



INDIA is INDUS: PAKISTAN, the Water and Blood is Ours

MOHIT KANDHARI/RAHUL DATTA ■ Jammu/New Delhi

Following India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty, the political leadership in Pakistan is running high and dry, staring at a bleak future ahead. For the first time, India has decided to hit Pakistan where it hurts the most, agriculture, food, water and energy security. Sources in New Delhi said the Centre is planning to undertake a study to look into ways to maximise the use of the quantum of water from the three rivers that Pakistan had earlier used under the Indus Water Treaty, now that the agreement has been suspended. The proposal was made at a high-level meeting on Saturday chaired by Home Minister Amit Shah that discussed the future course of action on the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960, which has been kept in abeyance following the Pahalgalam terror attack. With the treaty now put in abeyance, the government is looking at

ways to utilise the water of the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab. After Friday's high-level meeting, Jal Shakti Minister CR Paatil asserted that the government is working on a strategy to ensure that not a single drop of water flows into Pakistan. "We will ensure that not a single drop of water flows into Pakistan from India," the Jal Shakti Minister had said after the meeting. According to an official, the Ministry has been asked to conduct a study to look at ways to utilise the water from the three western rivers. In response to India's decision on the water-sharing agreement, Pakistan's Senate, in a resolution, has said the move amounted to "an act of war". Coupled with this, the heightened tension along the line of control has also rattled Pakistan's military leadership, especially after Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India will wipe out the remaining land of terror and will identify, track and punish every terrorist and their backers who were responsible for the attack

in Pahalgalam "beyond their imagination". Virtually bending on their knees, Pakistan on Saturday offered to join any "neutral and transparent" probe into the Pahalgalam terrorist attack that killed 26 people. **After Friday's high-level meeting, Jal Shakti Minister CR Paatil asserted that the government is working on a strategy to ensure that not a single drop of water flows into Pakistan** — CR PAATIL, JAL SHAKTI MINISTER The horrific terror attack, one of the most provocative since the scrapping of Article 370 in 2019, has triggered a strong backlash from the government against Pakistan, which New Delhi accuses of harbouring and supporting cross-border terrorism. Addressing a graduation ceremony at the Pakistan Military Academy in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa's Kakul, Prime

Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that his country is open to taking part in a "credible" investigation. "The recent tragedy in Pahalgalam is yet another example of this perpetual blame game, which must come to a grinding halt. As a responsible country, Pakistan is open to participating in any neutral, transparent and credible investigation," Shehbaz Sharif said. However, referring to the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty by India, Sharif said any attempt to stop, reduce or divert the flow of water belonging to Pakistan would be responded to with full force and might. Sharif threatened to use all options if the water of its share was stopped by India. "Water is our lifeline and a vital national interest, and its availability will be safeguarded at all costs and under all circumstances," he said. If India cuts off or significantly reduces flows from the Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab, the impact will be immediate and severe on Pakistan's economy. To begin with, food production could

collapse, threatening food security for millions. Urban water supplies would dry up, causing unrest in cities. Lastly, Power generation would stall, crippling industries and homes. Joining the chorus, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari also threatened that blood would flow in rivers if water is stopped, in a sharp response to India's decision to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) after the Pahalgalam terror attack. Hitting out, Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri Saturday issued a sharp response to Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chief Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari's recent remarks on India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) following the Pahalgalam terror attack on Tuesday. Puri's comments come in the wake of Bhutto-Zardari's inflammatory speech at a public rally in Sukkur, Sindh province. Addressing supporters, the PPP chairman had said, "The Indus is ours and will remain ours — either our water will flow through it, or their blood." Responding to Bhutto-Zardari's state-

ment, Puri remarked, "I heard his statement. Tell him to jump somewhere in the water. Well, how will he when there will be no water? Do not dignify such statements. They will get to understand that." In Ramban, J & K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also came out to strongly rebuke Pakistan Premier Shehbaz Sharif's offer for a "neutral" probe into the Pahalgalam terror attack, while pointing out clearly that Islamabad had initially denied the incident and accused New Delhi of "staging" it. "First of all, they did not even recognise that something had happened in Pahalgalam. First, they said that India was behind it. For the people who made allegations against us in the first place, it is difficult to say anything about it now. I don't want to give much importance to their statements," Abdullah told reporters in Ramban. Abdullah's reaction came after the Pakistani Prime Minister, rattled by the increasing tensions with India, said he was ready for a "neutral and transparent investigation" into the terror attack that left 26 tourists dead on April 22.

DGCA issue detailed advisory after Pakistan closes airspace

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

Amid longer flight durations triggered by Pakistan's airspace closure, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Saturday issued a detailed advisory directing airlines to take better care of passengers as international flights are now taking longer and inform passengers at check-in time about rerouting, longer flying time and the possibility of an enroute halt for refuelling the aircraft and crew change. "Passengers will generally remain onboard such stops," says the advisory issued by DGCA CFO Captain Shweta Singh. "Airlines must ensure that catering uplift is revised based on actual travel time (including technical halt). This includes: adequate meals and beverages for the full duration, additional hydration and dry snacks and special meals as per requests." Pakistan has shut its airspace for Indian

airlines. Because of this, many international flights, especially those leaving from north Indian cities like Delhi, are being forced to take longer routes. This is causing delays and longer flying hours. **Airlines must ensure that catering uplift is revised based on actual travel time (including technical halt), this includes—adequate meals and beverages for the full duration** The advisory focuses on five main areas — pre-flight passenger communication, in-flight catering and comfort, medical preparedness and alternate aerodromes, customer service and support readiness, and intra-departmental coordination. DGCA said that due to recent developments involving international airspace clo-

sures and overflight restrictions, airline operations have been impacted. There are significant rerouting of international and regional flights, increased block times compared to scheduled durations, and possibility of technical halts enroute for operational or fuel requirements. Generally, block time refers to the duration of a flight from the origin to the destination. It is estimated that over 800 flights a week are likely to be impacted by longer flight times, increased fuel burn, and a few other complexities related to crew and flight scheduling, all of which would increase operational costs. According to data from Cirium, an aviation analytics company, currently there are almost 400 weekly westward international departures from North Indian airports—Delhi, Amritsar, Jaipur and Lucknow—that were routinely flying over Pakistan. Given that all these flights have return legs, the total num-

ber of affected flights goes up to around 800 from these airports. Of these, around 640 flights are from or to India's largest airport — Delhi's Indira Gandhi International airport — which is likely to be the most affected due to the move by Pakistan. The initial impact is already visible with Indian airlines' flights from North India to West Asia, the Caucasus, Europe, the UK, and North America's eastern region switching from their routine paths to longer routes, adding anywhere between 15 minutes to a few hours to the journey, depending on the distance and the location of the destination. In the pre flight passenger communication, the DGCA stated the airlines must inform passengers about routing changes due to airspace restrictions. "Communicate the revised total expected travel time (departure to arrival).

Tensions escalate along LoC

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

The Line of Control (LoC) between India and Pakistan is once again heating up in the aftermath of the Pahalgalam massacre, in which 26 tourists were killed and 17 others were wounded on April 22. Shattering peace, the Pakistan Army has been violating the February 2021 ceasefire agreement for the last two days by resorting to small arms firing across multiple locations along the LoC. The Indian Army has also given them a befitting reply. Meanwhile, anticipating punitive strikes by India, Pakistan has already issued a NOTAM (Notice to Airmen/Mariners) for the Arabian Sea and initiated a naval live fire exercise, while putting its military on full alert. The local commanders of the Indian Army have been constantly monitoring the ground situation. High alert has been

sounded to prevent any 'lethal' strike by the Border Action Team (BAT) of the Pakistan Army on the forward Indian posts. "On the night of 25-26 of April, 2025, unprovoked small firing was carried out by multiple Pakistan Army posts all across the Line of Control in Kashmir. Indian troops responded appropriately with small arms. No casualties reported," a statement of the Indian Army said. On February 21, 2025, the Indian army lodged a strong protest with Pakistan over recent incidents of cross-LOC firing at a Brigade Commander level Flag meeting that took place along the line of control near the Chakan-Da-Bagh crossing point in Poonch. After the ceasefire agreement of 2021, tensions escalated between India and Pakistan on several occasions as targeted strikes on the Indian army convoys, army camps were reported across Jammu and Kashmir.

Indian, Pakistani protesters face off in London

London: There was a face-off between Indian diaspora groups who gathered to protest Pakistan-backed terrorism in the wake of the Pahalgalam terrorist attack and counter-protesters outside the Pakistan High Commission here, which saw scenes of a Pakistani diplomatic official making threatening gestures. In videos posted by Indian community groups from Friday evening's protest on social media, the Pakistani official can be seen taunting them from the balcony of the mission building at Lowndes Square. He was holding a poster with a sketch of Captain Abhinandan Varthaman and the words "Chai is Fantastic" — a reference to the Indian Air Force (IAF) pilot's captivity in February 2019. **FULL REPORT ON P6**

Kailash Mansarovar Yatra to resume from June

New Delhi: India and China will, after a gap of five years, resume the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra from June. This move is seen as an attempt to normalise the ties between the two countries that nosedived following the standoff at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Saturday said the Yatra is set to take place from June to August via two routes — Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand and Nathu La in Sikkim. The pilgrimage to Mount Kailash and Mansarovar Lake in China's Tibet Autonomous Region holds religious significance to Hindus as well as Jains and Buddhists. "Kailash Mansarovar Yatra organised by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is set to take place during June to August 2025," it said. The Yatra was suspended initially in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently because of the military standoff between the two sides on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. **FULL REPORT ON P4**

ISRO flags off second stage of GSLV launch vehicle

Bengaluru: ISRO on Saturday announced that the second stage of its GSLV launch vehicle was flagged off by Chairman V Narayanan recently from the ISRO Propulsion Complex (IPRC), Mahendragiri, to the launch complex at Sriharikota. The Directors of ISRO Propulsion Complex (IPRC) and Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) also participated in the flag off ceremony which was held on March 24, it said. "This liquid stage is earmarked for the upcoming mission of GSLV (GSLV-F16) that will launch the NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) satellite. The launch campaign activities for this mission have already commenced at Sriharikota in the first week of April 2025," ISRO said, in a statement.

India lifted 171 million people from extreme poverty: World Bank

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York

India has lifted 171 million people from extreme poverty in the decade between 2011-12 and 2022-23, the World Bank said. "Over the past decade, India has significantly reduced poverty. Extreme poverty (living on less than \$ 2.15 per day) fell from 16.2 per cent in 2011-12 to 2.3 per cent in 2022-23, lifting 171 million people above this line," the World Bank said in its 'Poverty & Equity Brief' on India. It added that rural extreme poverty dropped from 18.4 per cent to 2.8 per cent, and urban from 10.7 per cent to 1.1 per cent, narrowing the rural-urban gap from 7.7 to 1.7 percentage points — a 16 per cent annual decline. The brief said that India also transitioned into the lower-middle-income category. Using the \$3.65 per day LMIC poverty line, poverty fell from 61.8 per cent to 28.1 per cent, lifting 378 million people out of poverty. Rural poverty dropped from 69 per cent to 32.5 per cent, and urban poverty from 43.5 per cent to 17.2 per cent, reducing the rural-urban gap from 25 to 15 percentage points with a 7 per cent annual decline. India's five most populous states — Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh—accounted for 65 per cent of the country's extreme poor in 2011-12 and contributed to two-thirds

of the overall decline in extreme poverty by 2022-23, it said. "Nevertheless, these states still accounted for 54 per cent of India's extremely poor (2022-23) and 51 per cent of the multidimensionally poor (2019-21)," the brief said adding that as measured by the multidimensional poverty index (MPI), non-monetary poverty declined from 53.8 per cent in 2005-06 to 16.4 per cent by 2019-21. The brief added that employment growth has outpaced the working-age population since 2021-22. Employment rates, especially among women, are rising, and urban unemployment fell to 6.6 per cent in Q1 FY24/25, the lowest since 2017-18. Recent data indicates a shift of male workers from rural to urban areas for the first time since 2018-19, while rural female employment in agriculture has grown. Highlighting the challenges that persist, the brief said that youth unemployment is 13.3 per cent, increasing to 29 per cent among tertiary education graduates. Only 23 per cent of non-farm paid jobs are formal, and most agricultural employment remains informal. Self-employment is rising, especially among rural workers and women. Despite female employment rate of 31 per cent, gender disparities remain, with 234 million more men in paid work. The World Bank Poverty and Equity Briefs (PEBs) highlight poverty, shared prosperity and inequality trends for over 100 developing countries.

Government cancels Junior Engineer leaves

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

Cracking the whip, the Delhi Government has cancelled all leaves for officers at the Junior Engineer (JE) level and above in the Delhi Jal Board, Public Works Department (PWD) and Irrigation & Flood Control (I&FC) departments until 15th September 2025 to complete the desilting of drains and take necessary measures to prevent waterlogging before the upcoming monsoon. Leave will be allowed only for serious medical emergencies with senior approval. The issue has become a recurring feature during monsoons due to multiple factors, including old drains and silt accumulation. Delhi gets inundated every monsoon with waterlogging and flooding due to incomplete desilting work and poor drainage management system on the ground. Last year, on the first day of monsoon, roads of most parts of South Delhi — AIIMS, Airport road, Dhaura Kuan, Jangpura, Lajpat Nagar, ITO — saw heavy waterlogging leading to traffic snarls. Last year, three students in Old Rajinder Nagar after they were trapped in a flooded basement of a coaching centre. In 2023, the Ring Road, ISBT Kashmere Gate, ITO, IP Road, Pragati Maidan Tunnel falling near Yamuna River inundated for three days, disrupting vehicular movement. "It is hereby ordered that leave of any kind will not be approved or recommended at any level of JE and above till 15th

September, 2025 except in case of extreme medical emergency of the officer or immediate family members. Leave under exceptional circumstances will only be approved at the level of Principal Secretary/Additional Chief Secretary", reads the order issued by Naveen Kumar Chaudhary Additional Chief Secretary, from the General Administration Department of Delhi government. **It is hereby ordered that leave of any kind will not be approved at any level of JE and above till 15th September, 2025 except in case of extreme medical emergency of the officer** "Every year due to severe problems of waterlogging, bad road conditions and flooding across the city during monsoon, people suffer a lot. As the monsoon is approaching fast, work has to be carried out on war footing by way of completion of desilting of drains, necessary measures to prevent waterlogging and flooding, repairs of roads and removal of unwanted materials on roads and drains across the city. Even during monsoon, all the concerned departments have to be on alert mode to meet any emerging challenge," said the order. Recently at a review meeting, the Chief Minister Rekha Gupta was informed that in 2023 and 2024, Delhi Traffic Police

has identified 335 waterlogging sites under PWD in Delhi, out of which work has been completed at 284 sites, while instructions have been given to complete the work at the remaining places expeditiously. Of the 335 waterlogging points under PWD, 232 short-term solutions and 52 long-term projects have already been completed. Work is ongoing at the remaining 51 points, which are being addressed on a priority basis. Under this, Junior Engineers and Assistant Engineers have been assigned responsibilities as designated officers at the field level, while Executive Engineers have been appointed as reviewing officers to monitor these works. All nodal officers have been told to submit their detailed action plans within a week. The 7 most critical waterlogging points will be directly monitored by the Principal Secretary and Engineer-in-Chief, PWD, ensuring robust oversight and accountability. Under this, work is being carried out to strengthen 101 roads under PWD, which have been directed to be completed before the monsoon. Additionally, repair work for potholes on the capital's roads is also being completed on a priority basis. Water and PWD Minister Parvesh Verma has said that all the 1,400 km of drains under the Public Works Department are to be desilted by May 31, and other agencies are also working to clean the drains under their jurisdiction.

Massive explosion at Iranian port kills five, injures over 700

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Muscat (Oman)

A massive explosion and fire rocked a port on Saturday in Southern Iran purportedly linked to a shipment of a chemical ingredient used to make missile propellant, killing five people and injuring more than 700 others. The blast at the Shahid Rajaei port happened as Iran and the United States met on Saturday in Oman for the third round of negotiations over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear programme. While no one in Iran outright suggested that the explosion came from an attack, even Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who is leading the talks, on Wednesday acknowledged that "our security services are on high alert given past instances of attempted sabotage and assassination operations designed to provoke a legitimate response." For hours, authorities in Iran offered no clear explanation for what caused the blast at the port, which is just outside of Bandar Abbas, though they did deny that the explosion had anything to do with the country's oil industry. However, the port took in a shipment of "sodium perchlorate rocket fuel" in March, the private security firm Ambrey said. The fuel is part of a shipment from China by two vessels to Iran first report-

ed in January by the Financial Times. The fuel 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 fire was reportedly the result of improper handling of a shipment of solid fuel intended for use in Iranian ballistic missiles," Ambrey said. Ship-tracking data analysed by The Associated Press put one of the vessels believed to be carrying the chemical in the vicinity in March, as Ambrey said. Iran hasn't acknowledged taking the shipment. The Iranian mission to the United Nations didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on Saturday. It's unclear why Iran wouldn't have moved the chemicals from the port, particularly after the Beirut port blast in 2020. That explosion, caused by the ignition of hundreds of tonnes of highly explosive ammonium nitrate, killed more than 200 people and injured more than 6,000 others. However, Israel did target Iranian missile sites where Tehran uses industrial mixers to create solid fuel. Social media footage of the explosion on Saturday at Shahid Rajaei saw reddish-hued smoke rising from the fire just before the detonation. That suggests a chemical compound being involved in the blast.



President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday attended the funeral Mass of Pope Francis at St Peter's Square here. Francis, who was the first non-European Pope in nearly 1,300 years, died on Monday. He was 88. Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs, Kiren Rijiju, Minister of State for Minority Affairs, George Kurian and Deputy Speaker of Goa Legislative Assembly, Joshua De Souza, who are part of the official Indian delegation led by the President, also attended the ceremony. "President Droupadi Murmu attended the funeral Mass of His Holiness Pope Francis at Saint Peter's Square in Vatican City," her office said in a post on X. Murmu reached here on Friday on a two-day visit to offer condolences on behalf of the government and people of India. Soon after, she paid homage to Pope Francis at the Basilica of St Peter. India had declared a three-day state mourning on the passing of Pope Francis. World leaders and a large number of Catholic followers attended Pope Francis' funeral on Saturday.

Government taking measures for employment opportunities: Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Saturday that his government is taking several measures to ensure that the opportunities for employment and self-employment keep growing.

Addressing the 15th edition of Rozgar Mela after distributing more than 51,000 appointment letters to recruits in different departments of the central government, he said it is a time for unprecedented opportunities for youngsters.

In the virtual event, he noted that the International Monetary Fund has said India will remain the fastest-growing major economy, asserting that employment opportunities will be rising in every sector.

The production and export in automobile and footwear industries have hit new records, generating employment in large numbers, Modi said.

Citing the difference his government has made, the prime minister listed out that cargo being handled through inland water transport has surged to 145 million tonnes from 18 million tonnes before 2014 while national waterways have increased from five to 110, and their length from 2,700 km to over 5,000 km. The prime minister said a big highlight was that growth has been inclusive and noted that the participation of women has risen in every sector.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually attends a Rozgar Mela event PTI

Three of the five toppers in this year's UPSC exam are women, he said, adding over 90 lakh self-help groups have more than 10 crore women working for them. India's women power is scaling new heights in fields ranging from bureaucracy to space and science, and the government is also focusing on empowering rural women, he said. In this decade, the youth has powered

country's youth continue to grow. Mentioning initiatives like Skill India, Startup India, and Digital India, the prime minister said they are creating new opportunities for the youth and providing an open platform to showcase their talents. India's youth are demonstrating to the world through their dedication and innovation the immense potential that the country possesses, he added. Modi asserted that the World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES), to be held in Mumbai, will also be a big opportunity for youngsters to showcase their skills on a global platform. They will also get to understand Artificial Intelligence and immersive media, and the event will infuse a new energy into the sphere of digital content, he said, adding that for innovators in the media, gaming, and entertainment, WAVES is an unprecedented opportunity to showcase their talent. In this budget, the prime minister said, the government has announced the 'Manufacturing Mission' with a goal to promote the 'Make in India' initiative and provide the country's youth with the opportunity to create products of global standards. 'Manufacturing Mission will not only support millions of MSMEs and small entrepreneurs across the country but will also open up new employment avenues nationwide,' Modi added.

Kailash Mansarovar Yatra to resume after 5-year pause

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India and China will, after a gap of five years, resume the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra from June. This move is seen as an attempt to normalise the ties between the two countries that nosedived following the standoff at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Saturday said the Yatra is set to take place from June to August via two routes — Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand and Nathu La in Sikkim.

The pilgrimage to Mount Kailash and Mansarovar Lake in China's Tibet Autonomous Region holds religious significance to Hindus as well as Jains and Buddhists. 'Kailash Mansarovar Yatra organised by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is set to take place during June to August 2025,' it said.

The Yatra was suspended initially in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently because of the military standoff between the two sides on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. The militaries of India and China completed disengagement of troops at the two remaining friction points of Demchok and Depsang under a pact sealed on October 21 last year.

Two days later, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks in the Russian city of Kazan and agreed to revive various bilateral dialogue mechanisms.

Following the Modi-Xi talks, the two

sides held a series of meetings in the last few months which were aimed at normalising the bilateral relations.

In January, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri visited Beijing and held talks with his Chinese counterpart Sun Weidong. In the meeting, the two sides decided to resume the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and agreed to take certain people-centric steps to 'stabilise and rebuild' ties.

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Saturday said the Yatra is set to take place from June to August via two routes — Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand and Nathu La in Sikkim

"This year, five batches, each consisting of 50 Yatris, and 10 batches, each consisting of 50 Yatris, are scheduled to travel through Uttarakhand State crossing over at Lipulekh Pass, and through Sikkim state crossing over at Nathu La Pass, respectively," the MEA said in the readout.

The applications for the Yatra can be submitted at the website: kmy.gov.in, it noted.

The Yatris will be selected from among applicants through a 'fair, computer-generated, random and gender-balanced' selection process, MEA said.

"Since 2015, the entire process commencing with on-line application till selection of Yatris is a fully computerised process," according to the MEA.

Kashmiriyat lives on as pony wallah loses his life, shielding guests

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

A pony wallah who laid down his life trying to save visitors to his homeland, a guide who rescued a family of 11 and countless locals are among those who added another dimension to Kashmir's hospitality when terror struck Pahalgam on a calm Tuesday afternoon.

In what is the deadliest attack in the Valley since the Pulwama strike in 2019, terrorists opened fire in Baisaran, a popular tourist spot in the upper reaches of Pahalgam in Kashmir, killing 26 people, mostly holidaymakers from other states.

As tourists and families of victims from across the country reached home from Kashmir and outrage spread, stories of locals helping those who were stuck in the terrifying ordeal flooded in. Kashmir, their stories told the world, was also about those who had saved their lives and extended a helping hand in times of their greatest crisis.

When the initial list of victims was made public, Syed Adil Hussain Shah's was the only name of a local. The story of his bravery made thousands, including Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah, attend his funeral on Wednesday in Pahalgam's Hapatnurd village.

As the families of Kaustubh Ganbote and Santosh Jagdale, two of the victims, stood face to face with the armed terrorists, the 30-year-old pony 'wallah' confront-

ed them asking why they were killing innocent people. In a courageous attempt to protect the tourist, the young man tried to snatch away the weapon. Shah succumbed to three bullets to the chest.

Asavari Jagdale, who lost her father Santosh Jagdale and uncle Kaustubh Ganbote, recalled being helped by another pony rider as they escaped the mayhem.

"I gathered courage and managed to escape with my mother and aunt. While coming down, my mother suffered leg injuries. A pony rider offered us support and hope. He gave us a pony ride to our driver," Asavari, who had travelled from Pune, recounted.

She added that her cab driver and pony ride operator were "like angels sent from God who stood by her at the time of the attack". "The pony ride operator did not leave us behind, he was with us. He rescued my aunt, mother and me from the spot," she said.

The cab driver remained in touch even after she left Srinagar and "offered to help in every possible way".

"He asked us to tell him any help we need, whether it was money. He is a driver who still wants to help us. He was crying on the call and also when I was leaving from Srinagar. I thanked him, I told him that because of his presence I did not feel lonely. He cried saying that he is sad for my loss. They were like angels sent by God."



Syed Adil Hussain Shah FILE PHOTO

Nazakat Ahmed Shah, a cousin of Shah, was also at the venue of the massacre and was instrumental in saving the lives of 11 tourists, including three children.

The 28-year-old had taken four couples and three children to Baisaran on the last leg of their Kashmir trip. Just before the group was about to leave the location, the sound of gunfire alerted Nazakat who fell to the ground with two of the children.

"My first concern was the safety of the tourist families. I took Lucky's kid and another child and lay down on the ground. The area was fenced so it was not easy to escape. I noticed a small opening and asked the families to move out through that opening. They asked me to save the chil-

dren first. I slipped through it with the two kids, and ran towards Pahalgam town," Nazakat said. After depositing the children in a safe place, he returned to the spot and escorted the others out safely. "Thanks to Allah, I took all our 11 guests safely to Pahalgam," he said.

The story of Nazakat's selfless act came out when Arvind Agrawal, one of the tourists, posted pictures of him and his daughter with Shah on his social media handle. "You saved our lives by risking your own, we will never be able to repay the debt of Nazakat Bhai," he wrote.

Kuldeep Sthapak, another tourist, wrote on social media: "Nazakat bhai, you not only saved my life that day, you kept humanity alive. I will never forget you for the rest of my life."

An indelible face of compassion above all else was tourist guide Sajad Ahmad Bhat. Videos of him scurrying down the mountainside with a child on his back were circulated widely and many wanted to know who this brave, helpful man was.

"Humanity above all... this is the murder of humanity," Bhat said.

When he reached the meadow, many were crying for help. "We carried the injured on our ponies and took them to the Pahalgam hospital. We took at least 18-20 injured on ponies. There were two-three other men who carried people on their back. I carried a child on my back, offered water, took him to the hospital," the

shawl vendor and guide said.

Termining the attack a blot on humanity, he said all of Kashmir is in mourning.

"They should have instead killed us, it should not have happened to them (the tourists). We want to tell all Indians that we stand with them... We are all Indians."

Then there were those who were saved by cautious locals.

A five-member family from Buldhana district in Maharashtra vacationing in Pahalgam was about to step out for local sightseeing on the fateful day, unaware of the terror attack, but was stopped by the owner and staff of their hotel from going out in view of the tense situation.

Another couple from Maharashtra was helped by locals in quickly moving away from the site and reaching their hotel safely. Sakshi and Krishna Lolge, hailing from Nanded in Maharashtra, were at the Baisaran meadow some 15 minutes before the gunman burst into the meadow.

"We heard the sound of firing after we moved a little away from the place," Sakshi said.

"If there was no support from local people, who helped us to move away fast, we would have not been able to make this video.

The local people helped the tourists a lot," she said in a video shot from her hotel. Her husband Krishna said their pony ride operators quickly rushed them down the hill.

Centre to study Pakistan's maximum water use

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Centre is planning to undertake a study to look into ways to maximise the use of the quantum of water from the three rivers that Pakistan had earlier used under the Indus Water Treaty, now that the agreement has been suspended, officials said. The proposal was made at a high-level meeting on Friday chaired by Home Minister Amit Shah that discussed the future course of action on the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960, which has been kept in abeyance following the Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people were killed.

Under the World Bank-brokered treaty, India was granted exclusive rights to the water of the eastern rivers - the Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi - amounting to an average annual flow of about 33 million acre-feet (MAF). The water of the western rivers - the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab - with an average annual flow of around 135 MAF, were largely allocated to Pakistan.

With the treaty now put in abeyance, the government is looking at ways to utilise the water of the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab.

After Friday's high-level meeting, Jal Shakti Minister C R Paatil asserted that the government is working on a strategy to ensure that not a single drop of water flows into Pakistan.

He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has issued a slew of directives, and the meeting was held to follow up on them. Shah made several suggestions at the meeting for their effective implementation. "We will ensure that not a single drop of water flows into Pakistan from India," the Jal Shakti Minister had said after the meeting. Sources said the government is working on a long-term plan to ensure the effective implementation of its decisions. According to an official, the ministry has been asked to conduct a study to look at ways to utilise the water from the three western rivers.

Experts have spoken about the lack of infrastructure that may limit India's capability of completely utilising the water it gets from the decision to suspend the treaty. "The real issue is with the western rivers where infrastructure limitations prevent us from immediately stopping water flows," Himanshu Thakkar of the South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People said.

CRPF QAT first team to respond to Pahalgam attack

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

A quick action team (QAT) of CRPF commandos was the first responder to the ghastly terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam. The team reached the Baisaran meadow only to find droves of holidaymakers rushing down and three men who were shot at, officials said on Saturday.

The Delta company location of the CRPF's 116 battalion is the nearest security base, about four to five kilometres, from the scenic tourist spot where Pakistan-sponsored terrorists killed 26 people, mostly tourists, on April 22.

Rajesh Kumar, the commanding officer of the CRPF battalion, was moving out of the camp when he saw a number of "ponywallahs" and some tourists pacing down hurriedly from the heights, prompting him to stop them and ask questions. The ponywallahs said, "sahab, kuch hua hai upar Baisaran mein, Shayad goliyan chali hain (sir, something has happened at Baisaran, Bullets have probably been fired)", the officials said.

The CO immediately asked his QAT, stationed nearby, to report and a team of about 25 commandos soon began the 40-45 minute trek on the slushy and rocky track to reach the meadow.

The troops, the officials said, were mindful while climbing up as there was a huge possibility of pin-pointed fire coming from the top or a grenade being lobbed by the terrorists.

In the meantime, the local CRPF unit erected checkpoints around Pahalgam town and "secured" vantage points near the incident spot, they added.

The company commander of the Delta unit, Assistant Commandant Raashi Sikarwar, also joined in and was "tasked by the CO to take care of women and children as many of them were injured, screaming and scared".

The CRPF unit was "astounded" to find three men with bullet injuries lying on the ground and some women, chil-

dren and men hiding at different places when they reached the meadow around 2:30 pm on the fateful day.

The injured were evacuated by the Central Reserve Police Force's (CRPF) QAT personnel even as they did a brief combing of the area to look for the assailants as it was "clear in their minds that it was a terrorist attack".

The local station house officer (SHO) of the Jammu and Kashmir Police had arrived at the scene by then and the two forces joined efforts to take control of the situation.

Bodies were scattered, one was found near the gate of the meadow while at one spot, three of four were piled up, the officials said.

One of the injured men died, while the other two survived and were admitted to a nearby government hospital. About 30 to 40 tourists were housed in the Delta company's mess and provided with food and water, the officials said.

A senior security officer said the CRPF Delta company has all its units deployed across the area, including with the local police, and only a platoon strength (about 22 to 24 personnel) is usually available at the base.

There is a unit of the 3rd battalion of the Rashtriya Rifles (RR) a little far from the incident spot, he said.

These forces are not deployed for the security of the Baisaran meadow like many other tourist spots in the Kashmir valley. The upper reaches and dense forest areas in the valley are secured by routine patrols and by way of deployment when additional troops arrive ahead of the annual Amarnath Yatra in late May or June, the officer said.

The security forces, including the police, paramilitary and Army, have been asked to intensify operations and keep a "heightened vigil" in the wake of the attack, the biggest after the 2019 Pulwama strike, in which 40 CRPF personnel were killed when their convoy was bombed by terrorists.



RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat along with Swami Vignyanand and DU VC Yogesh Singh, Swami Krishnashah Vidyarthi and others during the launch of book 'Hindu Manifesto' by Swami Vignyanand, at the PM Museum in New Delhi PTI

Humans to blame for drop in three-striped roofed turtles

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The three-striped roofed turtle, once found in numbers in the Ganga and Brahmaputra rivers, has now largely disappeared with a government-funded study detecting an over 80 per cent drop in its population in half a century, largely due to habitat loss, illegal trade and pollution.

The study, supported by the National Mission for Clean Ganga, has revealed an alarmingly low genetic diversity in the rescued population of the freshwater reptile species, raising concerns over its long-term survival. Underscoring the urgent need for science-backed conservation efforts, the study called for long-term genetic tracking, stricter enforcement against poaching, and efforts to restore the semi-aquatic turtle's habitat, especially in its last stronghold - the National Chambal Sanctuary. The sanctuary is located on the Chambal

river near the tri-point of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

"The population of Batagur dhongoka (three-striped roofed turtle) has experienced a substantial decline due to entanglement in fishing nets, the construction of major hydrological projects affecting river flow dynamics and nesting beaches, water pollution, and the detrimental effects of illegal trade," the study said.

Researchers from the Wildlife Institute of India analysed genetic samples from the turtles housed at two Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Centres - TRRC in Varanasi and GARRC in Narora - part of a captive care initiative under the Namami Gange programme. Using mitochondrial DNA and microsatellite markers, the study found that the population exhibit low levels of genetic variation, a warning sign for any species on the brink.

The genetic data showed only weak structuring between the two populations,

one from TRRC in Varanasi and the other from GARRC in Narora, suggesting past intermixing but also indicating the danger of inbreeding. The average heterozygosity was under 50 per cent and many individual turtles carried similar genetic markers. Moreover, the demographic pattern estimated by the Bayesian skyline plot (BSP) analysis indicates historical stability followed by growth in the effective population size, with a recent reduction in population size from 2,000 years ago.

The study flagged a major concern for the ongoing rehabilitation programme - a lack of clarity around the geographic origin of some rescued turtles. This not only makes it harder to plan successful reintroductions but also raises the risk of outbreeding depression if genetically mismatched turtles are placed with wild populations, it said.

"Gathering information on the geographic origin of individual (turtles) is

sometimes difficult and the release of these unknown origin rescue individuals in the wild is often accompanied by high initial losses of released individuals.

"Hence, while a small number of individual (turtles) are released locally, genetic monitoring is vital to understand the wider and long-term contemporary genetic diversity for effective management and conservation interventions," the research said. In order to ensure the effective protection and conservation of the three-striped roofed turtle, the government has taken a proactive measure by incorporating it into Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2022. Species under this schedule enjoys the highest level of protection.

The research from last year was among several key documents unveiled on a new portal launched by the Ministry of Jal Shakti to promote access to ecological data and conservation insights.

Rush at Attari-Wagah border

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chandigarh

Ensure exemplary punishment for the Pahalgam terror attack perpetrators but spare the regular folks from bearing the brunt. That was the common refrain among Pakistani visitors at the Attari-Wagah land route racing to exit India ahead of a short deadline.

India has announced that all visas issued to Pakistani nationals will be revoked from April 27 and advised Indians residing in Pakistan to return home at the earliest, as tensions between the two countries escalated over the Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people, mostly tourists.

Medical visas issued to Pakistani nationals are valid till April 29.

Most of the Pakistani nationals exiting through the told PTI that they had come to meet their kin in India. Some were here to attend weddings but now have to rush back home without participating.

"It was my niece's wedding today. I came after 10 years but still couldn't attend the ceremony," said a visibly upset Baskari, a Karachi resident who had come to Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur along with her husband.

Her husband Mohd Rasheed said that they arrived in India on April 10 on a 45-day visa. "My wife was born in India and my in-laws live here. The wedding was to take place in Saharanpur district today. Police came to our relative's home and asked us to leave immediately," he said.

His wife said, "It is saddening to leave on the day of the wedding. Peace should prevail between the two nations."

"Whatever happened in Pahalgam is wrong. Those behind it should be severely punished, but the common people should not have to face the brunt. People carrying out such acts have nothing to do with religion. Common people on both sides love each other. A handful of terrorists spoil the atmosphere," Rasheed said.



Pakistani nationals wait for clearance at the integrated check post at the Attari-Wagah border to move to their country on Saturday

Another Pakistani national heading back home said he was in India for his mother's treatment and was lucky enough that it was over just a couple of days ago.

Bali Ram from Ghotki in Pakistan's northern Sindh said he was visiting his three daughters in Raipur when the news of the attack broke.

"I came on April 5 but now have to rush back. Those who carried out the act should be punished, but what in the fault of innocent tourists?"

Daulat from Karachi was in Jodhpur on a 45-day visa for a wedding. "Whatever happened (in Pahalgam) is not good. This should not have happened," she said while dragging a few trolley suitcases towards the exit gate.

Muzammil strongly condemned the April 22 terrorist attack, saying that "they should be hanged". An elderly man from Rawalpindi said he had come to Lucknow for a kin's wedding but had to cut short the trip now.

On Friday, Union Home Minister Amit

Shah called up the chief ministers of all the states and asked them to ensure that no Pakistani stays in India beyond the deadline set for leaving the country.

After Shah's telephonic conversations with the chief ministers, Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan held a video conference with the chief secretaries of all the states and asked them to ensure that all Pakistani nationals whose visas were revoked must leave India by the fixed deadline.

As many as 229 Pakistani nationals visiting India have returned home so far through the Attari-Wagah land route after the Centre set the deadline. A total of 392 Indian nationals visiting the neighbouring nation also returned, officials said.

The already strained relations between India and Pakistan nosedived further after the Pahalgam terror attack, with New Delhi announcing a raft of retaliatory steps, including the cancellation of visas, and Islamabad hitting back with a string of tit-for-tat measures.

DRG jawan injured in Bijapur IED blast

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Raipur

A District Reserve Guard (DRG) jawan was injured on Saturday when a pressure improvised explosive device (IED) planted by Naxalites went off in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district where a massive operation against Maoists was underway for the last six days.

The operation involving about 10,000 security personnel in a hilly region Karregutta, Durgamgutta and Pujarikanker along the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border was launched on Monday, a senior official said.

A DRG jawan sustained a minor injury when a pressure IED exploded this morning, he said. "The injured jawan was administered treatment at a camp of security forces and his condition was stated to be out of danger. He would be in a position for active duty very soon," the official said.

Another jawan belonging to the Special Task Force (STF) had sustained a minor sprain on ankle due to impact of an IED blast on April 24 morning during the operation, he said, adding that his condition was normal and he has recovered.

Talking to reporters here, Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said, "Our security forces have been bravely and strongly fighting against Naxalites. Security forces have been carrying out a major operation against Naxalites on a hill along the Telangana-Chhattisgarh border, braving over 40 degrees Celsius in scorching summer."

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has resolved to eliminate Naxalism by March 31, 2026 and the target will be achieved, he said. The operation, one of biggest counter-insurgency actions launched in the Bastar region, involves personnel of different units, including the DRG, Bastar Fighters and STF of the Chhattisgarh police, the Central Reserve Police Force and its elite Commando Battalions for



FILE PHOTO

Resolute Action (CoBRA). It is believed that some 500 cadres of the banned CPI (Maoist), including its top leaders, are holed up in the area, and Telangana Police are assisting in the exercise, said the official who is monitoring the action on the ground. On Thursday, three women Naxalites were killed on Karregutta hills, and a huge cache of weapons, explosives and other materials was recovered during the operation. The operation was launched on Monday in the densely forested hills of Karregutta and Durgamgutta along the inter-state border.

Parts of the area fall in the Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh, over 450 km away from state capital Raipur. It is believed to be the base of the PLGA (People's Liberation Guerilla Army) battalion No. 1, the strongest military formation of the Maoists, an official had said.

Intelligence inputs suggest more than 500 Naxalites belonging to PLGA battalion No 1, Telangana state committee and Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee of Maoists led by senior Maoists such as Hidma and Damodar are holed up in the area, he said. "It is a crucial operation because it would be a battle to finish off

the military strength of outlawed CPI (Maoists) by targeting PLGA battalion No 1 and the Maoists think tank in Dandakaranya special zonal committee (DKSJC) and Telangana state Committee," the official said.

"This operation is like a Test cricket match. It would last long and we would not get very exciting news in every session. But at the end of the match, we are hopeful of a very favourable result," the official said. Helicopters and drones are being used in the operation, the official added. Sources said that some jawans involved in the operation were shifted to hospital after they suffered dehydration and heatstroke.

The security forces have killed more than 350 Naxalites in a string of encounters, mostly centred in the Bastar region, since January last year. As many as 18 Naxalites, including 11 women, were killed in twin encounters in Bastar region on March 29. So far this year, 144 Naxalites have been gunned down in separate encounters in the state. Of these, 128 were eliminated in the Bastar division comprising seven districts, including Bijapur.

Politics fundamentally changed: Rahul Gandhi



Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi being welcomed by Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy upon his arrival at the airport in Hyderabad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Hyderabad

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said democratic politics have fundamentally changed across the globe and the rules that applied a decade ago no longer hold good.

Addressing a gathering at Bharat Summit 2025 in the presence of Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, the senior

Congress leader said in today's aggressive political atmosphere, the aim is to crush the Opposition and undermine the media.

Reflecting on his experiences during 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', Rahul said he realised that politicians have failed to listen to people's voices. "Politics, democratic politics have fundamentally changed across the globe. The rules that applied, I would say, a decade ago simply do not apply any

more. Sometimes, when I speak to younger members of our party, what was effective 10 years ago, the tools that worked 10 years ago, simply do not work anymore," he said.

"So in a sense, the old politician is dead and a new kind of politician has to be constructed," the AICC leader said. He also mentioned that he was originally scheduled to address the summit on Friday, but had to travel to Kashmir instead. The Congress MP thanked the delegates of Bharat Summit for their solidarity with India in the wake of Pahalgam terror attack.

The Bharat Summit, a two-day conclave focused on promoting meaningful dialogue on global justice, equity, and progressive cooperation, began on Friday.

Delivering the vote of thanks at the closing session of Bharat Summit 2025 Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Capt N Uttam Kumar Reddy said that freedoms of thought, speech, arts, academia, assembly and protest were under relentless attack by extreme right-wing and authoritarian regimes globally.

Reddy said it was a matter of pride that the Bharat Summit was being hosted in Hyderabad, Telangana, under a Congress-led government that is firmly committed to upholding liberal, democratic values.

Odisha targets 14 LMT of paddy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bhubaneswar

The Odisha government has set a target to procure 14 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) of paddy during the current Rabi season and decided to commence the exercise from May 1 in 20 of the 30 districts of the state, officials said on Saturday.

The decision was taken at the State-level Procurement Committee meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja on Friday. The meeting was also attended by the collectors of 20 districts through video conferencing, while Food Supply and Consumer Welfare Department Principal Secretary Sanjay Kumar Singh outlined issues for discussion.

Singh said that about 73.45 lakh metric tonnes of paddy was procured from nearly 16.60 lakh farmers in the last Kharif season. For this procurement, ₹16,853 crore was paid to farmers as minimum support price (MSP) and ₹5,862 crore as input assistance, he said.

Similarly, the procurement of paddy for the current Rabi season will begin on May 1 and continue till June 30, he said.

It has also been decided in the meeting to target procurement of 14 lakh metric tonnes of paddy in the current season, the official said. For Rabi paddy pro-

urement, about 3.37 lakh farmers have registered. "This year, procurement will be made in 20 districts, including newly added Kandhamal, Sundargarh and Bhadrak. "A total of 965 primary agricultural cooperative societies and 200 SHGs have also joined this exercise," the official said.

The chief secretary directed the collectors concerned to ensure that eligible farmers are not deprived of paddy procurement.

He also praised the effort for the distribution of tokens among farmers by validating paddy crop growing areas through satellite imagery technology by the Odisha Space Application Centre.

He also directed the authorities to immediately deploy nodal officers and supervisors for 'mandis', where all facilities will be available for farmers. Like the Kharif season, ₹2,300 per quintal as MSP and ₹800 as input assistance will be directly disbursed to the farmer's account within 48 hours of paddy procurement, Ahuja said.

In addition, complaints can be made through toll-free no 1967, regarding paddy purchase.

Each mandi will be equipped with CCTV and each vehicle carrying paddy from a mandi to a mill must have a Vehicle Tracking System.

IIM Sirmaur holds ninth convocation at new campus

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ new delhi

The 9th Convocation of IIM Sirmaur was held on Saturday, at the permanent campus of IIM Sirmaur in Dhaura Kuan. The ceremony began with the academic procession.

After declaring the convocation open, Ajay S Shriram, Chairperson of BoG, addressing the audience, spoke about the Indian and global business environment and the resilience and growth of Indian businesses. He inspired students to come up with new ideas quickly and move with an open mind to position the businesses for resilience and growth.

Professor Prafulla Y Agnihotri, Director, IIM Sirmaur, presented the Institute's annual report, highlighting the milestones achieved by faculty, staff, and students over the past year. IIM Sirmaur currently offers six full-time programmes.

This year, it launched a one-year, full-time program specialising in Advanced Manufacturing Management in collaboration with RWTH Aachen, Germany. As of today, 92.5 per cent of the construction of the campus has been completed at a cost of ₹316 crores.

A major milestone this year was the shift to the permanent campus in July 2024 after receiving all statutory approvals from the relevant government departments.

Expanding its Long Duration Programmes (LDPs), IIM Sirmaur successfully launched the first batch of the Executive MBA (EMBA) and Executive MBA in Digital Transformation and Analytics (EMBA-DTA) programmes in April 2024.

It is also introducing two new Post Graduate Diploma Programs in collaboration with the National Stock Exchange (NSE) Academy, providing specialised knowledge in financial markets, investment strategies, and risk management.

Summer Placement this year saw participation from a record 202 companies for a batch of 298 students, with students interning with leading companies in India such as Accenture, EY, ICICI Bank, HDFC Life, Tech Mahindra, and Varun Beverages Ltd for final placements, around 150 companies visited the campus.

MP police ordered to salute MLAs, sparks row

GIRISH SHARMA ■ Bhopal

Director General of Police (DGP) Kailash Makwana's recent order directing Madhya Pradesh police personnel to compulsorily salute Members of Parliament (MPs), Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and ministers has come under heavy fire from political leaders across party lines, who termed it "redundant," "unnecessary," and "detrimental to impartial policing."

Strongly reacting to the directive, Leader of Opposition Umang Singhar pointed out that formal protocols regarding respect and conduct towards elected representatives have long been established in the state's administrative guidelines. "There is no novelty in saluting an MLA or an MP — it is already part of the standard government protocol," Singhar said. "Issuing such a directive at this point serves no purpose other than to reinforce a feudal mindset. Governance is about service, not subservience."

Madhya Pradesh Congress president Jitu Patwari went further, warning that such orders compromise the integrity of the police force. "When a ruling party MLA storms into a police station to shield his supporter, and the officer is forced to salute him first, how can people expect fair and unbiased action? This directive is a direct assault on the principle of neutrality in policing," Patwari stated.

Historically, the All India Services (Conduct) Rules and various administrative protocols have always ensured that government officials maintain decorum with elected representatives — but without undermining the independence and objectivity of their duties. Critics argue

that reiterating such basic courtesies through formal directives dilutes the spirit of democratic accountability and pushes the police force into a posture of political subservience.

Interestingly, unease over the directive is visible even within the ruling BJP. A senior BJP leader, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) State Secretary Rajneesh Agrawal said, "An MLA is a people's representative, not a feudal lord. "Instead of ordering salutes, police officers should be directed to act swiftly on public complaints routed through MLAs. A salute without action means nothing to the citizens."

Both Congress and many BJP leaders agree: in a democracy, respect must come from efficiency and justice, not from forced rituals

Political observers have also pointed out that previous attempts to overemphasize ceremonial respect have often backfired, eroding public trust in administrative fairness. In fact, the 2015 controversy surrounding a similar protocol advisory in another BJP-ruled state had sparked a nationwide debate on whether elected representatives should seek reverence or results.

At a time when policing needs to be seen as professional, independent, and people-centric, the latest directive risks sending the opposite message — that symbolism matters more than service.

Both Congress and many BJP leaders agree: in a democracy, respect must come from efficiency and justice, not from forced rituals.

Truck crushes ambulance in UP, four dead

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Varanasi

In a devastating accident early on Saturday morning, four people, including a pregnant woman, lost their lives and two others sustained serious injuries when a gravel-laden truck overturned onto an ambulance on the Ahraura-Varanasi Shakti Nagar Road near an overbridge. The tragic incident took place when an ambulance, carrying a pregnant woman who had been referred from Lodhi Hospital in Sonbhadra to a hospital in Varanasi, was passing through the area.

Along with the pregnant woman, three of her family members were accompanying her in the ambulance. The vehicle was being driven by a professional ambulance driver, who was assisted by a colleague.

According to police sources, a truck

transporting gravel from a crusher plant in Sonbhadra towards Varanasi was moving at a high speed. As the truck approached the overbridge, the driver lost control of the vehicle. The truck overturned and crashed directly onto the ambulance, crushing it under the heavy load of gravel.

The force of the impact was so severe that all the occupants of the ambulance were trapped under the debris. Eyewitnesses quickly alerted the local authorities. Police teams, along with rescue units, reached the accident site and immediately launched a relief and rescue operation. Heavy machinery, including JCB earthmovers and Poklen excavators, were pressed into service to remove the debris and extract the victims. Sadly, four people died on the spot. The deceased have been identified as Heerawati Devi

(25), the pregnant woman and a resident of Kanhara village under Obra police station limits; Malti Devi (40), a resident of Jugail in Sonbhadra; Suraj Bali Kharwar (27), also from Kanhara; and Ramu, whose full address was not immediately available. Two other passengers — Kausal Kumar Kharwar alias Bhailal, a resident of Kanhara, and Bhandari Sharma, a resident of Santnagar Gurma under Robertsganj police station area — were rescued from the rubble with serious injuries. They were immediately rushed to a nearby hospital for urgent medical treatment.

The driver of the truck fled the scene following the accident. Police have launched a manhunt to apprehend him and have begun a thorough investigation to ascertain the circumstances leading to the mishap.

Hanumangarhi's Mahant to meet Ramlala on April 30

KAMLESH SRIVASTAVA ■ Ayodhya

In an unprecedented spiritual development in Ayodhya, Mahant Premdas Maharaj, the incumbent head of the revered Hanumangarhi temple, will step outside the traditional boundaries of Hanumangarhi to visit Lord Ramlala at the Ram Janmabhoomi complex.

This marks a significant break from a centuries-old tradition that restricted the Mahant from venturing beyond the 52 bighas of Hanumangarhi.

On April 30 at 7 am, Mahant Premdas will embark on this historic journey, accompanied by thousands of saints and devotees.

"This is a moment of transformation," said Panch Sanjay Das of Sagariya Patti.

"For centuries, the sitting Mahant of Hanumangarhi remained within the temple premises, symbolising self-restraint and devotion. Today, under divine inspiration,

we are witnessing history being made."

As part of the ceremonial journey, Mahant Premdas will first proceed to the banks of the holy Saryu river via the VIP route from Hanumangarhi. After taking a royal ceremonial bath, he will continue towards the court of Ramlala.

A grand procession is planned, with showers of flowers at 40 designated points along the route, and even helicopters dropping petals from the sky.

The procession will feature elephants, horses, camels, and thousands of devotees in attendance, creating a spectacle reminiscent of Ayodhya's ancient glory.

Carrying the sacred flag and stick of Hanumangarhi, Mahant Premdas will be joined by Mahants and Panchs from all four Patis of Hanumangarhi — Sagariya Patti, Ujjainiya Patti, Basantiya Patti, and Haridwari Patti.

"This is not just a visit; it is the beginning of a new chapter in Ayodhya's spiri-

tual history," emphasised Sanjay Das. "The decision was taken collectively by the All India Shri Panch Ramanandiya Nirvani Akhara Hanumangarhi after months of deliberation and prayer."

According to temple sources, for the past three months, Mahant Premdas had been experiencing spiritual visions and inspirations from Lord Hanuman himself, urging him to seek the darshan of Ramlala.

"Hanuman Ji has been inspiring the Mahant continuously," said a senior priest. "This journey is not a departure from tradition, but a fulfillment of divine will."

Religious scholars have welcomed the decision as a transformative event.

"The relationship between Hanuman and Lord Rama is eternal," said Acharya Rajendra Shastri, a noted religious commentator.

"By stepping out to meet Ramlala, the Mahant is symbolically reiterating Hanuman's eternal devotion to Ram. This

is an unprecedented step that will further enrich the spiritual culture of Ayodhya."

In a powerful gesture of devotion, 56 varieties of bhog will be offered to Lord Ramlala by the Hanumangarhi temple during the darshan, symbolising an offering of love, unity and spiritual bonding between two of Ayodhya's holiest sites.

Religious scholars have hailed this move as groundbreaking. "This is an unprecedented step. It signals the evolving spirit of Ayodhya where tradition meets a new spiritual awakening," said Acharya Rajendra Shastri, a leading religious commentator from Varanasi.

"Hanumangarhi and Ram Janmabhoomi represent two great pillars of Ayodhya's heritage, and this act strengthens the bond between them."

The procession is expected to draw thousands of pilgrims and onlookers, making April 30 a landmark day in the religious and cultural tapestry of Ramnagari.

Powerful and meek attend Pope Francis' funeral

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Vatican City

World leaders and Catholic faithful bade farewell to Pope Francis in a funeral Saturday that highlighted his concern for the "most peripheral of the peripheries" and reflected his wishes as pastor.

Though presidents and princes attended the Mass in St Peter's Square, prisoners and migrants will welcome him at the basilica across town where he will be buried. Some 2,50,000 people flocked to the funeral, held on a brilliant spring day that was supposed to have been a special Holy Year celebration for adolescents.

Perhaps because so many young people were on hand, the sombre ceremony still had a festive mood, with mourners taking selfies amid the hymns as Francis' simple coffin was brought out of St Peter's Basilica at the start of the Mass.

Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, the 91-year-old dean of the College of Cardinals, delivered a lengthy, spirited and highly personal homily, or sermon. He eulogised Francis as a pope of the people, a pastor who knew how to communicate to the "least among us" with an informal, spontaneous style. "He was a pope among the people, with an open heart towards everyone," Re said. He drew applause from the

crowd when he recounted Francis' constant concern for migrants, including when he celebrated Mass at the US-Mexico border and travelled to a refugee camp in Lesbos, Greece, and brought 12 migrants home with him. "The guiding thread of his mission was also the conviction that the church is a home for all, a home with its doors always open," Re said.

Francis had choreographed the funeral himself when he revised and simplified the Vatican's rites and rituals last year. His aim was to emphasize the pope's role as a mere pastor and not "a powerful man of this world." It was a reflection of Francis' 12-year project to radically reform the papacy, to stress priests as servants and to construct "a poor church for the poor." He articulated the mission just days after his 2013 election and it explained the name he chose as pope, honouring St Francis of Assisi "who had the heart of the poor of the world," according to the official decree of the pope's life that was placed in his simple wooden coffin before it was sealed Friday night.

Despite Francis' focus on the powerless, the powerful were out in force at his funeral. US President Donald Trump and former President Joe Biden, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, and



The body of Pope Francis rests inside St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer joined Prince William and European royals leading more than 160 official delegations. Argentine President Javier Milei had the

pride of place given Francis' nationality, even if the two didn't particularly get along and the pope alienated many Argentines by never returning home.

Trump and Zelenskyy met privately on the sidelines of the funeral. A photo showed the two men sitting alone, facing one another and hunched over on chairs in St Peter's Basilica. After the Mass ended, the cardinals filed back into the church.

The white facade of the basilica glowed pink as the sun rose Saturday and hordes of mourners rushed into the square. Giant television screens were set up along the surrounding streets for those who couldn't get close. The Mass and funeral procession across town — with Francis' coffin carried on the open-topped pope-mobile he used during his 2015 trip to the Philippines — were also being broadcast live around the world.

Police helicopters whirled overhead, part of the massive security operation Italian authorities mounted, including more than 2,500 police, 1,500 soldiers and a torpedo ship off the coast, Italian media reported.

Many mourners had planned to be in Rome anyway this weekend for the now-postponed Holy Year canonisation of the first millennial saint, Carlo Acutis, and groups of scouts and youth church groups nearly outnumbered the gaggles of nuns and seminarians.

"He was a very charismatic pope, very human, very kind, above all very human,"

said Miguel Vaca, a pilgrim from Peru who said he had camped out near the piazza. "It is a very great emotion to say goodbye to him," Francis, the first Latin American and first Jesuit pope, died Easter Monday at age 88 after suffering a stroke while recovering at home from pneumonia.

Following his funeral, preparations can begin in earnest to launch the centuries-old process of electing a new pope, a conclave that will likely begin in the first week of May. In the interim, the Vatican is being run by a handful of cardinals, key among them Re, who is organising the secret voting in the Sistine Chapel.

Francis is breaking with recent tradition and will be laid to rest in St Mary Major Basilica, near Rome's main train station, where a simple tomb awaits him with just his name: Franciscus.

As many as 3,00,000 people are expected to line the 6-kilometre motorcade route that is bringing Francis' coffin from the Vatican through the centre of Rome to the basilica after the funeral.

Forty special guests, organised by the Vatican's Caritas charity and the Sant'Egidio community, will greet his coffin at the basilica, honouring the marginalised groups Francis prioritised as pope: homeless people and migrants, prisoners and transgender people.

NOTICE TO THE RESPONDENT TO SHOW CAUSE (SCR, Order XXII) IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA CIVIL APPELLATE JURISDICTION PETITION FOR SPECIAL LEAVE PETITION (CIVIL) No(s) 24317-24323

NOTICE TO THE RESPONDENT TO SHOW CAUSE (SCR, Order XXII) IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA CIVIL APPELLATE JURISDICTION PETITION FOR SPECIAL LEAVE PETITION (CIVIL) No(s) 24317-24323 OF 17

1. JASWINDER KAUR, D/O LATE HARBHAJAN SINGH, R/O B-222, BHAI RAHNDHIR SINGH NAGAR, LUDHIANA (PUNJAB) ... Respondent(s) To,

NOTICE TO THE RESPONDENT TO SHOW CAUSE (SCR, Order XXII) IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA CIVIL APPELLATE JURISDICTION PETITION FOR SPECIAL LEAVE PETITION (CIVIL) No(s) 24317-24323 OF 17

UNSC condemns in 'strongest terms' J and K attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ United Nations

The UNSC has "condemned in the strongest terms" the terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir, stressing that those responsible should be held accountable and the organisers and sponsors of this "reprehensible act of terrorism" should be brought to justice.

The 15-nation Council issued a Press Statement on 'terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir' in which the members "condemned in the strongest terms the terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir" on April 22, during which at least 26 people were killed and many more injured.

"The members of the Security Council underlined the need to hold perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors of this reprehensible act of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice," the press statement said.

"They stressed that those responsible for these killings should be held accountable, and urged all States, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, to cooperate actively with all relevant authorities in this regard," it said.

A press statement is a declaration to the media made by the President of the Security Council on behalf of all 15 Members. France is President of the Council for the month of April and the press statement was issued by Council President Permanent Representative of France to the UN Ambassador Jerome Bonnafont. It is learnt that the US had floated the draft statement, which was then discussed by Council members.

Pakistan currently sits in the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member. A press statement requires agreement from all Council members and is a negotiated text.

The members of the Security Council expressed their deepest sympathy

and condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government of India and the Government of Nepal, and wished a speedy and full recovery to those who were injured. In the April 22 terror attack in Pahalgam, 25 Indians and one Nepali citizen were killed.

The victims were mostly tourists from all across India. The UNSC members reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. They reiterated that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomever committed.

They reaffirmed the need for all States to combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other obligations under international law, including international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts. Meanwhile, Stephane Dujarric, Spokesman for Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, responding to a question on the situation between India and Pakistan at the daily press briefing Friday, said that "we continue to follow the situation with very deep concern".

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is informed to all concerned that Pushpa Kayat D/o Gopi Ram W/o Mahesh Chand Kayat R/o H. No. 7 Church Lane, Jaugrana, Bhopal (M.P.) 462014 and Shivam Gaur S/o Ramji Singh R/o B-165 Sector-14 Noida are the Co-owner of Plot No. C-232 Sector-31 Noida. Pushpa Kayat has executed a Registered GPA of her share in the said above plot in favour of her sister Sneh Gaur D/o Gopi Ram R/o B-165 Sector-14 Noida dated 03/11/2018 in Book No. 111 Volume 1258 of the Office No. 196 to 210, Document No. 2224 of Sub. Register (III), Noida. Pushpa Kayat applied in the Noida Authority to transfer her share in the said above plot in favour of her sister Sneh Gaur which is still pending.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that my client Pooja Chaudhary is in process to purchase the Property Plot bearing No. 102 area measuring 45 sq. yds., out of Kharsa Mustafi No. 15, Kila No. 84 (B), 711 (B), 145 (B) and Mustafi No. 17, Kila No. 117, situated in the area of Saraswati Colony village Sehatpur, Tehsil and District Faridabad Haryana (having loan from Pyramid Finance Ltd.) from Gidhari Lal, having acquired the said property vide Sale Deed dated 5/4/2018 (Document No. 36) executed by Sunita Gautam. She confirmed that her seller i.e. Gidhari Lal is not having the below mentioned documents pertaining to the property in question that are being filed in the court dated 26.04.2025

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS CHANGE OF NAME

I, Binay Kumar S/o Sri Ishwar Dayal Prasad R/o GF-02, Plot No. 469, Sector - 4, Vaishali, Ghaziabad, UP 201010, have changed my minor daughter's name from Aakarshi Kanak Aakarshi to Kanak Aakarshi DOB-25/9/25. Hence, she would be named Kanak Aakarshi for all future purposes. PD(1934)A

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Mahender Pal & Mrs. Urmila Devi who are the owners of the House No. 2L46, area measuring 40 Sq. Yards, & Western Portion of House No. 2L47 (adjoining to 2L46), area measuring 129 Sq. Yds., Situated at NIT Faridabad, New Town Ship Faridabad, Tehsil Faridabad, Distt. Faridabad, Haryana, duly registered as Document No. 2172, in Addl. Book No. 1, Volume No. 124 on pages 57-9 dated 08.10.2017. SFO Badkhal has lost/misplaced So, to comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any person having any type of claim/ right/ interest/ mortgage on the property mentioned above, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 15 days from today failing which subject to be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, liens etc. Unit No. FF-2, First floor, Mahalaxmi Metro Tower Sector 2, Noida, UP-201301 Contact No. 1200-4269379

Singapore blocks voter-influencing Facebook posts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Singapore

Authorities in Singapore, which goes to the polls next week, have directed Meta to disable user access to several Facebook posts intended to influence voters by foreigners — one a former Singaporean detainee-turned-Australian linked to the Islamic State and two Malaysian politicians. The posts criticised, among others, the Singapore government's handling of sensitive religious issues and urged Singaporeans to vote along religious lines.

The posts have been targeted at Singaporeans, according to the statement. "They interfere with our domestic politics, which are reserved for our citizens. They also urge Singaporeans to vote on racial and religious lines, and have led to more social media postings of a similar nature."

All this has the potential to fracture the multi-racial and multi-religious harmony that is the bedrock of Singapore as a nation, according to the statement.

"We recognise that public policy may sometimes involve matters of religious concern," the MHA-ELD noted but assured the government would continue to engage widely, including with religious groups, to hear their views and ensure they were taken into account.

All this has the potential to fracture the multi-racial and multi-religious harmony that is the bedrock of Singapore as a nation, according to the statement.

The MHA-ELD also urged all political parties and their candidates, as well as religious organisations, leaders and members of the public to do "our part to safeguard the precious harmony we have in Singapore today".

Foreigners must not direct, fund or in any way influence Singapore's elections. It is an offence under the Parliamentary Elections Act for foreigners to participate in elections activity or publish online election advertising, according to the statement.

Under the Parliamentary Elections Act, online election advertising is defined as any material published online that can reasonably be regarded as intended to promote or prejudice the electoral success or standing of a political party or candidate.

Gurmit Singh, president of the Inter-Religious Organisation, said religion had to be kept out of politics "for the common good".

"In Singapore, we have witnessed the dangers of racial and religious conflicts in the past," Singh said in a statement posted on Facebook by the organisation's honorary secretary Lawrence Chong.

"This can come about when religion is mixed with politics, as witnessed in parts of the world," Channel News Asia quoted Singh as saying.

A total 27,58,846 (27.58 lakh) people are registered to vote in the May 3 elections. Among the voters, 75 per cent are of Chinese origin, 15 per cent Malays who mostly practise Islam, and more than seven per cent people of Indian origin.

Indiabulls Enterprises Limited (CIN: U71290HR2019PLC077579)

Extract of Audited Consolidated Financial Results for the quarter and year ended 31 March 2025

Table with 6 columns: Particulars, Quarter ended 31-Mar-25, Quarter ended 31-Dec-24, Quarter ended 31-Mar-24, Year ended 31-Mar-25, Year ended 31-Mar-24. Rows include Total Income, Net (Loss)/Profit for the period, Total Comprehensive Income, etc.

Notes: 1. The above results have been reviewed by the Audit Committee and subsequently approved at the meeting of the Board of Directors held on 26 April 2025.

2. Key stand-alone Financial information: (Rs. in Crores)

Table with 6 columns: Particulars, Quarter ended 31-Mar-25, Quarter ended 31-Dec-24, Quarter ended 31-Mar-24, Year ended 31-Mar-25, Year ended 31-Mar-24. Rows include Total Income, Net Loss/Profit before Tax, Net Loss/Profit after Tax.

3. Figures for the quarters ended 31 March 2025 and 31 March 2024 represent the balancing figures between the audited figures for the full financial year and published reviewed year to date figures upto third quarter of the respective financial year.

4. The above is an extract of the detailed format of quarterly / annual financial results filed with the stock exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly / annual Financial Results are available on the Company's website (https://www.indiabullsentprises.com) and on the website of BSE (https://www.bseindia.com) and NSE (https://www.nseindia.com).

Registered Office: 5th Floor, Plot No. 108, IT Park, Udyog Vihar, Phase-1 Gurugram, Haryana 122016

For and on behalf of Board of Directors Vijay Kumar Agarwal Executive Director

QR code and text: The same can be accessed by scanning the QR code provided below

IPL 2025: Mumbai Indians, LSG set for intense battle

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

A rampaging Mumbai Indians (MI) will look to maintain their winning run in a vital mid-table battle against a dangerous Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) in an Indian Premier League clash here on Sunday.

Placed fourth and sixth respectively, MI and LSG both have an impressive 10 points in their kitty and are only separated by the net run rate, having won five matches each and lost four in nine games so far.

While these two teams will battle for on-field supremacy at the Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai's unrelenting heat and humidity will also play its part in testing the players' readiness to give it all in adverse conditions.

For the visitors, a negative NRR of -0.054 is something they would be keen to improve while hoping that their skipper Rishabh Pant is able to get a big score under his belt.

Pant has managed a lowly 106 runs in nine matches so far this season while shuffling across batting positions to discover what works for him, but none of his efforts seem to have worked for the India wicketkeeper-batter.

As Pant grapples with the burden of carrying the highest price tag, the pressure that comes along with it and the immense responsibility of leading a new IPL team,



his players have responded well so far.

The challenge, thus, will be greater and a different one for Pant's visiting side since the hosts Mumbai Indians are familiar with the conditions and have been on a roll, having notched up four wins on the trot to move in the top half of the points

table. Mumbai are peaking just at the right time and are firing on all cylinders. The form of mainstays such as Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Trent Boult and even Hardik Pandya would pose a lot of threat to MI's opponents going forward.

Rohit banished an ordinary run of scores with two explosive half-centuries against Chennai Super Kings and Sunrisers Hyderabad, finding some consistency with the bat with a slight tweak in his all-out-attack approach.

Getting through the power play while putting away the bad deliveries — some-

thing that the India Test and ODI skipper was doing even when he was not getting big runs — have helped Rohit score 76 not out and 70 in his last two outings.

While there were no major concerns with Suryakumar, the familiar flourish for the ace T20 batter was missing at the start of the IPL but the right-handed batter too has been able to hit his strides like Tilak Varma.

Pandya has been an excellent floater for Mumbai Indians with precise and tight overs while he has been aggressive with the bat, proving to be a dependable option in both his roles.

Deepak Chahar and Trent Boult have found assistance under lights and with the evening sea breeze around in their home matches but the conditions will be a lot different for this game.

For LSG, overseas stars Nicholas Pooran (377 runs), Mitchell Marsh (344) and Aiden Markram (326) have formed the bedrock of their success more often than not and the trio's returns largely determine their fortunes on the field.

Marsh has thrived in his role as a specialist batter while Pooran has been a class apart, dazzling this IPL with strokes full of Caribbean flavour. Markram has been a dependable silent operator in the side who has performed his role really well.

Lucknow Super Giants' bowling line-up is not an intimidating one on paper but is smart enough to work their way around

conditions and pitches.

The presence of local man Shardul Thakur, a late signing for LSG who has taken most wickets (12) so far, would be vital in understanding the wicket and forming the plans as they go.

Ravi Bishnoi has not had many wickets but it is Digvesh Rathi who has made a strong mark this IPL, and will once again want to snaffle a few wickets in that MI line-up.

Teams

Mumbai Indians: Hardik Pandya (c), Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Robin Minz (wk), Ryan Rickelton (wk), Shrijith Krishnan (wk), Bevon Jacobs, Tilak Varma, Naman Dhir, Will Jacks, Mitchell Santner, Raj Angad Bawa, Vignesh Puthur, Corbin Bosch, Trent Boult, Karn Sharma, Deepak Chahar, Ashwani Kumar, Reece Topley, VS Penmetsa, Arjun Tendulkar, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Jasprit Bumrah.

Lucknow Super Giants: Rishabh Pant (C and wk), David Miller, Aiden Markram, Aryan Juyal, Himmat Singh, Matthew Breetzke, Nicholas Pooran (wk), Mitchell Marsh, Abdul Samad, Shabbaz Ahmad, Yuvraj Chaudhary, Rajvardhan Hangargekar, Arshin Kulkarni, Ayush Badoni, Shardul Thakur, Avesh Khan, Akash Deep, Manimaran Siddharth, Digvesh Singh, Akash Singh, Shamar Joseph, Prince Yadav, Mayank Yadav, Ravi Bishnoi.

Royal Challengers Bengaluru clash against Delhi Capitals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Virat Kohli and KL Rahul will headline the battle of anchors while Mitchell Starc versus Josh Hazlewood in the pace department can only add more spice to the contest between the in-form Delhi Capitals (DC) and Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) in the IPL here on Sunday. Things can change rather quickly in the IPL but on current form, both DC and RCB are expected to make the play-offs. Two points at the Feroz Shah Kotla will significantly help the winning team in that context.

Kohli remains the biggest draw as he returns to his 'home ground' at the back of five half-centuries in nine games. Four of them have come away from the Chinnaswamy Stadium and despite being in the opposition camp, the Delhi crowd will be hoping the Indian superstar extends his prolific run in the tournament.

Slower surfaces this season has made stroke-making tougher but RCB's leading run-getter Kohli has thrived on that challenge to flourish for his team. Another batter who has done remarkably well under the circumstances is Rahul, who has

scored the most runs for Delhi Capitals.

Not part of India's T20 set-up, Rahul has forced the selectors to take notice with his stellar performances in the middle order and behind the stumps.

Starc versus Hazlewood

The two champion Australian fast bowlers, Hazlewood and Starc, have already showed the immense value they bring to their respective IPL teams. Hazlewood is among the leading wicket takers in the tournament with 16 scalps and effectively won the game for RCB in their previous outing against Rajasthan Royals with an exemplary 19th over.

His compatriot Starc is not far behind on the impact table and coincidentally it was also against Royals that he came up with a barrage of wide yorkers to seal the game for DC. Their duel will be exciting to say the least.

Kuldeep versus Suyash, Axar versus Krunal

Kuldeep Yadav has foxed the batters in the middle overs throughout the Indian Premier League with his googly causing maximum damage to the opposition.

Besides 12 wickets in eight games, the left-arm wrist spinner has conceded runs at a frugal rate of 6.50 runs per over.

Both Delhi Capitals and Royal Challengers Bengaluru are expected to make the play-offs. Two points at the Feroz Shah Kotla will significantly help the winning team in that context

His presence will pose the biggest challenge to the in-form RCB batters on Sunday night.

Delhi boy Suyash Sharma has also given a good account of himself in RCB jersey and will be using all his local knowledge to out-think the DC batters.

While DC captain Axar Patel has led from the front, he has not bowled a lot in the competition due to a niggle but has completed his full quota of overs in the last game, marking another positive for a team on the charge.

Krunal will be performing a similar role for the RCB camp. With 12 wickets in nine games, the left-arm spinner has done the

job for his new franchise.

DC have been playing only three foreign players since dropping Jake-Fraser McGurk and that is likely to continue with Abhishek Porel and Karun Nair at the top of the order.

Teams

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

RCB: Virat Kohli, Rajat Patidar (captain), Swastik Chikara, Devdutt Padikkal, Jitesh Sharma, Philip Salt, Manoj Bhandage, Tim David, Krunal Pandya, Liam Livingstone, Romario Shepherd, Jacob Bethell, Swapnil Singh, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Josh Hazlewood, Nuwan Thushara, Lungi Ngidi, Yash Dayal, Rasikh Dar Salam, Suyash Sharma, Mohit Rathee, Abhinandan Singh.

Rinku feels any IPL team can breach magical 300-run barrier

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kolkata

Kolkata Knight Riders' swashbuckling batter Rinku Singh feels the Indian Premier League has now reached a stage where a team breaching the magical 300-run barrier in an innings won't be a surprise. The countdown to IPL 2025 was dominated by chatter around the real possibility of teams going past 300 in an innings in this edition of the league thanks to the franchisees' relentless focus on sustained power hitting.

During a chat with JioHotstar, Rinku backed the possibility of a team breaching the 300-run mark, citing past successful chases as proof of how the game has evolved.

"Yes, we can do it. IPL has reached a stage where even 300 is possible; last year, Punjab chased a total of 262 runs. All teams are strong this season - anyone can get to 300," the big-hitting Rinku said.

Stephen Fleming admits CSK might have got it wrong at auction table

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chennai

Half the IPL battle is normally won at auction table but in case of Chennai Super Kings, the seeds of their struggles this season were sown on that very evening in Jeddah many months ago, when they failed to get the best assortment of players.

Long-time head coach Stephen Fleming admitted that it has led to an unmitigated disaster in the ongoing edition of the league.

The CSK's template of going for the tried and tested players have backfired with the team languishing at the bottom of the points table having lost seven out of nine games.

"It is hard to say. We got it completely right with the performances that we've had. So we have been looking over that in detail, just around our style of play. Also looking at how the game is evolving, and it's not easy.

"And that's why we are proud of our record today, that we have been able to be consistent for so long. And it doesn't

take much for it to go another way," Fleming said after losing to Sunrisers Hyderabad here on Friday, initially trying hard to defend the team.

Other teams have got better, and that is the point of the auction. But we just have not been able to get it right

— STEPHEN FLEMING, COACH

But then there was acceptance that they might have missed a trick or two.

"Other teams have got better, and that is the point of the auction. But we just have not been able to get it right. So you take responsibility from the top down, and you just ask a little bit more of the players.

"But yeah, that has to be an area where we need to reflect and say it wasn't as good as what it could have been, or it hasn't worked out how we wanted.

"But it is also not a perfect science. The auction is a very fluid beast. It is like buying 25 houses, so you come away at the end of it mentally and sometimes phys-

ically exhausted. And to be fair, I still think we have got a good squad. We're not far away," he said, putting up a brave front.

Players like Rahul Tripathi, Deepak Hooda, Vijay Shankar have been super flops and CSK's reluctance to try out new talents at the start of the tournament cost them dear.

At the back end, youngsters such as Ayush Mhatre, Shaikh Rasheed and Dewald Brevis are showing promise for the next season.

Fleming also agreed that they probably need to have a closer look at their style of play, after his initial reluctance.

Injury to skipper Rituraj Gaikwad and trying out as many as 19 players to get the right combination also contributed to their dismal show.

Being the team's key strategist, Fleming admitted that the buck stops at him.

"A couple of key injuries, just a bit of a lack of form. And we have just struggled really to nail a game plan. Chopped and changed too much, but I think he was trying to look for something that perhaps we felt was not there."



SRH batting line-up served well against CSK: Vettori

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chennai

Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) coach Daniel Vettori said that working around their batting line-up and getting the match-ups right with Kamindu Mendis in the mix served the team well against Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in their Indian Premier League match.

SRH ended their winless streak against Chennai Super Kings at Chepauk when they defeated the hosts by five wickets here on Friday, scoring 155 for five in 18.4 overs after CSK were bowled out for 154.

Vettori admitted SRH have not done well on slow and tricky surfaces so far in this IPL which saw them lose to Mumbai Indians in an away game and two matches at home in Uppal.

"No, we have not (done well on those pitches)," Vettori told the media after the match.

"We have encountered them away and we have encountered them at home, so it has not quite matched up with our expectations around the surfaces. But the onus is on us to adapt and understand what's required," he said.

Vettori said moving around their players was crucial for SRH against CSK as Mendis played a vital role both with the bat and the ball.

"That's why the likes of Kamindu came into the team. That's why there was the shuffle in the batting order, putting (Heinrich) Klaasen up, Nitish (Kumar Reddy) down, to give us a more balanced approach to a chase in particular," he said. "The initial plan was around left-right-

hand combinations, and that's in a way to counter Noor (Ahmad) and Jaddu (Ravindra Jadeja) and how good they are through those middle stages."

"A lot of the logic was picking him (Mendis) for this ground. We knew what sort of surface we'd come up against and to have a batsman who can play all types of spin, be aggressive, and hit a multitude of shots, that was the starting point," he added.

Meanwhile, the former New Zealand spinner heaped rich praise on India and Gujarat Titans spinner R Sai Kishore, revealing that he was one player SRH wanted to have in their squad during the mega auction.

"I think Jadeja has got a big future. I think he can really kick on," Vettori quipped when asked which left-arm spinner has impressed him in this IPL.

"I am trying to think... (Mitchell) Santner has obviously been fantastic for Mumbai, Jaddu here, Harpreet Brar has got a few opportunities with Punjab (Kings).

"Sai Kishore has been the pick. He's been fantastic. He was a guy that we looked at very closely in the auction and wanted him in the team. He has all the attributes of a very good limited overs bowler."

"He is very brave. He has the ability to turn the ball, change his pace over and around the wicket. I think it sets up a template for other spinners to see how you can actually compete and succeed. He's done it on good batting wickets as well," he added.

MS Dhoni expresses helplessness at Chennai Super Kings poor performance in IPL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chennai

A distraught Mahendra Singh Dhoni has expressed his helplessness at Chennai Super Kings' (CSK) extended poor run in the ongoing IPL and said it's difficult for a team to get the desired result when four-five players lose form at the same time.

CSK lost to Sunrisers Hyderabad by five wickets here on Friday after another shoddy batting effort from the hosts, the result dealing a near-fatal blow to their play-off chances.

Bowled out for 154, CSK saw the visitors reach their target with eight balls to spare. "In a tournament like this, if you have one or two areas where you can plug in the holes, it is good. But if majority of your players are not doing well, it becomes very difficult," Dhoni said at the post-match press conference.

Chennai Super Kings, who are known to maintain continuity in team selections over the years, have fielded around 19 players in nine games so far, and Dhoni said he had no option but to explore various combinations.

"Because you have to do a few changes,

but if majority are doing well then you give those guys that extra few games and if it does not work out than you move onto the next one. But if four of them are not performing at the same time, you are bound to make that change, because you can't just keep on going," Dhoni added.

CSK have had one of their worst IPL seasons and are currently placed at the bottom of the points table with seven defeats. What is worse is that four of those losses have come at Chepauk, which remained their fortress for the longest time.

Bit it foreigners such as Devon Conway, Rachin Ravindra, Sam Curran or Indian players like Rahul Tripathi, Deepak Hooda and Vijay Shankar, none of them could step up in the first nine games.

Dhoni identified the batters' failure to attack spinners in the middle overs as one of the big reasons for the dismal show and felt that South African youngster Dewald Brevis would be a vital cog going forward.

Brevis scored 42 against SRH, but more importantly, looked good against the spinners.

"I think he (Brevis) batted really well and we need something like that in the middle order, where we have slightly struggled



when the spinners come in, that's a time we need to either you do it by batsmanship, where you pick up your areas or try to play the big shot in your area.

"I feel that's where we have been lacking and not been really able to dominate

or get runs against spinners at good pace in the middle. Because we are not putting enough runs on the board, because it is essential right now, the game has changed.

"I am not saying it is always 180-200, but assess the conditions and then look to put

the runs on the board," Dhoni said, his frustration and anger quite palpable.

He made no bones about CSK's failure with the bat on Friday, saying the pitch was good for stroke-making and the total was way below par.

"We kept losing wickets, and in the first innings the wicket was slightly better and 155 is not a justifiable score, because it wasn't turning a lot. Yes, after the 8-10th over, it became slightly two-paced when it comes to the fast bowlers, but nothing that was out of the ordinary.

"I feel we could have put few more runs on the board. Yes, second innings there was a bit of help, our spinners the quality was there and they bowled in the right areas and it was stopping a bit but we were short by 15-20 runs," he concluded.

It was tough to hit cross-batted shots, says Harshal Patel

Harshal Patel, a fine exponent of the slower ball and cutters, got the Player-of-the-Match award for returning excellent figures of 4/28, and he believed that the Chepauk track was not conducive for playing horizontal bat strokes, and so it became easy for the SRH medium pacer

to dominate the home team.

"I figured out pretty early, hitting the lengths and keeping it at the sticks was important. It was tough to hit the horizontal bat shots. I wanted the batters to hit me over square-leg and mid-wicket. So, I kept pulling the length back and mixing my pace up."

Unlike other, who have tried bowling wide yorkers to Dhoni in order to keep it out of his hitting arc, Harshal did the complete opposite.

"Was trying to bowl length to him (Dhoni). Wasn't trying to bowl wide. Was one of those variations that you try and bowl something but it doesn't come off. But glad it came off and went to hand," he said.

His skipper Pat Cummins was happy that SRH finally won their first game at Chepauk after failing all these years.

"That was great. Few things came together tonight. Boys played well. Good to see a few smiles. Couple of guys at the top looked like taking the game on."

"In these conditions, threw Klaasen at the top and Nitish to finish it off. Our record here isn't great. Be more clinical going forward but pleased with the win," Cummins said.

PASTEL PLAY: Softest Style Power

BY SAKSHI PRIYA

August slipped away into a moment in time... Taylor Swift's lyric sets the tone for summer 2025 soft, romantic and full of feeling. This season, fashion is leaning into pastels with renewed purpose. From pistachio and butter yellow to powder pink, mint green and sky-blue, these shades have captured the spotlight across collections, editorials, and social feeds alike.

There's something undeniably fresh about the pastel palette this year. It speaks of calm confidence, easy elegance, and a desire for lightness after seasons of excess. Designers are embracing subtle colour in strong silhouettes — flowing skirts, tailored suits, cropped jackets — proving that softness can be powerful.

Pastels are dominating social media too. Influencers are styling them head-to-toe, mixing them into beauty and lifestyle content and making them the season's most coveted colour story. These tones reflect a collective shift — towards clarity, wearability, and charm that lasts.

STYLE APPROACH
Mix and Match: Pair multiple pastel tones together for an effortless look that still feels curated.
Keep It Clean: Let the colours speak, avoid heavy prints or over-layering.
Play with Contrast: Add white, camel or denim to balance out the softness.
Tailored Softness: Pastel suiting especially in pistachio or blush, is ideal for spring events and workwear transitions.

SAGE GREEN: A CALM CONSTANT
Elegant and easy to wear, has found its place across spring collections. Style a sage green ankle-length skirt with a cotton blouse and tan leather sandals. Gold jewellery and a handbag to look effortlessly stylish.

BUTTER YELLOW: LIGHT, BUT IMPACTFUL
Less vibrant than lemon and subtler than neon, this version of yellow adds warmth without overpowering. Pair a butter yellow. A line skirt with neutral-toned top with crossbody and gold hoops.

SKY BLUE: POLISHED AND CALM
Cool and collected, sky blue made appearances in shirting, light knits and versatile summer suiting. A cropped jacket in sky blue over a white dress, paired with trainers or loafers, makes for a look that is as wearable as it is elegant.

MINT GREEN: THE COOL CLASSIC
Soft yet fresh, brings a touch of coolness to the pastel spectrum. Whether in flared pants, pleated skirts or summer tops.
A mint green blouse tucked into white high-waisted trousers creates a breezy, polished outfit for sunny afternoons. Pair with white sandals and delicate jewellery for a balanced look.

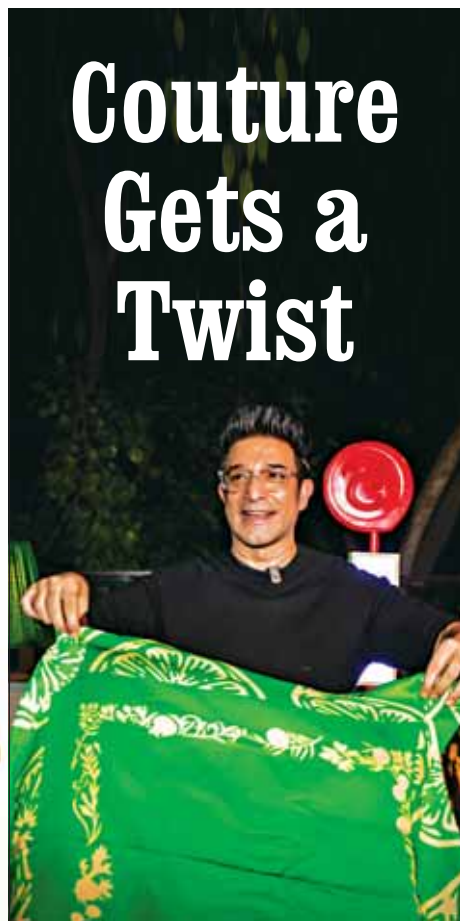
PISTACHIO GREEN: THE REFINED REFRESH
Once reserved for interiors and gelato menus, pistachio green is now one of fashion's leading colours. A pistachio green dress paired with off-white heels and minimal jewellery creates pinterest — worthy looks.

COTTON CANDY PINK: ROMANTIC, REWORKED
This pink is tender, not theatrical. Far from overly sweet, it is being presented in tailored, wearable shapes that make it ideal for grown-up dressing with a soft edge. A knee-length pleated skirt in pink with a neutral knit and ballet flats adds polish without looking overly styled.

THIS SEASON ALSO WELCOMES MAUVE, PEACH BLUSH, LAVENDER AND POWDER MINT INTO THE SPOTLIGHT. MAUVE, LOOKS STUNNING IN SATIN SLIP SKIRTS

KEY PIECES:
 ● Pistachio-toned mini shoulder bags
 ● Sky blue ballet flats
 ● Blush pink belts and hairbands
 ● Lightweight scarves in tonal pastels

In recent years, wearing pastels has shifted from being seen as a just style choice to a statement of sophistication. People now find themselves moving towards these colours because they're considered "aesthetic." You can wear a loud red, but the moment you wear pastel tone, you are labelled as aesthetically in tune with the times. It's almost as if every thing, in some way, has become about being 'aesthetic.'



Couture Gets a Twist

BY TEAM VIVA

When high fashion joins the art of refined indulgence, the result is bound to be enchanting. Celebrated couturier Suneet Varma and the iconic gin brand Tanqueray have presented "The OG Summer of Love," an evocative collaboration that exudes elegance and a touch of whimsy.

The highlight of the collection is the scarf, an artistic expression of Tanqueray's botanical roots. With motifs of juniper berries, citrus slices, and herbs rendered in delicate brushstrokes, the design is fresh, breezy, and undeniably chic. The palette — Tanqueray green offset by soft neutrals and bright botanical tones — makes it a perfect summer essential. It's a wearable poem, a nod to nature's fragrance and the joy of dressing up. You can imagine it fluttering softly in a sunlit garden party, paired with linen whites and laughter in the air.

Suneet Varma, known for his emotionally rich, opulent designs, lends his philosophy — celebration, storytelling, and connection to this collaboration. "The scarf is a wearable celebration," he says, and rightly so. It evokes the feeling of a summer evening where cocktails sparkle in crystal glasses and conversations meander like a favourite old melody — perhaps "All You Need is Love," playing softly in the background. The OG Summer of Love is an invitation — to pause, to sip, to drape, and to delight in the finer things.

Suneet Varma says, "My design philosophy has always been centered on celebration, emotion, and storytelling — values that align beautifully with Tanqueray's legacy of bold flavors and sophistication. This collaboration transcends fashion and spirits."

A Spanish Romantic Thriller that Blossoms in Blood

When murder becomes just another business, you enter the familiar chilling world of Netflix thrillers, writes ABHI SINGHAL

There have many thriller TV series like 'You' that keep you numb and go damn but **The Gardener** is somewhere something different and very gripping created by Miguel Sáez Carral. The TV series is a Spanish romantic thriller streaming on Netflix.

The series opens with a tense scene: Elmer (Alvaro Rico) calmly approaches the sea and murders an unsuspecting swimmer. What follows in the first three episodes is a sequence of brutal killings of innocent people, all orchestrated for monetary gain. At the heart of this darkness is Elmer's mother, La China Jurado (played with unnerving precision by Cecilia Suárez), who manipulates her emotionally void son into becoming a killer-for-hire.

Elmer, traumatised by a childhood car accident, is portrayed as emotionally detached, unable to feel love, guilt or remorse. Alvaro Rico delivers a striking performance, capturing the paradox of a man wrestling with his emptiness. His stoic expressions and stiff tone give the series its haunting core.

The story gains emotional complexity with the introduction of Violeta (Catalina Sopedana), a gentle nursery school teacher who unwittingly becomes a target for assassination due to a case of mistaken identity. Sopedana brings warmth and vulnerability to the role, serving as the emotional counterbalance to Elmer's coldness. The romantic tension



Highlights That Make The Gardener Stand Out:

- Unique blend of aesthetic beauty and darkness
- Strong performances, especially from Alvaro Rico and Cecilia Suárez

Reasons The Gardener May Miss the Mark

- Emotionally heavy and morbid themes with cold-blooded murders and emotional detachment
- Predictable family murder drama

between the two adds a tender, human element to an otherwise dark narrative.

Cecilia Suárez is mesmerising as La China Jurado, a cunning matriarch with a murky past, who hides her criminal empire behind the façade of a garden centre. Her disdain for Violeta injects familiar dramatic tension, reminiscent of classic soap-style maternal possessiveness. Yet here, it is underscored with a far more sinister undertone.

Perhaps the most disturbing, and oddly poetic, element of the series is the use of the victims' bodies as fertiliser to enrich the garden. It is a macabre metaphor that adds a gothic flourish to the storyline. The garden itself becomes a silent witness to the horrors that unfold, lush, vibrant and fed by death.

The Gardener is a visually striking series, filled with aesthetic scenes of blooming flowers and rich colours, which juxtapose sharply with its grim subject matter. This contrast only heightens the emotional unease, making the viewer question the price of beauty and the cost of love.

In six tightly crafted episodes, The Gardener manages to blend romance, psychological trauma, family drama and crime thriller into a cohesive and deeply unsettling narrative. For fans of shows like You or Dark Desire, this series offers a fresh twist on a common storyline that is beautiful, brutal and strangely hypnotic.



RATING
★★★★

SUGGESTED BINGES



Andor Season 2
OTT - JioHotstar
Cast - Stellan Skarsgård, Genevieve O'Reilly, Adria Arjona, Forest Whitaker



Jewel Thief - The Heist Begins
OTT - Netflix
Cast - Saif Ali Khan, Jaideep Ahlawat, Nikita Dutta, Kunal Kapoor



You Season 5
OTT - Netflix
Cast - Elizabeth Lail, Penn Badgley, Zach Cherry, Charlotte Ritchie



Veera Dheera Sooran
OTT - Amazon Prime Video
Cast - SJ Suryah, Suraj Venjaramoodu, Dushara Vijayan



Étoile
OTT - Amazon Prime Video
Cast - Luke Kirby, Charlotte Gainsbourg



BHURI BHOJ Comes Alive In Delhi

Bringing the stories and spices of Bengal to life, Chef Ananya Banerjee curates an unforgettable menu for the Delhiites, for ten days, that celebrates the region's rich love for the food culture, writes ABHI SINGHAL



Chef Ananya Banerjee — The mind and magic behind the creativity and fusion of the Bengali food.

The Bengali culture always makes you feel so alive and the Bengali feast is to die for in the case of food lovers. So, for ten special days, the essence of Bengal will be live at the *The Suryaa, New Delhi* with "Taste of Bengal", that is a grand celebration of food, flavour and nostalgia. The heart behind the entire finger licking food is Chef Ananya Banerjee, whose love for Bengal's food traditions shines through every plate.

The buffet spread showcases an impressive lineup of Bengali classics. Start with *Bhetki Paturi*, where mustard-marinated fish is gently wrapped in banana leaves and pan-fried to perfection. For the savours of the non vegetarian you can try the ever-popular *Keema Egg Devil*, a favourite from Kolkata's street food scene that wraps

THE SWEETEST GRAND FINALE

The dessert spread is a poetic end to the Bengali feast. You will get to relish the *Makha Shondesh* served in a crisp kunafa basket — soft, kneaded, and delicately sweet. Then, surrender to the charm of *Kheer Komala*, a silky milk pudding laced with fresh oranges and citrus zest. A gentle, flavourful finale that lingers on the palate long after the last bite.

spiced minced meat around a boiled egg, fried until golden and crisp. In the starters you also have *Ghugni tart* — a contemporary take on Kolkata's classic yellow pea curry, served in a delicate tart shell, *Beetroot Croquette cylinder* — a crisp, deep-fried beetroot and potato croquette with subtle spice, served with delicate garnish. These will not let you keep up the space for the upcoming main course. The main courses feature the much-loved *Kosha Mangsho*, a slow-cooked mutton dish rich with

spices. Pair it with puffed *Luchi* or the fragrant yellow *Basanti Pulao* for a truly satisfying plate. And for those with a sweet tooth, the *Baked Rasogolla* is a must — a gentle twist on Bengal's iconic sweet that's both comforting and indulgent. The *Vegetarian Thali* had the *Lebu pata bhaat* — fragrant gobindobogh rice infused with citrusy gondhoraj leaves for refreshing aroma, *Bengali Aloo Dum* — baby potatoes slow-cooked in lightly spiced tomato cumin. The taste of *Chholar Dal* with *Narkel & Kishmish* made with thick Bengal gram dal cooked with coconut slivers and sweet raisin will become your favourite eventually. The desert is the last and the best. You will have the sweetness of *Makha Shondesh* in kunafa basket — Soft, Kneaded Bengali sandesh delicately in a crisp kunafa nest. The *Kheer Komala* — A velvety milk pudding infused with fresh oranges

and citrus zest will make your taste buds

feel weak on food. But this festival is about more than just what is on the plate. *The Suryaa* has turned its dining space into a little slice of Bengal with Live kitchen counters let diners watch dishes come to life, while traditional music adds a soothing background, completing an atmosphere that feels like stepping into a Bengali home.

FACT SHEET -

Taste of Bengal
Where: The Suryaa, New Delhi
When: 25th April - 4th May 2025
Timings: 7:00 PM - 11:00 PM
Price: Dinner Buffet at INR 2399++



From street snacks to heirloom recipes, "Taste of Bengal" brings Kolkata's kitchen to Delhi under the culinary guidance of Chef Ananya. It promises a meal to remember and is an invitation to connect with a part of India that is rich in warmth, tradition, and taste. So, prepare for a nostalgic food journey as The Suryaa.



PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

THE VEGETARIAN THALI HAD THE LEBU PATA BHAAT, BENGALI ALOO DUM, CHHOLAR DAL, GOLDA CHINGRI MALAI KARI AND MORE TO ENJOY.



Passport to World's Street Food



From Tokyo to Mexico, it's a flavourful food world tour at Cafe Delhi Heights, writes ABHI SINGHAL

Street food is an extra happy taste buds experience, a cultural adventure that brings together the flavours and traditions of distant lands. Imagine embarking on a food journey around the globe, all without leaving your seat. With the *International Street Food Festival 2025 at Cafe Delhi Heights*, you can do just that, as this exciting celebration of global cuisine unfolds across all their outlets from April 15 to May 1.

Step into the warm and aesthetic atmosphere of Cafe Delhi Heights, where the scents of sizzling spices, grilling meats, and fresh ingredients fill the

air, setting the stage for a food adventure. The festival's specially formed menu promises to take you on a whirlwind tour across continents, offering a unique twist on iconic street food dishes from around the world.

You can start your journey in Asia with a steaming bowl of Japanese ramen, its rich, savoury broth paired perfectly with tender noodles and a medley of fresh toppings. If you're craving something with a bit of heat, the spicy, tangy kick of Mexican tacos will leave your taste buds dancing. For a touch of Middle Eastern warmth, savour the juicy, flavourful shawarmas, packed with a delicious mix of meats and spices that transport you straight to the bustling streets of Beirut or Cairo.

But the adventure doesn't stop there. Want to travel more? Now, CDH takes you to Spain with a bite of the crispy, sugar-dusted churros, or you can sink teeth into a tender Turkish kebab that captures the essence of Turkey's street food culture. For those who prefer something lighter, the Vietnamese spring rolls offer a refreshing crunch with a burst

of herbs and dipping sauce that's simply irresistible. And for the perfect comfort food, there are American sliders, mini burgers packed with bold flavours that are both familiar and exciting.

The festival adds an interactive twist to the experience with the *Dart World Board* — a fun, paid activity where you throw a dart at a world map that highlights the countries featured in the festival menu. Wherever the dart lands, that's the street food dish you must try. It's an adventurous way to discover new flavours, bringing an element of surprise to your dining experience.

Taste the global street food and something new with the *International Street Food Festival at Cafe Delhi Heights*. Hours of spending time and savouring food will take you through culture, flavour, and the joy of sharing a meal.

FACT SHEET

Location - All Outlets
Café Delhi Heights
Availability - 15th
April- 1st May



A Night of Artful Mixology

Bangkok's Rabbit Hole Brings Cocktail Magic to Gurugram at The Leela Ambience, writes GYANESHWAR DAYAL



The art of mixology extends far beyond simply combining drinks — it's a creative craft that merges flavour, balance, technique, and storytelling. A superb cocktail is a sensory journey, where each ingredient is selected with intention and precision to evoke a mood, a memory, or an emotion. From the clink of ice to the swirl of citrus oils, mixology is where culinary science meets artistic expression, turning a simple sip into a memorable experience.

In a dazzling display of global mixology, The *Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel & Residences* hosted one of Asia's most iconic cocktail destinations for an unforgettable evening. On 23rd April, the celebrated *Rubicon Bar & Cigar Lounge* opened its doors to a special bar takeover by *Rabbit Hole* — Bangkok's legendary speakeasy known for its inventive cocktails and chic, understated charm.

Tucked away behind a nondescript wooden door in Thonglor's vibrant nightlife district, Rabbit Hole has earned a reputation for pushing the boundaries of mixology while maintaining a relaxed elegance. For one night only, this distinctive Bangkok spirit was brought to Gurugram, infusing the capital region's cocktail culture with an international flair.

At the heart of the takeover were Rabbit Hole's star talents — Depp, the Group Beverage Manager, and Bite, a master mixologist known for

RABBIT HOLE'S SIGNATURE STYLE

Tucked away behind a nondescript wooden door in Thonglor's vibrant nightlife district, Rabbit Hole has earned a reputation for pushing the boundaries of mixology while maintaining a relaxed elegance. For one night only, this distinctive Bangkok spirit was brought to Gurugram, infusing the capital region's cocktail culture with an international flair.

his flair, finesse, and storytelling. The duo took over the bar with a menu of meticulously curated cocktails that highlighted their signature creativity, precision, and deep understanding of flavour. Each drink told a story, bridging cultures and delighting the senses of everyone in attendance.

The *Rubicon Bar & Cigar Lounge*, with interiors designed by Japan's renowned Studio Spin, provided an opulent yet intimate backdrop for the evening. Featuring rich wood panelling, maroon leather seating, warm ambient lighting, and the refined atmosphere of a private cigar lounge, *Rubicon* served as the perfect stage for Rabbit Hole's artistic libations.

This collaboration marks yet another milestone for The *Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel & Residences* in its mission to deliver world-class hospitality experiences. By partnering with global tastemakers such as Rabbit Hole, the hotel continues to elevate Gurugram's luxury scene, offer-

AGENDA

"A person susceptible to 'wanderlust' is not so much addicted to movement as committed to transformation"
— Pico Iyer

When *adventure* is a way of life!

The Mechukha Adventure Race in Arunachal Pradesh blended high-octane action with national pride, showcasing the region's beauty, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

The greatest challenge one can face often lies within — confronting and transcending personal limitations. Pushing these boundaries becomes one of the most rewarding experiences life can offer. This notion came to life both figuratively and literally when 22 teams converged in Mechukha for the 3rd National Adventure Racing Championship, a prestigious event under the Adventure Racing World Series — Asia Series.

In a spectacular blend of adrenaline and assertion, Arunachal Pradesh played host to a high — octane adventure race set against the breathtaking backdrop of Mechukha, located in the Shi Yomi district. Spearheaded by the Government of Arunachal Pradesh, which aims to place Mechukha firmly on the global adventure sports map, the choice of location was as strategic as it was scenic.

Nestled near the Chinese border on the far eastern edge of India, Mechukha stands not only as a gateway to natural beauty but also as a testament to national pride and resilience. *Pasang Dorjee Sona*, the Sports Minister of Arunachal Pradesh and the visionary behind the event's conception, expressed his intent with candor and conviction: "This is our way of telling the world — we are here, waiting to be explored. What you'll find here is an India unlike any other. The race is merely a means to draw global attention and unveil this hidden paradise."

His words carry weight, for Mechukha offers boundless opportunities for adventure tourism — from soaring down one of India's longest zip lines and paragliding over pristine valleys, to braving wild rivers through rafting and kayaking, scaling rugged mountain faces, and trekking through untouched landscapes. Set against the backdrop of the Eastern Himalayas, the race included mountain biking, trail running, river rafting, and rappelling — challenging participants across some of the most

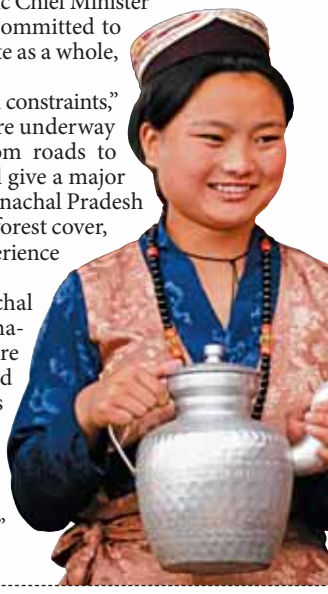
rugged and breathtaking terrain in the region. Mechukha, located near the Indo — Tibet border, offered a dramatic and fitting venue, with its raw beauty and strategic significance. The race covered a route that took participants through dense forests, across suspension bridges, over swift rivers, and into remote tribal hamlets, giving them a taste of the unique culture and unspoiled environment that defines Arunachal Pradesh.

Promoting Adventure Tourism

Organised by the state's Department of Tourism in collaboration with Nth adventure the race was a strategic move to boost adventure tourism in the region. Arunachal Pradesh, often referred to as the "Land of the Rising Sun," boasts immense untapped potential for eco and adventure tourism. *Pema Khandu*, the dynamic Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, is deeply committed to positioning Mechukha and the state as a whole, as a vibrant tourism hub.

"As a border state, we face certain constraints," he noted, "but significant efforts are underway to enhance infrastructure — from roads to telecommunications — which will give a major boost to the tourism industry. Arunachal Pradesh is a peaceful state with 85 percent forest cover, offering visitors a rejuvenating experience amidst nature."

Speaking at the event, Arunachal Pradesh's Tourism Minister emphasised, "This is our home, and we are proud to showcase its beauty and resilience. Adventure tourism is our bridge to the world, and Mechukha is just the beginning." "It's not just about the race. It's about experiencing India's frontier, the people, the spirit, the message," said a participant from Mumbai.



EXPLORING THE LAST SHANGRI-LA

Nestled in the eastern Himalayas, Mechukha is a pristine valley in the Shi-Yomi district of Arunachal Pradesh, India. Often described as the "Last Shangri-La," this enchanting destination remains largely untouched by commercial tourism, offering an unspoiled glimpse into nature, culture, and thrilling adventures.

A TAPESTRY OF NATURAL BEAUTY

Mechukha is a dreamscape of lush meadows, dense pine forests, winding rivers, and majestic mountains. In spring and summer, the valley is blanketed with wildflowers, while autumn offers crisp air and golden hues. Winters, though chilly, transform Mechukha into a white wonderland, with snow-draped landscapes that look like they're lifted straight from a postcard.

ADVENTURE AWAITS

While tranquility is one of Mechukha's charms, the region also promises adrenaline, pumping adventure for thrill seekers.

TREKKING AND HIKING

Mechukha is surrounded by several unexplored trails that cut through dense forests and mountain passes. The Samten Yongcha trek is a favourite among locals, offering panoramic views of the valley. Hikes to nearby ridges reveal sweeping vistas of snow capped peaks and endless forests.

RIVER RAFTING

The Siyom River, though calm in places, also has rapids suitable for white — water rafting, especially during the summer. For the more laid, back adventurer, angling for local fish species in the river is a peaceful pastime.

PARAGLIDING

Mechukha has also become known as a paragliding hotspot, especially during the annual Adventure Festival organised by the Arunachal Pradesh tourism department. Soaring over pine forests and rivers offers a bird's eye view of the valley's breathtaking landscape.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

With its rugged terrain and offbeat tracks, Mechukha is perfect for mountain biking. Whether you're coasting downhill or navigating rocky trails, the combination of fresh air and scenic backdrops makes every ride memorable.

A SUBTLE YET STRONG MESSAGE TO CHINA

China has consistently refused to recognise Arunachal Pradesh as part of India, referring to it as "South Tibet" in its official maps. The Indian government has repeatedly reaffirmed that Arunachal Pradesh is and will always be an integral part of India. By organising a high-profile adventure event in a border village, India sent a quiet but firm message: governance, development, and public participation in the region are thriving. The presence of Indian security forces, civil authorities, and a large number of Indian participants underlined the reality on the ground.

ADVENTURE MECHUKHA: LET THE ADRENAL RACE

India's 3rd National Adventure Racing Championship came to Arunachal Pradesh for the first time. As part of the prestigious ARWS Asia series, the championship offered an experience that combined intense competition, breathtaking landscapes, and rich cultural immersion. Held in the remote and pristine Mechukha Valley, the event lived up to its promise of providing a race like no other. Nestled high in the Himalayas, 6,000 feet above sea level, Mechukha

welcomed competitors with its untouched beauty. The participants not only faced some of the toughest terrains in the country but also had the chance to immerse themselves in the culture and traditions of the region, discovering the warmth and hospitality of the local tribes, including the Membas, Ramos, Bokars, Libos, and Tagin.

The 3rd National Adventure Racing Championship also served as a qualifier for the ARWS Asia Championship 2025, adding an extra layer

of intensity to the competition. With national and international teams coming together to compete, the event attracted some of the best in the field. In addition to the race, the championship offered a generous cash prize pool of Rs 7 lakh, 5 lakh and 3 lakhs. But beyond the competition, the event allowed participants to fully immerse themselves in Mechukha's rich culture. It was an experience that went far beyond the race itself, offering a deep connection to the land.



Beyond the Beaten Path, Into the Quiet

A peaceful getaway in the hills, perfect for relaxing, exploring nature, and enjoying quiet moments

Tucked away in the lush folds of the Kumaon hills lies a lake of nine corners, **Naukuchiyatal** — an emerald secret that still shimmers in its serenity, away from the better-trodden paths of Nainital and Bhimtal.

And now, it has a luxurious new address: Naukuchia House, a recently renovated 42 — room property by the Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL), the custodians of the iconic Taj brand.

Standing elegantly by the lake, Naukuchia House is not just a hotel — it's a sanctuary. Designed with understated charm and heritage echoes, the property offers panoramic lake views, with a private entry that takes you straight to the shimmering waters. Step out of your room, and you can hop directly onto a boat. I did. A slow ride in the morning mist, a fishing line tossed casually into the glassy lake surface — this isn't just vacationing; it's soul-deep unwinding.

For those chasing rejuvenation rather than adventure, I recommend their signature full-body spa therapy. My masseur was a magician with years of training in her fingertips, and the steam bath that followed was the kind of cleansing city souls long for.

But Naukuchia House doesn't stop there. On one of the afternoons, the hotel arranged a guided walk into the forest, leading to an enchanting village clearing where warm tea and quiet conversations replaced Wi-Fi signals and screens.

And then there's **Kainchi Dham** — just a scenic 30-minute drive away. This modest ashram has turned into a magnetic spiritual hub, drawing global figures like *Mark Zuckerberg*, *Julia Roberts*, and closer to home, *Virat Kohli* and *Anushka Sharma*.

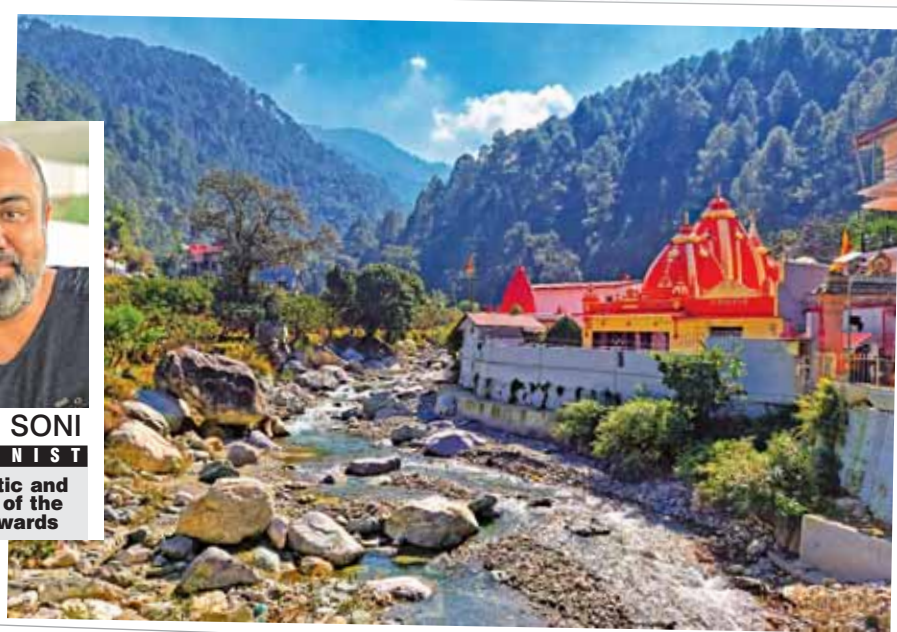
Whether you're a believer or a curious wanderer, the calm of *Shri Neem Karoli Baba's* temple will stay long after you leave. Back at the hotel, there's plenty to indulge in. The temperature — controlled pool makes a dip possible even when the air gets crisp.

The food?

Their Asian fare is well-balanced, and the Indian kebabs-succulent, smoky, and served with Himalayan charm-are memorable. A chef's nod to modern tastes without losing sight of tradition at Ija, their all — day dining restaurant that means 'Mother' in Kumaoni, is worth a praise. Naukuchiyatal is just 5.5 hours by road from Delhi, making it ideal for a 2-3 night escape. Unlike its over-touristed cousins, it offers silence, stars, and stories. And with Naukuchia House now writing its own, there's never been a better time to visit.



PAWAN SONI
COLUMNIST
 Food critic and founder of the Big F Awards



REJUVENATION

Naukuchiyatal Lake, with its nine serene corners, offers peaceful boating and fishing. Nearby, **Kainchi Dham** — home to *Shri Neem Karoli Baba* — draws seekers and celebrities alike for its calm, spiritual aura. Surrounded by pine forests and misty hills, the lake is a hidden gem for nature lovers. Birdwatchers often flock here to spot rare Himalayan species in the tranquil surroundings. Cozy homestays and lakeside cafés add charm to the quiet retreat.

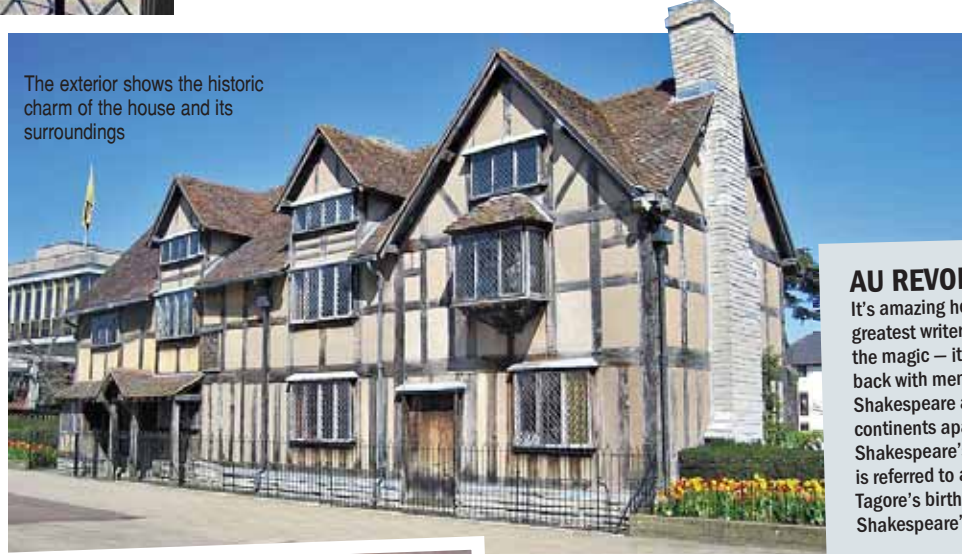
NOT TO MISS

The Kumaoni thali is a flavourful ode to the hills. It features aloo ke gutke, lahsuni palak and hearty gehat dal, paired with the region's signature lal bhaat. The tangy Kumaoni raita and spicy bhaang ki chutney add layers of taste. For meat lovers, there's tender chicken and a rich shikari mutton curry. The meal ends with a comforting bowl of rice kheer — soulful and satisfying.

Footsteps in the Halls of Genius

A literary journey in an English town unites two voices across continents and centuries

The exterior shows the historic charm of the house and its surroundings



AU REVOIR

It's amazing how such a humble space gave rise to one of the greatest writers ever. Quiet but meaningful. The setting adds to the magic — it's like the whole street tells a story. We drove back with memories of two great poets and writers — *William Shakespeare* and *Rabindranath Tagore*, born centuries and continents apart, yet brought together by little effort and fate at Shakespeare's Birthplace! No wonder that *Rabindranath Tagore* is referred to as the Shakespeare of India! *Rabindranath Tagore's* birth anniversary — 7th May is celebrated annually at Shakespeare's Birthplace by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

lour, hall, workshop, bedrooms and the furnishings have been reinstated too.

Also noteworthy is Shakespeare's bedchamber and birthing room from the year 1564, recreated to perfection! We were informed that he sometimes wrote the description of his personal domestic items, furniture etc. in his plays, which has helped the restoration work to a great extent!

Discovery in the Gardens

In the 16th century, the garden of the house was used for various purposes by Shakespeare's father — like wool-dealing activities, glove-making, growing vegetables, herbs and medicinal plants, a barn for pigs, hens and more and also as a storage area. Wandering through one of the five gardens attached to Shakespeare's house, we made a discovery that added excitement to our visit and it was an icon of a true tribute to the 'Voice of India'.

Tagore at Shakespeare's Birthplace

On the occasion of the upcoming birth anniversary of Nobel Laureate *Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore* on 7th May, I recall my visit to Shakespeare's Birthplace House fondly. After the Shakespeare house tour, we stepped out through one of the back exit doors, wandered through its five gardens attached to the main house, and spotted the bust of *Rabindranath Tagore* — the great Indian poet and writer — it stood there majestically, as a true homage to him. We were at a quiet garden corner of the house and there it was — a fine sculpture on a stone plinth carved with Tagore's poem to Shakespeare, which he wrote on the tercentenary of Shakespeare's death — completion of 300 years in 1916 — titled 'In Honour of William

Shakespeare's Birthing Room. A small, modest room believed to be where Shakespeare was born



Shakespeare's House on Henley Street. This timber — framed house is where Shakespeare was born



BY SEEMA ANAND CHOPRA

Trying to take a step backwards into history, on a cool September autumn afternoon I stood looking at the birthplace of *Shakespeare* and wondered what it was that had drawn me here at this time of the year.

It is just another English house, but for its resident who made it extraordinary — this was home to one of the greatest English writers who hold a universal appeal. His plays and poems continue, till times today, to entice readers and audiences, transcending borders of countries and languages. Undoubtedly, this celebrated author is remembered even after 450 years, for his literary works have proudly, since ages, been imbibed in most school and university syllabuses. So, I went visiting the English town of Stratford-upon-Avon where the historic and skillfully restored house of *William Shakespeare* is located.

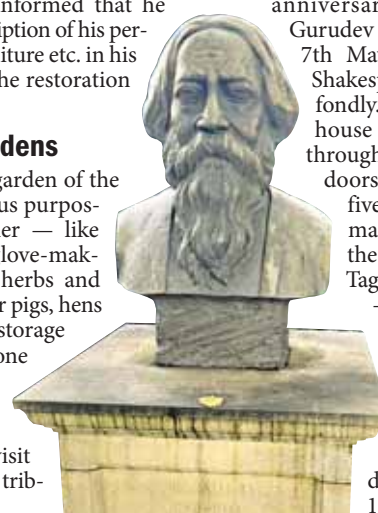
Shakespeare's Birthplace Museum

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust was founded in 1847, almost three centuries after his birth, and has been able to preserve his legacy and the five Tudor houses associated with Shakespeare's lifetime. By the 19th century, the house had decayed and was falling apart, but the timely restoration attempts by the famous writer — *Charles Dickens*, helped to save it. He organised performances in towns of England to raise funds to renovate the memorial house! We gathered this infor-

mation and a lot more at the vivid, engrossing Shakespeare Museum, through which is the entry to Shakespeare's birthplace!

Shakespeare's Birthplace

Subsequently, we reached Shakespeare's birthplace, which is quite lively with radiant colours welcoming all who enter it, echoing the lifestyle of the 16th century. Shakespeare lived here with his parents and many more brothers and sisters. The par-





ARIES March 21-April 19

As your work life blooms this week, be careful not to neglect personal connections due to your sharpened wit and a plethora of advanced ideas coming to the forefront. Your productivity becomes an asset, but may trigger feelings of emotional neglect from family and loved ones if left unbalanced. Mid-week could present chances to represent your organization or to travel for business after an initial period of basking in neglect from other employees, so try remaining vigilant around opposing coworkers as envy may lead others to seize the credit you rightfully deserve. Such ventures are bound to guarantee success and return value as they will serve to improve your standing and reputation in the organization.

Lucky number 3 | **Lucky colour** Midnight Blue
Lucky day Tuesday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

Possibly this week, you might feel pulled toward a more flexible and unusual way of going about your life. A valuable lesson comes from this sign, and it is that you possess freedom of your choices, all the reason to unapologetically choose the route you want irrespective of what others think. But at the same time, freedom seeking ambition might lead you to careless attitude, particularly when it comes to work matters. This could cause friction with authority and limit your progress or acknowledgement in the workplace. In any case, the solution lies in staying resolute and decluttered. As you make greater plans, try to bear in mind that fulfillment in achievements arises from consistent effort as well as the right intention.

Lucky number 18 | **Lucky colour** Ocean Blue
Lucky day Wednesday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

In the first two days, you might feel mentally drained and have a hard time making decisions. This conflict inside of you could cause tension and anxiety. As a means for relief, you might look to art, books, or even some religious texts. You actively seek people, and thus, become very social, as relationships become the new focus. A person's balance of intuitive and wise actions is very active at this time. The middle of the week is marked with solitude which can help provide an aid to personal reflection. This self-enlightenment is zen-like and very deep at this point. By the end of the week, there are some thrilling prospects waiting for you such as starting a new business, changing jobs, or even new developments in the family.

Lucky number 17 | **Lucky colour** Brown
Lucky day Thursday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

In the area of career and family, this week may present more challenges than usual. Disputes and misunderstandings may crop up among your colleagues, and interpersonal relationships may become even more strained. Remember to remain calm and to seek refuge from volatile confrontations. Calmly reflect on your behavior and attempt to approach the affected issues constructively. It is very likely that your energy and confidence will suffer a downturn on mid-week. Attending to personal health and relaxation is vital during this period. Greater insight could be derived from a consultation with a medical professional. By the week's end, a gradual improvement will be noticed. Personal matters, along with financial issues, will begin resolving and confidence will return gradually. Engaging in spiritual activities will aid in attaining tranquility and achieving equilibrium.

Lucky number 7 | **Lucky colour** Copper
Lucky day Thursday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

In matters of love and even in your profession, the week starts with some disappointments along with missed opportunities. You might feel lonely or alone in a crowd which rises from an underlying dissatisfaction. For those already in relationships, work obligations may entail unscheduled absences from one's loves. However, midweek brings a change of pace. A new business venture or an increase in income might be on the way. An assignment may have been given to you and your success will depend on how hard you work and commit yourself. Towards the end of the weekend, you should watch your temper which may lead to rage, or you falling into some emotional temptation that alters your sense of judgment. You can greatly benefit from paying attention to your subconscious through dreaming, remaining within the boundaries of logical and rational aspirations.

Lucky number 5 | **Lucky colour** Pink
Lucky day Friday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

Get ready for the week because you will feel an extreme level of happiness and satisfaction this week. Everything from your emotional state, health, and finances will bring deep fulfillment and satisfaction. You will be able to achieve everything you want while being grateful. You will start receiving better health and will feel more at ease during your day to day activities. All the burdens that felt impossible to overcome before will now seem like an easy task. From a personal point of view, you will receive lots of warmth and support from your family which underscores the importance of true love. Be grateful for the affection you do get, as it provides great strength. The reality you construct during this week will turn into a source of great strength and success in the long run.

Lucky number 12 | **Lucky colour** Purple
Lucky day Friday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

The clarity that you gain during this period will help you to navigate smoothly through any challenges converting negativity into positivity, and not the other way around. Instead of avoiding your difficulties, open yourself towards a new and deeper pursuit that is sustainable deep-rooted in lasting happiness and fulfillment. You may experience emotional struggles or physical imbalances, but learn to ride their wave instead of trying to stifle them. Release any attachments to the past and focus entirely on resolving conflicts within yourself in the present moment. By the end of the week, a decision, probably yours, will restore clarity on travel or family issues. Expect holistic healing on a mental and physical level as the week closes.

Lucky number 14 | **Lucky colour** Grey
Lucky day Monday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

Your determination, along with other factors this week, is sure to guide you to achieving all of your set goals. Embracing the strong focus is sure to yield inviting results. Turning those dreams into achievements is going to be a walk in the park now. Growth would be accompanied with opportunities in family or new endeavors. Towards the middle of the week, your memories are bound to wash over you like a wave alongside old friends or places which hold value bringing joy and happiness into your life. By the end of the week, focus from the outside world transforms into the inner self allowing an equilibrium shift to be attained via meditation, spiritual reflection, or simple prayer leading your introspective thought.

Lucky number 20 | **Lucky colour** Mint
Lucky day Saturday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week, your initiative and ability to lead are reasonably high. You become the source of strength for others, offering help and assistance where it is needed. You show great affection and might need to be a bit loving at times to set the right balance. You may get an impetus of some sort in the middle of the week which can stir some conflict or argument of sorts. You will want things settled your way and even though this isn't physical battle, it can feel like an emotional one. Either way, in this period of time, you won't be moved, focusing instead on everything sound and put together. No matter Ma, there are always mixed results and in this case, your capability of noticing every single detail will make it easier for you to make money. You stay safe with your wit.

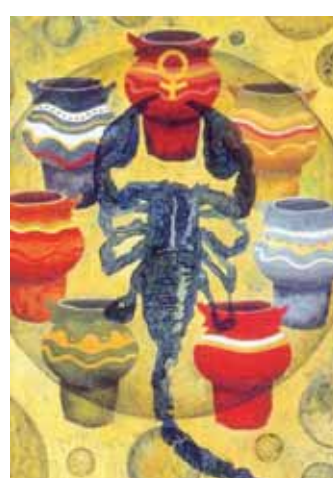
Lucky number 2 | **Lucky colour** Lime
Lucky day Monday



CANCER June 21-July 22

Feeling apprehensive and fearful of what others think could dominate your life this week. This may also lead to internal conflict and self-doubt. Unproductive conversations that can spiral into useless confrontations are also a possibility. Although it may seem like others are the issue, the real struggle is within yourself. In this case, you need to work on forgiving yourself which will help you channel your energy towards these unconstructive conflicts. With a positive attitude, success can be attained. The beginning of the week will allow you to feel motivated and strong achieving goals. If there is anything that needs to be worked on, now is the time to put in the effort with the extra energy to attain them.

Lucky number 1 | **Lucky colour** Fuchsia
Lucky day Friday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week, you will lead with your natural ability to be a strong marker of confidence and attract all sorts of positive attention. The week will start off with your desires being fulfilled, and a feeling of satisfaction will also accompany you as you experience the joy of family and new beginnings. You would feel an inner calmness and sense of calm after an important life cycle is finished. This would allow you to rest and enjoy the moment. However, some outdated beliefs or practices stemming from the past may be hindering your growth so do remember this. With this in mind, new perspectives that positively change your life are a must here. By the end of the week, strive to be neutral about challenges; exercise clear judgment, unwavering integrity, and strongly articulate elements of your truth.

Lucky number 9 | **Lucky colour** Orange
Lucky day Tuesday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week begins with a powerful urge towards spiritual development, driving you toward seeking enlightenment. You may find peace in meditative techniques like prayer and even participate in group spiritual activities. Enjoying your own company brings calm and quiet moment, reflecting back towards your milestones, and accepting the efforts you have put in. In projects like constructing a house, there is a feeling of closure. The joy that comes from family get-togethers and other celebrations will be significant, and relationships including those with spouses may deepen through understanding, caring, and affection. Along with these, this week contains chances of buying movable or immovable assets which combine external achievements with internal satisfaction. This enlightening journey will be taken with the guidance and support of elders. During this period, embrace the phase that brings ample growth.

Lucky number 15 | **Lucky colour** Lilac
Lucky day Sunday

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Dilemmas and Decision-Making in the Pursuit of Life

THOUGHTFUL INSIGHTS



Dr. Tanu Jain

While destiny may chart the broad course, confusion is often a creation of our own minds. I eventually understood — clarity is not external; it's the power of one's inner being

How often do we find ourselves at the crossroads of decision-making — hesitant, confused, or gripped by the fear of making the wrong choice? The mind echoes with questions: Am I doing the right thing? What if this backfires? Would life have been better if I had chosen the other path?

These are not rare thoughts. Many of us revisit decisions, wishing we had taken more time or acted differently. But then again, is the course of our life truly in our hands? Or are we being gently steered by the unseen currents of divine will?

While destiny may chart the broad course, confusion is often a creation of our own minds. In one of my encounters, I met a respected justice, a spiritually inclined man with decades of experience in law. I asked him earnestly, "Sir, how do you make such critical decisions about others' lives without hesitation or emotional burden?"

He smiled and replied, "I have never had a problem making decisions. My mind is clear, and I have no biases. I serve my duty with sincerity, and that anchors me."

That statement lingered with me for days. How could someone remain untouched by the emotional weight of decision-making? I eventually understood — clarity is not external; it's the power of one's inner being. His spiritual grounding and absence of personal attachment gave him freedom from confusion. He had transcended personal likes, dislikes, and ambitions. His work was not a job, it was his dharma —



his sacred duty.

The spiritual texts speak deeply about this inner clarity: "Yada te moha-kalilam buddhir vyatitarishyati, tada gantasi nirvedam shrotavyasya shrutasya cha."

— Bhagavad Gita 2.52

"When your intelligence has passed out of the dense forest of delusion, you shall become indifferent to all that has been heard and all that is to be heard."

This verse emphasises that clarity comes

when the fog of delusion lifts — when ego, attachment, and fear no longer influence your thoughts. So, what really brings that clarity?

Clear Priorities is the Key

Confusion creeps in when we are torn between our personal attachments and our responsibilities. When your priorities are aligned with your higher purpose — not temporary pleasures or emotional biases — decisions become smooth.

"Na karmanam anarambhan naisarkarmya puruso'snute"
— Bhagavad Gita 3.4

"One does not attain freedom from action by abstaining from work; nor does one reach perfection merely by renunciation." The key lies in understanding your role and walking it without ego or expectation.

Mental Clarity Through Devotion

When the mind is purified through sadhana — dedicated spiritual practice, service, and sincerity — clarity arises naturally. Decisions are no longer a burden; they become expressions of your inner purpose.

No Favourites, No Bias is a Blessing

When you stop playing favourites — be it people, outcomes, or even ambitions — you rise above confusion.

"Udaasina-vadaaseeno gunair yo na vichaalyate"
— Bhagavad Gita 14.23

"He who remains like one unconcerned, unshaken by the modes of nature — such a person gains peace."

Seeing Work as Worship Finally Leads to

Liberation

When your office, your duty, your contribution to the world becomes your tapasya (austerity), then your entire being aligns with it. Work stops being a burden. It becomes seva — sacred service.

In the end, life will always present us with choices. The roads may diverge, dilemmas may arise, and uncertainty may knock on our doors time and again.

But when we are anchored in purpose, detached from outcome, and aligned with our inner truth, the fog clears.

True clarity is not about always knowing the right answer — it's about being so rooted in your dharma that even the toughest choices feel light. It is the silence of the soul, not the noise of the world, that guides the wisest decisions.

As the Upanishads remind us: "Dharmam chara, satyam vada"
— Taittiriya Upanishad
"Walk the path of righteousness; speak the truth."

When decisions come from a place of truth, integrity, and surrender, even the unknown becomes sacred.

You may not always control the path, but you can choose to walk it with clarity, devotion, and grace. And in doing so, you don't just make decisions — you shape your destiny.

— The author's views are personal. The author is a civil servant at the Ministry of Defence and a spiritual speaker