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RAKSHA MANTRI BRIEFS PRIME MINISTER

RAHUL DATTA ■ New Delhi

Amidst the preparedness to fight against terror, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh briefed Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack. Rajnath arrived at PM's residence and he was joined by National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, top brass of the defence and ministry bureaucrats.

The crucial meeting came a day after Singh met the Chief of General Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan to discuss the key decisions taken up by the military to counter Pakistan following the horrific terrorist attack in Pahalgam. Sources said General Chauhan briefed the Defence Minister on critical military decisions to counter Pakistan following the attack. Singh had also chaired an all-party meeting three days ago to discuss the security situation in the region.

There was however no official word on Singh's meeting with PM Modi however sources said the meeting was scheduled following the briefing by Chief of General Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan to the Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. A Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence also met on Monday afternoon to further review preparedness and the Government's response to the situation while the Opposition demanded a Special Parliament Session to be convened to discuss the current situation prevailing in country following the terror activities.

Since the attack, teams from the National Investigation Agency (NIA) have been stationed in Pahalgam, intensifying evidence collection and investigations. The Indian Army remains on high alert, launching extensive search operations to neutralise the terrorists behind the assault. The teams, led by an IG, DIG, and SP from the anti-terror agency, are questioning eyewitnesses who observed the April 22 attack.

On April 23, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), chaired by Prime Minister Modi, held an emergency meeting, strongly condemning the attack and expressing condolences to the victims' families. The CCS noted the cross-border linkages to the attack and pointed out that it came amid successful elections and growing development in Jammu and Kashmir.

Citing "cross-border linkages" to the horrific attack, India has promised severe punishment to those involved in the strike that triggered wide-spread outrage within India and abroad.

In the briefing to the CCS, cross-border linkages of attack were highlighted. It was noted that this attack came in the wake of the holding successful elections in the Union Territory

In the briefing to the CCS, the cross-border linkages of the terrorist attack were brought out. It was noted that this attack came in the wake of the successful holding of elections in the Union Territory and its steady progress towards economic growth and development.

As a security measure, India has decided to withdraw its own Defence, Navy, and Air Advisors from the Indian High Commission in Islamabad. These posts in the respective High Commissions are deemed annulled. Five support staff of the Service Advisors will also be withdrawn from both High Commissions. The overall strength of the high commissions will be brought down to 30 from the present 55 through further reductions, to be effective by 1 May 2025.

On Sunday, the prime minister said the "perpetrators and conspirators" of the Pahalgam attack will be "served with the harshest response". "The whole world stands with 140 crore Indians in our fight against terrorism. I once again assure the affected families that they will get justice, and justice will be done, The perpetrators and conspirators of this attack will be served with the harshest response," Modi said in his 'Mann ki Baat' address.

Meanwhile Opposition MPs on Monday called for convening a special session of Parliament in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack. Rajya Sabha RJD MP Manoj Jha wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while Communist Party of India (CPI) MP P Sandosh Kumar sent a letter to Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, urging them to convene a special session of Parliament to express the will of the nation and send a message of unity.

Independent Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal too requested political parties to urge the Government to convene a special session of Parliament as early as possible in May.

The former Union minister has called for passing a resolution condemning the Pahalgam terror attack to convey the message to the world that the country is united.

Jha, in his letter addressed to the prime minister, said the Parliament of India stands as the cornerstone of the republic and the highest forum for democratic expression. "At this time of grief and testing, the Parliament must come together to pay heartfelt homage to the victims of the Pahalgam attack, honour their memory, and reaffirm our shared commitment to the ideals of unity, justice and peace," Jha said.

Kumar, a CPI MP from Rajya Sabha, in his letter addressed to Rijiju, said the special session would allow members across party lines to come together to mourn the loss and express the will of the nation. He said the attack did not only cause immense sorrow to the victims' kin but also shook the "collective conscience of our nation."

Nervous Pakistan continues to play dirty

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

Sensing the mood of the Indian establishment in the aftermath of the horrific killing of 26 tourists in Pahalgam, the troops of the Pakistan army remain on their tenterhooks, anticipating 'punitive strikes' on the 'terror factories' located along the line of control to launch heavily armed infiltrators inside the Indian territory.

For the last four days, the Pakistan army has been resorting to 'unprovoked' ceasefire violations across different sectors in Jammu and Kashmir.

According to a Defence Spokesman, late Sunday night Pakistan army resorted to unprovoked firing in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch and Kupwara districts. A defence spokesperson in Jammu said, "During the night of April 27-28, Pakistan Army posts initiated unprovoked small arms fire across the LoC in areas opposite Kupwara and Poonch districts." Indian troops responded swiftly and effectively, he added. There were no reports of any casualties, he added.

According to field reports, the army has been keeping a close eye on the cross LoC activities especially along the possible routes of infiltration.

A fresh assessment was made by the security forces, suggesting that despite remaining on high alert, the Pakistan army is also providing cover fire to a small group of infiltrators to sneak into the Indian territory. It is for the same reason, local villagers in the border areas of Rajouri and Poonch districts have spotted the presence of suspicious men in the forward areas and alerted the security forces to launch searches to capture them before they could launch a fresh strike targeting Indian security personnel. The local villagers living in the direct line of fire in the frontier districts of Rajouri and Poonch are also spending sleepless nights amid heightened tensions in the region.

At several places, the farmers have started harvesting their maize crop to prevent heavy losses in the wake of escalating tensions in the region.

The local villagers have also started cleaning the community bunkers to ensure the safety of their loved ones. The Indian army is maintaining a close liaison with the villagers and, wherever necessary, providing training to the members of the Village Defence Guards to maintain a tight vigil during the night.The army has advised these VDG groups to assist the local police during the night to maintain a tight vigil in the area.

Security personnel keep vigil in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terrorist attack in Srinagar PTI

Meanwhile, the teams of Jammu and Kashmir police and the National Investigations Agency have widened the scope of investigation by detaining a large number of service providers, active overground workers, pony wallahs, and others to gather vital clues about the Pahalgam terror attack.

The exact number of people questioned so far could not be ascertained immediately, as the local police authorities are still collecting vital clues.

With a series of amateur videos surfacing on social media, the intelligence agencies are carefully scanning the details to identify the perpetrators behind the attack.Several tourists present on the spot on April 22 have shared images and videos with the investigating agencies as responsible citizens to provide clues.

Meanwhile, a massive hunt is going on in the South Kashmir district of Anantnag to capture the group of terrorists behind the attack. The security forces have been combing the entire area for six days but have failed to hunt them down.

The security forces remain deployed at various locations in the adjoining areas bordering the Anantnag district. The local villagers in the region have been directed to share information about any suspicious movement in their areas in real time with the local police and army authorities. On the other hand, the Baisaran valley and other local getaways remain out of bounds for tourists arriving in Pahalgam.

The ByStander

At least 24 arrested for objectionable posts following J and K terror attack

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Lucknow

The Uttar Pradesh Police have registered a case against noted folk singer and poetess Neha Singh Rathore, accusing her of making provocative social media posts that allegedly threatened national unity and incited communal disharmony in the aftermath of the recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir.

The complaint was lodged by Abhay Pratap Singh at the Hazratganj police station in Lucknow. In his statement, Singh alleged that Rathore, through her Twitter (now X) handle @nehafolksinger, made several objectionable remarks targeting a particular religious community at a time when the nation was mourning the brutal killing of 26 individuals, most of them tourists. According to reports, the assailants had selectively targeted victims based on their religious affiliation.

Folk singer Neha Rathore has been charged for endangering the sovereignty and integrity of India, and promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion

The complainant asserted that while the entire country was grappling with grief and outrage over the Pahalgam incident, Rathore's posts sought to "incite one community against another," thereby undermining national integrity and public tranquillity. The remarks, Singh contended, had the potential to disturb the peace and endanger the sovereignty and unity of India. In one of her posts, Neha Singh Rathore wrote:

"Why this selective outrage? Are the lives of people from a particular faith less valuable? Hatred has no religion, but unfortunately, some are using religion to spread hatred openly. Justice for all innocent lives lost - not just slogans, but actions." In a subsequent post, she further criticised perceived selective condemnation of violence, stating:

"Silence in the face of such tragedies deepens divisions. Hypocrisy and hate crimes must be called out, regardless of the faith of the victims or the perpetrators."

Following the complaint, the police registered a First Information Report (FIR) against Rathore under several sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the new criminal code that has replaced the colonial-era Indian Penal Code (IPC). She has been charged under Section 152 of the BNS, which pertains to acts endangering the sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India, as well as sections related to promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion and disturbing public order.

ABVP gets a foot in the door in JNU red fortress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Left-backed candidates secured three of the four key posts in the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) elections, maintaining their stronghold over the premier university even as the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS)-affiliated Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) broke a nine-year drought to win the post of joint secretary.

According to the results announced by JNUSU election commission early on Monday, Nitish Kumar of the All India Students' Association (AISA) secured 1,702 votes to win the post of president. His closest competitor, Shikha Swaraj of the ABVP secured 1,430 votes, while the Students' Federation of India (SFI)-supported Tayabba Ahmed polled 918 votes. Manisha of the Democratic Students' Federation (DSF) won the post of vice-president by securing 1,150 votes, ahead of the ABVP's Nittu Goutham who polled 1,116 votes. The DSF also bagged the general secretary's post, with Munteha Fatima polling 1,520 votes, ahead of the ABVP's Kunal Rai, who secured 1,406 votes.

The ABVP clinched the post of joint secretary, with Vaibhav Meena polling 1,518 votes, ahead of AISA's Naresh Kumar (1,433 votes) and Progressive Students' Association (PSA) candidate Nigam Kumari (1,256 votes). Vaibhav Meena's win marked the first time the ABVP has bagged a central panel post since Saurav Sharma's victory on the same post in 2015-16.

The last time the ABVP won the post of president was in 2000-01 when Sandeep Mahapatra had emerged victorious.

This year's election saw a split in the Left alliance, with the AISA and the DSF contesting as one bloc while the SFI and the All India Students' Federation (AISF) formed a coalition with the Birsa Ambedkar Phule Students' Association (BAPSA) and the PSA.

PIONEER IN SHORT

India, France sign ₹64,000 crore deal for 26 Rafale jets

India and France signed an intergovernmental agreement on Monday for the acquisition of 26 Rafale-Marine fighter jets, valued at approximately ₹64,000 crore, to bolster the Indian Navy's air power. The deal includes setting up production and maintenance facilities in India, technology transfer for integrating indigenous weapons, and delivery of the jets by 2030. The aircraft, to be deployed on INS Vikrant, will enhance joint capabilities with the Indian Air Force. Signed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his French counterpart Sebastien Lecornu, the pact also covers weapons, spares, and training, marking a major step in Indo-French defence cooperation.

FULL REPORT ON P4

PIB debunks false claims of Indian Army document leak

The Press Information Bureau (PIB) has flagged false claims by pro-Pakistan social media accounts alleging a leak of confidential Indian Army preparedness documents. PIB Fact Check confirmed on X that the documents are fake, urging the public to avoid spreading unverified information and rely on official sources. The disinformation follows a terror attack in Pahalgam on April 22, where 26 people were killed. In response, the Cabinet Committee on Security, led by PM Modi, ordered heightened vigilance. The Defence Ministry also warned against a fraudulent WhatsApp message claiming the Government is seeking donations for army modernisation, calling it misleading and fake.

Honour killing must get strong punishment: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday said upheld the conviction of 11 accused for the "dastardly murder" of a young couple in Tamil Nadu in July 2003 and said honour killing must get a strong measure of punishment. A bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Prashant Kumar Mishra refused to interfere with the Madras High Court's June 2022 verdict that upheld the conviction and sentence of the accused persons, including two police officers.

The bench said the victims — Murugesan and Kannagi — who were in their early twenties were killed by administering poison in full view of a large number of villagers. The masterminds and the main perpetrators of this "macabre act" were none other than the father and brother of the woman, it added. The top court observed the reason behind the murder was that Kannagi belonged to the "Vanniyar" community whereas Murugesan was a Dalit from the same village in Cuddalore district. The couple secretly married in May 2003.

"So, at the root of this crime is the deeply entrenched hierarchical caste system in India, and ironically, this most dishonourable act goes by the name of honour-killing," the bench said in its 73-page verdict. Advocate Priyadharshni Rahul appeared for Murugesan's family.

"A crime is an act against the State. But a wicked and odious crime, as the one we have just dealt with, is the ugly reality of our deeply entrenched caste structure. Honour-killing, as these are called, must get a strong measure of punishment," it said.

The bench awarded a compensation of ₹5 lakh to Murugesan's kin and said the amount was liable to be paid by Tamil Nadu Government. On the role of the police officers, the bench said both committed the offences under Section 217 of IPC and the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 as they neglected their duties and disobeyed the law by not registering the FIR at the first instance with the intention to save the culprits.

Witnesses turning hostile was underlined to be one of the key events in the case. The bench noted the many reason for witnesses turning hostile was the delay caused in the trial

Witnesses turning hostile was underlined to be one of the key events in the case. The bench noted one of the many reasons for witnesses turning hostile was the long delay usually caused in a trial. The court underscored the presence of "enough material" placed by the prosecution in the trial court turning sufficient to prove the guilt of the accused beyond a reasonable doubt.

The bench directed those on bail in the case to surrender within two weeks to undergo their remaining sentence. Of the total 15 accused who faced trial in the case, 13 were convicted.

CM pushes for fast-track development of Bhopal-Indore Metropolitan areas

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has emphasized the need to expedite the development process of the proposed Bhopal-Indore metropolitan areas to provide better facilities to citizens and strengthen the state's economy. Addressing a meeting at Samatva Bhavan (the Chief Minister's residence), Dr. Yadav highlighted the importance of a comprehensive action plan focused on economic growth opportunities and a seamless traffic system in both metropolitan regions.

The meeting was attended by State Urban Development Minister Pratima Bagri, Chief Secretary Anurag Jain, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dr. Rajesh Rajoura, and other senior officials. Dr. Yadav instructed all agencies involved in the project to work closely to prepare an integrated action plan for the timely execution of development activities.

Dr. Yadav stressed that planned development of land within the metropolitan areas must be ensured, urging officials to start efforts to attract investors immediately to boost industrial and business activities in the region. He emphasized the creation of economic corridors, and the improvement of road and rail transport infrastructure as critical components for future development. Dr. Yadav directed officials to complete all related processes within a fixed timeframe to ensure the efficient and timely implementation of the project.

The Chief Minister noted that the simultaneous establishment of two metropolitan areas would significantly contribute to the overall development of the region between Indore and Bhopal. He mentioned that the connectivity between these two metropolitan areas will transform a vast portion of the state into a model of coordinated development.

Dr. Yadav also assured that suggestions from public representatives would be incorporated into the planning and implementation process, and that dialogues with representatives regarding the metropolitan development had already been held. During the meeting, Urban Development and Housing Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya stressed the importance of preserving the region's heritage and green belts during the development process, from an environmental perspective.

He also emphasized that the economic corridor vision could be realized through the creation of the Indore-Bhopal metropolitan area. Additionally, Panchayat and Rural Development Minister Prahlad Singh Patel highlighted the need for basic infrastructure planning in semi-urban areas to ensure the success of the project.

Additional Chief Secretary Sanjay Shukla, during a presentation, informed the meeting that the first metropolitan area would integrate the districts of Indore, Ujjain, Dewas, and Dhar, while the second area would include Bhopal, Sehore, Raisen, Vidisha, and Biaora (Rajgarh). He confirmed that preparations for completing the necessary legal procedures were underway and that all formalities would be finalized before the upcoming Legislative Assembly session.

CM announces comprehensive development plans for Bhopal

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav emphasized the importance of planned development for Bhopal while ensuring that the city's rich heritage is preserved. During a review meeting on the development works of Bhopal district, Dr. Yadav announced that as part of integrating the city's illustrious history into its modern planning, gates dedicated to Raja Bhoj and Emperor Vikramaditya will be constructed on the roads leading to Bhojpur and Ujjain, respectively. The Bhoomi Pujan for both gates will take place soon.

Dr. Yadav further directed that Bhopal@2047 planning should focus on representing the diverse regions of Madhya Pradesh within the city. He instructed officials to prepare an action plan for transforming Bhopal into a metropolitan area, starting with the expansion of a transport network that will connect the Agra-Mumbai Road in the west with Vidisha, Raisen, and Sehore.

The Chief Minister also praised the removal of the BRTS corridor, acknowledging that the decision has contributed to a reduction in road accidents. He noted that Bhopal's development has gained momentum, particularly following the Global Investors Summit, which has firmly established the city as a hub for industry and trade. He highlighted growth in sectors like education, healthcare, tourism, and industry.

To further enhance urban development, Dr. Yadav stressed the need for integrated transportation solutions, including metro facilities and road transport networks. He directed that transport infrastructure should be designed to accommodate multipurpose use and should integrate public input into route planning. He also called for the use of satellite surveys in city planning to monitor and prevent illegal settlements and stressed the need for mandatory CCTV installation in all approved colonies to improve security.

The Chief Minister also addressed high-rise building regulations, stating that existing rules for such developments must be strictly enforced. He highlighted the importance of ensuring that residential facilities developed under slum-free city initiatives are not rented out, and warned that revenue and municipal corporation officers will be held accountable for any illegal colonies or slums.

In terms of sustainability, Dr. Yadav directed that solar panels be installed on all government buildings in Bhopal, with the goal of making the capital a model city for solar energy utilization.

Additionally, metro construction is underway in two corridors in Bhopal: one from AIIMS to Karond Square, and another from Bhadbhada Square to Ratnagiri Tiraha. An in-principle agreement has been reached between the Ministry of Heavy Industries, Government of India, and the Urban Administration Department of Madhya Pradesh for the joint use of BHEL land under a 50-50 model, aimed at supporting both city development and the interests of BHEL.

Further initiatives include the development of an industrial zone in Hajjampura village, spanning 31.21 hectares of land, and the creation of a Readymade Garment Hosiery Park across 69.91 hectares in Satgarhi village in the Kolar area, at a cost of Rs 32.29 crore.

The meeting was attended by Mayor Malti Rai, MLAs Rameshwar Sharma, Bhagwan Das Sabnani, Vishnu Khatri, and senior government officials. The Chief Minister's comprehensive approach seeks to bolster Bhopal's infrastructure while ensuring its historical and cultural legacy remains intact.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav offers prayers at the banks of Kalisindh river in Sarangpur, Rajgarh district Madhya Pradesh on Monday. Pioneer photo

CtrlS to invest Rs 500 Crore in Greenfield Data Center

PNS ■ Indore

CtrlS Datacenters has announced a Rs 500 crore investment to establish a greenfield data center in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, as part of its plan to expand digital infrastructure across India.

The new facility will be situated on a five-acre plot at Badwai IT Park, which has been allocated by the state government. The project is expected to create around 200 jobs as it develops in phases.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav virtually inaugurated the groundbreaking ceremony during the Tech Growth Conclave 2025, which took place in Indore on Sunday. The data center is in line with the state's technology investment goals, including its IT, ITeS & ESDM Investment Promotion Policy 2023 and the Global Capability Centers Policy 2025.

As part of the state's economic vision, Madhya Pradesh aims to establish over 50 global technology centers and reach a USD 2 trillion economy by 2047.

Sridhar Pinnapureddy, Chairman and Managing Director of CtrlS Datacenters, stated, "Our significant investment in this facility underscores our commitment to driving the digital transformation of India's future." He highlighted Madhya Pradesh's strategic location, business-friendly policies, and emerging talent pool in technology as key reasons for selecting the state for the new data center.

The AI-ready facility will feature advanced cooling and security infrastructure, making it a crucial addition to the region's growing tech landscape. Upon reaching full capacity, it is expected to contribute approximately Rs 7.5 crore annually in both state goods and services tax (SGST) and central goods and services tax (CGST).

CtrlS currently operates 250 megawatts (MW) of combined data center capacity across major Indian cities, including Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Noida, and Kolkata.

The company also runs edge data centers in tier-2 cities such as Patna and Lucknow and has plans for further expansion in locations like GIFT City, Bhubaneswar, and Guwahati.

Sex assault case accused faces lawyers' anger

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

The accused in the sexual assault, gang rape, atrocities, love jihad, and forced religious conversion case have faced severe public and police backlash in Bhopal. The suspects were paraded by Baghsewania police, and while being transported for medical examination, they were assaulted by angry lawyers at the district court and met with protests at JP Hospital.

In an attempt to protect them, the accused were dressed in saffron clothing (Bhagwa) for their court appearance, but this did not quell the fury of the lawyers, who attacked the accused, leaving them bloodied. Police intervened to prevent further harm to their lives. The Sanskriti Bachao Manch led protests at JP Hospital, where they were outraged by the use of saffron attire, which further hindered the medical examination process. The authorities had to remove the accused from the hospital premises to avoid further escalation.

As the investigation continued, negligence by Indore police came to light, prompting Bhopal police to call for a more thorough probe. There were also reports of inaction by Dial-100 in Indore during the earlier stages of the investigation. One of the suspects, Hamid, was found to have died by suicide two years ago, which has added to the complexity of the case. Additionally, the luxurious lifestyles of the accused raised suspicions of financial backing from banned terror outfits, and this angle is now under investigation.

ED raids liquor traders in Madhya Pradesh

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) carried out extensive raids across Madhya Pradesh, focusing on prominent liquor traders in Indore, Bhopal, Rewa, Mandsaur, and Jabalpur. The most significant action took place in Indore, where 18 locations linked to contractors such as Avinash Srivastava, Vijay Srivastava, Rakesh Jaiswal, Yogendra Jaiswal, Rahul Chouksey, Suryaprakash Arora, Gopal Shivhare, Lavkush, and Pradeep Jaiswal were searched. These properties were located in areas including Basant Bihar Colony, Tulsi Nagar, and Mahalaxmi Nagar.

The raids were part of an ongoing investigation triggered by an FIR filed in 2024, which alleges that the state incurred a revenue loss of over Rs. 49 crore between 2015 and 2018. The investigation revealed that the accused contractors had used forged treasury challans and illegally obtained No Objection Certificates (NOCs) to procure excessive quantities of liquor from government warehouses. The contractors reportedly deposited small-amount challans in banks with the "Rupees in words" section left blank, only to later inflate the amounts to several lakhs to secure extra liquor, which was then sold through licensed shops.

In Mandsaur, a seven-member ED team, supported by CRPF personnel, raided the residence of liquor businessman Bunty Trivedi in Janta Colony. Meanwhile, in Bhopal, searches were conducted at the premises of a prominent businessman. Initial reports indicating raids on locations linked to Excise Flying Squad Deputy Commissioner Alok Khare were later clarified as false by ED sources.

The Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee has criticized the state government, particularly over the inaction against Sanjeev Dubey, the former Excise Officer and alleged mastermind behind the scam. Despite investigations by the Lokayukta and Economic Offences Wing (EOW), the Congress claims that no substantial action has been taken against Dubey, even after a decade of inquiries. Additionally, the Congress raised concerns about Rs. 22 crore deposited into government accounts by officers after the scam was uncovered, questioning the state's handling of the case.

AICC General Secretary and State In-charge Harish Chaudhary, Congress State President Jitu Patwari and leader of opposition Umang Singhar during 'Samvidhan Bachao Rally' in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh on Monday. Pioneer photo

Political firestorm erupts over assault on GRP personnel

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

A violent incident at Rani Kamlapati Railway Station in Bhopal has sparked a political controversy after intoxicated youths allegedly assaulted Government Railway Police (GRP) Head Constable Nazar Daulat Khan on the night of April 26, 2025. The incident, which began around 2 a.m., escalated when Khan confronted the youths for consuming alcohol inside a parked car on the station premises.

What initially began as a verbal altercation turned physical, with the youths reportedly tearing Khan's uniform, verbally abusing him, and making derogatory remarks targeting his Muslim identity. The situation was further amplified when a video showing three youths attacking Khan inside a GRP jeep went viral on April 27, intensifying public and political scrutiny.

Following the incident, the Bhopal police arrested one of the accused, identified as Jitendra Yadav, while the other two remain at large. An FIR has been registered against all three individuals involved in the assault.

This attack has quickly turned into a political issue, with Congress leaders questioning the law-and-order situation under the BJP-led government in Madhya Pradesh. MP Congress President Jitu Patwari condemned the assault, alleging that the BJP's governance has emboldened criminals and fueled communal hatred, citing the religious slurs used against Khan during the attack.

Youth Congress National President Uday Bhanu Chib took to X to label the BJP's rule under Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a "double standard" government, accusing them of prioritizing religious identity over law enforcement. Chib highlighted the audacity of the attackers, one of whom reportedly told another officer, Kamal Raghuvanshi, to step aside because of his Hindu identity, which he framed as a direct challenge to police authority.

The Congress party escalated its rhetoric, accusing the BJP government of sending "the self-respect of police to the abyss." They called the incident a "mirror of the government's shamelessness and incompetence." Congress national spokesperson Supriya Shrinet also amplified the communal aspect, pointing out the attackers' fearlessness and their targeted assault on Khan based on his religion.

In defense, BJP state spokesman Pankaj Chaturvedi rejected the Congress's claims, asserting that the police acted promptly by arresting the prime accused. He defended the law-and-order situation in Madhya Pradesh, stating that the state has significantly improved under BJP rule. Chaturvedi urged the Congress to reflect on its own tenure, accusing them of compromising public and police safety during their governance.

The incident's communal undertones, particularly the remarks made by the accused, have made it a flashpoint for political debate. Social media posts and media coverage reflect a divided public opinion, with some framing the attack as evidence of rising communal tensions under BJP rule, while others emphasize the police's swift response in apprehending the accused.

As police continue their search for the remaining suspects, the controversy highlights deeper political fault lines in Madhya Pradesh, with both parties using the incident to rally their bases ahead of the state elections. The debate over law enforcement, communal harmony, and governance is expected to remain a central issue in the state's political discourse.

Activists cast aspersions on UC waste incineration in Pithampur

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Two prominent activists on Monday levelled serious allegations against the ongoing incineration of legacy waste from the now defunct Union Carbide pesticides production facility at Pithampur. They said they plan to move the High Court.

Addressing journalists in the state capital, Sadhana Karnik Pradhan and PN Verma claimed that reports of trial incineration were riddled with inconsistencies in mercury levels while underlining contamination fears in the vicinity of the incineration site.

According to them, around 221 kg of mercury could be present in the 358 tonnes of waste incinerated without proper environmental audits, endangering Malwa's water sources including the Gambhir River.

They alleged that the Gas Relief Department, CPCB, and MPPCB violated international conventions and national environmental laws by conducting the trials without public hearings or environmental assessments.

The activists said trial reports showed extremely low mercury residues compared to expected levels, suggesting uncontrolled release of toxic mercury gas into the environment.

They cited findings of elevated heavy metals like lead, chromium, and arsenic, along with Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons reportedly 300 times higher than prescribed CPCB limits.

According to them, faulty mercury fixation processes produced vast quantities of hazardous bag filter residues, making future safe disposal unsustainable and dangerous for public health.

They also alleged inconsistencies in diesel usage, missing emission temperature data, and violations of chimney height norms, calling the 2025 trials deeply flawed and unscientific.

Demanding an independent probe, the activists said incinerating 307 tonnes of Bhopal's waste without credible scientific safeguards would be a serious crime against the people of the region.

Driver from Vidisha found dead

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

In a tragic incident, Akshay Lodhi, a 24-year-old driver from Vidisha, was found dead in Bhopal's Chhola Mandir area on Sunday night. He reportedly took his own life by hanging, and the police have initiated an investigation into the matter.

Akshay, who had been living on rent in Rasla Khedi for the past three years, worked as a driver for a factory owner in the industrial area of Bhopal. Just before his death, Akshay posted a WhatsApp status that read, "Forget me, goodbye to you, you have to live without me." This message is believed to be the last communication from him, raising concerns about the possible reasons behind his drastic action.

His body was sent for postmortem on Monday, and after the procedure, it was handed over to his family. The police have registered a case and are working to uncover the reasons for his suicide. According to Akshay's family, there were no known issues or conflicts he had shared with them. His brother stated that there were no signs of any love affairs or problems, and the family was in the process of arranging his marriage.

Cheetah Nirva gives birth to five cubs at Kuno National Park

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

In a significant milestone for India's cheetah conservation efforts, Cheetah Nirva has given birth to five healthy cubs at the Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh. With this new litter, the cheetah population at the park, located in Sheopur district, has now increased to 29, including both adults and cubs.

This birth brings the total number of cheetahs, including cubs, in the country to 31. Earlier this month, two cheetahs from Kuno were relocated to the Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary, expanding conservation initiatives in the region.

On Sunday night, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav expressed his joy, stating, "It is a great pleasure that the population of cheetahs at Kuno National Park is constantly growing. Recently, 5-year-old Nirva has given birth to five cubs. The arrival of these little cubs is a symbol of the success of the Cheetah Project and the rich biodiversity of India." He also credited the favorable environment created for wildlife conservation, under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for the success of the project.

The Chief Minister congratulated the entire team at Kuno National Park, wildlife experts, and conservation partners, commending their hard work in achieving this historic achievement.

The cheetah reintroduction project in India has already seen notable successes. On April 20, two South African cheetahs, Prabhash and Pavak, were moved from Kuno to the Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary, located across Neemuch and Mandsaur districts.

In September 2022, eight Namibian cheetahs—five females and three males—were released into the Kuno National Park as part of the first-ever intercontinental translocation of these big cats. In February 2023, twelve more cheetahs were brought from South Africa to enhance the growing population.

Before the birth of these cubs, the park was home to 24 cheetahs, including 14 cubs born in India. With the successful relocation of two adults, the cheetah population continues to thrive, marking another success for India's wildlife conservation efforts.

Unemployed youths participate in a Rozgar Mela organised at Employment Exchange in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

UCO Bank reports 14.12% growth in total business for FY 2024-25

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

UCO Bank has announced a 14.12% year-on-year increase in its total business for the fiscal year 2024-25, which reached Rs 5,13,527 crore as of March 31, 2025. The bank's total deposits grew by 11.56% to reach Rs 2,93,542 crore, while its gross advances saw a rise of 17.72%, totaling Rs 2,19,985 crore.

The Retail, Agriculture, and MSME (RAM) segment, a key focus area for UCO Bank, witnessed an impressive growth of 25.74%, with the total RAM business reaching Rs 1,22,613 crore. Specifically, the retail business saw a 35.09% increase, with housing and vehicle loans contributing significantly to this rise. The agriculture sector grew by 20.02%, while MSME loans increased by 18.55%.

The bank also reported a significant improvement in its Non-Performing Assets (NPA). The gross NPA reduced to 2.69%, showing a 77 basis point improvement compared to the previous year. The net NPA stood at 0.50%, reflecting a 39 basis point reduction.

In terms of profitability, UCO Bank's operating profit for Q4 FY 2024-25 reached Rs 1,699 crore, marking a 33.48% increase compared to the same period last year. The bank's net profit for Q4 FY 2024-25 stood at Rs 652 crore, a 23.98% year-on-year increase.

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Congress launches 'Save the Constitution' rally in Gwalior

PNS ■ Gwalior

Thousands of Congress workers and supporters on Monday gathered at the historic Veerangana Laxmibai Samadhi Sthal ground in Gwalior to launch a massive movement under the banner of the "Save the Constitution Rally." The rally aimed to raise issues related to the protection of the Indian Constitution and public welfare. Senior Congress leaders present at the event included Madhya Pradesh Congress In-charge Harish Choudhary, Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee President Jitu Patwari, Leader of Opposition Umang Singhar, AICC Social Media President Supriya Shrinet, former Chief Minister and Rajya Sabha MP Digvijay Singh, AICC Secretary Sanjay Dutt, CWC members Kamleshwar Patel and Omkar Markam, former Union Minister Arun Yadav, former Minister Sajjan Verma, Media Department Head Mukesh Nayak, among other Congress leaders, legislators, and thousands of party workers.

Addressing the massive gathering, Jitu Patwari declared, "From the historic land of Gwalior, we are starting a new fight—not against the government, but against the mindset that aims to weaken the Constitution. The Congress is not just fighting a political battle; we are standing for the protection of the Constitution, which guarantees the rights of the poor, Dalits, tribals, minorities, and women." Harish Choudhary emphasized the importance of the Constitution, stating, "The Constitution gives us the right to speak, live, and contest elections. Today, every right is under attack. This rally is not just political, but the beginning of social awareness." Supriya Shrinet highlighted the government's failures, saying, "More than 30,000 government posts are vacant so that SC, ST, and OBC youth don't get reservations. Appointments are being made through contracts and outsourcing. BJP leaders in Madhya Pradesh are committing atrocities against tribals, and Dalit youth are being shot at."

Leader of Opposition Umang Singhar termed the rally as a "citizens' movement," saying, "The Constitution grants you rights to equality, jobs, and reservations. But the BJP government is violating your constitutional rights to benefit a few industrialists. More than 70 young startups have shut down, millions of government posts remain vacant because they may have to give reservations. FIRs are being filed against Congress workers for attending programs in Datia."

Madhya Pradesh Congress has announced a multi-phase campaign to address public concerns. Following the Gwalior rally, protests will be held across the state against anti-people policies, inflation, unemployment, and the agriculture crisis. District-level rallies will focus on inflation and unemployment and will be organized to garner public support in every district. Leaders and workers will conduct rallies in each assembly constituency to protest attacks on citizens' rights and the misuse of constitutional institutions. Congress workers will visit households to discuss inflation, unemployment, and violations of constitutional rights. They will distribute literature and promote awareness through social media.

Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee has called on citizens to join the movement, demanding the protection of the Constitution and government accountability. The party reiterated its commitment to addressing the challenges faced by marginalized communities, the right to justice, and tackling issues like unemployment, inflation, and social inequality.

A car burns in flames after it caught fire at Shyamla hills locality in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

Actor and theater artist Rajiv Verma addresses a press conference at Sanskar Bharti in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

Pani Chaupal becomes major attraction in Jal Ganga Samvardhan Abhiyan

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

The Jal Ganga Samvardhan Abhiyan, launched by Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, is witnessing massive participation from farmers through Pani Chaupals, or Water Forums, across Madhya Pradesh.

Since its inception on March 30, the Horticulture Department's Pani Chaupals have emerged as key platforms for educating farmers about water conservation techniques, efficient crop cultivation, and integrating agriculture with horticulture. The forums also promote the online registration process for government schemes related to fruit orchards, drip irrigation, and vegetable expansion plans.

As part of the campaign, the Horticulture and Food Processing Department aims to allocate Rs 76.68 crore to support 13,500 farmers with sprinkler and drip systems. This initiative is part of the Prime Minister's "Per Drop, More Crop" scheme. The plan also includes planting fruit plants on 5,000 hectares, hosting micro-irrigation workshops, and distributing over 25 lakh fruit-bearing plants.

Pani Chaupals are being held in villages across the state, including Akavda, Ukvida, and Shivpur, among others. These forums address farmers' concerns, provide information on available schemes, and encourage proactive participation in sustainable agricultural practices.

Indore Police bust drug smuggling operation, two nabbed with 2.4 kg of Cannabis

PNS ■ Indore

In a significant breakthrough, Indore City Police have arrested two individuals involved in smuggling 2 kg 400 grams of ganja in the city. The operation was carried out under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner of Police Zone 02 Abhinav Vishwakarma, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police Indore Zone-2 Amarendra Singh, and Assistant Commissioner of Police, Khajrana Kundan Mandloi, as part of a comprehensive action plan to curb the illegal drug trade in the city.

On April 27, 2025, the Kanadia Police Station received a tip-off from an informer, alerting them about two individuals standing near Gate No. 02 at Khan Compound, Kanadia Bypass Service Road, in possession of a large quantity of ganja. Acting swiftly, the police team was dispatched to the location, where they apprehended two suspicious individuals. Upon questioning, the suspects were identified as Deepesh, 19 years old, son of Santosh Rajak, a resident of 133 Chetan Nagar, Bengali Square, and a juvenile delinquent.

During the search, the accused admitted to possessing 2 kg 400 grams of ganja, which was promptly seized along with a motorcycle. The seized ganja is estimated to be worth Rs. 2,00,000. A case under Section 8(20) of the NDPS Act (Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act) has been registered at Kanadia Police Station, and investigations are underway to trace the source of the illicit narcotic.

This successful operation has been hailed for its efficiency, with special commendation given to Police Station Incharge Inspector Saharsh Yadav and Sub Inspector Sachin Arya for their role in the operation.

The arrest is part of an ongoing effort by Indore Police Commissioner Santosh Singh and Additional Police Commissioner Amit Singh to combat the growing issue of illegal drugs, including alcohol, in the city. The police have vowed to continue their vigilance and take decisive action against drug-related crimes.

2 bootleggers nabbed

Bhopal: In a significant crackdown on illegal liquor smuggling, Ayodhyanagar Police in Bhopal have arrested two liquor smugglers and seized 54 liters of liquor worth approximately Rs. 45,000.

The police team acted on a tip-off regarding the illegal smuggling of liquor from other districts into Bhopal. Following the information, a swift operation was carried out, leading to the apprehension of the accused, identified as Manish Sahu alias Golu (30) and Abhishek Srivastava (22). The duo was caught with six sealed packets containing 300 quarters (180 ml each) of Genius Deluxe Whiskey, which were stored in a rented room in L-Sector, Ayodhyanagar. Both Manish Sahu and Abhishek Srivastava have been identified as habitual offenders with a history of criminal activities, including charges under the Gambling Act, Indian Penal Code (IPC), and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). During interrogation, the accused admitted to renting the room specifically for storing and selling liquor that they sourced at lower prices from unknown suppliers in Raisen district.

A case has been filed against the accused under Section 34(2) of the Excise Act, and further investigations are underway. The police have also vowed to intensify their efforts to curb the illegal liquor trade in the city.

Two decades later, sawmills chip away at relocation plans

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Despite repeated efforts over the last two decades, the city administration has failed to relocate sawmills from the Bharat Talkies area of the state capital, leading to traffic bottlenecks, fire hazards, and now delays in the Metro rail project.

Though relocation efforts started after a massive fire in the early 2020s, the most serious of them came during the Congress rule in January 2020. Land at Chandpur was earmarked, a boundary was built, and a list of 86 saw mill operators was compiled under the MSME Cluster Development Programme. But the sawmills simply refused to budge after a change in government.

The consequences have been deadly; various fire incidents reported since then have sounded the alarm over the threat posed by the presence of the mainstay timber market in this densely populated area.

Experts say dry weather, stacked timber, and narrow lanes create a perfect firetrap every summer, while clogged roads only add to the situation by making access difficult for emergency vehicles. Besides the fire hazard, the reluctance of sawmill owners is also dragging down public infrastructure. Bhopal Metro's Phase 2, particularly the Subhash Nagar-Karond stretch, is badly delayed due to the presence of these mills.

In the latest plan, the government has earmarked 18 acres of land at Chhota Ratibad. Infrastructure development, including roads, water, and electricity, has been promised. Yet mistrust between mill owners and the administration has allowed the problem to fester.

Speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal, saw mill owners say that the administration should shift all saw mills out of the city in an equitable manner to prevent the loss of livelihood and profits.

Even as the tug-of-war continues, hapless residents in areas where metro work is dragging continue to face considerable problems to their health and businesses.

The Metro Corporation has already deposited its share towards the development of the new sawmill site. How long the administration allows the relocation deadlock to persist is something that only time will tell.

Youth beaten for watching Pahalgam terror reel

Indore: The GRP on Monday registered an FIR against two unidentified individuals for allegedly abusing and assaulting a 23-year-old youth aboard the Bhopal-Indore passenger train. The attack occurred on April 27, when the victim claimed he was attacked for watching a reel related to the Pahalgam terror attack, which the accused reportedly found upsetting.

According to GRP Station House Officer Rashmi Patidar, the victim filed a complaint stating that the two men began arguing with him over the video. The victim had been watching the reel about the Pahalgam terror attack, which occurred on April 22, where 26 people, mostly tourists, were killed by terrorists. The GRP has filed charges under sections 118(1) (intentionally causing hurt by dangerous means), 296 (abuse), 351 (criminal intimidation), and other relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS).

The victim, who chose to keep his identity hidden, arrived at the GRP police station wearing a cap and a mask. He told reporters that the two men, after confronting him over the video, began making objectionable comments about India and the Constitution. He further alleged that the accused even attempted to throw him out of the moving train during the heated argument.

When asked about the allegation, Station In-charge Rashmi Patidar confirmed that threatening the victim had been added to the FIR, noting that the youth had claimed the accused threatened to throw him out of the moving train.

Bhopal Division now using USFD technology for enhanced track safety

Bhopal: The Bhopal Railway Division is now using Ultrasonic Flaw Detection (USFD) technology to ensure track safety by detecting internal flaws early, allowing timely repairs and safe train operations.

USFD technology enables precise inspection of railway tracks, detecting internal flaws before they lead to serious issues. This technique enhances the safety of both passenger and freight trains, preventing disruptions.

Approximately 2000 kilometres of track in Bhopal Division are regularly inspected with USFD machines. Inspections, based on traffic density, occur every two to four months, ensuring timely maintenance.

Eight USFD teams, consisting of 15 engineers, are equipped with B-Scan USFD machines that digitally record track conditions. These engineers also use digital weld testers to precisely assess welds, identifying any defects.

A complete digital record of each inspection is maintained for analysis and action. In the 2024–25 financial year, the division inspected 10,000 kilometres of track, 34,000 welds, 4,704 turnouts, and 4,498 switch expansion joints, identifying and repairing 861 flaws.

Engineers regularly undergo training at institutes like RDSO Lucknow and IRICEN Pune, ensuring they stay updated on the latest standards and technologies, continuously improving track safety. USFD technology has become a vital part of Indian Railways' safety system, offering early hazard detection and preventing accidents, thereby ensuring safe and smooth operations in the Bhopal Division.

CM to distribute Rs 600 cr under Sambal Scheme

Bhopal: Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav will on Wednesday distribute a total of Rs 600 crore under the Ex-Gratia Assistance Scheme of the Sambal Scheme in Umarban, Dhar district. The funds will be distributed to 27,523 beneficiaries with a single click during a special event. The Labor and Panchayat & Rural Development Minister, Prahlad Singh Patel, along with local public representatives and the beneficiaries, will also be present at the event.

The Chief Minister Jan-Kalyan Sambal Yojana is a vital initiative aimed at providing financial relief to the unorganized sector laborers across the state. Under the Ex-Gratia Assistance Scheme, the government offers Rs 4 lakh in case of accidental death, and Rs 2 lakh for natural deaths. Additionally, Rs 2 lakh is provided for permanent disability, and Rs 1 lakh for partial permanent disability. Rs 5,000 is also given as funeral assistance.

BMC demolishes 20 structure

Bhopal: The Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Monday took stringent action against encroachments and environmental violations in the city.

The municipal anti-encroachment squad cleared illegal structures from roads, footpaths and corridors across several areas. Carts, iron frames, tables and construction material were seized, while twenty houses obstructing Metro Rail work in Arjun Nagar were demolished.

Operations were carried out across Barkheda Pathani, Awadhpuri, Indrapuri, Ashoka Garden, Aishbagh, Railway Station Platform No 1, MP Nagar Zone-01, Bima Kunj, Sarvadharm Colony, Amar Nath Colony, Mahabalipuram, Lalita Nagar and New Market. Action also covered Link Roads 01, 02 and 03, Malviya Nagar, Bairagarh, Mini Market, Lalghati, Vijay Nagar and other key localities.

The Corporation's teams seized five carts, one iron frame, one table, and other illegally placed items. In Karond, an unauthorised balcony constructed near Adhar Hospital was also demolished in coordination with the Building Permission Department.

In a parallel environmental action, Zone 08 teams traced a farmhouse owner who had dumped medical waste along the lakeside in Bisankhedi. Using bills found in the litter, officials identified the culprit as Hemant Mathur.

The farmhouse owner was fined Rs 10,000 for discarding waste from goats' medicines and warned against future violations. Municipal officials have reiterated that stricter penalties will be imposed for any repeat encroachments or breaches of cleanliness standards.

Aspirations peak as youngsters return to TT Stadium for the summer

KISHAN SINGH RANA ■ Bhopal

Before the first sunrays hit the ground, the Tatya Tope (T.T.) Stadium in New Market is already buzzing with children's laughter and the rhythmic thud of sneakers on track.

With schools shut for the summer, the stadium has transformed into a carnival of sports. Kids aged 4 to 14 arrive, some sprinting, others with sleepy eyes but eager smiles, to camps offering everything from football and fencing to gymnastics and yoga.

Over 20 sports camps run in two crisp shifts – mornings from 6 to 9 and evenings from 5 to 8. Fees begin at Rs 1,000, but the excitement in the air is priceless. Children fill the track, bouncing along with the freshness of the day.

Currently, the stadium offers camps for Tennis, Volleyball, Table Tennis, Squash, Fencing, Wrestling (Kushti), Basketball, Karate, Skating, Judo, Football, Badminton, Gymnastics, Weightlifting, Kabaddi, Boxing, Mallakhamb, Yoga, Taekwondo and Athletics.

Taekwondo coach Amit, watching over a buzzing class of 100-plus students, beams, "This is the perfect age to mould a child's body and mind. Sports isn't just a hobby—it's a foundation for life."

Parents on the sidelines soak in the scenes. "My son Geetansh missed joining earlier because of school timings," shares a 45-year-old father. "Now, he wakes up excited for camp. If he shines here, we'll support his dream in sports."

Mentors, both seasoned coaches and young former trainees, guide children with a patience born of love for the game. Captain Sandeep, a gymnastics coach, says, "Flexibility built now will be their lifelong asset in martial arts and beyond."

As the clock strikes 6:30 AM, a vibrant ritual unfolds—nameplates for each sport are set along the race track. Children gather eagerly, forming crooked lines that mentors lovingly straighten before the first whistle pierces the air.

Then, the stadium turns into a giant Zumba floor. Music booms, little bodies sway and stretch with infectious joy. Those closer to the stage dance with abandon; a few at the back fumble but laugh along, filling the air with electric energy.

After Zumba, the serious business of training begins. Footballers dash, wrestlers grapple, and little skaters zoom past, some under the watchful eyes of proud parents perched on shaded benches nearby.

Among the many young athletes, one five-year-old skater stands out, confidently leading his team. His father proudly trails behind him on a motorbike every morning—proof of how one summer camp can shape a champion.

"He joined the campaign last year, and he's captaining the team this year," shares the father while observing every move of the young one.

But not everyone is an aspiring champion, a mother sitting among the visitors said, "I have three children, two of whom are suffering from obesity. I don't want the same for the third, so I have enrolled him in athletics classes and watch him from here."

Girls, though fewer in number, shine just as bright. A mentor remarks thoughtfully, "Imagine if we catch the right spark early. One day, Bharat won't just participate in the Olympics—we'll dominate."

As another schedule winds down, the cheers, laughter, and hopeful dreams stitched into the morning heat linger long after the children leave the stadium.

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

ICICI Home Finance Registered Office: ICICI Bank Towers, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai- 400051

Corporate Office: ICICI HFC Tower, JB Nagar, Andheri Kurla Road, Andheri East, Mumbai- 400059
Branch Office: Upper Ground Floor, Z-18 , M.P. Nagar, Zone -1, Near At Miracles Hospital, Bhopal (M.P.) Pin Code- 462011

Whereas

The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Home Finance Company Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Home Finance Company Limited.

The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of property/ Date of Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Prakash Tiwari (Borrower), Pramod Tiwari (Co-Borrower), Mamta Tiwari (Co-Borrower), Mahesh Prasad Tiwari (Co-Borrower), Kiran Tiwari LHBHP00001263281.	Plot No 2/26 /3, Ground Floor, Ward No 12, Nazul Sheet No 46, Sadar Bazar, Hoshangabad Madhya Pradesh- 461001. Bounded By- North: Ani Besent School, South: House of Mr Govind Patel, East: 20 Ft Colony Road, West: Hosue of Smt Asha Tiwari./ Date of Possession-23-Apr-25	10-01-2025 Rs. 34,52,620.34/-	Bhopal

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date : April 29, 2025, Place: Hoshangabad — Authorized Officer, ICICI Home Finance Company Limited

PUBLIC NOTICE

ICICI Home Finance Registered office: ICICI Bank Towers, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai- 400051

Corporate Office: ICICI HFC Tower, JB Nagar, Andheri Kurla Road, Andheri East, Mumbai- 400059
Branch Address: Ambika Arcade, 2nd Floor, Z-19, Zone 1, M.P. Nagar, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh- 462001
Branch Address: 1st Floor, Office No.1, Triyam height, Opp. Axis Bank, A.B. Road, Guna- 473001
Branch Address: 1st floor, Hari Chhaya, Vivekanand Ghat, Kothi Bazar Road, Nazul Sheet No 51, Plot No. 1/2/17 And 1/2/18, Hoshangabad- 461001
Branch Address: Hoshangabad Branch

The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from ICICI Home Finance Company Limited ("ICICI HFC") and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset/ Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Golu Singh (Borrower), Ram Babu Patel (Guarantor), G 2 Satpudavani Complex Press Complex X 2 Zone 1 Mp Nagar Bhopal Bhopal Madhya Pradesh- 462011. LHBHP00001551832.	Plot No 95, Khasra No. 36 (Computerised Khasra No. 36/1)gram Sevaniya Onkara, Ph No 20, Vikaskhand Fanda, Rnm 2, Tehsil Huzur, Distict Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. Bounded By- North: Plot No-96, South: Plot No- 94, East: Road Of Colony, West: Plot No-60.	23-04-2025 Rs. 3,03,040.88/-	10-04-2025
2.	Pramod Dhakad (Borrower), Bhavna Dhakad (Co-Borrower), Village Negma Guna Guna Madhya Pradesh- 473001. LHGUN00001458174.	Plot No- E-3/06 And E-3/07, Ph No. 64 New 07, Part Of Survey No. 229/min-01, Ward No. 01 New 37, Bhagat Singh Colony, Gram Nanakhedi, Tehsil And District Guna, Madhya Pradesh- 473001. Bounded By- North: Plot No.e 3/8, South: Plot No. E 3/5, East: Plot No. E 3/40.41, West: 20 Ft Road.	11-04-2025 Rs. 11,53,282/-	05-04-2025
3.	Pramod Dhakad (Borrower), Bhavna Dhakad (Co-Borrower), Village Negma Guna Guna Madhya Pradesh- 473001. LHGUN00001458175.	Plot No- E-3/06 And E-3/07, Ph No. 64 New 07, Part Of Survey No. 229/min-01, Ward No. 01 New 37, Bhagat Singh Colony, Gram Nanakhedi, Tehsil And District Guna, Madhya Pradesh- 473001. Bounded By- North: Plot No. E 3/8, South: Plot No. E 3/5, East: Plot No. E 3/40.41, West: 20 Ft Road.	11-04-2025 Rs. 48,767/-	05-04-2025
4.	Pramod Dhakad (Borrower), Bhavna Dhakad (Co-Borrower), Sanskar School Ke Samne Bhagat Singh Colony Guna Madhya Pradesh- 473001. LHGUN00001534068.	Plot No-e-3/06 And E-3/07, Ph No . 64 New 07, Part Of Survey No. 229/min-01 , Ward No. 01 New 37, Bhagat Singh Colony, Gram Nanakhedi, Tehsil And District Guna, Madhya Pradesh- 473001. Bounded By- North: Plot No. E 3/8, South: Plot No. E 3/5, East: Plot No. E 3/40.41, West: 20 Ft Road.	11-04-2025 Rs. 7,26,770/-	05-04-2025
5.	Late Devraj Kamlesh (Borrower), Sandhya Kahar (Legal Heir- Wife Of Late Devraj Kamlesh) (Co-Borrower), Pandukhedi Itarsi Itarsi Hoshangabad Itarsi Madhya Pradesh- 461111. LHHSG00001480218.	Kh No 428/4/1/1, Ph No. 37, Santu Lal Pumpe Ke Peeche, Gram Pathrota, Rnm And Vikaskhand Kesla, Tehsil Itarshi, District Hoshangabad, Madhya Pradesh- 461001. Bounded By- North: Rakba Of Tevendra, South: Remaining Rakba Of Seller, East: Remaining Rakba Of Seller, West: 20 Ft Road .	01-04-2025 Rs. 6,58,605/-	03-10-2024
6.	Late Devraj Kamlesh (Borrower), Sandhya Kahar (Legal Heir- Wife Of Late Devraj Kamlesh) (Co-Borrower), Pandukhedi Itarsi Itarsi Hoshangabad Itarsi Madhya Pradesh- 461111. LHHSG00001480201.	Kh No 428/4/1/1, Ph No. 37, Santu Lal Pumpe Ke Peeche, Gram Pathrota, Rnm And Vikaskhand Kesla, Tehsil Itarshi, District Hoshangabad, Madhya Pradesh- 461001. Bounded By- North: Rakba Of Tevendra, South: Remaining Rakba Of Seller, East: Remaining Rakba Of Seller, West: 20 Ft Road.	01-04-2025 Rs. 6,17,604/-	03-10-2024
7.	Vijay Singh Chouhan (Borrower), Shyam Bai Chouhan (Co-Borrower), Anuradha Chouhan (Co-Borrower), MN I 06 Ward No 11 Kavery State Nyas Colony Itarsi MP Itarsi Madhya Pradesh- 461111. LHHSG00001303458.	Diverted Plot On Part Of Khasra No. 16/2, 17, 18, Ward No 12, Priyadarshani Nagar, Kaveri State Colony, Tehsil Itarsi, District Hoshangabad (Narmadapuram) Madhya Pradesh- 461111. Bounded By- North: House Of Kamle, South: House Of Shrivastva Ji, East: Road, West: House Of Smt Sharma.	23-04-2025 Rs. 8,44,161/-	10-04-2025

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above borrower/s and/or their guarantors (as applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice else further steps will be taken as per the provisions of Securitization and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

Date: April 29, 2025
Place: Bhopal, Guna, Hoshangabad, Itarsi
Authorized Officer
ICICI Home Finance Company Limited

Pankaj Udhas, Shekhar Kapur among Padma awardees

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Former chief of Suzuki Motor late Osamu Suzuki, late singer Pankaj Udhas, former Bihar deputy chief minister late Sushil Kumar Modi, and publisher of Tamil daily Dinamalar, Lakshmipathy Ramasubbaiyer, were among the 71 prominent personalities conferred with Padma awards by President Droupadi Murmu on Monday.

Altogether 139 distinguished persons were named for the country's civilian awards — Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri — on the eve of the 76th Republic Day on January 25.

While 71 of them were given the awards at the Rashtrapati Bhavan's majestic Durbar Hall on Monday in the presence of Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, among others, the remaining will be conferred with the decorations at a separate function to be held soon.

Veteran actor Shekhar Kapur, cricketer Ravichandran Ashwin, hockey player P R Sreejesh, chairman of Asian Institute of Gastroenterology and AIG Hospitals, D Nageshwar Reddy, violinist Lakshminarayana Subramaniam and Telugu superstar Nandamuri Balakrishna, also known as Balayya, were the other prominent persons conferred with the Padma awards by Murmu.

Among the awardees, four received Padma Vibhushan — Suzuki (Posthumous), Subramaniam, Reddy and Malayalam author and film director MT Vasudevan Nair (Posthumous).

A total of 10 distinguished personalities were conferred with Padma Bhushan.

President Droupadi Murmu conferring the Padma Bhushan on filmmaker Shekhar Kapur during the Civil Investiture Ceremony-I at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi PTI

They include Udhas (Posthumous), Sushil Kumar Modi (Posthumous), Balakrishna, Kapur, Sreejesh, Tamil actor S Ajith Kumar, chairperson of Zydus Lifesciences, Pankaj Patel, and Vinod Dham, an Indian-American engineer, who is widely known as the 'Father of the Pentium'.

As many as 57 prominent personalities were conferred with Padma Shri.

These include former chairperson of the State Bank of India, Arundhati Bhattacharya, industrialist Pawan Kumar Goenka, wildlife researcher and Marathi author Maruti Bhujangrao Chitampalli, who gave unique dictionaries on birds, animals and trees, and master puppeteer Bhimavva Doddabalappa Shillekyathara, who was one of the first women to practise Togalu Gombeyaata (leather puppetry) art form.

Former AIIMS and SGPGI director A K Mahapatra and Punjabi singer Jaspinder Narula Kaul were also given Padma Shri.

This year, the Padma awards were given to 30 unsung heroes, including 100-year-old Libia Lobo Sardesai, who played an important role in Goa's freedom movement. She co-founded an underground radio station — 'Voz da Liberdabe (Voice of Freedom)' — in a forested area in 1955 to rally people against Portuguese rule.

The awards are given in various disciplines and fields such as art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports and civil service, among others.

Padma Vibhushan is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service; Padma Bhushan for distinguished service of high order, and Padma Shri for distinguished service in any field.

Rafale jets: India-France ink pact of ₹64,000 crore

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India and France on Monday inked an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to procure 26 naval variants of Rafale fighter jets at a cost of around Rs 64,000 crore for the Indian Navy.

The pact provides for setting up of a production facility for Rafale fuselage as well as maintenance, repair and overhaul facilities for aircraft engines, sensors and weapons in India, according to the Defence Ministry.

In line with the Government's thrust on Aatmanirbhar Bharat, the agreement includes Transfer of Technology for integration of indigenous weapons in India. It also includes setting up of production facility for Rafale Fuselage as well as Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul facilities for aircraft engine, sensors and weapons in India.

The deal is expected to generate thousands of jobs and revenue for a large number of MSMEs in setting up, production and running of these facilities.

The IGA has been signed by Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh and Minister of Armed Forces of France Sebastien Lecornu. The signed copies of the agreement, aircraft package supply protocol and weapons package supply protocol were exchanged by Indian and French officials in the presence of Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh at Nausena Bhawan. The ministry said the delivery of the aircraft would be completed by 2030, with the crew undergoing training in France and India.

India is procuring the jets for deployment on board aircraft carrier INS Vikrant. Manufactured by French defence major Dassault Aviation, the Rafale-Marine is a carrier-borne combat-ready aircraft with proven operational capabilities in the maritime environment.

The sealing of the mega deal came three weeks after the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi cleared the procurement.

Under the terms of reference, the delivery of the jets will have to start around five years after the signing of the contract. In July 2023, the defence ministry accorded the initial approval for the mega acquisition following a series of deliberations and evaluation tests of the platform.

Under the deal, the Indian Navy will also get associated ancillary equipment including weapon systems and spares from Dassault Aviation.

The Defence Ministry said that the Rafale-Marine has commonality with the Rafale being operated by the Indian Air Force (IAF).

"Its procurement will substantially enhance joint operational capability, besides optimising training and logistics for the aircraft for both Indian Navy and IAF," it said in a statement.

"The induction would lead to the addition of a potent force multiplier to the Indian Navy's aircraft carriers, substantially boosting the nation's air power at sea," it said

Manufactured by France's Dassault Aviation, the Rafale-Marine is a carrier-borne combat-ready aircraft with proven operational capabilities in maritime environment. The delivery of these aircraft would be completed by 2030, with the crew undergoing training in France and India.

Rafale-Marine has commonality with the Rafale being operated by IAF.

Naresh Tikait speaking 'language of Pakistan': BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The BJP on Monday accused Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) president Naresh Tikait of speaking the "language of Pakistan" after he took exception to the government's decision of putting in abeyance the Indus Waters Treaty in consequence to the Pahalgam terror attack. Tikait in a video clip that made rounds on social media condemned the Pahalgam terror strike and called for the strictest action against those involved.

But he also remarked that the Narendra Modi government should not have suspended the Indus Waters treaty with Pakistan as it would affect the common people, especially farmers, in the neighbouring country. BJP Kisan Morcha president and MP Rajkumar Chahar lashed out at Tikait and demanded that he apologise for his remarks.

"Naresh Tikait is speaking the language of Pakistan. He says the government's decision to stop water was wrong. He says that all Pakistanis are not culprits, only some people did that (terror strike)," he charged. "I strongly condemn his remarks. He should be ashamed of making such comments. He has spoken against India. He should apologise to the people of the country," Chahar added.

The BJP leader said that the Modi government had taken tough decisions against Pakistan which included suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty after the Pahalgam terror attack. "In the coming days, more effective decisions will be taken," he added.

Delhi Cabinet Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma also slammed the Tikait for voicing views against the Indian government's decision to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty, saying the farmers of India have always sweated in the fields for the pride of the tricolour and sacrificed their sons to protect the country." Verma said Tikait's statement has exposed the real face of those who do politics of power by pretending to be patriots.

"If leaders like Tikait brothers, who pursue politics in the name of farmers, have so much sympathy for Pakistan, then it would be better that they leave India and go to Pakistan," he said.

Verma's Cabinet colleague Manjinder Singh Sira also slammed Tikait, saying the BKU leader was indulging in anti-national activities under the garb of trans-border farmer unity. "Those who are worried about the farmers of Pakistan today are neither true citizens of India nor true well-wishers of the farmers," he said. Sirsa also trained his guns on Tikait and asked, "Should we continue giving water to those who want to shed our blood?"

Meanwhile, BKU national spokesperson Rakesh Tikait also reportedly raised questions on the government's line of action post-Pahalgam, saying the probe agencies should catch those who stand to benefit from the incident.

Delhi court extends Tahawwur's custody for 12 days

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

A Delhi court on Monday extended by 12 more days the NIA custody of 26/11 Mumbai attack accused Tahawwur Hussain Rana. Special NIA judge Chander Jit Singh extended Rana's custody on NIA's request after his previous 18-day remand got over. Rana was produced in court with his face covered amid tight security.

Senior advocate Dayan Krishnan and special public prosecutor Narender Mann are representing the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in the matter which is taking place in chamber. Advocate Piyush Sachdeva from Delhi Legal Services Authority is representing Rana. In its previous remand order, the court directed the NIA to conduct Rana's medical examination every 24 hours, and allow him to meet his lawyer every alternate day.

The court allowed Rana to use only a "soft-tip pen" and meet his lawyer in the presence of the NIA officials, who would be out of an audible distance.

During the arguments on the last occasion, the NIA said Rana's custody was required to piece together the full scope of the conspiracy, and submitted he was required to be taken to various locations for retracing the events that took place 17 years ago.

Rana, a close associate of 26/11 main conspirator David Coleman Headley alias Daood Gilani, a US citizen, was brought to India after the US Supreme Court on April 4 dismissed his review plea against his extradition to India.

On November 26, 2008, a group of 10 Pakistani terrorists went on a rampage, carrying out a coordinated attack on a railway station, two luxury hotels and a Jewish centre, after they sneaked into India's financial capital using the sea route in the Arabian Sea.

Police escort Tahawwur Hussain Rana after he was produced at the Patiala House Court in New Delhi on Monday RANJAN DIMRI

Congress distances itself from leaders making controversial comments on Pahalgam attack

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Congress on Monday distanced itself from the controversial comments of some of its leaders on the Pahalgam terror attack, saying that only the recent CWC resolution and the views expressed by AICC chief Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi and authorised AICC office-bearers represent its position.

The statement came after the BJP asked Kharge and Rahul if their call for national unity was merely a formality and cited comments of Congress leaders questioning the need for war with Pakistan and the Pahalgan terror attack victims' account that terrorists marked out non-Muslims. Congress leaders likes Vijay Wadettiwar, Mani Shankar Aiyar, Shashi Tharoor, Tariq Hameed Karra and Saifuddin Soz have triggered a row on the Pahalgam terror attack. The BJP alleged that some from the opposition party were speaking "Pakistan's language".

The Congress Working Committee had termed the Pahalgam attack masterminded by Pakistan as a direct assault on the values of our republic. It also called for a comprehensive examination of intelligence failures and security lapses.

Both Kharge and Rahul had expressed support to the government on whatever action it takes on the matter. Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "The Congress Working Committee had met on April 24, 2025, and passed a resolution on the brutal terror attack on tourists in Pahalgam two days earlier. "Thereafter, on the evening of April 24, 2025, the Congress President and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha attended the all-party meeting and put forward the party's views." "Some Congress leaders have been speaking to the media. They speak for themselves and do not reflect the Congress' views.

"There should be absolutely no doubt whatsoever at this most sensitive of times that the CWC resolution, the views expressed by Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi and the views of authorised AICC office-bearers ALONE represent the position of the Congress (sic)," Ramesh said in a post on X.

Aiyar, during a book release event here on Saturday, had wondered whether the April 22 terror attack in the tourist spot of Baisaran that left 26 dead, was a result of "unresolved questions of the Partition".

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddramaiah with his Deputy DK Shivakumar and Congress leaders during a party conference in Belagavi on Monday PTI

Former Jammu and Kashmir Congress president Saifuddin Soz, Prasad said, criticised India's decision to put the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance as the river is Pakistan's lifeline. The BJP leader asserted that Soz has asked the Indian government to take into Pakistan's official claim that it was not involved in the attack.

Tharoor's comments on the Pahalgam terror attack, in which he reportedly said there was some failure but no country can ever have a "foolproof, 100-per cent intelligence", have come under attack from within the Congress with party leader Udit Raj hitting out at him. Raj has said that being a Congressman, he should ask when will Prime Minister Narendra Modi teach Pakistan a lesson. "According to you Congress should guarantee foolproof intelligence to BJP and nothing should be asked of the BJP," Raj said in a post on X.

"Shashi Tharoor said no country has 100 per cent foolproof intelligence? At the time of 26/11 Mumbai attack, Modi ji had said after reaching Mumbai from Gujarat that it is the failure of the central government.

"He also said that the problem is the Centre and not the border. How did the terrorists come when the intelligence, BSF and CRPF are with the Centre. Tharoor ji, ask from Modi ji," said Raj, who is the chairman of the "Unorganised Workers and Employees Congress Other Than Professionals".The Congress Working Committee, in a resolution, on Thursday said the cowardly Pahalgam attack masterminded by Pakistan is a direct assault on the values of our republic. It also accused the BJP of exploiting the tragedy to promote discord and polarisation at a time when unity is most needed.

The CWC, chaired by Kharge, asserted that it is imperative that a comprehensive analysis is conducted into the intelligence failures and security lapses that enabled such an attack in a Union Territory, which is directly under the purview of the Union home ministry.

"This cowardly and calculated act of terror, masterminded by Pakistan, is a direct assault on the values of our Republic. The deliberate targeting of Hindus was done to inflame passions across the country. We appeal for calm in the face of this grave provocation and reaffirm our collective strength in the face of adversity," the resolution had said.

BJP questions Kharge, Rahul Gandhi over issue

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The BJP on Monday questioned Congress Chief Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi on Monday over the comments of several of their colleagues, some of whom have questioned the need for a war with Pakistan and the Pahalgam terror attack victims' account that the terrorists had marked out non-Muslims, asking if their call for national unity was merely a formality.

Addressing a press conference here, former Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad also lashed out at Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav for saying that he will not visit the grieving family of Shubham Dwivedi, one of the 26 people, mostly tourists, shot dead by terrorists at Pahalgam, as he had no relations with them. Yadav had, however, added that he would ask his party members to visit the Kanpur-based family and alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), at times, incites people in mourning to misbehave on such occasions.

This is the height of insensitivity, Prasad said and noted that some Congress leaders even went on to question the accounts of Pahalgam attack victims, including Dwivedi's wife, that the terrorists had identified their victims by religion. Prasad named a number of Congress leaders, including Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, senior Maharashtra leader Vijay Wadettiwar, Karnataka minister RB Timmapur and Gandhi's brother-in-law Robert Vadra, for their controversial comments to target the opposition party's leadership.

"Do Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge have no control over their party? Or both of them made pro-forma comments while letting others the freedom to speak as they wished?" he asked, adding that the remarks of the opposition leaders are being used in Pakistan, including by its media, to defame India. Has any warning been given to these Congress leaders or have they been asked to apologise, Prasad asked of the opposition party's leadership. He said Kharge, the Congress president, and Gandhi, the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha, had extended their support to the BJP-led Centre at an all-party meeting over the countermeasures being considered by it following the Pahalgam attack, and said this reflected the strength of India's mature democracy.

However, several Congress leaders have made comments that appeared to be part of a pattern, Ravi Shankar Prasad said, wondering if the top leadership of the opposition party merely responded in a perfunctory manner in the wake of the attack. Former Jammu and Kashmir Congress president Saifuddin Soz, he said, has criticised India's decision to put the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance as the river is Pakistan's lifeline. The BJP leader added that Soz has asked the Indian government to take into Pakistan's official claim that it was not involved in the attack.

Siddaramaiah has expressed his opposition to a war with Pakistan and subsequently, clarified that it should be pursued only as a last resort. When the world is with India after the terror strike, be it the United States, France or Saudi Arabia, these leaders are making such shameless and irresponsible remarks, Prasad said, reiterating PM Narendra Modi's assertion that the perpetrators of the Pahalgam attack and those who conspired with them will be pursued to the end of the world and subjected to the harshest punishment.

This is the height of insensitivity, he said, adding that the likes of Wadettiwar and Timmapur too have also questioned the account of some of the victims that the terrorists had identified non-Muslims before shooting them dead.

Wadettiwar had asked if the terrorists had time to ask the victims about their religion, a view also shared by Timmapur. A few days ago, Vadra alleged that Muslims are being targeted by the government, promoting its Hindutva ideology, as he hinted at links between terror activities and anger in a society. Prasad said when the country should speak in one voice, many Congress leaders are making such irresponsible statements.

Noting that he was the BJP's chief spokesperson during the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack in 2008, when the Congress-led UPA was in power, Prasad said he was instructed by his leadership to affirm the party's support to the government headed by then PM Manmohan Singh.

Government ensure no lapses in upcoming NEET-UG exam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Ministry of Education is holding a series of meetings with district magistrates and superintendents of police from all states and Union territories to ensure there are no lapses in the upcoming medical entrance exam NEET-UG, sources said on Monday.

The May 4 exam will be conducted in more than 550 cities at over 5,000 centres across the country. The Ministry has been working on a "fool-proof" plan after the last year's exam was blistered by irregularities, including paper leaks.

"To ensure smooth, fair and secure conduct of NEET-UG, a series of meetings have been held with DMs and SPs of all states and UTs. The district-level coordination committees are being fully activated to manage logistics, security and crisis response," a source said to media.

"There will be multi-layered frisking by district police in addition to NTA-designated security at the centres. The transport of confidential materials like question papers and OMR sheets will be under full police escort. Coaching centres and digital platforms will be monitored to prevent organised cheating networks," the source added. Duty Magistrates are being deployed for mandatory inspection of all examination centres, while there will be personal visits by DMs and SPs to exam centres to assess preparedness.

Under scrutiny over last year's irregularities in NEET-UG and PhD entrance NET, the Centre had last year set up a panel to ensure "transparent, smooth and fair" conduct of exams by the National Testing Agency, or NTA.

Last year, the UGC-NET (University Grants Commission - National Eligibility Test) was cancelled as the ministry received input that its integrity had been compromised. Both matters are being investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Two other exams — CSIR-UGC NET, NEET-PG — were cancelled at the last moment as a preemptive step.

This year, more than 23 lakh candidates are expected to appear for the exam which determines whether they will it to a medical college in the country.

The NTA had on Saturday a opened a platform to report suspicious claims regarding NEET-UG.

Jammu and Kashmir Assembly condemns Pahalgam attack

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

Lashing out at the neighboring country for not understanding that it has once again 'murdered humanity' by launching a strike on the tourists, holidaying in Pahalgam, the President of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, Farooq Abdullah, has demanded 'stern' action against Pakistan to prevent similar attacks in the future.

On the other hand, the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly unanimously passed a resolution on Monday condemning the heinous, cowardly act that resulted in the loss of 26 innocent lives in Pahalgam on April 22.

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also sent out a message of condemnation of the Pahalgam massacre and said that people across J&K are holding protests against the ghastly terror attack that claimed 26 lives on April 22.

Referring to his previous stand on holding a dialogue with Pakistan, Abdullah Monday told reporters outside the J&K Assembly, "I used to favour dialogue with Pakistan every time.

"How will we answer those who lost their loved ones? Are we doing justice? Not Balakot, today the nation wants such action to be taken so that these kinds of attacks never happen". Abdullah strongly criticised Pakistan's actions, stating that they have "murdered humanity" and should not expect India to compromise on its principles.

Targeting Pakistan further, the JKNC Chief emphasised India's unity, rejecting the two-nation theory and asserting that Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians are all one. He assured that India will give a befitting reply to those responsible for the attack.

"We regret that our neighbour today also does not understand that it has murdered humanity. If they think that we will go with Pakistan by doing this, we should clear their misunderstanding. We did not go with them in 1947, so why will we go today? We threw the two-nation theory into the water at that time.

Today, we are also not ready to accept the two-nation theory. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Christian, we are all one. We will give a befitting reply to them," Farooq Abdullah said.

Meanwhile, the resolution, moved by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary during a special session of the Assembly, was passed by voice vote. At the beginning of the session, House members observed a two-minute silence to pay homage to the 26 people killed in the tragedy last week.

Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather condemned the killing of innocent tourists from various parts of the country.

"We pay homage to the victims and extend our condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones," he said.

"The Legislative Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir reaffirms its unwavering commitment to foster an environment of peace, development, and inclusive prosperity for all its citizens, and to resolutely defeat the nefarious designs of those who seek to disturb the communal harmony and progress of the nation and of Jammu and Kashmir," the resolution stated. Concluding a discussion on the resolution, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who also holds the tourism portfolio, condemned the Pahalgam terror attack and admitted that he had failed in his responsibility of ensuring a safe return for tourists. "None of us supports this. It has hollowed us from within. In 26 years, this is the first time I've seen people come out of their homes like this. From Kathua to Kupwara, there is hardly any town or village where people have not come out of their homes to condemn this attack," he said.

President of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference Farooq Abdullah PIONEER PHOTO

He added that an attack of such a large scale has been carried out after 21 years in Baisaran. "I did not know how to apologise to the families of the deceased... Being the host, I was responsible for sending the tourists back safely.

I couldn't do it. I do not have the words to seek an apology," the Chief Minister added. Among the 26 people who lost their lives was a young Navy officer, Lieutenant Vinay Narwal, who got married on April 16, just six days before the attack. His wife, Himanshi, stood beside his tricolour-draped coffin to bid him a final goodbye after his mortal remains arrived in Delhi.

Omar Abdullah, while mentioning the Navy officer's wife during his speech, said, "What should I tell the widow of the Navy officer who had got married just a few days ago? I have no words to console her. Many family members of the victims asked me what their crime was. I had no answer."

Further, he remembered the pony rider Syed Adil Hussain Shah, who died trying to save the tourists during the attack.

He was the only local and only Muslim who died in the dastardly attack in which terrorists singled out men, asked for their religious identity and shot dead Hindus. "Adil, without bothering about his life, saved many tourists. He laid down his life. Instead of fleeing, he decided to save them," Omar Abdullah said.

The Chief Minister further said that he would not use the situation in Pahalgam to demand statehood or Jammu and Kashmir from the central government.

"I won't demand statehood on the dead bodies. We will demand statehood on some other occasion," he said while speaking in the Assembly.

"My brand of politics is not so cheap that I would demand statehood at the cost of 26 lives," he said, asserting that politics must have its limits, especially when human lives are involved.

Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly, Sunil Sharma, said the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, will not remain silent and will give a befitting reply to the deadly Pahalgam attack.

He also said that every single word in this special session of the House is being scrutinised as the eyes of the whole country are on us.

Addressing the Assembly, Sharma said Pakistan has been trying to keep its narrative alive through some miscreants, but the people after 35 years have given a strong reply by staying united and sending a message to the world that no ploys can divide them.

400 jobless Bengal school employees demand Mamata's intervention

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kolkata

Over 400 people, among the 25,753 teaching and non-teaching staff rendered jobless following the Supreme Court order on April 3, on Monday blocked the Hazra Crossing in south Kolkata demanding an audience with West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Traffic came to a standstill for nearly an hour along the busy Asutosh Mukherjee Road-Hazra Road crossing as protesters voiced their anger at being labelled "tainted" despite qualifying in the 2016 WBSSC Recruitment Test. They demanded to be reinstated or at least allowed to work until December 31, following the court's directive that allowed some teachers to continue temporarily.

As police tried to stop them from moving towards the CM's official residence in Kalighat area, around one km away, the protesters scuffled with police and squatted in the middle of the road.

Some of them were forced to board waiting police vehicles, while others were persuaded to move to the side of road.

United Teaching and Non-Teaching Forum members, sit on the road after police stopped them marching towards WB CM Mamata Banerjee's residence in Kolkata on Monday PTI

One protester, a woman lying in the middle of the road, refused to budge even after a senior police officer folded his hands and pleaded with her to move aside.

Another protester, holding up a photo of her OMR sheet, accused the SSC of playing a "divisive game" by excluding her name from the list of "not specifically tainted" candidates submitted to the district inspector of schools in Cooch Behar.

"We are facing social humiliation despite clearing the SSC exams fairly before 2016," said one teacher, who did not want to be named.

"If the Supreme Court itself said it couldn't distinguish between tainted and untainted candidates due to the corruption in the recruitment process, why is the state government isolating us?"

Bipul Jana, a former non-teaching staff member from a South 24 Parganas school, added, "While the SSC has sent lists of untainted teachers to respective DI offices in every region, no thought has been spared for the Group C and D staff. We earned our jobs in a fair way in 2016, but we are staring at an uncertain future because of the large-scale irregularities committed by a section of the ruling party and government officials at that time."

He also criticised the Chief Minister's announcement of a temporary allowance, saying, "The ₹25,000 monthly allowance for Group C and ₹20,000 for Group D employees until December 31 is simply not enough."

The blockade, organised by the United Teaching and Non-Teaching Employees Forum, lasted around 40 minutes before police managed to clear the area.

The Supreme Court has scrapped the entire 2016 WBSSC recruitment panel, resulting in 25,753 teachers and non-teaching staff losing their jobs.

The court later allowed "untainted" teachers to continue until December 31, but this relief was not extended to Group C and Group D staff.

MP MLAs to receive Apple iPads

GIRISH SHARMA ■ Bhopal

In a significant move towards modernizing legislative functioning, all 230 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in Madhya Pradesh will soon be provided with Apple iPads under the ambitious e-Vidhan initiative.

The process of completing formalities is in its final stage, with a unanimous consensus reached among all members.

Official sources said that three meetings in this regard have been convened in this regard in past two months. In the meetings, members emphasised the necessity of equipping legislators with secure and efficient devices, considering the evolving demands of legislative and constituency work and the critical need for robust data protection.

The consensus to provide Apple iPads — known for their high security standards and performance — reflects a broader national trend where several state assemblies have opted for Apple devices for their legislators.

The National Informatics Centre (NIC) will play a pivotal role in finalising the distribution process.

Once deployed, the e-Vidhan system will enable MLAs to access legislative documents, reference materials, and constituency data digitally, thereby enhancing legislative functioning and reducing dependency on paper-based processes.

Principal Secretary of the Madhya Pradesh Assembly, AP Singh, told *The Pioneer* that the process of laying lines has begun within the State Assembly premises.

The Public Works Department (PWD) of Madhya Pradesh is overseeing the execution of this work, while the procurement of iPads has been entrusted to the National Informatics Centre (NIC).

He informed that the cost of procuring the iPads will be shared between the Central and State Governments, with the Centre bearing 60 percent and the Madhya Pradesh Government covering the remaining 40 percent.

This approach is consistent with the Centre's push to promote digital governance under the broader framework of Digital India.

Notably, the move towards digitisation had been initiated earlier. On March 1, 2023, while presenting the State Budget for the fiscal year 2023–24, Finance Minister Jagdish Devda had earmarked ₹5 lakh per legislator for setting up e-office infrastructure.

The provision was made under the Madhya Pradesh Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2005, signaling a long-term vision to reduce physical paperwork and enhance administrative efficiency.

Once the e-Vidhan system is operational, Madhya Pradesh will join the league of 19 other Indian states that have already implemented similar initiatives.

The platform is expected to not only make Assembly proceedings more transparent and efficient but also significantly cut costs — saving crores of rupees annually that are currently spent on printing and distributing legislative documents.

Assembly Principal Secretary AP Singh expressed optimism that the distribution of iPads would be completed soon with NIC's assistance.

He further highlighted that moving to a fully digital platform will allow members to access all legislative material with just a click, facilitate real-time referencing during debates and foster inter-state innovation exchange by connecting all Assemblies through a unified digital system.

Kharge slams PM Modi for skipping Pahalgam terror meet

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge with party leader and former Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot during a rally in Jaipur PTI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Jaipur

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi for skipping the all-party meeting called to discuss the Pahalgam terror attack that left 26 people dead.

"It is the misfortune of the country that when the pride of the country was hurt, you (PM Modi) were giving an election speech in Bihar," he said addressing the 'Samvidhan Bachao' rally here.

"Leaders of all parties attended the all-party meeting, but it is sad that PM Modi did not come to that meeting. Was Bihar far away?

"The PM should have come to the all-party meeting and explained the plan. What help does he need from us?" he said. Further attacking the Prime Minister, he said, "Modi gave inflation and unemployment.

Such people weaken the country. The 56-inch chest has shrinked."

In the run up to the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, Modi had said that it takes a 56-inch chest to convert Uttar Pradesh into Gujarat in terms of development. Kharge said Congress leaders had decided that it will support the government in its action as the country is supreme.

"Country is supreme, then come parties, religion. Everyone should be united for country," he said.

He said the Congress talks about unity but the BJP talks of breaking it.

"In this country, the Constitution is supreme and our democracy runs under the Constitution," he said.

Attacking the government over alleged misuse of investigative agencies and raids on Congress leaders, he said, "Whenever Congress grows, these people try to suppress it. We are not the ones to be suppressed."

He alleged that BJP leaders are trying to weaken everyone but they cannot weaken democracy by filing "false" cases against people.

Encroachments on India-Nepal border removed

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Lucknow

In a determined move to safeguard national security and preserve government land holdings, the Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government has initiated a robust campaign to remove illegal encroachments and shut down unauthorised madrasas operating within close proximity to the India-Nepal international border.

A special operation conducted between April 25 and April 27 witnessed significant action across several border districts, where longstanding illegal occupations and unrecognised religious establishments had proliferated.

In Bahraich district, a comprehensive survey in Nanpara tehsil — covering the critical 0 to 10-kilometre stretch along the international boundary — identified 227 instances of unauthorised encroachment on government land.

Prior to the special operation, 63 illegal structures had already been dismantled. During the three-day drive, authorities succeeded in removing an additional 26 encroachments. Consequently, government land occupied by a total of 89 illegal settlers has now been reclaimed.

Notably, officials reported that none of the sites cleared during this phase involved madrasas or educational structures, offering a degree of administrative relief. The district of Shravasti saw a focused effort to curb the operation of unrecognised madrasas. In Jamunha tehsil, seven madrasas, and in Bhinga tehsil, ten madrasas were found operating without requisite documentation and official sanction. As a result, all 17 institutions were ordered to cease operations immediately. Simultaneously, within a 0 to 15-kilometre radius along the Nepal border, proceedings have been initiated under Section 67 of the Uttar Pradesh Revenue Code in 119 cases involving temporary and permanent illegal encroachments. Investigations in Siddharthnagar district's Naugarh tehsil confirmed the construction of five madrasas and mosques without legal authorisation within the 10-kilometre border zone.

Pursuant to directives from senior administrative authorities, inquiries and subsequent legal actions are underway. In Shohratgarh tehsil, six additional sites of unlawful construction have been identified.

Meanwhile, in Maharajganj district, government land encroachments were detected at three locations in Pharenda tehsil, ten in Nautanwa tehsil and six in Nichlaul tehsil. While one matter remains sub judice, eviction and demolition activities under Section 67(1) of the Revenue Code are actively progressing in all other instances. In Balrampur district, officials have recorded seven cases of illegal occupation — five in Balrampur tehsil and two in Tulsipur tehsil. Following identification, two encroachers voluntarily vacated the premises, while eviction proceedings continue against the remaining individuals. The Uttar Pradesh government has reiterated its uncompromising stance against any form of illegal encroachment or unauthorised madrasa activity within 10 kilometres of the Nepal border.

All district administrations have been instructed to expedite eviction processes, ensure the demolition of unlawful structures, and maintain continuous surveillance along the international boundary to prevent future violations.

SP MP Suman demands Z-category security

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Agra

Samajwadi Party (SP) Rajya Sabha member Ramji Lal Suman has alleged a conspiracy to assassinate him, blaming the state government after his convoy was attacked at the Gabhana toll plaza in Aligarh district.

During the attack, the windows of his vehicle were smashed. The MP later returned safely to Agra under police protection.

Addressing a press conference at his residence in Sanjay Place, Agra, Suman said the attack appeared to be a meticulously planned ambush intended to eliminate him.

"The way the attackers targeted my vehicle clearly shows that my murder is being orchestrated by the government. This was not an accident but a deliberate and deadly conspiracy," he stated.

Suman pointed out that this was not the first attempt on his life. Recalling a previous incident, he said, "On March 26, members of the Karni Sena attacked my residence.

Despite two FIRs being registered in connection with that attack, no arrests have been made till date.

This shows the level of protection the attackers are receiving from the police and the government." He further alleged that on April 12, Karni Sena activists organised a protest at Garhi Rami, openly brandishing swords and firearms.

Samajwadi Party (SP) Rajya Sabha member Ramji Lal Suman FILE PHOTO

"Even during that incident, police and administrative officials chose to turn a blind eye. Their inaction reflects a deliberate strategy to let such elements operate fearlessly under state patronage," he charged.

Warning the government, Suman said, "Today it is an MP under attack. If such incidents continue unchecked, it raises serious questions about the safety of ordinary citizens. Should anything happen to me, the government will be solely responsible."

Following the attack, senior SP leaders rallied behind Suman, strongly condemning the incident and demanding immediate action.

SP district president Shri Krishna Verma and city president Chaudhary Wajid Nisar stated, "In a government where elected representatives are unsafe, the security of the common man becomes a farce."

SP leader Shabbir Abbas demanded that Ramji Lal Suman be provided with Z-category security, citing the repeated threats and attacks on him.

Several other SP members, including MP representative Dharmendra Yadav, Salim Shah, Muin Babu, Rajpal Yadav, Mamta Taploo, Rahul Bharti, Santosh Jatav, Laxmi Dhangar and Diwakar Gurjar, also condemned the attack and expressed solidarity with Suman.

Party leaders have warned of statewide protests if immediate security measures are not taken and the culprits are not apprehended.

Meanwhile, the local police have initiated an investigation into the incident, but no arrests have been reported so far.

Editor's TAKE

Sweltering heat grips northern India

IMD issues advisories as vast swathes of the country brace for even hotter days ahead

As April nears its end, large parts of northern and central India are already in the grip of a blistering heatwave, with temperatures soaring well beyond seasonal norms. Delhi, the national capital, has touched 42°C — an ominous marker considering that the hottest months of May and June still lie ahead.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has sounded a yellow alert for the city, warning that maximum temperatures could touch 43°C in the coming days, a full 3–4 degrees above the usual average for this time of year. This unrelenting heat has not spared other parts of the country either. States across north, central, and eastern India — including Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal — are witnessing an early and intense summer. In parts of Jharkhand, temperatures have already breached the 43°C mark, prompting fresh warnings and health advisories from the IMD. The early arrival of such extreme heat is no longer an anomaly, but rather an indication of broader climatic shift.

Meteorologists have attributed this current spell to a combination of local and global factors. Dry and hot westerly winds continue to sweep across the northern plains, preventing any cloud development and keeping the heat trapped at the surface. A Western Disturbance — an upper air system that usually brings brief relief in the form of rain and cooler winds — is active, but its influence has largely remained confined to the Himalayan region, failing to bring much respite to the plains.

Additionally, global climate patterns such as the El Niño phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean are likely playing a role in distorting India's seasonal cycles. These disruptions are contributing to the growing unpredictability of weather, often resulting in prolonged dry spells, delayed monsoons, or early heatwaves. While temperatures have been climbing steadily, the IMD has made it clear that the coming days will be particularly challenging. The capital region is under a yellow alert, with authorities advising people to avoid stepping out during peak afternoon hours between 11 AM and 3 PM. Precautions such as staying hydrated, using umbrellas or hats, and wearing light, breathable clothing have been strongly recommended. The consequences of such extreme weather go far beyond mere discomfort. Public health experts warn of increased risks of heatstroke, dehydration, and respiratory illnesses.

For vulnerable populations such as the elderly, children, outdoor laborers, and those with pre-existing conditions, the risk is especially high. There are also growing concerns about the strain on infrastructure, particularly in terms of water and electricity. With power demand peaking due to widespread use of fans and air conditioning, there is a very real danger of grid overloads and outages.

Water reservoirs, already under stress in several regions, are likely to see further depletion as evaporation rates surge. Simultaneously, the contrast in regional weather patterns continues to widen. While the north and central parts of the country reel under extreme heat, the northeastern states are bracing for heavy rainfall. The IMD has forecast widespread showers accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning, and strong winds — particularly over Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Tripura.

This rainfall, expected between April 25 and 29, offers a stark reminder of India's increasingly uneven climate patterns — with floods and droughts occurring side by side in different corners of the nation. Further south, states such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and coastal Andhra Pradesh are dealing with a different but equally taxing weather pattern — hot and humid conditions that pose their own set of challenges, particularly for urban populations. This spell of early heat serves as yet another warning about the growing impact of climate change.

Once considered rare, heatwaves are now more frequent, more intense, and longer-lasting. Their consequences — on health, livelihoods, agriculture, and infrastructure — are already being felt and will likely worsen in the absence of strong mitigation and adaptation measures.

As India heads into what could be one of its hottest summers on record, it is clear that the time for reactive measures is over. Urban planning must prioritise heat-resilient infrastructure, public awareness campaigns must be ramped up, and long-term policies addressing climate adaptation need urgent attention.

The sweltering temperatures of April may just be the beginning. What lies ahead could be far more testing.

UCC on the horizon

As the BJP frames the Uniform Civil Code as a step toward national integration and gender justice, critics warn of growing unrest and constitutional challenges ahead

After the controversial passage of the Waqf Bill, the Modi Government plans to implement the equally or even more contentious Uniform Civil Code (UCC) passed last year.

This raises the question of whether it is the right time to push for the UCC amid ongoing protests against the Waqf Bill, which began after the UCC was approved in Parliament last year.

The BJP has released a video recently on the achievements of Modi's first year in his third term and is preparing for the UCC implementation. The video, titled 'Big Moves Under Modi 3.0 — The Journey Has Just Begun...', suggests prioritising the UCC. The video presents it as an important step towards national integration and gender equality.

Despite being proposed and withdrawn twice in 2019 and 2020, the UCC bill was eventually approved by Parliament last year. For the BJP, the UCC is a crucial part of its political agenda, alongside the completion of the Ayodhya temple and the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. The UCC is a complex issue.

It has several angles, such as political, legal, legislative, religious, gender, and Constitutional perspectives. The country witnessed angry agitations even during the passage of the law. Just as the Waqf Act creates unrest, the UCC is bound to trigger nationwide agitations.

It is worth noting that while many countries like France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia have a UCC, others like Kenya, Pakistan, Italy, South Africa, Nigeria, and Greece do not.

Prime Minister Modi defended the implementation of the UCC in Lok Sabha in December last year, stating that the Constituent Assembly, which drafted the Indian Constitution, wanted the Uniform Civil Code to be enacted by an elected Government.

He also highlighted that BR Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Indian Constitution, strongly advocated for a uniform civil code preventing one-sided claims.

The Apex Court also emphasised the need for a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in 1985 to maintain national unity and recommended a single law for all citizens in 1995. In 2019, the Modi Government reaffirmed its commitment to the UCC.

The Court had also declared Triple Talaq unconstitutional, promoting gender justice. Minority groups feel that personal laws are vital to cultural and religious identities, and implementing a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) could infringe on religious freedom under Article 25 of the Constitution. India currently has separate personal laws for various religious communities, including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Parsis, which govern issues like marriage, divorce, and inheritance. The UCC supporters argue for one law for all citizens.

KALYANI SHANKAR

Moreover, experts warn that the UCC could overstep state legislative authority, challenging the principles of cooperative federalism. The Portuguese Civil Code, introduced in the 19th century, is still in effect in Goa and has not been replaced since the state's liberation.

Early this year, Uttarakhand implemented the UCC for the state. Other BJP-ruled states like Assam and Maharashtra want to push it through.

The BJP may want to replicate this in different states.The challenges of implementing the UCC are many.

While supporters argue for a UCC implementation, others caution against it, citing the need to respect religious and cultural diversity. The lack of consensus among political parties presents a formidable challenge. Many opposition parties and even some NDA allies, and some communities like the Muslims, have strongly opposed it. Ensuring effective implementation across the vast and diverse India is formidable, as it requires preparations for administration, infrastructure, resources, and significant public awareness and education about the UCC.Implementing the UCC brings up concerns about religious freedom and cultural identity.

While the Supreme Court upholds the constitutional validity of the Uniform Civil Code, implementing it remains a contentious issue in Indian society and politics. It is a highly sensitive issue in India, with diverse cultures.

Many minority communities are concerned about the potential risks to their religious liberties, highlighting the complexity of the issue.

The Modi Government claims that the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) will secure equal property rights for women, ensuring fair distribution of a deceased person's assets among the spouse, children, and parents. Previously, only mothers inherited the property.

Both parties need to give grounds for divorce. Some communities, like Muslims, are apprehensive that a UCC could undermine this and the protections that the Constitution has provided. Implementing a UCC due to concerns about losing their cultural identity or traditional practices is a key fear. It will be prudent to address the complexities of the implementation before pushing it through, mainly to avoid law and order agitations at the ground level.

There are already demonstrations against the Waqf Bill, and the intention to implement the UCC will only add to the unrest. Therefore, a balanced approach, ensuring the rights of all communities, is the only way forward apart from mobilising a political consensus.

(The writer is a popular columnist. Views are personal)

Leaderspeak

In this war against terrorism, the unity of the country, the solidarity of 140 crore Indians is our biggest strength. We have to strengthen our resolve to face this challenge that has appeared before the country. We have to demonstrate strong willpower as a nation. Today, the world is watching, after this terrorist attack, the whole country is speaking in one voice.

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

Rekindling spirituality in public service

SECOND Opinion

BY KANISHK

Spirituality in public service is a quiet force — a subtle, transformative presence that elevates action beyond duty and policy. It is not dramatic or ceremonial; rather, it is the silent essence that gives meaning to governance. Without it, public service risks becoming mechanical, devoid of soul. With it, even routine work becomes an act of purpose, a service imbued with deeper intent.

At its heart, public service is a commitment to something larger than the self. It seeks to uplift the vulnerable, amplify the voices of the unheard, and bring dignity to the weary. This service calls for more than expertise or efficiency — it requires a vision born from character, moral clarity, and spiritual depth. True public service is not confined to a role or title.

It manifests in the policymaker, the volunteer, the social worker, the diplomat — all united by a common purpose: the greater good. Leadership, in this realm, cannot rely on knowledge alone. Knowledge is inert until shaped by reflection, compassion, and inner values. Spiritual wisdom breathes life into decisions, offering clarity and courage when doubt or fatigue sets in. Without this grounding, even the most brilliant minds may falter — confusion creeps in, cynicism sets root, and leadership loses its compass. Leadership today is often misunderstood as a position of authority, but real leadership stems from authenticity. It is not found in designations but discovered in one's depth of conviction and steadiness of spirit. Authority may be granted by position, but legitimacy is earned through inner alignment. Spiritually grounded leaders do not chase applause — they pursue truth and inspire through vision and integrity. They don't act from ambition, but from an attunement to the pulse of humanity. Such leadership stirs hope, cuts through cynicism, and dissolves indifference.

These leaders don't rebel against tradition for the sake of it; instead, they bring discernment and evolution. Their compass is conscience, not ideology. In moments of crisis, they offer stability. Their ethics are not performance, but an extension of their being. They see not division, but interconnectedness — as if all lives are branches of a single sacred tree. This worldview fosters institutions where dignity becomes a right, not a privilege.

Compassion becomes inclusive, not selective. Governance finds rhythm not in control, but in care. Here, spirituality is not religious dogma but a deep connection to something timeless and meaningful. Today, the world seeks not just knowledge or efficiency, but meaning.

A quiet spiritual awakening is unfolding. This awakening isn't about IQ or even EQ, but a higher dimension — Spiritual Quotient (SQ): the ability to see beyond the immediate, to act with purpose and compassion. Without SQ, institutions crumble under their own weight; fatigue replaces idealism, and burnout overtakes brilliance. When a leader is spiritually aligned, their institutions reflect that purpose. This generates "spiritual capital" — the shared conscience of a community that guides its ethos. When such spiritual clarity guides governance, it becomes more than administration — it becomes dharma in action. The ancient Indian ideal of Ram Rajya embodied this: a just society led by humility, where governance was sacred, and transformation flowed from values, not mandates. Great nations and institutions outlive their founders when their leaders' spiritual fire seeps into collective consciousness.

It becomes legacy, not just memory. This is no idealistic dream — it is rooted in India's own civilisational wisdom. Indian governance was never purely utilitarian. It emerged from Vedantic insight, where action and spirit were inseparable. Chanakya's Yogakshema envisioned a state that nourished holistic well-being, and his Rajrishi — the philosopher-king — was a leader who blended contemplation with action. Colonial rule, however, severed governance from spirituality. Administration became technical, education lost its soul, and systems bred compliance over conscience.

That legacy still lingers in our institutions today. But the spiritual embers remain — and they hold the promise of renewal. From the mystical Nasadiya Sukta to the Bhagavad Gita's call to duty, India's heritage calls us to see leadership as sacred service. Let service be a quiet prayer. Let leadership be a steady flame. Let us rekindle, through stillness, a public life that is once again filled with soul.

(The writer is a Central Government Officer, presently serving in the Ministry of Home Affairs. Views are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Indo-Pak staff is ominous

Madam — While the United Nations and world leaders, including the United States, have condemned the Pahalgam massacre, no nation has actively engaged in mediation talks, treating the matter as a bilateral affair. Meanwhile, in response to India's diplomatic measures and warnings to Pakistan over its alleged role in the incident, Pakistan is scrambling to bolster its operational readiness.

It has launched a three-day air warfare exercise, Zarb-e-Haideri, along its borders, deploying PL-15 Chinese missiles with a range of 200 km for the first time in its southern sector.

Additionally, Pakistan has positioned fifth-generation fighter aircraft such as the J-10, JF-17, and F-15C, capable of striking targets up to 290 km away, along with long-range anti — ship precision missiles to protect the Karachi harbour area.

The situation risks escalating into a standoff reminiscent of 'Operation Parakram' more than two decades ago. Pakistan should know that India is fully prepared to respond firmly to any Pakistani misadventure with anger held in abeyance as added strength hence should resort to diplomatic talks showing evidence of its non involvement in the massacre and help India in destroying terrorism jointly to diffuse the situation.

RS NARULA | PATIALA

International Dance Day

Madam — April 29 is the "International Dance Day" celebrated annually all over the world. The International Theatre Institute, ITI has established the day in 1982 and recognised by UNESCO to highlight the amazing diversity and talent of dancers all over the globe. April 29 marks the birth anniversary of renowned dancer Jean Georges Noverre.

Evidence of dance has been found dating back 9000 years and it has been growing fast into a worldwide phenomenon. This day provides an annual opportunity to unite dancers and enthusiasts in the joy of movement. Dance transcends cultural boundaries and connects people across the globe. It's a day to honour the beauty, passion, and expression that dance brings to our lives. Dance is healthy for the body, mind, heart, and soul and has been established as a form of happiness in many people's lives. Dance is an outlet of expression and communication of emotion, it helps in releasing powerful feelings into the environment to feel less overwhelmed.

One of the key aims of this day is to persuade governments and political bodies to recognise the importance of dance and remove obstacles to participation. Let's organise a professional dance performance, recognise the popular dancers, promote dance form in educational institutions, seek government support, financial help to dancers and dance trainers, erase the stigma about any form of dance, and exhibit the cultural importance of dance.

DR B MADHUSUDHAN REDDY | KARIMNAGAR

Houses of alleged terrorists demolished

Madam — Authorities here have demolished the houses of three alleged active terrorists in Bandipora, Pulwama and Shopian districts of Jammu and Kashmir as security forces continued their crackdown on the terror ecosystem following the Pahalgam terror attack.With this, nine houses of suspected terrorists and overground workers of terror outfits have been razed so far since the April 22 attack in the lush meadows of Baisaran that killed 26 people and left the nation grief-stricken and fuming.

As part of the anti-terror crackdown, that picked up more steam after the Pahalgam tragedy, security forces have raided more than 500 locations in the Valley in just five days and grilled hundreds of suspects. Political parties have urged the Centre to ensure that innocent people are not targeted while it goes after terrorists. Following the Pahalgam terror attack, Prime Minister Narendra Modi pledged to hunt down the killers "to the ends of the earth" as his government linked the dastardly attack to Pakistan. Since then New Delhi has announced a raft of retaliatory steps, including the cancellation of visas and suspension of the 1960s Indus Water Treaty, and Islamabad hitting back with a string of tit-for-tat measures, that included putting the 1972 Shimla Agreement in abeyance.Pakistan has warned that if India actually goes through with diverting or blocking the Indus water flow, Islamabad would see it as an "act of war".

BHAGWAN THADANI I MUMBAI

TEACH PAKISTAN A LESSON BUT WITH CAUTION

The content of the article, ' No Indus water to Pak..' (284-25), though carries some emotional touch, will be endorsed by many. It is true, Pandit Nehru was gentle enough and stood firm on international norms, a humane approach and tried to live up to the theory of Love thy Neighbour. The recipient not reciprocating the best of sentiments and gestures demonstrated by the Indus Water Treaty is a fallout of the misplaced priority of focusing more on communal agenda than on developing the country. India has waited enough and suspension of the treaty should sensitise the ruling dispensation to shun its communal agenda and focus on peoples' welfare besides establishing peace with all. Pakistan is falling in debt trap besides living with the menace of terrorism. All these make clear that the leadership in Pakistan is not prepared to change its course. India's decision to deprive Indus water, which is a lifeline for Pakistan, suits the situation of this day. However, it is to be kept in mind that there is possibility of our action becoming a precedent that turns against as we have China on the other side with a major river flowing through its soil into India. Basic fact Pakistan needs to understand is that it has wasted decades in pursuing communal agenda in the process of which it has lagged far behind India in every aspect, besides living with the pains inflicted by terrorism.

In spite of attacks and constant irritants from Pakistan India is growing in many spheres whereas Pakistan is sinking under debt and lack of development, which should open its eyes. Using hate towards India to make its failures and misdeeds may work for sometime but not for all the time. It should remember the poetic justice which says 'those who take sword will perish by sword'. It is also time for the Union government to spare some time and energy to settle all the disputes over sharing of water among the States, keeping all political considerations aside.

AG RAJMOHAN I ANANTPUR

Please send your letter to the letterstopioneer@gmail.com. In not more than 400 words. We appreciate your feedback.

India's grand rewrite of communication order

The WAVES summit will drive the country's creative economy through intellectual property creation and develop its M&E infrastructure. It will also help build the industry's capacity to create a skilled workforce for global needs

FIRST Column

As the final countdown to the WAVES Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit draws near, the moot question remains: how will the global communication ecosystem respond to the vision, challenges, and opportunities unleashed by the four-day summit in Mumbai from 1 May?

More than just another gathering, WAVES is a seismic shift. It promises to reorient the way we understand, design, and deliver the future of media and entertainment (M&E). With an architecture built around inclusivity, imagination, and integrated diplomacy, the summit is poised to be a landmark "Communication Moment" for the world.

Through its immersive curation of threads, themes, ideas, and tools, WAVES will redraw the boundaries of what M&E can mean in an era marked by disruption and reinvention.

At the heart of this transformation lies a compelling proposition: that the summit is not merely about showcasing creativity — it is about systematising it. The real takeaway from WAVES 2025 is not just the exchange of ideas, but the articulation of a futuristic communication order — one that interweaves Commerce, Creativity, Content, and Culture into a coherent, collaborative, and globally relevant vision.

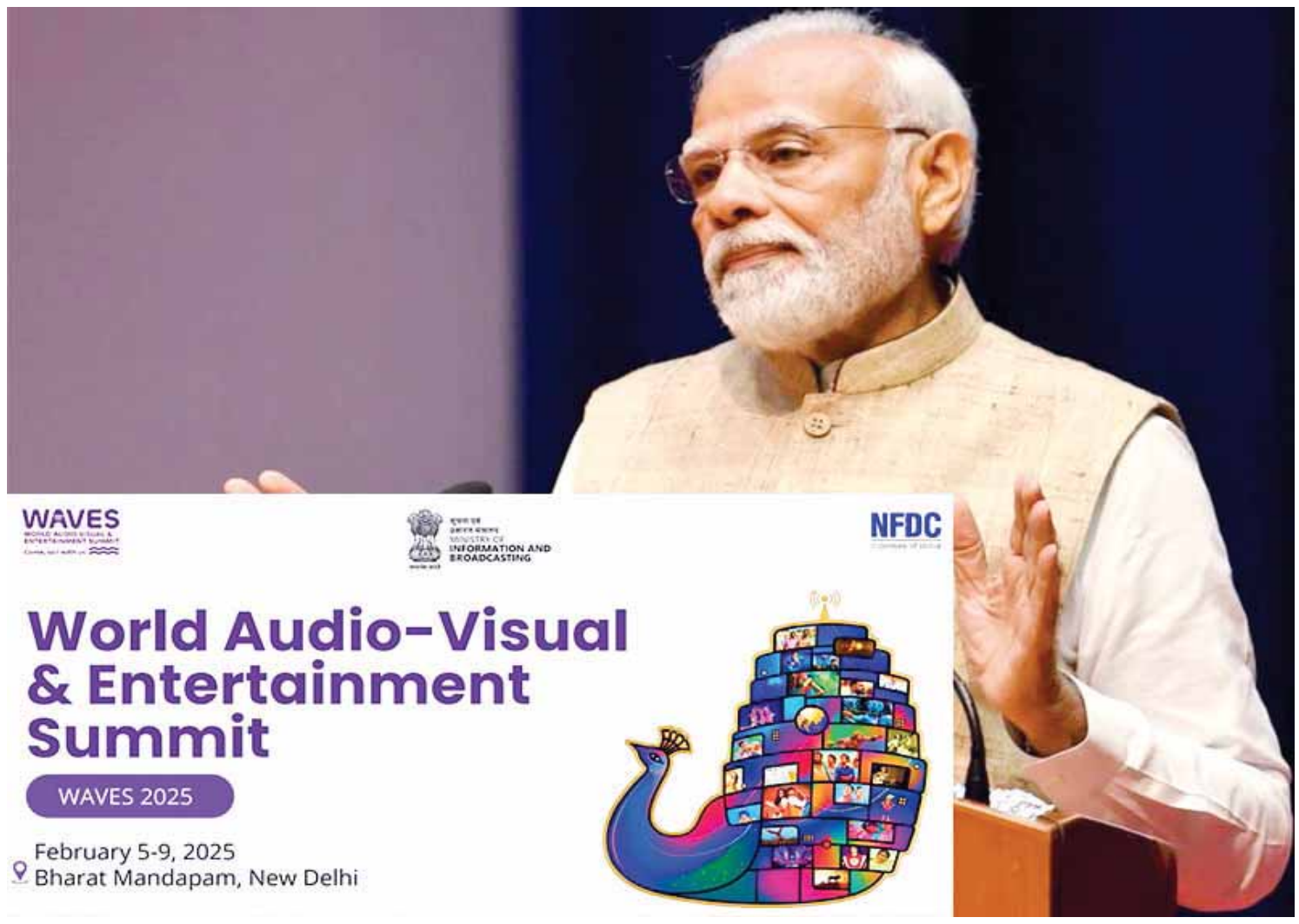
From the outset, WAVES has been propelled by an unflinching commitment to innovation and ideation. As the inaugural edition, it places "Communication First" not just as a slogan but as an organising principle. For perhaps the first time, a summit in the M&E space has been imagined as a "Communication Mahakumbh", where continuity meets disruption, and heritage is re-engineered through innovation.

The four identified pillars of WAVES — Broadcast & Infotainment, AVGC-XR, Digital Media, and Films — each distinct in their scope, nevertheless converge powerfully in intent and deliverables. Together, they represent a conscious synthesis of old and new, traditional mediums and emerging technologies, global ambitions and local identities.

What sets WAVES apart is its ability to harmonise these forces into a dynamic, composite framework. In doing so, it sketches the contours of a new communication order — one led by India, but built for the world. The catalytic force behind this vision has been the launch of Create in India: Season I, an initiative that has electrified the industry with its participatory energy and collaborative ethos.

It has thrown open the doors to storytellers, technologists, investors, and policymakers, crafting a rich ecosystem of engagement that mirrors the complexity of the M&E sector itself.

The themes and templates curated under this banner are refreshingly forward — looking. They tackle not just today's industry pain points but anticipate tomorrow's cultural, economic, and technological shifts. From decentralisation of narratives and platform-neutral storytelling to immersive formats and multilingual access, WAVES has laid down a clear thesis: the future belongs to those who dare to reimagine.



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

In doing so, it positions India as the Content Hub of the World, a nation not just exporting stories, but shaping the very grammar of global storytelling. The commercial vision that undergirds this ambition is bold and aspirational, showcasing India's intent to lead not only through scale, but through thought leadership.

WAVES 2025 emerges at a moment when the "Creator Economy" is reshaping global production — consumption cycles. Here, India is not a passive participant but a proactive architect; fusing its demographic dividend, cultural wealth, and technological prowess into an unbeatable formula for soft power.

> THE FOUR IDENTIFIED PILLARS OF WAVES — BROADCAST & INFOTAINMENT, AVGC-XR, DIGITAL MEDIA, AND FILMS EACH DISTINCT IN THEIR SCOPE, NEVERTHELESS CONVERGE POWERFULLY IN INTENT AND DELIVERABLES.

WAVES is the conduit through which this soft power is being systematised, internationalised, and strategically leveraged.

It is not just a summit. It is a signal — a signal that India is ready to anchor the future of M&E diplomacy through stories, ideas, and innovations that resonate across borders.

The kinetic current of visibility, opportunity, collaboration, and growth generated by WAVES is designed to have a lasting ripple effect, influencing how future summits around the world are conceived, especially in terms of fostering international tie — ups, cinematic synergies, and media-tech alliances.

At its core, WAVES is a think tank in motion — where storytelling meets strategy, policy meets participation, and art meets action. By blurring the lines between entertainment and engagement, it reminds the world that M&E is no longer a sideshow to diplomacy. It is diplomacy. In an increasingly multipolar world, cultural influence is power. And the medium through which that power is asserted is communication — fluid, visual, participatory.

Through M&E, nations now shape perceptions, steer conversations, and signal intent. WAVES situates India's M&E industry squarely within this strategic frame, projecting it as a potent tool of statecraft and global engagement. The brilliance of WAVES lies in its refusal to chase uniformity. It understands that the future of M&E is not about amplifying one dominant voice but about curating a chorus of perspectives.

As the world negotiates climate shifts, social transformations, digital disruptions, and identity politics, storytelling must evolve — from monologue to mosaic.

India, with its plurality of languages, genres, and formats, offers a compelling framework for this evolution. WAVES is a celebration of that plurality. It is a staging ground for narratives that are rooted in tradition but responsive to the future – narratives that can travel far, yet stay authentic. In a time where content is everywhere, WAVES is a reminder that context is king.

And in this context, India leads not just as a creator, but as a curator of meaning in a fragmented world. To conclude, one of the key objectives of the summit is to have global M&E leaders invest in India.

A lot of hard work and thought has gone into WAVES and officials are upbeat about its success. Sanjay Jaju, Secretary, I&B Ministry, said WAVES would be the first-ever global summit covering the entire gamut of the M&E industry.

The most promising aspect of WAVES is the interest it has generated across the globe. The international outreach of the summit is evident by a line-up that boasts Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen, YouTube CEO Neal Mohan, Instagram Head Adam Mosseri, Netflix CEO Ted Sarandos, marketing agency WPP's CEO Mark Read, Spotify's Chief Public Affairs Officer Dustee Jenkins, and NVIDIA's Vice President Richard Kerris — all of them will be part of the programming roster.

The Ministry hopes that the summit will promote India as a "one-stop destination" for content creation, drive the country's creative economy through intellectual property creation and develop its M&E infrastructure, as also build the industry's capacity to create a skilled workforce for global needs.

(The writer is a former civil servant and writes on cinema and strategic communication. Inputs provided by Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavie Srinivasan. Views are personal)

Why a new linguistic survey is crucial for cooperative India

A comprehensive linguistic survey is not just about collecting data; it is a transformative step toward building inclusive cooperative frameworks that truly reflect the voices of every Indian

In the land where the echoes of countless languages have woven a timeless cultural tapestry, India stands as a testament to resilience and diversity. Our linguistic heritage has not only shaped our folklore and traditions but also nurtured the roots of cooperative living.

From the ancient guilds of traders and craftsmen to the community — driven farming practices of our villages, collaboration has always been the essence of our economic framework. However, as we move towards the ambitious goal of Viksit Bharat @2047, it is alarming that we are yet to fully understand the linguistic landscape that underpins the cooperative spirit of this nation.

A comprehensive linguistic survey is not a luxury — it is a necessity. It is the compass that will guide policymakers to ensure that cooperative reforms are inclusive and effective.

Without accurate data on the languages spoken across regions, our policy interventions remain shallow, and our efforts to strengthen the cooperative economic framework risk becoming fragmented.

The Government's vision of the PACS-to-APEX approach — empowering primary agricultural credit societies to function cohesively with apex institutions — cannot materialise without understanding the linguistic and cultural nuances of local communities. Physiological density data and linguistic insights will ensure that financial services, credit schemes, and agricultural innovations reach the last mile.

Ironically, the most extensive linguistic survey of India was conducted not for the welfare of its people but for colonial administrative control.

The Linguistic Survey of India, initiated by Sir George Grierson during the British era between 1898 and 1928, documented Indian languages primarily to serve the colonial interest of consolidating power. The British viewed linguistic diversity as a tool to deepen divisions and enforce policies of divide and rule.

This colonial baggage still weighs heavily on our administrative systems. Despite over seven decades of independence, we have done little to refine or update this foundational linguistic knowledge.

Adding to this disparity is the fact that, while the private sector has astutely recognised the importance of linguistic insights, development practitioners and policymakers often lag. Rural marketing practitioners in corporate houses possess extensive data on regional languages, dialects, and consumer behaviour.

Using this intelligence, they successfully penetrate rural markets, build brand loyalty, and tailor communication strategies that resonate with local communities.

BINOD ANAND

In stark contrast, Government initiatives aimed at development and economic upliftment continue to operate with outdated linguistic data or delegate language considerations entirely to state Governments.

The result is a fragmented approach that fails to execute cooperative economic frameworks effectively. Consider this: a rural marketing executive knows precisely how to communicate with farmers in their dialect to sell fertilisers or machinery, but a Government financial literacy campaign in the same village may miss its mark simply because it is not available in the local language. This gap in understanding not only undermines the potential of Government schemes like PM-KISAN and FPOs (Farmer Producer Organisations) but also impedes the inclusive growth of cooperatives.

> GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES AIMED AT DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC UPLIFTMENT CONTINUE TO OPERATE WITH OUTDATED LINGUISTIC DATA OR DELEGATE LANGUAGE CONSIDERATIONS ENTIRELY TO STATE GOVERNMENTS

By conducting a fresh linguistic survey, policymakers can bridge this knowledge gap, making public-sector interventions as impactful and relatable as their private-sector counterparts.

A renewed linguistic survey will empower cooperatives to function as truly participatory institutions. It will facilitate the creation of multilingual financial literacy programmes, region — specific agricultural advisories, and cooperative training modules.

Further, the promotion of Indigenous languages will encourage knowledge sharing of traditional farming techniques, watershed management practices, and sustainable agriculture. With more accurate linguistic and physiological density data, policymakers can design hyper-localised interventions that cater to each region's unique challenges.

Moreover, respecting linguistic diversity fosters social cohesion and national unity.

By acknowledging and celebrating our people's rich linguistic heritage, we send a powerful message that every voice matters. The cooperative economic framework, founded on the principles of collective growth and mutual benefit, can only thrive when communication barriers are dismantled.

To achieve Viksit Bharat @2047, we must acknowledge that economic empowerment is incomplete without linguistic inclusion. Every cooperative, from the grassroots PACS to the apex-level institutions, must reflect the diverse voices of its members.

It is time for policymakers to embrace the richness of India's linguistic heritage and weave it into the fabric of cooperative governance. Only then can we build an equitable economic framework that uplifts every community, leaving no one behind. The call for a linguistic survey is not just a call for data — it is a call to honour the soul of our nation.

To realise the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047, India must prioritise linguistic inclusion as a cornerstone of cooperative growth. Our diverse languages are more than cultural artefacts — they are vital tools for empowerment, communication, and social cohesion.

Without updated and comprehensive linguistic data, policy interventions risk alienating the very communities they aim to support.

A new linguistic survey will bridge the gap between Government initiatives and grassroots realities, enabling cooperatives to function with greater participation, relevance, and impact.

It will foster multilingual literacy programmes, amplify Indigenous knowledge systems, and ensure that no voice is left unheard. As private enterprises leverage language to drive market success, so too must policymakers harness it for national development.

Recognising the role of language is not merely about effective governance — it is about honouring India's pluralism and building an inclusive, equitable economy. The time to act is now; the call for a linguistic survey is a call to unify and uplift.

(The writer is member of the PM MSP Committee and Agricultural Reforms. Views are personal)

Death toll in Iran port explosion reaches 46

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

The death toll from a huge explosion that rocked one of Iran's main ports rose Monday to 46 people killed, authorities said.

Iranian State television offered the toll from the blast at Shahid Rajaei port near Bandar Abbas, citing local officials.

A fire still burned at the site, some two days after the initial explosion Saturday, just as Iran began a third round of negotiations with the United States over its rapidly advancing nuclear program. Over 1,000 people suffered injuries in the blast.

Authorities still haven't offered an explanation for the explosion.

Private security firm Ambrey says the port received missile fuel chemical in March. It was part of a shipment of ammonium perchlorate from China by two vessels to Iran, first reported in January by the Financial Times. The chemical used to make solid propellant for rockets was going to be used to replenish Iran's missile stocks, which had been depleted by its direct attacks on Israel during the war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The Iranian military denied receiving the chemical shipment. Social media footage of the explosion saw reddish-hued smoke rising from the fire just before the detonation.

That suggests a chemical compound being involved in the blast, like in the 2020 Beirut port explosion.

New York protests against the Pahalgam attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York

Members of the Indian diaspora gathered outside the Pakistan Consulate and at Times Square here to protest against the Pahalgam terror attacks.

The protestors waved the Indian tricolour and held banners that read 'Declare Islamic Republic of Pakistan a Terrorist State — Pahalgam Hindu massacre'.

They also held a long banner that had the photos of the 26 victims of the terror attack, with the caption 'CNN, NBC, NYT, WAPO, UN - Please share their names, show their faces' along with the hashtag 'Hindu Lives Matter', 'End Terrorism Now', 'Islamic Terroir - End Today', ' Enough is Enough'.

The protests were held on April 27 and an interfaith-vigil against Jihadist terror was also held outside the Pakistani Consulate in New York, where members from diaspora communities waved the Indian and Israeli flags, jointly condemning terrorism and calling on the world to send a strong message to collectively combat terrorism.

A Hindu priest chanted prayers of peace for the victims of the attack and community members at the vigil held a one minute silence to pay their respects to those killed and injured in the Pahalgam attack.

In a post on X The Consulate General of India shared the photos from the protest and said "Condolences and Protest at Times Square, NY."

The protestors waved the Indian tricolour and held banners that read 'Declare Islamic Republic of Pakistan a Terrorist State - Pahalgam Hindu massacre'

"A large number of Indian community members and friends of India gathered at Times Square to express their deep sorrow and condemnation over the terrorist attack in Pahalgam. The gathering paid tribute to the victims, and extended condolences to their families," the post said.

In another post, the Indian Consulate said "The Dawoodi Bohra community in Queens, New York, held a heartfelt prayer meeting in solidarity with the victims of the tragic Pahalgam Terror Attack in Jammu and Kashmir."

The April 22 terror attack in Pahalgam killed 25 Indians and one Nepali citizen. The victims were mostly tourists from all across India.

Following the terror attack, India highlighted "the cross-border linkages of the terrorist attack" and announced a slew of measures including putting the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 in "abeyance with immediate effect", until Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that India will identify, track and punish every terrorist, their handlers and their backers.

"We will pursue them to the ends of the earth. India's spirit will never be broken by terrorism. Terrorism will not go unpunished," he said.

Messages of solidarity and support for India continued to flow from global leaders.

FBI Director Kash Patel said in a post on X that the agency sends its condolences to all the victims of the recent terrorist attack in Kashmir — and will continue offering our full support to the Indian Government.

"This is a reminder of the constant threats our world faces from the evils of terrorism. Pray for those affected.

Thank you to the men and women of law enforcement who answer the call in moments like these," FBI Director Kash Patel said.

US airstrike kills 68 African migrants: Houthi rebels

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

Yemen's Houthi rebels on Monday alleged a US airstrike hit a prison holding African migrants, killing at least 68 people and wounding 47 others. The US military had no immediate comment. The strike in Yemen's Saada governorate, a stronghold for the Houthis, is the latest incident in the country's decadelong war to kill African migrants from Ethiopia and other nations who risk crossing the nation for a chance to work in neighbouring Saudi Arabia.

It also likely will renew questions from activists about the American campaign, known as "Operation Rough Rider," which has been targeting the rebels as the Trump administration negotiates with their main benefactor, Iran, over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program.

The US military's Central Command, in a statement early Monday before news of the alleged strike broke, sought to defend its policy of offering no specific details of its extensive airstrike campaign. The strikes have drawn controversy in America over Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's use of the unclassified Signal messaging app to post sensitive details about the attacks.

"To preserve operational security, we have intentionally limited disclosing details of our ongoing or future operations," Central Command said. "We are very deliberate in our operational approach, but will not reveal specifics about what we've done or what we will do."

It did not immediately respond to questions from The Associated Press about the alleged strike in Saada.

Graphic footage aired by the Houthis' al-Masirah satellite news channel showed what appeared to be dead bodies and others wounded at the site. The Houthi-run Interior Ministry said some 115 migrants had been detained at the site. The rebels' Civil Defense organisation said at least 68 people had been killed and 47 others wounded in the attack.

Footage from the site analysed by the AP suggested some kind of explosion took place there, with its cement walls seemingly peppered by debris fragments and the wounds suffered by those there.

A woman's voice, soft in the footage, can be heard repeating the start of a prayer in Arabic: "In the name of God." An occasional gunshot rang out as medics sought to help those wounded.

Ethiopians and other African migrants for years have landed in Yemen, braving the war-torn nation to try and reach Saudi Arabia for work. The Houthi rebels allegedly make tens of thousands of dollars a week smuggling migrants over the border. Migrants from Ethiopia have found themselves detained, abused and even killed in Saudi Arabia and Yemen during the war. An Oct. 3, 2022, letter to the kingdom from the UN said its investigators "received concerning allegations of cross-border artillery shelling and small arms fire allegedly by Saudi security forces, causing the deaths of up to 430 and injuring 650 migrants." Monday's alleged strike recalled a similar strike by a Saudi-led coalition battling the Houthis back in 2022 on the same compound, which caused a collapse killing 66 detainees and wounding 113 others, a United Nations report later said.

The Houthis shot dead 16 detainees who fled after the strike and wounded another 50, the UN said. The Saudi-led coalition sought to justify the strike by saying the Houthis built and launched drones there, but the UN Said it was known to be a detention facility.

"The coalition should have avoided any attack on that facility," the UN report added. That 2022 attack was one of the deadliest single attacks in the yearslong war between the coalition and the Houthi rebels and came after the Houthis struck inside the UAE twice with missiles and drones, killing three in a strike near Abu Dhabi's international airport.

Meanwhile, US airstrikes overnight targeting Yemen's capital killed at least eight people, the Houthis said. The American military acknowledged carrying out over 800 individual strikes in their monthlong campaign. The overnight statement from Central Command also said "Operation Rough Rider" had "killed hundreds of Houthi fighters and numerous Houthi leaders," including those associated with its missile and drone program. It did not identify any of those officials. "Iran undoubtedly continues to provide support to the Houthis," the statement said.

"The Houthis can only continue to attack our forces with the backing of the Iranian regime." "We will continue to ratchet up the pressure until the objective is met, which remains the restoration of freedom of navigation and American deterrence in the region," it added.

The US is targeting the Houthis because of the group's attacks on shipping in the Red Sea, a crucial global trade route, and on Israel. The Houthis are also the last militant group in Iran's self-described "Axis of Resistance" that is capable of regularly attacking Israel.

The US is conducting strikes on Yemen from its two aircraft carriers in the region - the USS Harry S. Truman in the Red Sea and the USS Carl Vinson in the Arabian Sea. On April 18, an American strike on the Ras Isa fuel port killed at least 74 people and wounded 171 others in the deadliest-known attack of the American campaign. Central Command on Monday offered an explanation for why it hit the port. "US strikes destroyed the ability of Ras Isa Port to accept fuel, which will begin to impact Houthi ability to not only conduct operations, but also to generate millions of dollars in revenue for their terror activities," it said.

Meanwhile, the Houthis have increasingly sought to control the flow of information from the territory they hold to the outside world. It issued a notice Sunday that all those holding Starlink satellite internet receivers should "quickly hand over" the devices to authorities.

Singapore: condolences offered to victims of Pahalgam attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Singapore

Condolences were offered on Monday at the inaugural India-Singapore Futures Forum to the families of the 26 people killed by terrorists in Kashmir's Pahalgam.

India's High Commissioner to Singapore Dr Shilpak Ambule informed forum delegates of the "unfortunate and tragic" manner of the killings by terrorists last Tuesday.

"The manner of killing by identifying the religion (of the victims) was something unprecedented," said the envoy.

Joining Ambule in condemning the attack, keynote speaker and Singapore Ambassador at Large Professor Tommy Koh said, "Singapore stands with India in fighting the scourge of terrorism."

Last week, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) said, "Singapore strongly condemns the terror attacks in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, on Apr 22, 2025, which have claimed many lives."

In his keynote, Professor Koh highlighted the strength of Singapore-India bilateral relations. He also noted a messy transition globally, moving away from free trade and open economics and shifting towards protectionism and economic nationalism.

"Global cooperation is giving way to growing competition and distrust," he said.

"In the face of such upheavals and challenges, we need like-minded and trusted friends such as India and Singapore. Together, we will seek shelter from the storms ahead and seek opportunities in the midst of adversity," Prof Koh told the forum, pointing to the high level of comfort and mutual trust between the leaders of the two countries.

High Commissioner Ambule also spoke about the growing bilateral relations and the process of expanding cooperation into new areas including advanced technologies and manufacturing.

Meanwhile, forum speakers discussed and addressed opportunities and challenges in four critical areas between the two countries. They discussed artificial intelligence, semiconductors, fintech and space. In 2024, India and Singapore signed a memorandum of understanding on Digital Technologies which provides a comprehensive blueprint for joint AI development, emphasising ethical governance, talent exchange and scalable solutions for global challenges.

"India's vast data resources, technical talent pool and thriving startup ecosystem align seamlessly with Singapore's strengths in governance frameworks, research infrastructure and global market connectivity," said Prof Iqbal Singh Sevea, director of the Institute of South Asian Studies, a think-tank at the National University of Singapore which organised the inaugural forum.

Minister Piyush Goyal arrives in London to begin UK, tour

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal FILE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal arrived in London on Monday morning at the start of a five-day three-city tour, also covering Oslo and Brussels, to drive forward trade and investment dialogues with the UK and Europe.

The minister, who is accompanied by a business delegation of leading Indian companies, is expected to hold a series of high-level talks with UK Government ministers and officials. During a meeting with his UK counterpart, Jonathan Reynolds, the duo are scheduled to take stock of the ongoing Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations, believed to be approaching their final stages.

"This Government is committed to doing the right deal with India which will improve access for UK businesses, cut tariffs, and make trade cheaper and easier," a UK Department for Business and Trade (DBT) spokesperson said ahead of the ministerial meeting.

"Talks have been ongoing since they were relaunched in February, and we will only sign a deal that is in the best interests of the British people and drives growth across the UK," the spokesperson said. The relaunch of the negotiations, following a hiatus for general elections in both countries last year, is aimed at clinching an agreement that is expected to significantly enhance the estimated GBP 41 billion a year India-UK trade partnership.

Goyal's visit comes soon after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's London visit earlier this month, when she had highlighted a "great sense of positivity and also eagerness and a dedication" to have the FTA conclude "sooner rather than later". According to officials close to the discussions, the talks have been progressing at speed with some of the remaining issues expected to be ironed out at the ministerial level.

From the UK, Goyal is scheduled to leave for Oslo where he is expected to review progress of the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) signed with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) members which include Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland besides Norway.

For the final leg of his Europe tour, the minister is scheduled for meetings in Brussels, expected to revolve around ongoing trade negotiations with the 27-member EU.

China calls for 'swift and fair investigation' into Pahalgam attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Beijing

China has called for a "swift and fair investigation" into the Pahalgam terror attack and expressed support for its all-weather ally Pakistan in safeguarding its sovereignty and security interests amid Islamabad's rising tensions with India. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Sunday held a telephonic conversation with Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, State-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Dar briefed Wang — also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee — on the latest tensions between Pakistan and India "following a terrorist attack in the Kashmir region", it said in the report.

For his part, Wang said China was closely following the developments, stressing that combating terrorism was a shared responsibility of the entire world while reaffirming Beijing's consistent support for Pakistan's firm counterterrorism efforts, it added.

"As an ironclad friend and an all-weather strategic cooperative partner, China fully understands Pakistan's legitimate security concerns and supports Pakistan in safeguarding its sovereignty and security interests," the report quoted Wang as saying.

"China advocates for a swift and fair investigation and believes that conflict does not serve the fundamental interests of either India or Pakistan, nor does it benefit regional peace and stability," Wang noted.

China hopes both sides will remain restrained, move toward each other, and work together to de-escalate the situation, he added. Dar emphasised that Pakistan had consistently and firmly fought terrorism and was against any actions that could lead to an escalation of the situation, according to the report.

Pakistan is committed to managing the situation in a mature manner and will maintain communication with China and the international community, Dar said, the news agency reported.

On April 23, China "strongly condemned" the brutal terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam in which 26 people, mostly tourists, were killed.

"We strongly condemn the attack. China firmly opposes all forms of terrorism," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun had told a media briefing.

"We mourn for the lives lost and express sincere sympathies to the bereaved families and the injured," he had said.

Rare exposition of sacred Buddha tooth relic ends

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colombo

The rare exposition of the sacred tooth relic of Lord Buddha has been concluded in Sri Lanka's central town of Kandy, according to an official statement. The exposition began on April 18 and concluded on Sunday.

The chief monks, in a joint statement, said the exposition was the largest gathering in a single place in the entire history of the island.

The tooth relic holds special spiritual, historical and cultural significance for the 74 per cent Sinhala Buddhist majority in the island nation of 21 million people.

Hundreds of thousands of Buddhist devotees attended the 10-day exposition, the first since 2009.

The organisers had planned the event for nearly 2 million devotees, however, the officials believed only a less than half of that number attended as the authorities stopped the entry when it seemed they were going out of control in providing basic sanitary facilities for such a large turnout.

"We are so pleased that it has come to an end. But we are left with the bigger task of removing various temporary structures put up in the town," Indika Kumari, the Municipal Commissioner of Kandy, told reporters.

She said the cleaning operations commenced last night itself.

"We are currently in the process of segmenting the garbage.

Non-perishable garbage is estimated to be about 10 tonnes. We believe that 300 tonnes of rubbish have been piled up," Kumari said.

The exposition came at the request of President Anura Kumara Dissanayake. The Opposition charged that it was a political move by Dissanayake to gain support from the Buddhist majority in the local council election scheduled for May 6.

According to historical records, the tooth relic, which came to Kandy in 1590, came to symbolise Buddhist holiness, becoming Sri Lanka's most treasured possession and the seal of sovereignty.

Seven killed, Nine injured in bomb blast in northwest Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Peshawar

At least seven people were killed and nine injured on Monday after a powerful bomb blast ripped through the office of a peace committee in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, police said.

The bomb blast occurred at the office of a local peace committee in Wana, headquarters of South Waziristan district, police said. According to hospital administration, 16 injured people were brought to the hospital after the explosion, of which seven succumbed to their injuries.

So far, no group has claimed responsibility for the blast.

The police stated that the explosion was so severe that it destroyed the building of the peace committee's office, trapping several people under the debris.

Rescue teams and locals reached the site upon receiving the information and started an operation to retrieve the injured from the rubble.

The injured were transferred to a nearby hospital, where they are receiving treatment.

The bomb blast occurred at the office of a local peace committee in Wana, headquarters of South Waziristan district

According to the hospital administration, some of those injured are reportedly critical.

So far, no official statement has been released about the nature or motives behind the explosion.

However, police and security agencies have cordoned off the area and launched an investigation.

Officials have said that evidence is being collected from the scene and different aspects are being examined to trace those responsible for the blast.

Major power outage in Spain

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Barcelona

A major power outage hit Spain and Portugal on Monday, including their capitals, knocking out subway networks, phone lines, traffic lights and ATM machines.

It is rare to have such a widespread outage there. Spanish generator Red Eléctrica said it affected the Iberian peninsula and the incident is being assessed. The countries have a combined population of more than 50 million people. It was not immediately clear how many were affected. Spain's public broadcaster RTVE said a major power outage hit several regions of the country just after midday local time, leaving its newsroom, Spain's parliament in Madrid and subway stations across the country in the dark.

A graph on Spain's electricity network website showing demand across the country indicated a steep drop around 12.15 pm from 27,500MW to near 15,000MW.

A couple of hours later, Spain's electricity network operator said it was recovering power in the north and south of the peninsula, which would help to progressively restore the electricity supply nationwide. In Portugal, a country of some 10.6 million people, the outage hit the capital, Lisbon, and surrounding areas, as well as northern and southern parts of the country. Portugal's government said the incident appeared to stem from problems outside the country, an official told national news agency Lusa.

People check their mobile phones as they stand outside subway station during power outage PTI

"It looks like it was a problem with the distribution network, apparently in Spain. It's still being ascertained," Cabinet Minister Leitão Amaro was quoted as saying. Portuguese distributor E-Redes said the outage was due to "a problem with the European electricity system," according to Portuguese newspaper Expresso.

The company said it was compelled to cut power in specific areas to stabilise the network, according to Expresso. E-Redes said parts of France also were affected. Several Lisbon subway cars were evacuated, reports said. Also in Portugal, courts stopped work and ATMs and electronic payment systems were affected. Traffic lights in Lisbon stopped working. It was not possible to make calls on mobile phone networks, though some apps were working.

Canada set to vote in elections dominated by Trump's trade

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Toronto

Canadians will decide Monday whether to extend the Liberal Party's decade in power or instead hand control to the Conservatives. They'll pick either Prime Minister Mark Carney or opposition leader Pierre Poilievre to lead the way forward, but the election is also a referendum of sorts on someone who isn't even Canadian: Donald Trump.

Until the American president won a second term and began threatening Canada's economy and sovereignty, even suggesting the country should become the 51st state, the Liberals looked headed for defeat. Canadians go the polls as the country grapples with the aftermath of a fatal car ramming attack on Saturday in Vancouver. The tragedy on the eve of the election prompted the suspension of campaigning for several hours. Police ruled out terrorism and said the suspect is a local man with a history of mental health issues.

Trump's truculence has infuriated many Canadians, leading many to cancel US vacations, refuse to buy American goods and possibly even vote early - a record 7.3 million Canadians cast ballots before election day. Trump also put Poilievre and the Conservative Party on the back foot after they appeared headed for an easy victory only months ago.

"The Americans want to break us so they can own us," Carney said recently, laying out what he saw as the stakes for the election. "Those aren't just words. That's what's at risk."

Poilievre, a populist firebrand who campaigned with Trump-like bravado, had hoped to make the election a referendum on former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, whose popularity declined toward the end of his decade in power as food and housing prices rose and immigration surged. But then Trump became the dominant issue, and Poilievre's similarities to the bombastic president could cost him. "He appeals to the same sense of grievance," Canadian historian Robert

Until the American president won a second term and began threatening Canada's economy and sovereignty, even suggesting the country should become the 51st state, the Liberals looked headed for defeat

Bothwell said of the Conservative leader. "It's like Trump standing there saying 'I am your retribution.'"

Foreign policy hasn't dominated a Canadian election this much since 1988, when, ironically, free trade with the United States was the prevailing issue.

Whichever candidate emerges as prime minister will face a litany of challenges.

Canada has been dealing with a cost of living crisis for some time. And more than 75 percent of its exports go to the US, so Trump's threat to impose sweeping tariffs and his desire to get the North American automakers to move Canada's production south could severely damage the Canadian economy.

Immigrants detained at illegal nightclub in Colorado

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colorado Springs

More than 100 immigrants suspected of being in the US illegally were taken into custody early on Sunday following a federal raid at an illegal after-hours nightclub in Colorado Springs, Colorado, authorities said.

Video posted online by the Drug Enforcement Administration showed agents announcing their presence outside the building and ordering patrons to leave with their hands up. Other videos showed dozens of people fleeing the building through its entrance after federal agents smashed a window. Later, dozens of suspects were shown in handcuffs standing on a sidewalk waiting to be transported. During his second stint as US president, Donald Trump's unprecedented campaign of immigration enforcement has pushed the limits of executive power, and he has clashed with federal judges trying to restrain him.

Video posted online by the Drug Enforcement Administration showed agents announcing their presence outside the building and ordering patrons to leave with their hands up

The crackdown has included detaining more than 1,000 international college students, some of whom have seen their legal status restored, at least temporarily. The policies have slowed immigration at the southern border to a relative trickle.

On Sunday, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement took the club-going immigrants into custody, said Jonathan Pullen, special agent in charge of the DEA's Rocky Mountain Division.

"Colorado Springs is waking up to a safer community today," he said. The city, Colorado's second largest, lies about 113 kilometres south of Denver. More than 300 law enforcement officers and officials from multiple agencies responded to the nightclub, which had been under investigation for several months for alleged activities including drug trafficking, prostitution and "crimes of violence", Pullen said at a news conference. Cocaine was among the drugs found, he said.

"When the cops showed up at the door, most of the drugs hit the floor," Pullen said. An undisclosed number of guns were seized, he said. "Nothing good ever happens after 3 am," the DEA's Rocky Mountain Division posted on the social platform X.

Pullen estimated more than 200 people were inside the nightclub. Also among those detained were a dozen active-duty military members who either were patrons or working as armed security.

Journalists swarm cardinals at Vatican gates sincerely

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Vatican City

Cardinals arriving for the first day of informal meetings after Pope Francis' funeral were swarmed at the city-state's gates by journalists eager for hints of whether any consensus was building around the election of a successor.

A date for the start of the highly anticipated conclave could come as soon as Monday.

In a chaotic scene, journalists shouted out questions about the mood inside, whether there was unity, and when the conclave would begin.

A reporter for a satirical Italian television program repeatedly asked whether an Italian cardinal who has been convicted by the Vatican criminal court on finance-related charges would be allowed to vote.

"There is the hope of unity," said Argentine Cardinal Ángel Sixto Rossi, the 66-year-old archbishop of Cordoba who was made a cardinal by Francis in 2023.

Many cardinals cited the desire to continue Francis' pastoral focus on people who are marginalised and against war.

But conservatives in the ranks may be more focused on forging unity and refocusing the church back to core doctrines emphasized by St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, rather than continuing Francis' social justice focus and outreach to women and gays.

British Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the 79-year-old archbishop of Westminster, was adamant that the church must strive for unity, and he downplayed divisions.

"The role of the pope is to essentially hold us together and that's the grace we've been given from God," said Nichols.

Venezuelan Cardinal Baltazar Enrique Porras Cardozo expressed confidence that once the conclave begins, a decision would be quick, "between two and three days."

The College of Cardinals that will elect a new pope includes members from far-flung corners of the globe whom Francis named over his 12-year papacy to bring in new points of views of the Catholic Church hierarchy.

Many have spent little or no time in Rome getting to know their colleagues, injecting some uncertainty into a process that requires two-thirds of the 135 voting-age cardinals to coalesce behind a single candidate.

Nichols acknowledged that the 135 cardinal electors - 108 of whom were appointed by Francis - don't know each other very well.

The last 20 were appointed in early December.

"We've got all week," Nichols said as he arrived Monday. Only cardinals under 80 are eligible to vote, and it is not clear how many of the 135 will participate. A Spanish cardinal has already said he won't come to Rome for health reasons.

A big uncertainty is whether Cardinal Angelo Becciu, once one of the most powerful cardinals in the Vatican, will be allowed in the Sistine Chapel.

Francis in 2020 forced Becciu to resign as head of the Vatican's saint-making office and renounce his rights as a cardinal because of allegations of embezzlement and financial fraud. Becciu denied any wrongdoing but was put on trial in the Vatican criminal court and convicted of finance-related charges in December, 2023.

He is appealing the conviction and has participated in the pre-conclave meetings, but there is a lingering question about whether he is entitled to vote.

The Vatican's official statistics list him as a "non-elector."

Russia, Ukraine trade strikes as talks enter critical week

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kyiv

Ukraine and Russia targeted each other with long-range strikes, officials said Monday, amid continuing uncertainty about whether an agreement to stop their more than three-year war is within reach at the start of what America's top diplomat called a "very critical" week.

The Russian Defence Ministry said its forces downed 119 Ukrainian drones overnight, most of them over Russia's Bryansk border region. In Ukraine, air raid sirens rang out across the country Monday morning. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage. The outcome of a push by US President Donald Trump's administration to swiftly end the fighting remains unclear, clouded by conflicting claims and doubts about how far each side might be willing to compromise amid deep hostility and mistrust. The clock is ticking on Washington's engagement in efforts to resolve Europe's biggest conflict since World War II that has cost tens of thousands of lives. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Sunday that this week would be "very critical." The US needs to "make a determination about whether this is an endeavour that we want to continue to be involved in," he said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

American military aid has been crucial for Ukraine's war effort, and further help could be at risk if the Trump administration walks away from attempts to end the war. Trump said at the weekend he harbours doubts about Russian President Vladimir Putin's sincerity in pursuing a deal, as Russian forces have continued to strike civilian areas of Ukraine with cruise and ballistic missiles while the talks have proceeded. But on Friday, Trump described a brokered settlement on the war as "close." Western European officials have accused the Kremlin of dragging its feet on peace talks so that Russian forces, which are bigger than Ukraine's and have battlefield momentum, can capture more Ukrainian land.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Information is given to the general public at large by my client Mr. Rajnish Kumar who intends to purchase the Freehold Residential Ground Floor (without Roof/Terrace rights), Built-Up on Property bearing no. B-171, area measuring 100 sq. yds., out of Khasra no. 10/18, situated at Colony- Sainik Nagar, Village- Matiala, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi-110059, from Mr. Gaurav Madan who was the owner of the aforesaid property by virtue of Relinquishment Deed regd. dated 27.01.2025, executed by Mr. Shamit Madan (Doc. No. 2025/25/II/2817), Mr. Rajnish Kumar intend to seek a loan from Aavas Financiers Limited, any person(s), Bank/NBFC/institution(s) having any claim and/or objection/or litigation in respect of the said property shall communicate the same to the undersigned at our address within 07 days from the publication of this notice with documentary evidence in support thereof, failing which all the claim, of such person(s)/institution(s) shall not be binding upon the said property or purchaser.

Viksha Legal
Ram Prakash Pandey, (Advocate)
Mob. 9711281479, 2E/23, 3rd Floor, Jhandewalan Extn., N.D. 110055

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to all concern that I, Shivendra Kumar Sheoliha is the owner of Flat No. 630, 3rd Floor Sector-37, Arun Vihar, Noida (U.P) that the flat was purchased from Col. Trilok Singh Anand S/o Shri Sona Singh Anand R/o 103, DIN CGHS Sector-4, Plot No.7, Dwarika, New Delhi-110045, that the said property was sold on GPA Executed in favour of Shivendra Kumar Sheoliha, Which is registered at Sub Registrar Noida Dated- 22.01.2000. Further Agreement to sell was executed on Rs.100/- non Judicial Stamp Paper Duly Notarized on 22.01.2000, But Not registered at Sub Registrar Noida. So it is informed to all concern that the said property is going to be sold out as such if any one has/have any objection he/she may file his/her objection along with the sufficient proof in the Residential Department of the Noida Authority within 30 Days from the date of publication of this notice.

Shivendra Kumar Sheoliha

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice is given to the general public that my clientess Smt. Ritu Aggarwal W/o Late Shri Deepak Aggarwal R/o H.No. D-121, 2nd Floor, Kamla Nagar, Delhi-110007, has severed all relations with her son namely, Mr. Harshul Aggarwal S/o Late Shri Deepak Aggarwal R/o H.No. D-121, 2nd Floor, Kamla Nagar, Delhi-110007. She has disowned and disinherited him from all her properties moveable and immovable including property No. D-121, 2nd Floor, Kamla Nagar, Delhi-110007. He has no right, title or interest in the above said property or any other moveable or immovable properties owned or possessed by my clientess. Any person dealing with him in connection with the above said property or any other matter concerning him shall be doing the same at his own risk and consequences. The mother of my clientess Smt. Veena Jain, her Brother Mr. Neeraj Jain and her Sister Smt. Neha Jain are also not responsible directly or indirectly for the acts and omissions of Mr. Harshul Aggarwal. My clients shall not be held responsible for any of the acts of Mr. Harshul Aggarwal.

For and on behalf of
M/S LITIGATORS
M.S. Khan Advocate
4805/24, 3rd, 4th Floor, Krishna House, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj, New Delhi-110002
Mob.: 9818416099

Quarterage Developers Private Limited
Corp. Office: 1332 D, Sultan Singh Building, Kashmere Gate, Delhi-110006
Tel: 0130-4091004, 4091005
E-mail: theparkergroup@yahoo.com
Web: theparkergroup.in
CIN No. U70109DL2018PTC333106

PUBLIC NOTICE

We M/s Quarterage Developers Pvt. Ltd. (here in referred as company) Is in process of undertaking the development of plotted colony under Deen Dayal Aawas Yojna in the revenue estate of Nagal and Patla sector- 63/64, Sonipat in accordance with license no.95 of 2024 granted by Director, Town and country planning, Chandigarh.
where as the license for 12.975 acers was earlier granted by DTCP. Now the license company has proposed and additional license to the already granted license for an area admeasuring 2.56875 acers adding to the already license land for which the company has already obtained the LOI from the DTCP vide memo no.LC-476-B/JE(MK)/ 2025/15366 dated- 25/04/2025
As per condition no.11 of the said LOI, the developer company has to seek suggestions/objection before the grant of license from the general public. Accordingly vide this public notice, objections (if any) are here by invited from any person in the said colony and general public on the proposed of changes of the layout plan and proposed additional license for which the LOI has been granted.
A copy of the earlier approved layout plan and the layout plan now proposed to be revised as per the new LOI, same is available for perusal on the company website and at the office of the undersigned or at the office of DTP Sonipat and STP Rohtak
If any person having any objection on the proposed revision may file his / her objection within 15 days of the publication of this notice in the office of DTP Sonipat or STP Rohtak falling which it will be assumed and understood that no objection to proposed revision in the layout plan
Place: New Delhi | Date: 29/04/2025

PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD.
(Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall Patiala-147001)
Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813 Website- www.pspscl.in
Mobile No. 96461-55525

E-Tender Enq. No.611/P-3/EMPW-12986 Dated 25-04-2025
Dy. Chief Engineer / Headquarter (Procurement Cell-3) GGSSTP, Roopnagar invites E-Tender ID No. 2025_POWER_139345_1 for Repair of Conveyor Belt Structure of Coal Handling Plant, GGSSTP, Rupnagar. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to **https://eproc.punjab.gov.in** from dated **25-04-2025 / 17:00** Noon onwards.
Note:- Corrigendum & Addendum, if any will be published online at **https://eproc.punjab.gov.in**
RTP-43/25
76155/12/4186/2023/43917 Dated CHD :- 4/28/2025

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences
Sadiq Road, Faridkot -151203 Ph. 01639-256232, 256236

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot
(Admission Branch)
Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot
Admission Notice for PPMET (Basic B.Sc. Nursing) Course, session 2025
Online applications are invited alongwith requisite fee for admission to Basic B.Sc. Nursing course in all the Govt./University constituent /Private colleges of Punjab through University website from **30.04.2025 to 20.05.2025.** Prospectus for admission to Basic B.Sc. Nursing course will be available on university website from **30.04.2025.** The Entrance Test (PPMET-2025) for admission to Basic B.Sc. Nursing course will be conducted on **07.06.2024**
Note:- Any Notification/Corrigendum/Amendment by Govt. of Punjab will be followed. For Prospectus/fee details/schedule/online counseling/details & updates visit us at: **www.bfuhs.ac.in.**
REGISTRAR
00/12/421/2023/43907 Dated CHD :- 4/28/2025

CAN FIN HOMES LTD
Can Fin Homes Ltd (Sponsor : CANARA BANK)
CIN : L85110KA1987PLC008699,
Above Canara Bank Building, First Floor, Plot No C – 3, Sector – 1, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, Pin Code : 201301,
E-mail : noida@canfinhomes.com, Ph No : 0120 – 2970164/65/67, 7625079126

APPENDIX- IV-A [See proviso to rule 9 (1)]
Sale notice for sale of immovable properties

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 9 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 NOTICE is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Can Fin Homes Ltd., Noida Branch, will be sold by holding e-auction on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on **20-05-2025,** for recovery of **Rs. 26,10,348/-** (Rupees Twenty Six Lakh Ten Thousand Three Hundred Forty Eight Only) due to Can Fin Homes Ltd. from **Mr. Amit Negi S/o Dhan Singh Negi, Mrs. Rashi Negi W/o Amit Negi, (Borrowers) And Mr. Abhay Kumar Singh S/o Brij Pal Singh (Guarantors), As On 28-04-2025,** together with further interest and other charges thereon. The reserve price will be **Rs. 14,50,000/- (Rupees Fourteen Lakh Fifty Thousand Only) and the earnest money deposit will be Rs. 1,45,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Forty Five Thousand Only)**
(Description Of The Immovable Property)
Flat No.405, Fourth Floor, Tower –C, Ashiyan Khasra No. 118, Chipiyana Bujurg, Pargana & Tehsil Dadri, Gautam Budh Nagar,UP.
Bounded By: East : Plot, West: Plot, North: Gda Colony South : Road 20 Ft Wide
Known Encumbrance-: Nil
The detailed terms and conditions of the sale are provided in the official website of Can Fin Homes Ltd., (https://www.canfinhomes.com/SearchAuction.aspx).
Link for participating in e-auction: https://bankeauctionwizard.com
Place: Noida **Authorized Officer**
Date: 28-04-2024 **Can Fin Homes Ltd**

ग्रेटर नौएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण
प्लाट सख्या-01, सैक्टर-नॉलेज पार्क-4 ग्रेटर नौएडा सिटी, जिला-गौतमबुद्ध नगर (उ0प्र0)

सार्वजनिक सूचना

ग्रेटर नौएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण के अन्तर्गत M/s Future World Green Homes Pvt. Ltd. भूखण्ड संख्या-GH-16E, Sector-01, Greater Noida को दिनांक 10.06.2015 को मानचित्र स्वीकृति प्रदान की गयी थी। तदोपरान्त विकासकर्ता द्वारा (Group Project) का पुनरीक्षित मानचित्र स्वीकृति हेतु आवेदन संख्या-16613 दिनांक 24.03.2025 के माध्यम से आवेदन किया गया है। तत्क्रम में UP-Apartment Act&-2010, Amendment 2016 in Section-4 Sub Section-B के अन्तर्गत परियोजना के आवंटियो से आपत्ति / सुझाव आमंत्रित किये जाने का प्रावधान है। इस सम्बन्ध में विकासकर्ता द्वारा प्रस्तुत स्वीकृति मानचित्र एवं Declarations as per UP Apartment Act-2010 परीक्षण किसी भी कार्यदिवस में सुबह 9.30 से सायं 6:00 बजे के मध्य नियोजन विभाग में तथा प्राधिकरण की वेबसाईट पर किया जा सकता है।

अतः उपरोक्त परियोजना के आवटियों द्वारा Sanction Map एवं Declarations as per UP Apartment Act-2010 के सम्बन्ध में सूचना प्रकाशित करने के 30 दिनों के अन्दर आपत्तिया / सुझाव आमंत्रित की जाती है। उपरोक्त के निहितार्थ अपनी आपत्तिया लिखित रूप में अपने आवंटन पत्र, नाम, पता एवं दूरभाष नम्बर के साथ कार्यालय समय व कार्यदिवस में ग्रेटर नौएडा प्राधिकरण के मुख्य प्रशासनिक कार्यालय, भूखण्ड संख्या-1, सैक्टर-नॉलेज पार्क-4, ग्रेटर नौएडा में स्थित महाप्रबन्धक (नियोजन / वास्तु0) को सम्बोधित करते हुए सूचना प्रकाशित होने के 30 दिवसों के अन्दर जमा करायी जा सकती है।

महाप्रबन्धक (नियो0/वास्तु0)
ग्रेटर नौएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण

सार्वजनिक सूचना

मैं मंजू पत्नी श्री वेद पाल निवासी ग्राम सलेमपुर गुर्जर परगना दनकौर तहसील सदर जिला गौतमबुधनगर मेरे मकान की चेन डीड (रजिस्ट्री) तसलिमन पत्नी श्री मुनतयाज अली व श्रीमती बिलकिश पत्नी श्री नवाब अली के नाम दिनांक 15 02-2011 वही संख्या 1 जिल्द संख्या 7981 पृष्ठ सं 15 से 28 पर क्रमांक 2534 रजिस्टर किया गया IN-UP3327118472018 3X जो खो गई हैं खाता सं 000136 के खेत नंबर 478 रकबा 2.364 हेक्टेयर में से केवल 0.7008 हेक्टेयर का 1/2 भाग रकबा 0.3504 हेक्टेयर में से केवल 120 वर्ग गज अर्थात 100.३३ वर्ग मीटर खली प्लाट को विक्रय किया हैं। FIR NO:- LR No: 2786876/2025 Date :26/04/2025 अगर किसी व्यक्ति को यह मिलता हैं तो कृपया उसको इस पते पर (सलेमपुर गुर्जर परगना दनकौर तहसील सदर जिला गौतमबुधनगर) वापस कर दे। Mobile :-9315285066

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all that my client Mr. Dayanand Bhardwaj, S/o Late Sh. Nand Lal Bhardwaj, R/o X-7, Shivaji Gali, Mohalla Ram Nagar, Raghubar Pura No.1, Gandhi Nagar, Delhi-110031 has debarred, disinherited from all moveable & non-moveable assets, & disassociated and severed all his relation with his daughter namely Ms. Deepika Sharma, W/o Mr. Vaibhav Sharma, R/o E-22, Dronacharya Apartments, Mayur Vihar Phase-I, Delhi-110091 from all his relations as she is having quite disobedient & hostile behavior towards my client & she is not under the control of my client. My client will not be responsible for any dealings & acts in the society at large done by her.

Sidharth Joshi (Advocate)

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

LOST & FOUND

I, Kavita Kohli D/o- Darshan Lal Kohli, R/o- D2/111, Janakpuri, New Delhi- 110058, declare that I have lost the Original Share Certificates of Hexaware Technologies Limited, vide Folio No. 01140086, Certificate No. 3264 Distinctive No. 336801 to 336880 (80 shares) and Certificate No. 52222, Distinctive No. 288879590 to 288879669 (80 shares), if found contact : 9811296477.

PD(1938)C

CHANGE OF NAME

I, JC-473536M Nb/Sub Brajesh Singh R/o- Vill & Post- Pulawali, Thana- Umari, Teh & Dist- Bhind, M.P.- 477331, have changed my daughter's name from Jahnvi Singh Kushwah to Janvi Kushwah, vide affidavit dated 28/04/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1939)C

I, Rattni Devi, Mother of JC-471331Y Sub Maj Hony/Lt. Azad Singh, R/o- Khudan (242), Jhajjar, Haryana-124108, have changed my name from Rattni Devi to Ratni Devi, vide affidavit dated 28/04/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1940)C

I, B Sai Reddy, Father of-No.16026559X Hav/Clk B Dinesh Kumar Reddy, R/o- H. No. 5/60/2/A4, Vill & Teh- Pebbair, Dist- Mahbubnagar, Telangana- 509104, have changed my name from B Sai Reddy to Busi Reddy Sai Reddy, vide affidavit dated 28/04/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1941)C

I, B Vijaya Laxmi, Mother of-No.16026559X Hav/Clk B Dinesh Kumar Reddy, R/o- H. No. 5/60/2/A4, Vill & Teh- Pebbair, Dist- Mahbubnagar, Telangana- 509104, have changed my name from B Vijaya Laxmi to Busi Reddy Vijaya Laxmi, vide affidavit dated 28/04/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1942)C

I, Remika Subba W/o- No. 10136688P L/Nk Chef Dipesh Kumar Chhetri, R/o- Hum Busty Takdah, Hum Tukdah Khasmahal, Darjeeling, W.B.-734222, have changed my name from Remika Subba to Rimika Subba Chhetri, vide affidavit dated 28/04/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1943)C

I, No.14834530Y SEP/MT Takalkar Raju Gajanan R/o- Vill & Teh- Akot, Dist- Akola, Maharashtra- 444101, declare that in my service records, my father's name is wrongly recorded as Gajanan Takalkar, whereas his correct name is Gajanan Shriram Takalkar, which may be amended accordingly.

PD(1944)C

I, No.14834530Y SEP/MT Takalkar Raju Gajanan, R/o- Vill & Teh- Akot, Dist- Akola, Maharashtra- 444101, declare that in my service records, my mother's name is wrongly recorded as Leela, whereas her correct name is Lilabai Gajanan Takalkar, which may be amended accordingly.

PD(1945)C

I, Sakshi Patel spouse of No.14668083H Rank Nk Brajesh Kumar Kurmi, R/o- Vill/PO- Chhulla, Teh- Garhakota, Dist- Sagar, M.P.-470232, Now at Unit - 6121 (I) FWC (608 EME BN) C/O 56 APO, declare that I have changed my name from Sakshi Patel to Sakshi Kurmi, vide affidavit No. IN-DL75606654637183X, Dated 28/04/2025 by Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1946)C

I, No.14868907K NK/MT Om Prakash Singh, R/o- Vill- Bhakura, Post- Lauharfarna, Teh- Ara Sadar, Dist- Bhojpur, Bihar- 802315, declare that in my service records, my wife's name is wrongly recorded as Soni Singh, whereas her correct name is Soni Kumari, which may be amended accordingly.

PD(1947)C

PUBLIC NOTICE

We, **(1) SATISH KUMAR TIWARI (2) SURESH KUMAR TIWARI (3) SANJEEV KUMAR TIWARI (4) SUSHMA PANDIT (5) SARITA PANDEY, owners of FLAT NO. 126A, GROUND FLOOR, POCKET-C, TRILOKPURI RESIDENTIAL SCHEME, MAYUR VIHAR PHASE-II, DELHI, VIDE DDA FILE NO. F23(57)1985/06/NP.** The original document i.e. **DEMAND LETTER** of the above said property have been lost or misplaced by us and not traceable inspite of his best efforts. An F.I.R./NCR to this effect has been lodged in the Police Station, Crime Branch, Delhi (LR No.2755434/2025 dated **16.04.2025.**
Any person(s) claiming any rights, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above Address/Phone No.9312603681 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objection with respect to this property, can personally inform or write to Deputy Director LAB(Housing) or Director LAB(Housing), Vikas Sadan, New Delhi.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the ownership of **residential property bearing No. 38, Block-A, Sector-39, Noida, Uttar Pradesh,** originally allotted to **Late Sh. Nachhatar Singh Gharyal S/o Sh. Joginder Singh Gharyal,** who passed away on **01.01.1999,** leaving behind a **registered WILL executed on 02.09.1996 vide Document no. 41841, SR IV, DELHI** in the name of **Sh. Mohan Singh Gharyal S/o Sh. Joginder Singh Gharyal, and Mr. Daljeet Singh Gharyal S/o Late Sh. Mohan Singh Gharyal.**
It is stated that **Late Sh. Mohan Singh Gharyal S/o Sh. Joginder Singh Gharyal,** real brother of the allottee and intermediate beneficiary, also expired on **03.01.2023.**
In accordance with a registered WILL the said property is now proposed to be transferred in respect of 100% share to **Mr. Daljeet Singh Gharyal S/o Late Sh. Mohan Singh Gharyal.**
Any person having any objection, claim, or interest in the said property is hereby requested to submit the same in writing to the Residential Plots (R) of Noida Authority along with sufficient supporting documents within 30 days from the date of this publication. Failing which, the transfer shall be effected, and no claims shall be entertained thereafter.

Daljeet Singh Gharyal
(Transferor)

India to be competitive on many products: Scindia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The current global tariff environment notwithstanding, India is expected to stay competitive due to its vast domestic market, scale advantages, and focus on innovation, Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia has said, asserting that seen even from the lens of a comparative matrix of tariffs vis-a-vis other nations, India holds a more favourable position.

In a recent interview to media, Scindia — who is the Minister for Communications as well as Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) — noted that given that other nations too face varying levels of tariffs, India will likely emerge "fiercely and much more competitive" across numerous products than before. The lucrative domestic market has drawn global multinational companies to set up a significant presence here, he said and cited the strong pace of India's economic growth and New Delhi's policy push on manufacturing and innovation.

"So I do believe that irrespective of the prevailing environment of tariffs, India will continue to be competitive because she has economies of scale behind her because innovation comes along with that economies of scale to be able to cater to such a large market. And therefore, even in comparison with other nations, India will remain to be competitive," the minister said.

To a question on how he sees the US tariff situation playing out, the Minister said that the whole question of tariffs has to be seen from a comparative matrix point of view. "So if you're a country that I used to compete with and the tariffs that have been put on you are possibly today double of what mine are. Where I used to be uncompetitive vis-a-vis you, I now become competitive. So, I think it is important to look at it not only from purely India-centric point of view but from a comparative matrix point of view," Scindia said.

The Minister expressed confidence that for many products in many areas, India will emerge fiercely and much more competitive than prior to the tariffs being in place. India has transformed itself from an infrastructure standpoint, and from an exporting nation standpoint as well, he said terming it "a monumental change".

"...You have to understand where we stand as an economy....Today, India stands very tall...We're today going to become the third-largest economy by 2028. We're today at almost a $4 trillion economy, $5 trillion by 2028, close to $6 trillion by 2030," the minister said. From a country that used to import an overwhelming majority of its mobile phone requirement and produced merely 5 crore units, India is producing over 35 to 40 crore mobile phones, today.

"Our exports are over ₹1,75,000 crore purely on mobiles," he said.

Bullet train to be operational by 2028: Devendra Fadnavis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

The $15 billion Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project being built in collaboration with Japan will be operational by 2028, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said on Monday.

Fadnavis also said the state is looking to raise $50 billion from international financiers for infrastructure development in the state, and announcements for the same will be done in four months.

Without naming Shiv Sena's Uddhav Thackeray, Fadnavis said the bullet train project suffered during a two-year rule until 2022, but now the work is on in full swing.

"By 2028, we will be able to travel in the bullet train," Fadnavis said, conceding that neighbouring state Gujarat is ahead of Maharashtra on the project development.

Fadnavis said creating infrastructure is very important to achieve the goal of $1 trillion GSDP, and that $30 billion was invested in infrastructure creation during his first stint as the chief minister between 2014-19, and more money is being put into important projects now.

Speaking at an event on the India-Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC) project organized by VRF here, he said the Vadhavan port will be operational in the next 3-4 years.

He said the port, being built on reclaimed land, will help reduce the cost of logistics, pointing out that the turnaround time at JNPA, India's largest container port located nearby, is higher.

The Vadhavan port will also have an adjoining airport which will be built through land reclamation on the sea, Fadnavis said, adding that many major cities in the world have such airports.

It will also have a halt for the bullet train, Fadnavis said.

The Chief Minister said Maharashtra is building a highway from Nashik to Vadhavan port which will ensure that 17 districts of the state get connected with the modern port.

Without naming Shiv Sena's Uddhav Thackeray, Fadnavis said the bullet train project suffered during a two-year rule until 2022, but now the work is on in full swing

The state is building the Shaktipeeth highway to connect Nagpur with Goa, Fadnavis said, adding that this road project passing through the backward regions will also help boost the economic growth.

He said Mumbai and Maharashtra will play an important role in the IMEEC, and assured that the state will create the facilitating ecosystem for the project to be a success.

Speaking at the same event, Sanjeev Krishan, the country chairperson of consulting firm PwC said the corridor, when combined with existing trade routes, will have a multiplier effect on the global economy.

'Adding 50-GW renewable energy yearly can end coal imports by 2029'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

If India adds 50 gigawatts of renewable energy every year, it could completely stop importing thermal coal by 2029 and save about $66 billion in foreign exchange between 2025 and 2029, according to a new report published on Monday. The total savings could be at least $173 billion from 2025 to 2034, the report prepared by think tank Climate Risks Horizon said.

The climate and energy think tank said the country's electricity sector remains heavily dependent on coal imports, with around 20 per cent or 206 million tonnes of thermal coal imported in 2023-24 at a cost of $21 billion.

Thermal coal imports have risen by 58 per cent between 2013 and 2023, but the value of these imports has increased by 124 per cent due to volatile global prices and a weakening rupee, it added.

The report said imports surge during the summer months, when cooling demand pushes up electricity consumption. Over the said period (2013 to 2023), India imported around 2,128 million tonnes of coal, mostly thermal coal used for power generation.The import of thermal coal has been increasing steadily at 3.7 per cent annually and has gone up to 40 per cent since 2013. The think tank said India's dependency on imported coal poses both physical and financial risks. Physical risks arise with any disruption in the supply of imported coal, either due to unforeseen political changes or natural disasters.

Attari-Wagah closure likely to hit dry fruit imports from Afghanistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India's imports of dry fruits, including almonds, raisins, dried apricots, and pistachios, from Afghanistan are expected to be impacted due to the closure of the land borders amid heightened tensions between India and Pakistan following the Pahalgam terror attack, which is expected to push domestic prices of these commodities, according to exporters.

Following the terror attack in Pahalgam, which killed 26 people, mostly tourists, India took a series of measures, including immediate shutting down of the Attari land-transit post, used for movement of certain kinds of goods.

In retaliation, Pakistan also announced that all trade with India, including to and from any third country through Pakistan, is suspended forthwith. This move may affect India's exports to Afghanistan.

The exporters said that Afghanistan is a key exporter of these dry fruits into India. New Delhi also imports these goods from Islamabad. At present, India is trading with Afghanistan via the Attari-Wagah border and Pakistan's suspension of trade will impact domestic exports and imports to Kabul. In 2024-25 (April-January), India's exports to Afghanistan were $264.15 million, while imports stood at $591.49 million. Out of this, India's inbound shipments of dry fruits stood at $358 million.

During this period, India's fruits and nuts import from Pakistan was $0.08 million. The main goods imported from Afghanistan through the land route included dried figs, asafoetida), saffron, dried apricots, pistachios, and raisins.

Attari is near Amritsar in Punjab.

A Delhi-based importer said that the closure of the land route will definitely impact imports of dry fruits from both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

"Though immediate there is no impact as goods are in transit, but after ten days the imports will be stopped completely. After that the prices would go up to 20 per cent in the national capital," Rajiv Batra, president, Khari Baoli Traders' Association, said. He added, "We will get the nuts but it would come from countries like UAE, Iran, and Iraq as these would act as an alternate route for Afghan dry fruits".

PUBLIC NOTICE

ICICI Home Finance | Registered office: ICICI Bank Towers, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai- 400051

Corporate Office: ICICI HFC Tower, JB Nagar, Andheri Kurla Road, Andheri East, Mumbai- 400059
Branch Address: 1st floor, The Empire, Office no.-F-05, 33-City Centre, Ward no. 30, Near Income Tax Building, Opposite Madhav Rao Scindia Park, Gwalior (Mp) 474011
Branch Address: 1st Floor, 780, A/A Civil Lines,Kanika Building, Above ICICI Bank, Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh – 284001.

The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from ICICI Home Finance Company Limited ("ICICI HFC") and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset/ Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Late. Sirajuddin Kamruddin (Borrower), Salma Bai (Legal Heir – Wife Of Late. Sirajuddin Kamruddin) (Co-Borrower), Murtaza Malik (Director, M/s Kabeer Realty Pvt. Ltd) (legal Heir – Son Of Late. Sirajuddin Kamruddin) (Co-Borrower), Flat No.201 Aafrin Residency 147 Khatiwala Tank Nr Post Office Qtr Indore Madhya Pradesh 452001. NHIND00000730483.	Plot No.01, Agrawal Estate, Sanghi Colony, Indore, Madhya Pradesh 452001. Bounded By- North: Plot Of Anoop Nagar Indore, South: 40 Feet Wide Road Sanghi Colony, East: Plot No.2 Agarwal State Sanghi Colony Indore, West: 10 Feet Wide Gali.	11-04-2025 Rs. 3,09,012/-	05-04-2025
2.	Gouri Shankar Patidar (Borrower), Punam Vinayak Shitre (Co-Borrower), 290 A Abhinandan Nagar Indore Madhya Pradesh 452001. LHIND00001302341.	Southern Part Of Plot No. R-209, Kalindi Gold City, Situated In Bhangya Village, Tehsil Sanwer District Indore, Madhya Pradesh 452002. Bounded By- North: Plot No.r-10, South: Plot No.r-208, East: Plot No.r-220, West: Colony Road.	17-04-2025 Rs. 22,37,678/-	05-04-2025
3.	Ishwar Lal Lodwal (Borrower), Pushpa. (Co-Borrower), Jaora Road Near Sitlamata Mandir Ratlam Ratlam Madhya Pradesh 457001. LHRAT00001558435.	Plot No.68, Survey No. 181/27, Gourav Dham Colony, Gram Dosigaon,tehsil And District Ratlam Madhya Pradesh 457001. Bounded By- North: Plot No. 59, South: Road, East: Plot No. 69, West: Plot No. 67.	11-04-2025 Rs. 34,059.16/-	05-04-2025
4.	Ishwar Lal Lodwal (Borrower), Pushpa. (Co-Borrower), Jaora Road Near Sitlamata Mandir Ratlam Ratlam Madhya Pradesh 457001. LHRAT00001558437.	Plot No.68, Survey No. 181/27, Gourav Dham Colony, Gram Dosigaon,tehsil And District Ratlam Madhya Pradesh 457001. Bounded By- North: Plot No. 59, South: Road, East: Plot No. 69, West: Plot No. 67.	11-04-2025 Rs. 4,17,889/-	05-04-2025
5.	Bahadur Singh (Borrower), Pepa Bai (Co-Borrower), Ranaheda Tulaheda Ujjain Madhya Pradesh 456550. LHUJN00001526420.	Plot No. 286, Gram Ranaheda, Patwari Halka No. 45, Tehsil Ghatiya, District Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh 456550. Bounded By- North: Road, South: Road, East: Road, West: House Of Manna Ji.	23-04-2025 Rs. 21,346.99/-	10-04-2025
6.	Bahadur Singh (Borrower), Pepa Bai (Co-Borrower), Ranaheda Tulaheda Ujjain Madhya Pradesh 456550. LHUJN00001526421.	Plot No. 286, Gram Ranaheda, Patwari Halka No. 45, Tehsil Ghatiya, District Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh 456550. Bounded By- North: Road, South: Road, East: Road, West: House Of Manna Ji.	23-04-2025 Rs. 7,71,955/-	10-04-2025

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above borrower/s and/or their guarantors (as applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice else further steps will be taken as per the provisions of Securitization and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

Date: April 29, 2025
Place: Indore, Ratlam, Ujjain

Authorized Officer
ICICI Home Finance Company Limited

PUBLIC NOTICE

ICICI Home Finance | Registered office: ICICI Bank Towers, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai- 400051

Corporate Office: ICICI HFC Tower, JB Nagar, Andheri Kurla Road, Andheri East, Mumbai- 400059
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Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset/ Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Digvijay Singh (Borrower), Renu Narvariya (Co-Borrower), Ashok Colony Nadi Paar Taal Morar Gwalior Gwalior Madhya Pradesh 474006. LHGWA00001352496.	Plot At Part Of Survey No 1286, Ward No 61, Gram Khureri, Morar, Distruct Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh 474001. Bounded By- North: Remaining Property Of Seller, South: Road 20 Feet, East: Road 20 Ft, West: Plot Of Other.	11-04-2025 Rs. 3,09,012/-	05-04-2025
2.	Ram Kumar Yadav (Borrower), Deepika Yadav (Co-Borrower), Unav Road Mamma Ju Ka Baag Unav Raod Datia Madhya Pradesh 475661. LHJHN00001557536.	Plot No 329 Min 1 Property Situated At Mauza Hameerpur Tehsil Datia Madhya Pradesh 475661. Bounded By- North: Land Of Purchaser, South: Land Of Seller, East: Land Of Seller, West: Rasta 20 Feet.	17-04-2025 Rs. 22,37,678/-	05-04-2025
3.	Digvijay Singh (Borrower), Renu Narvariya (Co-Borrower), Ashok Colony Nadi Paar Taal Morar Gwalior Gwalior Madhya Pradesh 474006. LHGWA00001363486.	Plot At Part Of Survey No 1286, Ward No 61, Gram Khureri, Morar, Distruct Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh 474001. Bounded By- North: Remaining Property Of Seller, South: Road 20 Feet, East: Road 20 Ft, West: Plot Of Other.	11-04-2025 Rs. 34,059.16/-	05-04-2025
4.	Digvijay Singh Narwaria (Borrower), Renu Narvariya (Co-Borrower), S/o Gangadharrao Narwariya, Ashok Colony Nadi Paar Taal, Morar Gird Gwalior Gwalior Madhya Pradesh 474006. LHGWA00001353230.	Plot At Part Of Survey No 1286, Ward No 61, Gram Khureri, Morar, Distruct Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh 474001. Bounded By- North: Remaining Property Of Seller, South: Road 20 Feet, East: Road 20 Ft, West: Plot Of Other.	11-04-2025 Rs. 4,17,889/-	05-04-2025
5.	Sudha Devi (Borrower), Priyanka Singh Jadoun (Co-Borrower), C O Neeraj Gautam House No Gh 747 Deen Dayal Nagar Gwalior Gwalior Madhya Pradesh 474020. LHGWA00001560746.	Plot No.-2 Block No.f3, Cosmo Ananda, Ward No. 61, Village Sirol, Sirol Road, tehsil and District Gwalior Madhya Pradesh 474001. Bounded By- North: Plot No. F-3-3, South: Plot No. F3-1, East: 7.5 Mtr Road, West: Other Property.	23-04-2025 Rs. 21,346.99/-	10-04-2025
6.	Sudha Devi (Borrower), Priyanka Singh Jadoun (Co-Borrower), C O Neeraj Gautam House No Gh 747 Deen Dayal Nagar Gwalior Gwalior Madhya Pradesh 474020. LHGWA00001562116.	Plot No.-2 Block No.f3, Cosmo Ananda,ward No. 61, Village Sirol, Sirol Road,tehsil And District Gwalior Madhya Pradesh 474001. Bounded By- North: Plot No. F-3-3, South: Plot No. F3-1, East: 7.5 Mtr Road, West: Other Property.	23-04-2025 Rs. 7,71,955/-	10-04-2025

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above borrower/s and/or their guarantors (as applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice else further steps will be taken as per the provisions of Securitization and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

Date: April 29, 2025
Place: Gwalior

Authorized Officer
ICICI Home Finance Company Limited

Sensex jumps 1,006 points, foreign fund inflows

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Benchmark BSE Sensex soared by 1,006 points to close above 80,000 level on Monday as a sharp rally in Reliance Industries and private banks, and foreign fund inflows helped stock markets cut short two days of fall amid India-Pakistan border tensions.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,005.84 points or 1.27 per cent to settle at 80,218.37 with 23 of its constituents ending with gains and seven in the red. During the day, it surged 1,109.35 points or 1.40 per cent to 80,321.88. The NSE Nifty rallied 289.15 points or 1.20 per cent to close at 24,328.50. All key sectors, barring IT, participated in the rally, with pharma, energy, and auto emerging as the top gainers. Reliance Industries surged by 5.27 per cent to emerge as the biggest gainer among Sensex stocks.

The oil-to-retail behemoth reported a 2.4 per cent rise in March quarter net profit beating street estimates. Mahindra & Mahindra spurted 2.29 per cent after the auto major announced a ₹555-crore acquisition of SML Isuzu and said that the buyout was a strong strategic fit for the company that would put it in a strong position. SML Isuzu Ltd shares, on the other hand, tanked 10 per cent. Sun Pharma, Tata Steel, State Bank of India, Axis Bank, Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro and ICICI Bank were also among the Sensex gainers.

HCL Tech, UltraTech Cement, Nestle and Hindustan Unilever were among the laggards. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 2,952.33 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. Foreign investors have infused Rs 17,425 crore in the country's equity markets last week, supported by a combination of favourable global cues and strong domestic macroeconomic fundamentals. This came following a net investment of ₹8,500 crore in the preceding holiday-truncated week ended April 18.

"The domestic market recouped from the losses incurred during the last two days of the previous week, which stemmed from the border tensions. "While sustained buying from FIIs and better results from RIL also boosted the investor sentiment. A weakening dollar and inflationary pressure in the US may attract FIIs into the domestic market," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said. The BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.34 per cent and smallcap index climbed 0.39 per cent. Among BSE sectoral indices, energy jumped 3.02 per cent, oil & gas (2.90 per cent), capital goods (1.93 per cent), healthcare (1.60 per cent), metal (1.59 per cent), bankex (1.53 per cent) and realty (1.41 per cent).

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi index and Tokyo's Nikkei 225 settled in the positive territory while Shanghai SSE Composite and Hong Kong's Hang Seng ended lower.

IT and BSE Focused IT were the laggards. "The absence of any major geopolitical developments between India and Pakistan over the weekend, along with stability in global markets, eased pressure and triggered an upbeat start. Additionally, strength in index heavyweight Reliance, following its results, further supported the move as the session progressed," Ajit Mishra – SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd said.

European markets were trading higher. US markets ended with gains on Friday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.19 per cent to $66.74 a barrel.

The BSE barometer Sensex tanked 588.90 points or 0.74 per cent to settle at 79,212.53 on Friday. Falling for the second day, the Nifty tumbled 207.35 points or 0.86 per cent to 24,039.35.

UP aims to triple exports in five years

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh is working on a policy to promote exports and triple the outbound shipment from the state to over ₹ five lakh crore in the next five years by tapping new markets and products.

To achieve the target, the state government is working on a new export policy for 2025-30 which is expected to be approved soon.

The thrust of the new policy would be to increase exports three times by 2030 from ₹1.7 lakh crore in 2023-24 through host of measures including capital subsidy and sops for exporters, UP Minister for Industrial Development and Export Promotion Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi said.

"We have extensively studied export policies of various governments across the country and have incorporated best practices in the draft policy. Our aim is to increase UP's contribution in the country's overall exports substantially and the proposed policy will be a step in that direction," he said.

The new policy also seeks to provide sops like capital subsidy to investors for developing export infrastructure and proposes setting up a one-stop digital information hub which may provide all relevant information to exporters.

For example, he said, the proposed policy seeks to provide up to ₹10 crore as capital subsidy to investors to build export infrastructure.

A dedicated export promotion fund will be set up, which will be used for promoting Brand UP at global conferences and will also provide aid of up to ₹5 lakh to exporters towards payment of yearly premium under Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India (ECGC), he said.

It also plans to increase aid to each exporting unit to ₹ 25 lakh every year as against ₹ 16 lakh in the current policy. The new policy is expected to incentivise exporters by up to ₹ 30 lakh every year towards transport of goods to gateway port.

During 2023-24, UP's share in the country's total export was 4.71 per cent.

Exports from Uttar Pradesh stood at Rs 1.70 lakh crore. In the first half of last financial year exports from the state were Rs 87,151 crore.

Some of the major exports from the state include electrical machinery, meat, apparel, footwear, pearls and precious stones, carpets, furniture, aluminium products, leather products, organic chemicals, plastic and cereals, among others.

Gold declines ₹1,000 to ₹98,400/10 gm amid weak global trend

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Gold prices declined ₹1,000 to ₹98,400 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid weak global trend, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at ₹99,400 per 10 grams on Thursday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity depreciated ₹1,000 to ₹97,900 per 10 grams against the previous close of ₹98,900 per 10 grams.

"Gold prices continued to decline as easing US-China trade tensions boosted investors' risk appetite, reducing demand for safe-haven assets like bullion while a stronger dollar added downward pressure on gold," Abans Financial Services' Chief Executive Officer Chintan Mehta said.

On Friday, China announced it would exempt some US imports from its steep 125 per cent tariffs, though it denied that any formal trade talks were underway.

Meanwhile, the US Federal Reserve officials signalled that they see no immediate need to adjust monetary policy, choosing instead to monitor the economic impact of the Trump administration's tariffs.

This hawkish stance suggests that interest rate cuts may not materialise in the near term, further weighing on gold, which typically loses appeal as a non-yielding asset when interest rates stay elevated. Mehta further said, "Rising geopolitical tensions could limit gold's downside. As war risks escalate and new conflicts emerge, investors are likely to seek refuge in gold." "With tensions brewing among major powers, and regional strains like the growing friction between India and Pakistan, demand for gold as a safe-haven asset is expected to rise, making it a preferred hedge against market volatility and uncertainty," he added. The local bullion markets were closed on Friday due to traders' protest against the terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam.

Additionally, silver prices also plunged ₹1,400 to ₹98,500 per kg on Monday. The white metal had settled at ₹99,900 per kg in the previous session.

On the global front, spot gold fell nearly one per cent to trade at $3,291.04 per ounce. "Gold traded weak amid the US opening tariff talks with multiple nations and growing expectations of a possible China-US trade agreement according to US President Donald Trump. Additionally, optimism around a potential Russia-Ukraine peace deal further weighed on safe-haven demand for gold," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said. Spot silver in the Asian market hours traded 0.2 per cent lower at $33.05 per ounce.

According to HDFC Securities' Senior Analyst of Commodities Saumil Gandhi said this week traders expect the spotlight will be mostly on tariff-related developments.

On the macroeconomic front, US data release such as manufacturing PMI data for April, GDP data, and, most importantly, US non-farm payrolls and unemployment rates will impact the bullion market, Gandhi said.

Manchester City beats Forest 2-0 to reach FA Cup final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

Even Manchester City's worst season under Pep Guardiola could still end with a trophy. On the day it was officially deposed as Premier League champion, City reached the FA Cup final for the third year in a row by beating Nottingham Forest 2-0 at Wembley Stadium to maintain a chance of salvaging something from a dismal campaign. City scored early Sunday in each half as Rico Lewis put his team ahead in just the second minute and defender Josko Gvardiol doubled the lead in the 51st with a header from a corner.

Forest hit the woodwork three times after that but could not get a consolation goal in its first FA Cup semifinal since 1991. The win gives Pep Guardiola's team a chance to salvage something from a disappointing campaign where its hopes of a fifth straight Premier League title disappeared early and it failed to even reach the round of 16 in the Champions League.

City will play Crystal Palace in the final on May 17. "Unfortunately, the season has not been as we wanted, but we are still in another FA Cup final," said City midfielder Mateo Kovacic, who set up the opening goal. "So it's good that we want to finish it in a strong way." Liverpool clinched the Premier League title at the same time as City was playing, and even an FA Cup title would be a mere consolation for a club that has dominated English soccer under Guardiola. Even Guardiola made it clear that winning the cup would not make this a successful season.

"Noooo," the Spaniard said emphatically. "The season has not been good. We are a thousand million points behind Liverpool. But of course the damage will be (smaller)." That's currently 21 points behind Liverpool for the record, but City still has work to do just to secure a Champions League spot for next season. Forest is one of the teams trying to finish above City, meaning there's little time to dwell on this loss.

"Tomorrow we will wake up and see that we have a lot to fight for," Forest manager Nuno Espirito Santo said.

EMPTY SEATS

The jaded feeling among City fans was made evident by the 5,000 or so empty seats at Wembley in the sky blue half but the supporters who did make the trip had reason to celebrate early.

Lewis scored with his team's first chance when he was teed up by Kovacic just outside the area, turned to face the goal and hit a low show inside the left post.

Forest hardly had a whiff at goal in the first half but had a chance to get right back in the game just after the restart. Halftime substitute Anthony Elanga almost scored with his first touch when Callum Hudson-Odoi picked him out with a low cross into the area, but the Swede put his effort wide.

Instead, City made it 2-0 minutes later.

A chaotic sequence where Forest goalkeeper Matz Sels made three saves in quick succession ended in a corner after City had a strong appeal for handball waved away. Any debate about whether it should have been a penalty ended when Gvardiol rose unchallenged to head home the corner from close range.

Morgan Gibbs-White then hit the woodwork twice, first blasting a volley against the crossbar and later hitting the post from a tight angle after he pounced on a poor back pass and rounded goalkeeper Stefan Ortega.

Taiwo Awoniyi also hit the post in the 79th and Ortega kept out Gibbs-White's effort from the rebound as Forest just couldn't find a breakthrough.

"It's devastating. … I hold my hand up and apologise. I should have scored at least one of them," Gibbs-White said about his chances.

ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, BHOPAL
Saket Nagar, Bhopal-462020 (India)

NIT No. AIIMSBHOPAL-TENDER/NIT/25-26/30 Date:28/04/2025

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

AIIMS Bhopal invites e-Tender from registered manufactures/dealers/ distributors/Contractors for below mentioned items:

E-Tender ID No.	Required Items/Services at AIIMS Bhopal	Est. Cost
AIIMS/Bhopal/Path Lab/RC/2024-25/33	Rate Contract for the Supply of Antibodies for flow cytometry investigation of leukemia, lymphoma cases for the Department of Pathology and Lab Medicine.	41,00,000/-
GEM/2025/B/6068192	Microwave Ablation System	57,50,000/-
AIIMS/BPL/Gel Card/2025-26/034	Rate Contract for Procurement of Gel Card for the department of TMBB at AIIMS Bhopal	Not Disclosed
AIIMS/BPL/Antisera/2025-26/035	Rate Contract for Procurement of Antisera for the department of TMBB at AIIMS Bhopal	Not Disclosed

For further details of the above e-Tenders, the prospective bidders may please visit email: :www.aiimsbhopal.edu.in and Email: spso@aiimsbhopal.edu.in, Tenders may be downloaded from the e-procurement portal www.aiimsbhopal.edu.in and CPP Portal www.eprocure.gov.in. Any corrigendum/ amendments related to this NIT shall be published in the same websites only.

I/c Senior Procurement Cum Store Officer
For & On behalf of Director, AIIMS Bhopal.

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
Government of India, Ministry of Finance, Department of Finance Services (Banking Division)
3rd Floor, Sanchar Vikas Bhawan (BSNL Building), Residency Road, Near Head Post Office, South Civil Lines, Jabalpur -482001 (M.P.)

Case No. RC 403/2019 in O.A. No. 791/2018
BANK OF BARODA
Vs.
SHRI HARIGOVIND CHHAKKILAL
E-Auction No. 116/2025

Under mentioned properties will be sold by "on line e-auction" through website: **https://www.bankeauctions.com** for recovery of a sum of **Rs.19,92,896.10 (Rupees Nineteen Lakh Ninety Two Thousand Eight Hundred Ninety Six and Ten Paisa only)** payable by you/him in respect of Recovery Certificate in **O.A. No.791/2018** issued by the Presiding Officer, Debts Recovery Tribunal, Jabalpur with interest at **11.00%** p.a. with simple Interest from **02-07-2018** and costs payable as per recovery certificate till realization.

Date and Time of E-auction: **06-06-2025 Between 12.00 Hours and 13.00 hours**

SPECIFICATION OF THE PROPERTIES PUT FOR SALE

Land building Flat No. T-03, Third Floor, Aashiyan Homes, part of Khasra No. -208/3/4, Ward No 61, Village Khajurikalan, Tehsil - Huzur, District Bhopal (MP) area admeasuring 690 sq.ft. property in the name of Shri Hargovind Chhakki Lal S/o Chhakki Lal.

Upset Price: **Rs.5,50,000.00 (Rupees Five Lakh Fifty Thousand only);**

CONDITIONS OF SALE

1. Intending bidders must hold a valid digital signature certificate. For details contact **M/s C-1 India Pvt. Ltd., Website : https://www.bankeauctions.com, helpline No. 0124-4302020/21/22/23/24, for help a bidder in e-auction contact to Mr. Mithalesh Kumar on Mob. No. : 7080804466, E-mail ID: mpcg@c1india.com or E-mail ID: support@bankeauctions.com**
2. Intending bidders are advised to go through website : **https://www.bankeauctions.com** for auction Bid Form & details, Terms & conditions of sale before submitting their bids.
3. Bids should be submitted only online in the prescribed form along with a copy of identity document as an attachment to the bid form (refer detailed terms and conditions). Bidders should satisfy them self with regard to correctness, measurement, encumbrances, etc by their own sources, (Govt. Office) also later on DRT will not be responsible for this.
4. 10% of the upset price i.e. EMD/Bid price **Rs.55,000.00 (Rupees Fifty Five Thousand only)** must be remitted towards EMD through RTGS/NEFT/Money Transfer to the credit of Account no. **20020210000380** in the name of Recovery Officer, E-auction account, DRT Jabalpur with **UCO BANK, NAVYUG COLLEGE BRANCH, JABALPUR. (IFSC Code:UCBA0002002)** and the remittance must be clearly mentioned in the bid form.
5. **Bids should be submitted on or before 17:00 Hours on 04-06-2025 online.**
6. A copy of the bid form along with its enclosure submitted online should be sent to the **"Recovery Officer, DRT, Jabalpur, 797-II, Shantikunj, South Civil Lines, Jabalpur"** so as to reach at the earliest.
7. Online bidding will commence from the highest bid quoted among the bids and minimum increase for each bid will be **Rs. 6,000/-**(Rs. Six Thousand only), In case of bid received before closure of Auction window, there shall be an automatic extension of 5 minutes in Auction time by the system.
8. The Refund of EMD of the unsuccessful bidders will be remitted to the same account from with the payment has been made and no enquiry in this regard will be entertained. After deposit of EMD by intending bidders, they cannot withdraw the EMD amount until they are declared as "Unsuccessful bidder" otherwise the amount will be forfeited.
9. In the case of immovable property listed in the schedule below, the successful bidder shall remit 25% of the bid amount (less EMD) on the next day on declaration, if the sale is knocked down in his / her favour through RTGS/NEFT/Money Transfer to the Account No. **20020210000380** mentioned in SL. No. 4 and in default of such deposit, the property shall forthwith be put up again and resold and amount deposited as EMD will be forfeited.
10. The successful bidder shall remit balance 75% of the sale amount along with poundage of 1% of sale amount plus Rs. 10/- for each property separately within 15 days of auction, to the Account No. **20020210000380** mentioned in SL. No. 4 through RTGS/NEFT/Money Transfer, exclusive of such day, or if the 15th day be sunday or other holiday, then on the first office working day after the 15th day. In default of payment within the period mentioned above, the property shall be resold after the issue of a fresh proclamation of sale. The deposit will be forfeited to the government and the defaulting purchaser shall forfeit all claims to the property or to any part of the sum for which it may subsequently be sold.
11. Property will be sold on **"As is & where is and No Complaint basis".**
12. The Properties can be inspected on **26-05-2025** between 12:00 hours & 16.00 hours.
13. Properties will not be sold below the upset price.
14. Recovery Officer have the absolute right to accept or reject the bid or postpone/cancel the sale without assigning any reason.
15. Intending bidders are advised to peruse copies of title deed available with the **Ms. Sushma Krishnadasan, Chief Manager, Mob. No. 7247770078** and also check identity and correctness of property details and encumbrances etc from their own sources also. DRT will not be responsible for correctness etc.
16. Details regarding e-auctioning shall be obtained from **M/s C-1 India Pvt. Ltd., Website : https://www.bankeauctions.com, helpline No. 0124-4302020/21/22/23/24, for help a bidder in e-auction contact to Mr. Mithalesh Kumar on Mob. No. : 7080804466, E-mail ID: mpcg@c1india.com or E-mail ID: support@bankeauctions.com**
17. Further property details if required shall be obtained from **Ms. Sushma Krishnadasan, Chief Manager, Mob. No. 7247770078**
18. The bidders may participate in the e-auction by quoting / bidding from their own offices / places of their choice internet connectivity shall have to be ensured by each bidder himself. DRT / Bank / Services Provider shall not be held responsible for the internet connectivity, Network problems, system crash down, power failure etc.

Place: Jabalpur **(Priti Desai)**
Date: 21.04.2025 **RECOVERY OFFICER**

बैंक ऑफ इंडिया Bank of India BOI

Zonal Office: MIG- 15, Rajeshwar Building, Shivnagar, Damoh Road, Jabalpur (M.P.)- 482002
Email Id- Jabalpur.ard@bankofindia.co.in

POSSESSION NOTICE For Immovable Property (See Rule 8(1))

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of **Bank of India** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act. 2002, and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued a demand notice on the below mentioned dates to the below mentioned borrowers/guarantors to repay the amount mentioned below within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrowers/guarantors and public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in the exercise of powers conferred on him under Sub-Section (4) of Section 13 of Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002 on the below mentioned Possession Date. The borrowers/guarantors in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property shall be subject to the charge of Bank of India for the amount mentioned below and interest thereon, against the name of borrowers/guarantors. The borrower's/guarantors' attention is invited to provisions of Sub Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured asset.

Name of the Borrower / Guarantor	₹ Amount Demanded	Description of Immovable Property	Demand Notice Date / Possession Date
Borrower/Mortgagor- 1. Mr. Umesh Soni, House No. 66/1, Mohan Nagar Ward, Ward No. 34, PH No. 65, Circle Sagar-1, Sagar (M.P.)- 470002 **Co-Borrower- 2. Mr. Sonik Soni,** House No. 66/1, Mohan Nagar Ward, Ward No. 34, PH No. 65, Circle Sagar-1, Sagar (M.P.)- 470002 **Branch**: Berkhedi (M.P.)	**Rs. 19,11,037.82** + Interest and expenses thereon	EQM of Property / House situated at Part of House No. 66/1, Mohan Nagar Ward, Ward No. 34, Circle Sagar 1, Sagar (M.P.) total admeasuring 628.25 sq.ft. standing in the name of **Shri Umesh Soni**. **Boundaries**- North- 10' Wide Road CC, South- Swetamber Jain Mandir, East- House of Surendra Dubey, West- House of Abhinav Pateriya.	29-01-2025 / 24-04-2025
Borrower/Mortgagor- 1. Miss Ritu Sharma D/o Mr. Dayal Chand Sharma, Futera Ward No. 02, Narsingh Mandir Ke Pass, Damoh, Tehsil and District- Damoh (M.P.)- 470661 **Guarantor- 2. Amit Sharma S/o Late Mr. Dayal Chand Sharma,** Futera Ward No. 02, Narsingh Mandir Ke Pass, Damoh, Tehsil and District- Damoh (M.P.)- 470661 **Branch**: Damoh M.P.)	**Rs. 13,59,617/-** + Interest and expenses thereon	(A) Futera Ward No. 02, District- Damoh, P.C.- 16, Sheet No. 15, Halka No. 16/31, Plot No. 585/1, 585/4, Area- 1575 sq.ft. Registry Dated 31.03.2015, Pustak No. A1, Granth No. 6275, Page No. 51/56 Serial Number 4065, admeasuring 1575 sq.ft. standing in the name of **Miss Ritu Sharma D/o Mr. Dayal Chand Sharma**. **Boundaries: As per Sale Deed**- East- Kumari Ritu Sharma Ka Bhawan, West- Moolchand Soni Ka Bhawan, North- Mahakali Chourahe Se Narsingh Mandir Link Road, South- CP Tiwari Ka Bhawan. (B) Futera Ward No. 02, District- Damoh, P.C.- 16, Sheet No. 15, Plot No. 585/1, 585/4 New No. 585/7, Area- 1023 sq.ft. Registry Dated 08.07.2010, Pustak No. A1, Granth No. 5316, Page No. 1/7, Serial Number 1196, admeasuring 1023 sq.ft. standing in the name of **Miss Ritu Sharma D/o Mr. Dayal Chand Sharma**. **Boundaries: As per Sale Deed**- East- Bhagwati Tiwari Ka Bhawan, West- Shiv Narayan Ka Makan, North- Mahakali Chourahe Se Narsingh Mandir Link Road, South- Chand Prakash Tiwari Ka Makan.	10-10-2024 / 24-04-2025
Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s)- 1. Mrs. Jyoti Chile W/o Sanjay Chile, 232, Maganj Ward Number 1, Palamdi Chauraha, Damoh (M.P.)- 470661 **Borrower- 2. Mr. Sanjay Chile S/o Raghunandan Chile,** 232, Maganj Ward Number 1, Palamdi Chauraha, Damoh (M.P.)- 470661 **Borrower- 3. M/s Chile Medicose Prop. Mr. Sanjay Chile S/o Raghunandan Chile,** 232, Maganj Ward Number 1, Palamdi Chauraha, Damoh (M.P.)- 470661 **Branch**: Damoh M.P.)	**Rs. 9,04,671/-** + Interest and expenses thereon	(A) EQM of freehold immovable property situated at Maa Ganj Ward No. 01, KH No. 463/1, 464/1, 465/1, PH No. 16, Tehsil & District Damoh (M.P.) Admeasuring 238.75 Sqmt. in the name of **Mrs. Jyoti Chile W/o Mr. Sanjay Chile (Guarantor)**. **Boundaries:** East- House of Jagat Ram Huda, West- Palandi Chauraha to Rai Chauraha Road, North- Common Wall of Ramsahay Jain, South- Common Wall of Kusum Bai.	27-11-2024 / 24-04-2025

Place: Jabalpur, Date: 29/04/2025 **Authorised Officer, Bank of India**

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE & EMPOWERMENT
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Inviting Online Applications for National Entrance Test for Scheme for Residential Education for Students in High Classes in Targeted Areas (SHRESHTA (NETS))-2025

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has entrusted the responsibility of conducting National Entrance Test for Scheme for Residential Education for Students in Higher Classes in Targeted Areas (SHRESHTA (NETS))- 2025. Scheme for Residential Education for Students in Higher Classes in Targeted Areas (SHRESHTA) provides for high quality education for meritorious Scheduled Castes (SCs) students only, in CBSE-affiliated reputed residential schools. Approximately 3,000 seats would be provided in class 9th and 11th fully funded by the Central Government.

The National Entrance Test for SHRESTHA (NETS) will be conducted in offline mode by National Testing agency (NTA) towards the admission for class 9th and 11th for Schedule caste Students.

The schedule of Examination activities is as follows:

Submission of Application online	15 April 2025 to 05 May 2025 (Upto 05:00 PM)
Correction in Particulars	06 May 2025 to 07 May 2025
Pattern of Test	Multiple Choice Question (MCQ)
Duration of Test	03 Hours (180 minutes)
Mode of Test	Pen & Paper on the OMR
Question Paper Medium	Bilingual (Hindi and English)
Date of Examination	01st June 2025 (Sunday)
Exam Fee	NIL
Timing of Examination	02.00 PM to 05.00 PM (3 Hours)
Downloading of Admit Cards from NTA website	25th May 2025
Website (s)	https://exams.nta.ac.in/SHRESHTA/
Declaration of Result	With in 04 to 06 weeks after exam

The candidates are requested to fill the application form carefully. Information about the eligibility, scheme of examination, examination centers, examination timings, procedure for applying etc. are contained in the Information Bulletin hosted on the website of NTA: **https://exams.nta.ac.in/SHRESHTA/.**

Candidates who are desirous of applying for the exam may go through the Information Bulletin and apply online at **https://exams.nta.ac.in/SHRESHTA/**, only during the period between **15.04.2025 to 05.05.2025**.

The candidates and their parents are advised to keep visiting the NTA website for latest updates.

For any queries or /clarifications, candidates can call NTA Help Desk at 011 40759000 (Call) or write to NTA at **shreshta@nta.ac.in** (Email).

CBC 38101/11/0003/2526

बैंक ऑफ महाराष्ट्र Bank of Maharashtra
भारत सरकार का उपक्रम

JABALPUR ZONAL OFFICE, WRIGHT TOWN, JABALPUR PH: 0761-2480065,67,68
Branch - Satna

AUCTIONING OF GOLD ORNAMENTS

The under mentioned persons are hereby informed that they have failed to pay off the liability in the loan accounts. Notices sent to them by Registered Post have been returned undelivered to the Bank. They are therefore requested to pay off the liability and other charges and redeem the pledged securities on or before **29/05/2025** failing which the said securities will be sold by the Bank in public auction at the cost of the borrower at the Banks premises between **11.00 AM to 03.00 PM.** on **30/05/2025** or on any other convenient date thereafter without further notice at the absolute discretion of the Bank. Parties interested in purchase of the Gold Ornaments may participate in the auction.

SN	Name & address of the borrower	Account No.	Name of Branch	Description of Articles (Net wt. in Gms)	Purity (Carat)	Date of Auction	Total Dues
1.	Smt. ROSHNI AGRAWAL W/O DEEPAK AGRAWAL Address - Post Satna District Satna (M. P.)	60481432366	Satna	Kangan(02 Nos)-26.00 Gms Rudrakshmala(01)-20.00 Gms Mangalsutra(01)-6.00 Gms Stud(06)-9.00 Gms Chain(01)-6.00 Gms Ring(05)-10.00 Gms Nath(01)+Bendy(01) +Locket(01)-10.00 Gms Total(19)-87.00Gms	18	30/05/2025 Between 11.00 AM to 03.00 PM	Rs.396000/- plus interest and charges wef 08.02.2025
2.	Smt. ROSHNI AGRAWAL W/O DEEPAK AGRAWAL Address - Post Satna District Satna (M. P.)	60510891851	Satna	Bangles(04)-33.00 Gms Haar(02)-42.28 Gms Earrings(08)-20.23 Gms Chain(01)-19.62 Gms Locket(01)-4.70 Gms Rings(04)-14.70 Gms Total(20)-134.53 Gms	18	30/05/2025 Between 11.00 AM to 03.00 PM	Rs 700000/- plus interest and charges wef 08.02.2025

Conditions for Auction-

1. No responsibility attaches to the bank for the quality and the specifications of gold. The gold are being auctioned in **"as is where is"** condition at risk of the borrower and purchaser.
2. The gold proposed to be auctioned may be inspected on **29/05/2025** during office hours in presence of Branch Manager/Officer in charge in respective branches.
3. The Bank reserves the its right to accept or reject any bid without assigning any reason whatsoever.
4. The successful bidder will borne GST as applicable rate on final bidding amount.
5. Those parties interested in taking part in public auction should submit a refundable deposit of Rs 10000/- before 03.00 PM on or before **29/05/2025** at Bank of Maharashtra in above mentioned branches and get receipt.
6. Public auction for gold will take place on **30/05/2025** between **11.00 AM to 03.00 PM** in above mentioned branches.

Date : 29/04/2025 **Authorised Officer, Bank of Maharashtra**

IPL: Delhi Capitals eye comeback against KKR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Delhi Capitals (DC) would aim for an improved batting effort in the middle overs when they face a struggling Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in their Indian Premier League match here on Tuesday.

DC have suffered two defeats in their last four matches, including a loss to Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Sunday, and will look to avoid any hiccups at the business end of the tournament.

Abhishek Porel has batted with plenty of aggressive intent at the top of the order but veteran Faf fu Plessis will quickly need to get used to the slow nature of surface at Kotla after struggling in his comeback game. KL Rahul has been DC's leading run-getter this season but could not accelerate against the spinners on Sunday night. He would back himself to take on the likes of Sunil Narine and Varun Chakaravarthy. .

With quality spinners in their ranks, KKR could pose a stiff challenge for the home. The Ajinkya Rahane led-side is slightly low on confidence after a tough outing against Punjab Kings in a rain-hit match.

A solid innings is expected from Karun Nair to ensure Rahul isn't left to shoulder the burden alone in the middle-order.

In the bowling department, DC skipper Axar Patel led from the front with two wickets but found little support from others. Star pacer Mitchell Starc, who went wicketless against RCB, will look to exploit the weaknesses in his former team, while Kuldeep Yadav, with his deceptive googlies, remains a threat in the middle overs.

DC's fielding has also left much to be desired against RCB, with Porel dropping a crucial catch of Krunal Pandya on Sunday night.

KKR, meanwhile, have managed just seven points so far and are placed seventh in the standings, having failed to collect any

points from their last three matches, including two losses and a no-result.

Rahane will be desperate to arrest the slide and keep their playoff hopes alive, with another defeat making the task tougher. Issues have cropped up across departments for KKR.

Their batting lacks a settled look, with Quinton de Kock and Rahmanullah Gurbaz being rotated in the opening slot alongside Narine, while the side has relied heavily on Rahane and youngster Angkrish Raghuvanshi to score runs. The middle-order trio of Venkatesh Iyer, Andre Russell, Rinku Singh and Ramandeep Singh has struggled to make a significant impact.

Bowling has been another area of concern, with KKR failing to break opening stands, allowing teams to post big totals — as seen in the last game where PBKS added 120 for the opening wicket. While KKR managed to pull things back at the death, it will require a collective effort from Chakaravarthy, Vaibhav Arora, and Harshit Rana to stem the flow of runs against DC.

Teams

Delhi Capitals: Axar Patel (c), Jake Fraser-McGurk, Abishek Porel, Karun Nair, KL Rahul (wk), Tristan Stubbs, Ashutosh Sharma, Vipraj Nigam, Mitchell Starc, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohit Sharma, Mukesh Kumar, Sameer Rizvi, Darshan Nalkande, Donovan Ferreira, Tripurana Vijay, Dushmantha Chameera, Faf du Plessis, T Natarajan, Ajay Jadav Mandal, Manvanth Kumar L, Madhav Tiwari.

Kolkata Knight Riders: Ajinkya Rahane (c), Rinku Singh, Quinton de Kock (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Rovman Powell, Manish Pandey, Luvnith Sisodia, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Moeen Ali, Ramandeep Singh, Andre Russell, Anrich Nortje, Vaibhav Arora, Mayank Markande, Spencer Johnson, Harshit Rana, Sunil Narine, Varun Chakaravarthy, Chetan Sakariya.

People are forgetting importance of partnerships: Kohli

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Indian superstar Virat Kohli has underlined the importance of stitching partnerships in T20 cricket, especially on wickets where heaving the willow from the word go is not possible.

The pitches in the IPL thus far have been on the slower side, not allowing the batters to go hammer and tongs from ball one. However, the likes of Kohli and K L Rahul have flourished in challenging batting conditions.

Kohli collected his sixth half-century in 10 IPL innings against Delhi Capitals on Sunday, helping RCB maintain their unbeaten run away from home.

"It was a top win, especially looking at the surface. We saw a few games here and this wicket played out differently compared to those. Whenever there's a chase on, I keep checking with the dugout, whether we're on course," Kohli, who played a second-fiddle to Krunal Pandya, said after the win.

Kohli elaborated on his batting methodology, saying he analyses the conditions and changes his style of play accordingly. "(What) the total (is) on the board. What the conditions are like. Who are the bowlers that are due to bowl. Who are the bowlers that are going to be hard to get away," Kohli explained when asked how he plans the chase.

"I try and make sure my singles and doubles don't stop so that the game doesn't get stagnant. People are forgetting the importance of partnerships and that's

coming to the fore in this tournament to try and dominate the bowlers through partnerships and professionalism."

Krunal, who struggled initially to get going, eventually hit his first fifty in IPL in nine years.

"Krunal was outstanding, he can make an impact and it was just about time. We've communicated beautifully, Krunal kept telling me to stay while he took his chances," said Kohli.

After Kohli's dismissal, Tim David smashed 19 runs off just five balls to knock off the winning runs.

Talking about the finishers, Kohli said: "We have the extra power in Tim David, there's Jitesh as well. That firepower at the back end of the innings definitely helps you. And now Romario as well."

He also praised the low-profile spin duo of Krunal and Suyash Sharma. "Hazlewood and Bhuvi are world-class bowlers, there's a reason why Josh has the Purple Cap.

"Krunal was outstanding the way he varied his pace. Suyash has been the dark horse for us, even if he doesn't have the wickets. Our spinners keep attacking in the middle overs."

We were 10-15 runs short: Axar

Delhi Capitals skipper Axar Patel said his team was 10-15 runs short of a competitive total and rued the missed chances on the field after the six-wicket loss to RCB. "I thought in the first innings, the wicket was a bit tough but due to dew, it eased out in the second innings. We don't think anything we could have done different. If a batter could have accelerated, we could have got 10-15 runs extra.

"KL was batting well so I wanted him at number four. One side of the ground was shorter as well so we sent him at number four."

Adjudged the Player of the Match for his all-round show, Krunal, who took one wicket along with his unbeaten 73, said he was happy to perform for his new team.

"It is always good to see the results. Sometimes when you have put the hard work behind the scenes and feels good when it comes off. It is quite satisfying," he said. "My role was clear. If we lose three early wickets, I can go and make sure we stitch a partnership. We have such great power hitters — David, Jitesh and Shepherd. We can take down the bowling. Glad that I fulfilled my role."

"When Virat is at the other end, it is quite easy. First 20 balls, It was scratchy for me. But he kept backing me. Then I got his mojo. So, a lot of credit to Virat."

On his bowling, Krunal said: " I have always been an economical bowler. As a bowler, I have always wanted to be one step ahead. I have worked on my bowling. So, if you see the variations in speed.

"Knowing the batsmen's strength, I am trying to use it to my advantage. Glad it is using my favour."

Women's tri-series: India to face South Africa

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colombo

Their campaign off to a dominant start, a confident India will look to maintain momentum when they face South Africa in their second match of the women's tri-series here on Tuesday.

The Indian team extended its winning streak in ODIs to seven matches with a comprehensive nine-wicket victory over hosts Sri Lanka in the tournament opener on Sunday.

The 'Women in Blue' excelled across all three departments. The bowlers, led by the spinners Sneh Rana, Deepti Sharma and Shree Charani, restricted Sri Lanka to a sub-par total, while the top three — Pratika Rawal, Smriti Mandhana, and Harleen Deol — played fluent innings with the bat.

Their fielding was razor-sharp as well, and they will be confident of producing a similar performance against a South African side they haven't lost to in this format since March 2022.

India had beaten South Africa 3-0 the last time the two teams met in a 50-over series. The Indian players have also enjoyed recent game time in the Women's Premier League, adding to the squad's match readiness.

Spinners are once again expected to play a crucial role. However, the Indian team will continue to closely monitor the performance of its pacers in the absence of key players as it looks to identify a core group ahead of the 50-over World Cup, to be held at home later this year.

Meanwhile, South Africa, who open their campaign on Tuesday, are trying to find their rhythm under new coach Mandla Mashimbyi, who was appointed last year.

The 44-year-old, however, has no prior coaching experience in women's cricket.

South Africa will be without senior all-rounder Marizanne Kapp, who has been rested for the series, but they will lean on the in-form Sune Luus, Laura Wolvaardt, Nadine de Klerk, and Chloe Tryon. Masabata Klaas, along with allrounders Annerie Dercksen and de Klerk, will shoulder the pace duties.

Teams

India: Pratika Rawal, Smriti Mandhana, Harleen Deol, Harmanpreet Kaur(c), Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh(w), Deepti Sharma, Kashvee Gautam, Arundhati Reddy, Sneh Rana, Nallapureddy Charani, Yastika Bhatia, Amanjot Kaur, Tejal Hasabnis, Shuchi Upadhyay.

South Africa: Laura Wolvaardt(c), Tazmin Brits, Sune Luus, Annerie Dercksen, Lara Goodall, Nadine de Klerk, Chloe Tryon, Sinalo Jafta(w), Nonkululeko Mlaba, Masabata Klaas, Ayabonga Khaka, Karabo Meso, Miane Smit, Nondumiso Shangase, Seshnie Naidu.

Sunil Joshi biggest name in contention for spin coach's role at BCCI's COE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Former India left-arm spinner Sunil Joshi has thrown his hat in the ring for the post of spin bowling coach at BCCI's Centre of Excellence (COE) that was vacated by Sairaj Bahutule earlier this year. The COE was earlier known as the National Cricket Academy when it was based out of the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru. It remains in the city but is now operational from a new location after BCCI purchased land to build a more expansive facility.

Bahutule resigned to become an assistant coach in IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals. The 54-year-old Joshi, who played 15 Tests and 69 ODIs for India between 1996 and 2002, is currently working with Ricky Ponting in the Punjab Kings IPL team and has also coached Uttar Pradesh during the domestic season.

He has also worked with Bangladesh's national men's team as its spin bowling consultant.

According to sources in the BCCI, Joshi appeared for his interview online in front of a three-member panel comprising COE's Head of Cricket VVS Laxman, chairman of men's selection committee Ajit Agarkar and General Manager (Cricket Operations) Abbey Kuruvilla.

There were four others, who appeared for the interview in person, including India U-19 women's team coach Nooshin Al Khadeer, who was an off-spinner during her playing days.

She represented the country in five Tests and 78 WODIs and has been working in the erstwhile NCA setup for some years now. Another strong candidate is believed to be Rakesh Dhruv, a former Gujarat and Saurashtra left-arm spinner. Veteran off-spinner Pritam Gandhe, a domestic doyen from Vidarbha, has also been interviewed for the post.

When a senior BCCI official was asked about the interviews for the position, he said: "Obviously, Sunil Joshi has the best CV out of all the other candidates. In case of Nooshin, the BCCI is also going to have an elaborate women's wing with dedicated staff for international, national and domestic age-group women's cricketers."

"While playing elite level does embellish the CV and Sunil is the only (men's) Test cricketer among those who appeared for interview, his biggest plus is considerable experience in elite level coaching.

"He has coached multiple first-class teams, has been a part of IPL coaching set-up and also coached senior men's international team. And do not forget, he is from Bengaluru, which makes a lot of sense logistically," he said.

But even Dhruv cannot be ruled out as he has played a lot of cricket for Saurashtra and Gujarat. Most of the candidates were asked about their vision for the role.

The chosen candidate will be expected to not just provide technical insight to international stars like Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav or Washington Sundar but also work with a host of India A, India U-19 and top domestic performers.

Twelve teams to compete in Arjan Singh Memorial hockey tournament

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chandigarh

Twelve teams will compete in the sixth edition of the Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh Memorial hockey tournament to be held here from April 29 to May 6. Air Force Hockey team from Bangladesh will be one of the 12 sides taking part in the tournament, Air Marshal S Sivakumar said on Monday.

The other participating teams include Indian Air Force, Chandigarh XI, Punjab & Sind Bank, Central Industrial Security Force, Army XI, Indian Navy, Indian Railways and Rail Coach Factory.

The tournament winning team will get a prize money of ₹three lakh while the runners-up side will pocket ₹two lakh. Man of the match for each match will get Rs 10,000 while the player of the tournament will pocket ₹25,000.

The matches will be played at Raghbir Singh Bhola Hockey Ground, 3 Base Repair Depot, Air Force Station here on league-cum-knockout basis.

Air Force Sports Control Board has been organising the prestigious hockey tournament in the memory of legendary late Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh at 3 BRD, Air Force Station, Chandigarh since 2018.

> To promote hockey, the game in which our country has excelled for so many years in the international arena and to bring back its glory
>
> — YS PANGHAL, ORGANISING SECRETARY

"Considering the eminence of the tournament in the Indian hockey scenario and the initiatives being taken by the Air Force Sports Control Board to encourage hockey at all levels, an all out effort is being made to promote the event," Sivakumar said.

Sivakumar said the organisers are hoping participation of more overseas teams, including from the UK, in next year's edition.

The organisers also plan to hold the event alternately in Chandigarh and Bengaluru beginning next year, he said.

Group Captain Y S Panghal, Organising Secretary of the event, briefed about the tournament.

"Our air warriors have toiled hard and proved their mettle at all competitive levels and have brought laurels to the country as well as the Indian Air Force," Panghal said. "To promote hockey, the game in which our country has excelled for so many years in the international arena and to bring back its glory, it is strongly felt that there should be quality tournaments in the country where emerging talent competes and gets exposure to the fast pace game.

"This has resulted in the evolution of the Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh Memorial Hockey tournament since 2018," Panghal said.

KL Rahul should bat at four for India in next year's T20 World Cup: Kevin Pietersen

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KL Rahul is best placed to bat at number four and keep wickets for India in next year's T20 World Cup, believes Delhi Capitals (DC) mentor Kevin Pietersen.

With his intent in the shortest format being questioned in the past, Rahul has tweaked his approach to be the leading run-getter for Delhi Capitals this season.

The competition for the wicket-keeper-batter's slot in the national team is stiff with Rishabh Pant, Sanju Samson, Dhruv Jurel and Ishan Kishan being the other options for the selectors.

Rahul has not been a part of India's T20 setup since the 2022 World Cup but Pietersen reckons not only has he done enough to warrant a comeback, he is best suited for the wicket-keeper-batter's role.

"I'd bat KL at four for India in T20 cricket. I think you guys have got plenty of opening batters.

"But the way KL Rahul is playing cricket now, he would be my first choice to bat at four, and keep wickets for India," said Pietersen in response to a query after DC's loss to Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Sunday night.

At the start of the season, Rahul himself had talked about his renewed approach towards the T20 format.

Besides the stellar show in IPL, it was Rahul's recent performances for India in ODI cricket that left a huge impression on Pietersen, one of the best batters to have played for England.

"KL has been playing in a very positive manner since. Mid to late last year. We saw how he finished off a couple of the games for India and almost sealed the deal in the Champions Trophy in Dubai.

"I've had a lot of incredibly brilliant conversations with him about batting, a lot of deep and meaningful conversations because when you grow up as a youngster like he did, you get taught defence, elbow up, play in the V," he explained.

The big-hitter said it is not easy to change that approach after hitting the thirties. "You've got to change it and you've got to become a different kind of player for a different format which is evolving all the time. "It's very, very difficult. So the way that he has accepted that he's needed to change, the way that he has changed is of great, great credit to the person that he is," said Pietersen.

The next T20 World Cup will be jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

Fine with tough batting surfaces in T20s

Scores in the range of 250 were a common occurrence last IPL but the slower nature of pitches has made batting tougher this season. Pietersen has no issues with

that. "On wickets like these (the one at Feroz Shah Kotla), you've got to be methodical, you've got to find rhythm. Virat (Kohli) found rhythm this evening. KL got rhythm," he said.

"And I think that's where you see the true batter. The real batter that can come out there, and sort of monitor the situation, and it looks effortless... Is it good for T20 cricket to have the occasional wicket like this? I do not think it's a bad thing," he added.

Pietersen was not in favour of bowlers "just being served up into the stands every single ball". "...I don't think every night people want to see that. I don't really want to see it every night," Pietersen said.

Foundations can be laid in IPL

He has played in the IPL and more recently been a part of the commentary panel. This season, he is back in the dugout as a member of DC support staff. The 44-year-old spoke about his role in the team.

"I always knew that when I was playing franchise cricket, that no particular coach could change you over that four to six week period, or eight week period," he conceded.

However, he cited his interactions with Abhishek Porel to stress that changes introduced during the tournament can become permanent if persisted with over a period of time.

"Last night I was working on something. We are five weeks into the tournament, we have only got three or four weeks left of the tournament. And I said to him, I said, 'Abhi, this is not going to work for you tomorrow.'

"It might not work for you the next week. But if you keep working on it, in the next month, two months, three months, four months, I promise you this is going to help your game. And it's going to take you to a level where you're going to become a more destructive batter."