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Mehul Choksi arrested in Belgium on India's request

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Absconding diamantaire Mehul Choksi has been arrested in Belgium following an extradition request by Indian probe agencies for his involvement in the ₹13,000 crore PNB bank loan "fraud" case, officials said on Monday. The action against the second "prime suspect" in this case, after Choksi's nephew diamantaire Nirav Modi, was taken on Saturday based on an extradition request moved by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

Choksi, 65, was located in Belgium last year when he went there on the grounds of getting medical treatment. He had been staying in Antigua since 2018 after leaving India. Interpol Red Notice against him for arrest was "deleted" sometime back by the global police body and the Indian agencies were pursuing him via the extradition route since then, said officials.

At least two open-ended arrest warrants, issued by a special court in Mumbai in 2018 and 2021, have been shared by the Indian agencies with their Belgian counterparts as part of the extradition request, they said, adding that formal paperwork is being done following the arrest/detention. Choksi may seek bail on health grounds.

Choksi's lawyer Vijay Agarwal said his client was taken into custody by the Belgian Police on Saturday (April 12). "At the moment, he is in prison and there (Belgium), the procedure is not to apply for bail but file an appeal. During that appeal, request is made that he should not be kept in detention and he should be permitted to defend himself and oppose the extradition request while not being in custody," Agarwal told reporters. He said the "obvious" grounds for the appeal would be that Choksi is "not a flight risk, is extremely sick and undergoing treatment for cancer". He added that their legal defense would be that this is a "political case and the human condition (in Indian prisons) was not good".

Choksi, Nirav Modi, their family members and employees, bank officials and others were booked by the CBI and the ED in 2018 for perpetrating the alleged loan fraud at the Brady House branch of the Punjab National Bank (PNB) in Mumbai. It was alleged that Choksi, his firm Gitanjali Gems and others "committed the offence of cheating against PNB in connivance with certain bank officials by fraudulently getting the LOUs (letters of undertaking) issued and got the FLCs (foreign letter of credit) enhanced without following prescribed procedure and caused a wrongful loss to the bank".

FILE PHOTO

The CBI has filed two chargesheets against him in this case while the ED has filed three such prosecution complaints. Nirav Modi, declared a fugitive economic offender, has been lodged in a London jail since he was held by the authorities there in 2019 on the basis of a legal request made by the ED and the CBI in this case. He is contesting extradition to India. According to the investigating agencies, officials at PNB's Brady House branch in Mumbai issued 165 LoUs and 58 FLCs during March-April 2017, against which 311 bills were discounted.

These LoUs and FLCs were allegedly issued to Choksi's firms without any sanctioned limit or cash margin and without making entries in PNB's central banking system to evade any scrutiny in case of a default. LoUs are a guarantee given by a bank on behalf of its client to a foreign bank. If the client does not repay the foreign bank, the liability falls on the guarantor bank.

Based on these LoUs by PNB, money was lent by SBI, Mauritius; Allahabad Bank, Hong Kong; Axis Bank, Hong Kong; Bank of India, Antwerp; Canara Bank, Manama; and State Bank of India, Frankfurt.

"Since the accused companies did not repay the amount availed against the said fraudulent LoUs and FLCs, PNB made the payment of ₹6,344.97 crore ($ 965.18 million), including the overdue interest, to the overseas banks, which had advanced buyer's credit and discounted the bills against the fraudulent LoUs and FLCs issued by the PNB," said the CBI's supplementary charge sheet in the PNB bank fraud case. The ED has attached or seized assets worth ₹2,565.90 crore in the case against Choksi and the court has allowed "monetisation" of all these properties.

Turned Dalits, minorities to second class citizens: PM Modi on Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Hisar/New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday launched a scathing attack on the Congress on the birth anniversary of BR Ambedkar, accusing the party of turning Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and OBCs into "second-class citizens" while in power.

Amid the political heat over the Waqf (Amendment) Act, Modi sought to put the Congress and its allies opposed to the law in a corner, accusing them of destroying the Constitution by enacting a Waqf law, now amended, in 2013 above the constitutional values espoused by Ambedkar.

Modi alleged that the Muslim community suffered because of the Congress' appeasement policy. "The Congress made amendments in the Waqf law hurriedly at the end of 2013 so that it could get votes in elections. They made this law above the Constitution, which was the biggest insult to Babasaheb." "I want to ask them, who are greedy for vote bank? If you really have some sympathy for Muslims, then Congress should appoint a Muslim as its president," he asked.

Addressing a gathering after flagging off several infrastructure projects in Haryana, Modi alleged the Congress has become the destroyer of the Constitution framed by Ambedkar. The Congress "crushed" the Constitution whenever its government faced danger, Modi alleged and pointed to the 1975-77 Emergency to reinforce his claim.

"The spirit of the Constitution is to have a uniform civil code, which I call a secular civil code. But the Congress never implemented it," PM said.

He referred to the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code by the BJP government in Uttarakhand to say, "See the misfortune of this country. Those who carry a copy of the Constitution, these Congress people, are opposing that."

"If the Congress really has sympathy for Muslims, it should appoint a Muslim as its president and give 50 percent tickets to people from the community," Modi said.

He alleged the Congress followed a policy of appeasement which "pleased" only a few "fundamentalists" from among Muslims, while the rest of the community remained neglected, illiterate and poor. The biggest proof of this Congress' policy was the amendments it made in the Waqf law on the eve of the 2014 general elections, Modi said.

Addressing a gathering after flagging off several infrastructure projects in Haryana, Modi alleged the Congress has become the destroyer of the Constitution

"From Independence till 2013, there was a Waqf law. But to win elections, and in pursuing a politics of appeasement and vote bank, the Congress made amendments in the Waqf law hurriedly late in 2013 so that it can get votes in elections (few months later in 2014)," said Modi.

"If they (the Congress) really have some sympathy for Muslims, they should appoint their president from the Muslim community. Why do not they do it?" he asked.

He also asked the Congress to give 50 percent election tickets to people belonging to the Muslim community. "After they win, they will put forth their views," said Modi. "But they (the Congress) will not do it. They will give nothing from the Congress but will snatch away the rights of citizens," he said.

The Congress never had any intention of doing any good to anybody including Muslims, he said. "This is the real truth of the Congress."

He said the Waqf board owns lakhs of hectares land in the country which could have been utilised for the benefit of the poor, the destitute women and children. "Had it been honestly utilised, Muslims youths would not have to spend their lives by fixing puncture tyres."

"It benefited only a handful of land mafia. There was no gain to Pasmanda Muslims. This land mafia was looting the land of Dalits, downtrodden, 'aadiwasis' and widows. Hundreds of widows women wrote to the Centre and then a debate on this law took place," said Modi.

After the amendment to the Waqf law — enacted by his government and implemented from April 8 after the presidential approval to the Waqf Amendment Bill 2025— such loot of the poor will stop, he said. "We have made another amendment in the Waqf law. Under this, the Waqf board now cannot even touch the land and property of any 'aadiwasi' in the country," he said. Modi had recently said the new Waqf law was a significant step taken by his government towards social justice. He said the previous law, enacted in 2013, was an attempt for appeasement of land mafia and Muslim fundamentalists.

The Constitution has a provision of reservation for the SCs, STs and OBCs, but the Congress never cared for them, the PM claimed. "Babasaheb Ambedkar wanted to bring equality, but the Congress spread the virus of vote bank (politics) in the country. He wanted every poor person to live with dignity, with heads held high, to dream and fulfil them. But the Congress made the SCs, STs and OBCs second-class citizens," he said.

He slammed the Congress leadership, saying if they were so concerned about the welfare of the downtrodden, they should have ensured that water reached the homes of SCs, STs and OBCs when the party was in power.

Modi highlighted that his government has built 11 crore toilets and said the SCs, STs and OBCs had to face a lot of difficulties due to a lack of toilets earlier.

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Murshidabad Waqf violence reaches Kolkata's doorsteps

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

Even as parts of riot-torn Murshidabad limped back to normalcy anti-Waqf Act protests traveled to Bhangar a notorious rural block in the eastern suburban areas of Kolkata where hundreds of Muslim protesters attacked the police and torched at least 6 vehicles including motorcycles and prison vans injuring five men in uniform.

The Monday's situation emerged when Murshidabad had barely started to limp back to normalcy after a weeklong violence that saw hundreds of families leaving the district and taking shelter to neighbouring Malda and even in Jharkhand.

The trouble started after the protesters' vehicles were stopped by the law-enforcers from moving towards Ramlila Maidan in Kolkata where Muslim cleric-turned legislator Naushad Siddiqui — the lone non-Trinamool Congress-non-BJP MLA in Bengal Assembly — had called a rally against the new central laws. Siddiqui represents Indian Secular Front a new party mainly comprising Muslim populace.

A large contingent of Rapid Action Force was moved from Kolkata under senior IPS officer Rupesh Kumar to control the unruly mob, sources said adding the protestors pelted stones at the police and tore through the barricades near Bhojerhat on the Basanti Highway. The miscreants had come from Shonepur area of Bhangar as well as neighbouring areas of Minakhan and Sandeshkhali sources said.

Security personnel stand guard after two Hindu devotees were allegedly assaulted during 'Charak Puja' celebrations on Sunday in Siliguri, West Bengal PTI

Siddiqui however blamed the violence on "some mischief mongers who had pelted stones from the crowd," adding "ISF workers are always trained to take part in non-violence movement… This law is not just an attack on Muslims, it is an assault on the Constitution. We won't accept this Act," he said adding if Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was true to her statement that she was against this Act then "why her police are not allowing us to hold rallies in protest … why are they stopping our men from coming to Kolkata."

However TMC MLA Shaukat Molla from the neighbouring Canning constituency said it were all Siddiqui's men who had committed the mischief. "We have repeatedly told that this law has been enacted by the Centre and the TMC has nothing to do with it … if he has courage he should go to Delhi to protest and not here in Bengal," Molla said. Curiously like in Murshidabad the police tended to stand silent spectators while the miscreants snatched their motorbikes, sprinkled petrol and set them on fire alongside a prison van. "Despite a commensurate High Court order to deal with the situation with the help of central forces the Mamata Banerjee Government is sitting silent because she cannot annoy her vote-bank … whereas in Uttar Pradesh or other places the police give such lessons to miscreants and in such places that they remember that for years," said Bengal BJP president Sukanta Majumdar.

Mayawati plots Akash return amid rising Dalit vote battle

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Lucknow

In a significant political turnaround, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati on Sunday reinstated her nephew Akash Anand into the party fold, just 41 days after removing him from all responsibilities-including his status as her declared political heir. The move, preceded by a public apology from Akash, signals a carefully calibrated strategy by the BSP supremo to reconnect with young Dalit voters amid growing competition from emerging leaders and rival parties.

Akash Anand, son of Mayawati's younger brother Anand Kumar, had been fast-tracked through the party ranks since entering politics in 2017. With an MBA from London and youthful appeal, he was seen as the party's next-generation face-appointed national coordinator in 2019 and twice declared Mayawati's political successor, most recently in June 2024.

But on March 3, 2025, he was abruptly expelled, with Mayawati citing his "immaturity" and "arrogance." She also accused his father-in-law, former Rajya Sabha MP Ashok Siddharth, of fomenting factionalism and attempting to derail Akash's political career from within.

However, in a carefully timed gesture just two hours before his reinstatement was formally announced, Akash Anand posted a public apology to his aunt. In the letter, he took "full responsibility" for his actions, promised to sever political ties with his in-laws, and reaffirmed his loyalty to Mayawati and the party's core Ambedkarite ideology. "I consider Behenji as my only political guru and ideal. I apologize for my past mistakes and promise never to act in a way that hurts the dignity of the party or its leadership again," he wrote.

Though no formal post has been assigned to Akash upon his return, the reintegration is widely seen as a tactical response to the BSP's eroding support among young Dalit voters. Over the past several weeks, Akash had maintained a conspicuous silence, while regularly amplifying Mayawati's messages on social media-signaling continued alignment with her. Party insiders confirm that Akash's apology was circulated on social media by BSP loyalists, suggesting that the reconciliation had been quietly orchestrated in advance.

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300kg drugs recovered off Gujarat coast

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Ahmedabad

The Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad and the Coast Guard have seized 300 kg of drugs valued at ₹1,800 crore which were dumped into the Arabian Sea by smugglers before fleeing across the international boundary line. The seized contraband is suspected to be methamphetamine and has been handed over to the ATS for further probe, a release by the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) said on Monday.

The ATS and the Coast Guard carried out the joint operation near the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) in the Arabian Sea off Gujarat on the intervening night of April 12 and 13, said the release. Upon seeing the approaching Coast Guard ship, the smugglers, who were on a boat, dumped the contraband into the sea and fled across the IMBL, it said.

"In an overnight operation on April 12-13, the Indian Coast Guard undertook an intelligence based anti-narcotics operation at the sea jointly with the Gujarat ATS. More than 300 kg of narcotics approximately valued at ₹1,800 crore have been seized. The seized drug is suspected to be methamphetamine," the release said. Based on an input from the Gujarat ATS, an ICG ship from the Coast Guard Region (West) was diverted to that area in the sea near IMBL where a suspected boat's presence was detected, it said.

"The ICG ship identified a suspect boat despite pitch dark night. On realising the approaching ship, the suspect boat dumped its narcotics consignment in the sea before it started fleeing towards the IMBL. The alert ICG ship deployed its sea boat immediately for recovery of the jettisoned consignment whilst commencing a hot chase of the suspect boat," it said. The proximity of the international boundary line and the initial separation between the Coast Guard ship and the boat at the time of its detection helped the boat to evade interception before it crossed over the IMBL within a short time, said the release.

Later, the Coast Guard team, after a thorough search in the tough night conditions, recovered the narcotics which were dumped into the sea, it said.

"The seized narcotics have been brought to Porbandar by the ICG ship for further investigations," the release said. The collaboration of the Coast Guard and the ATS, which has led to 13 such successful law enforcement operations in recent years, "reaffirms the synergy for national objective," it added.

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Delhi's T2 to be closed for 4 months for renovation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA)'s oldest terminal, Terminal 2 will be closed from Monday-Tuesday midnight for what is likely to be the last renovation of its 1986-era building for approximately four months to facilitate repair and upgrade work. During this period, all flights that were previously operated from T2, including those by airlines such as IndiGo and Akasa Air, will be relocated to Terminal 1 (T1). The Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA), operated by DIAL, has three terminals and four runways. It is also the country's largest and busiest airport.

Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) has confirmed that T1 will operate at full capacity to accommodate the additional flights. "Starting from 15th April 2025 (0001 hrs), all flights operating from Terminal 2 will be relocated to Terminal 1 until further notice. Passengers are encouraged to verify their flight terminal information before travelling to the airport to avoid any inconvenience.

The Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA), operated by DIAL, has three terminals and four runways. It is also the country's largest and busiest airport. T2 will be closed temporarily to carry out maintenance works from April 15, and one runway is already shut for maintenance works.

IGIA has a capacity to handle close to 11 crore passengers annually and saw 7.8 crore last year. So there is no real hurry demolish T2 now as Noida Airport will open with a capacity of 1.2 crore passengers annually, which will increase to 7 crore in the next few years. Effective April 15, IndiGo said its flights arriving to and departing from T2 will operate to/from T1. IndiGo on Monday said it has taken proactive measures to ensure that customers are well-informed about the change in terminals.

"The airline is reaching out to all passengers and their respective travel agents through SMS, calls, and emails to notify them. IndiGo recommends retrieving PNR on the airline's website or mobile app to check departure/arrival terminal before heading to the airport," it said in a statement.

Fire breaks out at Lokbandhu Hospital

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

A massive fire broke out at Lokbandhu Hospital at around 10 pm, triggering panic among patients and their attendants on Monday night. There was a stampede like situation as the attendents started taking out their patients to save their lives. However, there was no loss of life.

Senior police officials, including DCP South Nipun Agrawal, alongwith civil police and firemen reached the spot on getting information.

In a video statement, the DCP South said the Krishna Nagar police was informed about the fire incident at around 10 pm on Monday. "On information civil police, firemen and fire tenders were dispatched to the scene. The patients were rescued and were transported to other hospitals for further treatment and the area was evacuated. We are finding the cause of fire," he said.

As per reports the fire broke out on the second floor of the hospital and close to children's NICU unit. A women's unit is also on the first floor. There were around 35-40 patients admitted on this floor.

As the fire broke out, there was a stampede like situation and every was seen scampering for cover. The hospital administration immediately called the police and six fire brigade vehicles reached the spot. The firemen were briefed by the hospital administration about the children's ward and women's ward on the floor where fire had broken out and were asked to start the rescue operation first. At the same time, efforts were made to stop the fire from spreading further.

Due to the fire, the entire hospital rooms and wards were filled with smoke. The firemen disconnected the electricity supply to the hospital to preempt any danger due to electricity.

Chief Medical Superintendent of Lokbandhu Hospital, Dr. Ajay Shankar Tripathi said that the fire broke out at around 10 pm. "In the investigation so far, the cause of the fire is said to be a short circuit. The situation is under control," Tripathi said.

The police said the critically ill patients will be taken to other hospitals to continue their treatment. The staff and the attendants also helped in rescuing patients trapped in the fire.

Youth electrocuted in Ambedkar Jayanti function in Bansgaon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The celebration during Ambedkar Jayanti in Shairo village of Bansgaon police station in Gorakhpur turned into mourning when a 22-year-old youth lost his life after being electrocuted.

Abhishek Kumar. who had participated in the rally with reverence and enthusiasm for Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, had the pride of carrying a flag of the village on his shoulders, but destiny had something else in store.

On Monday morning, around 9 am, when people of the village and the surrounding area were united and remembering the ideals of Baba Saheb in the rally, the flag raised by Abhishek with an iron rod inadvertently collided with a high tension wire. In the blink of an eye, the strong current caught Abhishek. He was badly burnt, and his screams echoed in the air.

The other participants immediately tried to take him to the district hospital, but he stopped breathing on the way. The doctors pronounced him dead soon after reaching the hospital.

According to the report, this news spread in the village like wildfire, and the celebration of the Harijan colony turned into mourning.

The police have sent the body for postmortem examinations and have started investigations in the case.

CM highlights UP's economic transformation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Monday, highlighted remarkable economic transformation of the state noting that the state, once struggling to pay salaries, is now a revenue-surplus economy.

Addressing FICCI's National Executive Committee, CM Yogi welcomed entrepreneurs, emphasising that Uttar Pradesh — the country's most populous state and vast consumer and labour market — is open and ready for investment.

Marking the occasion as significant, the Chief Minister noted that it coincides with the birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, the principal architect of the Indian Constitution. He acknowledged FICCI as a key partner in Uttar Pradesh's development journey, crediting the organisation's consistent support in fostering a positive investment ecosystem. He especially appreciated FICCI's pivotal role in successfully organising the UP-Investor Summits in 2018 and 2023.

Reflecting on the historical context, he said, "Although UP is the largest state in India by population, it was long categorised as a 'BIMARU' state. At the time of independence, its per capita income was on par with the national average, but over time, it declined to just one-third. However, the state has witnessed extraordinary progress over the past eight years — a transformation now recognised nationally and globally."

He emphasised that this progress was made possible partly due to the constructive role of institutions like FICCI in shaping policy and promoting growth.

The Chief Minister asserted that Uttar Pradesh is no longer seen as a laggard, but as one of India's leading economic powerhouses. He said, "It has become the country's growth engine and has emerged as the second-largest state economy. The state has doubled its Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) and per capita income."

Recalling the financial constraints faced in 2017, he shared that upon taking office, the government struggled to find funds even for farmer loan waivers and employee salaries, with little cooperation from banks. "The government restored fiscal discipline by identifying and eliminating budgetary leakages amounting to Rs 36,000 crore — a key factor in transforming Uttar Pradesh into a revenue surplus state today," he remarked.

The Chief Minister highlighted the drastic transformation in Uttar Pradesh, where, in the past, people were forced to conceal their identity due to rampant anarchy, hooliganism, and corruption. Using the example of the Maha Kumbh, he noted that prior to 2017, the event was marred by dirt and disorder, but this time, cleanliness and orderliness were the defining features.

"Today, the state stands as a beacon of law and order. Unnecessary loudspeakers have been removed, road-side religious events regulated, and the safety of women and traders ensured. The government has also introduced transparency in police recruitment, appointing over 60,000 trained officers," he asserted.

Emphasizing Uttar Pradesh's infrastructure development, the Chief Minister said that earlier, the state was associated with bad roads and darkness. But today, Uttar Pradesh has the country's largest expressway network, metro rail, rail network, and waterways.

"The state boasts four lakh kilometres of National Highway network, 16 functioning airports (four international and 12 domestic), and Asia's largest Jewar airport, which is under construction. Apart from this, steps like a logistics hub and dry port have made Uttar Pradesh attractive for investment," he pointed out.

The Chief Minister emphasised that the government has taken significant steps to support farmers, citing that 122 sugar mills now operate in Uttar Pradesh, with sugarcane farmers' dues paid within 3 to 7 days. Over the last eight years, sugarcane prices have been directly credited to farmers' accounts via DBT.

He also highlighted the government's efforts to enhance the investment climate, noting that in 2017, when companies like Samsung and TCS considered leaving UP, the government reassured them. Today, the state has attracted Rs 15 lakh crore in investments.

The Chief Minister shared that Uttar Pradesh now offers over 500 approvals through a single-window system, supported by 33 sectoral policies and the Nivesh Mitra portal. This has led to the revival of MSMEs and eliminated unnecessary harassment of entrepreneurs. He recalled an incident from 2017 when an entrepreneur from Mumbai sought a security guarantee. In 2023, that same entrepreneur invested Rs 4,000 crore, calling Uttar Pradesh a 'dream destination' for investment.

The Chief Minister hailed the successful organisation of the Maha Kumbh as a testament to Uttar Pradesh's potential, highlighting that Rs 7,500 crore was invested in rejuvenating Prayagraj's infrastructure. Addressing critics who questioned whether organizing the Maha Kumbh was the government's responsibility, he pointed out that the event was not confined to Prayagraj alone; cities like Kashi, Ayodhya, and Mathura also saw massive gatherings of devotees, boosting local businesses and reshaping Uttar Pradesh's image. The Chief Minister further emphasized the crucial role of Uttar Pradesh and FICCI in realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a self-reliant India.

the pioneer CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

My correct name is Mamta Tiwari W/o Sri Prakash Tiwari R/o 196 EWS -Y block double colony barra 2 Kanpur nagar which is mentioned Bank passbook pan card adhar card Records by mistake LIC no.237983906,233535975 my name is mentioned as Alkarani Tiwari which is my household name In future I will be known Mamta tiwari I have completed all legal formalities regarding the above by me

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I,JC-389726N SUB HARI NARAYAN SAH, in my service Records, my father's Name KAILASH SAH, and Date of Birth-01-07-1950 which is incorrect .correct Name- RAM KAILASH SAH and Date of Birth 01-01-1946

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आवश्यक्ता है।
राजदेव कृषक पी. जी. कालेज काशीपुर सुराई सठियाँव आजमगढ़ में स्नातक स्तर पर राजनीति शास्त्र 1 पद भूगोल 1 पद, अर्थशास्त्र 1 पद, मनोविज्ञान 1 पद, म. इतिहास 1 पद, सैन्य विज्ञान 1 पद, प्रा. इतिहास 1 पद, उर्दु 1 पद, शिक्षाशास्त्र 1 पद , अग्रेजी 1 पद, स्नातकोत्तर स्तर पर प्राणिविज्ञान 3 पद वनस्पति विज्ञान 3 पद, रसायन विज्ञान 3 पद, भौतिक विज्ञान 3 पद, गणित 3 पद, हिन्दी 1 पद, राजनिति शास्त्र 2 पद शिक्षा शास्त्र 2 पद समाज शास्त्र 2 पद, संस्कृत 2 पद, अंग्रेजी 2 पद, उर्दु 2 पद , वाणिज्य संकाय एम काम 6 पद, स्नातक स्तर पर वी. पी. एड विभागाध्यक्ष 1 पद, प्रवक्ता 7 पद, स्नातक स्तर पर प्रबन्धन संकाय बी.बी.ए. 6 पद एवं बी.सी.ए 6 पद प्रवक्ता योग्यता यू.जी.सी. नेट पी०एचडी० वेतन मान विश्वविद्यालय के शासनादेशानुसार इच्छुक अभ्यार्थी अपने समस्त शैक्षिक अभिलेखों की छाया प्रति एवं पासपोर्ट साइज फोटो के साथ विज्ञापन तिथि के 21 दिनो के अन्दर महाविद्यालय के पते पर आबेदन करे। शाक्षात्कार की सूचना डाक/दूरभाष द्वारा दी जायेगी।

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आवश्यक्ता है।

आवश्यक्ता है।
राम राजी देवी महिला पी. जी. कालेज सुराई सठियाँव आजमगढ़ में स्नातक स्तर पर विज्ञान संकाय के अन्तर्गत प्राणिविज्ञान 2 पद, वनस्पति विज्ञान 2 पद, रसायन विज्ञान 3 पद, गणित 2 पद भौतिक विज्ञान २ पद वाणिज्य संकाय बी. काम 6 पद, एवं स्नातकोत्तर स्तर पर विज्ञान संकाय के अन्तर्गत वनस्पति विज्ञान 3 पद, प्राणिविज्ञान 3 पद, स्नातक स्तर पर कला संकाय में, भूगोल 1 पद, हिन्दी 1 पद एवं स्नातकोत्तर स्तर पर गृहविज्ञान 2 पद समाज शास्त्र 2 पद, शिक्षा शास्त्र 2 पद उर्दू 2 पद प्रवक्ता योग्यता यू.जी.सी./पी.एच डी० वेतन मान विश्वविद्यालय के शासनादेशानुसार इच्छुक अभ्यर्थी अपने समस्त शैक्षिक अभिलेखो की छाया प्रति एवं पासपोर्ट साइज फोटो के साथ विज्ञापन के 21 दिनो के अन्दर महाविद्यालय के पते पर आवेदन करे । शाक्षात्कार की सूचना डाक । दूर भाष द्वारा दी जायेगी ।

प्रवन्धक
मो0 न0 9794356262

NOTICE

I JC-389726N Sub Hari Narayan sah, in my service Records my mother's Name SITA DEVI which is Incorrect, correct Name is SEETA DEVI

NOTICE

I JC-389726 N Sub Hari Narayan Sah, my wife s name wrongly written in my Service record SIMA SUSHAMA DEVI.Correct Name of my wife s SIMA SUSHMA DEVI

NOTICE

My correct name is Madhvi Tiwari W/o Ashok tiwari R/o-55/41 pipal wali kothi janralganj Kanpur nagar which is mentioned pen card aadhar card all educational Records by mistake policy no.233786097 my name is mentioned as Santoshi tiwari which is my household name In future I will be known Madhvi tiwari I have completed all legal formalities regarding the above by me

NOTICE

My correct name is Vaibhav Porwal S/o Vipin Porwal R/o ward no-8 om nagar rail bazar jinjhak Kanpur dehat which is mentioned aadhar card all educational Records by mistake policy no.233335054 my name is mentioned as shikhar porwal which is my household name In future I will be known vaibhav porwal I have completed all legal formalities regarding the above by me

NOTICE

My correct name is Akshat Srivastava S/o Amit Srivastava R/o 1/86 katri jyora nawabganj Kanpur nagar which is mentioned pen card aadhar card all educational Records by mistake policy no.233195029,233203928,233785822 my name is mentioned as Shivam Srivastava which is my household name In future I will be known Akshat Srivastava I have completed all legal formalities regarding the above by me

NOTICE

My correct name is Aanand kumar Gupta S/o Rajesh kumar Gupta R/o 33 C Yasodha nagar kidwai nagar kanpur which is mentioned pen card aadhar card all educational Records by mistake policy no.230987489 my name is mentioned as Aakash kumar gupta which is my household name In future I will be known Aanand kumar Gupta I have completed all legal formalities regarding the above by me

NOTICE

My correct name is Pavni Verma D/o Amit kumar Verma R/o-ward no-6 shivaji nagar pukhraya Kanpur Dehat which is mentioned Bank passbook pan card aadhar card all educational Records by mistake LIC no.233238622 my name is mentioned as Shristi Verma which is my household name In future I will be known pavni verma I have completed all legal formalities regarding the above by me

Two criminals held after encounter

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Two criminals were arrested after they were injured in a police encounter in Mohanlalganj, late on Sunday night. The police recovered two pistols, each of 315 bore, two empty cartridges, each of 315 bore, two live cartridges, each of 315 bore, a motorcycle, tools used in burglary and Rs 13,260 in cash from their possession.

DCP South Nipun Agarwal said those arrested were identified as Ramchandra alias Chhotu and Kamlesh, both of Sitapur.

He said a police patrolling team was tipped off that the above said accused were on the prowl in the area and were cornered. "On being asked to surrender, the miscreants opened fire on police and we retaliated. Both the accused suffered injuries in their legs and were arrested later," the DCP said.

He said the injured accused were immediately sent to the nearest hospital and other accused were being searched.

The DCP further said the arrest came in follow up of a theft attempt case at the house of one Gangaram of Bhaidua in the area, on March 25.

Gangaram had informed the police that on the night of March 24 and at around 11:45 PM, he had heard the sound that three or four people walking/running on the roof of his house and later he had heard a sound of a gunshot. He further had told police that he and his family had seen blood spattered on the roof and also a blood stained drag mark there.

" We immediately formed four teams for the arrest of accused involved in theft attempt at Gangaram's house. We also expedited the efforts to arrest them and a reward of Rs 25,000 on each of these miscreants was announced," the DCP said.

Kalash installed atop Ram temple

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Ayodhya

The construction of the grand Ram mandir in Ayodhya marked a significant milestone on Monday with the installation of the 'kalash' atop the temple.

The sacred ritual, performed with full Vedic traditions in the presence of Brahmins, began at 9:15 am and concluded at 10:30 am. A wave of devotion and celebration swept through Ayodhya, as residents hailed the moment as truly historic.

Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra general secretary Champat Rai said that a significant milestone in the temple's construction was achieved on the auspicious occasion of Vaisakhi and the birth anniversary of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar.

"The next phase will see the installation of the 'dhwajdand' on the temple's main shikhar (spire). The overall construction work is progressing steadily," he added.

Sharing his sentiments on this achievement, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath remarked that the construction of the Ram mandir stands as a powerful symbol of not just spiritual devotion, but also cultural and social harmony. He emphasised that the grand temple of Lord Ram in Ayodhya reflects the collective faith and unwavering resolve of the people of India and will serve to reinforce India's Sanatan values on the global stage.

The 'Kalash Puja' being prepared for installation atop the main shikhara of the Garbha Griha of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in Ayodhya. PTI

The chief minister lauded the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra trust and all individuals contributing to the construction, calling it a defining step toward building a 'New India'. He reiterated the state government's commitment to transforming Ayodhya into a world-class spiritual and tourism destination. Infrastructure projects encompassing road, rail and air connectivity are being rapidly developed, alongside expanded amenities for pilgrims and visitors. Champat Rai shared that the construction machinery will now be removed from the temple premises, marking a significant shift in the phase of development. He further informed that the consecration of idols in the temples of Raja Ram, Parakota, and the Saptarishis on the first floor will commence shortly.

The timely progress of the construction has filled devotees with a deep sense of joy and enthusiasm.

Remove encroachments from govt land: Jacob

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Divisional Commissioner Dr Roshan Jacob visited Gram Sabha Sevai and Gram Sabha Noor Nagar Bhadarsa of tehsil Sarojni Nagar on Monday to review illegal encroachment on government land and take action against illegal plotting. She conducted a site inspection of the occupied area.

First, the Divisional Commissioner inspected illegal occupation of government land in village Sabha Sevai. On receiving information that property dealers Nagendra Yadav and Jai Prakash Yadav had illegally occupied government land Gata No. 525, 528 in village Sevai and had done plotting on the said land, she ordered that an FIR be lodged against them and the said government land be freed from their occupation. Instructions were given to issue a chargesheet against the SDM Sarjoni Nagar and Municipal Corporation Tehsildar Arvind Pandey for negligence and laxity in getting the government land freed from illegal occupation.

During the inspection of Gram Sabha Noornagar by the Divisional Commissioner, it came to her notice that Balram Yadav had illegally occupied government plots number 603, 622, 608 in Noornagar Bhadarsa and had done plotting and illegal construction. In this regard, she directed the officals concerned to register an FIR against Balram Yadav and get the land freed from his occupation.

During inspection, the Divisional Commissioner said that a campaign is being run across the district to remove illegal encroachment from government land. The Divisional Commissioner said that a joint team of revenue and municipal corporation had been formed to take effective action against illegal encroachments on public land. Measurement, GS mapping and zero tagging of government land of the entire district is being done. She also directed the ADM to dispose of complaints against the land illegally occupied by land mafia on a priority basis.

Two drug peddlers carrying ganja held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Two drug peddlers carrying ganja were nabbed in the city on Sunday. They were going to deliver the ganja (cannabis) to a man in Alambagh on Sunday and were arrested near the auto stand behind Charbagh railway station by a joint team of the Special Task Force and Alambagh police which raided the place on a tip-off.

The police recovered ganja weighing 1,781 grams along with mobile phones and some cash from the drug peddlers, who were identified as Nitesh Pandey and Dhananjay Kumar, both natives of Gorakhpur. According to police, the arrested drug peddlers were looking for customers before going to deliver the ganja.

Drinking water testing campaign launched

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

In a major step towards ensuring public health, the state government has launched a door-to-door drinking water testing campaign across 17 municipal corporations of the state. What makes this initiative unique is that it is being led entirely by women, aptly titled 'Amrit Mitras.'

The campaign is being carried out as part of the AMRUT 2.0 and the National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM) under the directives of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. A total of 788 women from self-help groups have been specially trained to conduct water quality tests directly at people's homes.

In Uttar Pradesh, Amrit Mitra women are not just testing water at people's homes they are also educating families about the importance of safe and clean drinking water. This unique campaign is changing both lives and mindsets across the state. "Women who were once confined to their homes are now stepping out with confidence, going door-to-door to check water quality and becoming guardians of public health. Through this initiative, they have not only become self-reliant but are also inspiring a shift in how society views women's roles," said a government spokesperson.

The Amrit Mitras are proving that when given the right platform and opportunity, women can lead change in any field. Under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's vision, this initiative has become a model for promoting cleanliness, health and gender equality across the country.

Officials of the Uttar Pradesh Fire Services Department during installation of pin flags at the residence of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath as part of the 'Fire Safety Week', in Lucknow. PTI

Baby feeding rooms inaugurated at SGPGIMS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Baby feeding rooms in the OPD and ward areas of the Paediatric Surgical Super Specialties Department of Sanjay Gandhi Ppst-graduate Mediacal Sciences were officially inaugurated on Monday by Director Prof RK Dhiman.

SGPGIMS Chief Medical Superintendent Prof Prashant Aggarwal was also present at the event.

This initiative, carried out in collaboration with Himalaya, aims to provide a comfortable, private and hygienic space for mothers to breastfeed their infants. In his inaugural address, Prof Dhiman emphasised the importance of creating inclusive healthcare environment. He said, "It is a matter of pride that our institution is taking forward his vision of equality and dignity for all. These baby feeding rooms are a small yet significant step in supporting the health and wellbeing of mothers and children visiting our hospital." he conveyed his aspiration for the establishment of similar baby feeding rooms in other areas of the hospital and formally requested the Dr Prashant Agarwal to initiate and oversee their implementation The event was attended by faculty members, nursing staff, postgraduate students, and patient families. It also included a brief awareness session on importance of breastfeeding and maternal rights in public healthcare facilities.

Head of the Paediatric Surgical Super Specialties Department Dr Basant Kumar said that this initiative reflects the department's continuous commitment to improving holistic paediatric care.

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LUCKNOW | TUESDAY | APRIL 15, 2025

'Zero Poverty' mission in UP to be named after Dr Ambedkar: Yogi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday announced that the 'Zero Poverty' mission in Uttar Pradesh will be named after Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar. He said that this initiative, set to launch later this month, aims to lift every underprivileged and deprived individual above the poverty line.

Inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision, the programme aims to ensure that no underprivileged person is left without access to basic amenities and government welfare schemes, Adityanth said while addressing a gathering organised by the Ambedkar Mahasabha on Monday to mark the birth anniversary of the late jurist-cum-social reformer.

On the occasion, he also released a commemorative souvenir, the UP government said in a statement.

In the first phase, 14-15 lakh families will be identified and connected with the mission. Each gram panchayat will include 20-25 families who don't have full access to government benefits.

He added, "Uttar Pradesh will become the first state in India to take decisive steps toward Zero Poverty."

Reflecting on Dr Ambedkar's life, the Chief Minister recalled that despite numerous challenges, his efforts led him to pursue higher education in England. After returning to India, he worked for the betterment of the crores of deprived and marginalised citizens.

Dr Ambedkar served as the first law minister in the first organised government and as the chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution.

He emphasised that while many doubted India's ability to remain united after independence, their fears were proved wrong. "Thanks to the guiding principles of the Constitution, India today stands strong as the world's largest and most vibrant democracy," he said.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath pays tribute to BR Ambedkar on his birth anniversary, in Lucknow. PTI

Adityanath also emphasised that the journey to realise Ambedkar's vision began under the leadership of former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee and gained renewed strength under PM Modi.

The CM also announced that Gram Panchayat committees managing community toilets would be provided with a monthly honorarium, ensuring continued maintenance and dignity for sanitation workers.

He also lamented that while Babasaheb is widely revered, Jogendra Nath Mandal remains a forgotten figure despite his contributions.

The Chief Minister remarked that the situations in Pakistan and Bangladesh serve as important lessons for India. He praised the PM for giving dignity and respect to Dalits and the marginalised.

He also accused the Congress and Samajwadi Party of consistently disrespecting Baba Saheb. "While he was alive, they insulted him, and even after his death, they tried to suppress his values and ideals," the Chief Minister said. On Monday morning, the UP CM paid tributes to Ambedkar and described him as a true "Bharat Ratna" and a "living school of democracy".

Ambedkar's struggle for an egalitarian society will inspire people for an eternity, Adityanath said in a post on X in Hindi.

"Tributes to the architect of the Indian Constitution who was all-inclusive, benevolent to all, imbued with excellent democratic values and enriched the spirit of one India, great India, Babasaheb Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar on his birth anniversary!

"He was a Bharat Ratna in the true sense of the word and a living school of democracy. His struggle to establish an egalitarian and justice-loving society will continue to inspire all of us for eternity," the chief minister said. Ambedkar is recognised for his lifelong struggle for the empowerment of Scheduled Castes and his key role in drafting the Constitution. Born in a Dalit family in 1891, he was a brilliant student who went on to study in foreign countries. The discrimination he suffered in Indian society turned him into a committed social reformer.

He was India's first law minister. He died in 1956.

Mayawati exhorts Dalits, backwards and tribals to grab key to power

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati, on Monday, exhorted Dalits, backwards, tribals and other deprived sections of society to take the key to power in their hands.

She made this appeal while paying floral tributes to Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar on his birth anniversary here on Monday morning.

Targeting the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress, Mayawati said these parties only made promises, but the social, economic and political conditions of the Bahujans in the country was still bad.

She warned that constitutional rights like reservation were being attacked and the Bahujan samaj would have to wake up now.

Mayawati said, "Now the Bahujan samaj of the country will have to understand the power of their vote. We can build the society of Babasaheb's dreams not just by voting but by participating in power. This will be a true tribute to him."

The BSP supremo said, "All the Dalits, tribals, backward classes and other neglected people of the country will have to become missionary Ambedkarites in the true sense, for it is only through their mutual unity and the attainment of the master key of power that they can attain freedom from oppression and injustice etc. and become a ruling class."

Mayawati also called upon all the governments to abandon casteism and narrow selfish politics and become 'samvidhanvadi Bharatiya' (constitutional Indians) so that the dream of 'Mera Bharat Mahaan (My Great India)' and 'Developed India' can be fulfilled on the ground by making the wider public and country's interest possible. Mayawati also expressed concern over the safety and religious freedom of minorities in the country and said that there was a need to be cautious of parties that were pro-corporate and anti-Bahujan.

According to political commentators, this attack by Mayawati on Babasaheb's birth anniversary is a strategic beginning for the 2027 election season. The BSP is now trying to present itself once again as the axis of Bahujan unity and Ambedkarite ideology.

Meanwhile, on the instructions of the BSP, programmes were organised at the district level to pay homage to Dr BR Ambedkar in the entire Uttar Pradesh and other parts of the country. Party workers in Lucknow division reached the Ambedkar Memorial, while workers from Western UP and Delhi-NCR gathered at the National Dalit Prerna Sthal in Noida. This time the BSP kept a special focus on youths. Workers were instructed to participate in the programmes along with their families and the young generation and spread the thoughts of Babasaheb to the people through posters, hoardings and speeches. Dr BR Ambedkar is recognised for his lifelong struggle for the empowerment of Scheduled Castes and his key role in drafting the Constitution.

Born in a Dalit family in 1891, he was a brilliant student who went on to study in foreign countries. The discrimination he suffered in Indian society turned him into a committed social reformer.

He was India's first law minister. He died in 1956.

AKY: Constitution Ambedkar's gift to country

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, on the birth anniversary of Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, on Monday, said the Constitution was Babasaheb's gift to the country and as long as it remained safe, people's rights would remain safe.

In a post on X in Hindi, the Samajwadi Party chief called on people to unite to strengthen the 'PDA' movement to save the Constitution.

The 'PDA' acronym coined by Yadav refers to a combination of 'Pichhde' (Backward Classes), Dalits and 'Alpasankhyak' (minorities).

"Let us strengthen our sense of self-respect and unite to establish the rule of social justice and give new strength to the PDA's movement to save Babasaheb's gift and heritage — Constitution and reservation. Let us reiterate that the Constitution is the life-giver and the Constitution is a shield and that as long as the Constitution remains safe, our honour, respect, self-respect and rights will remain safe," the SP president and former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh said.

"Only through self-respect the people of the PDA society will be able to gain their decisive power and get freedom from oppression, tyranny and pain and will be able to give a constitutional answer to the oppressive, dominant and power-hungry negative forces," he said.

Yadav underlined that only the unity of PDA will save the Constitution and reservation, and create a golden future.

Ambedkar is recognised for his lifelong struggle for the empowerment of Scheduled Castes and his key role in drafting the Constitution.

Ambedkar dedicated life to unite Hindus: Bhagwat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kanpur

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on Monday praised Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar for his "lifelong efforts to unite Hindus", saying despite facing hardships since childhood, he remained committed to social harmony and national development.

Speaking at the inauguration of the newly constructed four-storey RSS regional office 'Keshav Bhawan' in Kanpur's Karavalo Nagar, Bhagwat said, "Babasaheb had to face severe hardships in his life. From childhood, he faced discrimination and inequality. "Yet, throughout his life, he tried to bring the Hindu society together. His commitment to social unity and progress is an inspiration to all," he said.

In his address, Bhagwat also drew parallels between Ambedkar and RSS founder Dr Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, stating that both men devoted their lives to the upliftment of society and shared a vision of national development. "Both Baba Saheb Ambedkar and Hedgewar worked for the Hindu society throughout their lives. They dreamed of a strong and developed India," Bhagwat said.

He called it a privilege that the inauguration of the RSS's new building coincided with Ambedkar Jayanti.

"It is our good fortune that today, on Babasaheb's birth anniversary, we are inaugurating Keshav Bhawan. When Dr Ambedkar once attended a Sangh shakha in Karad, Maharashtra, he said, 'there may be differences on certain matters, but I feel a sense of belonging here,'" Bhagwat recalled.

Underscoring the responsibilities of those who identify as Hindus, the RSS chief remarked, "Those who call themselves Hindus are accountable for the country and for society. One day, they will be asked what they did for India. The Hindu society must prepare for this responsibility. The Sangh is fulfilling its duty towards the nation through its work."

Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat pays tributes to BR Ambedkar on his birth anniversary during a programme in Kanpur on Monday. PTI

Reflecting on India's historical struggles, Bhagwat said, "We got entangled in our internal differences, and foreign invaders took advantage of this. They looted us and even defeated us. The mission of the Sangh is to serve society and restore unity."

During the ceremony, Bhagwat performed a traditional ritual to inaugurate Keshav Bhawan, which is now the biggest RSS office in Uttar Pradesh. The building has a basement, a ground floor, and three upper stories. A hall inside has been named after Dr Ambedkar in recognition of his contributions. The new complex brings all RSS functions in Kanpur under one roof for the first time. It features a large meeting hall on the ground floor, rooms for officials and guests on the upper floors, and a dormitory for 'swayamsevaks' (RSS workers) with dining arrangements on the top floor. The building has been painted using eco-friendly paint made from cow dung.

The RSS office in Kanpur was first established in 1978 in a rented property in Gandhi Nagar. Bhagwat is the first RSS sarsanghchalak to spend a night at the new Keshav Bhawan.

Elaborate security arrangements were in place during Bhagwat's five-day visit to Kanpur. Police personnel were deployed around the premises, with entry restricted to listed individuals and pass holders

CM lauds CAT's performance, stresses on timely justice for government employees

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday praised the functioning of the Central Administrative Tribunal's (CAT) Lucknow bench, highlighting that it disposed of over 6,000 cases out of 6,708 filed between 2014 and 2024.

He called for accelerating this pace further to provide timely justice to government personnel.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony of the newly constructed office building of CAT's Lucknow bench, the chief minister said, "It is a matter of pride that on the birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar, a towering architect of our Constitution and champion of justice for the marginalised, we are dedicating this important judicial institution to the public."

Thanking Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions Jitendra Singh, Adityanath explained that tribunals play a crucial role in offloading pending matters from the regular courts.

"The aim behind setting up tribunals is to ensure that pending service-related cases do not consume unnecessary court time and instead are handled in a specialised and time-bound manner. This enables the affected personnel to receive justice without long delays," he said. He also underlined the importance of resources for judicial institutions.

"Whether it is a circuit bench or a full bench, it cannot function proactively unless it is adequately resourced," the CM said.

The new CAT office will cater to 16 districts in the region, providing a vital platform for timely justice, he said.

Emphasising the importance of accessible justice for all citizens and government employees, Adityanath said, "A democracy's credibility rests on the ability of a common person or employee to access a fair hearing and resolution. If justice is delayed for years, it becomes a mockery of the system."

Recalling a personal legal battle tied to the Gorakhnath Math, the chief minister shared, "A land-related case linked to our Math went on from 1956 till the Supreme Court's verdict in 1997. I was the third generation affected by the case. This example shows how delayed justice stretches across generations."

He pointed out that government employees often suffer long-drawn cases that extend beyond their service tenure. "Imagine the toll it takes on them and their families," he remarked.

Highlighting the effective resolution of revenue-related disputes, Adityanath said when he took office in 2017, UP had over 33 lakh pending land-related cases.

"We categorised them into timelines — 30, 60 days, etc — and directed officials to resolve them accordingly. If they failed to do so, the decision would be presumed in favour of the appellant and the responsible officer would be held accountable," he said. He claimed that due to this approach, while 10 lakh new cases were filed in the last decade, over 34 lakh cases were resolved in a time-bound manner.

"This not only helped reduce administrative burden but also curbed the culture of delay," he noted.

Referring to CAT's success, Adityanath said, "Disposing of 6,000 out of 6,708 cases over 10 years is commendable but many of these can be resolved even faster if both parties are simply brought face-to-face."

Thanking Union minister Jitendra Singh for attending the inauguration, Adityanath said, "Despite his responsibilities in Delhi, and Jammu and Kashmir, and handling personnel matters across India, he has taken time to be here. His Lok Sabha constituency is so large that it could contain five average-sized parliamentary constituencies." Concluding his address, the CM assured CAT officials of the state government's full cooperation. "You will always find positive support from the UP government in discharging your duties. I extend my best wishes to all of you," he said.

Ambedkar Jayanti celebrated with fervour

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Ambedkar Jayanti was celebrated with enthusiasm and fervour in the city on Monday. The celebrations served as a poignant reminder of Br Bhimrao Ambedkar's pivotal role in shaping modern India. Renowned for his unparalleled contributions as an eminent jurist, visionary economic thinker, relentless social reformer and staunch advocate for the marginalised, Babasaheb remains one of the brightest luminaries in Indian political history.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath paid floral tribute to the statue of Bharat Ratna Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar in Hazratganj. He was accompanied by Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, cabinet minister Swatantra Dev Singh, Social Welfare Minister Asim Arun, Mayor Sushma Kharkwal, Rajya Sabha member Brij Lal, MLAs Yogesh Shukla and OP Srivastava, and MLCs Mukesh Sharma and Pawan Singh Chauhan, among others.

Speaking at a function organised by Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University on Monday to celebrate its Foundation Day and the birth anniversary of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar, the main architect of Indian Constitution, Chief Minister Yogi emphasised that education is the first foundation of holistic development and one should leave the mind open to receive new ideas through education.

Governor Anandiben Patel paid homage to Bharat Ratna Babasaheb Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar on the occasion of his birth anniversary by garlanding his portrait and offering flowers to it at Raj Bhavan. On this occasion, she also expressed her faith in the Constitution by offering flowers to the original copy of the Indian Constitution specially brought by her.

Additional Chief Secretary the governor, Dr Sudhir Mahadev Bobde, legal advisor to governor, Prashant Mishra, special officer to governor Ashok Desai, special officer (education) Dr Pankaj L Jani, Special Secretary Shriprakash Gupta and all the officers and employees of Raj Bhavan also paid floral tributes and homage to Babasaheb and expressed their respect by offering floral tribute to the original copy of the Indian Constitution.

Ram Manohar Lohia National Law University celebrated Ambedkar Jayanti to commemorate the birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar, the principal architect of the Indian Constitution and a towering figure in the nation's socio-political landscape. The ceremony began with floral tributes to Dr Ambedkar as a mark of deep respect and reverence. Vice-Chancellor Prof Amar Pal Singh, in his address, emphasised the continued relevance of Dr Ambedkar's ideals in contemporary society and urged everyone to reflect upon and embody the principles of liberty, equality and social justice in their daily lives.

Faculty members, administrative staff, and students too gathered in unity to honour the life and legacy of this outstanding humanist whose ideas continue to inspire generations in the pursuit of justice, equality, and fraternity. The event concluded with a collective resolve to uphold the values Babasaheb stood for and to continue striving towards a more just, inclusive and progressive society.

Lucknow University Vice-Chancellor Prof Alok Kumar Rai also paid homage to Dr BR Ambedkar. On this occasion, Registrar Vidyanand Tripathi, Prof DK Singh, Dr Anitya Gaurav, Prof Vivek Sahay, Dr CR Gautam, Dr Brijesh Kumar, Dr Pravesh Prakash, Prof Anoop Bhartiya and other teachers were present. A national seminar was organised in the Atal auditorium of the university campus at Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Language University.

While addressing the seminar, Lucknow University's retired professor Kalicharan Snehi, who was the chief guest, said Babasaheb was 'Vishwabhushan' and hailed in 192 countries. He said the creation of a healthy democracy was possible only by the destruction of caste. Freedom, equality and fraternity should be the factors of any constitutional nation, he added.

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Patel: Dr Ambedkar gave new direction to society

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

Regional president (Kashi) of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Dilip Patel said central and state governments of the party are working for the poor and the deprived and they have started many schemes to realise the dreams of Dr Ambedkar, which include Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, PM Awas Yojana, Jal Jeevan Mission, Ujjwala Yojana and important work towards strengthening the SC/ST Act.

Patel paid tribute to Babasaheb by garlanding his statue in Naginpur village of Sewapuri assembly. After offering flowers, he read the Preamble to the Indian Constitution with the people present and took a pledge to protect the Constitution, promote equality, education and social harmony. In his address, he said Babasaheb gave a new direction to the society on the strength of justice, equality and education.

He said under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Central government has done a historic work by developing the places associated with Babasaheb as Panchteerth. In the New Education Policy, knowledge, self-respect and humility have been given priority in accordance with the thoughts of Babasaheb.

A large number of Bharatiya Janata Party workers, villagers and other were present on this occasion.

Hundreds of people, including Sanjay Sonkar, Praveen Singh Gautam, Surendra Patel, Arvind Patel, Ramprakash Biru, regional media in charge Navratan Rathi, Santosh Solapurkar, were present in the programme.

On the occasion, programmes were organised by Bharatiya Janata Party Kashi region. Tributes were paid to the statues and pictures of Baba Saheb at all 337 mandals and booths of Kashi region. By reading the Preamble of the Constitution collectively, a pledge was taken to protect and follow the Constitution. The social message of Babasaheb's teachings was conveyed to people by distributing sweets in the service colonies.

Pledge taken to follow Babasaheb's ideals

UP minister Ravindra Jaiswal garlanding statue on Ambedkar Jayanti in Varanasi on Monday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

Uttar Pradesh Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Stamp and Court Registration Fees Ravindra Jaiswal paid tribute to Bharat Ratna Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar by attending the programme organised at Ambedkar Park on the occasion of his birth anniversary on Monday. A pledge was taken to follow the ideals and footsteps of Babasaheb.

In Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW), rich tribute was paid to Babasaheb by taking out the historic shobha yatra organised by BLW SC / ST Association and employees. The procession started from Ambedkar Park near BLW Inter College and after passing through Jalali Patti Railway Colony, Kandwa Gate, Kanchanpur Colony, Cinema Hall, Officers' Colony, Administration Building to East Colony, it ended again at Ambedkar Park. This shobha yatra was no less than a cultural festival. Crowds gathered at every corner of the colony. The active participation of women, children and senior citizens made this event historic. Public Relations Officer (PRO) Rajesh Kumar, Joint Secretary of Employees' Council Shrikant Yadav, members Amit Kumar, Sanjay Kumar, Amit Yadav, Manish Kumar Singh, Santosh Yadav, Naveen Sinha, President of SC/ST Association Sanjay Kumar Anand along with Umesh Chand, Naveen Kumar, Suchit Kujur, Deendayal and Vinay Bharti and a large number of employees and their families were present in the rally. The personnel of Uttar Pradesh Police and BLW Railway Protection Force (RPF) played an important role in maintaining discipline and smooth security arrangements. Besides, a programme was organised near the hospital premises of Cantonment Board. It was led by Vishwanath Bharti, former member of Cantonment Board Varanasi, who, imbibing the thoughts of Babasaheb, distributed cold drinks to the passersby. Chief guest Shailendra Singh, former vice-president of Cantonment Board, said that we have to spread the light of the lamp that Babasaheb has handed over to us in the form of knowledge, rights and equality, to every corner of the society.

Collective reading of Preamble to the Constitution organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

The Department of Political Science of Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Kidwai Nagar, organised a collective reading of the Preamble to the Constitution and a speech competition on the theme 'The vision of a developed India and Dr Ambedkar' on the occasion of Ambedkar Jayanti on Monday.

The programme commenced with Principal Prof Anju Chaudhary, offering floral tribute to the portrait of Dr BR Ambedkar. In her address, she highlighted the significance of the values of equality, social justice, liberty and fraternity established by Dr Ambedkar and described him as a constant source of inspiration, especially for his role as the architect of the Indian Constitution and his lifelong struggle for the rights of the marginalised.

The programme convener and Head of the Department of Political Science, Dr Anamika Verma, said, "On Ambedkar Jayanti, we pledge to uphold the rights and duties enshrined in the Constitution and inspired by Dr Ambedkar's ideals, remain committed to building an inclusive, just, and progressive society."

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from a large number of students. In the speech competition, Nisha Shakya secured the first position, Anjali Bajpai second, while Sidra and Khushi Prajapati shared the third place. Tasmiya was awarded a consolation prize. All winners were presented certificates.

MMV PG College celebrating Ambedkar Jayanti on Monday.

The programme was a success due to the efforts of Prof Mamta Gangwar, Prof Sangeeta Sitani, Prof Manisha Shukla, Prof Rashmi Chaturvedi, Prof Jyoti Kiran, Prof Sadhana Pandey, Prof Mamta Dixit, Dr Meera Tripathi, Dr Saba Yunus, Dr Nishi Singh and the entire college staff.

TRIBUTE PAID

The Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University (CSJMU) commenced a three-day event, 'Vividhotsava', National Youth Fest from April 14 to 17 alongside the celebration of Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar Jayanti with a vibrant inaugural ceremony held at the Tatya Tope Senate Hall on Monday.

The beginning of the joint celebration was marked by the traditional lighting of the lamp by Vice-Chancellor, Prof Vinay Kumar Pathak, chief guest, Dr Vandana Pathak and special guests Panther Dhani Rao Baudh, state president, Indian Dalit Panther and Kishan Lal Sudershan, former member, SC/ST Commission. The dignitaries also paid their respects to Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar by offering floral tributes to his portrait.

Vice-Chancellor Prof Vinay Kumar Pathak elaborated on the diverse range of events that 'Vividhotsava' encompasses, providing a platform for students to showcase their talents and engage in meaningful interactions. He also eloquently spoke about Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar's relentless struggle and his pivotal role in the social movements that shaped modern India.

'Ambedkar played pivotal role in shaping India's democratic framework'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Prayagraj

Floral tribute was paid to Bharat Ratna Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar on his 134th birth anniversary by the staff and employees of Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon Open University (UPRTOU) during a programme organised at the administrative building of its Ganga campus on Monday. Vice-Chancellor (V-C) Professor Satyakam inaugurated the programme by garlanding the portrait of Dr Ambedkar.

The V-C hailed Dr Ambedkar as a visionary nation builder who fostered unity and progress. He said Dr Ambedkar played a pivotal role in shaping India's democratic framework, ensuring representation and equality for all citizens. His tireless efforts aimed at uplifting marginalised communities, promoting social amalgamation, and combating caste-based discrimination.

Dr Ambedkar's thoughts on linguistic states, official languages and federal polity remain relevant today, showcasing his pragmatic approach to nation building, he added.

During the event, Dr Atul Kumar Mishra from the Humanities Faculty shed light on the significance of Gandhi and Ambedkar's thoughts, highlighting their impact on India's socio-political landscape. The programme concluded with a national anthem.

Contribution remembered

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

The birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar was celebrated with great enthusiasm at the Collectorate auditorium on Monday. District Magistrate Jitendra Pratap Singh paid floral tribute to Dr Ambedkar's portrait and remembered his invaluable contribution. The DM said Dr Ambedkar was not only the architect of the Indian Constitution but also a pioneer of social equality and harmony.

He said Babsaheb's life is a symbol of struggle, integrity, compassion and commitment. His teachings continue to guide us even today. The event was attended by ADM (City) Dr Rajesh Kumar, ADM (Judicial) Chandrashekhar, ADM (Finance and Revenue) Rajesh Kumar, along with other officials and employees, who paid homage to Dr Ambedkar.

Rai condemns murder, seeks financial assistance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Prayagraj

Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee p (UPCC) president Ajay Rai visited Prayagraj on Monday. Ajay Rai, accompanied by Allahabad Congress MP Ujjwal Raman Singh and other party office-bearers, visited the site near Allahabad High Court and paid floral tributes at the statue of Dr BR Ambedkar on his birth anniversary. Strongly condemning the murder of a Dalit in Karchana, Rai said, "No amount of condemnation is enough for this heinous crime," Rai said.

While talking to mediapersons here, Ajay Rai demanded that the state government provide the victim's family financial assistance of Rs 50 lakh, a safe accommodation besides prompt and severe punishment to the culprits.

He then proceeded to Karchana to meet the victim's family.

MARCH CONDUCTED

The members of All India Student Association (AISA) took out a march on the occasion of 134th birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar here on Monday. The march started from AU's Student Union Building and turned into a meeting in front of Babasaheb's statue in AU's Law Faculty. Sher Singh, Vandana, Radha, Kaushiki, Anushka, Aman Kumar, Sarthak, Deepak, Abhishek and other students were present.

UP moving ahead on path of development: Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

Uttar Pradesh Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Ayush Dr Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu' laid the foundation stone for the reconstruction of the damaged road from Seer Govardhan main road to Sahaj Academy on Sunday. This construction work will cost Rs 7.52 lakh.

A large number of school children travel through this route every day, especially the students of Sahaj Academy. Due to the dilapidated condition of the road, incidents of children getting injured have been coming to the fore every day. Taking the concern of the citizens seriously, Dr Dayalu sanctioned an amount of Rs 7.52 lakh and formally laid the foundation stone for the construction work.

After the programme, Dr Mishra reached Sahaj Academy, where he distributed mark sheets and prizes to the students. In his address, he said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi is very sensitive towards the education and all-round development of children. He worked to change the mindset of the society by giving the slogan of 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao'. Today's youth, whether son or daughter, parents are now giving equal opportunities to both without any discrimination."

The minister said that today Uttar Pradesh is continuously moving forward on the path of development under the leadership of the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. He inspired the school children to study with hard work and dedication and assured that no kind of basic deficiency will be allowed in their area.

On the occasion, school manager Nilendra Kumar Singh, Anoop Kumar Dubey, Principal Pooja Singh, Gaurav Rathi, Devendra Jaiswal, Virendra Yadav, Kallu Singh, Jaiprakash Yadav, LB Yadav, Dr Hardat Shukla, Ankur Upadhyay and many other local dignitaries were present. The program was conducted and the vote of thanks was given by school manager Nilendra Kumar Singh.

Six-day music fest from tomorrow

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

Internationally famous six-day Sankat Mochan Sangeet Samaroh (music festival) , which is in its 102nd year, will be organised with great pomp in the premises of Shri Sankat Mochan Temple from April 16 to 21. Giving this information, Mahant of Sankat Mochan Temple Prof Vishwambhar Nath Mishra said national and internationally renowned artistes will participate in this programme based entirely on classical music. This time 11 Padma awardees and 16 first entrant artistes will participate in the music festival. He said on the first day Pt Hariprasad Chaurasia (Flute), Janani Murali (Bharatnatyam), Pt Rahul Sharma (Santoor), Dr Yella Venkateswara Rao (Mridangam), Pt Praveen Godkhindi (Flute), Pt Ajay Pohankar (Singing), Pt Vikas Maharaj, Vibhas Maharaj (Sarod-Sitar), and Rohit Pawar (Kathak) will present their programmes .

Passenger services at 5 new underground stns set to begin soon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

Following approval from the Commissioner of Metro Rail Safety (CMRS) for operations between Moti Jheel and Kanpur Central under Corridor-1 (IIT to Naubasta), passenger services at five new underground stations — Chunniganj, Navin Market, Bada Chauraha, Nayaganj and Kanpur Central — are set to commence soon. To ensure smooth operations, Kanpur Metro has deployed nearly all essential staff and officials at these stations. Twenty experienced and specially trained station controllers will be primarily responsible for managing day-to-day operations across these new locations.

Since the launch of services on the priority corridor (IIT to Moti Jheel), the professional and courteous behaviour of Kanpur Metro staff has consistently earned praise from commuters. With the upcoming extension to Kanpur Central, the metro team is fully prepared to take on new responsibilities and maintain the high standards of service.

Station controllers are at the heart of metro station operations. From the Station Control Room, they manage a wide array of technical systems, enabling them to oversee the entire station from a single location. Their responsibilities include ensuring passenger safety, convenience and overall station functionality.

Before deployment, station controllers undergo extensive training to handle emergencies. Their training includes operation of tunnel ventilation systems, fire alarm control panels, automatic fare collection systems, lift rescues and more. Regular mock drills - such as emergency evacuations, anti-terrorism scenarios and fire safety drills - are also conducted to keep them prepared. In addition to technical training, station controllers are also trained in soft skills to interact politely and efficiently with passengers.

Supporting the station controllers are ticket office machine (TOM) operators, security personnel and housekeeping staff. Security is jointly managed by a private agency and the UPSSF, with women guards posted at each station to assist female passengers.

More than 50 housekeeping staff have been deployed at the five new stations to ensure cleanliness and hygiene. TOM operators will be present from the first day of service to handle ticketing, including the issuance of NCMC Go Smart Cards and assisting passengers with ticket vending machines.

Since its inception, Kanpur Metro has received widespread appreciation from passengers. A total of 94 passengers have submitted written appreciation letters, lauding the metro staff for their efficiency, professionalism and friendly conduct. Among the well-wishers are several of the city's esteemed educational institutions.

The commitment of Kanpur Metro staff to passenger service is reflected in their actions since operations began, they have successfully returned 65 lost smartphones, four laptops, over ₹85,000 in cash, and around 170 other valuable items, including jewellery and important documents, to their rightful owners.

Managing Director, Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation, Sushil Kumar, said, "The dream of extending the metro from IIT to Kanpur Central is soon to become a reality. The support and cooperation of the city's residents is our greatest strength. Our mission is to provide Kanpur with a safe, efficient and comfortable mode of public transport."

NATIONAL CONVENTION

The national convention of the We Bankers Association was organised in a hotel in Ratanlal Nagar. A large number of office-bearers and members from various states across the country participated in it. The chief guest on the occasion was former General Manager of Punjab National Bank Vinay Kumar Khanna. National president Vivek Mishra, national general secretary Rahul Mishra, Chandrashekhar Awasthi and Kamlesh Chaturvedi were also present.

Prominent among those present in the programme were Jugandeep Singh, Sumit Gupta, Rishabh Singh, Ankit Shukla, Krishnakant, Deval Mishra, Ghanshyam Verma and Ashutosh Srivastava.

MLA hears problems of people

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

Under the 'Ward Chalo Abhiyan' run by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Varanasi Cantt MLA Saurabh Srivastava spent the whole day in Ranipur ward on Sunday. During this, he actively participated in public relations, cleanliness campaign, public meeting and other public welfare programmes. Srivastava started his stay with a cleanliness campaign at the statue site of Baba Saheb Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar located in Teliana. He cleaned the statue site along with the workers and paid tribute to Baba Saheb by lighting a lamp.

Later, in Ranipur ward, the MLA went door to door and communicated with the citizens and distributed leaflets related to the achievements of the BJP government in eight years. During the public relations, he listened to the problems of the people seriously and directed the officials concerned to resolve them on priority. He said that every BJP worker considers social service as his religion and works continuously by staying among the people. He also met the beneficiaries of various government schemes and inquired about the effective implementation of schemes. He described the satisfaction of beneficiaries and the transparency of the schemes as proof of the success of the government.

On the occasion, Srivastava honoured senior workers associated with the Bharatiya Janata Party for a long time by garlanding them and draping them with shawls. He said the real strength of the party is its dedicated and loyal workers, whose continuous efforts are continuously strengthening the organisation. He heard the problems of the local residents in the Jan Chaupal organised in the colony of Ranipur ward.

MLA Saurabh Srivastava held a meeting with the workers of 14 booth committees of Ranipur ward and held a strategic discussion about strengthening of the organisation and the upcoming elections.

Prominent among those present in the programme were BJP city vice-president Abhishek Mishra, mandal president Jitendra Patel, former mandal president Shatrughan Patel, corporator representative Navneet Pandey 'Atul', corporators Shyam Asare Maurya and Madan Mohan Tiwari, Ajay Gupta, Anil Srivastava, Sunil Bind, Sagar Bind, Manoj Srivastava, Gupteshwar Maurya, Udal Jaiswal, Naresh Sharma, Dr JP Mishra, Sonu Mishra, Umesh Sonkar, Raju Jaiswal, Vinod Bind, Kavindra Singh, Kishan Sharma, Ram Lakhan Bind, Rajan Chaudhary, Abhishek Srivastava, Swastik, Rahul Yadav 'Basant', Raj Kumar Prajapati, Vijay Verma, Kamal Chaurasia, Shashank Prajapati, Bal Govind, Ram Prakash, Rakesh Mohan Dixit and other workers.

Talk show organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

Taking a significant step towards the development of the city, a talk show titled 'Kanpur Ki Baat' was organised under the 'Muskuraye Kanpur' campaign at Jainrain Vidya Mandir Inter College auditorium. Various experts, social workers, and citizens from different fields shared their views on the city's progress.

Chief coordinator Dr Sidhanshu Rai, emphasised that in order to make Kanpur a developed city, it is essential to prioritise issues such as traffic management, education, healthcare, tourism, entrepreneurship, and innovation. He said that suggestions of citizens will be conveyed to the respective departments.

Senior entrepreneur Balram Narula stressed the need to attract youth towards startups. Assistant Commissioner of Industries, Dr Ajay Yadav, highlighted the importance of establishing coordination between industries and universities so that students can be prepared according to industrial needs.

President pays tribute to Dr Ambedkar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

President Droupadi Murmu, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla paid floral tributes at the statue of Bhimrao Ambedkar in the Parliament House Complex on Monday, marking his birth anniversary.

Senior Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, and Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge also paid homage at the statue of Ambedkar.

Union ministers, MPs and Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta were also present to offer their tributes.

On the eve of the occasion, President Droupadi Murmu greeted people and said Ambedkar's contributions across various fields would continue to inspire future generations to work with dedication towards nation-building. In her message, she said Ambedkar created a distinct identity despite facing extreme hardships and earned global respect through his exceptional achievements. He considered education an important tool for social change and empowerment of the downtrodden, the President said. Paying tributes to Bhimrao Ambedkar on his birth anniversary, Prime Minister Modi said that it was due to his inspiration that the country was dedicated to realising the dream of social justice.

President Droupadi Murmu with Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a ceremony to pay tribute to BR Ambedkar on his birth anniversary PTI

His principles and ideas will strengthen and speed up the building of an 'aatmanirbhar' (self-reliant) and developed India, Modi said.

Ambedkar is recognised for his lifelong struggle for the empowerment of Scheduled Castes and his key role in drafting the Constitution. Born in a Dalit family in 1891, he was a brilliant student who went on to study abroad.

The discrimination he suffered in Indian society made him a committed social reformer. He was also India's first law minister.

Kharge stressed the need for a nationwide caste census as well as implementation of reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs in private educational institutions.

He said the Constitution is a gift from Ambedkar to citizens as it gives them the right of social, economic and political justice. Kharge said the Congress wants to forward five issues that it is striving for and asserted that a nationwide caste census is necessary.

Importance of forensic science has increased: Shah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The importance of forensic science has increased manifold with crime becoming borderless and criminals often breaching the boundaries of states and countries, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said Monday, highlighting that the Modi government has made forensic science a part of the criminal justice system.

The government also is working to ensure people get justice in time and to their satisfaction, he said at the All India Forensic Science Summit 2025.

"Under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, the government is striving to make the criminal justice system people-centric and scientific. Along with this, the government is working to ensure that the person seeking justice gets justice in time and also gets satisfaction of getting justice," he said.

The home minister said forensic science is very useful to strengthen the country's criminal justice system.

"Prime Minister Modi's vision has worked to change the landscape of the criminal justice system of this country.

We have made forensic science a part of the criminal justice system so that justice is not only delivered and guilty is punished but at the same time ensuring that no innocent suffers," Union Home Minister Amit Shah said.

Shah said the Summit will prove to be very useful in bringing experts on one platform, discussing policies, formulating and shaping future strategies and finding a unanimously accepted solution.

"In today's times, if we have to provide timely justice and increase the conviction rate, then this is not possible without forensic science," he said.

Shah said there was a time when crime used to be limited to the boundaries of districts, states and countries, but it has become borderless now.

"In such a situation, the importance of forensic science increases manifold."

The home minister said there should be no injustice done either to the accused to the complainant.

"If we want to ensure this, then we will have to make forensic science a part of the criminal justice system."

Delhi CM lays foundation stone in Shalimar Bagh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Monday laid the foundation stone for several development projects in the Shalimar Bagh assembly constituency. She also inaugurated the beautification of four public parks located in Ambedkar Colony, Haiderpur and laid the foundation stone for the construction of the main road and drainage system from the Haiderpur bus stand to the nearby canal.

The chief minister stated that the Delhi government is fully committed to building a robust and modern infrastructure across the capital. "Our aim is to provide every citizen with better facilities and a safe, accessible environment," she said.

The CM said that the government's top priority is to offer world-class roads, healthcare, educational institutions, transport services, and a clean environment to the people of Delhi. "We envision a Delhi that not only meets the present needs but also lays a sustainable and strong foundation for future generations. Our resolve is to build Delhi as an empowered, self-reliant, and inclusive capital that serves as a model for the entire nation," she added.

She further shared that the beautification work of the four public parks in Ambedkar Colony has now been completed and opened to the public. These parks are now equipped with swings for children, seating arrangements for senior citizens, and horticultural landscaping. "These spaces will now serve not only as recreational areas but also as centers of social harmony and inspiration," said the CM.

In addition, the CM laid the foundation stone for the construction of the main road and drains from the Haiderpur bus stand to the canal-a long-standing demand of the residents. This initiative is expected to significantly improve local connectivity and ease water logging issues.

On this occasion, CM Gupta said, "The life of Babasaheb BR Ambedkar inspires us with values of dedication, struggle, and equality. We are dedicating improved infrastructure to the people of Delhi. Our aim is not merely to commemorate him but to realize his ideals on the ground." She further emphasized that guided by Babasaheb's principles, the Delhi Government is consistently working.

NCLAT dismisses Supertech promoter's plea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has dismissed the plea filed by debt-ridden realty firm Supertech former promoter Ram Kishor Arora against personal insolvency proceedings initiated against him.

He had challenged an order by the Delhi bench of the National Company Law Tribunal, which, in February 2025, directed to initiate personal insolvency proceedings against Arora on the plea filed by IFCI and appointed an IRP.

A two-member bench of the appellate insolvency tribunal NCLAT said personal insolvency proceedings could not be defended based on another insolvency proceeding going against Supertech under section 7 of the IBC. It is on the lenders to proceed against both simultaneously or separately.

Section 95 (1) of the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code allows the creditors to file insolvency proceedings against the personal guarantors.

Arora's counsel submitted the insolvency proceedings initiated against Supertech Ltd under Section 7 is currently sub-judice before the Supreme Court. In this matter, the apex court had, on February 21, 2025, asked the promoters of Supertech and third parties to submit a settlement plan, and the process is already pending before the Supreme Court.

Supertech promoters and other parties are in the process of submitting a plan for construction and settlement.

Rejecting this argument, the NCLAT said: "Be that as it may, we are of the view that the personal insolvency proceedings are not defended on proceedings under Section 7, which are proceedings against the Corporate Debtor (Supertech), the liability of the personal guarantor and the Corporate Debtor to the lenders are co-extensive and it is open for the lenders to proceed against both simultaneously or separately".

Arora's counsel further submitted that the proposal has also been sent to IFCI Bank with an OTS (one-time settlement) Proposal, which is pending consideration.

"We after hearing the Counsel for the Appellant (Supertech), are of the view in so far as the admission of the application under Section 95, that cannot be faulted on the ground of pendency of proceedings under Section 7 against CD," said a NCLAT bench comprising Chairperson Justice Ashok Bhushan and Barun Mitra.

However, the NCLAT said it will be open for Arora to bring before the Resolution Professional settlement with IFCI Bank if any, or any proceedings or any settlement, entered into the proceedings under Section 7, which are pending consideration before the Supreme Court.

The appellate tribunal further said: "It goes without saying that all materials which are brought by the appellant be duly considered by the RP for proceeding further in the personal insolvency proceedings".

Arora was the personal guarantor of the loans taken by Supertech from IFCI.

Earlier, on December 12, 2024, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal had appointed state-owned NBCC as a project management consultant to complete debt-ridden realty firm Supertech Ltd's 16 real estate projects at a cost of nearly ₹9,500 crore.

This was challenged before the Supreme Court, which on February 21, 2025, stayed it and directed all stakeholders, including corporate guarantors, Supertech promoter RK Arora and the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (Yeida), to submit alternative proposals.

Insolvency proceedings were initiated against Supertech on March 25, 2022.

This was immediately challenged by Arora before the appellate tribunal National Company Law Appellate Tribunal, which on June 10, 2022, modified the order and directed the Committee of Creditors (CoC) to be constituted with regard to Project Eco Village-II only. For other projects, the appellate tribunal directed to be kept as ongoing projects. The construction of all other projects was to continue with the overall supervision of IRP.

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal order was challenged by the lenders and Indiabulls before the Supreme Court.

The apex court allowed the order passed by the NCLAT on June 10, 2022, to operate. Regarding Eco Village-II, the Supreme Court said the process beyond voting on the Resolution Plan will await a further order.

Earlier this year, on May 31, 2024, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal directed for a project-wise resolution of Supertech and steps were taken by the IRP. On July 15, 2024, NBCC made a statement showing their interest in the projects of Supertech.

Chhattisgarh: Injuries to troops in anti-Naxal jump four times

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
New Delhi/Raipur

The number of security personnel who got injured in IED attacks in Chhattisgarh has jumped to around 300 per cent in the first quarter of 2025, presenting a "formidable" challenge for them to meet the Centre's deadline of eliminating Naxalites from the country by March 2026.

As summer peaks in the jungles of the "last Naxal bastion" of the central Indian state, the security agencies are "treading with caution" on roads and dirt tracks to avoid getting trapped by these IED blasts that have killed hundreds and led to loss of limbs for many over more than two decades of the insurgency.

According to official data accessed by PTI, the first quarter (January-March) of 2025 saw 23 improvised explosive device (IED) attacks, leading to injuries to 23 personnel from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and other forces including Chhattisgarh Police and recovery of 201 such bombs weighing more than 500 kgs.

The comparative figures for the same period of last year show that there were nine IED attacks in Chhattisgarh, leading to injuries to six personnel and recovery of 85 such bombs weighing about 257 kgs.

The attacks have risen by around 150 per cent while the injuries to troops have gone up by four times in the first three months of this year, according to the data.

The entire year of 2024 saw 43 cases of IED attacks which led to recovery of 292 IEDs and injuries to 33 personnel including nine from the Central Reserve Police Force, the lead anti-Maoist operations force across the Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected states.

"There is about 2.5 times spurt in IED attacks and four-fold increase in injuries to personnel this year in Chhattisgarh.

This is because the Naxals are not undertaking one-to-one combat as they are very low on arms, ammunition, manpower and morale," a senior security officer posted in the Bastar region of the state said.

The security forces, hence, have been asked to scrupulously follow the old drill of walking the stretch rather boarding vehicles during operations and avoid taking the beaten track, he said.

On March 23 this year, two vehicle-borne Special Task Force (STF) personnel of Chhattisgarh Police suffered injuries in such a attack in Bijapur district as a convoy of eighteen vehicles was returning to the base, aided by the troops of the road opening party who sanitise roads.

Man arrested for allegedly killing his live-in partner

PARVESH SHARMA ■ Gurugram

A crime branch team of the Gurugram police has arrested a man for allegedly killing his live-in partner on March 11, 2025, police said.

The accused was identified as Shiv Shankar Sharma, Alias Kali Charan, a resident of Uttar Pradesh. While the victim was identified as Rita, a native of Bihar.

According to the police, on March 11, information was received regarding the body of a woman found in village Naharpur.

On receiving the information, the police team reached the spot where the body of a woman was found wrapped in a blanket in a field in village Naharpur.

The police team got to the scene and had the body inspected by the scene-of-crime and fingerprint teams and kept the body in the mortuary for postmortem and identification. On March 31, the deceased's father identified the victim as his daughter, Rita, who was residing in village Naharpur, Manesar, in rented accommodation. He told the police in his complaint that his daughter Rita was married 11 years ago.

"About 5 years ago, Rita and her husband came to the village of Naharpur and started living on rent and started working here.

Due to a rift between his daughter and her husband, he left his daughter in Naharpur. After that, his daughter started living in a relationship with a person named Shiv Shankar, Alias Kalicharan," he told the police.

Thereafter, he came to Naharpur to meet his daughter, where he came to know that a few days ago, the body of a woman was found in the fields here. He saw the photo of the body and identified her as Rita.

He suspects that Shiv Shankar, alias Kalicharan, has murdered his daughter.

The deceased's father identified the victim as his daughter, Rita, who was residing in village Naharpur, Manesar, in rented accommodation

On the complaint received, a case was registered under the relevant sections in Police Station Manesar, Gurugram. During the investigation, the police nabbed the accused on Monday from village Naharpur in Gurugram.

In the initial police interrogation, it was found that the above accused was in a relationship with Rita. The accused used to work as a laborer, and Rita worked in a company in IMT Manesar itself.

"The accused suspected Rita of having a relationship with someone else, due to which the accused killed Rita on February 23 and dumped Rita's body in a wheat field," Sandeep Kumar, spokesperson of the Gurugram police, said.

For further interrogation, the accused will be produced in the court and was taken into police custody.

BJP committed to Ambedkar's values: Nadda

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

BJP president JP Nadda led the ruling BJP to pay homage to Babasaheb Ambedkar at several commemorative events across the country as well party offices. Several BJP leaders at its headquarters also read out the Constitution's preamble to stress their commitment to its values.

Party leaders and its different state units launched the drive, 'Ambedkar Samman Abhiyan', to highlight how its governments at the Centre and in states have kept the deprived sections of society central to its welfare programmes in line with the vision of Ambedkar.

Union Social Justice Minister Virendra Kumar accused the Opposition of exploiting Dr Ambedkar's name for political mileage while failing to respect his contributions or develop places associated with his life." Opposition has only used Babasaheb's name all their lives. They neither shared his pain nor worked to develop places linked to his legacy. Today they roam around carrying copies of the Constitution, but when they were in power, they violated it multiple times. They even imposed Emergency through constitutional amendments for their selfish interests." Kumar said it was PM Narendra Modi's government that gave constitutional status to the Backward Classes Commission, something the opposition failed to do. "Those who ruled from panchayat to Parliament for 56 years never gave the Commission constitutional status. Modi ji did that," he said.

"The BJP is the only party that has given the Constitution the highest regard. The Constitution is the soul of this country," he said. On reservation, the minister said limits have been set by the judiciary, and any discussion must remain within those boundaries.

Union Minister JP Nadda pays tribute to Dr. BR Ambedkar on his birth anniversary in New Delhi PTI

Adityanath lauded Ambedkar as a true Bharat Ratna and a living school of democracy. "His struggle to establish an egalitarian and justice-loving society will continue to inspire all of us for eternity," he said. At a programme, he said his government has worked to ensure law and order and to boost development and welfare, as he accused rivals of being involved in rampant corruption and nepotism.

Shah lauded Ambedkar in his post on X saying he laid the foundation of social transformation based on education, equality and justice, and remained committed to the rights of the deprived sections of society throughout his life.

Following the setback it received in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls when it lost a majority on its own largely due to the loss of votes from the poorer sections of society, including Dalits, in some states, the BJP has ratcheted up its outreach to them.

Anti-independence forces destroying Bangladesh's culture: Hasina

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Bangladesh's deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina has said that anti-independence forces have illegally seized power and were actively trying to destroy the country's secular culture as she urged people to drive the usurpers out.

"Today, anti-liberation forces have illegally seized power in Bangladesh. They are actively trying to destroy Bengali culture," the 77-year-old self-exiled ousted premier said in a statement on the occasion of Bengali New Year - Pohela Boishakh.

Hasina left Bangladesh in August last year after her nearly 16-year-long Awami League government was toppled in a student-led uprising. Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, who was in a protracted row with the Hasina regime for obscure reasons, assumed the charge of an interim government.

"Whenever anti-independence forces gained control in the past, they attacked the nation's history, heritage, and culture. They not only tried to stop the Mangal Shobhajatra but even attempted to change its name," Hasina said.

Hasina, who now lives in India, said that those who now run Bangladesh are "enemies of the nation" and "enemies of our culture". "Let us drive out the anti-liberation and anti-culture forces, and raise Bangladesh's head high on the global stage," said the former premier as Bangladesh celebrated the Bengali New Year in a changed cultural scenario.

"On this auspicious moment of Bengali New Year, let us commit to rejecting all that is unhealthy, ugly, or part of a distorted culture - and instead, embrace a healthy, beautiful, and creative way of life," she added.

This year, Bangladesh authorities renamed the traditional "Mangal Shobhajatra" procession, a central attraction of Pohela Boishakh celebrations, as "Anondo Shobhajatra" after conservative Islamist groups like Hefazat-e-Islam called the "Mangal Shobhajatra" a "Hindu ritual" and urged the government to change its name. Dhaka University's fine arts faculty, which centrally stages the colourful street march in Dhaka, at a press conference last week announced the renaming of the event where towering masks, handcrafted puppets, and vivid depictions of animals feature the procession.

Dhaka University's new Vice-Chancellor Professor Mohammad Niaz Ahmed Khan, however, said on Monday that "Anondo Shobhajatra" this year was the largest and most diverse to date with representation from the highest number of ethnic communities, including indigenous groups. UNESCO declared "Mangal Shobhajatra" an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2016 while Hasina said the Bengali New Year became a symbol of the "secular consciousness" of the Bengali nation.

"Those who dared to change the name of Mangal Shobhajatra, those who engage in such heinous conspiracies against our heritage and culture, are enemies of the nation, enemies of our culture, enemies of Bangladesh," Hasina said.

"They are actively trying to destroy Bengali culture," the 77-year-old self-exiled ousted premier said in a statement on the occasion of Bengali New Year - Pohela Boishakh

"The people of this country will never let them succeed," she added.

Recalling the brutal assassination of her father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with his family in 1975, Hasina said, "There was an attempt to erase Bengali cultural identity and revert to a Pakistani ideology. Political toxins were insidiously injected into the realm of culture".

"But the Bengali people did not remain silent - they carried forward an unyielding cultural resistance," she added.

Hasina said Pohela Boishakh is the most universal celebration of the Bengali people. "This occasion is celebrated with hopes for happiness, peace, and prosperity while leaving behind the grief of past mistakes and failures," she added.

"The first light of dawn on this day brings forth new dreams, aspirations, and possibilities. It unites the Bengali nation in its unique worldview and rich cultural identity. I call upon all to step into the new year, leaving behind the old and the worn, embracing harmony that transcends religion, race, and community," she added.

Editor's TAKE

A matter of faith, fear and politics

Issues of faith must be approached with inclusivity and mutual trust to avoid flare ups

In a nation as diverse as India, policies that touch religious life must be crafted with sensitivity, consultation, and fairness. Otherwise, what begins as lawmaking in Parliament risks becoming lawbreaking on the streets. Murshidabad, West Bengal, the latest flashpoint in sectarian violence, bears testimony to this. It has become the epicentre of communal tension following violent protests over the recently passed Waqf Amendment Bill, 2025. In Murshidabad, a district with a Muslim majority, protests turned violent on April 11–12, leading to the deaths of three people and over 150 arrests. Protesters, many affiliated with groups like the Social Democratic Party, clashed with police and allegedly targeted properties of other communities.

What began as demonstrations against the Central Government's move to reform the management of Islamic charitable properties has now escalated into deadly riot and clashes between the communities. Reportedly some 400 Hindu families have moved out of the district fearing for their life. Passed earlier this month by Parliament, the Waqf Amendment Bill, 2025, introduces structural changes to how Waqf properties are governed across India.

Waqf, an Islamic endowment of property for religious or charitable purposes, includes an estimated lakhs of crores of assets such as mosques, shrines, graveyards, and commercial land. What is frowned upon by the Muslims is the inclusion of non-Muslims in Waqf board management and centralised oversight mechanisms to address alleged corruption and mismanagement. Besides, greater government authority over registration and use of Waqf land.

While the Government argues that the amendments aim to enhance transparency and accountability, many Muslims view it as a targeted encroachment on their religious autonomy. Unlike other religious institutions in India, Muslim endowments would now potentially be overseen by those outside the faith — a move critics say undermines constitutional guarantees of minority rights. The Muslims see it as an attempt to infringe their religious rights as the bill singles out Muslim institutions for reform while leaving others untouched, reinforcing a narrative of discrimination. Inclusion of non-Muslims in managing Waqf boards is seen as a violation of religious self-governance.

Moreover, there are anxieties that Waqf lands could be taken over or repurposed under the guise of regulatory control. Ironically, the WAqf Bill may not be implemented in West Bengal as Mamata has assured people but then the protests turned into a game of political one-upmanship. The opposition leader Suvendu Adhikari of the BJP has accused Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress (TMC) Government of enabling "radical elements" and allowing a breakdown of law and order. Such demographic shifts can leave lasting scars, deepening mistrust and setting a precedent for further segregation along religious lines. Banerjee's administration is now walking a tightrope — balancing the concerns of a large Muslim population while also addressing the security concerns of minority Hindus in districts like Murshidabad.

This latest communal riot is unfortunate. People can have genuine grievances against the government policies but it does not give them right to target other community. It is the responsibility of the State Government to maintain law and order in the state and protect people's life and property.

The violence in Murshidabad is a wake-up call. It is not merely about a Bill, but about trust, representation, and the fragile fabric of Indian secularism. The State and Central Governments must work in tandem — not at odds — to prevent further communal alienation.

Resetting the world order

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Ursula von der Leyen President of the European Commission share a common world view. Their leadership and synergy forges new pathways in global diplomacy, trade, and security

In a rapidly changing global landscape, countries across the world are striving to innovate and evolve — seeking deeper economic, strategic, and cultural integration. A united front has become essential to counter the disruptive ambitions of rising global actors and to address complex transnational challenges. In this context, India and the European Union emerge as natural partners, committed to shaping a more secure, prosperous, and cooperative world order.

This spirit of collaboration was evident during the recent visit of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, accompanied by the College of Commissioners, to India. The visit marked a significant moment in India–EU relations, taking place against the backdrop of major global shifts — including the reorientation of American economic policy under former United States President Donald Trump and the continuing, destabilising conflicts between Israel and Palestine as well as Russia and Ukraine.

The high-level meeting between India and the 27-member European Union has opened up new avenues for economic cooperation, trade negotiations, and investment protection. This dialogue has brought greater alignment among the EU nations and India, aiming for enhanced collaboration in Asia, the Pacific, and Africa. These efforts reflect the depth of understanding and mutual respect between the two sides.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Ursula von der Leyen have demonstrated remarkable vision and strategic foresight in recent years. Their leadership has forged new pathways in global diplomacy, trade, and security. They have worked tirelessly to establish multiple channels for negotiation, with the goal of inclusive democratisation in world politics. Their approach emphasises innovation, strategic adaptability, and a commitment to addressing the needs of all stakeholders.

One of the most pressing concerns remains the need for global consensus on relaxing intellectual property rights under the TRIPS Agreement, especially related to vaccines. Facilitating access to life-saving medicines during health emergencies is vital. The growing consensus on climate change, renewable energy, and technological development is another area where India and the EU are finding common ground.

Their focus on sustainable energy, power generation, and a coordinated response to challenges posed by initiatives like China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) bodes well for global peace and prosperity.

The 2019 Japan–EU agreement was a step in this direction. India and the EU have enjoyed historically strong relations, with bilateral trade witnessing a significant surge over the past five years. Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands have emerged as major importers from India, while Germany, France, and Belgium remain key exporters to India. These relationships are being further strengthened through recent diplomatic engagements, promoting a stable environment for economic growth, free trade, and strategic cooperation.

SUDHIR HINDWAN

The EU's Civil Protection System provided timely support to India during the devastating second wave of COVID-19. This humanitarian gesture created opportunities for deeper integration and expanded cooperation across a range of sectors. Diplomacy, especially during crises, thrives on timely gestures and coordinated responses. Leaders such as Emmanuel Macron of France and the Prime Ministers of Spain and Belgium have lauded India's efforts in tackling the pandemic, reaffirming the strength of India–EU relations.

While past negotiations on a Broad-Based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) did not reach a final conclusion on issues like market access and foreign direct investment, the partnership continues to progress. There has been meaningful cooperation in areas like nuclear energy and environmental sustainability. Future discussions may result in a robust strategic framework to address terrorism, international crime, drug trafficking, smuggling, and cyber threats posed by non-state actors.

Strengthening maritime cooperation is also on the agenda, particularly in the Indian Ocean and Indo–Pacific regions. These areas are increasingly significant in global geopolitics. A collaborative partnership built on equity, timely assistance, and mutual respect can empower people and governments to respond effectively during crises.

Such initiatives will also promote long-term development across both regions. By adopting a new structural approach and rethinking traditional frameworks, stakeholders can maintain synergy even when facing divergent perspectives. A fresh, inclusive vision will be essential to manage global challenges.

One emerging area of concern is the misuse of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), or drones. While primarily used for commercial purposes, their affordability and accessibility make them vulnerable to exploitation by extremist groups. The repeated misuse of drones globally has raised major security concerns. India and the EU have recently begun a dialogue on this issue, recognising the urgent need to establish regulations and monitoring mechanisms.

This cooperation stems from a broader strategic roadmap that began with the "EU–India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025," launched in July 2020. Another significant step was the 2021 conference focusing on enhancing the strategic partnership. With ongoing conflicts in West Asia, the Russia–Ukraine war, and unrest in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the potential for misuse of technology by non-state actors remains high. Therefore, developing a common understanding through the European Union's Project on Enhancing Security Cooperation in and with Asia is crucial.

The next major challenge will be establishing an effective regulatory framework for intelligence gathering and risk assessment. India–EU cooperation against terrorism must be supported by robust systems capable of addressing potential threats from biological, chemical, and nuclear attacks. These may be carried out by rogue individuals or extremist groups, making it essential to stay ahead through innovation and shared intelligence.

The current global landscape is undergoing rapid transformation. International relations must evolve to include a shared strategic vision and multilateral approaches to ensure mutual prosperity and global peace. In this spirit, there is an urgent need to develop international funding mechanisms to support education, healthcare, science, and technology. Even smaller nations are now increasingly affected by global economic and political changes, underscoring the need for a collective approach.

(The author, a recipient of the Bharat Gaurav and the Asian Achievers Award, is a professor and an expert on strategic affairs. Views are personal)

Leaderspeak

This latest escalation is a grim reminder: Russia was and remains the aggressor, in blatant violation of international law. Strong measures are urgently needed to enforce a ceasefire. Europe will continue to reach out to partners and maintain strong pressure on Russia until the bloodshed ends and a just and lasting peace is achieved, on Ukraine's terms and conditions. Europe stands with Ukraine and President Zelenskyy.

URSULA VON DER LEYEN, PRESIDENT EU COMMISSION

The power of positive thinking

SECOND Opinion

BY RAVI VALLURI

It is only natural to feel emotionally and energetically drained when surrounded by negativity. People who constantly complain or criticise can deplete our inner energy and lower our "prana" — the life force that sustains us. In contrast, individuals with a positive disposition uplift us. They radiate warmth and optimism, qualities that make them naturally likeable and often deeply inspiring.

True success in life is not merely measured by financial wealth. One may be a millionaire or an industry leader, but what truly matters is the legacy one leaves behind — a legacy that inspires future generations to innovate, create, and live with purpose. Take, for instance, Steve Jobs — co-founder of Apple and one of the most iconic innovators of our time. His life story is not just about creating revolutionary technology, but about a mindset — one rooted in curiosity, creativity, and resilience.

Despite his eccentric habits, including experimenting with LSD and following a strict fruitarian diet, Jobs maintained a sharp, forward-thinking mind that propelled Apple to unimaginable heights.His vision continues to influence the tech world long after his passing. Jobs wasn't perfect, but he embodied the power of positive action. Apple has continued to evolve, recently releasing the iPhone 16 — a testament to the enduring spark Jobs ignited. He proved that positively inclined individuals are capable of achieving the extraordinary. To them, the word "impossible" doesn't exist. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama once said, "In order to carry a positive action, we must develop here a positive vision."A person with such a vision is generous, productive, and constructive. They are not ego-driven or self-absorbed, but instead see their challenges as small compared to the larger suffering in the world.

Even when Steve Jobs faced a terminal illness like pancreatic cancer, his passion didn't waver. He continued to innovate, inspire, and strive for excellence. His life, though marked by physical deterioration, was also filled with immense creativity and unwavering drive. Khalil Gibran aptly described the selfish and self-absorbed, saying, "Wisdom ceases to be wisdom when it becomes too proud to weep, too grave to laugh, and too selfish to seek other than itself." Negativity, selfishness, and jealousy are detrimental to personal growth. We encounter such individuals in our lives — be it in families, workplaces, or social circles. They are quick to ask for help, but rarely offer it. In the long run, they lose the trust and respect of others. Positively inclined people, on the other hand, view money as a means, not an end. They live for a larger cause — one that includes serving society and uplifting others. This gives them inner peace and a sense of fulfilment that money alone cannot buy. Negativity, in contrast, leads only to dissatisfaction, strained relationships, and a hollow sense of existence. Creative and enthusiastic individuals are often deeply immersed in their passions — whether it's technology, music, science, or art. This devotion becomes a form of meditation, bringing joy and meaning to their lives. Jobs led a remarkably simple life despite his wealth. Similarly, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, India's beloved "Missile Man," owned little material wealth, yet his vision and humility inspired an entire generation. Both men were spiritual in their own ways — Jobs drew from Zen philosophy and Indian meditation, while Kalam found solace in music and literature. Their lives remind us that success is as much about the spirit as it is about science. Truly productive individuals don't wear masks.They are authentic — what you see is what you get. Sports legends like Kapil Dev and Virender Sehwag, for instance, were aggressive on the field but warm and genuine off it. They didn't waste energy on gossip or criticism but channelled their focus into their craft. Another hallmark of such individuals is their refusal to wallow in self-pity. They don't let others' opinions define them.

Instead, they stay focused, take responsibility, and act with purpose. They step outside their comfort zones to help others, finding deep satisfaction in doing so. As Steve Jobs once said, "Being the richest man in the cemetery doesn't matter to me. Going to bed at night and saying we've done something wonderful — that's what matters to me." That sentiment captures the essence of a life well-lived — one that goes beyond wealth to create meaning, impact, and inspiration.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is also a faculty member of the Art of Living. Views are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Plight of airline passengers

Madam —This refers to the news, Air traffic congestion delays 450 flights at Delhi airport (April 13). Frequent disruptions of flights at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport on account of air traffic congestion have heavily disturbed the visiting schedules of airline commuters. People going on important assignments or to attend medical emergencies suffer the most. This has become rather routine. Despite modern equipment adverse weather conditions have also led to disruption of arrivals and departures of flights.

Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL) is accustomed to announcing "inconvenience regretted" through posts on its X handle.There is a heavy load on three runways that are operational at IGIA — and another runway is still not operational and under scheduled maintenance activities. IGIA — being the country's largest airport — has caused frequent disruption in flight operations.

Another aspect in this context is the pricing tariff war going on — like gambling — over one-to-one seat sale and purchase. Several times, airline commuters feel cheated and defeated. Adverse weather conditions are unavoidable, but the redressal of the grievances of airline commuters is the need of the hour — and it should be dealt with on priority in the interests of the commuters.

YUGAL KISHORE SHARMA | FARIDABAD

From fear to freedom

Madam — Tribals, once living in fear under the shadow of Maoist violence, are now joining the mainstream of development. Data from the Union Home Ministry confirms a decline in Maoist violence, with significant progress in affected areas since 2010.

Robust intelligence, modern technology, and strategic operations by security forces have weakened Maoists. Their offer for peace talks signals that their base has collapsed. This victory belongs not only to the bravery of security forces but also to the government's policies and the public's unwavering trust in democracy.

In states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha, roads, schools, hospitals, and job opportunities have brought new light to tribal lives.

Between 2014 and 2024, road networks in Maoist areas grew by over 50 per cent — easing connectivity and opening paths to economic prosperity. Yet, the journey remains incomplete.

Education and healthcare services need further strengthening to erase the last traces of Maoism. It is time to make these regions symbols of a fear-free and prosperous India. This story of liberation from Maoism is a true triumph of democracy, development, and social harmony — laying a strong foundation for a secure India for future generations.

RK JAIN I BARWANI

West Bengal Govt fails Murshidabad

Madam — Apropos of the headlines (14 April) on Murshidabad violence and the fleeing of hundreds of ill-fated Hindus from Murshidabad fearing catastrophic persecution at the hands of violent and bloodthirsty mobs opposing the Waqf Amendment Law passed in Parliament and enacted after the President's assent.

The role of the TMC government and CM Mamata Banerjee in inciting and supporting the opposition of the Waqf Amendment Law — and failing to control the irate mobs attacking Hindus — is certainly deplorable. The High Court had to order deployment of paramilitary forces to contain violence. Implementation of Waqf law is the prerogative of the state government, so Mamata Banerjee was fully and constitutionally empowered to do so.

The Supreme Court has taken cognisance of the disputes raised by Muslim clergy and politicians — though their opposition does not emanate from the Waqf clauses. They don't even refer to Waqf law clauses while opposing the law. There are no Waqf boards in Islamic countries, so the Muslim leaders and clergy fail to convince how Waqf law is against their religion. The apparent reason for the Waqf law opposition is the apprehension of evacuation of illegally possessed properties by Waqf boards — and misuse of the Waqf assets by the vested interests in the Waqf boards

VINOD JOSHI I DELHI

DELIMITATION AND THE CONCERNS OF SOUTHERN STATES

Speaking at the launch of the book *Demography, Representation, Delimitation*, written by Ravi K Mishra, a scholar who has researched modern Indian political history, and the history of China and Canada, scholar-economist Meghnad Desai described India as a "multi-ethnic nation." With growing conflict between the southern and northern states regarding delimitation, Desai rightly suggested that some criteria should be fixed, such as no state receiving fewer seats than those it currently holds.

He further stated, "India is a conglomeration of many nations. Every linguistic state considers itself a nation. And we are building a civilisation. So, you have to respect the dignity of every nation and its right to be part of the Indian Union."

Desai also advised the central government to avoid prematurely rejecting solutions, warning, "Don't ban the solution before starting the talks. Don't begin by saying, "We have 545 seats now, but we cannot have more than 700 seats."

The announcement by Home Minister Amit Shah to implement the delimitation provision, long on hold, has greatly agitated the southern states. Leaders like Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu have urged citizens to have more children. Though the Central Government may try to downplay this as an imagined fear, it is not that simple. The South is an integral part of India. Thus, the Central Government should address their concerns, such as:

Will the political power of the southern states be reduced in Parliament?

Will their share of revenue be diminished?

Will their influence on key national issues and decisions be weakened?

Will this delimitation threaten federalism?

Will it result in injustice to the southern states in terms of democracy?

JANG BAHADUR SINGH | JAMSHEDPUR

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

Ghibli-fied: The rise of digital escapism

Generative AI has sparked a new cultural wave — one that's as enchanting as it is unsettling. The latest phenomenon? Ghibli AI — a trend that transforms ordinary selfies into dreamy, Studio Ghibli-style portraits, flooding our timelines with wide-eyed nostalgia

FIRST Column

In the ever-evolving landscape of technology, we are no strangers to artificial intelligence. Its integration into our daily lives has been gradual yet persistent — from recommendation algorithms curating our music playlists to predictive text completing our sentences.

However, the recent emergence of Generative AI or Gen AI has shaken the world like an earthquake, sending tremors through industries once thought impervious to automation.

Gen AI has wrapped netizens in its algorithmic embrace and disrupted the creative sector in ways few could have predicted. What began as a fascinating technological novelty has quickly transformed into a formidable force, expanding its tentacles to art, a domain historically defined by human expression and emotional depth.

Ghibli AI is the newest pop-cultural tsunami in the Gen AI family — sweeping across timelines, feeds, and filters with the quiet ferocity of a Studio Ghibli Forest spirit.

What began as a simple curiosity — "What would I look like in a Ghibli film?" — has now metamorphosed into a full-blown cultural phenomenon. But what is this trend telling us? Is it merely about the visuals, or is it about something far deeper; our collective yearning, our consumer anxieties, and the fragile state of contemporary art?

Let's call it what it is: The Ghibli Syndrome, a sweeping, almost obsessive need to see oneself rendered through the warm, nostalgic lens of Studio Ghibli's world.

With its signature soft palettes, melancholic charm, and wide-eyed whimsy, Ghibli's visual style speaks to our inner child while also satisfying our adult need for poetic escapism.

But the recent explosion of AI-generated Ghibli avatars isn't about Studio Ghibli at all, it's about us. It's about self-expression, identity branding, digital validation, and yes, fear of missing out (FOMO) in a culture that moves faster than we can scroll.

From a consumer behaviour perspective, this trend aligns with what psychologists call the "Proteus Effect"— the tendency for individuals to change their behaviour based on their digital self-representation.

In this case, AI doesn't just render us more beautiful, it renders us more narrative-worthy. And in a hyper-narrativised world, that's social currency. AI has always had a kind of Pied Piper effect, drawing the masses into whatever melody it happens to be playing.

But with the Ghibli generator, that effect feels amplified.The Ghibli AI trend marks a turning point in branding, where identity becomes fluid, re-skinning and reshaping at will. Smart brands are seizing this as an opportunity for immersive storytelling, letting users co-create narratives and inhabit stylised versions of themselves.

From skincare filters to dreamy travel avatars, brands that offer personal fantasy build deeper emotional connections. But there's a flipside: virality-driven branding risks becoming shallow and performative.

CHAITANYA K. PRASAD

As trends like "Dalgona coffee" and "Barbiecore" show, the thirst for belonging can foster a culture of reinvention rooted in fear of irrelevance; alienating those who can't or won't keep up. Beneath the charm of Ghibli-fied faces lies a stark reality: vast amounts of facial and emotional data are being fed into opaque AI systems.

These generators harvest biometric inputs, aesthetic preferences, and mood cues; treasured assets for advertisers and algorithmic profiling. Users may be unknowingly trading privacy for pixels. This gamified engagement masks a growing risk: manipulation, deepfakes, and surveillance capitalism.

> BEYOND THE REALM OF BRANDING AND PRIVACY, THERE LIES A MORE EXISTENTIAL CONCERN: WHAT BECOMES OF ART ITSELF? WHAT ARE WE LOSING IN THIS TIDAL WAVE OF ALGORITHMIC BEAUTY?

As play blurs with peril, we must ask: are we surrendering control for digital prettiness? The Ghibli AI trend is both a mirror and a warning: a reflection of our yearning and a reminder of the agency we must not give away. Beyond the realm of branding and privacy, there lies a more existential concern: what becomes of art itself?

What are we losing in this tidal wave of algorithmic beauty? As everyone begins to look like a Ghibli protagonist, the uniqueness of the aesthetic begins to dilute. Mass replication may be the enemy of meaning.

In attempting to become art, we may be rendering art flat, predictable, and mechanised. Moreover, this frenzy sets a dangerous precedent, where the most consumed visuals are not the ones made by human hands but the ones conjured by code.

In this light, the Ghibli trend is not just a creative outlet, it's a cultural warning. A glimpse into a future where originality might become indistinguishable from imitation.

The Ghibli AI art generator is not merely a toy. It is a cultural artefact of our times, revealing everything from our psychological needs to our digital dependencies.

Gone are the days when art was defined by its process, from its conception stage to the technique and the presentation.

Traditionally, the journey of creating art was as valued as the final product. Artists spent years mastering their craft, developing unique techniques, and pouring their lived experiences into their work.

The art appreciation was not just for the final product; it was also for the sheer amount of hard work, thought process, and passion for the craft.

A painter might spend months perfecting a portrait, a musician might iterate through countless melodies before finding the right composition, and a writer might revise a manuscript dozens of times before publication.

These processes were integral to the art itself, often visible in brushstrokes, musical motifs, or literary styles.Unfortunately, in the age of Generative AI, this elaborate creative process is now often reduced to a prompt — a few words typed into a text box. "Create a surrealist landscape in the style of Salvador Dalí with melting clocks by a seashore at sunset."

Within seconds, an AI system can generate an image that bears a striking resemblance to Dalí's work, without any understanding of surrealism's philosophical underpinnings or Dalí's personal experiences that informed his distinctive style.

As we navigate this brave new world of AI-generated art, we must reconcile our fascination with technological possibility with our reverence for human creativity.

The Ghibli AI phenomenon isn't merely a passing trend but a pivotal moment that challenges our understanding of art itself.

Perhaps the solution isn't to resist these tools but to redefine our relationship with them — using AI not as a replacement for human creativity but as an extension of it.

In this delicate balance lies the future of art: one where technology amplifies human expression rather than diminishing its value, preserving the soul behind the creation.

(The writer is Former Civil Servant, writes on Cinema and Strategic Communication. Inputs provided by Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavi Srinivasan. Views are personal)

A blow to public education's integrity

With thousands of appointments declared void in West Bengal and the State Government under fire, the scandal underscores the urgent need for transparency and accountability in public sector recruitment, especially in education

Last week, the Supreme Court concurred with the decision of Calcutta High Court and cancelled the 2016 recruitment of over 25,700 teachers and non-teaching staff recruited in 2016 for the schools of the West Bengal government.

A year earlier, on 22nd April 2024, Calcutta High Court had cancelled the selection process that was marred by manipulation and fraud on a large scale, and attempted cover-up by a state agency, resulting in a loss of credibility and legitimacy and thereby denting the entire process. The Supreme Court bench of Chief Justice Sanjeev Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar observed, "The entire selection process has been vitiated and tainted beyond resolution," and also referred to the candidates' OMR (answer) sheets for illegal rank jumping, selection of those who did not qualify, and also those who submitted blank answer sheets.

CBI, on the direction of Calcutta High Court in 2022, had investigated the entire matter of teachers' recruitment in West Bengal and found that 6,515 recruited persons out of total recruitment of 25,753 were tainted. However, the investigating agency could not conclusively conclude that all the remaining were untainted because OMR sheets were not found maintained and kept in PDF/digital form by the school service commission.

BK SINGH

The Supreme Court bench also added that the tainted candidates should be required to refund any salaries/payments received as the appointments were the result of fraud, which amounts to cheating. For the remaining candidates, the bench clarified that they lost the jobs, as the entire selection process has been cancelled, but they are not required to refund salaries and other reimbursements received.

The Supreme Court provided further relief to those who were not found on the list of tainted candidates and were in a job in the government department/autonomous body before the 2016 recruitment. These candidates can apply back to their respective organisations, where their jobs will have to be restored, protecting their pay and seniority.

Even if there were no vacancies, the concerned organisation would create supernumerary posts to accommodate the candidates. The court on humanitarian grounds allowed differently abled candidates to continue in the job and draw salaries, even though the entire process of selection was cancelled.

The bribe for job controversy had led to the 2022 arrest of former state's education Minister Partha Chatterjee, who was charged by ED for money laundering. Authorities had seized more than 49 crore rupees in cash from the flats of his aide and Chatterjee has been in jail for years. West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee, refused to accept the court's verdict and vowed to take it up for review. She accused BJP and CPM of trying to destabilise Bengal's education system and questioned why other recruitment scandals, such as Madhya Pradesh's Vyapam scam, had not faced similar legal consequences. She met the teachers terminated by the Supreme Court a few days ago at Netaji Indoor Stadium, Kolkata, and promised them to provide jobs in other departments, in case the state fails to find a favourable decision in review.

Her Education Minister Bratya Basu constituted a liaison committee with representatives of affected school staff, who would deal with the state's legal team comprising Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Kapil Sibal, Rakesh Dwivedi, Kalyan Banerjee, and Prashant Bhushan to safeguard the rights of the eligible teachers.

First and foremost, the state should have a check and balance system so that the irregularities found in recruitment are not carried forward. The recruitment by the School Service Commission, where fraud has occurred, has been in progress from 2016 to 2021.

Even after the scam came to light in 2021, it was incumbent on the state to make alternative arrangements and take up a transparent and impartial process to recruit a new set of teaching staff. There is no dearth of talent in the state. There are sincere and meritorious candidates, who do not have any Godfather to promote their candidature. They are generally from a humble background and will not have sufficient money to pay the bribe. Only a fair and impartial examination system for recruitment can provide them with an opportunity.

Nearly half a century ago, government schools in West Bengal and many other states provided a platform for students from humble backgrounds to rise in life. The teachers those days used to be extraordinary. Once they explained the topic in the class, one only needed to revise at home and there was never any need for tuition in extra hours. Teachers were also available to students to clear any doubt during breaks and when they had free periods. Further, before taking up a fresh topic in the class, they were in the habit of reviewing how students had understood the previous chapter and took pleasure in explaining the concepts again, where the understanding was lagging. Besides, some brighter students took it upon themselves to help those who lagged. There was no culture of tuition even in subjects like Science and Mathematics. My several friends cracked Indian Institute of Technology's entrance examination for admission in Engineering trades for graduation.They were attentive in classes, and did not undergo any IIT coaching.

These days, no one gets admission even in ordinary Engineering and Medical colleges without two years of rigorous coaching. Government schools and colleges often imparted superior training to students, as compared to private institutions. In my case, I did not get admission to a Government intermediate college, as my 10th standard marks were below the cut-off. Nevertheless, I got wonderful teachers of Physics and Mathematics in a private institution named DB Inter College Gorakhpur, who nicely trained me to utilise my full potential in learning the subjects. I am especially thankful to my Mathematics Teacher Sri Sambhoo Saran Dubey, whose meticulous training to approach any problem in the subject led to immense confidence building in me, which helped to crack UPSC's Indian Forest Service Examination in 1975. Dubey sir spent time on weak students too. He conducted extra classes on holidays without any additional emoluments.

The trends in the education system differ these days; Science, Engineering and Mathematics students do not opt for the subjects they graduated from in UPSC's competitive examinations. Engineering graduates from even IIT opt for Geology and Forestry in Indian Forest Service exams and Anthropology/Geography in Civil Services.

The course materials in altogether new subjects as well as the coaching are available in all major cities of the country helping them to crack the exams. Why these days students lack confidence in their core Science subjects? It adversely reflects on the system. They do not have a solid foundation in the subject.Imagine the degeneration in the system visible to present-day senior citizens over five decades.

What worse can we expect when there is corruption in the recruitment of the teaching staff? Such teachers' heads hang in shame and cannot face students and parents when questioned regarding the payment of bribes for their appointments.

The most striking part is the degradation of standards in government schools over this period. The corruption and inefficiency in the governments is to fully account for such downfall.

Society has also changed and there has been a mushrooming of private institutions, which is unaffordable for students from humble backgrounds.

Let the governments focus on corruption-free administration in the education system. When the wrongdoing was pointed out in selection of West Bengal teachers in 2021-22, the state should have immediately gone for fresh recruitments and saved four years for students.

(The writer is Retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Karnataka. Views are personal)

Salman Khan gets death threat again

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ Mumbai

In what is becoming a disturbingly recurring feature, Bollywood actor Salman Khan on Monday received yet another death threat — this time on the mobile number of the Mumbai Traffic police — in which an unknown person warned the actor that miscreants would enter his Bandra residence and would blow up his car.

Confirming the development, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone III) Datta Kamble said: "We have registered a case and investigations are in progress".

The Worli police station has registered an FIR against unidentified person(s) under sections 351(2) and 351(3) (criminal intimidation) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

In the WhatsApp message, the person(s) threatened Salman Khan that the miscreants would "barge into his house" and "blow up his car with a bomb".

Owing to the repeated threats received by him over the recent years, the actor has been provided security by the Protection Branch of Mumbai Police. Besides, he has also upgraded his private security. He now travels in a bullet proof car.

Salman Khan and his script writer-father Salim Khan have been facing multiple threats and attacks, from the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, and even some wannabe law-breakers who have targeted the celeb duo in recent years.

In the previous threat message received by the Mumbai traffic police on October 18, 2024, a gangster close to Lawrence Bishnoi demanded ₹5 crore from Khan as extortion money. Among other things, the gangster asked the actor to end his long-standing rivalry with incarcerated gangster Lawrence Bishnoi.

The Bishnoi gang member warned the traffic police in his text message saying: "Don't take it lightly, if Salman Khan wants to stay alive and wants to end the enmity with Lawrence Bishnoi, then he will have to pay ₹5 crore. If the money is not given, Salman Khan's condition will be worse than Baba Siddique."

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It may be recalled that on April 14, 2024, two unidentified motorcycle-borne miscreants, who were covering their faces with helmets, had opened four rounds of fire outside his Bandra (west) residence "Galaxy Apartment" in north-west Mumbai in the early hours of Sunday, before speeding away immediately after the shoot-out.

Following the incident in which Bishnoi gang members were allegedly involved, the Navi Mumbai police registered a case against 18 identified accused and others of the gang for hatching a conspiracy to kill the actor. Bishnoi is currently lodged in Sabarmati jail in Gujarat in a drugs case. His name had cropped during the course of investigations into the death threat letter received by Salim Khan, as the letter contained the initial LB. Even in the past, Bishnoi had vowed to kill Salman Khan after the actor was named as an accused in the 1998 Blackbuck poaching case in Rajasthan.

On November 29, 2023, the Mumbai police had enhanced the security provided to Bollywood super star Salman Khan after he allegedly received yet another threat from gangster Lawrence Bishnoi. This came after Bishnoi — in a post put out on Facebook — had claimed responsibility for killing Punjabi singer Sidhu Moose Wala, who was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Canada on May 29 2022. In his Facebook post, Bishnoi had also threatened that Salman Khan would meet the same fate as singer Sidhu Moose Wala.

Earlier in March 2023, the Mumbai had registered an FIR against gangsters Lawrence Bishnoi and Goldy Brar and another person under Indian Penal Code sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy), 506-II (criminal intimidation) and 34 (common intention), after an e-mail threatening Salman was received at his office.

The FIR was based on a complaint lodged with the Bandra Police by one Prashant Gunjalkar, who runs an artist management company and who used to visit the actor's office frequently.

In June 2022, the Mumbai police had beefed up security around Salman's Bandra residence "Galaxy Apartments" at Bandra in north-west Mumbai, in the wake of death threats to him and his writer-father Salim Khan, following an alleged threat from the Lawrence Bishnoi gang.

Bishnoi's name had cropped during the course of investigations into the death threat letter received by Salim Khan, as the letter contained the initial LB. Even in the past, Bishnoi had vowed to kill Salman Khan after the actor was named as an accused in the 1998 Blackbuck poaching case in Rajasthan.

Bishnoi had — during a questioning conducted in 2021 — reportedly confessed to have conspired to kill Salman Khan. During the questioning, Bishnoi had admitted to having hired Sampat Nehra, a gangster from Rajasthan, to kill Salman Khan.

Nehra had allegedly travelled to Mumbai and carried out reconnaissance around Salman Khan's home. Nehra could not accomplish the task assigned to him by Bishnoi as he could not get a clear shot of the actor from his pistol.

Telangana Government issues SC categorisation order for jobs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Hyderabad

Telangana government on Monday issued an order on the implementation of Scheduled Castes (SC) categorisation, making it the first state in the country to do so, Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy said.

Telangana government had earlier appointed a commission headed by retired High Court judge Justice Shameem Akther on SC categorisation, which made recommendations that the 59 Scheduled Caste (SC) communities be divided into three groups viz I, II and III for the total reservations of 15 per cent in government jobs and education.

"The following Act of the Telangana Legislature received the assent of the Governor of Telangana on 8, April 2025 and the said assent is hereby first published on the 14th April 2025 in the Telangana Gazette for general information," the GO said.

The issuance of GO coincides with the birth anniversary of BR Ambedkar, architect of Indian Constitution. According to the commission report, group-I one comprising 15 socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged SC communities, are given one per cent reservation.

Group-II, including 18 moderately benefited SC communities, are provided a nine per cent quota while the Group-III comprising 26 significantly benefited SC communities, are given five per cent reservation.

Addressing a Press conference, Minister Reddy, who headed a sub-committee on SC Categorisation, said the first copy of the GO was given to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy this morning. "From today, from this moment, SC categorisation will be implemented in Telangana in employment and education. We have issued a GO to that extent and gave the first copy to the CM," he told reporters.

"Telangana is the first state to implement the SC categorisation after the Supreme Court's verdicts," Reddy said. The minister alleged that earlier governments in Telangana confined themselves to pass resolutions for the categorisation and never took forward.

Telangana government had earlier appointed a commission headed by retired High Court judge Justice Shameem Akther on SC categorisation

He further said all job vacancies in the state government now will be filled according to the sub-categorisation for SCs. The Irrigation Minister further said the cabinet sub-committee did an extensive exercise in collecting the opinion of all the stakeholders. He also said if the SC population goes up in 2026 census, the reservations for it would go up accordingly.

The Telangana Legislature in February accepted the recommendations of Justice Akther on SC categorisation, rejecting an advice that creamy layer should be exempted from reservations. The Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservation) Bill, 2025 was passed last month. The Supreme Court gave a verdict last year in favour of categorisation.

Rahul Gandhi launches pilot to strengthen district units

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Ahmedabad

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi will launch the party's pilot project of strengthening district units in Gujarat and address party workers during his two-day visit to the state beginning Tuesday, a senior leader said.

On April 12, the All India Congress Committee appointed 42 AICC and 183 Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) observers for overseeing the process of appointment of the party committee presidents in 33 districts and 8 major cities of Gujarat.

Rahul Gandhi would hold an orientation meeting with these AICC and PCC observers in Ahmedabad on Tuesday before they embark on the state-wide exercise of selecting presidents of 41 district units, Gujarat Congress president Shaktisinh Gohil said. On Wednesday, he will address party workers at Modasa town in Arvalli district and kick-start the pilot project of selecting district unit chiefs through this process, he said.

"A nine-member committee appointed by the AICC had recommended strengthening district units and giving more powers to its presidents. The Congress Working Committee (CWC) has given its nod to these recommendations. On my request, the party has decided to launch the pilot project for the implementation of the recommendations in Gujarat," Gohil said.

A five-member committee, comprising one AICC observer and 4 state (PCC) observers, will oversee the process of appointing the new district unit chiefs for each of the 41 district units, he said, adding the entire process in Gujarat will be completed in 45 days.

Each of these five-member committees of observers will visit their assigned district and hold discussions with local leaders and party workers before the selection, Gohil said. "On April 16, Rahul Gandhi will address workers in Modasa town and officially kick-start the exercise," he said.

The Congress has been out of power in Gujarat for three decades. Rahul's visit comes after an AICC session and the CWC meeting were held here on April 8 and 9. Prior to the AICC session, Gandhi visited Gujarat in March and held discussions for the party's revival in the state.

Country saw blackouts under Congress rule: PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Yamunanagar/Chandigarh

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said there were blackouts when the Congress was in power before 2014 but India's power production has doubled in the last decade and it is now exporting electricity.

Addressing a gathering after laying the foundation stone of an 800-MW ultra-critical modern thermal power unit at the Deenbandhu Chhotu Ram Thermal Power Plant here, the prime minister said Haryana is seeing "double speed" of the BJP's double-engine government.

The thermal power unit, spread across 233 acres and worth around ₹8,470 crore, is expected to become operational by March 2029. It will significantly boost Haryana's energy self-sufficiency and provide uninterrupted power supply across the state.

Taking forward the vision of 'Gobardhan' (Galvanising Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan), Modi also laid the foundation stone of a compressed biogas plant in Mukarabpur here.

The plant, slated for completion by 2027, will have an annual production capacity of 2,600 metric tonnes and will help in effective organic waste management while contributing to clean energy production and environmental conservation, a statement said.

Modi also digitally inaugurated the 14.4-km Rewari Bypass project, worth around ₹1,070 crore under the Bharatmala Pariyojana. It will decongest Rewari City, reduce Delhi-Narnaul travel time by an hour, and boost economic activity in the region.

Before reaching Yamunanagar, Modi addressed a public gathering in Hisar after he flagged off a commercial flight from Maharaja Agrasen Airport in Hisar to Ayodhya and also laid the foundation stone of the new terminal building at the airport.

Addressing a gathering in Yamunanagar, Modi said there were blackouts when the Congress was in power before 2014 but India's power production has doubled in the last decade and it is now exporting electricity.

He said Yamunanagar is not just a city, but also an important part of the country's industrial map. From plywood to brass to steel, this entire region gives strength to the country's economy, he said. He recalled having frequently travelled to Yamunanagar as party in-charge in Haryana in the 1990s.

For the third term in a row, Haryana is witnessing the "double speed" of the double-engine government. And, pointing towards Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, Modi said "Now Saini is saying triple engine government (in reference to BJP ruled government at the Centre, in Haryana and BJP also recently winning the civic polls in the state)".

'Viksit Haryana' is our resolve for 'Viksit Bharat', said Modi. To realise this, to serve the people of Haryana, to fulfil the dreams of the youth here, we keep working with greater speed and on a bigger scale, he said.

The developmental schemes started here today are a living example of this. I am proud that our government is working by taking forward the ideas of Dr Ambedkar, he said. Baba Saheb described the development of industries as the path to social justice, said the prime minister, while adding that he had understood the problems of small landholders.

Ambedkar used to say Dalits do not have adequate land holdings for farming and he felt that Dalits would benefit most by the industry, he said. It was Baba Saheb's vision that Dalits will get more employment from the industry which will raise their living standards, he said.

WBSSC lists tainted and untainted candidates

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kolkata

Amidst ongoing protests by sacked teachers of secondary and higher secondary schools, the West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) has sent a list of 'tainted' and 'untainted' candidates to the state education department for cross-verification, a senior official said on Monday. The list, dispatched on April 13, reportedly segregates candidates affected by the Supreme Court's April 3 order, which invalidated the appointments of around 26,000 teaching and non-teaching staff due to large-scale irregularities in the 2016 recruitment process.

According to the official, the list categorises tainted candidates as those with discrepancies in their OMR sheets or those who allegedly secured jobs by jumping ranks through fraudulent means.

It also includes details of 'untainted' or deserving candidates who qualified purely on merit. "The list is currently being cross-verified," the official said.

Education Minister Bratya Basu had earlier announced that the list would be made public on the WBSSC website by April 21, following legal consultation. "We will seek advice from legal experts before publishing the names," he said on April 11. WBSSC chairman Siddhartha Majumdar could not be contacted for comments.

300kg drugs recovered off Gujarat coast

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Sharing the information on X, Union Home Minister Amit Shah underlined that the Narendra Modi Government was rooting out drug networks ruthlessly. "In the ceaseless pursuit of building a drug-free Bharat, a monumental feat was achieved by seizing 300 kg of narcotics worth ₹1,800 crore near the international maritime border," said Shah.

The Home Minister said the operation in the seas was a shining example of the success of the Modi dispensation's whole-of-the-government approach to rooting out the evil of narcotics. He applauded the Gujarat Police ATS and the Indian Coast Guard for their success.

Need to reposition J and K as destination for value tourism: Omar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday said Jammu and Kashmir has again "turned the corner" to become a pre-eminent destination, even as he pitched for choosing the path of "value-based tourism" instead of chasing volumes. Addressing an event here, the National Conference leader also flagged the high air fares for Srinagar-bound domestic flights, especially if booked a day or two before travel, saying he hoped the new Vande Bharat train connecting Jammu with Srinagar, which is expected to be flagged off soon by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will bring some relief for the travellers. The event — ICC Aviation and Tourism Conference 2025 — was hosted by the Indian Chamber of Commerce.

Abdullah said the beauty of Jammu and Kashmir has beckoned tourists for a long period of time, even before the Valley came under the shadow of terror and violence. "Tourism is something that Jammu and Kashmir is famous for. Long before we became famous for the troubles, we were famous for the beauty of Jammu and Kashmir, and for the tourism of Jammu and Kashmir. And this beauty is not something that is talked about in recent times," Abdullah said.

He illustrated his point by citing a famous couplet inscribed on a wall of the Red Fort that describes Kashmir as a "heaven on earth".

"These words were written centuries ago. From then to now, Jammu and Kashmir has attracted attention largely for good, but in recent years, somewhat for the bad as well," the chief minister said.

"But, I can safely say that we have turned the corner, and Jammu and Kashmir today has once again become a pre-eminent destination for tourism in the country, increasingly for overseas tourists as well," he said.

In his address, Abdullah also pitched for Jammu and Kashmir tourism to choose value over volume, and urged all the stakeholders to endeavour to work towards ensuring that tourists feel like coming back to Jammu and Kashmir after returning from there.

"It is my firm belief that Jammu and Kashmir now needs to reposition itself in terms of the tourist destination it wants to be, today, I am increasingly of the view that we need to reposition Jammu and Kashmir, not as a destination for volume tourism, but as a destination for value tourism. We need to go up the value chain," the chief minister said.

When Jammu and Kashmir was struggling with the aftereffects of violent attacks and terror, "for us, tourism was a visible sign of a move towards normalcy", he said.

Increase in the number of tourists added to its economic activity, and also "gave us a sense that perhaps better days were ahead of us", Abdullah said.

"And, therefore, we chased volumes, we went out and tried to get as many tourists as possible to visit Jammu and Kashmir, because the more the tourists, the more impact, and therefore it was a win-win for all of us," the chief minister added.

Emphasising the importance of "value-based tourism", he said, "We have in mind nine new destinations that we hope to get funded through multilateral agency funding, which we hope will ease some of the pressure on Gulmarg, Pahalgam and Sonmarg in the Valley, and also open up areas of Jammu hitherto undiscovered for tourism".

Turned Dalits, minorities to second class...

Continued from >> P1

"The Congress insulted Babasaheb when he was alive and he was defeated in elections twice. The then Congress government wanted to throw him out. A conspiracy was hatched to keep him out of the system. When Ambedkar was no more, the Congress tried to erase the memories of him. It wanted to finish off his ideas," he said and claimed that people had to struggle to set up Ambedkar's memorial at Indu Mill in Mumbai.

Modi said his government has developed the places connected to Ambedkar's life into 'Panch Tirath'. After flagging off the flight and laying the foundation stone, he said the BJP-led government at the Centre was emphasising connectivity while ensuring social justice and welfare of the poor. "This was the dream of Ambedkar," he stressed.

Mayawati plots Akash return amid rising Dalit vote battle

Continued from >> P1

The timing of the move is critical. The BSP, long the dominant force in Dalit politics, is facing stiff competition. Chandrashekhar Azad of the Bhim Army is rapidly gaining traction among young Dalits, while the Congress and Samajwadi Party (SP) have intensified their outreach to marginalized communities. The Congress's recent Ahmedabad resolution on Dalit, tribal, and OBC inclusion drew a sharp social media rebuttal from Mayawati, further underlining the competitive churn in this voter base.

"Mayawati knows the battle for Dalit votes is intensifying," said a senior BSP functionary. "Akash may have faltered, but his connect with young Dalits and educated Ambedkarites-especially in urban areas-remains strong."

Akash Anand's political journey within the BSP has been anything but smooth. In the past 15 months alone, he has twice been anointed Mayawati's successor-only to be removed both times. Each exit was attributed to his perceived lack of political maturity. Yet, his reappearance on the party stage suggests that Mayawati sees potential in him, albeit under strict supervision. Still, Mayawati made it clear that no one will succeed her as long as she remains active in politics.

"As long as I am healthy, I will not appoint any successor. The movement and the mission come first," she asserted on Sunday, emphasizing that the Ambedkarite cause will always outweigh familial ties.

As the BSP prepares for the 2027 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, Akash Anand's return marks both a political gamble and a generational experiment. Mayawati's decision to bring him back-without immediately restoring his former position-reflects a blend of caution and necessity.

If Akash can evolve into a disciplined and mature leader under Mayawati's mentorship, he may yet become the party's bridge to a younger, more urban Dalit electorate. But for now, his comeback remains a calculated move to reinforce the BSP's crumbling foundations in a fiercely contested political landscape.

Israel hit Gaza hospital on Palm Sunday, kills 21

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Deir Al-Balah

A wave of Israeli strikes across Gaza on Sunday hit a hospital and other sites, killing at least 21 people, including children, as Israel vowed to expand its security presence in the small coastal strip.

The predawn strike on Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City was the latest of several attacks on northern Gaza's last major hospital providing critical health care.

Hospital director Dr. Fadel Naim said the emergency room, pharmacy and surrounding buildings were severely damaged, affecting over 100 patients and dozens of staff.

One patient, a girl, died during the evacuation following an Israeli warning because staff were unable to provide urgent care, Gaza's Health Ministry said. Israel said it struck a Hamas command and control center at the hospital, without providing evidence. Hamas denied the allegations.

Al-Ahli Hospital is run by the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, which condemned the attack, saying in a statement it happened on "Palm Sunday, the start of the Holy Week, the most sacred week of the Christian year."

Palm Sunday commemorates Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, and worshipers in Gaza City marked it in a church whose gilded trim and intact walls were a contrast to the widespread debris elsewhere.

Associated Press video showed the hospital's caved-in roof surrounded by rubble. The health ministry's director general, Dr.Munir al-Boursh, said patients had been carried outside in beds and slept in the streets.

"Nothing was left safe inside the hospital, or all over Gaza," said Mohammad Abu Nasser, an injured man who sat on his bed outdoors and looked at the destruction.

The health ministry said the hospital was temporarily out of service and patients were transferred to other hospitals in Gaza City. The aid group Medical Aid for Palestinians called it the fifth attack on Al-Ahli since the war began.

Hospitals have special protection under international law. Israel has besieged and raided them, some several times, and struck multiple ones while accusing Hamas of using them as cover for its fighters.

Last month Israel struck Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, the largest in southern Gaza, killing two people and causing a large fire, the health ministry said. The facility had been overwhelmed when Israel ended a two-month ceasefire last month with a surprise wave of airstrikes.

Hours later Sunday, a strike on a car in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza killed at least seven people including six brothers, according to staff at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, which received the bodies. The youngest brother was 10.

Their father, Ibrahim Abu Mahadi, said his sons worked for a charity that distributes food to Palestinians. "For what sin were they killed?" he said.

Volunteers and emergency workers search for bodies and survivors from the rubble of the Manoun family's house after it was targeted by an Israeli army strike in Jabalia al-Balad, Gaza City on Sunday PTI

AP reporters saw the mangled, bloodied car as relatives wept over the bodies. Israel's military asserted that it killed the deputy head of a Hamas sniper cell.

An airstrike Sunday afternoon hit a house in the urban Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza, killing at least seven people including two women, according to the Indonesian hospital.

A pregnant woman was rescued from the rubble. Alaa Manoun later wept after learning her youngest daughter had died, along with her husband and her mother. Two other daughters, ages 4 and 7, were injured.

Manoun had a broken ankle but otherwise seemed OK, according to a doctor. No scan was available, since the only machine in northern Gaza was at Al-Ahli Hospital, now damaged.

"We don't know whose body is this and whose body is that," said a neighbor, Abdallah Dardouna. "There is no resistance, there is no Qassam, no Hamas, there is no one here. It's only civilians here."

Another strike in Deir al-Balah hit a municipal building and killed at least three people, according to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital. In Khan Younis, a strike killed at least three people, according to staff at Nasser Hospital.

Israel's military said in a statement it had struck over 90 militant targets over the past 48 hours including command and control centers, tunnels and weapons. The military also said it had intercepted a projectile fired from Gaza.

The war started when Hamas-led militants killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, during an Oct. 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel and took 250 people captive. Many were eventually freed in ceasefire deals.

Israeli authorities have vowed to pressure Hamas to release the remaining 59 hostages, 24 believed to be alive, and accept new ceasefire terms. It cut off all supplies to Gaza over a month ago.

More than 50,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's retaliatory offensive, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not differentiate between combatants and civilians in its count but says more than half of the dead have been women and children.

Israel's military said a missile was launched from Yemen on Sunday afternoon and the details were under review. Sirens sounded in several parts of Israel and the occupied West Bank. There were no reports of casualties or damage.

The Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen continue to target Israel in what they have called solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza.

Trump targets TV channel for going after him

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Washington

President Donald Trump bitterly attacked "60 Minutes" shortly after the CBS newsmagazine broadcast stories on Ukraine and Greenland on Sunday, saying the network was out of control and should "pay a big price" for going after him.

"Almost every week, 60 Minutes ... Mentions the name TRUMP' in a derogatory and defamatory way, but this Weekend's BROADCAST' tops them all," the president said on his Truth Social platform.

He called on Federal Communications Commission Chairman Brendan Carr to impose maximum fines and punishment "for their unlawful and illegal behaviour."

The network had no immediate comment.

Trump has an ongoing $20 billion lawsuit against "60 Minutes" for how it edited an interview with Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris last fall. The president claims it was edited in a way to make Harris look good, something the newscast denies.

But there are ongoing reports that Trump's lawyers and CBS' parent company are involved in settlement talks. Carr and the FCC have launched a parallel investigation of CBS News about the same case, one of several that it has undergone that also involve ABC News, NBC, PBS, NPR and the Walt Disney Co

Despite the legal battle, "60 Minutes" has been unstinting in its coverage of Trump's administration since he took office for a second term, particularly correspondent Scott Pelley. He travelled to Ukraine to conduct an interview with that country's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, on the site of a Russian attack where nine children were killed earlier this month.

In the interview broadcast on Sunday, Zelenskyy said he has "100per cent" hatred for Russian President Vladimir Putin for the invasion of Ukraine, and invited Trump to his visit his country to see what has been done.

Also Sunday, correspondent Jon Wertheim reported from Greenland on what some people in that nation are saying about Trump's desire to take control.

In his social media message, Trump said "60 Minutes" was no longer a news show but "a dishonest Political Operative simply disguised as News,' and must be responsible for what they have done, and are doing.

Trump team tries to project confidence and calm after tariffs rattle markets

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Atlanta

Trump administration officials were out in force across the television networks Sunday defending President Donald Trump's economic policies after another week of reeling markets that saw the Republican administration reverse course on some of its steepest tariffs.

Trump, meanwhile, said on his social media platform that there ultimately will be no exemptions for his sweeping tariff agenda, disputing characterizations that he has granted tariff exceptions for certain electronics, including smart phones, whose production is concentrated in China. Rather, Trump said, "those products are subject to the existing 20per cent Fentanyl Tariffs, and they are just moving to a different Tariff bucket.'"

White House advisers and Cabinet members tried to project confidence and calm amid Trump's on-again, off-again approach to tariffs on imported goods from around the world. But their explanations about the overall agenda, coupled with Trump's latest statements, also reflected shifting narratives from a president who, as a candidate in 2024, promised an immediate economic boost and lower prices but now asks American businesses and consumers for patience.

A week ago, Trump's team stood by his promise to leave the impending tariffs in place without exceptions. They used their latest news show appearances to defend his

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move to ratchet back to a 10 per cent universal tariff for most nations except China (145 per cent), while seeming to grant exemptions for certain electronics like smartphones, laptops, hard drives, flat-panel monitors and semiconductor chips.

There are varying answers on the purpose of the tariffs. Long before launching his first presidential campaign in 2015, Trump bemoaned the offshoring of US manufacturing. His promise is to reindustrialise the United States and eliminate trade deficits with other countries.

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, interviewed on CBS' "Face the Nation," played up national security. "You've got to realize this is a national security issue," he said, raising the worst-case scenarios of what could happen if the US were involved in a war.

"We don't make medicine in this country anymore. We don't make ships. We don't have enough steel and aluminum to fight a battle, right?" he said.

Lutnick stuck to that national security framing, but White House trade adviser Peter Navarro focused more on the import taxes being leverage in the bigger economic puzzle.

"The world cheats us. They have been cheating us for decades," Navarro said on NBC's "Meet the Press." He cited practices such as dumping products at unfairly low prices, currency manipulation and barriers to U.S. Auto and agricultural products entering foreign markets.

Navarro insisted the tariffs would yield broader bilateral trade deals to address all those issues. But he also relied on a separate justification when discussing China: the illicit drug trade.

"China has killed over a million people with their fentanyl," he said.

Speaking before Trump's Truth Social post disputing the notion of exemptions, Lutnick alluded to that coming policy. "They're going to have a special focus-type of tariff to make sure that those products get reshored," he told ABC's "This Week."

The status of negotiations with other nations, including China, remains fuzzy

With the higher rates set to be collected beginning April 9, administration officials argued that other countries would rush to the negotiating table.

"I've heard that there are negotiations ongoing and that there are a number of offers," Kevin Hassett, director of the White House Economic Council, told ABC. He claimed that "more than 50 countries (were) reaching out," though he did not name any.

Tariff exemptions are temporary, chip tariffs coming: US Commerce Secretary

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Nashville

Tariff exemptions announced Friday on electronics like smartphones and laptops are only a temporary reprieve until the Trump administration develops a new tariff approach specific to the semiconductor industry, US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said Sunday.

"They're exempt from the reciprocal tariffs but they're included in the semiconductor tariffs, which are coming in probably a month or two," Lutnick told ABC's "This Week" on Sunday.

President Donald Trump added to the confusion hours later, declaring on social media that there was no "exception" at all because the goods are "just moving to a different" bucket and will still face a 20 per cent tariff as part of his administration's move to punish China for its role in fentanyl trafficking.

The Trump administration late Friday had said it would exclude electronics from broader so-called reciprocal tariffs, a move that could help keep the prices down for popular consumer devices that aren't usually made in the US

The move was expected to benefit big tech companies like Apple and Samsung and chip makers like Nvidia, though the uncertainty of future tariffs may rein in an expected tech stock rally on Monday.

US Customs and Border Protection said items like smartphones, laptops, hard drives, flat-panel monitors and some chips would qualify for the exemption. Machines used to make semiconductors are excluded too. That means they won't be subject to most of the tariffs levied on China or the 10per cent baseline tariffs elsewhere.

It's the latest tariff change by the Trump administration, which has made several U-turns in its massive plan to put tariffs in place on goods from most countries. Lutnick's comments Sunday made clear that more changes were on the way, including a policy specific to the computer chip industry.

On Air Force One Saturday night, President Donald Trump told reporters he would get into more specifics on exemptions on Monday. In his post Sunday on TruthSocial, he promised the White House was "taking a look at Semiconductors and the WHOLE ELECTRONICS SUPPLY CHAIN in the upcoming National Security Tariff Investigations."

Some had assumed the exemption filed Friday night reflected the president's realization that his China tariffs are unlikely to shift more manufacturing of smartphones, computers and other gadgets to the US any time soon, if ever.

US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick PTI

The administration has predicted that the trade war prod Apple to make iPhones in the US for the first time, but that was an unlikely scenario after Apple spent decades building up a finely calibrated supply chain in China.

What's more, it would take several years and cost billions of dollars to build new plants in the US, and then confront Apple with economic forces that could triple the price of an iPhone, threatening to torpedo sales of its marquee product.

The turmoil has battered the stocks of tech's "Magnificent Seven" — Apple, Microsoft, Nvidia, Amazon, Tesla, Google parent Alphabet and Facebook parent Meta Platforms.

At one point, the Magnificent Seven's combined market value had plunged by $2.1 trillion, or 14 per cent, from April 2 when Trump unveiled sweeping tariffs on a wide range of countries. When Trump paused the tariffs outside of China on Wednesday, the lost value in those companies was pared to $644 billion, or a 4 per cent decline.

An electronics exemption would fulfill the kind of friendly treatment that industry was envisioning when Apple CEO Tim Cook, Tesla CEO Elon Musk, Google CEO Sundar Pichai, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos assembled behind the president during his January 20 inauguration.

That united display of fealty reflected Big Tech's hopes that Trump would be more accommodating than President Joe Biden's administration.

Apple won praise from Trump in late February when the Cupertino, California, company committed to invest $500 billion and add 20,000 jobs in the US during the next four years. The pledge was an echo of a $350 billion investment commitment in the U.S. That Apple made during Trump's first term when the iPhone was exempted from China tariffs.

The move removes "a huge black cloud overhang for now over the tech sector and the pressure facing US Big Tech," said Wedbush analyst Dan Ives in a research note. Ives amended that note after Lutnick's comments Sunday, saying the confusing news out of the White House "is dizzying for the industry and investors and creating massive uncertainty and chaos for companies trying to plan their supply chain, inventory, and demand."

As Hungary bans LGBTQ+ Pride, what does it mean for other basic rights?

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Budapest

Hungarian lawmakers are preparing to vote on a constitutional amendment viewed by many critics as both a crackdown on the freedoms of assembly and expression and the most recent move by the populist government to restrict the rights of LGBTQ+ communities.

The amendment, which will almost certainly be passed Monday by the two-thirds majority of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's nationalist Fidesz party, would permanently codify a ban on public events held by LGBTQ+ communities — including the popular Pride event that draws thousands annually in the capital, Budapest.

It will also provide a constitutional basis for denying the gender identities or sexual characteristics of minority groups, and allow for some Hungarians to have their citizenship suspended if they are deemed to pose a threat to Hungary's security or sovereignty.

Here's what the amendment will do, what it entails for LGBTQ+ Hungarians, and for some of the basic rights of all citizens in the Central European nation.

The amendment, the 15th to Hungary's constitution since it was unilaterally authored and approved by the ruling Fidesz-KDNP coalition in 2011, gives legal support to a law fast-tracked in March that made it an offense to hold or attend events that violate the country's contentious "child protection" legislation, which prohibits the "depiction or promotion" of homosexuality to minors aged under 18.

That law also allows authorities to use facial recognition tools to identify individuals that attend prohibited events — such as Budapest Pride — and can come with fines for violators of up to 200,000 Hungarian forints ($546).

Some legal experts have argued that such a restriction on assembly rights violates Hungary's constitution. In order to bring the Pride ban in line with constitutional protections, the amendment declares that children's rights to moral, physical and spiritual development super-

This declaration will provide a constitutional basis for denying the gender identities of transgender people, as well as ignoring the existence of intersex individuals, who are born with atypical sexual characteristics

sede any other fundamental right other than the right to life — including that to peacefully assemble.

The amendment also declares that "a person's sex at birth is a biological characteristic and can be either male or female" — an expansion of an earlier amendment that prohibits same-sex adoption by stating that a mother is a woman and a father is a man.

This declaration will provide a constitutional basis for denying the gender identities of transgender people, as well as ignoring the existence of intersex individuals, who are born with atypical sexual characteristics that do not align with binary conceptions of male and female.

The human rights agency of the United Nations has written that up to 1.7per cent of the global population is born with intersex traits.

The amendment, as well as previous legislation targeting LGBTQ+ communities, is reminiscent of similar restrictions against sexual minorities in Russia. Orbán, seen as Russian President Vladimir Putin's closest ally in the European Union, has in recent years prohibited same-sex adoption and banned any LGBTQ+ content including in television, films, advertisements and literature that is available to minors.

His government argues that its policies are designed to protect children from "sexual propaganda," but critics view them as part of a broader effort to scapegoat sexual minorities and mobilize his conservative base.

Hungary has taken vigorous steps in recent months to protect its national sovereignty from what it claims are foreign efforts to influence its politics or even topple Orbán's government.

The self-described "illiberal" leader has accelerated his longstanding efforts to crack down on critics such as media outlets and groups devoted to civil rights and anti-corruption, which he says have undermined Hungary's sovereignty by receiving financial assistance from international donors.

In a speech laden with conspiracy theories in March, Orbán compared people who work for such groups to insects, and pledged to "eliminate the entire shadow army" of foreign-funded "politicians, judges, journalists, pseudo-NGOs and political activists."

As part of the government's sovereignty protection efforts, the newest constitutional amendment will make it possible to suspend the Hungarians' citizenship if they are deemed to pose a threat to public order, public security or national security.

Such suspensions would apply to Hungarian citizens who also hold citizenship of another country that is not a member of the EU or European Economic Area. Such suspensions may last for a maximum of 10 years.

The passage of the law banning Pride set off a wave of protests in Hungary with thousands taking to the streets to demand the restoration of assembly rights. Demonstrators employed the tactic of blocking bridges and major thoroughfares in Budapest, something Orbán later said would be prohibited by new legislation.

Reacting to the ban on Pride, local organizers wrote: "This is not child protection, this is fascism."

On Monday, when lawmakers vote to approve the constitutional amendment, the opposition Momentum party will attempt to blockade the parliament and prevent the vote from taking place. The party accused Orbán's government of being an "intimidating and cowardly power," writing on social media: "Let's collectively prevent them from leading us down the Putin road and depriving us of our freedom."

Xi says China will focus on joint modernisation of Asia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Beijing

Visiting Vietnam to enhance political and trade ties amid a major tariff row with the US, Chinese President Xi Jinping Monday said that China will ensure continuity and stability in its neighbourhood diplomacy and jointly advance the modernisation of Asia. Xi arrived in Hanoi on his first visit abroad after US President Donald Trump slapped steep tariffs against China while pausing levies on a host of other countries, including Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia — the three countries on the Chinese president's current itinerary.

In an article published in Vietnam's Nhan Dan newspaper ahead of his visit, Xi said China would deepen friendly cooperation with neighbouring countries by ensuring continuity and stability of its neighbourhood diplomacy. "We will stay committed to the principle of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness," he wrote. "We will continue to pursue the policy of forging friendship and partnership with our neighbours," he added.

Xi, who is under pressure after Trump's unprecedented 145 per cent tariffs against Chinese exports to the US which amounted to over USD 438 billion last year, spoke of focussing on joint modernisation of Asia along with China's neighbours as part of its new policy to reduce trade dependence on the US and the EU.

While Beijing hit back with 125 per cent tariffs against US goods in tit-for-tat retaliation, foreign trade-dependent China looks to fast-paced diversion of its commerce to make up the losses.

"Asia represents a new elevation in global cooperation and development. At a new starting point toward revitalisation of the whole region, Asia faces both unprecedented opportunities and challenges", Xi said.

Amid the tariff war with the US, Xi is visiting the three Southeast Asian countries which are part of the ASEAN bloc with which Beijing has its largest foreign trade, totalling over USD 962 billion.

The ASEAN countries, Vietnam in particular also faced a major crisis as the US tariffs targeted the country which prospered by reshoring Chinese industries and products and exporting them to the US, benefiting from Trump's tariffs against China in his previous term.

Chinese President Xi Jinping waves as he arrives for a two-day state visit, at Hanoi's Noi Bai International Airport PTI

Vietnam became the biggest beneficiary of the China Plus One strategy of several multinational firms like Apple besides Chinese companies moving their investments there to escape the US tariffs, becoming one of the key trade routes for exports to America.

Last year alone, Vietnam's exports to the US amounted to over USD 142 billion.

Trump last week hit Vietnam with 46 per cent tariffs, one of the highest besides China, in an apparent bid to target Hanoi's reshoring policy.

After fervent appeals from Vietnam, Trump agreed to negotiate a new tariff deal during the 90-day pause in the levies on many countries except China.

Before the key visit to three Southeast nations, Xi pledged to strengthen strategic bonds with neighbouring nations by "appropriately" managing differences and enhanced supply chain ties as the tariff war with the US escalated.

In his first public speech after Trump's tariffs, Xi called for breaking new ground for China's neighbourhood diplomacy at a meeting of the ruling Communist Party of China in Beijing on April 9. China sought to improve ties with several countries in its fraught neighbourhood.

Beijing in recent months winded down border tensions with India and sought to improve its relations with other major neighbours like Japan and South Korea, bracing for tough times under the Trump presidency on trade and strategic fronts.

The India-China relations, which remained frozen for over four years over the Eastern Ladakh military standoff, showed signs of improvement after the meeting between Xi and Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Kazan in Russia last October.

Recently, China held trade talks with South Korea and Japan, the first economic dialogue between the three countries in five years, to discuss regional trade facilitation.

China's exports jump 12.4 per cent and imports fall

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bangkok

China's exports jumped 12.4per cent in March from a year earlier as companies rushed to beat increases in US tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump, the government said Monday. Imports fell 4.3per cent, the customs administration reported.

It said exports from the world's second largest economy rose 5.8per cent in the first three months of the year from a year earlier while imports sank 7per cent.

China's trade surplus with the United States was $27.6 billion in March as its exports rose 4.5per cent. It logged a surplus of $76.6 billion with the US in the first quarter of the year.

China is facing 145per cent tariffs on most exports to the United States as of the most recent revisions in Trump's trade policies.

However, the biggest increases in exports were to China's Southeast Asian neighbors, which saw exports from China jump nearly 17per cent in March from a year earlier. Exports to Africa rose more than 11per cent.

Chinese President Xi Jinping was travelling to Vietnam on Monday as part of a regional tour that also will take him to Malaysia and Cambodia, giving him an opportunity to firm up trade ties with other Asian countries that also are facing potentially steep tariffs, though last week Trump delayed enforcing them by 90 days.

China's exports to Vietnam jumped nearly 17per cent last month from a year earlier, while its imports fell 2.7per cent.

While Xi's trip likely was planned earlier, it gained significance amid the trade war between Washington and Beijing.

A customs administration spokesperson, Lyu Daliang, said China was facing a "complex and severe external situation" but that the sky would not fall. He pointed to China's diversified export options and huge domestic market.

When asked about falling Chinese imports, he told reporters that China has been the world's second largest importer for 16 straight years, increasing its share of global imports from about 8per cent to 10.5per cent. "At present and in the future, China's import growth space is huge, and the large Chinese market is always a great opportunity for the world," he said.

SBI passes RBI rate cuts, slashes interest rate by 25 bps

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The country's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) has reduced its lending rate by 25 basis points following the Reserve Bank's policy rate cut, making loans cheaper for both existing and new borrowers.

With the latest round of reduction, the Repo Linked Lending Rate (RLLR) of SBI would come down by 25 basis points to 8.25 per cent.

It has also reduced the External Benchmark Based Lending Rate (EBLR) by similar basis points to 8.65 per cent. The revised rates come into effect from April 15, 2025, according to updated rate information on SBI's website.

The rate reduction is in response to last week's RBI slashing key interest rate by 25 basis points for the second time in a row to support growth facing the threat of reciprocal tariffs by the US.

Besides, the bank also cut deposit rates by 10-25 basis points, which will again be effective from April 15.

With the revision, for fixed deposits up to ₹3 crore, the interest rate on 1-2 year term deposits will be lower by 10 basis points to 6.70 per cent, and deposits having two years to less than 3 years maturity will attract 6.90 per cent as against 7 per cent.

FILE PHOTO

In case of fixed deposits over ₹3 crore, term deposits of maturity 180 days to 210 days have been reduced by 20 basis points to 6.40 per cent while for 211 days to less than 1 year by 25 basis points to 6.50 per cent. Similarly, for 1-2 years, the new interest rate would be 6.80 per cent from 7 per cent, and for 2-3 years would be 6.75 per cent from 7 per cent, a reduction of 25 basis points.

SBI green rupee term deposit is available for three specific tenors of 1111, 1777 and 2222 days, at 10 bps below card rate. The specific tenor scheme of '444 days' (Amrit Vrishti) at rate of interest 7.05 per cent is effective from April 15, 2025, and senior citizens are offered a rate of interest 7.55 per cent and super senior citizens are offered an interest rate of 7.65 per cent.

Meanwhile, private sector major HDFC Bank has lowered interest rate on savings accounts by 25 basis points to 2.75 per cent which is the lowest among peers in the private sector.

For balances above ₹50 lakh, the rate now stands at 3.25 per cent as against 3.5 per cent. The reduction in rate is effective from April 12, as per the HDFC Bank's website. Another public sector Bank of India has withdrawn its 400-day special deposit scheme which offered 7.3 per cent. Mumbai-based Bank of India has announced a reduction of 25 basis points in its home loan interest rates, benefitting both new and existing customers.

With this revision, the home loan rate stands reduced to 7.9 per cent per annum based on CIBIL score. The revised rates come into effect from April 15, 2025.

In addition to home loans, Bank of India has also reduced interest rates by 25 basis points across select existing retail loan products, including vehicle loan, personal loan, loan against property, education loan and Star reverse mortgage loan, it said.

Tariffs may open new opportunities for India: Skoda Auto Volkswagen MD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

European auto major Skoda Auto Volkswagen India on Monday said while it does not support the new reciprocal tariff imposed by the Trump Administration, which have now been paused for 90 days on non-retaliating countries, the move may open up opportunities for the industries in the long term.

Earlier, the group, which is battling a ₹11,000-crore tax show cause notice for alleged customs duty fraud related to the import of cars as completely knocked down units, rolled out the all-new Volkswagen Tiguan R Line at an introductory price of ₹49 lakh.

"Of course, we do not support the (reciprocal) tariffs but at the same time there are a lot of discussions about opening up the economy even in India through bilateral trade or free trade agreements," Piyush Arora, Managing Director at Skoda Auto Volkswagen India said at the launch event.

Emphasising that the group always believes in "free trade" and transfer of technology between countries for customers and their benefits, Arora said there is a lot of uncertainty right now hovering around the recent announcements on the tariff front which the US administration has imposed.

He, however, added that these developments (tariff discussion) might expedite the free trade agreements being discussed between India and the EU for a long time. "I do believe that there are opportunities for India. We have always been a proponent of having lower tariffs between Europe whether it is EU trade or bilateral FTA which has been discussed for a very long time but at the same time might give an opportunity.

Ashish Gupta, Brand Director, Volkswagen India and Skoda Auto Volkswagen India CEO Piyush Arora during the launch of Volkswagen's Tiguan R-Line SUV PTI

"There might be short-term hiccups because of increased tariff for our component industry from India which is exporting a good amount of parts to the US and the initial tariffs can hinder that but in the long run maybe it will open up opportunities," Arora said.

At the same time, it can't be said at this stage how would this entire tariff issue settle down and in which direction it is heading for as the goal posts are moving, he said, adding, "India getting affected in a different way vis-a-vis some other competing economies so we will have to see how it pans out."

Built on the MQB EVO platform, the all-new third-generation flagship SUV Tiguan R-Line boasts of a new chassis generation and comes with a 2.0-litre TSI EVO engine

CEPC Carpet Expo begins in Bharat Mandapam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

On April 14, 2025, the four-day Carpet Expo organized by the Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC) commenced at Hall No. 1 of Bharat Mandapam. The event is scheduled from April 14 to 17, 2025. It was inaugurated by the Honourable Union Minister of Textiles, Mr. Giriraj Singh, in the presence of Mrs. Amrit Raj, IAS, Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), by lighting the ceremonial lamp.

Other dignitaries present at the inaugural ceremony included Mr. Kuldeep Raj Wattal, Chairman, CEPC, and members of the Executive Committee - Mr. Anil Kumar Singh, Mr. Aslam Mehbub, Mr. Mahabir Pratap, Mr. Bodhraj Malhotra, Mr. Wasif Ansari, Mr. Deepak Khanna, Mr. Hussain Jafar Husaini, Mr. Imtiaz Ahmad, Mr. Mehraj Yaseen Jain, Mr. Piyush Kumar Barnwal, Mr. Rohit Gupta, Mr. Sanjay Gupta, Mr. Shaukat Khan, and Mr. Sheikh Ashiq Ahmad, along with other members and exporters. Dr. Smita Nagarkoti. Officiating Executive Director-cum-Secretary, was also present during the auspicious event.

The Honourable Minister of Textiles, Mr. Giriraj Singh, visited various carpet stalls at the expo and was impressed by the wide range of colorful carpets. He expressed his admiration and reiterated his full support for the development of the industry, assuring complete cooperation from the government to promote its growth. He affirmed that the government stands firmly with the exporters.

India Carpet Expo is one of Asia's largest exhibitions of handmade carpets, providing an exceptional platform for buyers to purchase premium handmade carpets, rugs, and other floor coverings under one roof. With participation from 160 exhibitors, it has become a globally recognized destination for handmade carpets.

On the first day, the expo witnessed a record attendance of 125 overseas carpet buyers from around 34 countries including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, France, Canada, Israel, Turkey, Japan, Russia, the USA, the UK, Italy, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, and 75 buying representatives. These buyers visited the expo to explore business opportunities with this rural-based cottage sector.

CEPC Chairman Mr. Kuldeep Raj Wattal stated, "India Carpet Expo is an ideal platform for international carpet buyers, buying agents, architects, and Indian carpet manufacturers and exporters to interact and build long-term business relationships. This exhibition is a significant step toward taking Indian handmade carpet exports to greater heights." He further mentioned that there are tremendous business opportunities for participating manufacturers and exporters as many prominent global buyers of handmade carpets will be attending the show, and orders worth thousands of crores are expected to be executed in the near future.

Draft rules issued for gas metres to protect consumers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The government has drafted new rules requiring testing, verification and stamping of all domestic, commercial, and industrial gas metres before they can be used in trade, the consumer affairs ministry said on Monday.

The proposed regulations under the Legal Metrology (General) Rules, 2011 aim to ensure accuracy and reliability in gas measurement, preventing billing disputes and protecting consumers from faulty devices. "Verified and stamped gas meters will prevent overcharging or under-measurement, reduce disputes and provide guaranteed protection to consumers against faulty or manipulated devices," the ministry said in a statement. Consumers will benefit through fair billing, improved energy efficiency and reduced maintenance costs from standardised equipment, it added.

The draft rules include provisions for re-verification of meters in use and establish a compliance framework for manufacturers and distribution companies aligned with International Organisation of Legal Metrology standards. The ministry framed the regulations after consulting with the Indian Institute of Legal Metrology, industry experts, consumer organisations.

Investor wealth erode by ₹11.30 lakh crore since tariffs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Investors' wealth eroded by ₹11.30 lakh crore since early this month, where the BSE benchmark Sensex tumbled nearly 2 per cent, as stock markets experienced turbulence in recent times initially due to US President Donald Trump unveiling a massive tariff plan, followed by growing concerns of a tit-for-tat trade war between China and the US.

Since April 2, the BSE benchmark gauge has slumped 1,460.18 points or 1.90 per cent.

Tracking uncertainty in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms tumbled by ₹11,30,627.09 crore to ₹4,01,67,468.51 crore (USD 4.66 trillion) during this period. Benchmark indices jumped nearly 2 per cent on Friday as investors rejoiced at the 90-day suspension of additional import duties by the US.

Markets remained closed on two occasions, on April 10 for Mahavir Jayanti and April 14 due to Ambedkar Jayanti.

Trump unveiled a massive tariff plan in the first week of April. The White House later announced a 90-day pause on "reciprocal tariffs" for most countries except China, which in turn decided to impose 125 per cent tariffs on US imports.

Market participants fear that tensions between the world's two largest economies could cause widespread global damage. China is the only country to have retaliated with tit-for-tat levies

China on Friday upped its additional tariff on US goods to 125 per cent, retaliating the America's 145 per cent levy.

"Markets had a rocky start to the new fiscal year after Trump announced sweeping reciprocal tariffs on the world. Global markets witnessed sharp losses, and India also was not immune to the sell-off but fared relatively better so far," Satish Chandra Aluri, Analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

The US, on April 2, announced an additional 26 per cent tariff on Indian goods entering the US. But on April 9, the Trump administration announced the suspension of these on India for 90 days until July 9 this year. However, the 10 per cent baseline tariff imposed on the countries will continue to remain in place.

"Immediate challenge emanates from the global trade war with escalating tit-for-tat tariffs between the US and China. How the trade war evolves will be the key factor in determining the growth trajectory and market outlook for FY26," Aluri added.

Market participants fear that tensions between the world's two largest economies could cause widespread global damage.

China is the only country to have retaliated with tit-for-tat levies.

Vishnu Kant Upadhyay, AVP - Research & Advisory at Master Capital Services, said that the Indian markets have indeed experienced turbulence in recent times, driven by a combination of domestic and global factors. But, now global uncertainty is the major fear of market participants which can be a big force in deciding the trend and trajectory in the near term.

According to him, Indian equity markets are navigating a complex landscape which is shaped by global uncertainties and potential shifts in US trade policy. While domestic resilience and strengthening corporate earnings could offer a base for recovery.

"Despite the steep correction that took off during the end of the previous year, participants are optimistic that the market could rebound in the second half of FY26. This projected rebound is likely to be aided by a recovery in corporate profits and renewed foreign capital inflow since valuation has turned reasonable.

"But the present phase of uncertainty may last for another three to six months specifically because of fear of a US slowdown and recession that is stifling investor sentiment. Conversely, if global conditions stabilise, Indian equities may once again emerge as a desirable destination for foreign investors seeking long-term growth potential," Upadhyay said.

Lodha brothers resolve dispute over use of brand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Abhishek Lodha-led Macrotech Developers has resolved trademark and brand dispute with House of Abhinandan Lodha (HoABL), formed by his younger brother.

Macrotech Developers will continue to use 'Lodha' brand while the younger brother will continue to operate under 'House of Abhinandan Lodha' brand, as per the agreements between the two brothers under the guidance of their parents.

Abhishek and Abhinandan will not have any claims against each other.

In January, Macrotech Developers filed a suit in the Bombay High Court against HoABL for infringement of its trademarks and sought appropriate injunctions, reliefs, and damages.

Macrotech Developers and HoABL announced that they have resolved the dispute over the use of Lodha brand, through separate statements but with similar words.

"In a significant development, the Lodha brothers — elder brother, Abhishek Lodha and younger brother, Abhinandan Lodha — and the companies led by them, have amicably resolved all outstanding disputes under the guidance of their parents," the statement said.

As per the agreement, listed entity Macrotech Developers Ltd is the owner of and has the exclusive right to use, the brand names 'Lodha' and 'Lodha Group'.

Abhinandan Lodha is the owner of, and has the exclusive right to use the brand name 'House of Abhinandan Lodha'.

"Lodha Group' and 'House of Abhinandan Lodha' have no connection with each other. Both entities will communicate this widely," as per the statement.

Abhinandan Lodha has no rights or claims in Lodha Group or Macrotech Developers or other businesses of Abhishek.

Rory McIlroy wins Masters at Augusta National

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Augusta

Rory McIlroy began "the best day of my golfing life" by finding a note in his locker at Augusta National before he got ready for what turned out to be one of the wildest final rounds ever at the Masters.

It was from Angel Cabrera, a thoughtful gesture to wish him good luck. McIlroy could have taken either way. Cabrera played in the final group with him in 2011 at the Masters when McIlroy had the world at his feet and a four-shot lead and one arm in a Masters green jacket. But then he threw it away with an 80 in the final round.

"It was a nice touch and little bit ironic at the same time," McIlroy said of the note. "It is been 14 long years. But thankfully, I got the job done."

He did, barely, beating Justin Rose in a sudden-death playoff with a gap wedge that spun back to 3 feet for birdie on the 18th hole. Along with a lifelong dream of being a Masters champion, McIlroy is now part of golfing immortality as only the sixth player with the career Grand Slam.

But what a ride. "I have been saying it until I am blue in the face: I truly believe I am a better player now than I was 10 years ago," McIlroy said. "It is so hard to stay patient. It is so hard to keep coming back every year and trying your best and not being able to get it done.

"It is been an emotionally draining week for a lot of reasons," he said. "Absolutely thrilled to be sitting here at the end of the week as the last man standing."

A final round that lasted four hours, 45 minutes felt like 14 years, certainly the past 11 years that have been consumed with him getting the final leg of the Grand Slam.

McIlroy began with a double bogey and lost his two-shot lead in two holes. It was a start comparable to when he played in the final group at the 2018 Masters with Patrick Reed, all of Augusta on his side and laid an egg.

He ran off two birdies with a sublime chip and pure 5-iron, then twice made pars with amazing escapes through gaps in the Georgia pines. Yes, this is the guy who has won the FedEx Cup a record three times and reached number one in the world on nine occasions.

Staked to a four-shot lead on the back nine, he hit his worst shot of the week. McIlroy had a big target from 82 yards with a lob wedge and put it into the tributary of Rae's Creek in front of the par-5 13th green for a double bogey.

This looked like the player who two-putted every green in the final round at St Andrews, who missed two short putts in the closing stretch at Pinehurst number two last summer to watch Bryson DeChambeau hoist that US Open trophy.

So much brilliance. Too many blunders. And ultimately, so much determination to keep coming back for more, to not give up on the one prize he was chasing no matter how much it hurt.

Consider his final round Sunday. He set a record for making six straight 3s to start the third round. He set another record for most double bogeys — four! — by a Masters champion.

McIlroy famously said two years ago after a runner-up finish in the US Open left him gutted, "I would go through 100 Sundays like this to get my hands on another major championship."

He won this Masters with that willingness to keep going no matter the setbacks.

McIlroy wasted a superb opening round with two careless double bogeys leaving him seven shots behind. He answered with a 66 the next day.

He went from a four-shot lead to trailing by one shot on Sunday when he answered with his best swings — the 7-iron over the pond to 6 feet on the par-5 15th, the 9-iron to a back pin on the 16th to 9 feet, the 8-iron blind shot to 2 feet on the 17th. When he failed to convert a 5-foot birdie putt on the 18th in regulation, he was headed to a playoff with Rose, more major disappointment perhaps waiting. But then he pounded his drive, hit gap wedge to 3 feet and won the Masters.

"There was points on the back nine today I thought, Have I let this slip again?' But again, I responded with some clutch shots when I needed to," McIlroy said. "And really proud of myself for that."

Rose was gracious as ever after his second straight time finishing second in a major, having lost out at Royal Troon last summer. "We saw a part of history today," Rose said. "Someone won a career Grand Slam. It is a momentous day in the game of golf." It had been 25 years since the last addition to the club, Tiger Woods. Before that it had been 34 years since Jack Nicklaus won all four.

President Donald Trump, who played golf with McIlroy in February, offered him congratulations aboard Air Force One on his way back to Washington from Florida.

"People have no idea how tough that is and he came back. He should be proud," Trump said. "It is better for him that it happened that way because that showed real courage."

McIlroy might beg to differ on the latter point. "I certainly did not make it easy," he said. But when it comes to McIlroy, is there any other way? He had lunch with Nicklaus the previous week and went over how to play the course.

This was not the Nicklaus way, or even the Tiger way. When they built leads, they played without mistake and forced players to catch them.

That's not how Rory rolls. It might have taken longer than he wanted — his 17th time playing the Masters, the 11th time with the Grand Slam at stake — but he got what he so desperately wanted. That green jacket is a size 38.

Roma draw against Lazio

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Rome

The always-tense Rome derby ended 1-1, allowing Roma to extend its unbeaten run to 16 matches and enabling Lazio to stay one spot in front of its city rival in the standings.

Lifelong Lazio fan Alessio Romagnoli achieved a childhood dream when he put Lazio ahead shortly after the break. Matias Soule equalised for Roma with a long-distance shot midway through the second half. Sixth-placed Lazio remained two points ahead of seventh-placed Roma, which hasn't lost since December.

The result also ended the perfect run of five straight derby wins for Roma coach Claudio Ranieri, who is expected to retire at the end of the season.

Hours before kickoff, police in riot gear intervened to prevent clashes between rival fans outside the stadium.

In the first half, Roma goalkeeper Mile Svilar was the star, making several spectacular saves to deny Lazio winger Gustav Isaksen. Romagnoli scored for Lazio two minutes after the break by redirecting in a free kick with a header.

There was also a spectacular save from Lazio goalkeeper Christos Mandas, who tipped away a dangerous header from Gianluca Mancini.

But there was no stopping a powerful shot from Soule that deflected in off the underside of the crossbar and then out of the goal. After a brief moment of suspense, the referee awarded the goal when his wrist watch vibrated to confirm the decision by goal-line technology.

Atalanta revives Champions League hopesItaly center forward Mateo Retegui scored one goal and set up another as Atalanta ended a run of three straight losses with a 2-0 win over Bologna to revive its chances of finishing in the Champions League places.

Atalanta moved back up to third in Serie A while Bologna remained fifth.

Atalanta is two points ahead of Juventus, which beat Lecce 2-1 on Saturday, and four points ahead of Bologna — with the top four finishers qualifying for the Champions League. Retegui scored his league-leading 23rd goal early on and then set up another for Mario Pasalic less than 20 minutes later.

Atalanta goalkeeper Marco Carnesecchi preserved the advantage when he palmed a shot from Bologna's Dan Ndoye off the post.Both goals came on counterattacks.

Retegui outmuscled a defender to redirect in a cross from Raoul Bellanova and then he worked his way past another defender on the right flank before whipping in a cross that Pasalic turned in with one touch.

Bologna had not lost since February. Also, Fiorentina-Parma and Hellas Verona-Genoa ended 0-0; and Como beat Torino 1-0 with a first-half header from Anastasios Douvikas. Sassuolo promoted after 1 season in Serie B.

Serie B leader Sassuolo was assured of promotion to the top flight after Spezia drew 2-2 at Mantova in Serie B. The result left Sassuolo, which won 3-1 at Modena on Saturday, 16 points ahead of third-placed Spezia with five rounds remaining.

Hockey India announces 26-member women's squad for tour of Australia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Five new players got their first senior national call-ups as Hockey India on Monday announced a 26-member women's squad for the upcoming five-match tour of Australia, scheduled to take place from April 26 to May 4. India will take on Australia A in the first two games, followed by three matches against the senior Australia team. All the five matches will be played at the Perth Hockey Stadium.

The tour will be a crucial preparatory assignment ahead of the team's European leg of the FIH Pro League 2024-25, set to be held in June.

Five players — Jyoti Singh, Sujata Kujur, Ajmina Kujur, Pooja Yadav and Mahima Tete — have earned a call-up to the senior team. They will be eager to make their senior team debut.

The squad, which is a mix of experienced and fresh players, will be led by dynamic midfielder Salima Tete, with experienced forward Navneet Kaur serving as her deputy.

Seasoned goalkeeper Savita and young talent Bichu Devi Kharibam will share responsibilities between the posts, providing a strong last line of defence.

The defensive line-up features a mix of experience and promising young talent, comprising Jyoti Singh, Ishika Chaudhary, Sushila Chanu Pukhrambam, Sujata Kujur, Suman Devi Thoudam, Jyoti, Ajmina Kujur and Sakshi Rana.

In the midfield, captain Tete will marshal the centre with support from Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Neha, Sharmila Devi, Manisha Chauhan, Sunelita Toppo, Mahima Tete, Pooja Yadav and Lalremsiami, bringing depth and creativity to the side.

The forward line looks sharp and attacking with Navneet Kaur, Deepika, Rutaja Dadaso Pisal, Mumtaz Khan, Baljeet Kaur, Deepika Soreng, and Beauty Dungdung.

Additionally, Bansari Solanki (goalkeeper), Anjana Dundung and Lalthantluangi (defenders), Sakshi Shukla and Khaidem Shileima Chanu (midfielders), along with Dipi Monika Toppo and Sonam (forwards), have been named as standby players.

Reflecting of the team selection, chief coach Harendra Singh said, "This tour is an important opportunity for us to test our skills and strategies against top-level competition. We have selected a balanced squad that combines experience with fresh energy..

"It is great to see young players earning their spots through consistent performances in national level tournaments and senior camps. It will be exciting to see how they adapt and rise to the challenge at the international level."

Singh said the team is in good shape, both mentally and physically, after a solid block of training at the national camp in Bengaluru. "Playing against Australia A and the Hockeyroos will help us fine-tune our game before the European leg of the FIH Pro League."

"We are in the process of strengthening key areas such as fitness, decision-making, and building a resilient mentality that allows us to stay composed and competitive in high-pressure situations. We aim to maintain the fighting spirit we showed in the Pro League recently."

United States, Japan qualify for Billie Jean King Cup Finals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bratislava

Hailey Baptiste and Bernarda Pera had straight-set wins to give the United States a spot in the Billie Jean King Cup Finals with a 2-1 victory over host Slovakia. Baptiste beat Renata Jamrichova 6-3, 6-4 and Pera overcame Slovakian number one Rebecca Sramkova 7-6 (2), 7-5 in the Group C match.

"Honestly, I am so overwhelmed by the emotions, so happy," Pera said. "I had so much fun with the team, the girls are amazing, I got so much support from all of them and I am super happy."

The US, which beat Denmark 3-0 on Saturday, topped Group C.

Japan advancesEna Shibahara and Shuko Aoyama defeated Canadians Kayla Cross and Rebecca Marino 6-3, 5-7 6-2 in the decisive doubles match in Group A to secure Japan a spot in the finals.

Canada had taken a 1-0 lead when Victoria Mboko defeated Shibahara 6-4, 6-7 (8), 7-5.

Lyon beats Auxerre to move up to fourth in Ligue 1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Paris

Forward Georges Mikautadze scored one goal and set up another as resurgent Lyon won 3-1 at Auxerre to climb into fourth place in Ligue 1.

It was Lyon's fifth win in the last six league games and moved it one point behind Marseille in third place, and one point above Lille in fifth. The top three get an automatic spot in next season's Champions League while the team in fourth enters qualifying.

Mikautadze tucked away a penalty in the 54th minute after being fouled by goalkeeper Donovan Léon as he went clean through.

Right back Saël Kumbedi and midfielder Corentin Tolisso then combined to set up Rayan Cherki for a neat curled finish in the 62nd.

After Auxerre striker Lassine Sinayoko pulled one back, the fleet-footed Mikautadze pinged over a low cross from the left to give veteran striker Alexandre Lacazette an easy finish in the 84th.

Lyon visits bitter local rival Saint-Etienne next Sunday, with Mikautadze facing countryman Zuriko Davitashvili and much at stake for both sides at opposite ends of the table.

Never give upSaint-Etienne earlier came from behind three times to draw 3-3 with Brest in Ligue 1 and earn a valuable point in its relegation fight.

The draw moved 17th-placed Saint-Etienne three points behind Le Havre in the relegation-playoff spot with five rounds left.

The manner of the performance may give Saint-Etienne fans hope, although the club has a difficult run-in. Saint-Etienne also faces high-flying Monaco and Strasbourg — with those sides chasing a Champions League spot next season.

It was Lyon's fifth win in the last six league games and moved it one point behind Marseille in third place and one point above Lille in fifth

Eighth-placed Brest led 3-2 after a thrilling first half where striker Ludovic Ajorque scored twice for the visitors and Abdallah Sima got the other goal, while lively forwards Lucas Stassin and Irvin Cardona netted for Saint-Etienne.

Cardona made it 3-3 with 10 minutes to go and Saint-Etienne went close to winning when Davitashvili's header hit the crossbar five minutes into stoppage time.

Rennes routs Le HavreRennes raced into a 3-0 lead inside 15 minutes on the way to a 5-1 win at Le Havre.

Dutch midfielder Azor Matusiwa scored after 37 seconds following a huge blunder by goalkeeper Mathieu Gorgelin, who passed the ball straight to a Rennes player. Striker Arnaud Kalimuendo then set up Matusiwa for an empty-net goal.

Defender Lorenz Assignon and Kalimuendo netted soon after. Le Havre pulled one back before the break but Jordan forward Mousa Tamari and substitute Andrés Gomez grabbed completed a rout as Rennes moved up to 11th.

Montpellier's misery continuesStriker Esteban Lepaul scored twice as Angers beat rock-bottom Montpellier 2-0 and pushed it closer to relegation.

Indian-origin golfers Rai, Theegala finish in Top-30

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Augusta

Indian-origin golfers Aaron Rai, Sahith Theegala and Akshay Bhatia had a modest finish, with two of the three signing off in the Top-30 at the Masters here. Rai (70) finished at one-under for four days for a T-27 finish on his Masters debut, while Theegala (71) was even par for four days and finished T-29.

Bhatia shot 71 and was four-over 292 for the week, finishing T-42.

Theegala was playing his third Masters and Bhatia his second.

At the top, Rory McIlroy ended an 11-year wait for a fifth Major with a dramatic win. Despite a double bogey start that wiped out his two-shot advantage right at the beginning, McIlroy picked up the pieces as his opponents failed to seize their chances.

After going into a tie at 11-under with Justin Rose, the Northern Irishman birdied the first hole in the play-off to end the mother of all waits.

Rose ended runner-up at the Masters for a third time – the previous ones being in 2015 and 2017 – while 2018 Masters winner Patrick Reed was third, and Scottie Scheffler, the defending champion and twice winner in the previous three years, was fourth at 8-under for the week.

India wins four medals in Archery World Cup Stage 1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Auburndale

India wrapped up their campaign at the Archery World Cup Stage 1 with a creditable four medals, including a silver in the men's recurve team event and a bronze by rising star Dhiraj Bommadevara in the individual recurve category, here on Sunday.

The 23-year-old Army archer Dhiraj showed exceptional grit and composure to clinch the bronze medal match, bouncing back from a 2-4 deficit to beat Andres Temino Mediel of Spain 6-4 in a tense five-setter.

India's medal tally from the tournament stood at four — gold in the compound mixed team, bronze in compound men's team, silver in recurve men's team and bronze in recurve men's individual (Dhiraj)

Earlier in the day, he was also part of the Indian trio alongside veterans Tarundeep Rai and Atanu Das that settled for silver after a 1-5 loss to China in the team final.

India's medal tally from the tournament stood at four — gold in the compound mixed team, bronze in compound men's team, silver in recurve men's team and bronze in recurve men's individual (Dhiraj). India's campaign also saw Abhishek Verma narrowly miss out on a medal, finishing fourth in the compound men's individual section.

In the bronze medal match, Dhiraj and Mediel tied the first set 28-28.

The Spaniard then edged ahead 29-28 in the second set with two 10s, while Dhiraj could manage only one, to take a 3-1 lead. The third set was again deadlocked at 29-29, putting Dhiraj under pressure. But the young Indian responded with a brilliant fourth set, hitting two 10s (including an X, the arrow closer to the centre) to win it 29-28 and level the score at 4-4.

In the deciding set, Dhiraj was ice-cool under pressure, nailing three perfect 10s to seal a well-deserved bronze. Earlier in the semifinals, he had lost 1-7 to world number four and Paris Olympics silver medallist Florian Unruh of Germany, who proved too strong with consistently high scoring.

Earlier, the Indian men's recurve team of Dhiraj, Tarundeep Rai and Atanu Das started well in the gold medal match against China, tying the first set 54-54.

However, inconsistency in the second set—marked by two 8s allowed the Chinese trio of Li Zhongyuan, Kao Wenchao and Wang Yan to pull ahead with a 58-55 scoreline.

Spanish league: Real Madrid beats Alaves

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Madrid

Real Madrid overcame Kylian Mbappé's red card for a reckless tackle in the first half to win 1-0 at Alaves and get back to within four points of Spanish league leader Barcelona.

Mbappé was sent off shortly before the break after coming in hard for a studs-up challenge on Alaves midfielder Antonio Blanco. The France star was initially shown a yellow card but the referee changed it to a red after video review.

Mbappé had not seen a red card since 2019 while still playing for Paris Saint-Germain. He will miss at least the Spanish league game at Athletic Bilbao next Sunday. "Kylian is not violent, he has apologized," said Madrid assistant coach Davide Ancelotti, who was in charge on the bench because of a yellow-card suspension for his father, Carlo Ancelotti, who watched from the stands.

"He knows what he has done," Davide Ancelotti said. "It is a clear red-card foul and he paid for it." Alaves also played with 10 men from the 70th minute after Manu Sánchez was sent off for a foul on Madrid forward Vinícius Júnior. Eduardo Camavinga scored Madrid's winner with a shot from outside the area in the 34th. He had not scored a goal since a Copa del Rey match in January.

Barcelona had increased its lead over Madrid with a 1-0 win at Leganes on Saturday. The victory snapped Madrid's three-game winless streak in all competitions, a run that included Tuesday's 3-0 loss

at Arsenal in the first leg of the Champions League quarterfinals.

Carlo Ancelotti rested some of his regular starters ahead of the second leg on Wednesday in the Spanish capital.

"The victory gives us confidence," Davide Ancelotti said. "It was what we were looking for and we knew it was not going to be easy." Alaves, which has only two wins in its last 11 league games, stayed in 17th place, just outside the relegation zone.

The match was briefly interrupted in the 70th because of some fans' "Die" chants against Madrid defender Raúl Asencio.

Fight for fourthBoth fourth-placed Athletic Bilbao and fifth-placed Villarreal won their matches.

Athletic beat Rayo Vallecano 3-1 at home and Villarreal defeated sixth-placed Real Betis 2-1 on the road. Athletic has a six-point lead over Villarreal, which has a game in hand. Betis is a further three points back.

Villarreal rallied with goals from Thierno Barry and Ayoze Pérez after Aitor Ruibal had put the hosts ahead three minutes into the match. It was Betis' first loss after nine games without defeat.

Athletic got a pair of goals by Oihan Sancet and one by Nico Williams against 10th-placed Rayo. The victory ended Athletic's streak of three straight draws across all competitions.

Osasuna wins Osasuna beat Girona 2-1 to move to 12th place and end a three-game losing streak against the Catalan club in the league. It had not won in nine matches in all competitions.

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IPL: Punjab Kings take on KKR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mullanpur

A beleaguered Punjab Kings need to pick up pieces after being blown away by 'tornado' Abhishek Sharma as they face yet another challenging opposition in Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR), here on Tuesday. It is a rarity that a team loses after putting on board a mammoth score like 245 but Punjab Kings had to endure a hard-to-digest defeat due to Abhishek Sharma's whirlwind knock of 141 off just 55 balls in their previous match against Sunrisers Hyderabad.

A helpless Shreyas Iyer, who himself smashed a 36-ball 82, could only laugh at the end of the match after watching his bowlers torn to shreds by Abhishek's blazing blade.

The carnage unfolded in Hyderabad, where the flat Uppal track resembles a 'national highway' where no total is safe.

On Tuesday, though, Punjab will play at their home in Mullanpur where the pitch is also conducive for batters and the team management needs to decide what kind of conditions it would prefer going forward. In the two matches at Mullanpur, 200-plus scores were managed by team batting first. The bowling unit's confidence must have been shaken, especially of the two spinners Yuzvendra Chahal and

Glenn Maxwell, who gave away 96 runs in seven overs between them.

And herein lies the dilemma. If Punjab goes for a flat deck, there is no guarantee that the bowling unit can defend anything in the 220 range, especially when KKR have the likes of Sunil Narine, Rinku Singh, and Venkatesh Iyer in their rank.

One piece of statistics that head coach Ricky Ponting would not like to look at, is Punjab bowling unit's economy rate. None of the bowlers has gone below nine runs an over. The usually dependable Chahal has gone for 11.13 runs per over in five games with only two wickets to show. The loopy leg-breaks, bowled wide outside the off stump, are not working for him. On the other hand, if Iyer and Ponting asks the curator to prepare a track ready where the ball would grip and offer uneven bounce, it could well boomerang on them. In the KKR corner is the country's most improved T20 spinner Varun Chakravarthy, who loves to bowl on these kind of surfaces and Sunil Narine, who despite being past his prime, can be more than a handful in slower conditions.

KR is a unit which can be equally dangerous on both flatter decks and the slow spin-friendly tracks since they have all their bases covered.

Also the severe thrashing they handed the Chennai Super King at Chepauk would have done a world of good to their confidence.

The Punjab Kings batting is heavily dependent on skipper Iyer (250 runs), who has scored three fifties in five games so far. Priyansh Arya (194 runs) has been the find of the season.

Nehal Wadhera (141 runs), Prabhsimran Singh (133 runs) and finisher Shashank Singh (108 runs) also give the team a lot of solidity.

But Punjab's weak link is not their Indian players but the two Australians — Glenn Maxwell (34 runs) and Marcus Stoinis (59 runs), who have not contributed with the bat much so far.

The team expects a lot more from them but facing Varun Chakravarthy and Narine would be a big challenge for the duo. Even Marco Jansen (ER of 11.33) has bowled way too many loose deliveries for his comfort.

Dhoni, Dube snap CSK's five-match losing streak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lucknow

The iconic MS Dhoni played a nice little cameo alongside Shivam Dube to guide Chennai Super Kings to a much-needed five-wicket win over Lucknow Super Giants and break their five-match losing streak in the IPL here on Monday.

Dhoni (26 not out off 11 balls; 4x4s, 1x6) and Dube (43 not out off 37 balls; 3x4s, 2x6s) shared a match-winning stand of 57 runs for the sixth wicket to chase down a target of 167 with three balls to spare.

This was after LSG skipper Rishabh Pant returned to form with a half-century to guide his side to 166 for seven.

Pant (63 off 49 balls) struggled initially but grew in confidence as the innings progressed and together with Abdul Samad (20) shared 53 runs for the fifth wicket off 33 balls.

Shaik Rasheed (27 off 19) and Rachin Ravindra (37 off 22) got CSK's chase off to a flier with a brilliant 29-ball 52-run opening stand.

While Ravindra showed his class on the off side, Rasheed was elegant on the leg side, finding the fence at will to bring up CSK's fifty in the fifth over.

Debutant Rasheed's entertaining knock came to an end when he skied a Avesh Khan short ball while trying to hoick it on the leg side.

Aiden Markram then had Ravindra trapped in front of the wicket while Rahul Tripathi failed to cash in on a reprieve as he edged a Ravi Bishnoi delivery back to the leg-spinner.

Bishnoi bowled superbly, and his efforts yielded result as he dismissed Ravindra Jadeja with a flighted delivery, and Markram took a fine catch at long on.

With CSK needing 56 off 30, in came Dhoni and he smashed Avesh through the off side for a four, and deliberately nicked the next ball past the keeper to the third man fence to bring down the equation to 44 of 24 balls.

It was vintage Dhoni on display as he swung his bat to hit a one-handed six off Shardul Thakur and then got a boundary off Avesh.

Both Dhoni and Dube used the pace of LSG bowlers to perfection to take CSK home and give their fans some relief.

Pandya praises Karn Sharma

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

A relieved Hardik Pandya credited 'impact sub' Karn Sharma for showing a lot of heart to fashion Mumbai Indians' 12-run win against Delhi Capitals here on Sunday, a result that helped the visitors get their IPL campaign back on track.

DC were cruising at 119 for one just after the halfway stage but were eventually bowled out for 193 in 19 overs, with spinner Karn playing a pivotal role by taking three wickets for 36 runs.

It was skipper Rohit Sharma who suggested to coach Mahela Jayawardene to bring Karn into the attack and also requested a ball change after the 11th over.

"Absolutely. Winning is always special. Especially in games like this. You have to keep fighting and it means a lot," said Pandya at the post-match presentation when asked if he felt relieved after MI secured only their second win of the season. "(Karn was) Fantastic. Coming in and bowling the way he bowled, showed a lot of heart, especially at a small ground like that." Karun Nair's whirlwind 89 went in vain, and Pandya admitted the knock took them by surprise.

"We were running out of options regarding what to bowl at him. The way he took on our bowlers, took his chances, and the way he executed — it shows the hard work he has put in. I think he took us by surprise." DC batters suffered a dramatic collapse that included three successive run outs, ending their chase at 193.

"I always believe fielding is something that can change the game upside down. We were switched on, didn't give up, and they got the chances and converted."

Sent in to bat, Tilak Varma smashed a 33-ball 59 to power Mumbai Indians to 205 for 5. Ryan Rickelton (41 off 25), Suryakumar Yadav (40 off 28), and Naman Dhir (38 off 17) also made vital contributions. Speaking about MI's batting approach, Pandya said it depends on the situation. "Amazing. It's always going to depend on the situation. The more the in-form players try to face the balls and take responsibility.

"Obviously, dew played a factor later. Just making sure the game is not over till it's over. Keep fighting — that was the chatter in the group and my message to the boys. Wins like this change the momentum and bring everything back."

Delhi Capitals skipper Axar Patel blamed "soft dismissals" in the middle order for the loss but didn't want to dwell too much on the result.

"We had the game. I think we had soft dismissals from the middle order, some bad shots. We lost by 12 runs with an over to go, so we could have still won it. It can't happen that your lower-order batters will always come and save you in chases.

"There are some odd days where you play wrong shots, so I don't think there's any point thinking too much about it. I thought 205 was a great target because it was a good pitch and dew was also coming." Axar also pointed to sloppy fielding as a factor that allowed MI to cross the 200-mark, but praised his spin unit.

I was ready, waited for my chance, says Karun Nair

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Karun Nair marked his return to IPL with a superb knock for Delhi Capitals (DC) but despite being away from the league for two seasons, he always knew what to expect from opposition in terms of quality having been there and done that earlier too.

Grabbing his first opportunity of the season with both hands, Karun hit a superb 40-ball 89 while chasing a target of 206, but it went in vain as DC ended on 193 in 19 overs to go down by 12 runs to Mumbai Indians.

Not many batters have hit Jasprit Bumrah for two sixes in an over and Karun underlined his preparation as a key to success, having gained enough confidence during the domestic season in which he aggregated 1870 runs for Vidarbha across formats.

"Honestly, I had the confidence that I have played (IPL) before and I know how it is going to be, and it is nothing different that I am going to be facing anything new," said Nair, a Test-match triple-centurion, told reporters.

"So, but in my mind, it was just about going out there and giving myself a few balls and just getting used to the speed of the game again and the atmosphere," said Nair, who last played in the 2022 season for Rajasthan Royals.

He also spoke about hitting conventional shots during Powerplay and then going for improvisation during the latter part of

the innings. "So I just told myself, 'give yourself the time, play normal shots and then, you know, improvise when needed'. Fortunately, everything came off, and I am happy that I batted well. But again, I would have loved that if the team had gone on to win."

He did not play in first four games but knew that sooner or later his chance would come and he would have to be ready. "Look, obviously, we lost an important player in Faf, and we always knew - the few of us batters who are sitting outside who should be and have to be ready at any given time. So, mentally, I was ready, and obviously looking forward to the chance, whenever it came,"

"I felt confident. I felt like, I am well prepared to play in the IPL if given the opportunity. So it was all about me preparing the way that I have been all through the season and waiting for my chance. So I was doing my bit to prepare and be ready for the game.

"It is always a tough call for the team to pick 11 or 12 players, and I have always respected that. For me, it was about preparing and keeping the same process that I followed, which has worked for me, and just being ready to go out there and perform for the team."

Veteran leg-spinner Karn Sharma, who dismissed Abhishek Porel, KL Rahul and Tristan Stubbs admitted that ball change after 13th over did help Mumbai Indians as it gripped and turned making life difficult for batters.

"I did not expect that there would be a dew. Because in the first innings, I think there was no dew. So when the ball was changed, the seam was newer and it was a little upright. So it gave me purchase from the wicket and we benefited from that," Karn, who took 3 for 36, said at the post match press conference.

Karn, who had won the IPL with Mumbai Indians in 2017, is considered as a 'Lucky Mascot' in IPL circles. He has been part of three IPL winning sides — SRH in 2016, MI in 2017 and CSK in 2018.

"It is a good thing that I came back after 6-7 years to Mumbai Indians where I finished in 2017. I just wanted to continue from there whenever I get a chance," Karn said.

"At that time, the situation was that they were going 10-11 runs per over. My role was just to take wickets in between. So, Mitchell Santner and I had to take wickets in between.

"In such matches, every wicket is important. The way they were playing, the way they were performing, the way the batting was going on ... Obviously, KL Rahul is a big name for them. And they finished the game very well in the last match. So, for us, all the wickets were important at that time."

George Foreman to be honoured at Houston memorial service

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Houston

Family, friends and the public are preparing to remember boxing legend, pastor and entrepreneur George Foreman during a memorial service in his hometown of Houston.

George Foreman IV, one of five sons of the boxing legend, along with Houston Mayor John Whitmire and former boxer Michael Moorer, who Foreman defeated in 1994 to become the oldest man at age 45 to win the heavyweight championship, are expected to speak at the service Monday.

The service will be hosted by Foreman's family and the city of Houston at the Wortham Theater Center, a performing arts center that is home to the city's ballet and opera companies.

"We are going to celebrate the life of George Foreman, two-time heavyweight champion of the world and certainly the face of how great Houston is," Whitmire said. Foreman died on March 21 at age 76. Foreman's family has not disclosed his cause of death, only saying on social media that he "peacefully departed … surrounded by loved ones."

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>
> — SOURCE, DESIGNATION

Born in Marshall, Texas, Foreman was raised in Houston's Fifth Ward, one of the city's historically Black neighborhoods.

He began his boxing career as an Olympic gold medalist in 1968, turning pro the next year.

Foreman became the heavyweight champion of the world when he beat Joe Frazier in 1973. But he lost the title the following year when Muhammad Ali beat Foreman in the famous "Rumble in the Jungle" fight in Zaire.

Foreman then gave up boxing and after a religious awakening, became an ordained minister in 1978. He began preaching in Houston, later founding The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in 1980. The middle-aged fighter returned to the ring after a 10-year absence and in 1994 pulled off one of the most spectacular knockouts in boxing history, flooring Moorer — 19 years his junior — with a surgical right hand to claim Moorer's two heavyweight belts.

Foreman retired in 1997 with a 76-5 career record.

He then moved to the next chapter in his life as a businessman, pitchman and occasional actor.

He became known to a new generation as the face of the George Foreman Grill. The simple cooking machine sold more than 100 million units and brought him more wealth than boxing. A biographical movie based on his life was released in 2023.

Foreman had 12 children, including five sons who are all famously named George Edward Foreman.

ISSF World Cup: Indian shooters look to maintain good form

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lima (Peru)

Indian shooters will look to maintain their impressive form when they take to the range in the ISSF World Cup beginning here from Tuesday.

The Indian team finished a creditable second in the year's first World Cup for rifle, pistol and shotgun shooters in Buenos Aires last week.

On the first competition day in the capital city of Peru, the likes of Manu Bhaker, Suruchi and Sainyam will be in action in the women's air pistol competition, while Saurabh Chaudhary, Varun Tomar and Ravinder will take another shot at gold in the men's air pistol event at the Las Palmas range.

Both the men's and women's 10m air pistol finals are scheduled for Tuesday.

Close to 400 shooters from 43 countries, including a 35-member Indian contingent, will compete across 15 events in the three disciplines of rifle, pistol and shotgun over the next week, to establish early supremacy with the blue-riband ISSF World Championships coming up at the end of the year.

India finished second to China in the first leg which concluded last week in Argentina. The squad had won four gold and a total of eight medals.

All winners from the Argentina World Cup will be competing in Lima.

Barcelona, PSG, Arsenal hold leads in Champions League quarterfinal matches

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Manchester

Barcelona, Paris Saint-Germain and Arsenal hold such commanding leads in their Champions League quarterfinal matches that a place in the last four looks all but certain.

Do not be so sure. European club soccer's most prestigious competition has a habit of upsetting the odds.

Barcelona and PSG have very recent memories of how quickly things can change. Barcelona was 4-2 up on aggregate against PSG early in the second leg of last year's quarterfinals - only to lose 6-4.

In 2017 PSG led 4-0 after the first leg of a round of 16 game between the two in Paris, but famously lost 6-1 at Camp Nou.

Part of what makes the Champions League such compelling viewing is the fragility of even the most commanding leads.

Liverpool trailed AC Milan 3-0 at halftime of the final of 2005 before staging a dramatic fightback and going on to win in a penalty shootout. The Merseyside club stunned Barcelona on its way to the title in 2019 when overturning a 3-0 loss in the first leg of the semifinals by winning the return leg 4-0.

There are many more examples of how the tables can be turned when Europe's elite go head-to-head, which is why nothing can be taken for granted ahead of this week's second leg matches.

REAL TROUBLE

Record 15-time winner and defending champion Real Madrid will have to produce another of its famous comebacks to overturn a 3-0 first leg loss to Arsenal.

If anyone can, Madrid can — but it goes into Wednesday's game at the Bernabeu after a run of unconvincing results. Carlo Ancelotti's team has only won one of its last four games in all competitions — Sunday's 1-0 victory against Alaves.

The defeat to Arsenal could have been even heavier after being dominated at the Emirates Stadium and came after Madrid needed a penalty shootout to overcome Atletico Madrid in the round of 16.

But Madrid's history is built on producing special performances in Europe. Its run to the title in 2022 was filled with dramatic comebacks — none more so than the semifinals win against Manchester City when trailing 5-3 on aggregate going into the 90th minute of the second leg. Madrid simply never knows when it is beaten.

EUROPE'S FINEST?

This could be the first great Barcelona team of the post-Lionel Messi era. Top of the Spanish league and on the verge of the Champions League semifinals, Barcelona looks like the team to beat in this year's competition. Leading 4-0 against Borussia Dortmund, it would take the unlikeliest of collapses in Germany on Tuesday to prevent Hansi Flick's team from booking its place in the semifinals.

With the devastating goal-scoring power of Robert Lewandowski and the individual brilliance of Raphinha and Lamine Yamal, this looks like Barcelona's best team since the days of Messi, Neymar and Luis Suarez and its best chance in a long time of winning its first Champions League title since 2015.

A NEW ERA

The post-Kylian Mbappe era is going just fine for PSG. A record-extending 13th French league title has already been sealed and there have been standout performances in the Champions League.

After struggling early on in the tournament, wins against Manchester City and Liverpool have underlined PSG's progress under Luis Enrique this season, with an exciting young team that is full of flair.

While less reliant on the individual brilliance of long-time talisman Mbappe, PSG has been driven by the outstanding form of Ousmane Dembele, who is realizing the potential that convinced Barcelona to pay up to 147 million euros (then $173 million) when signing him from Dortmund in 2017. A run of 24 goals in 18 games between December and March established him as one of the deadliest forwards in Europe.

Leading 3-1 against Aston Villa after the first leg of their quarterfinal, PSG looks in control, but has so often failed to live up to expectations in this competition.

DARK HORSE

Inter Milan leads Bayern Munich 2-1 in the closest match of the quarterfinals.

Davide Frattesi's 88th-minute winner in Munich gave the 2023 finalist the advantage heading into the second leg at the San Siro. Bayern, under Vincent Kompany, cruised to the quarterfinals and looks like regaining the German league title this season. Inter could be the dark horse of this year's competition, having come so close to stopping City's treble of trophies two years ago.

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