

# INDIA SHALL IDENTIFY, TRACK AND PUNISH EVERY TERRORIST

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE** ■ New Delhi/Madhubani (Bihar)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday sent out a fierce message that perpetrators of Pahalgalam terror attack will be pursued "to the ends of the earth" and promised to "identify, track and punish every terrorist and their backers".

India's spirit will never be broken by terrorism.

Modi then spoke in English and said, "Friends, today from the soil of Bihar, I say to the whole world India will identify, track, and punish every terrorist and their backers. We will pursue them to the ends of the earth. India's spirit will never be broken by terrorism. Terrorism will not go unpunished."

In his first reaction after the dastardly attack, which left 26 dead on Tuesday, Modi also vowed that terrorists and conspirators behind the attack will get a punishment beyond their imagination.

In a message to Pakistan without naming the country, Modi said he will state it categorically that the terrorists who carried out the attack and those who hatched the conspiracy, they will be punished beyond their imagination. "Punishment will definitely be served." The prime minister said the willpower of 140 crore

## PM'S PLEDGE TO THE NATION



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaking at the National Panchayati Raj Day programme in Madhubani district of Bihar

Indians will break the back of patrons of terrorism.

Paying condolences to the victims and their families, he said citizens across the country are in mourning over the brutal manner in which terrorists killed 26 innocent civilians in Kashmir on April 22. The nation stands with their families, he said. Modi, other leaders on the dais and the crowd observed silence to pay homage to the victims of the attack at the beginning of the prime minister's speech.

He said people lost their sons, brothers and husbands and noted that the victims belong to different parts of India, be it Bengal, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Odisha and Bihar. "Our sorrow and anger are same from Kargil to Kanniyakumari," he said. Peace and security are the most necessary conditions for fast development, he added.

Earlier, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar condemned the terror attack at Pahalgalam and told the prime minister that the entire nation was united against terrorism.

Panchayati Raj Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh said the entire nation had belief in Modi's strength and were confident he would give a befitting reply to the perpetrators of terror at an appropriate time. These strong assertions came a day after India on Wednesday downgraded diplomatic ties with Pakistan and announced a raft of measures, including expulsion of Pakistani military attaches, suspension of the Indus Water Treaty of 1960 and immediate shutting down of the Attari land-transit post in view of the cross-border links to the horrific Pahalgalam terror attack.

These decisions were taken in Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) meeting chaired by Prime Minister. He had cut short his visit to Saudi Arabia and returned to New Delhi on Wednesday. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval and Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri briefed him about the situation at the airport.

## Army Commando killed in Jammu and Kashmir

**MOHIT KANDHARI** ■ Jammu

An elite Para Commando of the Indian Army was 'killed in action' after an encounter broke out during an ongoing search operation in the forest area of Dudu Basantgarh in Udhampur district of Jammu region on Thursday.

A joint team of security forces were combing the area based on the receipt of information about the presence of terrorists in the area.

After the brutal massacre of tourists in Pahalgalam, in which 26 tourists were killed and 17 others were wounded on Tuesday, this is the third encounter in the last 24 hours between terrorists and security forces in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Indian Army on Wednesday foiled an infiltration bid in the Uri Nala area of Baramulla, killing two terrorists amid an intense firefight.

The second encounter broke out after terrorists opened fire on security personnel

during a cordon and search operation in the Tangmarg area of Kulgam district of south Kashmir.

It is believed the forces were looking for the same group of terrorists who were earlier spotted in the Joffer area of Ramnagar tehsil on April 9.

**After the brutal massacre of tourists in Pahalgalam, in which 26 tourists were killed and 17 others were wounded on Tuesday, this is the third encounter in the last 24 hours**

"Based on specific intelligence, a joint operation with Jammu and Kashmir Police was launched today in the Basantgarh area of Udhampur," the White Knight Corps said on X. Contact was established, and a fierce firefight ensued, it said.

"One of our bravehearts sustained griev-

ous injuries in the initial exchange and later succumbed despite best medical efforts," the Army said.

The deceased soldier has been identified as Havaladar Jhantu Ali Sheikh of 6 Para of the Special Forces.

"GOC White Knight Corps and all ranks salute braveheart Havaladar Jhantu Ali Shaikh of 6 PARA SF, who made the supreme sacrifice during a counter-terror operation," the Army said on X.

The Army said his indomitable courage and the valour of his team will never be forgotten. "We stand in solidarity with the bereaved family in this moment of grief," the Army added. The operation was still underway when the last reports came in from the spot, they added.

Four suspects were also picked up from the area for questioning.

In the last year, the area of Basantgarh has witnessed several incidents of terrorist violence.

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## Raksha Mantri holds All-Party meet

**DEEPAK KUMAR JHA** ■ New Delhi

The crucial All Party meeting convened by Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh saw all the political parties including the Opposition extending full support to the Narendra Modi Government in its fight against terrorism. Sources said the Government admitted to security lapses in the recent Pahalgalam terror attack, which killed 26 people and injured many others.

The Government briefed leaders of various political parties on the Pahalgalam terror attack and heard their views at the All Party meeting. At the beginning of the meeting, a moment of silence was observed for the victims of the attack.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh initiated the discussion at the meeting, Intelligence Bureau Director Tapan Deka gave all leaders a 20-minute briefing on the attack and how it happened.

Later, he answered the questions of sev-

eral leaders and Home Minister Amit Shah joined him in answering the queries. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman were also present at the meeting from the government's side.

During the closed door meeting which lasted for about 46 minutes, several Opposition parties asked questions about the apparent failure of security protocols. "Where were the security forces? Where was the Central Reserve Police Force?" several leaders asked, according to sources.

In response, the Government reportedly said local authorities did not inform security agencies before opening the Baisaran area near Pahalgalam in Anantnag district, which traditionally remains restricted until the Amarnath Yatra in June. Concerns were also raised about the delayed response to the incident. According to sources, Government officials explained that the site was a 45-

minute uphill walk and that no standard operating procedure (SOP) was in place to handle such situations.

Leaders across party lines assured their support to the Government in taking decisive action against terrorism and destroying terror camps, even as they flagged security lapses in Pahalgalam.

Sources said Government claimed it was taking all measures to ensure security. It noted that the attack was aimed at vitiating the atmosphere at a time when the economy was on the upswing and tourism was booming in Jammu and Kashmir.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said everyone agreed that India should fight terror united and all parties said that they are with the Government in this fight. All political parties have given this message and their leaders have said in one voice that whatever step the Government takes, they will support it.

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## The Bystander



## Read the sign: No entry for Pakistanis

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE** ■ New Delhi

India on Thursday scaled up its hard stance in the wake of the Pahalgalam terror attack by suspending visas to Pakistani nationals with immediate effect. It also advised Indian nationals to avoid travelling to Pakistan and advised those currently there to return home at the earliest.

The account of 'Government of Pakistan' on X (formerly known as Twitter), meanwhile, was withheld in India on Thursday. A message appearing on the handle's X account read, "Account Withheld @GovtofPakistan has been withheld in IN in response to a legal demand."

The new measures came a day after India on Wednesday downgraded diplomatic ties with Pakistan and announced a raft of measures including expulsion of Pakistani military attaches, suspension of the Indus Water Treaty of 1960 and immediate shutting down of the Attari land-transit post in view of the cross-border links to the Pahalgalam attack that killed 26 people. Announcing the fresh retaliatory steps, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said all existing valid visas issued by India to Pakistani nationals stand revoked with effect from April 27.

It said medical visas issued to Pakistani nationals will be valid only till April 29. The MEA said all Pakistani nationals currently in India must leave the country



A security official walking past the entrance of the Pakistan High Commission on Thursday

before the expiry of visas.

It also strongly advised Indian nationals to avoid travelling to Pakistan and advised those currently in the neighbouring country to return home at the earliest.

The punitive measures against Pakistan were decided at a meeting of Cabinet Committee on Security headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday called on President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here.

The meeting comes in the wake of the terrorist attack in Pahalgalam in which 26 men, mostly tourists and including a Nepalese citizen, were gunned down in cold blood.

"Union Minister for Home Affairs and Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah and Minister of External Affairs, Dr S Jaishankar called on President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan," the President's office said in a social media post along with a picture of the meeting.

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## Cricketer Gambhir fears for life

**VAISHNAVI MISHRA** ■ New Delhi

Team India head coach and former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Member of Parliament (MP) Gautam Gambhir has reportedly received a death threat from "ISIS Kashmir". The threats were allegedly received on April 22 - the same day terrorists gunned down 26 people, mostly tourists, in Kashmir's Pahalgalam - from a suspicious Gmail account. The first email threat to Gambhir was sent at 1407hrs on April 22 from an e-mail ID named named jigneshsindhodhparmar14@gmail.com while the second mail was received at 1909 hrs from an ID named named chandrossodha3@gmail.com. Both containing the message, "IKILLU" Cyber cell of the Delhi Police is currently working to trace the origin of the email and identify the sender.

Gambhir's secretary Gaurav Arora has filed an email complaint with the Delhi Police attaching screenshots of the threat mails. "Dear sir, Namaskar, As we spoke, please find below the 'Threat Mails' received on the mail ID of Mr Gautam Gambhir (Ex-MP), Head Coach Indian Cricket Team. Kindly register the FIR accordingly and ensure the safety and security of the family," stated the complaint. Gambhir formally submitted a request for the registration of a First Information Report (FIR) too, according to the SHO Rajinder Nagar Police Station

**The threats were allegedly received on April 22, the same day terrorists gunned down 26 people, mostly tourists, in Kashmir's Pahalgalam, from suspicious Gmail accounts**

and the DCP Central Delhi.

"We have been informed about an alleged threat mail received on an email ID associated with Gautam Gambhir. Same is being investigated. We are verifying the email IDs," said Harsha Vardhan, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central).

When asked about if the threats have any connection with the Pahalgalam terror attack, he said, "It is too early to say this." The former India cricketer recently returned with his family from a holiday in France after leading Team India to Champions Trophy success before the IPL 2025 began.

On Tuesday, Gambhir condemned the terror attack on tourists in Pahalgalam, he posted on X platform. "Praying for the families of the deceased. Those responsible for this will pay. India will strike." This is not the first time Gambhir has received such threats, in November 2021, during his tenure as a sitting Member of Parliament, he had received a similar email.

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## PIONEER IN SHORT

### Massive anti-Naxal operation underway

Over 10,000 security personnel, including CRPF, Telangana, and Chhattisgarh police forces, are engaged in a major operation against Maoists in the forests along the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border. The ongoing assault, which began on Monday, aims to neutralise top Maoist commander Hidma and has led to the deaths of three female Naxals so far. The operation, involving around 5,000 troops, is being led by CRPF's CoBRA battalion and supported by helicopters, drones, and satellite surveillance. With over 60 hours of intense firefighting, the operation is one of the largest launched this year, as part of the government's goal to end Left Wing Extremism by 2026.

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### Delhi traders call bandh over Pahalgalam attack

Trade bodies including the Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI) and the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) have called a bandh in Delhi on Friday to protest the Pahalgalam terror attack. The shutdown, supported by over 100 markets and merchant associations, is intended as a peaceful tribute to the victims. A candle march was held Thursday at Connaught Place, where traders wore black armbands in solidarity. Key markets like Chandni Chowk, Sadar Bazar, Rajouri Garden, and Jama Masjid will remain closed. BJP MP Praveen Khandelwal emphasised it as a symbol of unity, not protest. Nationwide, civil groups also condemned the killings.

## India mourns its dead: From North to South, East to West

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA** ■ Jaipur/Ahmedabad/Balalore

Flames leapt from funeral pyres, suppressed sobs and anguished cries mingled with the sound of mantras and the fragrance of flowers and incense lingered. It was the final adieu for the families of those killed in Pahalgalam and also for a country in mourning with them.

On Thursday, the last rites of several of the 26 gunned down by terrorists in Baisaran in the upper reaches of Pahalgalam were held - from Odisha to Gujarat and from Rajasthan to Karnataka. A snapshot as it were of the prime holiday destination that Kashmir has been for people across the country and indication of the belief that all was well in the volatile Valley.

The dead in Tuesday's terror strike were all men, 26 lives of promise that ended in a hail of bullets. And back in their homes, families grieved for the sons, fathers and husbands they had lost, some stoic and others inconsolable.

A hush fell over many villages and towns as funeral corteges wound their way to crematoriums and shops downed shutters.

In Ishani village in Odisha's Balasore district, nine-year-old Tanuj Kumar Satpathy

lit the pyre of his father Prashant.

It was just two days ago that the family - 41-year-old Prashant, an employee of the Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology, his wife Priya Darshini and Tanuj - were in Pahalgalam.

A distraught Priya Darshini did not allow anyone to touch the body of her husband, hugging it till she crumpled in a faint.

Hundreds of people gathered in Ishani to pay their respects to Prashant, lining up on both sides of the road as the funeral procession proceeded to the crematorium a kilometre away. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Balasore MP Pratap Chandra Sarangi were among those who accompanied Tanuj from his home to the crematorium.

Amid chants of "Jai Hind" and "Prashant Satpathy Amar Rahe", young Tanuj lit the pyre, a sight that seared the consciousness of everyone who was watching, whether in Ishani or on their mobile and television screens. The Satpathy family's story found tragic echo in many other parts of the country.

In Jaipur, the flower-bedecked bier of 33-year-old Neeraj Udhvani made its way down a quiet street with mourners walking silently behind and lining the streets.



Rajasthan deputy CM Diya Kumari pays tribute to Neeraj Udhvani, who was killed in the Pahalgalam terror attack

The chartered accountant had come from Dubai to attend a wedding and on an impulse decided to holiday in Kashmir. As his elder brother Kishore lit the funeral pyre at Moksh Dham in Jhalana, his wife Ayushi fought back her tears. He was shot dead right in front of her eyes.

The funeral was attended by large crowds. Political lines blurred as Rajasthan Governor Haribhau Bagade, Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma, Union minister Jagendra Singh Shekhawat as well as state Congress chief Govind Singh Dotasra among others visited Udhvani's Model

Town residence. A woman in the crowd spoke out loudly. "This is your government's failure. What is the point of deploying security here now?" In response, Shekhawat was seen standing with folded hands, acknowledging the grief and anger of the people.

Gujarat saw three funerals - Yatish Parmar and his son Smit from Bhavnagar city and Shailesh Kalathiya, a resident of Surat. Everywhere, local residents and political bigwigs joined the families, an outpouring of grief and anger that united them all. Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, who reached Bhavnagar on Wednesday night, paid floral tributes to Yatish and Smit Parmar at their residence in the Kaliyabid area before the bodies were taken for cremation on Thursday morning.

In Surat, Union minister CR Paatil along with Gujarat Minister of State for Home Harsh Sanghani were among the dignitaries who paid floral tributes to Kalathiya.

And in Hathipur village in Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur district, 31-year-old businessman Shubham Dwivedi was given a tearful sendoff with full state honours.

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# Body of missing car driver found inside his vehicle

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The body of a missing car driver was recovered from inside his car which was parked near Kathauta Jheel in Vibhuti Khand police station area on Thursday.

The police have not ruled out the possibility of some foul play and are collecting details of the friends and foes of the deceased.

The deceased, identified as Arun Kumar Dubey, was a native of Amethi and worked as a driver. The car from which Arun's body was recovered is registered in his name. He was found lying on the front seat of car.

According to local residents, the car was parked on the roadside for the last four days. The Vibhuti Khand police said the car was recovered from near Vijaypur crossing in Vikrant Khand. Vibhuti Khand's station house officer said forensic team reached the spot and collected samples.

"Prima facie it seems to be a case of death due to suffocation. But we are not ruling out other possibilities," a police spokesman

said. The deceased's relative, Santosh Pathak, who reached the spot after getting information, said Arun had not returned home since April 21 and he had lodged a missing report at Gomti Nagar Extension police station on Thursday morning.

According to Santosh, Arun was the only earning member of his family and he is survived by his wife, Puja, two daughters and a 6-year-old son. The deceased also has a brother who is said to be mentally challenged.

Arun had left home at 6 am on April 21 and then his location was found in Indira Nagar at 2 pm on that day. Since then, Arun was untraceable.

Meanwhile, the body of a missing truck driver was found lying outside the boundary wall of a private factory manufacturing cement roofing sheets in Mohanlalgarj on Thursday.

The deceased was identified as Ehsan Ansari (55) of Azad Nagar in Bhuli police station area of Dhanbad district in Jharkhand. He had come to Lucknow on April 20 to load cement roofing sheets from a transporter's office close to the factory.

Preliminary investigation revealed that Ehsan had left the factory on foot on Wednesday and had told his truck's cleaner that he was going for a walk. When he did not return till late evening, the cleaner started a search for Ehsan when the transporter asked him to load the goods. He also contacted Ehsan's family after he did not find him. Later a missing person report was lodged at the police station.

On Thursday afternoon, some commuters spotted the body of a man lying near the boundary wall of the factory. On getting information, the police also reached the spot. The investigators said injury marks were found on the head of the deceased.

Police suspect Ehsan died in a road mishap. "Pieces of broken windshield of some four-wheeler were found at the scene. It seems that a vehicle hit Ehsan and he died due to injuries," the police said.

According to Additional Commissioner of Police (Mohanlalgarj) Rajneesh Verma, the body was found on Lucknow-Rae Bareilly highway near the boundary wall of the private factory.

The family members of the deceased reached the spot and identified the body.

# IGNOU, MKITM sign MoU

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and Manyava Kansiram Institute of Tourism Management (MKITM) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Thursday to strengthen collaboration in the field of tourism education, training and research. This partnership marks a key step towards aligning academic programmes with industry needs and enhancing professional skills among students in Uttar Pradesh.

The MoU was signed at a formal ceremony held at the Directorate of Tourism in the presence of Principal Secretary of Tourism and Culture Mukesh Meshram, Director of Tourism, Prakash Mishra and IGNOU V-C Prof Uma Kanjilal. The other dignitaries included Dr Alok

Chaubey, Dr Sonia Sharma, Prof Harkirat Bains, Regional Director IGNOU Anil Kumar Mishra, Assistant Director Dr Kirti Vikram and senior representatives from MKITM.

Meshrum emphasised Uttar Pradesh's rise as a major domestic tourism hub and underlined the need for skilled professionals to meet the growing demand in the tourism and hospitality sector. "This MoU will help build a capable workforce not just for the state but also for national and international markets," he stated.

IGNOU V-C Prof Uma Kanjilal called the collaboration a significant opportunity to develop industry-aligned courses. "Our goal is to offer training that enhances employability of students and meets industry standards," she said.

Tourism Director Prakash Mishra said this partnership was a crucial step toward

delivering quality and practical education. "It's a golden opportunity to elevate tourism education in the state and empower both students and the local industry," he added. Established in 1991, MKITM is a leading institute under the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department, offering a variety of short-and long-term programmes in tourism and hospitality. Under the MoU, both institutions have agreed to jointly develop academic programmes, ensure quality assurance and promote vocational education through innovative methods.

A Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) comprising seven members—four from IGNOU and three from MKITM will oversee the partnership.

Uttar Pradesh Tourism and Culture Minister Jaijeer Singh welcomed the MoU, calling it a milestone for the state's tourism sector.

# Class IX girl student hangs self in Chinhat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

A class IX girl student ended her life at her house in Chinhat on Thursday afternoon. She was all alone at her rented house when she took the extreme step. The girl was identified as Shagun Singh of Kamta village. She was found hanging from the ceiling when her mother, Anshika Singh, reached home around 2:45 pm.

Anshika is a supervisor in a private company located in Vibhuti Khand of Gomti Nagar. Anshika had left for her office at 6:30 am and returned home at 2:45 pm. She found the room's door closed from inside. When she peeped inside the room through a slit in the window she saw her daughter hanging from the ceiling.

The girl was rushed to Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital where doctors pronounced her dead. The girl was a native of Gonda. Her father works as a driver. She was enrolled at a school in Gonda and had returned to her mother on Wednesday after appearing in her final examination.

# Man, son killed as car hits tractor-trolley

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

A man and his son were killed when their car rammmed into a tractor-trolley parked at the roadside on Sitapur road near Madiyaon police station on Thursday.

Two other members of the family and the car driver were seriously injured in the mishap and they were admitted to the Trauma Centre of King George's Medical University.

The family was going from Bareilly to Ayodhya to pay obeisance at the Ram Lalla temple.

Police said the accident took place near Deori Rukhara village on Lucknow-Sitapur highway.

The deceased were identified as Vikas Chandra Hajela of Subhash Nagar in Bareilly and his son Gaurav Hajela. Gaurav's wife Prachi and their son Ayan and car driver Arpit Dixit sustained injuries. The condition of Prachi and Ayan was said to be critical.

Due to the heavy impact of the collision the car was badly damaged.

The police suspect the car rammmed into the tractor-trolley as the driver dozed off and the car went out of control.

Meanwhile, a youth riding a scooter died after he got sandwiched between a Thar jeep and a SUV that collided head-on in Cantonment police station area on Wednesday night.

The deceased was identified from the Aadhaar card found in his pocket as 29-year-old Mahesh Singhania of Kankarbagh, Patna, Bihar. He lived in the Cantonment police station area.

The accident took place near Dilkusha Garden.

Eyewitnesses told police that the Thar jeep and SUV collided head-on near Dilkusha Garden and Mahesh Singhania, who was passing by, suddenly got caught between them.

Some people present there took the injured youth to SPM (Civil) Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead.

Police said Rs 40,000 and an Aadhaar card were recovered from Mahesh's pocket. After the accident, traffic on the road remained disrupted for hours.

## CLASSIFIEDS

### NOTICE

I have changed my name Naveen Kumar Jaiswal To Naveen Jaiswal for all future purposes S/o Late Ram Ashry H.No.107/244-A, Nehru Nagar R.K.Nagar Kanpur Nagar

### NOTICE

It is notified to the general public that my son Prince Yadav's name has been erroneously recorded as Shubham Yadav in the records of City Convent School. Whereas his name in his Aadhar card is mentioned as Prince Yadav. I want to register my son's name as Prince Yadav instead of Shubham Yadav. Amuk Yadav, S/o Shri Ghanshyam Yadav resident-285 K H/106, Sanjay Nagar Eveready Chauraha Mill Road, Aishbagh, Rajendra Nagar, Lucknow

### NOTICE

I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM FAREHA ANJUM TO UZMA SAEED D/O SAEEDUDDIN QADER R/O, 11/29 M-1, SOUTER GANJ CIVIL LINES KANPUR NAGAR

### NOTICE

My father's name is Rajesh Gupta in my educational certificates. Where as Rajesh Kumar Gupta is mentioned in my Aadhar card. Both the names belong to the same person. Shachi Gupta D/o Rajesh Kumar Gupta resident of 615 Lane-7, Phool Bagh Colony, Meerut.

### NOTICE

I, Mohd Fariq, appeared in Class 10th (2025) from St. Fidelis College, Unique ID:8518476. My father's and mother's names were incorrectly mentioned as Asif Nazir Khan and Mohd Mozamma Firdaus. Kindly correct them as: Father's Name: Asif Nazir Mother's Name: Mouzamma Firdaus This notice is for official record correction.

### NOTICE

I have changed my name from PREETI SAGAR AZAD TO PREETI SINGH. Preeti Singh W/o Dharendra Singh R/o CV-1, SECOND FLOOR, NRI CITY MAINAWATI MARG, KANPUR NAGAR-208017

### NOTICE

I informed that my Son's name changed from Kartik to Animesh Pratap Singh. In future called him Animesh Pratap Singh till now. Aditya Kumar Singh, Shankargarh, Mazre Felsanda, Rudauli, Ayodhya

### NOTICE

Informed That, Bifour Marriage my Name is Kumari Ritika Singh D/o Shiv Raj Singh On behalf educational records. Change my name is Afhar Marriage Ritika Verma D/o Shiv Raj Singh W/o Dipak Varma. On behalf of Aadhar card & Pan card. In future, She would be known and recognised by this name only. Ritika Varma W/o Dipak Varma R/o Safayar Suprim thard floor 117/H.-2/140 Pandu Nagar (Bihand Dwivedi Hospital H.S.Nagar) Kanpur City (U.P.) 208005

### NOTICE

To be Informed That I have lost my original sale agreement dated 06 /05/ 2005 of the property located at plot NO - 75 Sector- N Ashiyana kanpur Road Lucknow while pursuing photo copy of my original documents Neha Singh W/o Randeep Singh HN -1153/3 Hanuman puri Sarojni Nagar Lucknow

### NOTICE

I Arvind kumar S/o Dhunnulal R/o: E/6/B, P.D.Nagar, Unnao, has been lost my original Allotment Letter above house issued by Unnao Shuklaganj development authority, Unnao, No.612(6) Ramp/D.A./2002-03/Ashraya vihin dt.30/12/2002

### NOTICE

For all concurring i beg to inform that i change the name of my son from Aradhy Pratap Singh to Abhiraj Pratap Singh for his good health on advice of my astrologer. Hence he will be known/read by Abhiraj Pratap Singh S/o Alok Kumar Singh for all records and purpose. Alok Kumar Singh. R/o-Shivrajpur. Post-Gadwara Distt-Pratapgarh (UP).

### NOTICE

I 14447143-P L/NK/GD-KRISHNA KUMAR S/O JAY KARAN YADAV VILL- PURE PANAI POST- HAJIPATTI TEHS & DISTT-SULTANPUR(UP) here-by Declare that in service record my wife Name and DOB is incorrectly mentioned as Indu Devi DOB-07.12.1983 which should be read and written as. INDU KUMARI DOB-25-11-1981 respectively.

### NOTICE

I have changed the name of my daughter from Naina Soni To Veedikaa Soni. In future she will be known and identified as Veedikaa Soni, Roshan Soni 8/440, Gandhi Nagar, Shuklaganj Unnao

### NOTICE

I am Durgesh Srivastava son of Kailash nath srivastava want to inform all that I have lost the original copy of allotment letter dated 14/02/2007 that was Issue by Uttar Pradesh awas Vikas Parishad Gonda bharatpuri Yojana in favour of Nisha Pandey wife of Ajay Kumar Pandey for House No. L- 1779 bharatpuri Yojana Gonda In case anyone finds the same then please inform me on my mobile number 9565000009. use of the document without my knowledge will be treated unconstitutional.

### Required

M.P.B. Degree College Village Kasmandikala, P.O. Malihabad, District- Lucknow  
Required Principal-01 post, Assistant Professor for the following subjects: Economics, Education, English Literature, History, Hindi Literature, Political Science, Sociology, Assistant Professor/Professor and for each subject of B.Com. Salary and Qualification:- As per Lucknow University bye-laws and UGC standards. E-mail the application to the institution by 30 may E-mail ID: mpbbpublic@gmail.com  
Manager Mrs Anita Singh Pradhan Mobile No. 8081619759

# Bodies of lovers found; suicide suspected

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Partially-clothed bodies of a youth and a girl were found lying under mysterious circumstances in Gorakhpur on Thursday morning.

A bottle containing some poisonous substance was also found near the girl.

The police have sent the bodies for post-mortem and have started an investigation.

According to information, the bodies of 24-year-old Vishwanath Singh and a girl, Neetu, were found under suspicious circumstances near Chitutha bridge near Jungle Kauriya in Chiluatal police station area of Gorakhpur on Thursday morning.

The bodies were identified on the basis of the youth's purse and the girl's Aadhaar and PAN cards. There were light scratch marks at some places.

According to the police, the bodies were found near Chitutha bridge on Gorakhpur-Sonauli road at around 8 am. The deceased Neetu (of Campierganj) was in a semi-nude state, a bottle of sulphas, water bottles, maroon handbag, watch, nose ring and dupatta were found near her body.

The body of Vishwanath Singh (also of Campierganj) was in only underwear and a saffron towel, blue jeans and belt were lying nearby. Both bodies were 100 metres apart, and an Activa scooter (UP 42 D 2645) and its keys were found in between them. Both were in love for four years. Neetu was married and divorced, and she lived in Gorakhpur, while Vishwanath worked in a hospital in Delhi. Vishwanath was threatening to commit suicide for the last few days.

Campierganj Circle Officer Gaurav Tripathi said that a report of Neetu's disappearance was registered at Campierganj police station on Wednesday.

Superintendent of Police (North) Jitendra Kumar Srivastava said that prima facie it appeared to be a suicide case as sulphas bottles were found near the bodies.

# BBAU prof, team gets patent

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Head and Dean of the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences at Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (BBAU) Prof PS Rajnikanth and his research team have been granted a patent for groundbreaking nanofibre technology in diabetic wound healing. This innovation marks first-of-its-kind development in India, potentially revolutionising wound care for millions affected by diabetes.

# Solar energy brings light, livelihood

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The Uttar Pradesh government is using solar energy not just to light up homes, but also to create jobs for the youth. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the state has launched a new plan to train and employ 30,000 young people in the solar energy sector by 2027.

This initiative is being carried out by the Uttar Pradesh New and Renewable Energy Development Agency (UPNEDA), in collaboration with the National Institute for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (ni-mse) and the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. The initiative is equipping youth across the state with solar technology skills to help them become self-reliant in the future.

Recognising the rising demand in the solar energy sector, the state government envisions a wave of new job opportunities for youth in roles such as installation technicians, maintenance engineers and site supervisors. To meet this emerging need, special training programmes are being rolled out to equip young people with the necessary skills.

UPNEDA, along with the National Institute for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and the Ministry of Skill Development, is training vendors under the Surya Ghar scheme. So far, nearly 1,800 people

have been trained.

In addition, programmes like Surya Mitra Training, Solar Shops, and the Surya Sakhi Yojana are also being implemented. These schemes aim to provide training and jobs not only to youth, but also to women in rural areas. The government's goal is to make Uttar Pradesh self-reliant in solar energy while also empowering women and youth economically.

Uttar Pradesh has set a target to produce 22,000 megawatts of solar energy by 2027. To meet this goal, specific production targets have been allocated across different sectors. The government aims to generate 4,500 MW from residential rooftop solar systems, 1,500 MW from non-residential rooftops, 2,000 MW through the PM-KUSUM scheme for farmers, and the largest share — 14,000 MW — from utility-scale solar projects.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha Evam Utthaan Mahabhayan (PM-KUSUM) scheme, farmers are being provided with solar-powered pumps, which not only reduce irrigation costs but also offer them the opportunity to earn additional income by selling surplus energy. Similarly, under the rooftop solar scheme, both residential and commercial buildings are being encouraged to install solar panels, helping users meet their own electricity needs while cutting power bills.

# UP govt empowers civil services aspirants with Sanskrit training

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

In a significant step towards inclusive education, the Yogi Adityanath government has emerged as a strong support system for students preparing for civil services through Sanskrit medium. This visionary initiative is not only benefiting students within the state, but also attracting aspirants from across the country.

Since 2019, the Uttar Pradesh Sanskrit Sansthan has been preparing youth for various competitive exams, including the civil services. The recent success of two students from the institution in the Civil Services Examination 2024 stands as a testament to its growing impact. So far, the institute has guided four candidates to become IAS officers and 18 to secure positions in PCS, with a total of 62 selections in various competitive examinations.

The initiative goes beyond coaching, offering students a monthly scholarship of Rs 3,000, free study material and a structured support system. The selected candidates have praised the institute for its dedicated efforts.

Senior Administrative Officer of the Uttar Pradesh Sanskrit Sansthan, Dinesh

Mishra, said that two students from the institute have been selected in the Civil Services Examination 2024. Among them, Tanmay secured 346th rank and Yatish Agrawal has secured 761st rank. Tanmay is from Nagpur and Yatish is from Dhar in Madhya Pradesh. In the 2023-24 session, another student, Shailekh Shukla, was selected for the post of lekhpal. During the same session, Rajbhushan Maurya, Upasana Tripathi, and Sangam Vajpayee were selected as assistant professors, while Shretank Mishra, Piyush Mishra, Chandan Yadav, and Alok Pandey were selected as Sanskrit lecturers.

Former Chairman of the Uttar Pradesh Sanskrit Sansthan Dr Vachaspati Mishra said inspired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's love and commitment towards Sanskrit, the institute started a flagship programme in December 2019. Under it free coaching and guidance is provided to students preparing for civil services. The aim is to make Sanskrit more job-oriented and to encourage young people to take interest in it as a language useful in administrative services.

He said under chief minister's leadership, Sanskrit is steadily emerging as an administrative language in Uttar Pradesh. Previously viewed solely as a language for religious rituals, Sanskrit is now recognised as a gateway to government employment, he pointed out.

Coordinator of the Civil Services Free Coaching Programme Dr Sheelwant Singh, explained that this is a 10-month integrated training course. It helps students prepare for the preliminary, mains and interview stages of the Civil Services Examination with Sanskrit Literature as the subject. Students receive a monthly scholarship of Rs 3,000 along with free study material, mock tests and a test series.

They also attend daily classes of four to five hours conducted by subject experts. In addition, senior officers who have cleared the examinations with Sanskrit and other subjects are invited from time to time to deliver special lectures to guide and motivate the students.

"I received great support from the Civil Services Coaching and Guidance Programme run by the Uttar Pradesh Sanskrit Sansthan, especially during the preparation for the prelims, mains and interview," asserted Yatish Agarwal.

# Temple priest found dead

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

In a shocking incident, the priest of Radha Krishna temple was shot dead on Thursday morning in Balrampur.

Passersby informed the police after which senior officers rushed to the spot and started investigations. They sent the body for a post-mortem examination and formed teams to search for the killers.

According to reports, the body of the priest was found lying near Dipwa Bagh dam of Nagar Kotwali in Balrampur. The deceased was identified as Shatrughan Dwivedi alias Babu, son of Krishna Kumar Dwivedi, resident of Mohalla Khaalwa. The deceased's brother Sevak Das said that his family worships at Jharkhandi Radha Krishna Temple.

On Wednesday evening, a youth had come to the temple and enquired about Babu and also requested his mobile number. When they asked for his introduction and what work he had with Babu, he quietly left. At around 8 pm, some people took Babu away from his home.

After a long time, a search for Babu was launched and the local police was informed. Finally on Thursday morning, information was received that Babu's body was lying in Dipwa Bagh. On receiving information of murder, Superintendent of Police Vikas Kumar reached the spot with police force and forensic team.

**PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY**  
MARINE DEPARTMENT  
No.MD/ACCTS/W/R-05/2025/006 Date: 15/04/2025  
E-TENDER CALL NOTICE (E-TCN)  
Name of the Work : Chartering of Green Tug (Green Tug Transition Programme Compliant) - Manning, Operation, Maintenance and Complete Technical Management of Service Provider Owned 01 No. 60 T Bollard Pull New Battery Electric Tug for 15 Years at Paradip Port Authority. Estimated cost put to tender for hire charges for one year : Rs.24,47,28,667/-  
Last date & time of submission of tender through on-line bidding is 15:00 Hours on 08/07/2025. Date & time for opening of Technical Bid is 15:30 hours on 08/07/2025. For further details, please log on to the Website: <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>.  
Sd/- Deputy Conservator, Paradip Port Authority  
PPA/PR/06/2025-2026 dttd.23.04.2025

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FASHION TECHNOLOGY**  
(Ministry of Textiles, Govt of India)  
NIFT Campus, Mithapur Farms, Patna -800001  
**RECRUITMENT NOTICE**  
National Institute of Fashion Technology invites applications to engage faculties on Short Term Contract basis for its extension centre at Begusarai, Bihar. The last date of submitting the application is 11.05.2025. The details of the posts are available at the website [www.nift.ac.in/patna](http://www.nift.ac.in/patna)  
Administration  
NIFT - Patna

**GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY, AMRITSAR**  
Tender Notice  
The Department of G.N.D.U. Amritsar invites online bids for the following:  

Sr. No.	Reference no.	Item	Quantity	Closing Date & Time
1	GNDU/Gen/07/2025	Photocopier Paper	4000 ream	08-05-2025 at 5:00 P.M.
2	GNDU/Gen/08/2025	Heavy duty Printer / Digital Duplicator Machine	01	08-05-2025 at 5:00 P.M.

For details log onto [www.eproc.punjab.gov.in](http://www.eproc.punjab.gov.in)  
Note: Any corrigendum(s) to the Tender Notice shall be published on the above website only  
Sd/- Deputy Registrar (General)  
Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar  
NA/12/29523/2023/43833 Dated CHD - 4/24/2025

# CM: Venomous fangs of terror will be crushed with absolute resolve

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

Thousands gathered at Deori Ghat on Thursday to bid a tearful farewell to Shubham Dwivedi of Kanpur, who lost his life in the brutal terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir. He was cremated with full state honours, in a moving ceremony marked by solemn dignity and public solidarity.

Earlier in the day, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath visited Shubham's Hathipur (Kanpur) residence to pay his respects. Bowing before the mortal remains of the brave youth, the chief minister offered heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family. He spoke with Shubham's father and listened closely as his wife recounted the tragic incident.

Addressing the media afterwards, Chief Minister Yogi condemned the Pahalgam terror attack as a "barbaric and cowardly act", asserting that it was a sign that terrorism was on its last breath.

He reiterated the government's commitment to a zero-tolerance policy on terrorism and extremism, assuring the people of Uttar Pradesh and the nation that those responsible will face the full force of justice.

"This government will crush the venomous fangs of terror with absolute resolve," the chief minister declared. "Those involved in this conspiracy will face severe consequences, and the nation will bear witness to it. The terrorists and their handlers will be punished for the barbarity inflicted upon Hindu women, stripping them of their sindoor in an act of inhuman cruelty. There should be no doubt about this," he added.

Chief Minister Yogi further emphasised that the April 22 attack in Pahalgam, where innocent tourists were targeted based on their religion, is not only condemned by India but by every civilised society around the world. "No society with a conscience can tolerate such acts," he said.

Highlighting decisive steps taken at the national level, the chief minister pointed out that the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has already made key decisions in response. Home Minister Amit Shah personally visited the affected areas, and a comprehensive strategy to eliminate terrorism is now underway.

"The final nail is being driven into the coffin of terrorism," Chief Minister Yogi remarked. "India has taken a firm stand under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The entire country must unite in trust and determination to uphold our zero-tolerance policy and bring an end to extremism once and for all," he added.



UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath pays tribute to Shubham Dwivedi, who was killed in the Pahalgam terrorist attack, at his residence in Kanpur on Thursday



Pahalgam terror attack victim Shubham Dwivedi's wife, in blue shirt, and his sister mourn after his mortal remains were brought to his residence in Kanpur on Thursday

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed deep sorrow over the tragic loss of Shubham Dwivedi, stating that Shubham was the only son of his family

and had been married just two months ago. "We pray for the peace of his soul and extend our heartfelt condolences to the grieving family," the chief minister said.

"At this painful time, the entire nation stands united in condemning this inhuman and barbaric act," he added.

Reaffirming the government's commitment, Chief Minister Yogi emphasised that the double-engine government firmly stands with Shubham's family in this hour of grief. "This is a government that follows a zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism and barbarity. Unlike those who withdraw cases against terrorists for vote bank politics, this government delivers justice and stands by its people with unwavering resolve," he said.

Shubham's mortal remains arrived in Lucknow on Wednesday night and were later transported to Kanpur. Following the chief minister's instructions, all arrangements were made for his cremation with full state honours.

To personally share the family's grief, Chief Minister Yogi visited their residence in Hathipur, where he met with Shubham's father and wife, listening closely to their account of the incident. The pain of losing a newlywed son echoed deeply in the sombre atmosphere. The chief minister was accompanied by several prominent leaders, including Assembly Speaker Satish Mahana, Bharatiya Janata Party state president Bupendra Chaudhary, Cabinet Minister Rakesh Sachan, MP Ramesh Awasthi, Minister Pratibha Shukla, along with local MLAs and senior officials.

# AKY: Centre should have taken 'stricter' decisions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lucknow

Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday condemned the terrorist attack on tourists in Pahalgam and said that the Centre should have taken 'stricter' decisions on this matter.

Yadav condemned the Pahalgam "incident" in a press conference at the party's state headquarters here and said he will put forward his views in the all-party meeting.

"Stricter decisions should have been taken than the decisions taken," Yadav said on being asked about the decisions taken in the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) meeting held on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Not only strict decisions, but there should also be a discussion on how to implement them strictly. Only statements should not be given. We will put forward our views and suggestions in the all-party meeting," Yadav said.

Referring to the Indian government's decision to end the Indus Water Treaty with Pakistan, the SP chief said, "The tough decisions taken by the government should be implemented with equal strictness because if water has to be stopped, do you have any arrangement for that? This is a very long process."

Condemning the Pahalgam attack, Yadav said, "We condemn such an incident. The government should take the toughest action against terrorists because terrorists have no religion. Terrorists do not belong to any religion. Their main aim is to create fear and stop the business of the country and the state."

He said that the party leader Ramgopal Yadav will participate in the all-party meeting to be held in Delhi and will represent the party and give suggestions.

He further said that even before this, "big incidents" happened "before the elections" due to "lapses in security and failure of the intelligence system". He asked

why the government "did not learn a lesson from those incidents".

On a question about the claim that terrorists killed people after asking their religion during the Pahalgam attack, Yadav said, "Well, if you see the pages of BJP leaders on social media, or the people who run content by paying money, God knows how much money they spend. If this kind of money was spent on security, then such incidents would probably not have happened. They spend it on propaganda."

The SP chief further said, "In the all-party meeting, this suggestion will also be from our party that the leaders of political parties are poisoning the society with targeted and animations on social media or can say wrong things about any leader, in such a case it is the responsibility of the Government of India to stop such things."

When asked about the alleged call by former minister Raghuraj Pratap Singh alias Raja Bhaiya to boycott tourism in Kashmir after the Pahalgam attack, the former chief minister said, "We do not know him."

Raja Bhaiya was a Cabinet minister in the state during Yadav's tenure as chief minister.

However, Yadav said, "I have said on many occasions that business unites us. There is neither caste nor religion in business. Especially, that thing will have to be removed from the minds of some fundamentalists."

When asked whether he would visit the house of Kanpur businessman Shubham Dwivedi, who was killed in the Pahalgam attack, to express condolences to his family, the SP chief said, "Although I have no relation with the family, I will ask my party members to reach out to the family."

He said, "Many times the BJP people make others behave badly. I should not say this, but since you have asked this question... the BJP can humiliate anyone in a programme at any time, so one should be very careful."

# Pahalgam attack gruesome: Maya

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ ALucknow

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati on Thursday decried the Pahalgam terror attack as a "highly gruesome" massacre and questioned authorities over the security lapse at the key tourist location. She said it was natural for the public to get angry, as she demanded accountability from the BJP-led Centre over the security breach.

"The highly gruesome massacre of tourists by Pakistan-sponsored terrorists in Pahalgam, one of the country's prominent tourist destinations, has deeply shocked the nation. The

absence of adequate security at such an important location during the tourism season makes this tragedy all the more distressing. Public outrage and anger are natural, and accountability is essential," Mayawati said on X.

Terrorists on Tuesday opened fire on a group of tourists near Pahalgam town in south Kashmir's Anantnag district, killing at least 26 people – most of them from other states. The attack was the Valley's deadliest since the 2019 Pulwama strike.

The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said political blame games were secondary to national security concerns, as she called for a decisive action.

# School timings changed, heat wave continues

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

In view of the rising temperature in Lucknow district and in the interest of the students, the District Magistrate has given directions for all schools that the timings of classes 1 to 8 will be from 7.30 am to 12.30 pm from April 25 and no activity of students will be conducted in the open area.

Meanwhile, the Met department has forecast heat wave conditions in the southern and south eastern parts of the state for the next three days.

Senior Scientist, Met Office, Mohammed Danish said that hot weather conditions will prevail in Lucknow with above normal temperature. "The heat wave is prevailing because of the westerly winds and the presence of clear skies", he said. He said that easterly winds will bring some thunderstorm activity in the eastern parts of the state after three days.

Heat wave conditions for the next three days will prevail in Banda, Chitrakoot, Kaushambi, Prayagraj, Fatehpur, Pratapgarh, Sonbhadra, Mirzapur, Chandauli, Varanasi, SR Nagar, Jaunpur, Ghazipur, Azamgarh, Mau, Ballia, Farrukhabad, Kannauj, Kanpur Rural,

Kanpur Nagar, Unnao, Rae Bareilly, Amethi, Sultanpur, Ambedkar Nagar, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Bulandshahr, Aligarh, Mathura, Hathras, Kasganj, Etah, Agra, Firozabad, Mainpuri, Etawah, Auraiya, Jalaun, Hamirpur, Mahoba, Jhansi, Lalitpur and surrounding areas.

Lucknow recorded a maximum temperature of 41.8 degree Celcius on Thursday and a minimum temperature of 22 degree Celcius.

Looking into the hot weather medical experts advised that one should avoid staying in the sun for long hours especially during the afternoon and wear light coloured, loose and cotton clothes.

"While going out in the sun, keep your head covered with a cloth, cap or umbrella. Drink enough fluids to avoid dehydration. Use ORS, homemade beverages like lassi, rice water, lemonade, buttermilk etc. to keep yourself hydrated. Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated in hot weather and drink frequently. Avoid sugary or caffeinated drinks as they can dehydrate you. Carry a water bottle with you wherever you go, especially if you are going out," said a senior doctor.

He said that wiping or washing one's face or neck with a damp cloth may provide temporary relief from the heat.

# UP Board all set to declare results

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Prayagraj

The Uttar Pradesh Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad (UPMSP) or UP Board is set to announce the results of its High School (class 10) and Intermediate (class 12) examinations in the coming days and for the first time, students will be able to access their digital mark sheets on DigiLocker, complete with digital signatures, an official said on Thursday.

"The UP Board is set to declare the High School and Intermediate examination results in the coming days," UP Board Secretary Bhagwati Singh told PTI.

He added that with the 2025 exam results, digital mark sheets for both classes will be made available on DigiLocker, bearing digitally verified signatures. However, the physical copies of the mark sheets will still be distributed through schools as per previous practice.

"With mark sheets available on DigiLocker, students will no longer have to wait to collect them from schools. They will be able to use the digital versions for admission to higher education institutions," Singh said.

To download the mark sheet, High

He added that with the 2025 exam results, digital mark sheets for both classes will be made available on DigiLocker, bearing digitally verified signatures. However, the physical copies of the mark sheets will still be distributed through schools as per previous practice.

School students will need to enter their roll number and date of birth on DigiLocker. Intermediate students will have to provide their roll number and their mother's name to access their digital mark sheet.

The UP Board Secretary also said that the physical mark sheets and certificates being issued will be tear-resistant and water-proof, making them more durable and secure. This year, the UP Board conducted its class 10 and 12 exams across 8,140 centres from February 24 to March 12, 2025. A total of 25,56,992 students appeared for the High School exams, while 25,77,733 students sat for the Intermediate examinations.

# Leopard captured, to be released in forest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

A three-year-old male leopard was successfully rescued by the Forest Department at around 5 am from the Tata Motors Office Complex on Deva Road on Thursday. The leopard was found fit and will be sent to Katarniaghath reserve to be released in the forests.

DFO Awadh Sitanshu Pandey said they had received information from Tata Motors that a leopard had been spotted on their campus one and half months back. "We had installed camera traps in the area and we were checking the movement of the animal for the past one and half months. It was not harming anyone, however, still we were monitoring the animal in two shifts of 12 hours each," he said.

"Several times the leopard would come near the cages and move away but today it was trapped as it came for the bait in the cage. Leopards normally walk into the cages easily," he added.

He said that Tata Motors had a 250-hectare property and there is a forest developed in a hundred acres which was the favourite haunt of the animal. "The leopard was living in that forest and was not making any foray into the city," he said. Pandey said that the leopard probably



The leopard caught by Forest Department from Deva Road

came from Barabanki side following the Gomti river into this patch of forest.

"Action is being taken to release the rescued leopard in the forests of Katarniaghath Wildlife Division in its natural habitat after obtaining permission from authorities and also after conducting health tests," said DFO Awadh Sitanshu Pandey.

# Sanitation to be thrust area of new municipal commissioner

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Gaurav Kumar took charge as the new municipal commissioner of at Lucknow Nagar Nigam headquarters on Thursday.

He replaces Inderjeet Singh. Briefing media persons about his priorities, the new municipal commissioner said that his focus would be on sanitation of the city. "My thrust area is going to be sanitation because everything starts from there as it is the foundation block. If the drains are clear, the flow of water will not stop. Sanitation includes cleanliness, water availability, road blockages, sewers etc. I will also go through the city before finalising my plans," he said.

Talking about the Swachhata ranking of the city, Kumar said he would carry out a review and make all efforts to see that the Lucknow district gets the best ranking. With the monsoon approaching and the tall claims of the nagar nigam exposed each year, Kumar said that tackling waterlog-



ging would also be a priority area. "I cannot say that I have a concrete plan on the very first day of joining office, but surely, I know that it is a major problem in all the

urban areas. Every city has a history with certain points always facing waterlogging and our effort would be that these points do not face waterlogging issues. The

nagar nigam will complete the cleaning of drains in time. This will be my first priority on how to deal with this issue because the monsoon is approaching," he said. When asked about traffic jams in the city, he municipal commissioner said that traffic was primarily concerned with the traffic police but nagar nigam would make efforts. "This is one of the issues which the traffic police deal with, but there are certain civil upgrades which are required. So, I will discuss with the traffic police and the divisional commissioner if civil upgrades are required at roundabouts and roads to ease the traffic and they will be surely carried out," he said.

Regarding encroachments in the city, Kumar said that he would visit areas to take stock of the situation and would see that the encroachments were removed from those areas. He said that tax collection would also be reviewed because better financial resources would help in developmental works in the Lucknow district. He further said that infrastructural devel-

opment would also be a focus and it would include drains, roads, the government buildings and the schools under nagar nigam. "I would focus on the timely completion of the civil works being carried out currently," he added.

When asked whether he would meet the standards set up by former municipal commissioner Inderjeet Singh in the discharge of his responsibility, Kumar said that he would make efforts to emulate his seniors and follow the path of development by replicating the works done in the city.

"I would take all the stakeholders involved while discharging my duties. A policy of zero tolerance will be followed," he added. The new municipal commissioner, who was chief development officer at Prayagraj, said that urban development was a new area for him. "For the last three years I have been working in the area of rural development," he said. A mechanical engineer, Gaurav Kumar is a 2018 batch officer. He was posted in Lucknow Development Authority earlier for a short while.

# Govt to link educated, unemployed OBC youth with jobs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Taking a decisive step toward empowering educated but unemployed youth from Other Backward Classes (OBCs), the Yogi Adityanath government is set to upgrade its computer training scheme by incorporating modern, employment-oriented courses such as artificial intelligence (AI), drone technology and cyber security. The aim is to align the skills of young people with the demands of a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

To facilitate this, the Backward Classes Welfare Department is preparing a comprehensive proposal and initiating the budget approval process. The rollout of this revamped training initiative is planned for the financial year 2025-26. This move will boost technical proficiency, enhance employability and promote innovation in key sectors.

# Pahalgam terror attack condemned

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi/  
Prayagraj

The terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir, has sparked widespread anger and condemnation across the country.

In Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Stamp and Court Registration Fees Ravindra Jaiswal strongly condemned the Pahalgam terrorist attack and called it a cowardly attack. He paid tribute to those people killed in this incident and expressed deep condolences to their families. He emphasised that this attack by terrorists nurtured by a neighbouring country is being criticised all over the world.

Jaiswal said Prime Minister Narendra Modi would not forgive this cowardly act and a befitting reply would definitely be given to it.

Meanwhile, in the condolence meetings organised at the regional and city offices of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers in Rohania and Gulab Bagh under the leadership of regional president Dilip Patel and city chief Pradeep Agrahari respectively, the party workers expressed deep sorrow over the incident. Condolence meetings were also organised at various BJP offices in Varanasi. Apart from this, a demand was also made for strict action against terrorism.

The public representatives and BJP leaders present in the meeting strongly condemned this cowardly act committed by the terrorists. The speakers said that this attack is not only a shame on humanity but also an attack on the integrity and peace of the country. They expressed confidence that the government will give a befitting reply to this heinous act and the culprits will definitely be punished for their crime. The BJP leaders said that the way the terrorists have targeted peace and humanity in Pahalgam exposes the ugly face of the enemies of peace in Kashmir.

Prominent among those present in the condolence meetings were UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Ayush Dr Dayashankar Mishra Dayalu, MLA Dr



Members of Shri Baba Kashi Vishwanath Seva Samiti take out a protest rally against the Pahalgam terror attack, in Varanasi on Thursday PTI

Neelkanth Tiwari, Shankar Giri, former mayors Ramgopal Mohle and Mridula Jaiswal, Vidyasagar Rai, Prem Kapoor, Sanjay Rai, regional party media in charge Navratan Rath, Jagdish Tripathi, Chandrashekhar Upadhyay, Santosh Solapurkar, Narsingh Das, Atma Vishwaeshwar, Naveen Kapoor, Madhukar Chitransh, Rahul Singh, Ashok Patel, Vinod Gupta, Abhishek Mishra, Alok Srivastava, Ashok Kumar, Neeraj Jaiswal, Hari Keshari, Shalini Yadav, Sadhana Vedanti, Kusum Patel, Geeta Shastri, Kishore Seth, Kanaklata Mishra, Gokul Sharma, Shobhnath Maurya, Siddhant Sharma, Sushil Gupta, CP Jain, along with other BJP workers.

## TRIBUTE PAID TO VICTIMS

In response to the brutal killing of tourists by terrorists in Pahalgam the workers of Samajwadi Party (SP) Backward Class Cell paid tribute to the victims by lighting candles near Azad Park in Lahurabir on Wednesday evening. They condemned terrorism and burnt posters of terrorists. Former city president of SP Vishnu Sharma alleged it is the result of the failure of the Central government.

"It is the failure of the central government that it could not know in advance

that the enemies of the country were going to carry out such a horrific incident. The way terrorists armed with modern weapons killed 28 people by firing on unarmed tourists in Pahalgam, the SP workers are deeply saddened by this incident and it is the responsibility of the Central government to increase the security of tourists", he said. The family of the deceased should be given financial help of Rs 50 lakh and a government job and the family injured in the attack should be provided immediate financial help of Rs 20 lakh and security arrangements for tourists should be strengthened. Among those who also lit the candles were city president of Backward Class Cell Vivek Kahar 'Rocky', city president of Minority Sabha Haider 'Guddu', Javed Ansari, Shamim Ansari, Shubham Seth 'Golu', Ashok Yadav, Manish Yadav, Shailendra Singh, Durga Yadav, Altob Khan, Fahad Bhai, Sewalal Yadav, Vivek Seth, Umesh Yadav, Suraj Bindam, etc.

## PRAYERS OFFERED

The activists of Namami Gange on the occasion of Vaishakh Krishna Varuthini Ekadashi on Thursday, prayed to the Almighty for eradication of terrorism at the ancient Adikesava Teerth situated at the

confluence of Ganga and Varuna. Tribute was paid to the departed souls and the incident was termed as a cowardly act of terrorists in Pahalgam. They urged the Central government to take the strictest action against terrorists.

The coordinator of Namami Gange Kashi region and Swachhata Brand Ambassador of the Municipal Corporation Rajesh Shukla said expressed confidence that the government will give a befitting reply to this cowardly act of terrorists. Vaibhav Kushwaha, Jesus Rajbhar, Dilip Rai, Vinay Yadav, Arpit Singh and others were present.

## OUTRAGE EXPRESSED

In Prayagraj, BJP MLA Harsh Vardhan Bajpai expressed outrage over the incident, stating that the Indian Army will respond to this heinous crime. He emphasised that the Indian Army will take action.

Meanwhile senior Congress leader Pramod Tiwari strongly condemned the terrorist attack in Pahalgam. He described the attack as "barbaric and cowardly". Talking to mediapersons on Thursday, Tiwari emphasised the need for a united approach to combat terrorism, rather than engaging in allegations and counter-allegations. Tiwari stressed that terrorism should be eradicated by taking the opposition into confidence. He emphasized that no religion allows terrorism and that a collective effort is necessary to combat this threat.

In Shankargarh, traders and local citizens organised a demonstration against the terrorist attack. They raised slogans and demanded death penalty for the terrorists. President of Udyog Vyapar Mandal Shankargarh, Arvind Kesarwani, said terrorism threatens national unity and integrity. He demanded strict action from the government. The protest was attended by Pankaj Gupta, Dheeraj Soni, Dharendra Gupta, Neeraj Kesarwani, Abid Ali, Arpan Kesarwani, Deepak Nir and Bachcha Kesarwani.

# Special vaccination campaign launched



CMO Dr Sandeep Chaudhary addressing vaccination programme in Varanasi on Thursday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

The World Immunisation Week is being run from April 24 to May 10 to immunise children and in this direction, a special vaccination campaign was inaugurated by Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary along with Tulsiapur Ward corporator Punnul on Thursday at Composite School, Mahmoorganj.

The chief medical officer said during the special campaign, about 86,000 school/madrasa-based children aged 10 years and about 84,500 children aged 16 years will be vaccinated against tetanus and diphtheria (diphtheria) because there is a high possibility of transmission of diphtheria between July and December.

"By running a campaign in advance, children are being covered with the vaccine so that they remain safe", he said.

District Immunisation Officer and ACOMO Dr AK Maurya said all 50 children were vaccinated in the composite school. Apart from this, children were vaccinated in other targeted schools of the district. He said diphtheria was an infectious disease spread by a bacterium (Corynebacterium Diphtheria), which usually affects throat and tonsils.

"Children who have not been vaccinated against diphtheria are more likely to get this disease, so be cautious and parents must get their children aged 10 and 16 years vaccinated in this special campaign."

On the occasion of inauguration, District Health Education and Information Officer Hariwansh Yadav, Principal of the school Preeti Tiwari, in charge of Urban Primary Health Centre Dr Nidhi Pandey, Dr Shahid, Dr Chelsea, Dr Ravi, Dr Satrupa, Reena Verma, Rajiv Gupta and ANM Kanchan were present.

# Importance of Gurukul system highlighted



Participants at a seminar organised under the aegis of the Merchants Chamber of Uttar Pradesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

A seminar on the theme 'Gurukul Education: Ancient Knowledge, Modern Scientific and Technological Development' was organized under the aegis of the Merchants Chamber of Uttar Pradesh

The keynote speaker, Acharya Deepak Koirala, Assistant Professor, Institute of Indic Studies, Gujarat University, highlighted the significance of the ancient Gurukul education system. He said the Gurukul system was not just about imparting knowledge, but also focused on holistic personality development, ethics, discipline and a comprehensive worldview. Dr Koirala emphasised that integrating the Gurukul system with modern scientific and technological education could provide a new direction to India's educa-

tional framework. He also remarked that this combination could be a revolutionary step towards nurturing a generation that strikes a balance between knowledge, science, culture and humanity. He stressed that students educated in the Gurukul tradition would move away from job-seeking mindsets and instead adopt self-employment, entrepreneurship and research-oriented lifestyles.

The seminar was moderated by Sudhindra Jain. Prominent attendees included Dr Shyam Babu Gupta, Avadh Bihari Mishra, Mukul Tandon, Atul Kanodia, Mahendra Modi, along with a large number of academicians, intellectuals, social workers and professors.

On the occasion the speakers also emphasised the need to incorporate elements of the Gurukul tradition in the National Education Policy (NEP).

# DC conducts inspection

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Prayagraj

Divisional Commissioner of Prayagraj Vijay Vishwas Pant conducted a surprise inspection of Tej Bahadur Sapru (Beli) Hospital on Thursday. During it he reviewed various facilities, including the OT, OPD, wards, MRI and X-ray. The Commissioner expressed displeasure over the poor condition of the hospital. The Commissioner directed the Additional Director and Divisional Manager of NHM to prepare a detailed report on the hospital's issues. He also instructed the hospital administration to ensure the operation of the C-arm machine and conduct surgeries without delay. He also asked to provide online reports to patients besides increasing the number of MRI tests per day.

During the inspection, the commissioner interacted with patients and gathered a feedback on the hospital's services.

Meanwhile newly-appointed Municipal Commissioner (MC) Seelam Sai Teja conducted a surprise inspection of various departments in Prayagraj Municipal Corporation (PMC). Its purpose was to assess the functioning and maintenance of different departments. During the inspection the MC sought information related to 'khasra' from the Record department. After the employees failed to provide a satisfactory answers, he issued notices to six employees. The MC found the condition of office of the Jalak department to be unsatisfactory. He instructed the department to make arrangements for painting and seating of public.

# World Malaria Day to be observed today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

Continuous efforts are being made to make the country malaria-free by the year 2030. World Malaria Day is celebrated every year on April 25 with the aim of increasing awareness about malaria. This year's theme is 'Malaria ends with us: Reinvest, Reimagine, Reignite'. On this day, extensive camps will be organised in the district to fever check-ups in hot spot areas. Children in schools will be informed about the prevention of malaria disease, especially in prayer meetings.

Special communicable disease control and Dastak campaign is also being run this month. Besides, inter-departmental activities are going on to prevent vector-borne diseases. Giving this information, Chief

Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said ASHA workers would visit every house on this day. "The lower the density of mosquitoes according to the population, the more safe people will be from malaria. Due to this, breeding sources of mosquitoes are being destroyed in urban and rural areas. Antilarva spraying and fogging is also being done", the CMO said, adding that after identifying malaria, the patients will be given 14 days of treatment.

District Malaria Officer (DMO) Sharat Chandra Pandey said that work is being done at four levels for malaria elimination in the district. "Under the active approach, ASHA workers are doing house-to-house fever tracking. Under the passive approach, fever of all

patients coming to OPD is checked. Under the mass contact approach, fever tracking is done in 50 houses around the house of the patient found positive. The fourth is the camp approach, under which malaria tests of fever patients are being done by setting up weekly camps in hot spot areas", he said, adding that the result of all this is that in the year 2022, there were 1,16,536 malaria tests and 69 people were found positive, whereas in the year 2023, 23 malaria patients were found in 1,67,000 tests. In the year 2024, only 13 malaria patients were found in 2,29,000 tests.

"Thus, while on one hand surveillance has been increased, on the other hand the percentage of malaria infection is decreasing", he said.

# Team discusses benefits of nano fertilisers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Prayagraj

The IFFCO Pulphur unit team on Thursday visited village Kanehti and conducted a Kisan Chaupal session to introduce farmers to Nano Urea Plus and Nano DAP for paddy crops. The team discussed the method of spraying, quantity and benefits of these nano fertilisers.

Senior Executive Director (Unit Head) Sanjay Kudesia emphasised the benefits of nano fertilisers in increasing crop yields and encouraged farmers to use them. He suggested that farmers use Nano Urea Plus and Nano DAP on a portion of their land to experience the difference. IFFCO announced a free drone-based spraying service for farmers this year.



Farmers showed enthusiasm towards Nano Urea Plus and Nano DAP during the chaupal session. The event was attended by key officials, Dr Harish Chandra, CORDET Principal, Swayam Prakash,

PRO, Anurag Tiwari, Manager Training, Rajesh Singh, Avinash Kumar Patel, Gram Pradhan, Harish Gupta and farmers Ram Murat Patel, Shivam Patel, Tej Pratap and others.

# Induction programme held for research scholars

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

An induction programme was organised for the newly admitted PhD research scholars of the Faculty of Commerce, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Thursday. The chief guest was Dean of Commerce Faculty Prof HK Singh, who in his address, encouraged the research scholars to undertake quality-driven and solution-oriented research. Prof Singh emphasised the relevance of the Case

Study Method of Harvard University for research in the field of business and shared valuable insights on producing high-quality publications and conducting practical, impactful research.

**Prof HK Singh encouraged the research scholars to undertake quality-driven and solution-oriented research.**

Programme coordinator Prof SC Das highlighted the importance of a comprehensive review of literature, scaling and measurement, and sample-based study, urging students to adopt an empirical approach in their research. Prof Das also provided several suggestions for enhanc-

## AWARENESS PROGRAMME

A one-day awareness programme on 'Expressing Gratitude with Music' was organised by the Psychological Counselors of Wellbeing Service Cell (WBSC), in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) for university students.

This session aimed to help students understand the psychological benefits of expressing gratitude and how it contributes to emotional well-being. It demonstrated how music can serve as a powerful tool for emotional expression and healing. Through guided musical experiences students practiced self-reflection and mindfulness. Session created a positive and emotionally supportive environment where students explored and expressed gratitude.

Additionally, it offered practical strategies for incorporating both music and gratitude into daily life for lasting emotional resilience and personal growth. 22 students actively participated in this awareness programme. The students responded positively, giving excellent feedback on their learning experience.

# Job fair 'Skillserv FY25' organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

A job fair 'Skillserv FY25' was jointly organised Bajaj Finserv and Dr Virendra Swaroop Institute of Computer Studies (VSICS), Saket Nagar. For this, Bajaj Finserv provided 100 hours training to students in colleges of many cities of the state. Only those students who participated in this training were eligible to participate in this job fair by registering themselves. Apart from Dr Virendra Swaroop Institute of Computer Studies, around 542 students from colleges of Kanpur, Lucknow, Prayagraj, Mathura, Agra and Varanasi had registered themselves. Students from graduation to MBA, BBA, BCA participated in this job fair and took part in the interviews. Seven renowned companies from banking, finance, insurance and marketing sectors conducted interviews at the job fair. Prominent companies present were HDFC Group, Motilal Oswal, HDB Financial Services, Bajaj Allianz Futurez HR, Bajaj Asset Management and Zairo International. Candidates selected by various companies in the job fair will be provided an average package of Rs 2.80 lakh and will be given an opportunity to work in various cities of Uttar Pradesh. Executive Director of the institute, Dr



A job fair 'Skillserv FY25' was jointly organised Bajaj Finserv and Dr Virendra Swaroop Institute of Computer Studies (VSICS), Saket Nagar

Arpit Awasthi said VSICS had been working on its mantra of quality education, reasonable fees and assured placement for the last 27 years and this job fair was the next step in that direction. In the year 2024-25, 787 students had been selected in 95 companies. He blessed the successful students for a bright future. Tulsi Mehra, Senior Manager Placement Division from Bajaj Finserv, Mohd Ozair Project Manager, Rahul Agnihotri, Satya

Pratap Singh from VSICS, Training Placement Officer Krishna Mohan Mishra and others were present.

## KPDA'S ANNUAL CELEBRATION

During the 33rd annual celebration of the Kanpur Paints Dealers Association (KPDA) to be held on Friday at Lajpat Bhavan, around a 100 distinguished individuals will be honoured. Among those to be felicitated are young entrepreneurs,

leading paint traders, police official, and other prominent citizens. This information was given during a press conference by the association's president Bhopinder Singh 'Bhuppi', general secretary Sanjay Mittal, treasurer Satbir Singh and senior vice-president Sunil Mittal.

President Bhopinder Singh and general secretary Sanjay Mittal said the main attraction of the 33rd annual event will be the renowned devotional singer Kanhaiya Mittal. Known for his famous bhajan "Jinko Ram Laye Hain, Unko Laayenge...". Kanhaiya Mittal will fill the Lajpat Bhavan lawn with a devotional atmosphere.

UP Jal Shakti and Flood Control Minister Swatantra Dev Singh will be the chief guest, while Cabinet Minister Rakesh Sachan will be the special guest. The programme will be presided over by Member of Parliament Ramesh Awasthi.

Directors of Meera Paints, Sunil Mittal and Sanjay Mittal, said that the association will honour about 50 young entrepreneurs to encourage the new generation. In addition, the executive committee members will also be felicitated. The families of paint traders who passed away during the COVID-19 pandemic will also be honoured by the association.

They said that this would be the first time that the famous bhajan singer Kanhaiya Mittal would present his devotional songs in the city.

# PM Modi launches ₹13,500 crore projects in Bihar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India cannot develop without developing its villages, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday as he launched and inaugurated projects worth ₹13,500 crore in Bihar's Madhubani, and addressed Panchayati Raj Institutions across the country.

Speaking at an event to mark National Panchayati Raj Day here, Modi also lauded the work done by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in the poll-bound state. He said a developed Bihar is essential for a developed India, and said efforts are being made to ensure the benefits of progress reach all corners of the state.

Modi said Mahatma Gandhi's idea that India cannot be developed without empowering its villages is the concept behind the Panchayati Raj system. "Bihar is the land where Mahatma Gandhi expanded the mantra of Satyagrah," Modi said, highlighting Mahatma Gandhi's firm belief that "India's rapid development is only possible when its villages are strong".

He said the projects launched on Thursday will boost development and generate employment opportunities in the state.

"Farmers are the backbone of the rural economy, the stronger this backbone, the

stronger the villages, and consequently, the nation," Modi said.

He also underscored that panchayats have strengthened social participation, remarking that Bihar was the first state in the country to provide 50 per cent reservation for women in panchayats.

"Today, a significant number of women from economically weaker sections, Dalits, Mahadalits, backwards, and extremely backward communities are serving as public representatives in Bihar. This is real social justice and democracy," he said.

"Many steps have been taken to strengthen panchayats, and technology has also been used... More than 2 lakh gram panchayats have been linked with the internet, and more than 5.5 lakh common service centres have been established in villages," he said.

Modi said more than 30,000 new panchayat buildings have also been constructed.

He lauded the Bihar government's 'Jeevika Didi' programme and said, today, self-help groups of women in Bihar have been provided financial assistance of approximately ₹1,000 crore.

He said this will further strengthen the economic empowerment of women and contribute to the goal of creating three crore 'Lakshmi Didi's' across the country.

Modi said villages have seen the con-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi flags-off a Namoh Bharat train launching India's first 16-coach Namoh Bharat Rapid Rail service between Jayanagar and Patna, during a National Panchayati Raj Day event in Madhubani, Thursday

struction of houses for the poor, roads, gas connections, water connections, and toilets, bringing lakhs of crores of rupees to rural areas.

"The last decade has been a decade of infrastructure development for India," said the prime minister, asserting that this modern infrastructure is strengthening the

foundation of a developed India.

Talking about the steps taken by the Union government, he said more than 10,000 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs and more than 800 Jan Aushadhi Kendras have come up in Bihar, due to which around ₹2,000 crore of out-of-pocket medical expenses were saved.

He also mentioned the AIIMS being established in Darbhanga.

At the event, where four new trains were also flagged off, Modi noted that metro projects are underway in Patna, and over two dozen cities across the country are now connected with metro facilities.

He announced the launch of the 'Namoh Bharat Rapid Rail' service between Patna and Jaynagar, which will significantly reduce travel time between the two locations, and emphasised that this development will benefit lakhs of people from Samastipur, Darbhanga, Madhubani, and Begusarai.

Modi called floods a "persistent challenge" in the Mithila and Kosi regions, and said the government is set to invest Rs 11,000 crore to mitigate its impact on Bihar.

He said the investment will facilitate the construction of dams on rivers such as Bagmati, Dhar, Budhi Gandak, and Kosi, and canals will be developed, ensuring irrigation arrangements through river water. He highlighted the Budget announcement of the Makhana Board, which is expected to transform the fortunes of makhana farmers.

The prime minister flagged off four new trains — Amrit Bharat Express between Saharsa and Mumbai, Namoh Bharat Rapid Rail between Jaynagar and Patna and trains

between Pipra and Saharsa and Saharsa and Samastipur.

He also inaugurated the Supaul Pipra Rail Line, Hasanpur Bithan Rail Line and two-lane rail over bridges at Chapra and Bagaha and dedicated to the nation the Khagaria-Alauli Rail Line.

Other projects of which Modi laid the foundation stone included an LPG bottling plant with a rail unloading facility at Hathua in Gopalganj worth around ₹340 crore. He also laid the foundation stone of projects worth over ₹1,170 crore and inaugurated multiple projects worth over ₹5,030 crore in the power sector in Bihar under the revamped distribution sector scheme.

Modi distributed benefits of around Rs 930 crore under the community investment fund to over 2 lakh SHGs from Bihar under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), handed over sanction letters to 15 lakh new beneficiaries of PMAY-Gramin and released instalments to 10 lakh PMAY-G beneficiaries from across the country.

Apart from these, the prime minister presented the Special Category National Panchayat Award 2025, which include the Climate Action Special Panchayat Award, Atma Nirbhar Panchayat Special Award, and Panchayat Kshamta Nirman Sarvottam Sansthan Puraskar.

## Pahalgam terror attack is direct assault on values of our republic: Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Congress on Thursday said the "cowardly" Pahalgam attack has been masterminded by Pakistan and is a direct assault on the "values of our republic", even as it accused the BJP of exploiting the tragedy to promote discord and polarisation at a time when unity is most needed.

The Congress Working Committee (CWC), the highest decision-making body of the party, adopted a resolution expressing its deepest shock and condemnation of the heinous terrorist attack, which claimed the lives of 26 innocent tourists and left more than 20 others grievously injured. "The Congress Working Committee extends its deepest condolences to the bereaved families. It stands with them wholeheartedly in this moment of profound anguish."

"This cowardly and calculated act of terror, masterminded by Pakistan, is a direct assault on the values of our republic. The deliberate targeting of Hindus was done to inflame passions across the country," the party's resolution said.

"We appeal for calm in the face of this grave provocation and reaffirm our collective strength in the face of adversity. The CWC appeals for calm and reaffirms the Indian National Congress' long-standing resolve to combat cross-border terrorism with determination and unity,"

the resolution said. Reading out the resolution at a press conference, party general secretary K C Venugopal, along with Jairam Ramesh and Pawan Kherra, said the CWC also paid tributes to the local ponywalas and tourist guides, one of whom was killed while trying to protect tourists to uphold the idea of India.

**Our primary question is only on security lapses and intelligence failure, which are evident. We are expecting an answer from the Government**

— KC VENUGOPAL, GENERAL SECRETARY

The CWC said in its resolution that the massacre has rightly drawn condemnation from all political parties in Jammu and Kashmir and from a wide cross-section of its citizens.

"However, it is shocking that the BJP is exploiting this grave tragedy through official and proxy social media platforms to sow further discord, mistrust, polarisation and division at a time when unity and solidarity are most needed," it said. Venugopal said the Congress, being a responsible opposition, asks questions on the security and intelligence failure that led to the terror attack.

"Our primary question is only on security lapses and intelligence failure, which are evident. We are expecting an answer

from the government, let the answer come, and then we will respond," he said. Venugopal also announced that the Congress will hold candle marches across the country on April 25 to pay homage to the victims of the attack and protest against terrorist activities.

The CWC noted that Pahalgam is known to be a heavily guarded area, secured by a three-tier security arrangement and, "It is imperative that a comprehensive analysis is conducted into the intelligence failures and security lapses that enabled such an attack in a Union Territory — an area directly under the purview of the Union Home Ministry."

"These questions must be raised in the larger public interest. This is the only way justice can truly be seen to be served for the families whose lives have been so brutally devastated," the CWC resolution said.

Noting that the Amarnath Yatra is set to commence shortly and lakhs of pilgrims from across India will participate in the annual journey, the CWC said their safety must be treated as a national priority. "Robust, transparent, and proactive security arrangements must be put in place without delay. The safety of pilgrims, as well as the livelihoods of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, many of whom depend on tourism, must be protected with full sincerity and seriousness," the resolution adopted by the CWC said.

## Pahalgam attack similar to Hamas strike: Israel envoy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Israel's Ambassador to India, Reuven Azar, on Thursday compared the terror attack in Pahalgam to the October 7, 2023, Hamas strike on Israel, citing similarities in their targeting of civilians and warning of growing coordination among terrorist groups.

Drawing parallels to the Hamas-led assault that killed over 1,100 people in Israel, Azar pointed to the deliberate targeting of unarmed civilians in both cases.

His remarks came after terrorists struck at a prime tourist location in Pahalgam in south Kashmir on Tuesday, killing at least 26 civilians, mostly tourists, and injuring several others. "Unfortunately, we must confess, these terrorist groups are inspiring each other. There are similarities between the Pahalgam attack and what happened on October 7 (2023) in Israel. Innocent tourists were enjoying their vacation in Pahalgam, while in Israel, people were celebrating a music festival," Azar said.

He also linked the Pahalgam attack's timing to the recent visits by Hamas leaders to Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK), where they reportedly met with Jaish-e-Muhammed operatives and a few others, suggesting possible coordination.

The Israeli ambassador also praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

response to the Pahalgam attack, particularly his speech at a gathering in Madhubani, Bihar, on Thursday where he vowed to "hunt down" those responsible for the killings.

"I'm very encouraged by not only the strong condemnation but also the strict measures taken by the Indian government," Azar told PTI Videos, referring to India's diplomatic moves, including the suspension of the Indus Water Treaty of 1960 with Pakistan and immediate shutting down of the Attari land-transit post in view of the cross-border links to the attack in Pahalgam.

Azar also urged the global community to expose the state sponsors of terrorism, emphasising that the problem extends much beyond individual terrorists.

"Terrorism has to be exposed because terrorists enjoy a series of deeds by countries that supply money, intelligence inputs and weapons (to them), which is unacceptable," he said. Calling for stronger international coordination to curb terrorism, the Israeli diplomat said, "I feel all countries should put restrictions on the capabilities of companies to supply services to the extremist elements."

"Countering terrorism requires not just military action but also efforts to combat incitement. The terrorists are not just using violence. They are inciting violence," he added.

## AIIMS Raipur performs its first swap kidney transplant

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The AIIMS Raipur has successfully performed its first swap kidney transplant, making it the first among the newer AIIMS institutions and the first government hospital in Chhattisgarh to carry out this complex and life-saving procedure. The Union Health ministry said swap kidney transplant, which is also known as Kidney Paired Transplant (KPT), can lead to a 15 per cent increase in the number of transplants.

In a swap transplant, a patient with renal failure who has a willing living donor but is unable to receive the kidney due to an incompatible blood group or the presence of HLA antibodies can still undergo a transplant by exchanging donors with another incompatible pair. Through this arrangement, both recipients receive compatible kidneys, resulting in successful transplants for both pairs.

In the case at AIIMS Raipur, two male End Stage Renal Disease patients, aged 39 and 41 from Bilaspur, had been on dialysis for three years, the ministry said in a statement. Both were advised to undergo kidney transplantation. Their respective wives came forward as living donors. However, due to blood group incompatibility direct donation was not possible.

## Delhi HC orders attachment of TMC MP Saket Gokhale salary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Thursday ordered the attachment of TMC MP Saket Gokhale's salary in a defamation case filed by former diplomat Lakshmi Puri. Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora observed Gokhale was previously directed to apologise to the former assistant secretary general of the United Nations and pay her ₹50 lakh in damages.

However, the court said, neither did he deposit the fine amount nor offer a reasonable explanation.

"Accordingly, issue warrant of attachment as section 60(i) with respect to salary of the respondent which is stated to be ₹1.90 lakh. The salary shall remain attached until ₹50 lakh is deposited with the court," the court said.

Section 60 of the Code of Civil Procedure stipulates in matters of execution of a decree, the salary of a judgement-debtor can be attached to the extent of the first one thousand rupees and two-third of the remainder. The court passed the order while dealing with Puri's plea seeking execution of the decree in her favour.

Though Gokhale's plea in relation to a "recall" of the judgement against him was pending before another bench, the court said there was no stay on the present proceedings.

Puri moved the high court in 2021, alleging Gokhale tarnished her goodwill and reputation by making reckless and false allegations about her financial affairs in the context of an apartment that she owned in Geneva.

In the July 1, 2024 verdict, aside from directing publication of an apology and payment of ₹50 lakh as damages, the high court restrained Gokhale from publishing any more content on any social media or electronic platform concerning his imputation against Puri.

## NHAI starts construction work of six foot over bridges

PARVESH SHARMA ■ Gurugram

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has started the construction work of six foot over bridges (FOBs) on the Delhi-Jaipur National Highway (NH-48). These FOBs will be ready by August in Gurugram and Rewari districts, officials said.

In Gurugram, these FOBs will be built in Rampura, the NSG Campus in Manesar, and the village of Binola.

In Rewari, these FOBs will be built in villages Rathivas, Malpura, and Jaisingh Kheda. Jaisingh Kheda is situated on the border of Haryana and Rajasthan.

NHAI allotted the work of construction of new FOBs on the Delhi-Jaipur Highway to a company in February this year.

This company has been assigned the work of repairing two old FOBs. It will cost around ₹12 crore. Apart from this, the FOBs built in village Sidhrawali and village Kharkhada will be repaired.

NHAI has an FOB near Signature Tower on the Delhi-Jaipur Highway. It is in bad condition due to lack of maintenance. The machine has been stolen from

its escalator. The escalator is in bad condition. Because of this, people have to cross this highway on foot, due to which there is a fear of road accidents.

On the other hand, the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) will construct FOBs near Raheja Mall and CD Chowk on the Gurugram-Sohna Highway, besides Old Delhi Road and Sheela Mata Road.

The construction of these FOBs will cost around ₹16 crore. Lifts and escalators will be constructed in these FOBs. Due to this, people will not face any problem in crossing these roads.

GMDA has decided the location of these FOBs. Construction will start in the next one or two months. On the other hand, GMDA has claimed that the construction work of the FOB under construction in village Narsinghpur will be completed soon.

"The tender for construction of six FOBs on the Delhi-Jaipur Highway has been allotted. Work has started under this. All these FOBs will be constructed within the month of August. Apart from this, two FOBs will also be repaired," Prakash Tiwari, Manager, NHAI, said.

## CRPF launches biggest anti-Naxal operations in Chattisgarh, three killed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi/Raipur

In one of the biggest operations, more than 10,000 security personnel apart from back up units are engaged in fire-fight with naxals in jungles of Chattisgarh bordering Telangana and three female naxals have, so far, died. Security teams from both the states besides Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) are engaged in the ongoing action.

It is the biggest offensive launched this year to neutralise most-wanted Maoist Hidma, officials said Thursday. The operation launched from the Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh to Karregutta hills in Mulugu district across the border in Telangana has clocked over 60 hours after it was launched on Monday with close to 5,000 troops apart from backup units. The forces and Maoists were exchanging fire till the fore noon of Thursday and it is expected to continue, they said.

The assault is led by the 210th battalion of CRPF's CoBRA units and has teams from the Chhattisgarh police, its special task force (STF), DRG, some regular

CRPF units and Telangana Police, they said. Around 9:30 am on Thursday, three bodies of female Maoists along with an equal number of weapons has been seized. The operation is continuing, a senior CRPF officer said. Director General (DG) of CRPF G P Singh is monitoring the operation from Raipur and Jagdalpur since April 21, he said.

**The assault is led by the 210th battalion of CRPF's CoBRA units and has teams from the Chhattisgarh police, its Special Task Force (STF), DRG, some regular CRPF units and Telangana Police**

Four helicopters, two drone squadrons comprising 20 big and small unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in each along with satellite imagery and maps provided by the NTRO have been deployed to track Hidma, the top commander of the PLGA battalion no 1, the officer said. Inputs suggested that Hidma was seen

around a bunker built in the Karregutta Hills along with an armed squad and the operation was launched on this information, a second officer said.

This is the biggest operation launched by any of the security agencies in or around Chhattisgarh this year, he said.

The hill area is dotted with many improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and the forces are still on the job, the officer said. The offensive is part of the Union government's declaration to end Left Wing Extremism (LWE) from the country by March, 2026. Chhattisgarh and its border areas remain the "last bastion" of this task, according to officials.

The operation, one of biggest counter-insurgency actions launched in Bastar region, involved around 10,000 security personnel belonging to different units, including the District Reserve Guard (DRG), Bastar Fighters, Special Task Force (STF), all units of the state police, as well as the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and its elite Commando Battalions for Resolute Action (CoBRA), he said. The Telangana police were also assisting in the operation, the official said.

## Second edition of Milipol India showcases cutting-edge defence solutions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The second edition of Milipol India 2025 was formally inaugurated on Thursday by François-Noël Buffet, representing the French Minister of the Interior, alongside esteemed dignitaries.

The event witnessed the presence of Dr Thierry Mathou, the French Ambassador to India, and Colonel Yannick Vidal, Chief of Staff for Operations from the French National Gendarmerie Intervention Group (GIGN), along with senior officials from Indian and French security and governmental agencies.

Enhancing the significance of the occasion, India's Minister of State for Home Affairs, Nityanand Rai, delivered a keynote address, emphasising the strengthening Indo-French collaboration in homeland



security. He highlighted the joint efforts in advanced technology development, intelligence sharing, and reinforcing security infrastructure, reaffirming the commitment of both nations toward global security advancements and counter-terrorism strategies.

Rover Mark-1, developed by "Security Defence System," totally Makein India, is a cutting-edge innovation known for producing the highest number of indigenous products. Designed for handling suspicious objects, with its load capacity of 10 kg. Equipped with four cameras, it offers precise control — up to 200 meters out of sight and 01 km within the line of sight and weighs 84 kg. This advanced device is utilised by CISE, J and K Police, Maharashtra Police and Punjab Police, along with security operations at four air-

ports. CARACAL from UAE has showcased some of the finest weapons, with their flagship model, the CSR 50 anti-material sniper rifle, taking center stage — an asset that could significantly enhance Indian Army, CAPF and State police operations. With an effective range of 2 km and beyond, it offers long-range precision essential for border security, counter-terrorism missions, and high-threat engagements. Maintaining its distinction as the lightest in its category, weighing just 10 kg without accessories, the rifle ensures greater mobility and operational efficiency for soldiers in rugged terrains.

This year, the rifle has seen impressive advancements, including advanced ergonomics and reduced recoil, enhancing stability for Indian sharpshooters during prolonged operations.

Editor's TAKE

## Pope Francis: A Pope of the people

As the world awaits his funeral, it is time for the Catholic world to reflect on his legacy

The death of Pope Francis on Easter Monday marked the end of an era in the Roman Catholic Church, one shaped by humility, joy, and profound efforts to bridge divides within the Church and beyond. As his body now lies in state in the grand sanctuary of St Peter's Basilica, a sacred calm has descended over Vatican City — a moment not just of mourning, but of gratitude. From the moment of his election in 2013, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the first pope from the Americas and the first Jesuit to hold the papacy, signalled a change in tone and style. Eschewing the traditional papal apartment, he chose instead to live in the modest Casa Santa Marta, a Vatican guesthouse.

His decision was more than symbolic — it reflected his core message: that the Church should be close to the people, particularly the poor and marginalised. Pope Francis was a pope of paradoxes: deeply traditional in doctrine, yet boldly progressive in tone. He upheld the tenets of Catholic teaching while urging a shift in how they are communicated and lived. His papacy was not defined by rigid dogma but by mercy, dialogue, and pastoral care. He asked Catholics to be a "field hospital" for a wounded world.

Central to Francis' leadership was his theology of joy. He often warned against a Christianity devoid of joy — likening such faith to being "pickled in vinegar." This joy was not naive optimism but a resilient faith rooted in love and the presence of God amid human suffering. He brought this spirit to bear on some of the most contentious issues facing the Church. Whether addressing climate change, global poverty, refugee crises, or the plight of the LGBTQ+ community, Francis consistently emphasised compassion over condemnation. His encyclical *Laudato Si'* marked a historic moment in linking Catholic teaching with environmental stewardship, while his overtures toward greater inclusion of LGBTQ+ Catholics signalled a departure from past approaches marked by silence or rejection.

As thousands queue to bid farewell in person, and millions more watch the funeral unfold across screens worldwide, the atmosphere in Rome is less one of despair and more of sacred remembrance. In the words of one Vatican observer, it is as if a beloved elder has finished their life's journey — leaving behind not just grief, but gratitude. The city has responded with reverence.

Images of the Pope flash across digital billboards with a simple message: "Grazie." His final resting place, Santa Maria Maggiore — a church he visited before and after nearly every papal journey — underscores his identity as a pilgrim pope, always walking alongside the faithful. The death of Pope Francis also opens a new chapter. Behind closed doors, the College of Cardinals has begun its quiet conversations about the future of the Church.

As tradition dictates, white smoke will soon signal their decision to the world. But even as attention turns to the question of succession, the legacy of Pope Francis will remain etched into the conscience of the Church. He has set a precedent not easily ignored: that the papacy is not about power, but service; not about separation from the world, but deep engagement with it. For Catholics around the globe, his death is not just a loss — it is a call to carry forward the values he championed: humility, mercy, joy, and justice. Pope Francis changed the papacy. Now, the Church must discern how to build on what he began. Pope Francis leaves behind a Church forever marked by his humility, compassion, and unwavering call to joy. His papacy re-centred the mission of the Catholic Church on mercy, inclusion, and care for the vulnerable, urging believers to live their faith in action, not just words.

As the world bids farewell, his legacy offers both comfort and challenge, a reminder that faith must engage the realities of the world with love.

The conclave will choose his successor, but his influence will endure, not only in Church doctrine but in the hearts of millions who found hope and dignity through his leadership.

## Soft power in retreat

For decades, the US won hearts and minds not with tanks or fighter jets, but with scholarships, foreign aid, immigration opportunities, and cultural exchange. But Donald Trump has upended the soul of America

Soft power is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment — Joseph Nye.

In diplomacy, not every war is fought with guns, and not every ally is won with treaties. Some of the most lasting alliances, perceptions, and influences are built in classrooms, libraries, hospitals, and open-minded immigration desks. For decades, America cultivated a compelling global image not just through its military might but through an unparalleled soft power apparatus — university scholarships, fellowships like Fulbright, technological partnerships, and student exchange programmes. But under Trump's leadership, this carefully crafted image took a sharp U-turn. His decisions to defund Ivy League institutions, restrict prestigious fellowships, cut down on foreign aid, and slam doors on immigrants have not just changed policies — they've dented America's soul in the eyes of the world.

From the end of World War II to the close of the 20th century, the US balanced hard power with soft persuasion.

After Pearl Harbour and the end of the Monroe Doctrine's inward-looking policy, America stepped decisively into the global theatre. Initially, it flexed its military muscle — from Hiroshima to the Cold War nuclear stand-offs — but soon realised that tanks and warships couldn't alone win hearts. The next American invasion came with books, food aid, hospital care, and university scholarships. PL-480 food assistance, USAID, cultural exchanges, NASA tie-ups, and the brain-drain corridor became tools of soft power that made America an aspirational ideal, especially for the Global South.

But Trump's reign of ultra-nationalism, ultra-capitalism, and ultra-conservatism diluted this global goodwill. His administration's decision to roll back funding to elite educational institutions — many of which had been incubators of international leadership and liberal thought — sent shockwaves through academic diplomacy. Places like Harvard, MIT, and Stanford weren't just American educational brands; they were world laboratories of innovation, cross-cultural dialogue, and diplomacy by proxy. For many young minds across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, getting into an Ivy League school was akin to getting a golden ticket — not just to education, but to enlightenment.

When Trump questioned the utility of such universities and threatened to cut their funds, he wasn't just aiming at liberal professors or elite academia; he was hacking away at the roots of America's global intellectual tree. The Fulbright Programme, which since 1946 had created a global network of US-educated



thinkers, diplomats, artists, and professionals, saw restrictions and stagnation under Trump's regime. This wasn't just about budget lines; it was about breaking bridges that had taken decades to build.

The shift wasn't limited to academia. Trump's "America First" translated into America alone. US



SANTHOSH MATHEW

foreign aid took a hit, including humanitarian and development assistance that had long been a lever of influence in fragile regions. Aid wasn't just charity — it was strategy. Whether it was reconstructing post-war Europe via the Marshall Plan, aiding countries during natural disasters,

or investing in public health abroad, American dollars often brought American goodwill. Cutting this lifeline left a vacuum often filled by rival powers, notably China. Perhaps the most damaging was the policy on immigration and visas. By clamping down on H1-B visas, Trump stifled the inflow of skilled professionals — especially from India. This move hurt not only the American tech industry but also tarnished its reputation as a land that rewards merit. India, a nation that sent scores of doctors, engineers, and nurses to serve in the US found itself at the receiving end of arbitrary bans and changing visa goalposts. Indian nurses in particular, known globally for their compassion

and professionalism, were once the unsung heroes of the American healthcare system. They became unintended victims of a policy that seemed more guided by xenophobic rhetoric than economic sense.

It's ironic. America gained its comparative cost advantage and global dominance in various sectors precisely because it welcomed the world's best minds. The openness to foreign students and workers was not just humanitarian — it was deeply pragmatic. When America opened its doors, it got the world's top scientists, engineers, teachers, and healthcare professionals. This influx didn't just boost the economy; it exported American values when these individuals returned home as brand ambassadors of the American dream. Trump's decision to erect barriers where bridges once stood was not just bad economics — it was terrible diplomacy.

Soft power, unlike hard power, does not rely on fear, force, or finance alone. It thrives on attraction. A country that welcomes, educates, and employs foreigners becomes a hub of admiration. The world's image of America, diverse, democratic, and dynamic — was always more powerful than any military base. That image is cracking under the weight of Trump's authoritarian tendencies wrapped in an elected regime. The global message is clear: this is not the America we used to know.

The consequences are already visible. International student applications to American universities have dropped. Countries that once looked to America for inspiration are now

turning elsewhere. China's Confucius Institutes, European Union scholarships, and India's neighbourhood outreach are stepping into the vacuum left by the US. And this matters. In a world of multipolar influence, losing moral and cultural leadership is as fatal as losing a war. The tragedy of Trump's approach is that it reverts America to a pre-globalisation, fortress-like nation. This stands in sharp contrast to the post-Pearl Harbour awakening that pushed America into internationalism. Back then, it learned that isolationism was not just impractical but dangerous. Trump's policies drag the country back into an atmosphere of division — racially, religiously, and ideologically. His emphasis on Christian identity, his anti-immigration posture, and his trade protectionism all add up to an authoritarian flavour, coated in electoral legitimacy.

When nations drift towards ultra-nationalism and away from global collaboration, they don't just lose allies — they lose identity. The America that helped rebuild Japan and Germany, which welcomed Einstein and later Sundar Pichai, is being replaced by an America that shuts doors, silences debate, and shuns difference. In the end, Trump's war is not just on liberals or foreigners or aid budgets. It's a war on America's most valuable diplomatic currency — its image. And once that image is broken, no amount of tanks or tariffs can fix it.

(The author is Professor, Centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies and Social Sciences, Pondicherry Central University, India. Views are personal)

## New moon Race: Private sector takes the lead

SECOND Opinion

BY RAJNEESH BHANDARI

This year will be a landmark year for lunar exploration, with three moon landings scheduled in quick succession that demonstrate humanity's renewed enchantment with our closest celestial neighbour. This week marks the first of these touchdowns, with Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost successfully landing on the lunar surface in Mare Crisium. This milestone is followed by plans for Japan's M2/Resilience mission and Intuitive Machines' IM-2 mission before June. These landings signal a new era of lunar exploration driven by private-sector innovation, international collaboration, and an ambitious space programme.

Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost lunar lander has achieved a soft landing on Mare Crisium, a vast basaltic plain on the moon's near side. An upright and stable landing makes Firefly the first private company to put a spacecraft on the moon without crashing or falling over — a feat where only five countries have been successful: Russia, the US, China, India, and Japan. Launched on January 15 aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9, this mission is part of NASA's Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) programme, which partners with private companies to deliver scientific payloads to the moon. This landing marks Firefly's first lunar mission and a significant win for the private sector, as the lander touched down just after

lunar dawn, giving it roughly 14 Earth days of sunlight to operate. This mission is notable for being the first US lunar landing of 2025 and for carrying 10 NASA-sponsored experiments alongside commercial payloads. It will test satellite navigation and radiation-resistant computers, which are critical for developing resilient technology for lunar habitation. Japan's M2/Resilience mission, led by space and scheduled for May/June, will deploy the RESILIENCE lander and the TENACIOUS micro-rover. This will mark Japan's second private lunar landing attempt after a 2023 failure. The micro-rover will attempt to extract water from lunar soil and split it into hydrogen and oxygen.

This could pave the way for producing life-sustaining resources on the moon, essential for long-term human presence. The third landing, Intuitive Machines' IM-2 mission, will carry a 1-metre drill to probe for water ice. This mission aims to map subsurface ice deposits, which are crucial for NASA's Artemis programme, which plans to have a sustainable base on the moon by 2030. The moon is re-emerging as humanity's next frontier for several reasons. Strategically, it's a stepping stone to Mars. It provides a testing ground for technologies like radiation shielding and in-situ generation of critical resources like oxygen. In terms of astronomy, the moon holds clues to the solar system's history. Economically, the moon's resources, like ice for fuel and oxygen, rare earth elements, etc., could fuel a space economy. Geopolitically, nations like the US and China see lunar dominance as a symbol of technological superiority, with the US and China planning to set up manned lunar bases before 2030.

Private Sector Involvement: A New Paradigm  
The success of startups like Firefly Aerospace, space and Intuitive Machines marks a shift from Government-led exploration to a commercial model.

NASA's CLPS programme exemplifies this by outsourcing lunar delivery to firms for a fraction of traditional costs. Private sector agility accelerates mission timelines, fosters innovation, and reduces cost. At the same time, competition drives technological leaps, such as SpaceX's water-splitting experiment.

India, too, is at the cusp of developing the startup ecosystem for space technologies. Startups like Dhruva Space, Pixxel, Agnikul Cosmos, Bellatrix Aerospace, and Skyroot Aerospace are developing a host of technologies, including end-to-end satellite solutions, a constellation of high-resolution hyperspectral imaging satellites, electrical thrusters for satellites, a small satellite launch vehicle, etc.

These startups are driving India's private sector, leveraging Government support and global interest. The lunar landings will provide a wealth of scientific insights and lay the foundation for future lunar bases.

For the first time, private companies and startups are leading the charge, conducting pioneering experiments like water extraction and ice drilling. These missions will bring us closer to a future where humanity not only visits the moon but thrives there and beyond.

(The writer is an alumnus of IIT Delhi and founder of NeuroEquilibrium. Views are personal)

Leaderspeak



Every country wants to partake, even countries that have ripped us off for many, many years. China is an example, but it's not just China, European Union. They ripped us off for many, many years, and those days are over... We'll be able to lower taxes substantially.

US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP

A wake-up call for National security

Madam — The brutal killing of 26 innocent people, most of them tourists, in Pahalgam, Jammu & Kashmir, has left the nation stunned. Militants disguised in army uniforms opened fire while the victims were enjoying pony rides and scenic views.

It stands as one of the most diabolical acts of terror in recent times. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi in response, questions arise about the Government's repeated claims of normalcy in the region. How did such a well-coordinated attack go unnoticed? Was this not a failure of our intelligence and security apparatus?

Reports suggest that the attack may have been carried out by 'The Resistance Front', an offshoot of Lashkar-e-Taiba. If so, how were they able to infiltrate a tourist hotspot without triggering any security alerts? Where were the patrols? Why was there no surveillance in such vulnerable areas? The Government must give answers to all these questions. It is not the time for rhetoric but for real action; nab the culprits and give them an exemplary punishment. These questions demand urgent answers. As peace-loving citizens, we mourn with the bereaved families and demand accountability. May the souls of the departed rest in peace and may justice be served swiftly and decisively.

BIDYUT KUMAR CHATTERJEE | FARIDABAD

The transformative power of reading

Madam — Reading is more than a skill — it is a gateway to lifelong learning, personal growth, and academic success. On World Book Day, we celebrate the vital role that reading plays in shaping young minds and inspiring curiosity.

A child's attitude toward reading greatly influences their motivation to read. When children enjoy reading, they naturally want to read more.

This enjoyment, nurtured from a young age, forms the foundation of strong reading habits. Reading not only enhances vocabulary and communication but also sharpens analytical thinking and improves writing skills.

Parents play a critical role by reading with their children regularly. These shared moments help children experience the joys of storytelling, cultivating a lasting love for books.

Every child learns differently — while some may take to reading naturally, others need encouragement and exposure to find their spark. Let us instil the value of reading early, so the next generation grows up with the tools they need to succeed and the imagination to dream big.

Let us nurture a love for reading from an early age, guiding children toward knowledge, creativity, and success. With consistent encouragement and shared reading moments, we can empower young minds to embrace books, build essential skills, and unlock their full potential. As they books are our best friends. Let this friendship begin!

CK SUBRAMANIAM | MUMBAI

Nation stands united against terror

Madam — India stands united in sorrow following the horrific terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu & Kashmir, on Tuesday, April 22, which claimed the lives of 30 innocent civilians. The nation mourns with the affected families who are enduring unimaginable pain. As countless voices across the country express solidarity, many are also demanding the severing of all sporting ties with Pakistan in the wake of the tragedy.

"This heinous act has caused irreparable harm, destroying families and striking at the heart of our society," many said in their condolences. "Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the victims. May they find peace and strength in these dark times," many people said in their emotional posts. It is a moment which can destroy all the gains humanity has made till date and plunge into negativity. But let us be sane and not spread hate. Interestingly, while bilateral cricket matches between India and Pakistan have not occurred since a one-off ODI series in 2012–13, their clashes in ICC tournaments remain the most anticipated events in global cricket. The recent ICC Champions Trophy faced turbulence, with India declining to send a team to Pakistan due to security concerns. Matches were eventually hosted at a neutral venue in Dubai. Moving forward, both the BCCI and PCB have agreed to avoid playing on each other's soil for at least three years.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

## Letters to the Editor

### WORLD MALARIA DAY: REIGNITING THE FIGHT AGAINST MALARIA

Malaria is a life-threatening parasitic disease transmitted by the female *Anopheles* mosquito. Despite being preventable and treatable, it remains a major global health challenge. Since the late 1990s, the international community has renewed its commitment to eradicating malaria, preventing an estimated 2.2 billion cases and 12.7 million deaths over two decades.

Yet, the disease still claims one life every minute, with the vast majority of fatalities occurring in the African region, which accounts for 82 per cent of cases and 95 per cent of deaths. Unfortunately, malaria control efforts are being hampered in low-income endemic countries due to extreme weather conditions, armed conflicts, humanitarian crises, and economic instability.

These challenges leave millions with limited access to preventive, diagnostic, and treatment services. If not treated promptly, malaria can quickly become a severe and life-threatening illness. World

Malaria Day 2025 Theme: This year, World Malaria Day, observed annually on April 25 since 2008, is themed "Malaria Ends With Us: Reinvent, Reimagine, Reignite." It is a global call to action that urges individuals, communities, and leaders to intensify efforts, champion innovation, and ensure sustained investment in the fight to end malaria. Common symptoms of malaria include fever, chills, sweating, headache, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, muscle and joint pain, anaemia, cough, and abdominal discomfort.

Preventive measures such as using insect repellents, wearing long-sleeved clothing, using mosquito nets, and eliminating stagnant water around homes are vital in reducing mosquito bites and keeping communities malaria-free. We have the knowledge and tools to end malaria. The choice is ours — act now. Ending malaria is not only a health necessity but also a step toward a fairer, safer, and more prosperous future for all.

BURRA M REDDY | KARIMNAGAR

# Terror in Pahalgam shatters India's diplomatic high

As world leaders lauded India's geopolitical ascent, the attack marked a chilling reminder that terror in Kashmir remains a calculated lever in the regional and international balance of power

FIRST Column

JD Vance, the Vice President of the United States, arrived in India on 19 April, following a solemn stop at the Vatican, where he became the final high — ranking official to meet the late Pope Francis — an emblematic rebel of the modern Church whose death this week marked the end of a transformative papacy.

Vance's arrival was framed as an endorsement of India's ascendant geopolitical status, punctuated by public tributes to Prime Minister Modi and the deepening of the Indo-American strategic alliance. This diplomatic spectacle was further amplified by the April 9 extradition of Tahawwur Hussain Rana, a Pakistani — origin Canadian linked to the 2008 Mumbai attacks, representing a rare convergence of legal triumphs between the two nations in their fight against terrorism.

Yet, this orchestration of diplomatic victories quickly unravelled, as within days of these high-profile engagements, Kashmir — a region central to India's evolving image — was once again thrust into global headlines, not by progress, but by tragedy. On April 22, a massacre in the idyllic meadows of Baisaran near Pahalgam once heralded as the face of Kashmir's resurgence, accentuated a brutal paradox: the strategic narrative of peace and prosperity was violently interrupted by terror, forcing the world to confront the enduring volatility of the region at a moment when India appeared poised for diplomatic consolidation.

On April 22, 2025, a massacre unfolded in the meadows of Baisaran near Pahalgam, often romanticised as "India's Switzerland." What had become a symbol of India's Kashmir renaissance — a picturesque site of family vacations, film shoots, and summer retreats — was reduced to a field of carnage as unidentified gunmen opened fire on a group of tourists. At least twenty-eight civilians, mostly men, were methodically executed, while women and children were reportedly spared.

The attack was not merely an act of terror, but a deeply choreographed intervention in India's domestic and international narrative regarding Kashmir. It sought not just to kill, but to provoke, destabilise, and symbolically mutilate the emerging image of a peaceful, integrated, and economically flourishing region. The timing of the attack is far too conspicuous to be dismissed as arbitrary. Beyond coinciding with the visit of the American Vice President and coming a few days after the extradition of a high — profile terror suspect, the attack occurred against the backdrop of growing international recognition of India's Kashmir policy post the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. Since that constitutional transformation, Jammu and Kashmir have experienced what some argue is the beginning of a socio-economic metamorphosis. The region recorded a significant uptick in tourist arrivals, over 3.5 million in 2024 alone and notable improvements in infrastructure, per capita income, and public order, especially relative to other northern Indian states. Critics of New Delhi's policy feared a resurgence of insur-



gency post-2019, but such forecasts had not materialised at the scale predicted. Instead, the Indian Government appeared to have successfully restrained militant mobilisation through strategic military presence, economic incentives, and political integration. In this context, the Pahalgam attack functions as a violent punctuation — an abrupt and bloody interruption in a gradually stabilising narrative. Its deliberate orchestration, selective targeting of non-Muslim male tourists, and execution-style killings point to a calculated act of psychological and political warfare. Intelligence sources have attributed the operation to the Resistance Front (TRF), a group often described as a proxy of Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Pakistan — based organisation responsible for the 26/11 Mumbai attacks. Although the Pakistani state has officially denied any involvement, the attack bears the hallmarks



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

of asymmetric warfare, characteristic of entities that, though ostensibly autonomous, often operate under the shadow and sanction of foreign state apparatuses. This week, newly declassified US intelligence documents, released by the National Security Archive, highlight a chilling historical continuity with the current crisis. A 1981 memorandum warned of catastrophic consequences from an Indian strike on Pakistan's Karachi Nuclear Power Plant, with up to 20,000 latent cancer cases in Karachi due to Iodine-131 exposure. The document reflected Washington's concerns about how quickly a conventional South Asian conflict could escalate to nuclear war. This was echoed in a 1989 report by the US State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, which deemed a full-scale war between India and Pakistan "improbable," yet stressed the high risk of escalation through miscalculation, especially in the event of strikes on Pakistan's nuclear sites. By 1993, a National Intelligence Estimate suggested a one in five chance of war, noting that nuclear rivalry, cross-border militancy, and rising extremism could turn even minor skirmishes into a regional disaster. What emerges from these archival assessments is a grim continuity: terror

FROM THE CHATTISINGHPORA MASSACRE IN MARCH 2000, WHERE 36 SIKH VILLAGERS WERE EXECUTED DURING PRESIDENT CLINTON'S VISIT, TO THE 2001 JAMMU AND KASHMIR ASSEMBLY BOMBING, THE 2003 NANDIMARG MASSACRE OF KASHMIRI PANDITS, THE 2017 AMARNATH YATRA AMBUSH, AND NOW THE 2025 PAHALGAM KILLINGS, THE PATTERN IS UNMISTAKABLE

of asymmetric warfare, characteristic of entities that, though ostensibly autonomous, often operate under the shadow and sanction of foreign state apparatuses. This week, newly declassified US intelligence documents, released by the National Security Archive, highlight a chilling historical continuity with the current crisis.

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in Kashmir has consistently been a strategic tool wielded not merely to express ideological dissent but to force geopolitical recalibration. This is not a theatre of mindless extremism; it is a crucible of meticulously calibrated violence. From the Chattisinghpura massacre in March 2000, where 36 Sikh villagers were executed during President Clinton's visit, to the 2001 Jammu and Kashmir Assembly bombing, the 2003 Nandimarg massacre of Kashmiri Pandits, the 2017 Amarnath Yatra ambush, and now the 2025 Pahalgam killings, the pattern is unmistakable. Civilian targeting escalates in moments of diplomatic progress, suggesting an ideological commitment by militant actors to challenge not only the Indian state but also its evolving position within the global order.

The present attack comes at a moment when India is enjoying heightened diplomatic engagement with the Arab Countries and the West. Saudi Arabia, traditionally a close ally of Pakistan, has in recent years pivoted towards India as a key economic and strategic partner. The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and even Iran have signalled similar recalibrations.

This realignment was most visible during the 2019 India-Pakistan standoff when the Gulf states played a critical role in de-escalation, and again when they muted their responses to India's abrogation of Kashmir's autonomy. The Kashmir issue, once a central rallying cry in Islamic internationalism, has lost its salience in the Gulf's strategic calculus. For militant organisations and their state backers, this diminishing global sympathy poses an existential challenge. Reinvigorating the Kashmir discourse through acts of horror appears to be the chosen mode of revival.

It would be naïve to view the Pahalgam massacre in isolation. The possibility of future attacks targeting soft civilian clusters — tourists, religious pilgrims, migrant workers — across other regions in South Asia cannot be discounted. Nepal's porous borders, Sri Lanka's post-conflict fragilities, and India's Northeast remain potential theatres for replication.

In the wake of this attack, Prime Minister Modi faces a dilemma reminiscent of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's conundrum following the Hamas assault in October 2023. A tempered response could be construed as weakness, emboldening adversaries and fuelling domestic political critiques of failed security assurances. Conversely, a muscular retaliation — especially if aimed at Pakistan or its proxies — risks internationalising the Kashmir dispute once again, undoing years of diplomatic effort to position it as an internal Indian matter. Moreover, in the context of escalating global multipolarity and emergent regional axes, a misstep could precipitate a broader crisis, pulling in actors far beyond South Asia.

(The writer is a columnist based in Colombo. Views are personal)

## Mental Health: A silent crisis demanding urgent action

Mental well-being can no longer be treated as secondary to physical health. As Government initiatives take shape and public awareness grows, the time has come for a collective, compassionate response to protect our nation's mental health and with it, our future

There is an old saying that a healthy mind leads to a healthy body — I could not agree with it more! Ever since the pandemic, we are witnessing a steep rise in mental health related conditions. It's a matter of grave concern that a large number of people are today suffering from what is termed as unmanageable stress, depression and anxiety. It is equally concerning to note that these ailments are impacting across the age spectrum, be it students, young adults or the elderly.

When we look at the data pertaining to mental health, it is like being hit by a ton of bricks. Such is the extent of this issue that one student is committing suicide every hour in India.

Taking note of the growing suicide deaths in higher educational institutions across the country, the Supreme Court recently formed a National Task Force for a mechanism to prevent student suicide deaths on campuses and address their mental health issues.

The bench said that the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data for 2021 highlights the grim reality that over 13,000 students lost their lives by committing suicide in the country.

According to the World Health Organisation, depression affects over 300 million people globally, and it is predicted to be the leading cause of disability by 2030. In 2024, studies in India continue to reveal a significant burden of depression, with estimates indicating that over 56 million people are affected and research points to a rising trend, particularly in rural areas and among certain demographics.

Factors like rapid urbanisation, economic pressures, social isolation, and the pandemic have contributed to the increase. The Bipolar disorder landscape in India is also quite serious, about 1 in 150 persons in the country suffer from it, and quite disturbingly, 70 per cent remain untreated.

It is characterised by low mood, decreased energy, loss of interest, sleep problems, thoughts or acts of self-harm, along with episodes of mania. Research is now shedding light on the fact that 60 per cent of the people who lose their life to suicide have had a mood ailment such



as depression or bipolar disorder. This finding is significant as it points to a series of progressions before this most tragic final step.

When we look deeper into the mental health scenario in India, multiple issues that have a profound impact on mental health — come to the fore.

In the case of the students and the young, many are too busy searching for material things as the entire space for them has become extremely competitive, there is reduced focus on relaxation and unwinding, and as a result burn outs and depression encircle their lives.

In all this, the impact of the internet and social media in aggravating pressures

and setting unattainable and overambitious goals — courtesy of peer pressure, is also creating a havoc in the lives of the youth.

In the case of the elderly, we are witnessing the rise in loneliness as their children are either not living with them, due to studies or jobs, or spending much less time because of preoccupations and inability to detach from their busy schedules. There is therefore, a fear of growing old, along with increasing insecurities — about who will take care of them, when they reach their physical limits due to advancing age.

Since the pandemic, we are witnessing a renewed focus and much greater emphasis on mental health issues. They are now being increasingly considered as much of a priority as many physical issues.

The Indian Government has launched several initiatives to address mental health, including the National Tele Mental Health Programme (Tele

MANAS) and the Ayushman Bharat, HWC Scheme.

Tele MANAS provides free, 24/7 mental health support through a toll-free helpline, while the Ayushman Bharat scheme integrates mental health services into primary healthcare. Additionally, the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) and the District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) are key components of India's mental healthcare services. For the elderly, the Government has launched the National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly (NPHCE) and the Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY).

The NPHCE provides comprehensive healthcare, including mental health services, to senior citizens. AVYAY supports various welfare initiatives for senior citizens, including grant-in-aid for mental health services and awareness programs. Additionally, the National Helpline for Senior Citizens (Elderline) offers support and guidance, including emotional sup-

port for those struggling with mental health issues.

It is extremely reassuring that the highest levels of our nation — are aware and alive, to the seriousness of the situation. In fact, our hon'ble Prime Minister has led from the front with his views and possible solutions that can go a long way in addressing this critical subject. In his popular monthly program 'Mann Ki Baat', he highlighted the importance of mental health, especially among the youth in the current era, and spoke with crystal clarity about the role of physical activity, diet, yoga, along with the use of technology like artificial intelligence to elevate mental health.

This should be seen as a nudge, and it requires a collective approach that involves the families, academia and the community to create an enabling ecosystem that safeguards our students and the generations to follow. These guardrails should both protect and strengthen — protect against the perils of social media,

the pressure that it can unleash on the young and innocent, strengthen the two-way communication (candid and unreserved) between the students and their parents/families, strengthen the role of the friends, peers and the community in creating a positive environment that accepts average performance as not the end of the world, and instills the spirit of optimism.

All of these, will ensure, that the dejection from failure or pressure of excelling, are dealt with most effectively. The educational institutions and their leadership also have to provide an environment where students feel motivated, encouraged and appreciated. Grades and excellence alone are not what life is all about — it's about an honest to self and best possible effort.

It's for all this, that suitable conditions have to be created. This can include counselling, dedicated presence and round the clock availability of experts who can spot the red flags and identify those who need psychological support and guidance in a timely manner, thereby, ensuring that a decline in mental faculties of the students in their institutions is drastically reduced.

This will play an impactful role in the creation of a quintessential complete establishment — one that focuses not just on the studies but also creates avenues of growth for the all-round development of its students.

In the end, we have to be mindful of the ground realities. Our journey has just started on this very long and arduous path, and it will take multiple approaches to address this key health aspect, that has a huge bearing on our country.

Mental health is a significant component of a 'Swastha Bharat' dream, and has a direct and crucial impact on national creativity and productivity. While factors that contribute to mental ailments will only increase in the coming times, it's our proactive and head-on engagement, that will ensure effective remedies.

I do believe, that well begun is half done, and that we are indeed headed in the right direction — one of hope and promise of a bright future!

(The writer is President — Corporate Affairs, ITC. Views are personal)

# Political parties of J and K condemn Pahalgam attack

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

After witnessing the 'horrific killing' of 26 tourists, hailing from different states of India in Pahalgam, the political parties of Jammu and Kashmir Thursday adopted a strongly-worded resolution under the leadership of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah condemning the "heinous and inhumane" attack on innocent civilians. The All-Party meeting held in Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC), Srinagar, was attended by representatives from different political parties. Reading out the resolution, at the end of the meeting, Omar Abdullah appealed to governments of other states and union territories to protect Kashmiris against any form of harassment in the wake of the Pahalgam killings. "We, the participants of the All-Party Meeting of Jammu & Kashmir, deeply shocked and anguished by the recent barbaric attack in Pahalgam on April 22, 2025 on innocent civilians, do hereby adopt this resolution in a spirit of collective solidarity," the Chief Minister said. "We unequivocally condemn in the

strongest possible terms the heinous, inhumane attack in Pahalgam that targeted and killed innocent civilians. "Such cowardly acts of brutality against peaceful citizens have no place in society and are a direct assault on the values of Kashmiriyat, and the idea of India, which have long been a symbol of unity, peace, and harmony in the region," he added. Abdullah said all parties of Jammu and Kashmir stand "unwavering in our commitment" to support all efforts in bringing these perpetrators to justice. "In doing so, we affirm that no act of terror can ever weaken our resolve or extinguish our indomitable spirit. We also support the steps taken by the Union Government announced yesterday," he added. The meeting extended "our deepest condolences" to the families who have suffered a loss. The resolution also lauded the sacrifice of 'ponywallah' Syed Adil Hussain Shah, who stood up against the armed terrorists. "We share in your sorrow and stand united with you in this time of profound grief. We salute the supreme sacrifice of Shaheed Syed Adil Hussain Shah, who fer-



J and K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah at All-Party meeting in Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC), Srinagar

ried tourists on his horse in Pahalgam, was martyred during his attempt to fight one of the terrorists to save the tourists. "His valour and selflessness shall forever remain an inspiration to all. He is a true

face of Kashmiriyat and Kashmir hospitality," the chief minister said. The meeting also commended the people of Jammu and Kashmir for their moral and material support to all the

tourists across the Valley and for their resolute unity in condemning the recent attack. "We appreciate the spontaneous, peaceful demonstrations across towns and villages across the length and breadth of J and K, which exemplify our unwavering commitment to peace, communal harmony, and the rule of law, and reaffirm our collective resolve to foster mutual respect, uphold constitutional values, and work collaboratively for the prosperity and stability of Jammu & Kashmir," Abdullah said. The resolution called on the governments of all states and union territories to come forward with an unwavering commitment to protect the Kashmiri students and citizens who find themselves far from home. "These individuals, whether traveling or residing outside Jammu and Kashmir, must be safeguarded against any form of harassment, discrimination, or intimidation," the resolution read. The meeting also called upon all political parties, community leaders, religious institutions, youth groups, civil society organisations and media organisations in Jammu & Kashmir and the nation to maintain calm, resist the provocations of those

who seek to disrupt harmony, and continue working together for the peace and development of the region. Earlier, a group of Kashmiri Pandit employees working in the valley held a silent sit-in on Thursday against the Pahalgam attack, saying such killings were not acceptable. The members of the community, employed under the Prime Minister's package, also asked the government to think about their safety and security as well. "We, the PM package employees, have come from across the valley to pay homage to those who were killed in the Pahalgam attack. We have come here to condemn the killings. We want to say that such killings are not acceptable. We have also come here to seek justice," one of the employees told reporters. He said the situation in Kashmir had been peaceful over the last few years, but the Pahalgam massacre has disturbed the whole valley. "We employees are also disturbed. We want to say that if tourists, who were here to enjoy for a few days, are not safe, then how can the minority employees who work here be safe? That is our issue, it is about our safety and security," he added.

## Dombivli still in grief, bereaved families break down

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ Mumbai

Tears have not stopped rolling from the eyes of the three families of three cousins Atul Mone, Sanjay Lele, and Hemant Joshi who were killed in the Pahalgam terror attack on Tuesday. A day after the solemn funeral rites of the terror victims, the members of three bereaved families broke down in front of the cameras on Thursday as they recounted the horrifying and inhumane details of the incident. Two days after their dream trip to Jammu and Kashmir into a blood-soaked nightmare, Atul's wife Anushka Mone recalled: "We were enjoying the beauty of Besaran hills, surrounded by crowds of happy tourists. There was a festive atmosphere all over the place... All of a sudden, our world turned upside down as the terrorists descended on the place at around 12.30 on Tuesday." "Two men dressed in military uniform suddenly appeared, wearing GoPro cameras on their foreheads. They ordered all tourists to gather together. Local horse-men sensed danger and told us to bow down to avoid provoking them," she said. Unable to control her tears, Anushka continued: "Hemant Joshi asked them as to who they were, and what they were doing. They shot him in the head before he could finish his sentence." Before long, the attackers asked the huddled tourists to identify themselves: "Who is Hindu? Who is Muslim?" As

**PEOPLE STAGE PROTESTS TO CONDEMN TERROR ATTACK**

**Mumbai:** All major political parties along with commoners staged peaceful demonstrations, marches and protests in various parts of Maharashtra on Thursday to condemn the Pahalgam terror attack that claimed 26 lives, including 6 from the state on Thursday. Common people and political parties took to the streets in Mumbai, Thane, Dombivli, Palghar, Pune, Jalgaon, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, Satara, Amravati, Nashik and other parts of the state to give vent their anger against the ghastly massacre of tourists in Kashmir on April 22. The protesters raised angry slogans, carried posters, placards slamming the terror perpetrators and their handlers in Pakistan. They hit posters with shoes, burnt photos of

the terrorists and demanded justice for the victims. Amravati observed a spontaneous partial shutdown to condemn the killings and called upon the government to avenge the deaths of innocents. The parties that protested comprised BJP, Shinde Shiv Sena, Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT), Republican Party of India (Athawale), their affiliates, along with their activists and senior leaders. Several Muslim organisations and groups also joined the protests. In a related development, the Mumbai Police have beefed up security all over the country's commercial capital. They are enforcing road blocks, random checks and other precautionary measures, especially at sensitive locations.

soon as Sanjay Lele raised his hand and said he was a Hindu, he was shot in the head. When Atul Mone responded, he was shot in the stomach. "Atul died on the spot... I tried to shield him, but they fired anyway. My fingers were injured in the chaos." Mone's daughter Richa, a 12th standard student, added, "They asked about Sanjay Kaka. I was right behind him when they shot him dead." Richa also recounted how her uncle — Anushka's brother — was spared possibly only because his wife wore green bangles, which the terrorists may have mistakenly associated with Muslim identity. Among the tourists the terrorists wanted the Hindus and Muslims to make sep-

arate ground. However, tourists were in no mood to oblige them, which prompted the terrorists to indulge in indiscriminate firing. "There was no chance to run. If we had, they would have fired more bullets and killed more people. So we ducked and sat silently," Richa said. The Mone family, along with other affected families, rooted for strong and swift action against the terrorists "All breadwinners have been massacred. The government must take responsibility — support the families, fund the children's education, and ensure jobs in the future," Prasad Soman said. "Catch the terrorists, skin them alive, punish them publicly. This should never

## Flight fares likely to surge after Pakistan closes airspace

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

International flights, especially from Delhi and other northern cities, will take a longer time to reach their destinations and fares are also likely to rise in the range of 8-12 per cent in the near term, with Pakistan closing its airspace for India and airlines. Air India and IndiGo on Thursday said some of its international flights have been impacted by the Pakistan airspace closure, with the Tata Group-owned airline mentioning that its flights connecting North America, UK, Europe and Middle East are likely to take an alternative extended route. Apart from IndiGo and Air India, Air India Express, SpiceJet and Akasa Air also have international operations. All West-bound flights flying from north Indian cities, including Delhi, will be impacted due to the closure. These flights will have to take alternative routes that will be longer over the Arabian Sea, according to senior airline officials and pilots. With longer routes, airlines will need more fuel to operate the flights resulting in higher costs as well as deal with payload issues. Amid escalating tensions between India and Pakistan due to Pahalgam terror attack, Pakistan on Thursday said it will bar Indian airlines from using its air-

space. The airspace cannot be used by India-registered aircraft as well as planes owned or leased by Indian operators. In a post on X, Air India said that due to the announced restriction of Pakistan airspace for all Indian airlines, it is expected that some Air India flights to or from North America, UK, Europe, and Middle East will take an alternative extended route. "Air India regrets the inconvenience caused to our passengers due to this unforeseen airspace closure that is outside our control. We would like to reiterate that at Air India, the safety of our customers and crew remains top priority," the airline said. IndiGo said that due to the sudden announcement of air space closure by Pakistan, a few of our international flights are being impacted. "We understood the inconvenience this may cause and our teams are doing their best to help you reach your destination at the earliest," the airline said in a post on X. A senior pilot said that the duration of some of the US and European flights operated by Indian airlines will increase in the range of 2 to 2.5 hours. The duration of the international flights will depend on routes that will be taken by the airlines and there are different route options. A clearer picture will emerge once airlines file their flight plans, a senior Air Traffic Controller said.

## Film body roots for ban on Abir Gulal featuring Pakistan actor Fawad Khan

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ Mumbai

Two days after the Pahalgam terror attack, the Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE) clamoured for a ban on an upcoming Hindi film "Abir Gulal" featuring Pakistani actor Fawad Khan and Indian actress Vaani Kapoor — which is slated for release on May 9, 2025. Having taken strong objection to the Pakistani artists being employed by Bollywood, the FWICE's President BN Tiwari said: "We reiterate our call, originally issued on February 18, 2019, calling for complete non-cooperation with all Pakistani artists, singers, and technicians within the Indian film and entertainment industry".

"Despite this ongoing directive, we have been made aware of the recent collaboration with Pakistani actor Fawad Khan for the Hindi film Abir Gulal. In light of the recent attack in Pahalgam, FWICE is once again compelled to issue a blanket boycott on all Pakistani artists, singers, and technicians participating in any Indian film or entertainment projects. This includes performances or collaborations occurring anywhere in the world," Tiwari said. The Indian Film and TV Directors' Association (IFTDA) too condemned the attack. "This cowardly and inhumane act of violence against innocent people is a direct heinous attack on the values of peace, humanity and unity that we all stand for; such senseless brutality has no place in any civilized society and must be universal con-

demned," IFTDA's President Ashoke Pandit said. "IFTDA stands in complete solidarity with the victims and their families during the unimaginably difficult time. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who lost their loved ones and extend our heartfelt condolences to all those affected by this tragedy," Pandit said. In a related development, Fawad Khan and Vaani Kapoor has conveyed their condolences to the bereaved families over the incident. "Deeply saddened to hear the news of the heinous attack in Pahalgam. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims of this horrifying incident, and we pray for strength and healing for their families in this difficult time," Fawad Khan wrote in the social media.

## Raksha Mantri holds All Party meet

Continued from >> P1 Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi who has scheduled a Kashmir visit on Friday said everyone at the meeting unequivocally condemned the terror attack and offered full support to the Government. He also raised the issue of security lapses at the tourist spot, asking why no security personnel were deputed there, sources said. Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said there has been a security lapse and the Government did not act promptly after the attack. Congress and AAP's Sanjay Singh, sought to know the absence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the meeting

and said that he should have been present. Leader of the House in Rajya Sabha and BJP president JP Nadda also attended the meeting. Others who attended the meeting included NCP-SP's Supriya Sule, NCP's Praful Patel, AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi, BJD's Sasmit Patra, TDP's Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu, Shiv Sena's Shrikant Shinde, RJD's Premchand Gupta, DMK's Tiruchi Siva and SP's Ram Gopal Yadav. It has been a convention to call an all-party meeting following an incident with serious repercussions related to national security, as was seen after the Pulwama terror attack in 2019 or during the India-China standoff in 2020.

## Army Commando killed in Jammu and Kashmir

Continued from >> P1 On April 9, an encounter broke out between security forces and terrorists in the Jopher-Marta belt of Rambnagar, Udhampur district. However, the terrorists managed to escape. On September 11 last year, two terrorists affiliated with the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) outfit were killed in an encounter in the upper reaches of Basantgarh. On April 29 last year, a Village Defence Guard member was killed in an exchange of fire with unidentified gunmen in Panara village of Basantgarh. Several encounters and operations

have occurred in this strategic belt, which lies between the Kathua border district and the Doda-Kishtwar belt, as part of infiltration routes. Meanwhile, a search operation was launched at multiple locations near the Line of Control in the Poonch district on Thursday. Based on inputs about suspicious movement, the Special Operations Group of local police and troops of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jointly cordoned off Phamarnar, Kiker Morh, Jabdan Gali and Harni in Gursai and Brela and Kasbalari in Mendhar and Bafliaz forest in Surankote.

## Tihar refutes claims of Christian Michel

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Rubbishing allegations of Augustawestland case accused Christian Michel, who claimed being lodged with a prisoner with a checkered record, Tihar authorities on Thursday said he was never kept with another person in a single cell.

## Cricketer Gambhir fears for life

Continued from >> P1 Gambhir's stint as head coach of the Indian cricket team has been nothing short of a dramatic journey marked by early setbacks, intense scrutiny, and a glorious turnaround on the big stage. Taking charge with high expectations, Gambhir faced a stormy start. India stumbled in the ODI series against Sri Lanka and then suffered a crushing 0-3 whitewash in the Test series at home against New Zealand. The Border-Gavaskar Trophy, a symbol of India's dominance over Australia for nearly a decade, slipped away after a 1-3 series loss. However, Gambhir and Team India turned the narrative around spectacularly. The turning point came at the ICC Champions Trophy, where India found its rhythm and delivered a flawless campaign. From start to finish, the Men in Blue remained unbeaten, culminating in a clinical win over New Zealand in the final.

## Read the sign: No entry for Pakistanis

Continued from >> P1 Foreign secretary Vikram Misri on Thursday briefed the ambassadors of select nations including Germany, Japan, Poland, the United Kingdom, and Russia on the recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam. Misri provided a detailed update to envoys from G20 countries, including representatives from China and Canada, in a meeting that sources say lasted approximately 30 minutes. Army Chief General Uday Dwivedi will visit Srinagar on Friday to carry out a comprehensive review of the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir on Friday in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 civilians. Top Army Commanders will brief General Dwivedi on various aspects of the security scenario, military sources said. Security barricades outside the Pakistan High Commission in Delhi were removed by the police on Thursday a day after India downgraded diplomatic ties with Pakistan following the Pahalgam attack. Soon after barricades were removed, protests broke out outside Pakistan Embassy with protesters shouting "Pakistan Murdabad" slogans. More than 500 people staged a protest near the Pakistan High Commission here at around 11:30 am just as security was beefed up near the building. Holding placards and raising slogans against Pakistan, the protesters demanded deci-

sive action against the neighbouring country, accusing it of supporting terror activities in India. Visuals from outside the Pakistan High Commission, located in Chanakyapuri, Delhi's diplomatic enclave, show a large crowd gathered outside the building, with police forces trying to pacify it. The BJP, along with various social organisations like the Anti-Terror Action Forum, also participated in the protest. "Earlier, the government carried out a surgical strike. We demand similar action again to eradicate terrorism. This was a shameful attack on innocent tourists," a member of the Anti-Terror Action Forum said "We trust the government has already made a plan," he added. Meanwhile, the Delhi Police had strengthened security outside the high commission after several organisations called for a protest. Barricades were put up around 500 metres from the high commission, and the protesters were stopped there, a Delhi Police officer said. "We received information that several organisations have called for a protest at Tri Murti Chowk near the Pakistan High Commission. We have barricaded the area and no one will be allowed to disturb the law and order situation," a senior police officer said, adding "necessary" traffic diversions have been made. Some protesters tried to climb over the barricades but were

stopped by the police personnel and taken away. Till Wednesday afternoon, the barricades were in place outside the Pakistan High Commission embassy after a protest call was made by some organisations. On Thursday morning, however, not a single barricade remained. Meanwhile, two protests, one by the BJP and another by the Anti-Terror Action Forum, were held outside the Pakistan High Commission, where protesters raised slogans against the country. The police asked the protesters to disperse and continue their agitation at Jantar Mantar. Meanwhile, a purported video circulating on social media has ignited widespread outrage after it depicted a person delivering a cake to the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi. In this video, an individual being confronted by reporters who questioned the nature of celebrations, refused to comment and hurried past media persons. The video surfaced just two days after the Pahalgam terror attack, leading to accusations that it was a celebratory gesture from the High Commission in response to the attack. The video quickly went viral, sparking heated reactions across social media platforms. Users were quick to accuse the Pakistan High Commission of celebrating the terror attack.

## India mourns its dead: From North to South, East to West

Continued from >> P1 He had been married just over two months ago on February 12. Shubham was on a weeklong trip to Kashmir with his wife Ashanya, parents, in-laws, sister, brother-in-law, and her sister's in-laws when terrorists shot him from point-blank range. Ashanya was witness to the horror. A green corridor was established to transport the body from Lucknow airport to Hathipur. Thousands of mourners, including leaders of the ruling BJP and opposition Congress, attended the funeral. Accompanied by Speaker Satish Mahana, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath

also visited Dwivedi's ancestral home and assured the bereaved family of every possible support. "Today I paid tribute to Shubham Dwivedi, who died in a cowardly terrorist attack in Pahalgam, at his ancestral home in Kanpur and consoled the bereaved family," Adityanath said in a post on X. In Karnataka, thousands gathered for the funerals of Manjunath Rao and Bharath Bhushan, both in their 40s. Manjunath, a businessman from Shivamogga, had gone to Kashmir with his wife and son, who had just completed his Class 12 exams.

Bharath went for a holiday, also with his wife and three-year-old son. Both lives cruelly cut short. While Manjunath was cremated in Shivamogga, Bharath's last rites were held in Bengaluru. Ministers, political leaders, government officials including police officers and activists joined the family members in their moment of sorrow. Family members were inconsolable as the pyres were lit. It was a day of remembrance, grief and resolve for the country and for the families. The much loved men now framed in forever smiles in garlanded photographs.



# Pakistan top brass meet, discuss India's response

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Islamabad

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday held a meeting with key ministers and the three services chiefs to formulate the country's response on India's move to suspend the Indus Water Treaty and downgrade diplomatic ties after the Pahalgam terror attack.

The decisions taken at the National Security Committee meeting were not immediately known.

India on Wednesday suspended the Indus Water Treaty of 1960 and announced downgrading diplomatic ties with Pakistan, including expulsion of its military attaches, in view of the cross-border links to the Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26

people on Tuesday.

Earlier, Dawn reported that deputy prime minister Ishaq Dar, while speaking to a private television channel late on Wednesday, lashed out at India's approach, calling it "immature" and "hasty".

"India has not given any evidence. They have not shown any maturity in their response," Dar said. "This is a non-serious approach. They started creating hype immediately after the incident."

Pakistan's Foreign Office, in a separate statement earlier on Wednesday, expressed regret over the loss of life. Diplomatic observers warn that the Indian response and Pakistan's counter-messaging could push bilateral relations to new lows, further widening a rift that has persisted since the 2019 Pulwama-Balakot crisis.

The treaty suspension, in particular, risks sparking long-term water disputes, while the downgrading of diplomatic ties could hinder any future de-escalation efforts, Dawn reported.

A day after the Pahalgam attack, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) met in New Delhi on Wednesday evening under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and firmed up the responses to the terror attack.

The CCS also decided to close the Integrated Check Post at Attari with immediate effect. Pakistani nationals will not be permitted to travel to India under the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme (SVES) and any such visas issued in the past to Pakistani nationals are deemed cancelled, it was announced.

# China successfully launches three new astronauts to its space station

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Beijing

China has successfully launched three astronauts to its space station on Thursday to replace their colleagues manning the station for the past six months.

The Shenzhou-20 crewed spaceship carrying the astronauts blasted off at 5:17 pm (Beijing Time) from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in northwest China.

Minutes after the launch an official in the mission control centre announced that the launch was a "complete success." The launch was telecast live by the state-run CGTN.

The spaceship is carrying three astronauts — Chen Dong, Chen Zhongrui and Wang Jie.

It will dock with the space station later tonight.

Shenzhou-20 is the 35th flight mission of China's manned space programme, and the fifth crewed mission during the application and development stage of China's space station.

The crew is scheduled to return to the Dongfeng landing site in north China in late October this year.

China rotates a three-member crew manning the space station named Tiangong every six months.

After the new set of crew members enter the station, the other three are expected to return to earth on April 29.

The crew will conduct new life science experiments involving zebrafish, planarians and streptomycetes, the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) spokesman Lin Xiqiang told the media on Wednesday.

These experiments will mark China's first space-based investigation into the regeneration of planarians, a new organism introduced to China's space station and known for their extraordinary ability to regrow organs, Lin said.

This project will enhance our understanding of fundamental mechanisms of regeneration at the individual level and could provide insights into human health issues related to space-induced injuries, Lin said.



Chinese astronauts for the Shenzhou-20 mission Chen Dong, right, and Chen Zhongrui wave during a send-off ceremony for their manned space mission at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China

The CMSA also said on Wednesday that two Pakistani astronauts will be selected to receive spaceflight training in China to take part in a joint mission to the country's space station.

One of the two Pakistanis will participate as a payload specialist, state-run Xinhua quoted a CMSA spokesperson as saying.

China built its space station after it was reportedly excluded from the International Space Station (ISS) over concerns that China's space programme is manned by its military, the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

It is currently the only country to have a space station while the ISS is a collaborative project of several countries.

Observers say China's space station may become the only one of its kind in orbit once the ISS retires in the coming years.

The two robotic arms of the station, especially the long one which has the ability to grab objects including satellites from space, drew international concerns.

The launch day coincided with China's 10th Space Day. China had designated April 24 as its Space Day in 2016 to mark the successful launch of its first satellite,

Dongfanghong-1 on April 24, 1970.

Separately, the China National Space Administration (CNSA) announced on Thursday that scientists from institutions in France, Germany, Japan, Pakistan, the UK and the US have been granted the opportunity to borrow lunar samples collected by the Chang'e-5 mission for scientific research.

At a ceremony for China's Space Day in Shanghai, the agency announced that seven institutions from six countries have been authorised to borrow the lunar samples, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

In 2020, China's Chang'e-5 mission retrieved samples from the moon weighing about 1,731 grams.

Shan Zhongde, head of the CNSA, said China's lunar exploration programme has always adhered to the principles of equality, mutual benefits, peaceful utilisation and win-win cooperation, sharing achievements with the international community.

By the end of December 2023, CNSA had received 24 applications from 11 countries and international organisations, the report said.

# Korean leader indicted for alleged bribery

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Seoul

South Korean prosecutors indicted former liberal President Moon Jae-in on bribery charges Thursday, saying that a budget airline gave his son-in-law a lucrative no-show job during Moon's term in office.

Moon's indictment adds him to a long list of South Korean leaders who have faced trials or scandals at the close of their terms or after leaving office.

Prosecutors allege that Moon, who served as president from 2017-2022, received bribes totalling 217 million Won (USD 151,705) from Lee Sang-jik, founder of the budget carrier Thai Eastar Jet, in the form of wages, housing expenses and other financial assistance provided to Moon's then-son-in-law from 2018-2020.

South Korean media reported that Moon's daughter and her husband were divorced in 2021.

The Jeonju District Prosecutors' Office said in a statement that Lee was also indicted on charges of paying bribes to Moon and committing breaches of trust.

The prosecutors' office said Moon's former son-in-law was hired as a director-

level employee at Lee's company in Thailand even though he had no work experience in the airline industry.

The office said he spent only brief periods at the company's office in Thailand and carried out only minor duties while claiming to be working remotely from South Korea.

**Moon's indictment adds him to a long list of South Korean leaders who have faced trials or scandals at the close of their terms or after leaving office**

The prosecutors' office said it had not found evidence that Moon performed political favours for Lee, who worked on Moon's campaign, but that Lee likely expected his assistance to be repaid.

Lee was later named the head of the state-funded Korea SME and Startups Agency and was nominated by Moon's party to run for parliament while Moon was in office, but the prosecutors' office said that it hasn't found any evidence that Moon helped Lee win those positions.

There was no immediate response from Moon.

Moon's indictment comes before South Korea elects a new president on June 3 to succeed conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol, who was ousted over an ill-fated imposition of martial law. It's unclear if Moon's indictment will influence prospects for liberals to win back the presidency.

Observers say liberal presidential aspirant Lee Jae-myung is heavily favoured to win the vote as conservatives remain in disarray over Yoon's ouster, although Lee also faces criminal trials on allegations of corruption and other charges.

Most past South Korean presidents have been embroiled in scandal in the final months of their terms or after leaving office. In 2017, Park Geun-hye, South Korea's first female president, was removed from office and arrested over an explosive corruption scandal.

Park's conservative predecessor Lee Myung-bak was also arrested on a range of crimes, years after leaving office. Moon's friend and former liberal President Roh Moo-hyun jumped to his death in 2009 amid corruption investigations into his family.

# South Korean truth commission halts probe into adoption fraud, cases in limbo

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Seoul

The South Korean government's fact-finding commission suspended its groundbreaking investigation into the extensive fraud and abuse that tainted the nation's historic foreign adoption program, a decision stemming from internal disputes among commissioners regarding which cases warranted recognition as problematic.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission confirmed human rights violations in just 56 of the 367 complaints filed by adoptees before suspending its investigation Wednesday night, just one month before its May 26 deadline.

The fate of the remaining 311 cases, either deferred or incompletely reviewed, now hinges on whether lawmakers will establish a new truth commission through legislation during Seoul's next government, which takes office after the presidential by-election on June 3.

After a nearly three-year investigation into adoption cases across Europe, the United States, and Australia, the commission concluded in a March interim report that the government bears responsibility for facilitating a foreign adoption program riddled with fraud and abuse, driven by efforts to cut welfare costs and carried out by private agencies that often manipulated children's backgrounds and origins.

However, some adoptees, and even

members of the commission, criticised the cautiously-worded report, arguing that it should have more forcefully established the government's complicity.

Disputes also arose after the commission's nine-member decision-making panel, dominated by conservative-leaning members appointed by recently ousted President Yoon Suk Yeol and his party, voted on March 25 to defer the assessments of 42 adoptee cases, citing insufficient documentation to conclusively prove the adoptions were problematic.

Commission officials haven't disclosed which documents were central to the discussions. However, they suggested that some commissioners were hesitant to recognize cases where adoptees couldn't definitively prove falsification of biological details in their adoption papers, either through meeting their birth parents or verifying information about them.

On Wednesday, the panel resolved the standoff by unanimously agreeing to suspend, rather than completely drop, the investigation into the 42 cases. The approach leaves open the door for the cases to be reconsidered if a future truth commission is established. The panel also agreed to suspend investigations into the remaining 269 cases, citing insufficient time to complete the reviews before the deadline, according to three commission sources who described the discussions to the Associated Press.



It was unclear if and when another commission will be established. Political attention is now focused on the early presidential election. South Korea's constitutional Court formally removed Yoon from office on April 4, months after the opposition-controlled legislature impeached him over his brief imposition of martial law in December.

The ruling triggered a snap presidential election set for June 3. Park Geun Tae, a senior investigator who led the probe into adoptions, said the truth commission would be unable to produce any further

investigation reports on adoptions before the end of its mandate, after the terms of five of the nine commissioners ended following Wednesday's meeting.

This potentially paralyses the decision-making process, which requires the support of at least five members. Most Korean adoptees were registered by agencies as abandoned orphans, even though many had relatives who could have been easily identified or located. This practice has often made it difficult - or even impossible - for them to trace their roots.

The reluctance of some commissioners to accept cases in which adoptees have been unable to find information about their birth parents reflects a lack of understanding of the systemic problems in adoption and contradicts the commission's broader findings, which acknowledged the manipulation of children's origins, said Philsik Shin, a scholar at South Korea's Anyang University.

Shin's analysis of government, law enforcement, and adoption records concludes that more than 90 per cent of Korean children sent to the West between 1980 and 1987, when adoptions peaked, almost certainly had known relatives.

The commission's findings released in March broadly aligned with previous reporting by The Associated Press. The AP investigations, which were also documented by Frontline (PBS), detailed how South Korea's government, Western countries and adoption agencies worked in tandem to supply some 200,000 Korean children to parents overseas, despite years of evidence that many were being procured through questionable or outright unscrupulous means.

Military governments implemented special laws aimed at promoting foreign adoptions, removing judicial oversight and granting vast powers to private agencies, which bypassed proper child relinquishment practices while shipping thousands of children to the West every year.

Western nations ignored these problems and sometimes pressured South Korea to keep the kids coming as they focused on satisfying their huge domestic demands for babies.

South Korea's government has never acknowledged direct responsibility for issues related to past adoptions and has so far not responded to the commission's recommendation to issue an official apology.

Modeled after the South African commission established in the 1990s to expose apartheid-era injustices, South Korea originally launched the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2006 to investigate past human rights violations. That ended its work in 2010.

Following the passing of a law that allowed for more investigations, the commission was relaunched in December 2020 under South Korea's former liberal government, with a focus on cases that occurred during the country's military dictatorships from the 1960s to 1980s.

Foreign adoptions were a major subject of the second commission, along with the atrocities at Brothers Home, a government-funded facility in Busan that kidnapped, abused and enslaved thousands of children and adults deemed as vagrants for decades until the 1980s. In January, the commission confirmed at least 31 cases in which children from Brothers Home were adopted abroad, which came years after The AP exposed adoptions from the facility as part of a vast, profit-driven operation.

# SA scraps proposed tax increase after pushback

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Johannesburg

The South African government on Thursday cancelled a proposed tax increase that had threatened to collapse the unity government after a pushback from various political parties.

Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana announced that the government would no longer implement a 0.5 per cent increase on value-added tax (VAT), payable on goods and services including food and electricity, that would have increased it to 15.5 per cent.

**The decision to forgo the increase follows extensive consultations with political parties, and careful consideration of the recommendations of the parliamentary committees**

FINANCE MINISTER ENOCH GODONGWANA

The proposed VAT increase is the latest contentious issue faced by the unity government that was formed after the African National Congress party lost its parliamentary majority for the first time since coming to power in 1994.

"The decision to forgo the increase follows extensive consultations with political parties, and careful consideration of the recommendations of the parliamentary

committees," said Godongwana in a statement early Thursday.

The government was looking to increase tax revenues through the VAT increase, and Godongwana said the estimated revenue would fall short by around USD 4 billion.

The Democratic Alliance, the second-biggest political party in the country and the coalition government, opposed the VAT increase and voted against the annual budget which initially proposed it.

The DA subsequently challenged the matter in court this week and claimed victory on Thursday, saying the cancellation of the tax increase was a win for all South Africans.

"We will continue to fight for all South Africans, especially the poor and the marginalised, in seeking responsible public spending so that the government does not keep on raising taxes to fund unlawful expenditure, corruption and sheer waste," said DA federal chairperson Helen Zille. Opposition parties and civil society have also criticised the proposed increase as anti-poor.

More than 20 million people in South Africa rely on welfare grants, with the unemployment rate at over 32 per cent, according to official statistics.

This is the latest disagreement between the two main parties after the formation of the unity government last year.

# Ancient Taiwan jawbone is of human ancestors: Scientists

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Taipei

An ancient jawbone discovered in Taiwan belonged to an enigmatic group of early human ancestors called Denisovans, scientists reported Thursday. Relatively little is known about Denisovans, an extinct group of human cousins that interacted with Neanderthals and our own species, Homo sapiens.

"Denisovan fossils are very scarce," with only a few confirmed finds in East Asia,

said study co-author Takumi Tsutaya at the Graduate University for Advanced Studies in Japan.

So far, the only known Denisovan fossils include partial jawbones, a few teeth and part of a finger bone found in caves in Siberia and Tibet. Some scientists believe fossils found in a cave in Laos may also belong to Denisovans.

The probable identification of the jawbone from Taiwan as Denisovan expands the region where scientists know these

ancient people once lived, said Tsutaya.

The partial jawbone was first recovered when a fishing operation dredged the seafloor in the Penghu Channel near the Taiwan Strait. After it was sold to an antique shop, a collector spotted it and purchased it in 2008, then later donated it to Taiwan's National Museum of Natural Science. Based on the composition of marine invertebrates found attached to it, the fossil was dated to the Pleistocene era. But exactly which species of early human

ancestor it belonged to remained a mystery.

The condition of the fossil made it impossible to study ancient DNA. But recently, scientists in Taiwan, Japan and Denmark were able to extract some protein sequences from the incomplete jawbone. An analysis showed some protein sequences resembled those contained in the genome of a Denisovan fossil recovered in Siberia. The findings were published in the journal Science.

# Istanbul residents spend night outdoors after earthquake

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Istanbul

Many Istanbul residents spent the night outdoors, too fearful to return to their homes, following a strong earthquake and over 180 aftershocks.

The magnitude 6.2 quake tremor that struck on Wednesday deeply impacted the city of 16 million residents, leaving many inhabitants shaken and wary of a possible more destructive tremor. There were no reports of serious damage but the tremor, the strongest felt in Istanbul in recent years, prompted widespread panic and scores of injuries.

The earthquake had a shallow depth of 10 kilometers (about 6 miles), according to the United States Geological Survey, with its epicentre about 40 kilometers (25 miles) southwest of Istanbul, in the Sea of Marmara. It was felt in several neighbouring provinces. At least 236 people were treated for injuries they suffered while trying to jump from buildings or for panic attacks. Most of the



injuries were in Istanbul, where residents remain on edge because the city is considered at high risk for a major quake. In fear of a stronger earthquake that could demolish homes, residents sought refuge by sleeping in their

cars or setting up tents in parks and other open spaces. Many lit camp fires to keep warm after the temperature dipped. Turkey is crossed by two major fault lines, and earthquakes are frequent. For many, the memory of a devastating earthquake that struck 11 southern and southeastern provinces two years ago, remains vivid.

The 7.8-magnitude earthquake on February 6, 2023, claimed more than 53,000 lives and destroyed or damaged hundreds of thousands of buildings. Another 6,000 people were killed in the northern parts of neighbouring Syria. The Turkish disaster and emergency management agency, AFAD, said Wednesday's earthquake was followed by 184 aftershocks - seven of them of a magnitude 4 or stronger.

Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change Minister Murat Kurum stated that authorities had received 378 reports of structural damage in various buildings. At least 12 buildings had been evacuated as a precautionary measure, he said.

# 'India Inc revenue growth to remain flat'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

India Inc's revenue growth will remain flat at about 5 per cent to 6 per cent in the March quarter, but profitability will widen, a domestic rating agency said on Thursday.

An arm of Crisil Ratings said the operating profit margins are seen at 8 per cent, a widening of up to 0.60 per cent, when compared with the year-ago performance. The agency analysed over 400 companies accounting for over 50 per cent of NSE's market capitalisation to arrive at its estimates. Some companies, especially in the information technology sector have already announced their earnings.

Improved showing by the consumer-driven sectors excluding staples will be a key contributor for the topline growth, while the bottom line will benefit from a

mixed set of aspects which are unique to a sector, it said.

Crisil Intelligence's director Pushan Sharma said consumer discretionary products, services and staple services segment is expected to see 8 per cent to 9 per cent on-year increase in revenue.

**The agency analysed over 400 companies accounting for over 50 per cent of NSE's market capitalisation to arrive at its estimates**

"This would be led by an expected 15 per cent surge in telecom services revenue resulting from significant tariff hikes implemented in the second quarter and the introduction of premium 5G plans by telecom operators.

"The retail segment likely saw a robust 17 per cent growth, led by demand in the value fashion, and food and grocery segments, as well as an expansion of store networks," Sharma said.

The automobile sector's revenue likely grew 6 per cent as retail momentum for passenger vehicles picked up and realisations rose owing to a change in the product mix and increasing share of exports, Sharma said. The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) segment is expected to see 4-6 per cent revenue growth led by price hikes amid subdued volume growth, it said, adding that rural demand has been resilient and urban demand has stayed subdued.

Overall exports revenue is likely to grow 4 per cent, including 2-3 per cent growth in IT services revenue following a marginal improvement in demand and prod-

uct pick-ups and 8 per cent in the pharmaceutical sector. In the agriculture sector, including fertilisers, revenues are likely to grow 17-19 per cent with consumption improving, following a stable summer crop acreage and higher disposable incomes stemming from better yields and remuneration for kharif paddy.

In construction-linked sectors, revenue growth is seen limited to 1-2 per cent as cheaper steel imports throughout the year resulted in lower prices.

However, steel prices have improved sequentially after the announcement of safeguard duty, it noted.

On the profitability front, its associate director Elizabeth Master said, "the top 10 sectors, which collectively account for over 70 per cent of revenue, showed a mixed trend in EBITDA margins."

Five sectors including export-driven

ones such as pharmaceuticals, investment-linked ones such as power, and consumer discretionary such as telecom services, likely saw margin expansion, Master said. Five other sectors — automobile, IT services, FMCG, cement, and steel — saw margins decline in the March quarter.

The automobile sector's EBITDA margin fell by 1 percentage point following a 25 per cent increase in aluminium prices driven by inventory decline and supply concerns in various global regions.

The margin in IT services is estimated to have fallen by up to 0.40 per cent on-year owing to higher marketing and travel spends.

The FMCG sector margin likely slipped 0.50-1 per cent on increased cost of essential inputs such as palm oil, tea and dried coconut kernels, the agency said.

# 'Regulations alone can't save you if you don't protect yourself': BSE CEO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kolkata

Stressing the need for investor awareness and responsibility, BSE Managing Director and CEO Sundaraman Ramamurthy on Thursday said that regulations alone cannot protect investors if they do not take adequate precautions while investing.

"You trade what you understand, and you understand what you trade - if you don't do that, you have a problem," Ramamurthy said, urging investors to be vigilant and informed.

He criticised the tendency of investors to rely on hearsay rather than due diligence. "You scan a vegetable before you buy it, but when you invest your life's earnings, you go by hearsay - that's not how it should be," he said.

On regulatory expectations, the BSE chief remarked that there is a general perception that regulators are blamed when investors lose money, but when markets do well the same person praise their own knowledge. "If you don't want to safeguard yourself, no amount of regulation can save you. Be alert," he stressed.

Addressing the issue of retail participation while speaking at the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce, Ramamurthy advised that small investors who are not market experts should opt for the mutual fund route - and even then, they should avoid thematic funds and instead choose broad-based mutual funds or large-cap funds to diversify risk.

He also encouraged women and the youth to begin investing early in their careers. Highlighting the potential of India's SME sector, the BSE CEO pointed out that only about 40 companies from this region are currently listed on the stock exchange, while the actual potential could be well over 1,000. He urged more small and medium enterprises to consider listing as a viable route to raise funds and grow their business and unlock their potential.

Responding to a question on possible manipulation in SME listings, Ramamurthy acknowledged that frauds such as pump-and-dump schemes could not be ruled out entirely even if regulators and stock exchanges are vigilant.

# Shyam VNL unveils Cyber Solutions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Shyam VNL, a trailblazer in innovation-led security and communication technologies, reaffirmed its leadership in the Homeland Security (HLS) with the launch of next-generation solutions focused on empowering the HLS, CAPF (Central Armed Police Forces) & Security Agencies at the MILIPOL India 2025 exhibition being held at the Yashobhoomi International Convention & Expo Centre. The event featured a keynote presentation by Rajiv Mehrotra, Chairman of Shyam VNL, highlighting the company's unwavering commitment to national security.

At the Center of attention is Shyam VNL's cutting-edge solution designed to counter the increasing threat of mobile devices covertly embedded in everyday electronic appliances. As spying from homes and offices using concealed devices becomes a rising concern, Shyam VNL introduced its proprietary "Secure Meeting Guard" and "Secure Ops Room Guard" - advanced systems that neutralize all RF transmissions within a specified area. These solutions ensure that no mobile device can operate in sensitive spaces, creating 100% secure, Mobile free zones. Also drawing significant interest



was the company's comprehensive Counter-Drone portfolio, tailored to meet varied operational needs across borders, critical infrastructure, VVIP security, and more. On display were Drone Detection Systems, Networked Directional Drone, Detectors and Jammers, Backpack and Hand Held Drone Detectors & Jammers, Handheld Drone Guns in multiple configurations and Wearable Drone Detection and Jamming Systems - for individual Soldiers. These solutions address the

increasing threat of short-range drone attacks, moving away from traditional long-range surveillance models. By integrating AI and machine learning, Shyam VNL enhances real-time situational awareness and operational responsiveness for ground forces.

Further reinforcing its commitment to the 'Made in India' innovation ecosystem, the company also showcased a range of tactical solutions designed for use by various security agencies, including the Defence sector.

# SEBI facilitates ease of doing business for SM REITs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

To facilitate ease of doing business for Small and Medium REITs (SM REITs), markets regulator Sebi has standardised disclosures in draft scheme offer document and simplified public issue processes for such schemes.

In its notification, the regulator has standardised disclosures in scheme offer document by splitting the document into two parts — Key Information of the Trust (KIT) that contains information about the SM REIT, its investment manager, Trustee, and overall structure and Key Information of the Scheme (KIS) that includes details specific to the individual scheme and its assets. On processing of KIT and KIS, Sebi said that for the first scheme, KIT and KIS will be filed together for its review. For subsequent schemes, only the new KIS needs to be submitted, while KIT is updated for records, and the regulator will review only the KIS. Sebi said any material changes in the KIT will be disclosed through an addendum on the SM REIT's website and reported to the regulator and stock exchanges within seven days.

Further, the investment manager will

have to ensure that KIT is updated every 6 months and the updated KIT is disclosed on the website of SM REIT within 30 days from the end of half-year.

The investment manager is required to file the updated KIT with Sebi and stock exchanges for records within 30 days from the end of half-half-year.

With regards to proposals for the public issue process for SM REITs, the regulator has extended REIT Guidelines to SM REITs with certain exceptions.

Also, the regulator said a scheme of SM REIT can make an initial offer of its units by way of public issue only. Such an initial offer is required to be made within one year of Sebi's observations.

If not, a fresh draft scheme offer document needs to be filed.

"The minimum subscription amount shall be 90 per cent of the fresh issue size as specified in the KIS in case of a scheme of SM REIT which opts to utilise leverage in accordance with these regulations. The minimum subscription amount shall be 100 per cent of the fresh issue size as specified in the KIS in case of a scheme of SM REIT which does not opt to utilise leverage in accordance with these regulations," Sebi said in its notification

# SEBI tweaks framework for ESG rating providers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Markets regulator Sebi has tweaked the framework for ESG Rating Providers (ERPs), especially for those using a subscriber-pays model, requiring them to share ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) rating reports with both subscribers and the rated issuer simultaneously.

This policy needs to be publicly disclosed.

To give this effect, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has amended rules governing credit rating agencies in a bid to enhance clarity and transparency.

"An ESG rating provider following a subscriber-pays business model shall share the ESG rating report with its subscribers and the rated entity or the issuer whose securities have been rated at the same time and provide two working days to such rated entity or the issuer to provide its comments," Sebi said in its notification issued on Tuesday.

Further, all comments or clarifications received from the rated entity within the specified timeline will be included in the addendum to the ESG rating report by the ERP.

If the rated entity or the issuer has a different viewpoint on the data stated in the report, ERPs, after taking into account such viewpoint, can either revise the report or issue an addendum to the report with its remarks, for circulation to all its subscribers.

Moreover, ERPs are required to disclose the policy regarding the sharing of ESG rating reports with the rated entity or the issuer whose securities have been rated and the subscribers on its website.

Also ERP will provide a facility to the rated entity or the issuer whose securities have been rated to seek any clarification, including the ESG rating methodology or assumptions.

Sebi has defined subscriber-pays business model as a business model where the ESG rating provider derives its revenues from ESG ratings from subscribers including banks, insurance companies, pension funds, or the rated entity itself.

An ESG rating provider following a subscriber-pays business model will have to ensure that assigned rating is based only on publicly available information and that the fee paid by the subscriber is the lowest fee paid amongst all the subscribers if the rated entity or issuer is a subscriber itself.

# Rupee gains 16 paise to settle at 85.29 against US Dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

After a two-day pause, the rupee gained 16 paise to 85.29 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, on weak greenback and overnight decline in crude oil prices.

Forex traders said the rupee strengthened on the weak US dollar and overnight decline in crude oil prices amid slowing US business activity. The US Treasury yields also declined with the 10-year yield falling 3 basis points to 4.35 per cent.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.60 and moved between the intra-day high of 85.25 and the low of 85.67 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 85.29 (provisional), registering a gain of 16 paise over its previous closing level.

On Wednesday, the rupee depreciated 26 paise and settled for the day at 85.45 against the US dollar.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a positive bias as weakness in the US dollar is likely to remain intact amid trade tariff uncertainties. However, risk-on sentiments in the global markets and FII inflows may support the rupee at lower levels. "Traders may take cues from weekly unemployment claims, durable goods orders and existing home sales data from the US. USD INR spot price is

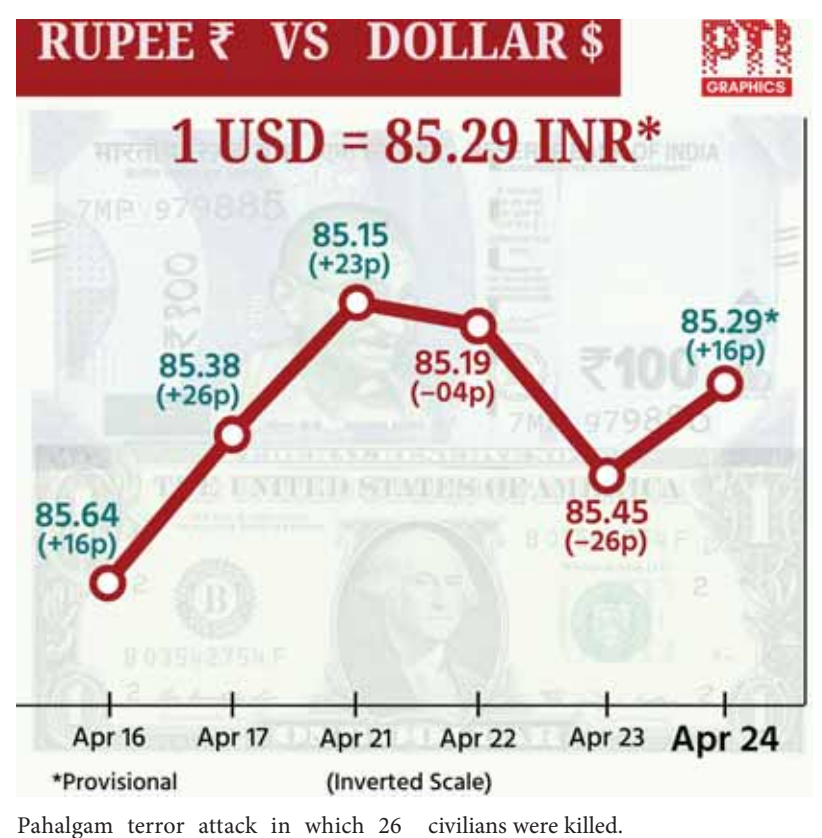
expected to trade in a range of 85 to 85.70," Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading lower by 0.51 per cent at 99.33. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.65 per cent at C 66.55 per barrel in futures trade.

"Near-term technicals for spot USD INR indicate support at 85.03 and resistance at 85.70. High-frequency data suggests a stronger rupee, though geopolitical factors may cap the gains," Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said.

Traders said heightened geopolitical tensions, following the terror attack in Pahalgam, Jammu & Kashmir, weighed on market sentiment.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday declared that the killers of Pahalgam will be pursued "to the ends of the earth" and promised to "identify, track and punish every terrorist and their backers". India on Wednesday downgraded diplomatic ties with Pakistan and announced a raft of measures, including expulsion of Pakistani military attaches, suspension of the Indus Water Treaty of 1960, and immediate shutting down of the Attari land-transit post in view of the cross-border links to the horrific



Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 civilians were killed.

# Gold climbs ₹200 to ₹99,400/10 gm amid US, China standoff

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Gold prices climbed ₹ 200 to ₹99,400 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday following fresh buying by stockists and jewellers and a weak dollar, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity took a U-turn from the historic ₹ 1 lakh-mark and declined ₹ 2,400 to ₹ 99,200 per 10 gram on Wednesday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also increased ₹ 200 to ₹ 98,900 per 10 grams against the previous close of ₹ 98,700 per 10 grams.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Wednesday said the current trade standoff between the US and China could continue for a while.

Adding to this, there were reports that President Donald Trump signalled that China may receive a new tariff rate in the next "two to three weeks" while countries that are currently in the negotiation phase might see reciprocal tariffs come in if negotiations are not going the way he wants.

According to commodities market experts, remarks by Trump and Bessent help revive demand for the safe-haven bullion following a corrective slide from the all-time peak.

Meanwhile, silver prices appreciated ₹ 700 to ₹ 99,900 per kg on Thursday. The white metal had settled at ₹ 99,200 per kg in the previous close.



In futures trade, gold contracts for June delivery bounced ₹ 1,046, or 1.1 per cent, to ₹ 95,768 per 10 grams on the Multi Commodity Exchange.

"Gold opened with a strong gap-up of over ₹ 1,000, hitting ₹ 95,700 on MCX, as Comex gold held firm above \$ 3,300.

The renewed upside came after a sharp shift in the Trump administration's tone — indicating that tariffs may still remain a central part of the conversation before any concrete trade talks with China begin.

"This delay in diplomatic progress, cou-

pled with uncertainty around China's official response, continues to keep risk sentiment elevated," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst, Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said.

Notably, China has yet to issue a strong or clear stance on the trade discus-

# Stock market decline after 7-day rally, HUL drops

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Thursday amid profit-taking after a seven-day rally and disappointing earnings from Hindustan Unilever.

Selling in blue-chips ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel and a largely muted trend in Asian and European equities also dragged the markets lower. The 30-share BSE benchmark declined 315.06 points or 0.39 per cent to settle at 79,801.43.

During the day, it dropped 391.94 points or 0.48 per cent to 79,724.55. The

NSE Nifty went down by 82.25 points or 0.34 per cent to 24,246.70.

In the past seven trading days, the BSE benchmark gauge zoomed 6,269.34 points or 8.48 per cent and the Nifty jumped 1,929.8 points or 8.61 per cent.

From the Sensex firms, FMCG major Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) dropped 4 per cent after the firm reported a decline of 3.35 per cent in consolidated net profit at Rs 2,475 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2025 on lower margins. In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled lower.

## IN BRIEF

### IGNOU CELEBRATES EARTH DAY

Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, and Geological Society of India, Bangalore celebrated Earth Day on April 22, 2025, with "Our Power, Our Planet" programs to raise awareness and promote sustainability. The event was sponsored by India's Ministry of Earth Sciences. Earth Day promotes resource conservation for future generations. Earth Day addresses global environmental concerns. It promotes sustainable living to protect the planet.





## PARROTS: Species Shown in Print

A blend of nature, art and numismatics, the book is a visual and knowledgeable journey into the lives of parrots at risk, says **ABHI SINGHAL**

**THE ENDANGERED PARROTS OF THE WORLD ON STAMPS, COINS & BANKNOTES**  
by Sushilkumar Agrawal

**SPECIALITY OF THE BOOK LIES IN THE RARE COLLECTION OF OVER 459 STAMPS, 37 COINS AND 12 BANKNOTES RELEASED BY DIFFERENT COUNTRIES**

India's segment in the book emphasises on the stamps of yellow-crested cockatoo issued in 2016, endangered sun conure issued in 2016 and many more

**GLOBAL CATALOGUE**  
Parrots have accompanied humans since ancient times. They are found on every continent except Antarctica. Some parrot species have exceptional intelligence and mimicking ability, making them great human companions and pets. This book is meant to bring together and catalogue legal stamps, coins, and banknotes issued on parrots. The information is sourced from the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as of July 2024.

showing how countries use these birds to highlight nature and conservation on their currency.

The book also sorts the parrots into five main groups for their readers based on their risk of extinction — Extinct (EX), Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN), Vulnerable (VU) and Nearly Threatened (NT).

This gives readers a clearer picture of the danger each bird is in and the issues they face, such as the illegal pet trade, cutting down of forests, loss of habitat and climate change.

Talking about the part of India which lies at Page 66 of the book, emphasises on the stamps of Yellow-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea*) issued in 2016, endangered Sun Conure (*Aratinga solstitialis*) issued in 2016 and many more. A buy to fact is that the book also has many interesting facts which will make a good read.

The Parrots on Coins part of the book is equally amazing and visually appealing. This section showcases the parrots on coins issued by different countries like Australia (10 Dollar with Palm Cockatoo — Page 144), Bahamas, Cameroon, Cayman Islands-Cuba, Indonesia, Jamaica (the 10 Jamaican Dollars with Black-billed Parrot- Page 157), Liberia and more.

Whether you're a bird lover, a coin or stamp collector, a conservation supporter or simply someone who enjoys informative books, *Endangered Parrots of the World on Stamps, Coins and Banknotes* is a wonderful addition to your library. It is not just a book - it is a tribute to these amazing birds and a call to action to help protect them for future generations.

**APRIL READS**

**LIES OUR MOTHERS TOLD US**  
Author: Nilanjana Bhowmick  
Publisher: Alepha Book Company  
Price: ₹699

**ENTERING THE MAZE**  
Author: Krishnagopal Mallick, Niladri Chatterjee  
Publisher: Thornbird Books  
Price: ₹350

**ON DEMOCRACIES AND DEATH CULTS**  
Author: Douglas Murray  
Publisher: HarperCollins  
Price: ₹599

**THE SECRET OF MORE**  
Author: Tejaswini Apte Rahm  
Publisher: Alepha book company  
Price: ₹899

## The Erasure of Truth from Our Classrooms

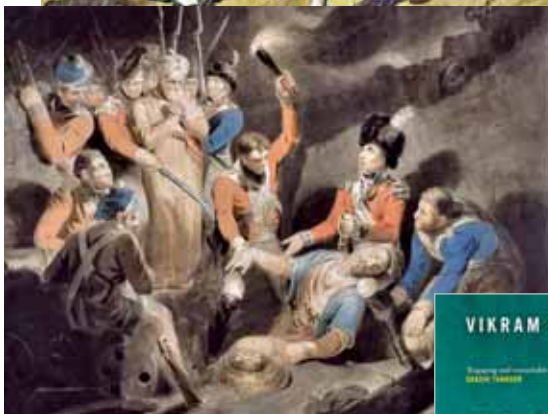
A powerful book revisits distorted narratives and uncovers the legacy of Tipu Sultan's reign, presenting a thought-provoking account of a lesser-known chapter in Indian history, the author challenges misconceptions and sheds light on the atrocities committed by Tipu Sultan, says **KUMAR CHELLAPPAN**

Most of us have heard about the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), formed in 1972 by the Government of India to foster objective and scientific writing of history and to inculcate an informed appreciation of the country's national and cultural heritage.

The ICHR, since the day it was formed, has been jam-packed with Leftist intellectuals who decide what the true history is and what should be told to the world about the history and tradition of the subcontinent. It was the Marxists who constituted the think tank and determined the quality of Indian history. The organisation publishes a journal *Indian Historical Review* (IHR) twice a year and it is said that the publication has a list of historical research undertaken by the eminent historians in the country whose are the last words in history.

The IHR is published by a foreign agency with a dubious track record. The old issues are sold across the counters in ICHR's stalls during book fairs and exhibitions. It is priced at ₹800/- per issue to make sure that ordinary mortals do not buy or read these reviews. Neither Raghuvendra Tanwar, Chairman, nor other members of the ICHR could give an answer to the query why this review is being published by an outside agency while the Council itself is flush with funds. A top official, when asked and pointed out this discrepancy, told this writer, "Dekhenge" (Let's see). The reasons behind the mystery associated with the ICHR are not much to seek. The organisation has a lot to hide from the public eye.

If you have any doubts, please read what has been written by S L Bhyrappa, that wonderful scholar from Mysore, as foreword to *Tipu Sultan — The Saga of Mysore's Interregnum* (1760-1799) authored by Vikram Sampath, the young historian who created a storm with his earlier book on Savarkar. Since 1969, what we read and learn as history in schools and universities in the country is manufactured history and tampered chronicles. The series Yes, Prime Minister, authored by Jonathan Lynn and



Antony Jay and telecast as a series by Doordarshan way back in the 1980s, is a good example. There was this cabinet minister in Britain, Right Hon. James Hacker, who was elevated as Prime Minister of the country by accident. Hacker wanted to leave an indelible track record about his tenure and asked Lynn and Jay to edit his memoirs. "We were astonished to discover that, at times, Hacker seems to have de-

orated and rearranged past events in order to present himself in a favourable light... We cannot believe that any politician would rearrange past events deliberately in order to distort the historical record and so we have had to assume that Hacker had some strange defect of mind that frequently led him to ask not "What did I do?" but "What is the most impressive explanation of my actions that cannot be disproved by published facts?"

Bhyrappa says that a meeting of educationists was convened by G Parthasarathy, an acolyte of Indira Gandhi, and asked them to rewrite Indian history to integrate the nation through education. For that to happen, Parthasarathy wanted the educationists to remove the unpalatable truths from Indian history and fill it with half-lies and full lies so that students would

remain ignorant of the cruelties meted out by the likes of Aurangzeb, Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, all Islamic zealots. What the then government wanted was to black out the cruel deeds and genocides of Hindus by Aurangzeb and others. When Bhyrappa objected to this diktat, he was quickly eased out of the committee and replaced with a Marxist ideologist.

Since then, we have been hearing about Akbar the Great, Aurangzeb the Mighty, and Tipu Sultan the Lion, etc. What Sampath has done in this 904 — page volume is a chronicle of events launched by Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan as rulers of Mysore and the treachery committed by the duo to cleanse the region free of infidels. During Tipu's campaign in the Malabar province, he took into custody thousands of Hindus and asked them: "Sword or Islam?"

Those who refused to get converted to Islam were slaughtered instantly.

The Malabar campaign of Tipu stands out for the murder and mayhem unleashed by him in the region. Not only Malabar, the entire stretch of area from Kasaragod to Kochi bore the brunt of his savage deeds.

Tipu Sultan, portrayed as the embodiment of secularism, had destroyed, demolished, desecrated and plundered thousands of temples spread across Karnataka, Malabar and Kochi. But there are certain forces out to whitewash him as an angel. His father, Hyder Ali, too was a barbarian and had murdered the Wodeyar King who had appointed him as a commander in the Mysore Army.

In yet another book *It Happened Along the Kaveri*, authors Padma Seshadri and Padma Malini had recounted with proof that Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan were the founding fathers of scams and corruption.

Sandeep Balakrishna, in his compendium *Tipu Sultan: The Tyrant of Mysore*, buried Tipu, while Vikram Sampath has erected his gravestone with this work. A movie maker like Vivek Agnihotri has enough material in this book for a widescreen film. If you miss this book, you are the loser.

## In Step with a Republic's Journey

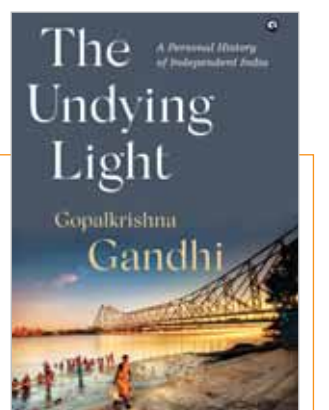
BY TEAM VIVA

**The Undying Light** by Gopalkrishna Gandhi is a deeply personal and panoramic account of India's journey from Independence to the present. With the quiet dignity and precision that characterise his public life, Gandhi weaves together memoir, political commentary, and historical reflection into a work that is both intimate and illuminating.

The book begins with the tragic memory of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, which the author witnessed as a three-year-old—a haunting prelude that sets the emotional tenor for what follows. Across eight distinct sections, he traces the milestones and missteps of independent India through the lens of one who has served at the highest echelons of government, from secretary to two Presidents to governor of West Bengal and Bihar.

The volume moves through the seismic shifts in India's post-Independence trajectory — Partition, the framing of the Constitution, the Emergency, communal violence, the rise of coalitions, and the emergence of majoritarian politics. Gandhi filters these moments through a moral and reflective lens. His writing is meditative and grounded, offering a perspective shaped by first-hand observation and an enduring faith in democratic values. The Emergency is dissected with the same rigour as the demolition of the Babri Masjid; the idealism of the Nehruvian era is weighed alongside the complexities of the present. His reflections on federalism, secularism, and democratic ethics serve as poignant reminders of the principles upon which modern India was built—and the forces now testing their resilience. The book was recently launched by Sharmila Tagore, who described it as a profound reflection on India's rich history and values. The launch also featured a panel discussion with Aruna Roy, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, and Rudrangshu Mukherjee, who shared insights that added depth to Gandhi's perspective.

**The Undying Light** does not aim to dazzle with dramatic flourish, but to illuminate the path of a nation that continues to evolve. It is a considered work—layered, compassionate, and quietly urgent. For readers seeking a deeper engagement with modern Indian history through the lens of a scholar — statesman, this book offers a compelling narrative rooted in lived experience and thoughtful observation.



**ABOUT THE BOOK**  
Book: *The Undying Light*  
Author: Gopalkrishna Gandhi  
Publisher: Aleph Book Company  
Price: ₹999/-

### CSK vs SRH: Battle of survival

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chennai

Chennai Super Kings (CSK) will eye a crucial turnaround at home when they face an equally desperate Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) in a battle of survival in the Indian Premier League here on Friday. Both sides have endured a turbulent season, notching just four points from eight games, and must now win all remaining fixtures to keep their slim qualification hopes alive.

Known to make the most of home conditions, five-time champions CSK find themselves in unchartered territory as they have not been able to read the wickets well at the Chepauk.

They started strong at their fortress, dominating Mumbai Indians as Noor Ahmad spun a web around the visitors. But the early promise fizzled out quickly, with three successive losses at home. The also endured the ignominy of posting their lowest-ever IPL total at home — 103/9 against Kolkata Knight Riders.

Head coach Stephen Fleming has also voiced frustration over the Chepauk surface, which has offered more to seamers than CSK's usual spin-heavy attack.

There away form has not been any better either, with just one win in four attempts.

CSK have lacked firepower in the batting department and captain Ruturaj



Gaikwad's absence due to an injury has only made it worse for the storied outfit. MS Dhoni has returned as full-time captain. While his knee continues to limit mobility, the former Indian captain's leadership remains invaluable.

His death-overs batting, field placements, and ability to recalibrate the bowling attack could be key in CSK's revival.

In encouraging signs, 17-year-old Ayush Mhatre made a promising debut against MI with the bat. The franchise has also roped in South Africa's Dewald

Brevis in a bid to strengthen their power-hitting department.

SRH, meanwhile, have endured an equally erratic campaign. A bright start gave way to inconsistency, with their ultra-aggressive, attack-at-all-costs strategy falling flat.

The explosive opening pair of Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma, so vital last season, have failed to hit the same heights this year.

While Sharma's brilliance secured a win against Punjab Kings, Head is yet to truly make his mark.

The heavy dependence on their top two has exposed the frailty of the middle order, which has struggled to absorb pressure, something head coach Daniel Vettori also conceded after the seven-wicket loss to Mumbai Indians.

"When Head and Abhishek don't succeed, then it's the responsibility of the other batsmen. Potentially that's what we haven't had this season around. The ability for partnerships, for one or two guys to step up," Vettori said.

#### TEAMS

**SUNRISERS HYDERABAD:** Pat Cummins (c), Ishan Kishan (wk), Atharva Taide, Abhinav Manohar, Aniket Verma, Sachin Baby, Smaran Ravichandran, Heinrich Klaasen (wk), Travis Head, Harshal Patel, Kamindu Mendis, Wiaan Mulder, Abhishek Sharma, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Mohammed Shami, Rahul Chahar, Simarjeet Singh, Zeeshan Ansari, Jaydev Unadkat, Eshan Malinga.

**CHENNAI SUPER KINGS:** MS Dhoni (c&wk), Dewald Brevis, Devon Conway, Rahul Tripathi, Shaik Rasheed, Vansh Bedi, Andre Siddharth, Ayush Mhatre, Rachin Ravindra, Ravichandran Ashwin, VJ Jay Shankar, Sam Curran, Anshul Kamboj, Deepak Hooda, Jamie Overton, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Ramakrishna Ghosh, Ravindra Jadeja, Shivam Dube, Khaleel Ahmed, Noor Ahmad, Mukesh Choudhary, Nathan Ellis, Shreyas Gopal, Matheesha Pathirana.

### RCB beat RR by 11 runs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bengaluru

Josh Hazlewood scalped four wickets in a brilliant fast-bowling spell to help Royal Challengers Bengaluru beat Rajasthan Royals by 11 runs in their Indian Premier League match here on Thursday.

Chasing 206 for a win, RR made 194 for 9 in 20 overs to lose their fifth match on

On a pitch where stroke-making was not very easy, RCB were also well-served by Jitesh Sharma (20 not out off 10 balls) and Tim David (23 off 15 balls), who struck some lusty blows to take RCB past 200.

This was after Kohli (70 off 42 balls) and Padikkal (50 off 27) controlled the middle overs with a partnership of 95 for the



the trot. Yashasvi Jaiswal top-scored for RR with 49, while Dhruv Jurel chipped in with 47. Star batter Virat Kohli and Devdutt Padikkal helped themselves to breezy half-centuries as Royal Challengers Bengaluru posted a competitive 205 for five.

second wicket. Batting first after losing their fourth toss at home this season, RCB were off to a decent start after an eventful first over by Jofra Archer, who conceded 11 runs, including bowling a 149.8km bumper that bounced over the keeper for a four.

### SRH need support from middle order: Coach Vettori

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Hyderabad

Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) head coach Daniel Vettori admitted that a dramatic top-order collapse coupled with a wrong "assessment" of the pitch proved decisive in their crushing defeat to Mumbai Indians.

The big-hitting SRH top order slumped to 24/4 in the powerplay, and despite a fighting partnership between Heinrich Klaasen (71) and impact substitute Abhinav Manohar (43), the hosts could only manage 143/8, a total that proved woefully inadequate on a pitch that has

already seen two 240-plus totals this season. "The toss was important — we wanted to bowl first. The wicket was different from what we'd seen before, and while we had discussed the possibility of a 250-280 surface, the conditions changed dramatically. It was tough to assess the par score early on," he said at the post-match press conference.

"Once we got through two overs, the assessment was that it was not the 250-260 wicket that this has been the last couple of games. And we obviously went out of depth." He said their strategy was to go all out in the powerplay but the plan

unravell quickly.

"We wanted to maximise the powerplay, but unfortunately we kept losing wickets and once we realised that the surface wasn't what we anticipated, then we needed to build towards that sort of 180 score, and that unfortunately became difficult to do when you're 24/4 after the power play."

Vettori said Ishan Kishan's bizarre dismissal only added pressure to the team.

Batting at number 3, Ishan Kishan stunned everyone by walking off, indicating a faint edge, even as none of the MI players appealed and the on-field umpire was on the verge of signalling a wide.

"Ishan's dismissal was obviously disappointing, and that put pressure on everyone coming in. When you are in a power play situation, you still want to try and maximise those two fielders out."

Vettori said there's a need for better game awareness and support from the middle order when the aggressive top-order duo of Head and Abhishek fail to fire.

"Travis and AB, when they go, they are very aggressive and they take the game on and it's led to a lot of success for us. And when they don't succeed, then it's the responsibility of the other batsmen."

### Boult backs Rohit, calls him world-class

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Hyderabad

Mumbai Indians' pacer Trent Boult has backed "world-class" Rohit Sharma to play a pivotal role in the team's pursuit for a record-extending sixth IPL title, following back-to-back half-centuries that signalled his timely return to form.

The Kiwi left-arm pacer was instrumental in dismantling Sunrisers Hyderabad's famed top order, returning with a match-winning spell of 4/26 to cap MI's fourth straight win in emphatic style.

After SRH collapsed to 143/8, MI, powered by Rohit's commanding 46-ball 70, chased down the target in just 15.4 overs. The emphatic win not only boosted their net run rate but also propelled them to third place on the points table.

"I think the whole side, the whole Mumbai Indians squad possesses some world-class players and obviously Rohit needs no introduction in that regard," Boult said at the post-match media interaction.

"I am sure everyone wants to be contributing at some points, but Rohit's doing a fantastic job of late and playing nicely just at the right time. So he's going to play a huge role for us in the remaining part of the season. I think you just need to be pre-



pared for any role," he added.

Boult also praised captain Hardik Pandya for his leadership style, calling it a refreshing experience.

"Hardik's a passionate cricketer, obviously very skillful. He's a great leader, I think. He leads from the front."

"He's a great communicator. He's one of my favourite Indian cricketers, so to get the chance to play underneath him is a great

experience."

Boult, who has adjusted seamlessly into a new role after shifting from Rajasthan Royals to MI, emphasised the importance of adaptability in a long tournament like the IPL.

"At Rajasthan I was prepared to bowl at any stage of the match. I've been lucky enough to play 10 IPL seasons where it hasn't always been the same recipe every time. So I think the first thing is you've got to always want the ball."

"There's some great players in there. Obviously, (Jasprit) Bumrah needs no introduction either, so it's great to be having ball back in hand with him."

Mumbai Indians had just one win in their first five matches, and now they have four on the trot, keeping them firmly placed for a playoff berth. But Boult is not looking too far ahead.

"Momentum wasn't on our side to start with, but to turn it around to have four wins in a row was the focus, just to get a bit of momentum, a bit of rhythm. Guys playing nice cricket at certain points. We're not going to look too far ahead."

"It can quickly change. Looking forward to getting back home, playing in some conditions that we know pretty well, but there's a long way to go in this tournament," he added.

### Real Madrid beats Getafe 1-0

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Madrid

Real Madrid kept pace with Spanish league leader Barcelona with a 1-0 win at Getafe ahead of the rivals' meeting in the Copa del Rey final.

Arda Güler scored a first-half goal for Madrid, which moved back within four points of Barcelona. The Catalan club edged Mallorca 1-0 on Tuesday.

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti used many reserves ahead of Saturday's Copa final in Seville. Brazil forward Endrick made his first Spanish league start with the club, and Vinícius Júnior was substituted in the second half. Jude Bellingham came off the bench in the second half.

Midfielder Eduardo Camavinga had to be replaced because of an apparent muscle injury in the final minutes and is doubtful to be available for Saturday's final. He had entered the match at halftime to replace defender David Alaba, who also is doubtful because of a muscle ailment.

"We'll see, but it's unlikely that they will be available on Saturday," Ancelotti said.

Madrid had demoralizing losses in both "clásicos" against Barcelona this season - 5-2 in the Spanish Super Cup final and 4-0 in their first league encounter at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium.

Güler scored the winner with a well-placed right-footed shot in the 21st minute at the Coliseum in Getafe.

"Fortunately, I scored the goal that gave us the three points," Güler said. "We knew it was going to be a tough match. It was important to give us confidence for the final (on Saturday)."

Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois made a couple of difficult saves late to secure Madrid's victory.

It was the third league win in a row for Madrid, which endured a Champions League elimination against Arsenal in the competition's quarterfinals.



Getafe has lost three in a row, and four of its last five league games. The club from southern Madrid sits in 12th place.

The match was briefly stopped in the second half as fans from Getafe chanted "Die (Dani) Ceballos, die Ceballos."

#### CELTA WINS AGAIN

Celta Vigo moved to seventh place by routing fifth-place Villarreal 3-0 at home with goals by Fer López, Borja Iglesias and Iago Aspas.

The victory ended a two-match losing streak for the Vigo team. Villarreal, winless in two matches, played a man down from the 37th after Eric Bailly was sent off with a straight red card.

#### WILLIAMS SCORES EARLY

Iñaki Williams scored five minutes into the match to give fourth-place Athletic Bilbao a 1-0 win over Las Palmas, helping the Basque Country club to open an eight-point gap above Villarreal, which remains with a game in hand.

Las Palmas, sitting in 18th place, was coming off two wins in a row after a 12-match winless streak in the league.

Alaves moved out of the relegation zone by beating ninth-place Real Sociedad 1-0 at home with a goal by Nahuel Tenaglia in the 65th.

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