





# CM Rekha Gupta, Hardeep Puri launch Vaya Vandana scheme



Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta present the Ayushman Vaya Vandana Card during the launch of the Ayushman Vaya Vandana Yojana, offering free treatment worth up to ₹10 lakh to citizens aged 70 years and above in New Delhi on Monday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Delhi government on Monday launched the Ayushman Vaya Vandana scheme, offering free treatment worth up to ₹10 lakh to citizens aged 70 years and above in the city. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri distributed the first Vaya Vandana cards to beneficiaries at an event in the capital. Under this scheme, yearly medical assistance worth ₹5 lakh will be provided free of cost. Additionally, ₹5 lakh coverage will be provided under the Delhi government's scheme, making the total health cover ₹10 lakh. Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister said, "This is the first programme of its kind under the triple engine model, and I thank Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi for respecting our elderly with this health scheme."

"There will be no difference between the rich and the poor; everyone will benefit from this scheme, regardless of their financial background," she said, adding that registration starts today, and the only criteria is that you must be a Delhi citizen and hold an Aadhaar card. "You can enroll from today onwards." More than 100 hospitals in the city are included in the scheme and over 30,000 registered for cashless treatment. This is a significant step forward, she said. Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri at the launch of the scheme said that it will be cited as a model in the world. In his address, the Union Petroleum and Natural Gas slammed the previous AAP government for holding up Ayushman Bharat health scheme. Puri said that the launch of the Vaya Vandana healthcare scheme for the people aged 70 and above, will be written in "golden words" in the history books for

its significance. Citing problems with healthcare systems of advanced, industrial democracies, Puri said these were riddled with issues like requirements of insurance premium payments, limited number of hospitals and delayed consultations for elderly, and added "Vaya Vandana will be cited as a model in the world in the field of elderly healthcare." Under the scheme, 47 private and 10 government hospitals are empanelled for the beneficiaries. A speciality of the scheme is that it is totally cashless, he said. The minister said that Delhi's former chief ministers Kejriwal and Atishi used to talk much about Mohalla Clinics that faced "serious allegations". "In the enquiry, it was revealed that 65,000 fake tests were conducted there and the medicines did not have manufacturing and expiry dates. Around 26,000 test reports bore the same registration numbers," he claimed. "Its best not to talk

much about Mohalla Clinics," said the Union minister.

The AAP before its inception ran a movement against corruption but held back tabling of CAG reports on its government's performance, in the Delhi Assembly, he said. Further, he said that during his seven-year tenure as Union Housing and Urban Affairs minister, the previous AAP government created hurdles the Phase III and Phase IV Metro projects. Lashing out at the previous AAP government, CM Gupta said, "The previous government did an injustice by delaying this scheme in Delhi for seven years due to ego and political reasons." "Now, with triple engagement, we promise to bring change to Delhi. The city will become more beautiful, educated, and developed. The benefits of this scheme will reach everyone. We will work together, and it is a huge responsibility. Excuses won't work anymore; we will deliver the progress Delhi deserves," she added.

Health Minister Pankaj Singh said it is a historical step for Delhi's healthcare system and the government is working to strengthen its health infrastructure.

"This scheme is portable, and any Delhi resident, even if they are outside the city, can enrol. Chemotherapy, ICU care, surgeries, and 961 other medical treatments are also included," Singh said.

Under the Vaya Vandana Yojana, each registered senior citizen will be provided with a unique health card. This card will securely store their complete health records, regular health check-up information, and emergency service details.

All health tests for citizens aged 70 years and above in Delhi will be conducted completely free of cost under the scheme. Gupta earlier posted on X, "Serving the elderly is our top priority. Now, the Centre and Delhi governments together are providing health coverage of up to ₹10 lakh to senior citizens aged 70 and above. Secure the health of your loved ones — get the Ayushman Vaya Vandana Card today. #ViksitDelhi #AyushmanDelhi70Plus."

# Power demand crosses 6,000 megawatt amid heatwave

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The peak power demand of Delhi, pushed by the hot weather, crossed 6,000 MW for the first time this season on Monday.

According to the State Load Dispatch Centre, Delhi's peak power demand reached 6,015 MW at 3:30 pm — the highest on April 28 in the last three years. Earlier, the highest peak demand on April 28 was 6,050 MW in 2022.

The peak demand on April 28 in 2024 and 2023 was 4,994 MW and 4,428 MW. The maximum temperature in Delhi reached 40.4 degrees Celsius on Monday.

BSES discoms — BRPL and BYPL — successfully met the demand of 2590 MW and 1290 MW in their distribution areas, said a spokesperson of the company.

He said more than 2,100 MW of green power will play an important role in ensuring a smooth supply in Delhi during the summer months.

Delhi is on the cusp of another historic power milestone, the SLDC said, adding that after clocking a record power demand of 8,656 MW in 2024, Delhi's peak power demand during the summers of 2025 may clock the 9,000 MW for the first time.

Tata Power-DDL, supplying electricity to North Delhi, also met the peak load of 1817 MW, the highest for the season so far.

Peak power demand in BRPL area of South and West Delhi, which had clocked 3809 MW during the summers of 2024, is expected to reach around 4050 MW during the summers of 2025.

On the other hand, in BYPL area of East and Central Delhi, the peak power demand, which had reached 1882 MW during the summers of 2024, is expected to touch around 1900 MW this year.

Delhi is on the cusp of another historic power milestone.

According to SLDC, after clocking a record power demand of 8656 MW in 2024, Delhi's peak power demand during the summers of 2025 may clock the

9000 MW for the first time. Last year, Delhi's peak power demand had crossed 8000 MW for the first very first time.

BSES distribution companies have strengthened their network by undertaking several initiatives.

Extensive predictive and preventive maintenance activities such as thermal scanning, partial discharge measurement, and health assessments of power and distribution transformers have been conducted.

An online load monitoring system is also tracking transformer and feeder loads, especially critical during the summer months.

To ensure seamless supply, BSES discoms have secured long-term power purchase agreements and banking arrangements with various states, ensuring up to 500 MW of additional power during the summer.

They are also deploying advanced technologies such as Artificial

**An online load monitoring system is also tracking transformer and feeder loads, especially critical during the summer months**

Intelligence and Machine Learning for more accurate load forecasting.

A significant contribution towards Delhi's power reliability this summer is the infusion of over 2100 MW of green energy into the BSES grid.

Tata Power-DDL too has made adequate arrangements to ensure uninterrupted power supply amid the rising heat wave conditions.

Peak summer demand forecasts suggest that BRPL's area could reach 4050 MW, up from 3809 MW last year, while BYPL's areas could see demand touch 1900 MW, compared to 1882 MW in 2024.

Delhi's power utilities remain fully prepared, working round-the-clock to ensure stable and reliable electricity supply for over two crore residents as the mercury continues to rise.

# ABVP breaks JNUSU poll jinx after nine years

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The RSS-affiliated Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad has declared its sole victory in the JNUSU polls after nearly a decade-long drought of a "new dawn of nationalism" in the campus politics, which has historically been dominated by the Leftist parties.

ABVP's Vaibhav Meena secured the post of Joint Secretary in the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union elections after a nine-year gap. Meena, who got 1,518 votes, narrowly surpassed AISA's Naresh Kumar by 85 votes.

**The elections, held on April 25, saw a voter turnout of around 70 per cent, with approximately 5,500 of 7,906 eligible students casting their votes**

The victory marks ABVP's first central panel win since 2015-16 and poses a challenge to the Left's hold on JNU.

Hailing from Karauli, Rajasthan, Meena comes from a tribal farming family.

He holds a post-graduate degree in Hindi Literature from Banaras Hindu University and is currently pursuing research at JNU's Centre of Indian Languages.

Meena has served as the President of Kaveri Hostel and has been actively involved in the National Service Scheme (NSS).

"Following his victory, Meena asserted, 'A new dawn of nationalism has begun in JNU.'

This victory is not just mine, but a win for every student who believes in the power of education to rebuild our nation and promote cultural identity."

While the Left-wing AISA-DSF alliance won the top three central panel posts — President, Vice-President and General Secretary — Meena's win frustrated a Leftist clean-sweep and betrayed the ABVP's rising influence.

The Left too recognised the ABVP's breakthrough as a bellwether of the changing political landscape on the campus.

More so, ABVP also secured 24 out of 46 councillor seats across various schools and special centres.

Breaches in the traditionally Left-leaning academic holdouts, such as the School of Social Sciences and the School of International Studies indicated ABVP's growing support base.

The elections, held on April 25, saw a voter turnout of around 70 per cent, with approximately 5,500 of 7,906 eligible students casting their votes.

# JNU: Left retains hold, ABVP makes inroads

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The left parties reaffirmed their long time dominance in the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) polls on Sunday, when the AISA-DSF combine grabbed three key posts, with a fourth going to the ABVP. Nitish Kumar, Manisha and Munteha Fatima secured the three key central panel positions of President, Vice-President, and General Secretary respectively, reminding the sceptics that the JNU campus remains a bulwark of Leftism where the mighty saffron wave comes to break.

A breach, however, was formed when a resurgent ABVP took the Joint Secretary post after a nine-year hiatus.

CPI-ML-backed AISA's Nitish Kumar won the presidential race with 1,702 votes, comfortably defeating ABVP's Shikha Swaraj, who garnered 1,430 votes, and SFI-supported Tayabba Ahmed, who received 918 votes.

Nitish, hailing from an OBC family in Sheikhpura, Bihar, has been a vocal advocate for underprivileged students and their access to quality education. His leadership chops became apparent in the 'Reopen JNU' movement in 2021, which called for the resumption of offline classes and the reopening of hostels. His victory is seen as a mandate against the government's education policies, which the Left argues are discriminatory and



Newly-elected Jawaharlal Nehru University Students Union President Nitish Kumar, General Secretary Munteha Fatima (right) and VP Manisha (left) outside JNU in New Delhi on Monday

exclusionary. DSF's Manisha won the Vice-President's post with 1,150 votes, narrowly surpassing ABVP's Nittu Goutham, who received 1,116 votes and represents the resilience of first-generation Dalit scholars who have fought against systemic oppression to access education.

She secured a place in the PhD programme at the Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies. She champions a more inclusive campus, where marginalised communities can thrive free from caste and class-based discrimination.

DSF's Munteha Fatima, elected General Secretary with 1,520 votes,

defeated her closest rival ABVP's Kunal Rai, who garnered 1,406 votes. An OBC Muslim from Patna, Munteha has been a powerful voice against "communal fascism" and the marginalisation of Muslims and women. She wants to resist the rise of right-wing politics and the fight for "justice and equality."

ABVP, a right wing outfit, managed to secure the Joint Secretary post after a nine-year gap, with candidate Vaibhav Meena winning by a narrow margin of just 85 votes over AISA's Naresh Kumar.

Though not much, the win is not lost on the Left, which acknowledged the ABVP's rising influence in campus politics.

# Jamia girl student molested, accused arrested

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

A woman day-scholar at the Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) was allegedly molested near a campus gate on Sunday night and the accused has been arrested. In a statement, the university said the incident was "unfortunate and strongly condemnable" and swift action was taken in the matter. The JMI administration reiterated its "zero-tolerance" policy towards any form of violence against women, even as a student organisation alleged that the incident took place in full view of security staff who failed to intervene and claimed serious lapses in campus security.

According to the JMI official, the incident occurred on Sunday night when a woman student reported being molested near Gate No. 8 of the campus. The university's proctorial and security teams, along with the Security Advisor and Chief Proctor, immediately alerted the Jamia Nagar Police Station. Police personnel quickly arrived at the university gate and apprehended the accused, it said. An FIR has been registered under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), and the accused is currently in police custody with further investigation underway into the matter.

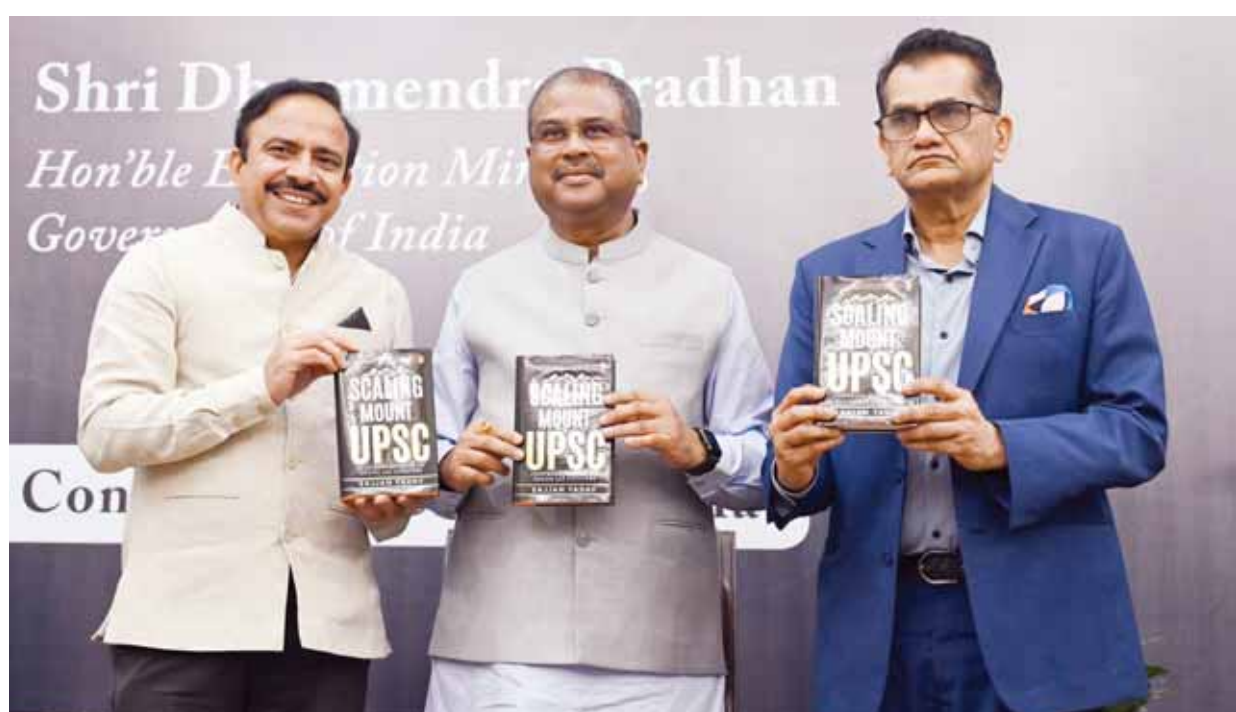
# Dharmendra Pradhan launches book of success stories of young IAS officers

VAISHNAVI MISHRA ■ New Delhi

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan launched the book titled 'Scaling Mount UPSC: Inspiring Stories of Young IAS Officers', on Monday, which is written by Additional Secretary at Department of Expenditure of Ministry of Finance and talks about inspiring success stories of seven IAS officers across the years. Former NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant, who is currently serving as G20 sherpa, was also present.

The book talks about the range of UPSC success stories including: a visually impaired girl Anjali Sharma, the son of a beekeeper from Kashmir Waseem Ahmad Bhat, an economically challenged 21 year old who had just got rejected by both IIT and NDA Satyam Gandhi, a mother of a 2-year-old Minnu, the ward of a servant to an IAS officer Bharat Singh, a privileged US based IITian, who chose to give up a cushy job and pursue the UPSC Lavish and lastly Shruti Sharma, who fetched 1st rank in 2021 UPSC exam.

Among all the mentioned IAS officers in the books, two were present in the event. One was visually impaired IAS Anjali Sharma, who secured AIR 185 in 2021 UPSC civil service exams and is currently posted as assistant secretary at Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. Waseem Ahmad Bhat, from Anantnag in South Kashmir, who secured All India



Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan with G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant and author Sajjan Singh Yadav during the launch of the book Scaling Mount UPSC: Inspiring Stories of Young IAS Officers at the Constitution Club of India in New Delhi on Monday

Rank 7 in the UPSC Civil Services Examination 2022 was also present in the event. The education minister facilitated them with momentum. The parents of IAS Bharat Singh were present on his place and were honored by the education minister.

While addressing the UPSC aspirants, Pradhan said, "One should always keep their catalyst alive to keep themselves going on as everyday is an exam in itself, and one has to pass each one in order to crack the civil service exam. Apart from that, the

world is changing very fast with the evolution of AI and fast paced change in geopolitical scenarios and we have to keep up pace with it, in order to fulfill the dream of 'Viksit Bharat' till 2047." Mentioning the recent Pahalgam attack in his address, he

said, "When the darkness looms over the country after the incidents like the Pahalgam one, Bureaucrats like Waseem become the source of light in the society."

Talking about the utility of the book for UPSC aspirants, Kant said, "As you will turn the pages of the book, you will find encouragement in the journeys of seven heroes and heroines and the book is a call to action for every UPSC aspirant to remind them that no dream is too big to achieve, if you have the courage to perse."

Yadav is a 1995 batch IAS officer of the AGMUT (Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-

Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), a Master's degree in Public Policy from the University of Minnesota, USA, and an MBA from the University of Delhi.

Yadav has served in senior leadership roles in both the Government of India and various state governments, bringing over three decades of rich and diverse administrative experience.

He has been honored with multiple prestigious awards, including the National e-Governance Award (2017-18) and the President of India Medal for excellence in Census Operations.

HEALTH ESTABLISHMENT - UNIT - II  
NEW DELHI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL  
PALIKA KENDRA - NEW DELHI

**Recruitment Notice**  
Filing up 03 (Three) posts of Consultant (Assistant Veterinary Surgeon) and 01 (One) post of Veterinary & Livestock Inspector in NDMC.

NDMC proposes to fill up 03 (Three) posts of Consultant (Assistant Veterinary Surgeon) and 01 (One) post of Veterinary & Livestock Inspector from retired employees of Central Govt./ State Govt./ Municipal Bodies/ NDMC from the equivalent post of the relevant field.

The last date for receipt of application is **31.05.2025**. Further details regarding age, qualification experience and other conditions of eligibility, Pay etc and application form can be downloaded from NDMC website i.e. <https://www.ndmc.gov.in/vacancy.aspx>.

Sd/-  
Joint Director (Health)

# Pankaj Udhas, Shekhar Kapur among Padma awardees

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Former chief of Suzuki Motor late Osamu Suzuki, late singer Pankaj Udhas, former Bihar deputy chief minister late Sushil Kumar Modi, and publisher of Tamil daily Dinamalar, Lakshminarayanan Ramasubbaiyer, were among the 71 prominent personalities conferred with Padma awards by President Droupadi Murmu on Monday. Altogether 139 distinguished persons were named for the country's civilian awards — Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri — on the eve of the 76th Republic Day on January 25. While 71 of them were given the awards at the Rashtrapati Bhavan's majestic Durbar Hall on Monday in the presence of Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home

Minister Amit Shah, among others, the remaining will be conferred with the decorations at a separate function to be held soon. Veteran actor Shekhar Kapur, cricketer Ravichandran Ashwin, hockey player P R Sreejesh, chairman of Asian Institute of Gastroenterology and AIG Hospitals, D Nageshwar Reddy, violinist Lakshminarayanan Subramaniam and Telugu superstar Nandamuri Balakrishna, also known as Balayya, were the other prominent persons conferred with the Padma awards by Murmu. Among the awardees, four received Padma Vibhushan — Suzuki (Posthumous), Subramaniam, Reddy and Malayalam author and film director MT Vasudevan Nair (Posthumous). A total of 10 distinguished personalities were conferred with Padma Bhushan.



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

They include Udhas (Posthumous), Sushil Kumar Modi (Posthumous), Balakrishna, Kapur, Sreejesh, Tamil actor S Ajith Kumar, chairperson of Zydu Lifesciences, Pankaj Patel, and Vinod Dham, an Indian-American engineer, who is widely known as the 'Father of the Pentium'. As many as 57 prominent personalities were conferred with Padma Shri. These include former chairperson of the State Bank of India, Arundhati Bhattacharya, industrialist Pawan Kumar Goenka, wildlife researcher and Marathi author Maruti Bhujangrao Chitampalli, who gave unique dictionaries on birds, animals and trees, and master puppeteer Bhimavva Daddabappa Shillekyathara, who was one of the first women to practise Togalu Gombeyata (leather puppetry) art form. Former AIIMS and SGPGI director A

K Mahapatra and Punjabi singer Jaspinder Narula Kaul were also given Padma Shri. This year, the Padma awards were given to 30 unsung heroes, including 100-year-old Libia Lobo Sardesai, who played an important role in Goa's freedom movement. She co-founded an underground radio station — 'Voz da Liberdade (Voice of Freedom)' — in a forested area in 1955 to rally people against Portuguese rule. The awards are given in various disciplines and fields such as art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports and civil service, among others. Padma Vibhushan is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service; Padma Bhushan for distinguished service of high order, and Padma Shri for distinguished service in any field.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India and France on Monday inked an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to procure 26 naval variants of Rafale fighter jets at a cost of around Rs 64,000 crore for the Indian Navy. The pact provides for setting up of a production facility for Rafale fuselage as well as maintenance, repair and overhaul facilities for aircraft engines, sensors and weapons in India, according to the Defence Ministry. In line with the Government's thrust on Aatmanirbhar Bharat, the agreement includes Transfer of Technology for integration of indigenous weapons in India. It also includes setting up of production facility for Rafale Fuselage as well as Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul facilities for aircraft engine, sensors and weapons in India. The deal is expected to generate thousands of jobs and revenue for a large number of MSMEs in setting up, production and running of these facilities. The IGA has been signed by Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh and Minister of Armed Forces of France Sebastien Lecornu. The signed copies of the agreement, aircraft package supply protocol and weapons package supply protocol were exchanged by Indian and French officials in the presence of Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh at Nausera Bhawan. The ministry said the delivery of the aircraft would be completed by 2030, with the crew undergoing training in France and India. India is procuring the jets for deployment on board aircraft carrier INS Vikrant. Manufactured by French defence major

Dassault Aviation, the Rafale-Marine is a carrier-borne combat-ready aircraft with proven operational capabilities in the maritime environment. The sealing of the mega deal came three weeks after the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi cleared the procurement. Under the terms of reference, the delivery of the jets will have to start around five years after the signing of the contract. In July 2023, the defence ministry accorded the initial approval for the mega acquisition following a series of deliberations and evaluation tests of the platform. Under the deal, the Indian Navy will also get associated ancillary equipment including weapon systems and spares from Dassault Aviation. The Defence Ministry said that the Rafale-Marine has commonality with the Rafale being operated by the Indian Air Force (IAF). "Its procurement will substantially enhance joint operational capability, besides optimising training and logistics for the aircraft for both Indian Navy and IAF," it said in a statement. "The induction would lead to the addition of a potent force multiplier to the Indian Navy's aircraft carriers, substantially boosting the nation's air power at sea," it said. Manufactured by France's Dassault Aviation, the Rafale-Marine is a carrier-borne combat-ready aircraft with proven operational capabilities in maritime environment. The delivery of these aircraft would be completed by 2030, with the crew undergoing training in France and India. Rafale-Marine has commonality with the Rafale being operated by IAF.

## Naresh Tikait speaking 'language of Pakistan': BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The BJP on Monday accused Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) president Naresh Tikait of speaking the "language of Pakistan" after he took exception to the government's decision of putting in abeyance the Indus Waters Treaty in consequence to the Pahalgam terror attack. Tikait in a video clip that made rounds on social media condemned the Pahalgam terror strike and called for the strictest action against those involved. But he also remarked that the Narendra Modi government should not have suspended the Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan as it would affect the common people, especially farmers, in the neigh-

bouring country. BJP Kisan Morcha president and MP Rajkumar Chahar lashed out at Tikait and demanded that he apologise for his remarks. "Naresh Tikait is speaking the language of Pakistan. He says the government's decision to stop water was wrong. He says that all Pakistanis are not culprits, only some people did that (terror strike)," he charged. "I strongly condemn his remarks. He should be ashamed of making such comments. He has spoken against India. He should apologise to the people of the country," Chahar added. The BJP leader said that the Modi government had taken tough decisions against Pakistan which included suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty after the

Pahalgam terror attack. "In the coming days, more effective decisions will be taken," he added. Delhi Cabinet Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma also slammed the Tikait for voicing views against the Indian government's decision to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty, saying the farmers of India have always sweated in the fields for the pride of the tricolour and sacrificed their sons to protect the country. Verma said Tikait's statement has exposed the real face of those who do politics of power by pretending to be patriots. "If leaders like Tikait brothers, who pursue politics in the name of farmers, have so much sympathy for Pakistan, then it would be better that they leave India and

go to Pakistan," he said. Verma's Cabinet colleague Manjinder Singh Sirsa also slammed Tikait, saying the BKU leader was indulging in anti-national activities under the garb of trans-border farmer unity. "Those who are worried about the farmers of Pakistan today are neither true citizens of India nor true well-wishers of the farmers," he said. Sirsa also trained his guns on Tikait and asked, "Should we continue giving water to those who want to shed our blood?" Meanwhile, BKU national spokesperson Rakesh Tikait also reportedly raised questions on the government's line of action post-Pahalgam, saying the probe agencies should catch those who stand to benefit from the incident.

## Delhi court extends Tahawwur's custody for 12 days

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi court on Monday extended by 12 more days the NIA custody of 26/11 Mumbai attack accused Tahawwur Hussain Rana. Special NIA judge Chander Jit Singh extended Rana's custody on NIA's request after his previous 18-day remand got over. Rana was produced in court with his face covered amid tight security. Senior advocate Dayan Krishnan and special public prosecutor Narender Mann are representing the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in the matter which is taking place in chamber. Advocate Piyush Sachdeva from Delhi Legal Services Authority is representing Rana. In its previous remand order, the court directed the NIA to conduct Rana's medical examination every 24 hours, and allow him to meet his lawyer every alternate day. The court allowed Rana to use only a

"soft-tip pen" and meet his lawyer in the presence of the NIA officials, who would be out of an audible distance. During the arguments on the last occasion, the NIA said Rana's custody was required to piece together the full scope of the conspiracy, and submitted he was required to be taken to various locations for retracing the events that took place 17 years ago. Rana, a close associate of 26/11 main conspirator David Coleman Headley alias Daoud Gilani, a US citizen, was brought to India after the US Supreme Court on April 4 dismissed his review plea against his extradition to India. On November 26, 2008, a group of 10 Pakistani terrorists went on a rampage, carrying out a coordinated attack on a railway station, two luxury hotels and a Jewish centre, after they sneaked into India's financial capital using the sea route in the Arabian Sea.



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

## Congress distances itself from leaders making controversial comments on Pahalgam attack

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Congress on Monday distanced itself from the controversial comments of some of its leaders on the Pahalgam terror attack, saying that only the recent CWC resolution and the views expressed by AICC chief Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi and authorised AICC office-bearers represent its position. The statement came after the BJP asked Kharge and Rahul if their call for national unity was merely a formality and cited comments of Congress leaders questioning the need for war with Pakistan and the Pahalgam terror attack victims' account that terrorists marked out non-Muslims. Congress leaders likes Vijay Wadetiwar, Mani Shankar Aiyar, Shashi Tharoor, Tariq Hameed Karra and Saifuddin Soz have triggered a row on the Pahalgam terror attack. The BJP alleged that some from the opposition party were speaking "Pakistan's language". The Congress Working Committee had termed the Pahalgam attack masterminded by Pakistan as a direct assault on the values of our republic. It also called for a comprehensive examination of intelligence failures and security lapses. Both Kharge and Rahul had expressed support to the government on whatever action it takes on the matter. Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "The Congress Working Committee had met on April 24, 2025, and passed a resolution on the brutal terror attack on tourists in Pahalgam two days earlier. "Thereafter, on the evening of April 24, 2025, the Congress President and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha attended the all-party meeting and put forward the party's views." "Some Congress leaders have been speaking to the media. They speak for themselves and do not reflect the Congress' views. "There should be absolutely no doubt whatsoever at this most sensitive of times that the CWC resolution, the views expressed by Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi and the views of authorised AICC office-bearers ALONE represent the position of the Congress (sic)," Ramesh said in a post on X. Aiyar, during a book release event here on Saturday, had wondered whether the April 22 terror attack in the tourist spot of Baisaran that left 26 dead, was a result of



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

"unresolved questions of the Partition". Former Jammu and Kashmir Congress president Saifuddin Soz, Prasad said, criticised India's decision to put the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance as the river is Pakistan's lifeline. The BJP leader asserted that Soz has asked the Indian government to take into Pakistan's official claim that it was not involved in the attack. Tharoor's comments on the Pahalgam terror attack, in which he reportedly said there was some failure but no country can ever have a "foolproof, 100-per cent intelligence", have come under attack from within the Congress with party leader Udit Raj hitting out at him. Raj has said that being a Congressman, he should ask when will Prime Minister Narendra Modi teach Pakistan a lesson. "According to you Congress should guarantee foolproof intelligence to BJP and nothing should be asked of the BJP," Raj said in a post on X. "Shashi Tharoor said no country has 100 per cent foolproof intelligence? At the time of 26/11 Mumbai attack, Modi ji had said after reaching Mumbai from Gujarat that it is the failure of the central government. "He also said that the problem is the Centre and not the border. How did the

terrorists come when the intelligence, BSF and CRPF are with the Centre. Tharoor ji, ask from Modi ji," said Raj, who is the chairman of the "Unorganised Workers and Employees Congress Other Than Professionals". The Congress Working Committee, in a resolution, on Thursday said the cowardly Pahalgam attack masterminded by Pakistan is a direct assault on the values of our republic. It also accused the BJP of exploiting the tragedy to promote discord and polarisation at a time when unity is most needed. The CWC, chaired by Kharge, asserted that it is imperative that a comprehensive analysis is conducted into the intelligence failures and security lapses that enabled such an attack in a Union Territory, which is directly under the purview of the Union home ministry. "This cowardly and calculated act of terror, masterminded by Pakistan, is a direct assault on the values of our Republic. The deliberate targeting of Hindus was done to inflame passions across the country. We appeal for calm in the face of this grave provocation and reaffirm our collective strength in the face of adversity," the resolution had said.

## BJP questions Kharge, Rahul Gandhi over issue

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The BJP on Monday questioned Congress Chief Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi on Monday over the comments of several of their colleagues, some of whom have questioned the need for a war with Pakistan and the Pahalgam terror attack victims' account that the terrorists had marked out non-Muslims, asking if their call for national unity was merely a formality. Addressing a press conference here, former Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad also lashed out at Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav for saying that he will not visit the grieving family of Shubham Dwivedi, one of the 26 people, mostly tourists, shot dead by terrorists at Pahalgam, as he had no relations with them. Yadav had, however, added that he would ask his party members to visit the Kanpur-based family and alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), at times, incites people in mourning to misbehave on such occasions. This is the height of insensitivity, Prasad said and noted that some Congress leaders even went on to question the accounts of Pahalgam attack victims, including Dwivedi's wife, that the terrorists had identified their victims by religion. Prasad named a number of Congress leaders, including Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, senior Maharashtra leader Vijay Wadetiwar, Karnataka minister RB Timmapur and Gandhi's brother-in-law Robert Vadra, for their controversial comments to target the opposition party's leadership. "Do Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge have no control over their party? Or both of them made pro-forma comments while letting others the freedom to speak as they wished?" he asked, adding that the remarks of the opposition leaders are being used in Pakistan, including by its media, to defame India. Has any warning been given to these Congress leaders or have they been asked to apologise, Prasad asked of the opposition party's leadership. He said Kharge, the Congress president, and Gandhi, the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha, had extended their support to the BJP-led Centre at an all-party meeting over

the countermeasures being considered by it following the Pahalgam attack, and said this reflected the strength of India's mature democracy. However, several Congress leaders have made comments that appeared to be part of a pattern, Ravi Shankar Prasad said, wondering if the top leadership of the opposition party merely responded in a perfunctory manner in the wake of the attack. Former Jammu and Kashmir Congress president Saifuddin Soz, he said, has criticised India's decision to put the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance as the river is Pakistan's lifeline. The BJP leader added that Soz has asked the Indian government to take into Pakistan's official claim that it was not involved in the attack. Siddaramaiah has expressed his opposition to a war with Pakistan and subsequently, clarified that it should be pursued only as a last resort. When the world is with India after the terror strike, be it the United States, France or Saudi Arabia, these leaders are making such shameful and irresponsible remarks, Prasad said, reiterating PM Narendra Modi's assertion that the perpetrators of the Pahalgam attack and those who conspired with them will be pursued to the end of the world and subjected to the harshest punishment. This is the height of insensitivity, he said, adding that the likes of Wadetiwar and Timmapur too have also questioned the account of some of the victims that the terrorists had identified non-Muslims before shooting them dead. Wadetiwar had asked if the terrorists had time to ask the victims about their religion, a view also shared by Timmapur. A few days ago, Vadra alleged that Muslims are being targeted by the government, promoting its Hindutva ideology, as he hinted at links between terror activities and anger in a society. Prasad said when the country should speak in one voice, many Congress leaders are making such irresponsible statements. Noting that he was the BJP's chief spokesperson during the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack in 2008, when the Congress-led UPA was in power, Prasad said he was instructed by his leadership to affirm the party's support to the government headed by then PM Manmohan Singh.

## Government ensure no lapses in upcoming NEET-UG exam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Ministry of Education is holding a series of meetings with district magistrates and superintendents of police from all states and Union territories to ensure there are no lapses in the upcoming medical entrance exam NEET-UG, sources said on Monday. The May 4 exam will be conducted in more than 550 cities at over 5,000 centres across the country. The Ministry has been working on a "fool-proof" plan after the last year's exam was blighted by irregularities, including paper leaks. "To ensure smooth, fair and secure conduct of NEET-UG, a series of meetings have been held with DMs and SPs of all states and UTs. The district-level coordination committees are being fully activated to manage logistics, security and crisis response," a source said to media. "There will be multi-layered frisking by district police in addition to NTA-designated security at the centres. The transport of confidential materials like question papers and OMR sheets will be under full police escort. Coaching centres and digital platforms will be monitored to prevent organised cheating networks," the source added. Duty Magistrates are being deployed for mandatory inspection of all examination centres, while there will be personal visits by DMs and SPs to exam centres to assess preparedness. Under scrutiny over last year's irregularities in NEET-UG and PhD entrance NET, the Centre had last year set up a panel to ensure "transparent, smooth and fair" conduct of exams by the National Testing Agency, or NTA. Last year, the UGC-NET (University Grants Commission - National Eligibility Test) was cancelled as the ministry received input that its integrity had been compromised. Both matters are being investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Two other exams — CSIR-UGC NET, NEET-PG — were cancelled at the last moment as a preemptive step. This year, more than 23 lakh candidates are expected to appear for the exam which determines whether they will it to a medical college in the country. The NTA had on Saturday opened a platform to report suspicious claims regarding NEET-UG.



Editor's TAKE

## Sweltering heat grips northern India

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## UCC on the horizon

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Court had also declared Triple Talaq unconstitutional, promoting gender justice. Minority groups feel that personal laws are vital to cultural and religious identities, and implementing a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) could infringe on religious freedom



under Article 25 of the Constitution. India currently has separate personal laws for various religious communities, including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Parsis, which govern issues like marriage, divorce, and inheritance. The UCC supporters argue for one law for all citizens.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Modi Government claims that the

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

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

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

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

## Rekindling spirituality in public service

### SECOND Opinion

BY KANISHK

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

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

It manifests in the policymaker, the volunteer, the social worker, the diplomat — all united by a common purpose: the greater good. Leadership, in this realm, cannot rely on knowledge alone. Knowledge is inert until shaped by reflection, compassion, and inner values. Spiritual wisdom breathes life into decisions, offering clarity and courage when doubt or fatigue sets in. Without this grounding, even the most brilliant minds may falter — confusion creeps in, cynicism sets root, and leadership loses its compass. Leadership today is often misunderstood as a position of authority, but real leadership stems from

authenticity. It is not found in designations but discovered in one's depth of conviction and steadiness of spirit. Authority may be granted by position, but legitimacy is earned through inner alignment. Spiritually grounded leaders do not chase applause — they pursue truth and inspire through vision and integrity. They don't act from ambition, but from an attunement to the pulse of humanity. Such leadership stirs hope, cuts through cynicism, and dissolves indifference.

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

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

A quiet spiritual awakening is unfolding. This awakening isn't about IQ or even EQ, but a higher dimension — Spiritual Quotient (SQ): the ability to see beyond the immediate, to act with purpose and compassion. Without SQ, institutions crumble under their own weight; fatigue replaces idealism, and burnout overtakes brilliance. When a leader is spiritually aligned, their institutions reflect that purpose. This generates "spiritual capital" — the shared conscience of a community

that guides its ethos. When such spiritual clarity guides governance, it becomes more than administration — it becomes dharma in action. The ancient Indian ideal of Ram Rajya embodied this: a just society led by humility, where governance was sacred, and transformation flowed from values, not mandates. Great nations and institutions outlive their founders when their leaders' spiritual fire seeps into collective consciousness.

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

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

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

### Leaderspeak



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

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

## Letters to the Editor

### Indo-Pak staff is ominous

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

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

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

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

RS NARULA | PATIALA

### International Dance Day

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

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

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

DR B MADHUSUDHAN REDDY | KARIMNAGAR

### Houses of alleged terrorists demolished

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

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

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

### TEACH PAKISTAN A LESSON BUT WITH CAUTION

The content of the article, 'No Indus water to Pak...' (284-25), though carries some emotional touch, will be endorsed by many. It is true, Pandit Nehru was gentle enough and stood firm on international norms, a humane approach and tried to live up to the theory of Love thy Neighbour. The recipient not reciprocating the best of sentiments and gestures demonstrated by the Indus Water Treaty is a fallout of the misplaced priority of focusing more on communal agenda than on developing the country. India has waited enough and suspension of the treaty should sensitise the ruling dispensation to shun its communal agenda and focus on peoples' welfare besides establishing peace with all. Pakistan is falling in debt trap besides living with the menace of terrorism. All these make clear that the leadership in Pakistan is not prepared to change its course. India's decision to deprive Indus water, which is a lifeline for Pakistan, suits the situation of this day. However, it is to be kept in mind that there

is possibility of our action becoming a precedent that turns against us as we have China on the other side with a major river flowing through its soil into India. Basic fact Pakistan needs to understand is that it has wasted decades in pursuing communal agenda in the process of which it has lagged far behind India in every aspect, besides living with the pains inflicted by terrorism.

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

AG RAJMOHAN I ANANTPUR

# India's grand rewrite of communication order

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

FIRST Column

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

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

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

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

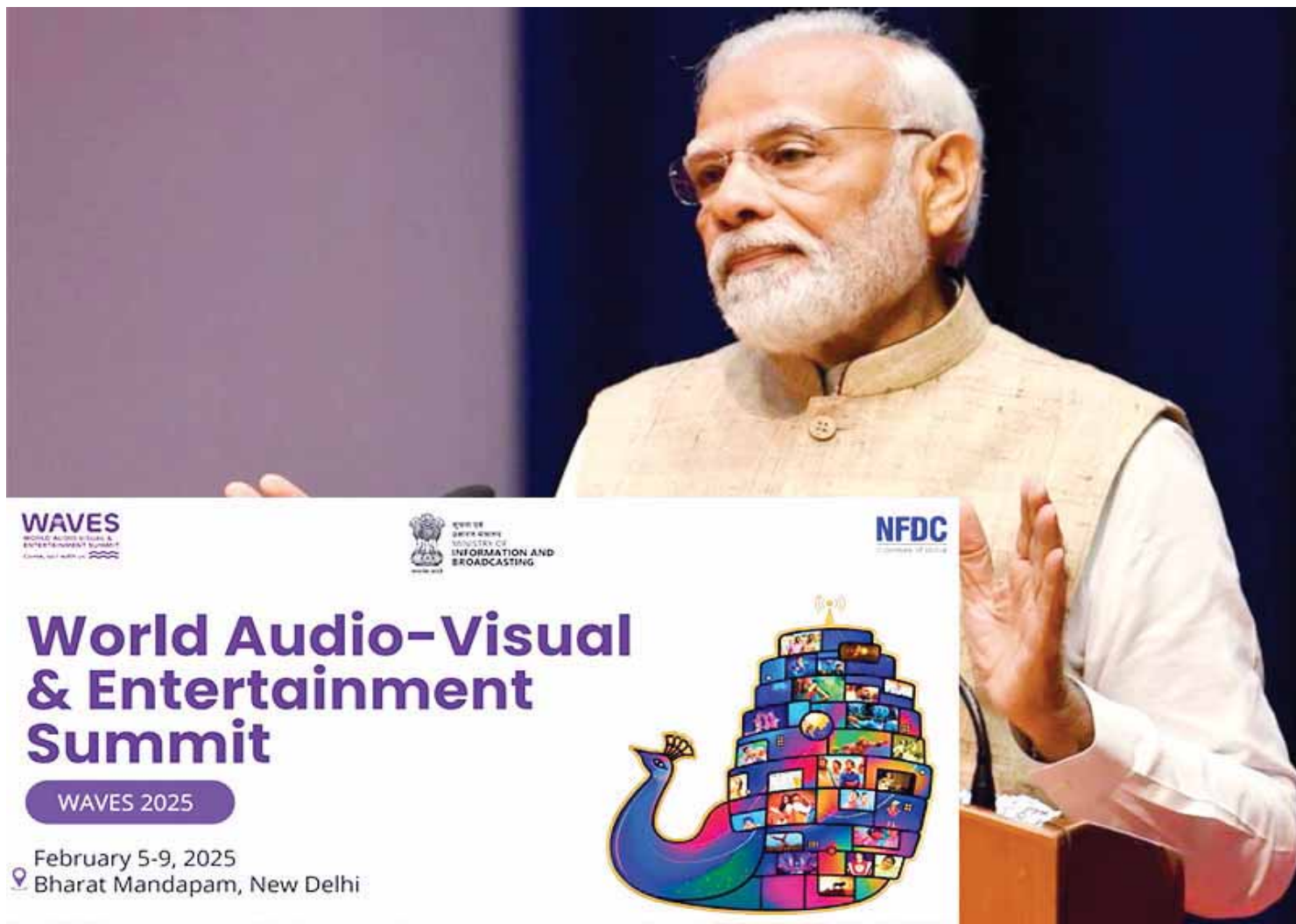
From the outset, WAVES has been propelled by an unflinching commitment to innovation and ideation. As the inaugural edition, it places "Communication First" not just as a slogan but as an organising principle. For perhaps the first time, a summit in the M&E space has been imagined as a "Communication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

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

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

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

The themes and templates curated under this banner are refreshingly forward — looking. They tackle not just today's industry pain points but anticipate tomorrow's cultural, economic, and technological shifts. From decentralisation of nar-



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

atives and platform-neutral storytelling to immersive formats and multilingual access, WAVES has laid down a clear thesis: the future belongs to those who dare to reimagine.

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

WAVES 2025 emerges at a moment when the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Why a new linguistic survey is crucial for cooperative India

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



BINOD ANAND

local communities.

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

The result is a fragmented approach that fails to execute cooperative economic frameworks effectively. Consider this: a rural marketing executive knows

precisely how to communicate with farmers in their dialect to sell fertilisers or machinery, but a Government financial literacy campaign in the same village may miss its mark simply because it

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

is not available in the local language. This gap in understanding not only undermines the potential of Government schemes like PM-KISAN and FPOs (Farmer Producer Organisations) but also impedes the inclusive growth of cooperatives.

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

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

Further, the promotion of Indigenous languages will encourage knowledge sharing of traditional farming techniques, watershed

management practices, and sustainable agriculture. With more accurate linguistic and physiological density data, policymakers can design hyper-localised interventions that cater to each region's unique challenges.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Death toll in Iran port explosion reaches 46

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

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

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

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

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

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



attacks on Israel during the war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The Iranian military denied receiving the chemical shipment. Social media footage of the explosion saw reddish-hued

smoke rising from the fire just before the detonation.

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

# New York protests against the Pahalgam attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York

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

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

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

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

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

to those killed and injured in the Pahalgam attack.

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

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

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

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

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

all across India.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# US airstrike kills 68 African migrants: Houthis rebels

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ethiopians and other African migrants for years have landed in Yemen, braving the war-torn nation to try and reach Saudi Arabia for work. The Houthi rebels allegedly make tens of thousands of dollars a week smuggling migrants over the border. Migrants from Ethiopia have found themselves detained, abused and even killed in Saudi Arabia and Yemen during the war. An Oct. 3, 2022, letter to the kingdom from the UN said its investigators "received concerning allegations of cross-border artillery shelling and small arms fire allegedly by Saudi security forces, causing the deaths of up to 430

and injuring 650 migrants." Monday's alleged strike recalled a similar strike by a Saudi-led coalition battling the Houthis back in 2022 on the same compound, which caused a collapse killing 66 detainees and wounding 113 others, a United Nations reporter later said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Singapore: condolences offered to victims of Pahalgam attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Singapore

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"In the face of such upheavals and chal-

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

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

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

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

# Minister Piyush Goyal arrives in London to begin UK, tour



Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal

FILE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

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

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

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

"Talks have been ongoing since they were relaunched in February, and we will only sign a deal that is in the best interests of the British people and drives growth across the UK," the spokesperson

said. The relaunch of the negotiations, following a hiatus for general elections in both countries last year, is aimed at clinching an agreement that is expected to significantly enhance the estimated GBP 41 billion a year India-UK trade partnership.

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

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Beijing

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

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

For his part, Wang said China was closely following the developments, stressing

that combating terrorism was a shared responsibility of the entire world while reaffirming Beijing's consistent support for Pakistan's firm counterterrorism efforts, it added.

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

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

China hopes both sides will remain restrained, move toward each other, and work together to de-escalate the situation,

he added. Dar emphasised that Pakistan had consistently and firmly fought terrorism and was against any actions that could lead to an escalation of the situation, according to the report.

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

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

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

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

# Seven killed, Nine injured in bomb blast in northwest Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Peshawar

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Rare exposition of sacred Buddha tooth relic ends

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colombo

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

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

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

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

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

"We are so pleased that it has come to an end. But we are left with the bigger task of removing various temporary structures



put up in the town," Indika Kumari, the Municipal Commissioner of Kandy, told reporters.

She said the cleaning operations commenced last night itself.

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

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

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

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



Major power outage in Spain

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Barcelona

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



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

It is rare to have such a widespread outage there. Spanish generator Red Eléctrica said it affected the Iberian peninsula and the incident is being assessed.

ively restore the electricity supply nationwide. In Portugal, a country of some 10.6 million people, the outage hit the capital, Lisbon, and surrounding areas, as well as northern and southern parts of the country.

"It looks like it was a problem with the distribution network, apparently in Spain. It's still being ascertained," Cabinet Minister Leitão Amaro was quoted as saying.

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Toronto

Canadians will decide Monday whether to extend the Liberal Party's decade in power or instead hand control to the Conservatives.

It's like Trump standing there saying 'I am your retribution.' Foreign policy hasn't dominated a Canadian election this much since 1988.

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

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

Immigrants detained at illegal nightclub in Colorado

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colorado Springs

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

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

more than 1,000 international college students, some of whom have seen their legal status restored, at least temporarily.

ported. During his second stint as US president, Donald Trump's unprecedented campaign of immigration enforcement has pushed the limits of executive power, and he has clashed with federal judges trying to restrain him.

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

Journalists swarm cardinals at Vatican gates sincerely

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Vatican City

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

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

A date for the start of the highly anticipated conclave could come as soon as Monday. In a chaotic scene, journalists shouted out questions about the mood inside, whether there was unity, and when the conclave would begin.

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

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

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

The Russian Defence Ministry said its forces downed 119 Ukrainian drones overnight, most of them over Russia's Bryansk border region. In Ukraine, air raid sirens rang out across the country Monday morning.

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

The last 20 were appointed in early December. "We've got all week," Nichols said as he arrived Monday. Only cardinals under 80 are eligible to vote, and it is not clear how many of the 135 will participate.

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

Francis in 2020 forced Becciu to resign as head of the Vatican's saint-making office and renounce his rights as a cardinal because of allegations of embezzlement and financial fraud.

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

American military aid has been crucial for Ukraine's war effort, and further help could be at risk if the Trump administration walks away from attempts to end the war.

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# India to be competitive on many products: Scindia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

To a question on how he sees the US tariff situation playing out, the Minister said



that the whole question of tariffs has to be seen from a comparative matrix point of view. “So if you’re a country that I used to compete with and the tariffs that have been put on you are possibly today double of what mine are. Where I used to be uncompetitive vis-a-vis you, I now become competitive. So, I think it is important to look at it not only from purely India-centric point of view but from a comparative matrix point of view,” Scindia said.

The Minister expressed confidence that for many products in many areas, India will emerge fiercely and much more competitive than prior to the tariffs being in place. India has transformed itself from an

infrastructure standpoint, and from an exporting nation standpoint as well, he said terming it “a monumental change.”

“...You have to understand where we stand as an economy... Today, India stands very tall... We’re today going to become the third-largest economy by 2028. We’re today at almost a \$4 trillion economy, \$5 trillion by 2028, close to \$6 trillion by 2030,” the minister said. From a country that used to import an overwhelming majority of its mobile phone requirement and produced merely 5 crore units, India is producing over 35 to 40 crore mobile phones, today. “Our exports are over ₹1,75,000 crore purely on mobiles,” he said.

# Bullet train to be operational by 2028: Devendra Fadnavis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# ‘Adding 50-GW renewable energy yearly can end coal imports by 2029’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

**Attari is near Amritsar in Punjab.** A Delhi-based importer said that the closure of the land route will definitely impact imports of dry fruits from both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

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

# Sensex jumps 1,006 points, foreign fund inflows

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

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

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

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

HCL Tech, UltraTech Cement, Nestle

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

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

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

# New study finds Apple App Store in India facilitated ₹44,447 crore in 2024

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

**A**pple on Monday released a new study saying that the App Store ecosystem in India facilitated ₹44,447 crore (\$5.31 billion) in developer billings and sales in 2024. The study — conducted by Professor Viswanath Pingali from the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad — showed that more than 94 per cent of that revenue accrued solely to developers and businesses, without any commission paid to Apple.

The study showed that over the last five years, the global earnings of India-based developers have tripled, highlighting the tremendous business opportunity and global reach the App Store provides.

“The App Store has been an economic miracle for developers in India and all around the world, and we’re thrilled to support their work,” Tim Cook, Apple’s CEO said in a release. This study underlines the power of India’s incredibly vibrant app economy, he added.

“And we’re committed to keep investing in the success of developers of all sizes as they build apps that make an important impact and enrich people’s lives,” according to him. The study from Professor Pingali took a close look at the key drivers shaping the App Store ecosystem in India, including increased app usage in sectors like food delivery, travel, gaming, and entertainment. In 2024



alone, it found that App Store developers generated ₹38,906 crore (\$4.65 billion) in total billings and sales from the sale of physical goods and services, ₹3,014 crore (\$352.9 million) from in-app advertising, and ₹2,527 crore (\$302 million) from digital goods and services.

Since its launch more than fifteen years ago, developers have more ways than ever to monetise their apps and build successful businesses on the App Store, resulting in a healthy and dynamic ecosystem. In 2024, developers active in India have been successful across a diverse range of app categories such as games, health, and fit-

ness, lifestyle and utilities, as per the study. The App Store’s ecosystem of innovation provides Apple developers around the world with a global distribution platform across 175 storefronts.

In 2024, close to 80 per cent of India-based developers’ App Store earnings came from users outside of the country, and 87 per cent of developers were active on multiple storefronts.

Moreover, throughout the same year, users from all over the world downloaded apps from developers in India more than 755 million times through the App Store, twice as many as five years ago.

# UP aims to triple exports in five years

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

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

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

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

Promotion Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi said.

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

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

For example, he said, the proposed policy seeks to provide up to ₹10 crore as cap-

ital subsidy to investors to build export infrastructure.

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

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

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

## IN BRIEF

**GNU CELEBRATES EARTH DAY**  
Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar celebrated Earth Day under the guidance of Vice-Chancellor Professor Karamjeet Singh with great zeal and environmental consciousness. The event was jointly organised by the College Development Council and the NSS unit of GNDU. The Earth Day rally was flagged off by Registrar, KS Chahal, Dean Student Welfare, HS Saini and Saroj Arora, Dean College Development Council.

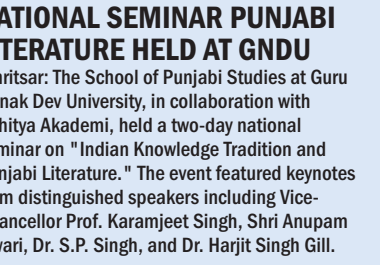


**DNA DAY CELEBRATE AT GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY**  
Amritsar: The Department of Human Genetics at Guru Nanak Dev University hosted a dynamic and engaging celebration of DNA Day, marking the anniversary of the discovery of the structure of DNA. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from four reputed schools — Delhi Public School, Invictus School, Holy Heart Presidency School, and Spring Dale School. A total of 78 students along with their teachers joined hands with the department to explore the wonders of genetics.

**VEDANTA LEVERAGES AI TO TRANSFORM SAFETY**  
New Delhi: On World Day for Safety and Health at Work, Vedanta reaffirmed its safety commitment, leveraging AI, drones, and smart systems. Innovations like VR training simulators and AI-based monitoring enhance safety. The company also focuses on employee health, with initiatives including wellness programs, mental health support, and community safety training.



**NATIONAL SEMINAR PUNJABI LITERATURE HELD AT GNDU**  
Amritsar: The School of Punjabi Studies at Guru Nanak Dev University, in collaboration with Sahitya Akademi, held a two-day national seminar on “Indian Knowledge Tradition and Punjabi Literature.” The event featured keynotes from distinguished speakers including Vice-Chancellor Prof. Karamjeet Singh, Shri Anupam Tiwari, Dr. S.P. Singh, and Dr. Harjit Singh Gill.



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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

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

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

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

On Friday, China announced it would exempt some US imports from its steep 125 per cent tariffs, though it denied that

any formal trade talks were underway.

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

This hawkish stance suggests that interest rate cuts may not materialise in the near term, further weighing on gold, which typically loses appeal as a non-yielding asset when interest rates stay elevated. Mehta further said, “Rising geopolitical tensions could limit gold’s downside. As war risks escalate and new conflicts emerge, investors are likely to seek refuge in gold.”

“With tensions brewing among major powers, and regional strains like the growing friction between India and Pakistan, demand for gold as a safe-haven asset is expected to rise, making it a preferred hedge against market

**Gold prices continued to decline as easing US-China trade tensions boosted investors’ risk appetite, reducing demand for safe-haven assets like bullion while a stronger dollar added downward pressure on gold**

volatility and uncertainty,” he added. The local bullion markets were closed on Friday due to traders’ protest against the terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir’s Pahalgam.

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

On the global front, spot gold fell nearly one per cent to trade at \$3,291.04 per ounce. “Gold traded weak amid the US

opening tariff talks with multiple nations and growing expectations of a possible China-US trade agreement according to US President Donald Trump.

Additionally, optimism around a potential Russia-Ukraine peace deal further weighed on safe-haven demand for gold,” Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said. Spot silver in the Asian market hours traded 0.2 per cent lower at \$33.05 per ounce.

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

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



# IPL: Delhi Capitals eye comeback against KKR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Delhi Capitals (DC) would aim for an improved batting effort in the middle overs when they face a struggling Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in their Indian Premier League match here on Tuesday. DC have suffered two defeats in their last four matches, including a loss to Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Sunday, and will look to avoid any hiccups at the business end of the tournament. Abhishek Porel has batted with plenty of aggressive intent at the top of the order but veteran Faf du Plessis will quickly need to get used to the slow nature of surface at Kotla after struggling in his comeback game. KL Rahul has been DC's leading run-getter this season but could not accelerate against the spinners on Sunday night. He would back himself to take on the likes of Sunil Narine and Varun Chakaravathy. .

With quality spinners in their ranks, KKR could pose a stiff challenge for the home. The Ajinkya Rahane led-side is slightly low on confidence after a tough outing against Punjab Kings in a rain-hit match. A solid innings is expected from Karun Nair to ensure Rahul isn't left to shoulder the burden alone in the middle-order. In the bowling department, DC skipper Axar Patel led from the front with two wickets but found little support from others. Star pacer Mitchell Starc, who went wicketless against RCB, will look to exploit the weaknesses in his former team, while Kuldeep Yadav, with his deceptive googlies, remains a threat in the middle overs. DC's fielding has also left much to be desired against RCB, with Porel dropping a crucial catch of Krunal Pandya on Sunday night. KKR, meanwhile, have managed just seven points so far and are placed seventh in the standings, having failed to collect any



points from their last three matches, including two losses and a no-result. Rahane will be desperate to arrest the slide and keep their playoff hopes alive, with another defeat making the task tougher. Issues have cropped up across departments for KKR. Their batting lacks a settled look, with Quinton de Kock and Rahmanullah Gurbaz being rotated in the opening slot alongside Narine, while the side has relied heavily on Rahane and youngster Angkrish Raghuvanshi to score runs. The middle-order trio of Venkatesh Iyer, Andre Russell, Rinku Singh and Ramandeep Singh has struggled to make a significant impact. Bowling has been another area of concern, with KKR failing to break opening stands, allowing teams to post big totals — as seen in the last game where PBKS added 120 for the opening wicket. While KKR managed to pull things back at the death, it will require a collective effort from Chakaravathy, Vaibhav Arora, and Harshit

Rana to stem the flow of runs against DC. **Teams**  
**Delhi Capitals:** Axar Patel (c), Jake Fraser-McGurk, Abhishek Porel, Karun Nair, KL Rahul (wk), Tristan Stubbs, Ashutosh Sharma, Vipraj Nigam, Mitchell Starc, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohit Sharma, Mukesh Kumar, Sameer Rizvi, Darshan Nalkande, Donovan Ferreira, Tripurana Vijay, Dushmantha Chameera, Faf du Plessis, T Natarajan, Ajay Yadav Mandal, Manvath Kumar L, Madhav Tiwari.  
**Kolkata Knight Riders:** Ajinkya Rahane (c), Rinku Singh, Quinton de Kock (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Rovman Powell, Manish Pandey, Luvnith Sisodia, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Moeen Ali, Ramandeep Singh, Andre Russell, Anrich Nortje, Vaibhav Arora, Mayank Markande, Spencer Johnson, Harshit Rana, Sunil Narine, Varun Chakaravathy, Chetan Sakariya.

# People are forgetting importance of partnerships: Kohli

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Indian superstar Virat Kohli has underlined the importance of stitching partnerships in T20 cricket, especially on wickets where heaving the willow from the word go is not possible. The pitches in the IPL thus far have been on the slower side, not allowing the batters to go hammer and tongs from ball one. However, the likes of Kohli and K L Rahul have flourished in challenging batting conditions. Kohli collected his sixth half-century in 10 IPL innings against Delhi Capitals on Sunday, helping RCB maintain their unbeaten run away from home. "It was a top win, especially looking at the surface. We saw a few games here and this wicket played out differently compared to those. Whenever there's a chase on, I keep checking with the dugout, whether we're on course," Kohli, who played a second-fiddle to Krunal Pandya, said after the win. Kohli elaborated on his batting methodology, saying he analyses the conditions and changes his style of play accordingly. "What the total (is) on the board. What the conditions are like. Who are the bowlers that are due to bowl. Who are the bowlers that are going to be hard to get away," Kohli explained when asked how he plans the chase. "I try and make sure my singles and doubles don't stop so that the game doesn't get stagnant. People are forgetting the importance of partnerships and that's



coming to the fore in this tournament to try and dominate the bowlers through partnerships and professionalism." Krunal, who struggled initially to get going, eventually hit his first fifty in IPL in nine years. "Krunal was outstanding, he can make an impact and it was just about time. We've communicated beautifully, Krunal kept telling me to stay while he took his chances," said Kohli. After Kohli's dismissal, Tim David smashed 19 runs off just five balls to knock off the winning runs. Talking about the finishers, Kohli said: "We have the extra power in Tim David,

petitive total and rued the missed chances on the field after the six-wicket loss to RCB. "I thought in the first innings, the wicket was a bit tough but due to dew, it eased out in the second innings. We don't think anything we could have done different. If a batter could have accelerated, we could have got 10-15 runs extra. "KL was batting well so I wanted him at number four. One side of the ground was shorter as well so we sent him at number four." Adjudged the Player of the Match for his all-round show, Krunal, who took one wicket along with his unbeaten 73, said he was happy to perform for his new team. "It is always good to see the results. Sometimes when you have put the hard work behind the scenes and feels good when it comes off. It is quite satisfying," he said. "My role was clear. If we lose three early wickets, I can go and make sure we stitch a partnership. We have such great power hitters — David, Jitesh and Shepherd. We can take down the bowling. Glad that I fulfilled my role." "When Virat is at the other end, it is quite easy. First 20 balls, it is scratchy for me. But he kept backing me. Then I got his mojo. So, a lot of credit to Virat." On his bowling, Krunal said: "I have always been an economical bowler. As a bowler, I have always wanted to be one step ahead. I have worked on my bowling. So, if you see the variations in speed. "Knowing the batsmen's strength, I am trying to use it to my advantage. Glad it is using my favour."

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colombo

Their campaign off to a dominant start, a confident India will look to maintain momentum when they face South Africa in their second match of the women's tri-series here on Tuesday. The Indian team extended its winning streak in ODIs to seven matches with a comprehensive nine-wicket victory over hosts Sri Lanka in the tournament opener on Sunday. The 'Women in Blue' excelled across all three departments. The bowlers, led by the spinners Sneha Rana, Deepti Sharma and Shree Charani, restricted Sri Lanka to a sub-par total, while the top three — Pratika Rawal, Smriti Mandhana, and Harleen Deol — played fluent innings with the bat. Their fielding was razor-sharp as well, and they will be confident of producing a similar performance against a South African side they haven't lost to in this format since March 2022. India had beaten South Africa 3-0 the last time the two teams met in a 50-over series. The Indian players have also enjoyed recent game time in the Women's Premier League, adding to the squad's match readiness. Spinners are once again expected to play a crucial role. However, the Indian team will continue to closely monitor the performance of its pacers in the absence of key

players as it looks to identify a core group ahead of the 50-over World Cup, to be held at home later this year. Meanwhile, South Africa, who open their campaign on Tuesday, are trying to find their rhythm under new coach Mandla Mashimbyi, who was appointed last year. The 44-year-old, however, has no prior coaching experience in women's cricket. South Africa will be without senior all-rounder Marizanne Kapp, who has been rested for the series, but they will lean on the in-form Sune Luus, Laura Wolvaardt, Nadine de Klerk, and Chloe Tryon. Masabata Klaas, along with allrounders Annerie Dercksen and de Klerk, will shoulder the pace duties. **Teams**  
**India:** Pratika Rawal, Smriti Mandhana, Harleen Deol, Harmanpreet Kaur(c), Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh(w), Deepti Sharma, Kashvee Gautam, Arundhati Reddy, Sneha Rana, Nallapureddy Charani, Yastika Bhatia, Amanjot Kaur, Tejal Hasabnis, Shuchi Upadhyay.  
**South Africa:** Laura Wolvaardt(c), Tazmin Brits, Sune Luus, Annerie Dercksen, Lara Goodall, Nadine de Klerk, Chloe Tryon, Sinalo Jafta(w), Nonkululeko Mlaba, Masabata Klaas, Ayabonga Khaka, Karabo Meso, Miane Smit, Nondumiso Shangase, Seshnie Naidoo.

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Former India left-arm spinner Sunil Joshi has thrown his hat in the ring for the post of spin bowling coach at BCCI's Centre of Excellence (COE) that was vacated by Sairaj Bahutule earlier this year. The COE was earlier known as the National Cricket Academy when it was based out of the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru. It remains in the city but is now operational from a new location after BCCI purchased land to build a more expansive facility. Bahutule resigned to become an assistant coach in IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals. The 54-year-old Joshi, who played 15 Tests and 69 ODIs for India between 1996 and 2002, is currently working with Ricky Ponting in the Punjab Kings IPL team and has also coached Uttar Pradesh during the domestic season. He has also worked with Bangladesh's national men's team as its spin bowling consultant.

According to sources in the BCCI, Joshi appeared for his interview online in front of a three-member panel comprising COE's Head of Cricket VVS Laxman, chairman of men's selection committee Ajit Agarkar and General Manager (Cricket Operations) Abbey Kuruvilla. There were four others, who appeared for the interview in person, including India U-19 women's team coach Nooshin Al Khadeer, who was an off-spinner during her playing days. She represented the country in five Tests and 78 WODIs and has been working in the erstwhile NCA setup for some years now. Another strong candidate is believed to be Rakesh Dhruv, a former Gujarat and Saurashtra left-arm spinner. Veteran off-spinner Pritam Gandhe, a domestic doyen from Vidarbha, has also been interviewed for the post. When a senior BCCI official was asked about the interviews for the position, he said: "Obviously, Sunil Joshi has the best CV out of all the other candidates. In case

of Nooshin, the BCCI is also going to have an elaborate women's wing with dedicated staff for international, national and domestic age-group women's cricketers." "While playing elite level does embellish the CV and Sunil is the only (men's) Test cricketer among those who appeared for interview, his biggest plus is considerable experience in elite level coaching. "He has coached multiple first-class teams, has been a part of IPL coaching set-up and also coached senior men's international team. And do not forget, he is from Bengaluru, which makes a lot of sense logistically," he said. But even Dhruv cannot be ruled out as he has played a lot of cricket for Saurashtra and Gujarat. Most of the candidates were asked about their vision for the role. The chosen candidate will be expected to not just provide technical insight to international stars like Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav or Washington Sundar but also work with a host of India A, India U-19 and top domestic performers.

# Twelve teams to compete in Arjan Singh Memorial hockey tournament

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chandigarh

Twelve teams will compete in the sixth edition of the Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh Memorial hockey tournament to be held here from April 29 to May 6. Air Force Hockey team from Bangladesh will be one of the 12 sides taking part in the tournament, Air Marshal S Sivakumar said on Monday. The other participating teams include Indian Air Force, Chandigarh XI, Punjab & Sind Bank, Central Industrial Security Force, Army XI, Indian Navy, Indian Railways and Rail Coach Factory. The tournament winning team will get a prize money of ₹three lakh while the runners-up side will pocket ₹two lakh. Man of the match for each match will get Rs 10,000 while the player of the tournament will pocket ₹25,000. The matches will be played at Raghbir Singh Bhola Hockey Ground, 3 Base Repair Depot, Air Force Station here on

league-cum-knockout basis. Air Force Sports Control Board has been organising the prestigious hockey tournament in the memory of legendary late Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh at 3 BRD, Air Force Station, Chandigarh since 2018. "To promote hockey, the game in which our country has excelled for so many years in the international arena and to bring back its glory" — YS PANGHAL, ORGANISING SECRETARY "Considering the eminence of the tournament in the Indian hockey scenario and the initiatives being taken by the Air Force Sports Control Board to encourage hockey at all levels, an all out effort is being made to promote the event," Sivakumar said. Sivakumar said the organisers are hoping participation of more overseas

teams, including from the UK, in next year's edition. The organisers also plan to hold the event alternately in Chandigarh and Bengaluru beginning next year, he said. Group Captain Y S Panghal, Organising Secretary of the event, briefed about the tournament. "Our air warriors have toiled hard and proved their mettle at all competitive levels and have brought laurels to the country as well as the Indian Air Force," Panghal said. "To promote hockey, the game in which our country has excelled for so many years in the international arena and to bring back its glory, it is strongly felt that there should be quality tournaments in the country where emerging talent competes and gets exposure to the fast pace game. "This has resulted in the evolution of the Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh Memorial Hockey tournament since 2018," Panghal said.

# KL Rahul should bat at four for India in next year's T20 World Cup: Kevin Pietersen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

KL Rahul is best placed to bat at number four and keep wickets for India in next year's T20 World Cup, believes Delhi Capitals (DC) mentor Kevin Pietersen. With his intent in the shortest format being questioned in the past, Rahul has tweaked his approach to be the leading run-getter for Delhi Capitals this season. The competition for the wicket-keeper-batter's slot in the national team is stiff with Rishabh Pant, Sanju Samson, Dhruv Jurel and Ishan Kishan being the other options for the selectors. Rahul has not been a part of India's T20 setup since the 2022 World Cup but Pietersen reckons not only has he done enough to warrant a comeback, he is best suited for the wicket-keeper-batter's role. "I'd bat KL at four for India in T20 cricket. I think you guys have got plenty of opening batters. "But the way KL Rahul is playing cricket now, he would be my first choice to bat

at four, and keep wickets for India," said Pietersen in response to a query after DC's loss to Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Sunday night. At the start of the season, Rahul himself had talked about his renewed approach towards the T20 format. Besides the stellar show in IPL, it was Rahul's recent performances for India in ODI cricket that left a huge impression on Pietersen, one of the best batters to have played for England. "KL has been playing in a very positive manner since. Mid to late last year. We saw how he finished off a couple of the games for India and almost sealed the deal in the Champions Trophy in Dubai. "I've had a lot of incredibly brilliant conversations with him about batting, a lot of deep and meaningful conversations because when you grow up as a youngster like he did, you get taught defence, elbow up, play in the V," he explained. The big-hitter said it is not easy to change that approach after hitting the thirties. "You've got to change it and you've got



to become a different kind of player for a different format which is evolving all the time. "It's very, very difficult. So the way that he has accepted that he's needed to change, the way that he has changed is of great, great credit to the person that he is," said Pietersen.

The next T20 World Cup will be jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka. Fine with tough batting surfaces in T20s Scores in the range of 250 were a common occurrence last IPL but the slower nature of pitches has made batting tougher this season. Pietersen has no issues with

that. "On wickets like these (the one at Feroz Shah Kotla), you've got to be methodical, you've got to find rhythm. Virat (Kohli) found rhythm this evening. KL got rhythm," he said. "And I think that's where you see the true batter. The real batter that can come out there, and sort of monitor the situation, and it looks effortless... Is it good for T20 cricket to have the occasional wicket like this? I do not think it's a bad thing," he added. Pietersen was not in favour of bowlers "just being served up into the stands every single ball". "...I don't think every night people want to see that. I don't really want to see it every night," Pietersen said. **Foundations can be laid in IPL**

franchise cricket, that no particular coach could change you over that four to six week period, or eight week period," he conceded. However, he cited his interactions with Abhishek Porel to stress that changes introduced during the tournament can become permanent if persisted with over a period of time. "Last night I was working on something. We are five weeks into the tournament, we have only got three or four weeks left of the tournament. And I said to him, I said, 'Abhi, this is not going to work for you tomorrow'. "It might not work for you the next week. But if you keep working on it, in the next month, two months, three months, four months, I promise you this is going to help your game. And it's going to take you to a level where you're going to become a more destructive batter. "So I think that's the key. Trying to lay foundations now, and then also just mentally, trying to switch a few players on, and make them think better," he added.