



India seeks Britain's response on Rahul's citizenship

J GOPIKRISHNAN ■ New Delhi

The Centre has written to the UK Government seeking details about claims that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had British citizenship, the Allahabad High Court was told on Monday. After the submission, the Lucknow bench of the High Court granted time to the Central Government till May 5 to place before it the outcome of a representation moved against the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, seeking cancellation of his 2024 Lok Sabha election over claims that he had British citizenship.

A bench of Justices A R Masoodi and Rajiv Singh passed the order while hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by S Vignesh Shishir, a BJP worker from Karnataka. While hearing the PIL on November 25, the court sought information from the central government regarding its decision on the representation of the petitioner. Deputy Solicitor General SB Pandey informed the court on Monday that acting on the petitioner's representation, the Ministry concerned had written to the UK Government seeking details about Gandhi's alleged British citizenship and hence the government needed more time to take a final

decision on the petitioner's representation. The central government had earlier also sought more time in this regard. In the PIL, BJP worker Vignesh Shishir, the petitioner has claimed that he has documents and some emails of the British government which prove that Rahul Gandhi is a British citizen, and due to this, he is ineligible to contest elections in India and cannot hold the post of a Lok Sabha member. The petitioner also said that he sent complaints twice to the competent authority regarding Rahul Gandhi's alleged dual citizenship, but no action was taken by them. On March 26, In BJP leader

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Subramanian Swamy's petition, Union Home Ministry informed Delhi High Court that probe on Rahul Gandhi's petition is under consideration. In April 2019, MHA had issued show cause notice to Rahul Gandhi on Subramanian Swamy's complaint

showing British company records, where Rahul declared himself as British citizen. Rahul had floated company named as Backops in London in 2002 and till 2009 in compnay registry he claimed as British Citizen and London resident. The petitioner also said that he sent complaints twice to the competent authority regarding Rahul Gandhi's alleged dual citizenship, but no action was taken by them.

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cause notice to Rahul Gandhi in Subramanian Swamy's complaint showing British company records, where Rahul declared himself as British citizen. Rahul had floated company named as Backops in London in 2002 and till 2009 in compnay registry he claimed as British Citizen and London resident.

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Modi, Vance discuss BTA, strategic ties

RAHUL DATTA ■ New Delhi

India and the US on Monday discussed the entire gamut of their bilateral ties and ways to further enhance strategic ties during talks here between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Vice President J D Vance. They expressed satisfaction at the progress made in the trade pact. Parleys were held in the backdrop of ongoing negotiations for a bilateral trade agreement to address various issues including tariff and market access. Modi also hosted a dinner for the visiting dignitary.

In their talks, Prime Minister Modi and Vice President Vance also exchanged views on various regional and global issues of mutual interest.

A statement by Prime Minister's Office (PMO) after the talks said they welcomed progress in the India-US. Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) and efforts towards enhancing cooperation in energy, defence, strategic technologies. The two leaders also exchanged views on various regional and global issues of mutual interest.

Prime Minister Modi fondly recalled his visit to Washington D.C. in January and his fruitful discussions with President Trump, which laid down the roadmap for close cooperation between India and the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting with US Vice President JD Vance

PTI

U.S., leveraging the strengths of Make America Great Again (MAGA) and Viksit Bharat 2047, the statement said.

Both of them reviewed and positively assessed the progress in various areas

of bilateral cooperation. They welcomed the significant progress in the negotiations for a mutually beneficial India-US.

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World mourns death of Pope Francis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lyon

Tributes to Pope Francis instantly poured in from around the world from presidents to people of all walks of life on Monday after the Vatican announced the pontiff's death at age 88. President Emmanuel Macron of France, a country that is largely Roman Catholic, focused on the pope's impact on the church, writing on X that "From Buenos Aires to Rome, Pope Francis wanted the Church to bring joy and hope to the poorest. For it to unite humans among themselves, and with nature. May this hope forever outlast him."

US Vice President JD Vance, who on Easter Sunday met with the pope before travelling to India, wrote on X on Monday that his "heart goes out" to the millions of Christians who loved him, and said: "I was happy to see him yesterday, though he was obviously very ill."

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, who was one of the few official visitors to see Francis during his recent hospitalization, alluded to the pope's personal comfort and advice for her, saying "I had the privilege of enjoying his friendship, his counsel and his teachings, which never failed me, not even in times of trial and suffering."

Francis' death, she said, "deeply saddens us, as we are saying goodbye to a great man and a great shepherd." European

PM CONDOLES POPE'S DEATH

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday condoled the passing of Pope Francis and said he would always be remembered as a beacon of compassion, humility and spiritual courage by millions across the world.

"Deeply pained by the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis. In this hour of grief and remembrance, my heartfelt condolences to the global Catholic community. Pope Francis will always be remembered as a beacon of compassion, humility and spiritual courage by millions across the world," Modi said in a social media post. "From a young age, he devoted himself towards realising the ideals of Lord Christ. He diligently served the poor and downtrodden. For those who were suffering, he ignited a spirit of hope," he said.

Modi fondly recalled his meetings with the pontiff and said he was greatly inspired by his commitment to inclusive and all-round development. "His affection for the people of India will always be cherished. May his soul find eternal peace in God's embrace," the Prime Minister said. Modi met Pope Francis for the first time when he visited Italy for the G20 summit. The meeting took place at the Vatican when the world was still coping with Covid.

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Commission President Ursula von der Leyen recalled the pontiff as an inspiration for the entire world, not just Christians. "He inspired millions, far beyond the

Catholic Church, with his humility and love so pure for the less fortunate," she tweeted. "My thoughts are with all who feel this profound loss. May they find solace in the idea that Pope Francis' legacy will continue to guide us all toward a more just, peaceful and compassionate world."

As crowds flocked to St. Peter's Square, well-wishers worldwide laid flowers at churches — many of whose bells tolled in honour of Francis, including at the recently reopened Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Israeli President Issac Herzog, whose role is mostly ceremonial, offered condolences and called Francis a man of "deep faith and boundless compassion."

"I truly hope that his prayers for peace in the Middle East and for the safe return of the hostages will soon be answered," Herzog posted on X, referring to the pope's repeated calls for an end to the war and the release of captives held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Francis had repeatedly criticized Israel's wartime conduct and said allegations of genocide, which Israel has adamantly denied, should be investigated.

On social media, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez hailed Francis for focusing on the world's most vulnerable; Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk posted a photo of himself on X with the pope, both smiling, and called Francis a "kind, warm and compassionate person."

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The Bystander



Wife threw chilli powder before DGP murder, say police

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bengaluru

Police probing former Karnataka DGP Om Prakash's murder case have learnt that his wife Pallavi allegedly threw chilli powder on his face before stabbing him to death, police sources said. Police have detained Pallavi as she emerged as a key suspect in the murder case.

Along with her, their daughter Kriti has also been detained. Prakash, a 1981 batch IPS officer hailing from Bihar, was found dead in a pool of blood in the ground floor of his three-storeyed house in the posh HSR Layout in the city on Sunday. "After a heated exchange of words, Pallavi threw chilli powder on Prakash's face," sources claimed. As the hefty former police chief of Karnataka scrambled for relief from the burning sensation, Pallavi stabbed him multiple times with a knife, killing him on

the spot, sources said. She then made a video call to her friend and said, "I have killed the monster," sources claimed.

The murder was the culmination of frequent run-ins between the couple, the sources said. It is learnt that there was a property dispute involved in the crime pertaining to a land in Dandeli in Karnataka. A few months ago, Pallavi had approached the HSR Layout police station to lodge a complaint. When the staff there did not oblige, she staged a 'Dharna' (sit-in demonstration) in front of the police station, sources claimed. It's also learnt that Pallavi was diagnosed with schizophrenia and was under medication too.

The 68-year-old retired IPS officer was a native of Champaran, Bihar, and held a Master's degree in Geology.

Prakash was appointed Director General of Police on March 1, 2015.

Delhi unveils action plan to combat heatwave

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

Aimed at combating the adverse effects of rising temperatures, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Monday unveiled the Heat Action Plan 2025 and activated the disaster management machinery. Considering the threat of heatwaves, the Heat Action Plan proposes 3,000 cold water ATMs, cool roof technology to setting up heatwave wards in hospitals and shading public walkways.

In addition to an early warning system for heat waves, green roofs at bus stops and special wards for heatstroke patients at all hospitals, the plan proposes deploying 1,800 National and Delhi Disaster Response volunteers — known as 'Aapda Mitra's' — the plan includes the establishment of shaded cooling shelters and the installation of 3,000-4,000 large RO water units attached to the boundary walls of Delhi government schools and office



Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta with Health Minister Pankaj Kumar Singh, Water Minister Parvesh Verma and Rajendra Singh, member & HoD, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) during the launch of the Heat Action Plan 2025 of the Delhi government

RANJAN DIMRI/THE PIONEER

buildings. These will dispense cold water round-the-clock, benefiting approximately five lakh citizens. The chief minister also virtually inaugurated three Cool Roof pilot

projects at Kashmere Gate, Anand Vihar and Delhi Secretariat. The number of such projects will be increased soon, she said.

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Eight Naxals, including one with ₹1 crore bounty, killed in Jharkhand encounter

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Ranchi/ New Delhi

Eight Naxals, including a top rung central committee member of the extremists carrying a bounty of ₹1 crore on his head, were killed in an encounter with CoBRA commandos of the CRPF and police in Bokaro district of Jharkhand on Monday, officials said.

The exchange of fire started around 5.30 am in Lugu Hills of Lalpania area of the district, they said.

The troops of 209 Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) along with state police conducted the operation in which eight Naxals were killed and an AK

series rifle, three INSAS rifles, a self-loading rifle (SLR), eight country-made guns and a pistol were seized, officials said.

Those killed include central committee member of the extremist outfit Prayag Manjhi alias Vivek, special area committee member Arvind Yadav alias Avinash, zonal committee member Sahebram Manjhi alias Rahul Manjhi, Mahesh Manjhi alias Mota, Talu, Ranju Manjhi, Gangaram and Mahesh.

Vivek carried a bounty of ₹1 crore, Arvind Yadav had a reward of ₹25 lakh and Sahebram Majhi ₹10 lakh.

They were booked by the police in various cases of violence, the officials said. The central committee is the top deci-

Vivek carried a bounty of ₹1 crore, Arvind Yadav had a reward of ₹25 lakh and Sahebram Majhi ₹10 lakh. They were booked by the police in various cases of violence

sion-making body of the Maoist organisation, they said. No injuries have been reported among the security personnel, they said.

Jharkhand DGP Anurag Gupta said, "With this encounter, Maoist squads in North Chotanagpur region have been wiped out." He added, "Maoists have nearly been wiped out from across the state.

They only remain in Chaibasa region. We are going to relocate all our forces, including the CRPF, Jharkhand Jagur and Jharkhand Armed Police, in the Saranda area. Our target is to eliminate all the Maoist squads in the region in the next 15 to 20 days, or certainly before the rainy season."

"We appeal to the Maoists of Chaibasa to surrender before police. We have a good surrender policy," the DGP said. The CoBRA is the special jungle warfare unit of the CRPF.

The operation is part of the Union government's declaration of eliminating Naxalism from the country by March, 2026.

In another development, Vishnu Deo Sai, the chief minister of neighbouring

Chhattisgarh, is expected to meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah at his office in North Block in New Delhi on Monday evening for a comprehensive review of the anti-Naxal operations in his state and related subjects, officials said.

This year, more than 140 Maoists have been gunned down in separate encounters in Chhattisgarh, called by security officials as the "last bastion" for Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in the country.

In the wake of killing of eight Naxals by security forces in Jharkhand, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday asserted that his government's commitment to eliminate Naxalism continues unabated. "Our march to eliminate Naxalism con-

tinues unabated. Today security forces achieved another significant success in the ongoing operation to uproot Naxalism. In an encounter at Lugu Hills in Bokaro, Jharkhand, 8 Maoists were neutralised, including a top-level naxal leader, Vivek, who carried a reward of Rs 1 crore, and two other notorious Naxalites. The operation is being continued. Applaud our security forces," Shah wrote on X.

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Delhi man lives stereotype, threatens judge inside courtroom: *tu bahar mil*

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

A city courtroom in Dwarka was left stunned earlier this month when a 63-year-old retired government school teacher and his lawyer recently threatened and hurled abuses at a woman judge inside a courtroom in Delhi after he was convicted in a six-year-old cheque bounce case.

The accused even attempted to hurl an object at the judge for not delivering an order in his favour. He then instructed his lawyer to do whatever it took to secure a favourable judgment.

The outburst took place before Judicial Magistrate (NI Act) Shivangi Mangla, who had on April 2 convicted the accused under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act — the law dealing with

dishonour of cheques. Following the conviction, the judge directed the accused to furnish bail bonds under Section 437A of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

"Tu hai kya cheez.....ki tu bahar mil dekte hai kaise zinda ghar jaati hai.....(Who even are you... just meet me outside and let's see how you make it back home alive)," the accused told the judge as noted in the Court's order dated April 2. "After hearing the judgment not in favour of accused, Accused erupted with anger on the Judge in open court as to how the judgment of conviction can be passed. Accused started harassing the Judge in open court in unofficial Hindi language with commentary against the mother of the Judge. Accused was also holding some object and he tried to throw it on the

Judge for not passing order in his favor. Then, he ordered his advocate to do anything to get judgment in his favour," the judge wrote in her order.

Then again they both harassed mentally and physically to resign from job and they both again harassed to acquit the accused else they will file complaint against me and forcibly arrange my resignation.

However, following the conviction, the accused and his counsel allegedly harassed the woman judge both mentally and physically, pressuring her to resign from her post, Judge Mangla recorded in her order.

They again subjected her to harassment, demanding that she acquit the accused. They also threatened to file a complaint against her and forcibly secure

her resignation. The judge said that appropriate action shall be initiated against the accused before the National Commission for Women for the threats and harassment.

The judge issued a show cause notice to the convict's lawyer seeking an explanation as to why criminal contempt proceedings should not be initiated against him

"Still the undersigned stand against all the odds and always do needful in favor of justice. The undersigned shall be taking appropriate measures against the accused before National Commission

Woman, Delhi for such threatening and harassment," the Court directed.

The judge also issued a show cause notice to the convict's lawyer, advocate Atul Kumar, seeking an explanation as to why criminal contempt proceedings should not be initiated against him for misbehaving with her.

"Court notice be issued to counsel for accused Sh Atul Kumar to show cause in writing providing relevant explanation for the conduct shown by him today and further to explain as to why he shall not be referred to the Hon'ble High Court for initiating criminal contempt proceedings against him for such misbehavior."

The lawyer was directed to furnish the reply on the next date of hearing on April 5, 2025.

On April 5, the court sentenced the

convict who is retired teacher to 22 months of simple imprisonment and imposed a fine of ₹6.65 lakh.

Kumar appeared before the court on April 5 at around 1400hrs, saying the convict was a retired government teacher, living on pension with three dependent sons. The court then sentenced him to 1.10 years of imprisonment and imposed a ₹6.65 lakh fine in the NI Act case. The convict moved a plea to file an appeal, which the court allowed.

On the misdemeanour of the convict and his counsel, the court said, "Let the matter be referred to the principal district and sessions judge, southwest, Dwarka, for the referral to the Delhi High Court for taking up appropriate proceedings in terms of the order dated April 2."

Jammu-Srinagar highway to open after 6 days: NHAI

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

The National Highways Authority of India (NHA) on Monday said that it would take at least six days to restore traffic on the Jammu-Srinagar highway as tons of debris remain accumulated at multiple locations in the Ramban district of Jammu division. Sharing his preliminary assessment of the ongoing restoration works, NHA project director Purshottam Kumar Sharma said, "Going by the condition of the damaged road and volume of debris accumulated due to the landslides, it may take six days for us to make the affected stretch worthy for partial restoration of traffic." "The height of the sludge at some places is more than 20 feet," he said. "The NHA is facing a challenging situation due to massive deposits of muck on the highway at more than a dozen places, especially on the four-kilometre stretch between Seri and Maroog, he added.

Meanwhile, to clear the rush of stranded vehicles, the authorities threw open the Mughal road connecting the twin border districts of Rajouri and Poonch in Jammu to south Kashmir's Shopian district. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also visited Ramban on Monday to assess the ground situation. Three people, including two minor siblings, were killed and more than 100 people were rescued after cloudburst-induced floods and landslides on Sunday caused massive damage to infrastructure, including roads and residential buildings. Bad weather prevented the Chief Minister from reaching out to the affected families. Earlier in the day, Divisional Commissioner Jammu Ramesh Kumar and Inspector General of Police Bhim Sen Tuti visited flood-affected and landslide-hit areas of Ramban district to assess the damage. Accompanied by Deputy Commissioner Ramban Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary, SSP Ramban Kulbir Singh, SSP



Chief Minister Omar Abdullah visited Maroog in Ramban district to take stock of the devastation caused by the recent flash floods and landslides

Traffic NHW Raja Adil Hamid, the Divisional Commissioner and IGP Jammu visited several severely affected locations including Seri, Boli Bazar, Main Bazar Ramban, Higher Secondary School area and Nawi Basti. "About 10 to 12 villages, including Seri, Bagna, Panote and Khari, have suffered varying degrees of damage and our teams are on the ground to make a complete assessment so that the affected population is provided relief," the divisional commissioner told reporters. The Div Com and IGP interacted with affected families and took a firsthand account of the ongoing rescue, relief, and restoration operations. Cutting across party lines, political leaders urged the Centre to declare the tragedy a "national disaster" and provide adequate financial assistance to the families affected to restart their lives. Senior BJP leader and Leader of Opposition Sunil Sharma visited the

affected villages and said, "We have come to assess the situation and submit a report to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah." "We want the government to declare it as a national disaster and announce a rehabilitation package for the affected population," Sharma told reporters. National Conference MLA Arjun Singh Raju demanded that the tragedy be declared a "national disaster" and said villages in the hilly areas had suffered major damage. "The full assessment can be made only when the roads leading to the villages in the hills are opened. The administration is making efforts on a war footing and we are hopeful of restoring essential supplies by later this evening," he said. Police, army and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel, along with civil volunteers, have been at the forefront to provide relief, especially to hundreds of the stranded commuters and tourists.

CM Mamata hates Hindus, says BJP

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

More than a hundred ejected families of riot-torn Murshidabad that were allegedly "forced" by the State administration to return home to once again live in a climate of terror have raised fresh demands for setting up of a permanent camp of the Border Security Force besides an investigation conducted by the National Investigation Agency. Senior BJP leader Sambit Patra on Monday attacked Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for her "hatred for the Hindus." The victim families on Monday narrated their woes to Bengal BJP president Sukanto Majumdar complaining how they were forced by the Bengal Police to evacuate the relief camp at a Government School in Malda before making a fresh demand for setting up of a permanent BSF camp in the riot affected areas of Murshidabad. "We did not want to return home as there is nothing left here and we have no faith in the State Police. But the police forced us to evacuate the camp at Baishnabnagar in Malda, they forced us to return home, but where will we live as there is no home left, everything is burnt down, our shops, houses doors windows and everything," locals complained adding how "the rioters are still threat-

ening us with murder and rape once the BSF leaves this area. They are telling that 'how long the BSF will protect you. let them leave then we will cut you up, we have no faith in the Bengal Police. If you want us safe then don't remove BSF from here" the victims told Majumdar who is also a Union Minister. "I will take this issue up with the Home Minister once I am in Delhi. The BSF is still there for a few days more, by then we will try to do something for them," the Minister said wondering at the "sense of responsibility of the Mamata Banerjee Government. They were driven out of Malda like livestock, without considering what they will eat and where they will live, they have no money, no roof, everything has been torched by the Muslim rioters. Mamata Banerjee is only concerned with saving her honour nationally by forcing the people to return home." He also met the Das family two members of which were hacked to death on the 11 April by a mob of rioters who were protesting against the Waqf Amendment Act. The family an alleged supporter of the CPI(M) had on Saturday refused to accept a compensation of ₹20 lakh offered by the Government. "We only want BSF camp and adequate punishment for the murderers" they said amid reports that five people had thus far been arrested in that connection by the SIT team.

Regarding NIA investigation Majumdar said, "The Agency cannot come on its own. A petition has been filed in the High Court seeking NIA investigation and as when the Court orders the investigation will be started." Curiously however Firdaus Shamim and JN Chattopadhyay advocates in Calcutta High Court said that the NIA had inherent powers to investigate such offences where national security or similar issues are involved. "The BJP, like the TMC too is playing with the woes of these poor people, they don't need any Court direction for NIA investigation, they are doing so because they know that NIA investigation will expose the game plan of both the parties and bring the truth to the fore regarding how these riots were planned," they said. Meanwhile, the BJP on Monday launched scathing attack on the Chief Minister calling her a "hater of the Hindus." Saffron leader Sambit Patra in a media conference in Delhi said that Mamata Banerjee "hates Hindus," wondering whether she would not have started agitating "had such atrocities been carried out against Muslim rioters." Attacking the Left too he questioned their silence on the issue despite the fact that the persons killed were all Marxist supporters.

Saamana hails possible Thackeray re-union

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ Mumbai

Saamana, the official mouth-piece of the Shiv Sena (UBT), on Monday hailed the possible coming together of the two Thackeray cousins — Uddhav and Raj, saying that the reunion of the two leaders was what Maharashtra needed, it as it was in the larger interests of Maharashtra. Holding that the impending re-union of Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray as a "befitting reply" to those who were "anti-Maharashtra" in their approach, "Saamana" welcomed the possible coming together of the two Thackeray cousins. "Marathi manoes have the strength and power to fight against those who are anti-Maharashtra. And that is why Marathi manoes should come together. Raj Thackeray understands the importance of reunion, while Uddhav Thackeray has responded positively," the Sena (UBT) mouth-piece stated in its editorial. It may be recalled that three months after he rebelled against Uddhav's leadership and quit the united Shiv Sena on December 18, 2005, Raj founded the MNS on March 9, 2006. Sena patriarch Bal Thackeray, who was alive at the time of Raj walking out of the Sena and founding the MNS, passed away on November 17, 2012.

More than 19 years after he quit the Bal Thackeray-headed Shiv Sena and founded the MNS, Raj held out an olive branch to his cousin Uddhav on Saturday — which the latter showed sure signs of accepting. After that there has been considerable discussion in the state political circles. Maintaining that possible reunion of Uddhav and Raj had caused unease in certain political quarters of Maharashtra while others had welcomed the development, the "Saamana" editorial stated: "Whatever is in the heart of Maharashtra should take place. If we continue to fight and dispute all our lives, the future generation of Maharashtra will never forgive us. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and chief minister Devendra Fadnis do not actually represent the nation. That being the case, how will they belong to Maharashtra state??" The Sena (UBT) mouth-piece said that after Raj quit the undivided Shiv Sena in December 2005 and founded the MNS, his party received public support in civic and Assembly elections. However, the MNS suffered electoral setbacks in the subsequent elections. Averring that the BJP "trapped" the MNS chief through its "fake Hindutva" stance, "Saamana" editorial stated: "He (Raj) used the support of the BJP and the Shinde Sena to attack us. As a consequence, the Marathi unity suffered a setback.

Though he had taken a stand not to allow Modi-Shah to put their foot on Maharashtra's soil and that they were not working in Maharashtra's interest, Raj did not stick to his stand." Alluding to the reported differences between the two Thackeray cousins, the Sena (UBT) mouth-piece stated: "In a media interview, Raj said whatever has happened, their dispute and differences are trivial compared to the bigger issues. The differences have never come out in the open." Raj has been speaking about Marathi manoes, while Uddhav Thackeray has been doing the same over the years. Both have now once again spoken about Marathi manoes and Maharashtra's interests. If we keep out the BJP and Shinde Sena, then the differences will not remain. Because they are the ones who caused the differences." "Amit Shah, Modi, Fadnis and Eknath Shinde have tried to weaken Maharashtra. They attacked the late Bal Thackeray-founded Shiv Sena... Raj Thackeray was born in the womb of the same Shiv Sena. And therefore, Uddhav Thackeray expects that Raj Thackeray should not align with such people," Saamana stated. It may be recalled that in a recent podcast by senior filmmaker Mahesh Manjrekar, Raj had said: "For me, the interest of Maharashtra is bigger and everything else is secondary before it."

Ex police officer gets life term for colleague murder

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ Mumbai

Nine years after the ghastly murder of a lady police officer, a trial court at Panvel in the adjoining Raigad district has handed out to senior police inspector and recipient of President's gallantry award Abhay Kurundkar to life imprisonment and sentenced two others to seven years of rigorous imprisonment

for their involvement in the sensational crime. Holding Kurundkar and his two aides Mahesh Phalnikar and Kundan Bhandari guilty of involvement in the crime, Sessions Judge of Panvel court K G Paldewar convicted them for the gruesome murder of Assistant Police Inspector Ashwini Bidre-Gore on the basis of strong circumstantial and technical evi-

dence. While the prime accused Kurundkar was awarded life imprisonment, Phalnikar and Bhandari were sentenced to seven years' rigorous imprisonment for destruction of evidence. However, another accused Raju Patil was acquitted of the charges due to insufficient evidence. While Phalnikar is a close friend of Kurundkar, Bhandari is the driver of the

prime accused. It may be recalled that Bidre-Gore, a resident of Roadpali in Kalamboli in Navi Mumbai who was then posted with the Protection of Civil Rights Unit in Konkan Bhavan at Belapur, had gone missing from April 15 2016 and that a missing case was registered three months later on July 14 2016 on the basis of a complaint made by her brother Anand Bidre.

Modi, Vance discuss BTA, strategic ties

Continued from >> P1 Bilateral Trade Agreement focused on the welfare of the people of the two countries. Likewise, they noted continued efforts towards enhancing cooperation in energy, defence, strategic technologies and other areas, it said. The two leaders also exchanged views on various regional and global issues of mutual interest, and called for dialogue and diplomacy as the way forward. Prime Minister Modi also conveyed his warm greetings to President Trump and said he looked forward to his visit to India later this year. Vance arrived here on Monday on a four-day visit accompanied by his Indian origin wife Usha Chilukuri and their three children Ewan, Vivek, Mirabel, and a delegation of senior US government officials. The US Vice President and the Second Lady were received at the Palam air base by Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw. The American leader was also accorded a ceremonial welcome on his arrival. The visit spanning Delhi, Jaipur and Agra is expected to further deepen the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership. Vance's first visit to India came weeks after US President Donald Trump imposed and then paused a sweeping tar-

iff regime against around 60 countries, including India. Also, Vance's visit comes weeks after US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard visited India for a geopolitical conference. New Delhi and Washington are now holding negotiations to seal a bilateral trade agreement that is expected to address a variety of issues, including tariff and market access. Vance and his family left for Jaipur on Monday night. On Tuesday, the Vances will visit a number of historical sites in Jaipur, including the Amer Fort, also known as Amber Fort. The fort is a UNESCO world heritage site. In the afternoon, the US Vice President is scheduled to address a gathering at the Rajasthan International Centre in Jaipur. Vance is expected to delve into broader aspects of India-US relations under the Donald Trump administration during his speech that is expected to be attended by diplomats, foreign policy experts, Indian government officials and academia. The US Vice President and his family will travel to Agra on the morning of April 23. They will visit Taj Mahal and Shilpgram which is an open air emporium showcasing various Indian artefacts. The US Vice President and his family will depart for the US from Jaipur on April 24.

Delhi unveils action plan to combat heatwave

Continued from >> P1 The national capital has already registered its first heatwave this summer — from April 7 to 9 — as temperatures crossed 40 degree Celsius. With the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasting a higher-than-usual number of heatwave days this year, the Heat Action Plans prepared at the state, district, and city levels are aimed at mitigating the adverse impacts of extreme weather. Building on last year's groundwork, the Delhi Government has expanded the scope of its heat preparedness efforts this summer. As per the plan, shading structures will be built along footpaths to offer pedestrians relief from the sun. Bus stops will be designed to protect waiting passengers from the heat. Additionally, Government and private buildings will adopt cool roof and green roof technologies. Over 1.4 million students in more than 5,500 schools across Delhi will be trained and will be made aware on disaster management and heatwave preparedness. Comprehensive arrangements have been made to tackle heatwaves from slum areas to major hospitals. Heatwave wards are being developed in hospitals, and cold water facilities are being ensured at public places like bus stops and railway stations. The plan has been developed following NDMA guidelines, global best practices, district-level vulnerability mapping, and consultations with knowledge partners such as NDMA, UNEP, UNICEF, Resilience AI, and UC Berkeley. Under this Heat Action Plan, 3,000 water coolers will be installed throughout the city-1,000 on roads, 1,000 in government buildings, and 1,000 in locations that lack water facilities for those living on footpaths or homeless individuals. As per the plan, heatwave wards are being prepared in major hospitals in Delhi, equipped with cooling facilities, ORS, and trained staff. Shade, drinking water, and assistance centers are being set up in slums and low-income neighborhoods. In schools, children will be encouraged to drink water through the "Water Bell" initiative, and more than 1.4 million children in over 5,500 schools will be educated on disaster management and heatwave protection. Cold water facilities will also be arranged at public places such as bus stops and railway stations. The salient features of the Delhi Heat

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Action Plan 2025 include: Cool Roof Technology will be implemented at major sites, including the Vivekananda terminal, Kashmir Gate ISBT, and Delhi Secretariat; Dedicated heatwave wards to be set up in large hospitals, equipped with trained medical staff to treat heat-related illnesses; Cooling shelters and shaded structures will be developed along footpaths for pedestrian relief; Booklets for schools detailing safety guidelines and preparedness strategies for students and staff during extreme heat. Ambulance, kits, and booklet launched for emergency transport of heat stroke patients; Deployment of 1,800 trained Disaster Mitras to assist during heat emergencies as first responders and Real-time issuance of heat alerts in collaboration with the weather department. The Chief Minister further explained that in recent years, temperatures in Delhi has touched up to 50 degrees Celsius - which is a serious threat for public. "Our mission is to make Delhi heat-resilient, protect lives and make every season livable for its residents," the chief minister said. She said the government has been working extensively to reduce the impact

of heatwaves, which have become increasingly frequent and intense, with the temperature in Delhi going as high as 52.9 degrees Celsius. As part of the plan, the government has asked hospitals to create dedicated wards equipped with ICU beds and essential medicines for heat-stroke patients. Cooling centres will also be set up in densely populated areas, especially near footpaths and slums. Other initiatives include green roofs, shaded areas at bus stops and an early warning system for heatwaves, the chief minister said. The government will issue heatwave alerts through medical portals and text messages, she said. Government schools will follow stricter routines to ensure regular water intake among children and slums will be equipped with cool shelters and have access to chilled drinking water, she said. The Chief Minister stated that the "Delhi Heat Action Plan" is not only for the people but also for the thousands of voiceless birds and animals who are part of our planet. Health Minister Pankaj Singh, PWD and Water Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma and senior officials attended the event.

PM condones Pope's death

Continued from >> P1 The two leaders discussed a range of topics - from poverty to climate change. The Prime Minister also invited Pope Francis to India. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday condoled the demise of Pope Francis. "Saddened at the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis. His compassion and commitment to building a better world defined his papacy," Jaishankar said in a social media post. Rajnath Singh said "Deeply saddened by the passing away of His Holiness Pope Francis. He will be remembered for his remarkable service to the human society, specially poor and the marginalized. My thoughts are with the millions around the world who grieve his demise." Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge expressed sadness over the passing away of Pope Francis, whom he described as a consistent champion of inter-religious understanding and an influential force for global peace and harmony. "The entire world is saddened by the passing away of Pope Francis who will be seen by posterity as being hugely consequential. "He was a consistent champion of

inter-religious understanding and engagement. He was also a greatly influential force for global peace and harmony who actively supported causes like the ending of discrimination of all forms, the mitigation of economic inequalities and of collaborative endeavours to deal with the impacts of climate change," Kharge said in a statement. The Congress president said Pope Francis was truly an iconic personality, a humanitarian par excellence, who has left behind a very valuable legacy. "On behalf of the Indian National Congress, I extend our sincere condolences to our Christian brethren especially in different parts of our country and the world," the Congress chief said. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said the passing away of His Holiness Pope Francis is a loss to the entire world. "He was truly an embodiment of love and compassion. He stood for the truth, he spoke out fearlessly against injustice and cared for the poor and marginalized in true faith. "He was an inspiration to millions across the world who hope and strive for a more peaceful and kinder world. May his soul rest in eternal peace," she said in her message on social media.

World mourns death of Pope Francis

Continued from >> P1 Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof said that Francis "was in every way a man of the people." Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi said in a statement that Francis leaves behind "a great human legacy that will remain etched in the conscience of humanity" and called him "an exceptional global figure who dedicated his life to serving the values of peace and justice." Irish Foreign Minister Simon Harris praised Francis' advocacy for the poor, and calls for improved interfaith relations and a focus on protecting the environment that made him "a beacon of hope and a voice for the voiceless." But some critics voiced frustration, with the Women's Ordination Conference lamenting Francis' unwillingness to push for the ordination of women. "His repeated closed door" policy on

women's ordination was painfully incongruous with his otherwise pastoral nature, and for many, a betrayal of the synodal, listening church he championed," the conference said. "This made him a complicated, frustrating, and sometimes heart-breaking figure for many women." The Vatican announced that Francis, the 266th pope, died Monday morning - a day after his last public appearance on Easter Sunday to bless thousands of people in St. Peter's Square. Bishop Paolo Martinelli, the apostolic vicar of Southern Arabia, issued a statement saying that "all the people in the UAE are greatly saddened by the death of Pope Francis, whom we remember with gratitude for his visit to Abu Dhabi in 2019." He asked all parishes to plan a Mass for Francis. The vicariate oversees the Catholic Church in the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai, called Francis "a great leader whose compassion and commitment to peace touched countless lives." "His legacy of humility and interfaith unity will continue to inspire many communities around the world," Sheikh Mohammed said in an online message. Bishop James Ruggieri of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland, Maine, said that Francis' legacy will be "one of mercy and compassion, but also of hope. In this Jubilee Year, may we honor Pope Francis by carrying on his mission and living as pilgrims of hope." From Buenos Aires, Francis' hometown, the office of Argentine President Javier Milei expressed condolences and support to all the faithful in the predominantly

Catholic South American country. Milei highlighted the "tireless struggle of Francis' papacy to protect life from conception, promote inter-religious dialogue and bring a spiritual and virtuous life closer to young people," his office said, describing Argentina as "the land of Pope Francis." Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif says the passing of Francis is an irreplaceable loss to the global community. Sharif praised Francis as a "pioneer of interfaith harmony, peace, and the promotion of humanity." He said under the pope's leadership, the Catholic Church consistently spread the message of love, tolerance and mutual respect across the world. "Pope Francis' life and conduct have been a beacon of light - not only for Christians but for people of all faiths."

'Chhattisgarh to play a key role in implementing new criminal laws'

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR/NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said on Monday that Chhattisgarh will play a key role in the implementation of the new criminal laws.

Sai briefed Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on the eradication of Naxalism, the overall development of the Bastar region, and measures to further strengthen the security and justice systems in the state.

Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma, Chief Secretary Amitabh Jain, and Director General of Police Arun Dev Gautam were present.

Shah reviewed the implementation and current status of various new provisions related to the police, prisons, judiciary, prosecution, and forensic systems.

Sai said that both administrative and technical preparations have been completed for the effective implementation of the new criminal laws in Chhattisgarh.

A total of 27 types of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and guidelines have been formulated and put into



practice across the state, he said.

Additionally, around 37,385 police personnel have been trained under the new framework. Infrastructure across courts, police stations, and jails has been upgraded with e-evidence handling capabilities and video conferencing systems, he said.

So far, 53,981 FIRs have been registered under the new laws, with chargesheets filed in approximately 50 percent of the cases, he said.

Special strategies were also discussed for a permanent solution to the Naxal problem. Sai spoke about the recent operations

in which many wanted Naxalites have been killed, arrested or have surrendered.

Shah commended the efforts of the Chhattisgarh government and emphasized the need for 100 percent implementation of the new criminal laws in the state at the earliest.

Congress protests over rising crime against women



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The opposition Congress party in Chhattisgarh on Monday staged a protest in Raipur against the rising incidents of crime against women and girls, as well as the deteriorating law and order situation in the BJP-ruled state.

Addressing the party workers, Pradesh Congress Committee chief Deepak Baij alleged that law and order has collapsed in the entire state and incidents of rape, loot and murder have become frequent.

The situation in Chhattisgarh has become like that prevailing in Uttar

Pradesh and Bihar, as the BJP has failed to check rising crimes against women, Baij claimed. Later, the grand old party workers bid to lay siege to the official residence of the Chhattisgarh Chief Minister here, but it was foiled by a heavy police contingent deployed near OCM Chowk, where barricades were put up.

The senior party leaders including state party chief Baij, Leader of Opposition Charan Das Mahant, AICC secretary and party's joint in-charge Szarita Laitphlang and legislators were prevented by police personnel from moving towards the CM residence.



A glimpse of the mega survey campaign for Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (rural) in Chhattisgarh's Bilaspur district on Monday. More than one lakh families in the district have been surveyed so far.

Maoist killed in Bijapur



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

A Maoist was killed in a gunfight with security personnel in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh on Monday.

The gun battle ensued around 5:30 pm in a forest between Kerpe and Tosampara villages in the Bedre area during an anti-Naxal operation, Bijapur Superintendent of Police Jitendra Kumar Yadav

said. The Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF) and local police were involved in the operation, he added.

After the skirmish, the body of a Maoist, besides a .315 bore rifle, a tiffin bomb and firecrackers, was recovered from the encounter site.

The deceased Maoist is yet to be identified and a search operation is underway. So far, 139 Maoists have been killed in Chhattisgarh this year.

HNLU-ASLA conference to explore pathways to inclusive, resilient growth



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The Hidayatullah National Law University in Raipur will hold an international conference in collaboration with the Asian Law Schools Association on 'Trade, Business and Sustainability: Pathways to Inclusive and Resilient Growth' on July 27 and 28.

The conference will mark World Nature Conservation Day. It will explore the intricate relationship between trade, business, and sustain-

ability and suggest a path forward.

The conference will consist of various sub-themes like eco-labelling and market access, carbon border tax adjustments (CBTAs) and low-income countries, greening trade: GVCs and emissions, digital solutions for sustainability, consumer behaviour and sustainable demand and decarbonising global transportation.

Academicians, researchers, professionals, practitioners, and students will share their research.

CAF trooper killed in IED blast



STAFF REPORTER ■ BIJAPUR

A Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF) trooper was killed on Monday after a pressure improvised explosive device (IED) planted by Maoists went off in Bijapur district.

The blast occurred between Toynar and Farsegarh villages, where a CAF team was engaged in a Road Security Operation

(RSO) duty to provide security for road construction workers, Bijapur Additional Superintendent of Police Chandrakant Governa said.

A road is being constructed from Toynar to Farsegarh, he added.

CAF's 19th battalion constable Manoj Pujari (26), unknowingly stepped on an IED, triggering the blast that killed him.

A search operation is underway in the area.

CGDF seeks cadre for superspeciality doctors

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh Doctor's Federation on Monday wrote to the Commissioner of Health Education to establish a superspeciality cadre to overcome the shortage of superspeciality doctors in the state.

Within a health organisation, 'cadre' refers to an organised system that includes different levels of roles and responsibilities.

They said that there was a shortage of superspeciality doctors in the state due to low salaries and a lack of a superspeciality cadre.

They stressed the need for the creation of a superspeciality cadre on the lines of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

Speaking to The Pioneer, CGDF President Dr Heera Singh Lodhi said that patients stand to lose the most if this is not resolved.



They have no option but to seek treatment at private institutions, which not everyone can afford, he said.

Due to a lack of cadre, superspeciality doctors are receiving a lower salary and are opting to work at private institutions, he said.

They have also made other demands, like the appointment of postgraduate doctors as per their speciality, relaxation of the bond amount and mortgage to enable financially weak students to pursue higher education, and expediting the procedure of bond posting.

Leopard, bison found dead in Mahasamund



STAFF REPORTER ■ MAHASAMUND

A leopard and wild bison were found dead of suspected electrocution on Monday in Mahasamund district of Chhattisgarh.

The carcasses of animals were found around 8 am near the hills of Khallari Circle in the

Bagbahara Forest Range, Mahasamund Divisional Forest Officer Pankaj Rajput said.

After being alerted, forest personnel rushed to the spot.

Preliminary investigation suggests that electrocution led to the deaths of animals, but the exact cause of the deaths will be known after the post-mortem.

बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा Bank of Baroda Regional Office, Jeevan Prakash, L.I.C. Building, Pandri, Raipur (C.G.), PH: 0771 - 4222611, 4222612
E-mail: recovery.raipur@bankofbaroda.com

POSSESSION NOTICE

(As per Appendix IV read with rule 8(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002) Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Bank of Baroda under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(2) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice to the following borrowers / guarantors calling upon the Borrowers to repay the amount mentioned in the respective notices within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The under mentioned Borrower / Guarantor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers/Guarantors and the Public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein, below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section (4) of section 13 of the Act read with Rule 8 and under section 14 of the Act of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002.

S. N.	Branch Name/Ph.No.	Name of Borrower / Guarantor	Description of Property	Demand Notice Date, Amount & Symbolic / Physical Possession Date
01	Sunder Nagar Branch Raipur 9752098094	Mr. Sankirtan Yadav S/o Late Shri Ramesh Yadav Add.- Madhav Rao Sapre Ward No. - 68, Village - Raipura, Raipur, C.G.	Equitable Mortgage of House bearing Kh. No. - 576/27, Area - 1000 Sq.ft. situated in Madhav Rao Sapre Ward No. - 68, Village Raipura PH.No.- 104/35 New PH. No.- 57, RIC Circle Raipur-1, Raipura, Teh. & Dist. - Raipur, C.G. belonging to Mr. Sankirtan Yadav S/o Late Shri Ramesh Yadav. Boundary Description : North- Land of Shivam School, South- Road, East- Open Land, West - Land of Smt. Parwati Devi.	14.02.2025 Rs. 11,37,910.00 + interest + other charges 19.04.2025 Symbolic Possession

The Borrowers / Guarantors / Mortgagees in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the above mentioned property and any dealings with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of Bank of Baroda for above mentioned amount interest and other charges thereon.
The Borrower's attention is invited to provision of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Date: 22.04.2025, Place: Raipur, Chhattisgarh
Authorised Officer, Bank of Baroda

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियंता,
लोक निर्माण विभाग, बिलासपुर मंडल, बिलासपुर

ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट निविदा सूचना
Portal: <http://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>

छत्तीसगढ़ शासन, लोक निर्माण विभाग, बिलासपुर मण्डल, बिलासपुर में निम्नलिखित कार्य नवीन ई-पंजीयन में पंजीकृत टेकेदार हेतु दिनांक 06.05.2025 तक निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है-

क्र. / दिनांक	कार्य का नाम	लागत (लाख में)
1 / 11	जिला बिलासपुर वि.ख. कोटा के करैहापारा में हाईस्कूल भवन का निर्माण कार्य। प्रथम आमंत्रण। संभाग क्र. 1, बिलासपुर।	68.72
2 / 12	जिला बिलासपुर के वि.ख. तखतपुर के भरनी में हायर सेकेंडरी स्कूल भवन का निर्माण कार्य। प्रथम आमंत्रण। संभाग क्र. 2, बिलासपुर।	116.28

निविदा में भाग लेने की प्रक्रिया एवं निविदा के संबंध में विस्तृत जानकारी विभाग के उपरोक्त वेबसाइट में देखें जा सकते हैं।

अधीक्षण अभियंता
लो.नि.वि.बिलासपुर मण्डल, बिलासपुर
G-252600358/6

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, E/M CIRCLE, RAIPUR (C.G.)

e-Procurement Tender Notice

Online tenders are invited on behalf of Governor of Chhattisgarh from contractors, C.G. P.W.D in new Registration system (unified Registration system) for the following work :-

NIT No.	Name of work	Probable amount of contract	Date of bid submission
01/SE E/M/2025 (I Call) System Tender No 165026 Registered contractor class in "D" & above For Form "A" (Percentage Rate Tender)	GROUND FLOOR FOR E/F & VRV A.C. WORK OF INTEGRATED EXAMINATION HALL AT Pt. R.S.S. UNIVERSITY RAIPUR (C.G.)	Rs 33.54 Lacs	08-05-2025

The tender documents can be downloaded from the web-portal <http://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>. Only those contractors/bidders, interested in bidding shall pay the tender document cost online.

Superintending Engineer
P.W.D., E/M Circle Raipur (C.G.)
G-252600373/3

Policies today will shape India's next 1,000 years: PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Asserting that India's bureaucracy and policymaking cannot operate on outdated frameworks, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the policies that his government is working on are going to shape the future of the next 1,000 years and asked everyone to work tirelessly towards this shared vision.

Reflecting on the past role of bureaucracy as a regulator that controlled the pace of industrialisation and entrepreneurship, he emphasised that the nation has moved beyond this mindset and is now fostering an environment that promotes enterprise among citizens and helps them overcome barriers.

"Civil services must transform into an enabler, expanding its role from merely being the keeper of rule books to becoming a facilitator of growth," Modi said, addressing the Civil Services Day function at Vigyan Bhawan here.

During his nearly 40-minute pep talk to the bureaucrats, he highlighted the aspirations of India's society, youth, farmers and women, stating that their dreams have reached unprecedented heights and stressed the need for extraordinary speed to fulfil these extraordinary aspirations.

"The policies we are working on today, the decisions we are making, are going to

shape the future of the next thousand years", Modi said.

Underscoring the importance of collective effort and determination in achieving the goal of a developed India, the prime minister urged everyone to work tirelessly, every day and every moment, towards this shared vision.

Mentioning the rapid changes occurring globally, noting how even within families, interactions with younger generations can make one feel outdated due to the fast pace of change, Modi highlighted the swift evolution of gadgets every two to three years and how children are growing up amidst these transformations.

"India's bureaucracy, work processes, and policymaking cannot operate on outdated frameworks," he said, during the function being attended by a large number of civil services officers.

Modi said the aspirations of India's society, youth, farmers and women, and their dreams have reached unprecedented heights and stressed the need for extraordinary speed to fulfil these extraordinary aspirations.

The prime minister outlined India's ambitious goals for the coming years, including energy security, clean energy, advancements in sports, and achievements in space exploration, emphasising the importance of raising India's flag high



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks during the 17th Civil Services Day programme in New Delhi

in every sector. Underscoring the immense responsibility on civil servants to ensure that India becomes the world's third-largest economy at the earliest, he urged them to prevent any delays in achieving this critical objective.

Modi said this year's theme of Civil Services Day — Holistic Development of India — is a commitment and a promise

to the people of the nation.

"Holistic development of India means ensuring that no village, no family, and no citizen is left behind," the prime minister said, adding that true progress is not about small changes but about achieving a full-scale impact. He said the vision of holistic development, which includes clean water for every household, quality educa-

tion for every child, financial access for every entrepreneur, and the benefits of the digital economy for every village.

Modi said that quality in governance is not determined by the mere launch of schemes but by how deeply these schemes reach the people and their real impact.

Highlighting that over the past 10 years, India has progressed from incremen-

tal change to impactful transformation, the prime minister emphasised that the country's governance model is now focused on next-generation reforms, leveraging technology and innovative practices to bridge the gap between the government and citizens. "India is now recognised not merely for its growth but for setting new benchmarks in governance, transparency, and innovation," he said.

Modi cited India's G20 Presidency as a significant example of these advancements, noting that, for the first time in G20's history, over 200 meetings were held across more than 60 cities, creating a broad and inclusive footprint.

He underscored how the approach of public participation transformed the G20 into a people's movement. "The world has acknowledged India's leadership; India is not just participating, it is leading," the prime minister said. Modi highlighted the growing discussions around government efficiency and said that India is 10-11 years ahead of other nations in this regard.

Mentioning efforts made over the past 11 years to eliminate delays, introduce new processes, and reduce turnaround time through technology, he said that over 40,000 compliances have been removed, and more than 3,400 legal provisions have been decriminalised to promote ease of business.

BJP slams Rahul Gandhi, calls him traitor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The BJP on Monday called Congress leader Rahul Gandhi a "traitor" for his remarks against the Election Commission and accused him of venting his frustration over ED action in the National Herald case on the poll body.

The former Congress chief, who is on a visit to the US, raised questions on the BJP-led coalition's victory in the Maharashtra polls and alleged the Election Commission (EC) was compromised.

Flaying Rahul Gandhi for his remarks, BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra said, "You are venting the ire over the Enforcement Directorate (action in the National Herald case) on the Election Commission. Nothing will happen by doing so."

"The ED will not spare you because agencies work on the basis of facts and the National Herald matter is an open-and-shut case. You will not be spared. You and your mother will be caught with the proceeds of crime and sent to jail," he said at a press conference at the BJP headquarters.

Both Rahul Gandhi and his mother Sonia Gandhi will go behind bars in connection with the case, he asserted.

"You are a traitor, not just because you insult Indian institutions and Indian democracy on foreign soil but also because

you and your mother embezzled crores of rupees of the country in the National Herald case. You and your mother will not be able to get away with this," Patra said.

The BJP spokesperson also slammed Rahul Gandhi for raising questions on the conduct of the assembly polls in Maharashtra and asked him if the Congress and its ally, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), had any agreement with the EC that enabled the coalition to win last year's assembly polls in Jharkhand.

He also asked Rahul Gandhi if the EC was compromised when Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, his sister, was elected to the Lok Sabha from the Wayanad seat in Kerala.

"In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP won 240 seats and the Congress 99. The Congress was then calling the results its victory and the BJP's defeat. Was the EC compromised then?" he asked.

Though Rahul Gandhi is the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha, he is actually a "leader with no position" in his own party and in the eyes of the country's people, Patra said.

"With their votes, people are saying that he is a leader with no position. He is incapable and politically unfit, who always takes the crutches of false allegations to prove that he is a leader. What he has been doing in the US and other countries are the result of his frustration with his failures," he said.

excused, the long arm of the law will catch them."

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Vance's kids dress up in traditional Indian attire

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Dressed in traditional Indian attire chosen especially for their visit to India, US Vice-President JD Vance's three children won hearts, with their photographs going viral on social media shortly after they landed in Delhi on Monday.

Eight-year-old Ewan wore a grey kurta while his five-year-old brother Vivek was dressed in yellow, with both pairing their kurtas with white pyjamas.

Vance's three-year-old daughter Mirabel was dressed in a teal green anarkali suit and a jacket.

The trio became a hit among the photographers covering the visit as soon as they deplaned, with their photographs trending on social media during the day.

Vance and his Indian-origin wife Usha arrived in Delhi to a warm welcome early on Monday.

They were received at the airport by Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw. While Vance wore a navy blue business suit paired with a white shirt and a red tie, his wife chose a red long dress with a white blazer.

The Vance family visited the Akshardham temple where they posed for camera crews outside the shrine's imposing facade. Vance and his family will travel to Jaipur and Agra during their four-



US Vice President JD Vance with Second Lady Usha Vance and their children visits Akshardham temple in New Delhi

day trip. Later on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will host a dinner for the Vances after holding talks with the US vice-president. Vance's first visit to India comes weeks after US President Donald Trump imposed and then paused a sweeping tariff regime against around 60 countries, including India.

Vance is being accompanied by a del-

egation of senior US government officials. The Vances will reach Jaipur in a special plane and stay at the Rambagh Palace hotel.

The US vice-president will reach Amber Fort at 9 am on Tuesday and address an event at the RIC at 3 pm. The family is scheduled to leave for Agra in a special plane early on Wednesday.

SC judge flags concerns over attacks on judiciary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

As it is, we are alleged of encroaching upon the parliamentary and executive functions," Supreme Court's judge B R Gavai said on Monday in an apparent reference to recent attacks on the judiciary.

Justice Gavai's comment came while the apex court bench, also comprising Justice Augustine George Masih, was considering a fresh plea seeking an inquiry into the recent violence in West Bengal during anti-Waqf law protests.

Advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain, who had filed a PIL in 2021 on behalf of two petitioners seeking President's Rule in West Bengal in the wake of violence following assembly polls, urged the bench to take up a fresh plea for hearing on Tuesday. Jain said the 2021 plea was listed for hearing and the fresh application bringing out more incidents of violence in West Bengal also be heard. "In tomorrow's list item 42 pertains to imposition of President Rule in the state of West Bengal. That petition is filed by me. In that petition, I have filed

an IA (application) for directions and impleadment bringing out certain more incidents of violence which have happened in the state of West Bengal," he said.

Jain said deployment of paramilitary force and immediate action was required. He referred to Article 355 of the Constitution, which pertains to duty of the Union to protect states against external aggression and internal disturbance, and said the Supreme Court can call for a report as to what was happening in the state. Jain said the top court had earlier issued notice on the 2021 petition.

"When the matter will come up, I will demonstrate how the violence happened," he said. In July 2021, the Supreme Court agreed to hear the PIL, which also sought a direction to the Centre to deploy armed or paramilitary forces in the state. It then issued notice to the Centre, West Bengal and the Election Commission on the plea.

Recently, two separate petitions were filed in the Supreme Court seeking a court-monitored probe into the violence in West Bengal over the newly-enacted Waqf (Amendment) Act.

Chidambaram slams ED case against Gandhis

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The "political assault" on the integrity and reputation of Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi is an "abuse of power", former Union minister P Chidambaram said on Monday as he questioned the ED chargesheet against the Congress leaders in the National Herald case.

Addressing a press conference at the Delhi Congress office, Chidambaram alleged that the facts of the case made it clear that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) at the behest of its "political masters is carrying on a vendetta against" the opposition party leaders.

There were no proceeds of the crime in the case and hence there could not be a money laundering case and as such the ED has no jurisdiction in it, the senior Congress leader claimed and asserted that the party will "prevail over the assault". "The entire Congress party will resist and fight back this political assault on its leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. Truth will prevail, justice will prevail, we will prevail," he said.

Defending the Gandhis, Chidambaram said in the conversion of

loan to equity that happened in the case of Associated Journals Limited (AJL) and Young Indian (YI), the Congress loaned Rs 90 crore to AJL over a period of 10-12 years.

That loan was bought by Young Indian which is irrecoverable, he said. "Therefore the loan was converted into equity," he said and added it is a well-known instrument employed by the banks. Recently, Chidambaram said, the Government of India (GOI) converted the liability of Rs 36,000 crore owned by Vodafone India to it, into equity. Now, the Government of India equity in Vodafone India is 48.99 per cent, he said.

"That loan cannot be recovered by the Government of India so two months ago that loan was converted into equity. Why does not the ED file a money laundering case against GOI," he asked.

The Congress leader said the IT department has valued the assets of AJL to Rs 413 crore and questioned from where the Rs 2000 crore figure came as was being alleged. "That Rs 413 crore is still there. Who has taken it away. If somebody has taken it away, you tell me and I will go and catch him," he said.

Chidambaram said the AJL owned six

immovable properties including one in Lucknow that was the only free-hold property while the remaining in Patna, Indore, Mumbai, Panchkula and Delhi are leasehold.

He said there were no money transactions involved as there was no money to be distributed or taken away by anyone. "Not a single rupee has been taken by YI shareholders or directors since the inception of the company," he claimed. All the four shareholders of Young Indian which is a non-profit company, are senior Congress office bearers, he said.

Chidambaram that the statements being given against the Congress leaders in media were either out of "ignorance or malice". The ED had recently filed a chargesheet against Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and others before a special court in New Delhi in the National Herald case accusing them of allegedly laundering Rs 988 crore.

The prosecution complaint filed on April 9, under various sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), named former Congress presidents Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi as accused no 1 and 2 respectively.

Pope Francis passes away before his India visit could happen

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Pope Francis was likely to visit India next year but his sojourn could not materialise after he breathed his last on Monday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Pope Francis twice — in 2021 and 2024 — and extended an invitation for him to visit India that the pontiff had accepted.

Union minister George Kurian, who visited Vatican City last December, said the much-awaited visit was expected to take place after the celebrations of the jubilee year of Jesus Christ's birth by the Catholic Church in 2025.

The last papal visit to India was in 1999 when Pope John Paul II came to New Delhi to preside over the concluding celebrations of the Special Assembly of Synod of Bishops of Asia.

Pope Francis, who was battling complications arising out of a complex lung infection, breathed his last on Monday at the age of 88

He had met the then vice-president Krishan Kant and prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Pope John Paul II also visited India in February 1986 and toured different parts of the country, including the Missionaries of Charity in Kolkata and met the Indian leadership.

The first pontiff to visit India was Paul IV, who visited Mumbai in 1964 to attend the International Eucharistic Congress.

Modi, along with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar first met Pope Francis in Vatican City in October 2021 on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Rome.

The prime minister had extended an invitation to Pope Francis to visit India at an early date.

Modi also met Pope Francis on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Apulia, Italy, in June last year and renewed the invitation for him to visit India.

Nadda slams states over unused health funds, urges to improve infrastructure

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Union Health Minister J P Nadda on Monday expressed strong concern over the underutilisation of allocated health funds by states and asked them to focus on improving healthcare infrastructure.

Chairing a session at the 17th Civil Services Day celebrations here, Nadda said, "I will not allow this narrative to continue that there's no money or capacity to spend it. Utilisation certificates are not even submitted for funds already given."

He recounted a recent visit to a state where allocated funds remained unspent for three years due to repeated tendering and delay in equipment procurement.

"Models have changed, new versions have come, but the tender process hasn't even begun," he said.

Calling implementation the crux of the problem, Nadda said, "We can aim for the world's largest health coverage program, we will not let it go down the drain."

He stressed that accountability and coordination across all administrative



Union Health Minister JP Nadda leads the 'Liver Health Pledge Ceremony' at the Health Camp organised by Ministry of Health in observance of World Liver Day 2025 in New Delhi

levels are essential, especially when out-of-pocket expenditure for health has reduced from 62 per cent to 39 per cent — calling it a clear sign of the benefit to common citizens.

Highlighting the need for administrative reform within the health sector,

Nadda said that many officials, including state health directors and chief medical officers, lack proper training and are hesitant to make decisions.

"They are administratively incapacitated. We must support them through capacity building and handholding," he

said. He pointed out that many district-level administrators are unaware of the Program Implementation Plan (PIP) under the National Health Mission (NHM), which is central to planning and executing healthcare initiatives.

"How can they plan if they don't even know the year's implementation plan?" Nadda questioned, and urged IAS officers to take ownership of the PIP and involve district officials in planning before forwarding it to Delhi.

Praising India's COVID-19 vaccination campaign, the health minister said, "We were able to deliver over 220 crore doses including boosters...It's proof of how robust our health system is." He also emphasised the need to invest in grassroots workers.

He called for increased reliance on and incentivisation of ASHA workers and for strengthening telemedicine services.

Nadda criticized the disconnect between government offerings and public awareness, noting that despite 157 medicines being offered free at Primary Health Centres, patients often report

shortages. He asked district magistrates and sub-divisional magistrates to conduct impact assessments to ensure the availability of diagnostics and medicines.

He also reiterated the government's long-term vision for Ayushman Bharat, which includes the PM-JAY insurance scheme and Ayushman Arogya Mandirs. These, he said, stemmed from extensive consultation since 2015, unlike earlier fragmented health policies.

"This is India's first holistic and inclusive health policy," he said, noting its emphasis on geriatric care and early screening for non-communicable diseases.

"By the age of 30, everyone should be visiting Arogya Mandirs for screening hypertension, diabetes, oral and cervical cancer, and mental and dental health," he said, underlining the shift from treatment to preventive healthcare.

India has already extended health coverage to 61 crore citizens under PM-JAY, Nadda said, adding that public health expenditure has increased from 29 per cent in 2014 to 48 per cent today.

Akhilesh slams Nishikant Dubey

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Lucknow

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Monday slammed BJP MP Nishikant Dubey for his remarks against former Chief Election Commissioner SY Quraishi, urging BJP leaders to refrain from making comments about retired constitutional authorities who have served the nation with distinction.

In a post on X, Yadav wrote that one who has already been discredited by his own party for making a personal opinion not worthy of endorsement should maintain silence on a retired constitutional officer, adding that such silence would be more respectful.

Nishikant Dubey had stirred controversy on Sunday when he said, "You (SY Quraishi) were not an election commissioner, and you were a Muslim commissioner. The maximum number of Bangladeshi infiltrators was made voters in Santal Pargana in Jharkhand during your tenure."

Responding to the statement, Yadav targeted the BJP over alleged electoral malpractices and cited various instances that, according to him, question the party's commitment to democratic values. He alleged



that BJP leaders should revisit their own long list of electoral misconducts before making any public statements. Among the incidents he referred to were the alleged manipulation in the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections and the use of armed policemen to intimidate voters during the bypoll in the Mirapur Assembly seat in

Uttar Pradesh, an incident that was widely shared on social media.

He also mentioned the coercion and forced withdrawal of nominations in Madhya Pradesh to secure unopposed victories for BJP candidates, and cash-for-vote allegations in Maharashtra involving a senior BJP leader.

Yadav also pointed to sudden and unexplained spikes in voter turnout in Haryana and Maharashtra during the final hours of voting, the use of fake voters in the Milkipur bypoll in Uttar Pradesh where a man claimed on television that he had cast six votes for the BJP and an allegation from Maharashtra that a police officer was bribed with ₹10 lakh to ignore EVM tampering.

He said the BJP's moral compass was never intact and never will be, but added that reminders are necessary. He warned that those sidelined within the BJP should not try to return to the spotlight by making inflammatory statements.

He further remarked that BJP leaders are not loyal even to their own, pointing out that the party is now witnessing internal conflicts playing out on social media. According to Yadav, the factionalism within the BJP has reached its peak, and the corruption syndicate inside the party is beginning to expose its own secrets. He claimed that the mask has fallen and that the people will soon bring down the party's arrogance.

Concluding his remarks, Yadav said that history has shown time and again that the seeds of downfall lie within the unchecked rise of negative regimes.

Road rage: IAF officer assaulted, verbally abused in Bengaluru

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bengaluru

An IAF officer was allegedly assaulted and verbally abused by a group of Kannada-speaking individuals who chased him on a bike in Bengaluru early Monday morning, police said.

The incident occurred while he was on his way to the airport with his wife, who is also an Indian Air Force (IAF) officer.

Based on a complaint filed by the man's wife, Squadron Leader Madhumita Dutta, a case has been registered at the Byappanahalli police station against unknown individuals, police added.

Wing Commander Shiladitya Bose alleged that he was attacked and verbally abused in a road rage incident by men who followed them on a two-wheeler.

He shared a video on Instagram narrating the sequence of events and displaying injuries on his face and neck, with blood visibly oozing from the wounds.

"We stay in DRDO, CV Raman Nagar Phase 1. This morning, my wife was driving me to the airport when a bike came from behind and blocked our car. I will share the dash cam footage too. One of the riders started abusing me in Kannada."

Noticing the DRDO sticker on my car, he said, "You DRDO people, followed by more abuse in Kannada. He then abused my wife. I couldn't bear it," he alleged in the video. Recounting the assault, Bose claimed, "When I got out of the car, he immediately hit me on the forehead with his keys. I stood there, shouting, asking if this is how people treat someone from the Army or Defence Forces. More individuals gathered and began abusing us."

Further, he said, "That man even picked up a stone and tried to damage my car. When I tried to stop him, he hit me again. You can see the blood-this is what happened. Thankfully, my wife was there to get me out."

Bose also claimed that they went to the police station but did not receive immediate help. "But this is what Karnataka has become. I believed in this state, but after today's incident, I'm shocked. God help us. God give me the strength not to retaliate. But if law and order fail, I will retaliate," Bose alleged in the video.

While the exact location is yet to be officially confirmed, the officer stated that the incident occurred on the route from CV Raman Nagar to the airport.

AICC sideline Patwari ahead of 2028 Assembly elections

GIRISH SHARMA ■ Bhopal

In a significant move aimed at curbing growing factionalism within the Madhya Pradesh Congress, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) has stripped state party president Jitu Patwari of the authority to nominate or elect district Congress presidents. This decision marks a critical intervention by the central leadership, signaling a shift towards tighter organisational control ahead of the 2028 Assembly elections.

By assuming direct oversight of district-level appointments, the AICC has effectively sidelined Patwari, who had been pushing aggressively to restructure the party's local leadership by installing loyalists in influential positions. According to sources within the Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC), the central leadership has already finalised a pool of eligible candidates and plans to deploy observers from outside the state to oversee the appointment process.

The move is being interpreted as a clear effort by the high command to dismantle entrenched loyalties and coteries that have long impeded internal cohesion within the state unit. Observers will now assess local leadership potential in politically volatile districts, with a focus on grassroots connect and electoral viability over factional allegiances.

Defending the AICC's decision, Madhya Pradesh Congress Media Department Chairman Mukesh Nayak said the party requires 'disciplined organisation-building' rather than infighting and factional dominance. "This decision by the high command sends a strong message - only those who can deliver electorally and engage meaningfully with the public will be entrusted with leadership roles," Nayak stated.

Patwari had reportedly prepared a draft list of new district presidents that included sweeping changes, even in sensitive strongholds like Chhindwara-home turf of senior leader Kamal Nath.

His restructuring attempts were widely seen as a push to diminish the influence of leaders aligned with Kamal Nath and Digvijaya Singh, replacing them with his own supporters.

However, the draft list triggered discontent within the party. Former minister and Kamal Nath supporter Sajjan Singh Verma criticised the selections, saying several names appeared to be chosen solely on the basis of loyalty.

"You cannot tamper with political bastions like Chhindwara without risking backlash. The All India Congress Committee has rightly intervened to restore balance and preserve the party's strength," Verma remarked.

The power shift is also being seen as a consolidation of authority by All India Congress Committee Secretary and Madhya Pradesh in-charge Harish Chaudhary. Initially perceived as vulnerable to pressure from regional factions, Chaudhary's backing of the high command's decision positions him firmly in control of the state party apparatus.

This development is unfolding as the Congress intensifies its efforts to rebrand itself as a formidable alternative to the BJP in Madhya Pradesh. With the 2028 state elections on the horizon, the All India Congress Committee's assertiveness is viewed as a strategic move to instill discipline, ensure merit-based leadership, and eliminate the factional infighting that has weakened the party's performance in the past.

Despite the political shake-up, Jitu Patwari has so far remained unavailable for comment.

Rana Sanga row sparks Upper Caste vs Dalit clash in UP

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Lucknow

A remark made in the Rajya Sabha by Samajwadi Party MP Ramjilal Suman has spiraled into a major caste and political flashpoint in Uttar Pradesh, intensifying tensions between the Karni Sena and the SP's Dalit leadership. What began as a historical debate over Rajput icon Rana Sanga has now escalated into a full-blown confrontation between upper castes (Agda) and Dalits, unsettling political equations ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections.

Suman's statement-alleging that Rana Sanga had invited Mughal emperor Babur to India and labeling him a 'traitor'-triggered fierce backlash from the Karni Sena, a vocal Kshatriya outfit. The group launched protests, brandished swords on the streets, and accused the SP of insulting Rajput pride. The controversy has since morphed into a larger identity conflict with political ramifications for all major players in the state.

Rather than retreat, the Samajwadi Party has doubled down. Party chief

Akhilesh Yadav has tactically deployed senior Dalit leaders such as Indrajit Saroj and Awadhesh Prasad to reframe the debate.

According to SP, the issue is not about disrespect but about reclaiming historical narratives from a Dalit lens.

Awadhesh Prasad's recent visit to Ram Lalla in Ayodhya on Ram Navami was symbolic-an effort to merge Ambedkarite pride with religious sentiment. The SP's evolving PDA (Pichhda, Dalit, Alpsankhyak) formula, party insiders say, is flexible enough to accommodate both Bhimrao Ambedkar and Ram, presenting a sharp contrast to the BJP's Hindutva narrative.

For the ruling BJP, the controversy poses a significant political dilemma. Backing Karni Sena's outrage risks alienating Dalit voters-a section already drifting away after the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. But distancing itself from the Kshatriya anger could weaken its traditional social base.

In damage control mode, the BJP has launched a 12-day Dalit outreach cam-

SP MP Ramjilal Suman's statement-alleging that Rana Sanga had invited Mughal emperor Babur to India and labeling him a 'traitor'-triggered fierce backlash from the Karni Sena, a vocal Kshatriya outfit

campaign coinciding with Ambedkar Jayanti. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, along with BJP state president Bhupendra Chaudhary, are leading meetings with Dalit communities across the state.

Additionally, prominent Dalit leaders within the party-Women Welfare Minister Baby Rani Maurya, Rajya Sabha MP Brajraj, and SC Commission Chairman Vaidyanath Rawat-have been activated to reassure the Dalit electorate of the BJP's continued commitment to their welfare.

However, the BJP top brass has

remained conspicuously silent on the provocative acts by Karni Sena, a move that has not gone unnoticed. Analysts warn that visuals of sword-wielding Kshatriyas on the streets could strengthen Dalit perceptions of upper-caste dominance under BJP rule.

Senior journalist RN Bajpayee believes the Samajwadi Party may have stumbled into a political opportunity. "Initially, it looked like a self-goal by Samajwadi Party. But the Karni Sena's aggressive reaction shifted the narrative. It became less about Rana Sanga and more about Dalit dignity," he said.

The incident could further erode the Bahujan Samaj Party's (BSP) shrinking base. With Mayawati already struggling to retain Dalit support, the SP's assertive posturing on caste issues may dent her remaining vote bank.

Political observers suggest that if the Samajwadi Party succeeds in projecting itself as the chief defender of Dalit rights against upper-caste aggression, it could reconfigure caste alignments in the state ahead of 2027.

Husband killed by wife, lover in Uttar Pradesh

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Lucknow

In a shocking incident bearing similarities to recent murders involving extramarital affairs, a man who had just returned from Saudi Arabia was brutally murdered by his wife and her lover in Uttar Pradesh's Deoria district. The body was stuffed inside a suitcase and dumped nearly 50 kilometres away in a wheat field.

The victim, Naushad (28), was a resident of Bhatuli village under Mall police station limits. He had returned to India only a week ago after working in Saudi

Arabia. According to the police, Naushad's murder was meticulously planned by his wife and her paramour, who is also her nephew.

The murder came to light on Sunday afternoon when residents of Pakri Chhapar Patkhali village under the Tarkulwa police station spotted an abandoned suitcase in a field. Upon opening it, authorities discovered a body along with documents that helped identify the deceased as Naushad.

Acting on suspicion, police detained Naushad's wife for questioning. During interrogation, she reportedly confessed to

the murder, revealing that after Naushad returned home, he began objecting to her illicit relationship. This led her and her lover to conspire and carry out the killing. The duo is said to have murdered Naushad using a sharp weapon on Saturday night.

They then placed his body in a suitcase and dumped it far from their home on Sunday morning in an attempt to mislead investigators.

Superintendent of Police Vikrant Veer, along with other senior officers, visited the crime scene. While Naushad's wife has been taken into custody, her lover is currently

on the run. A manhunt has been launched to nab him.

Speaking to the media, SP Veer stated, "Preliminary investigations suggest the murder was the result of an illicit relationship. The crime was premeditated and carried out jointly by the victim's wife and her lover. Efforts are underway to arrest the absconding accused."

The incident has stirred outrage and concern, drawing comparisons to the recent "blue drum" murder case in Meerut, where another NRI was similarly killed upon returning to India. Further investigations in the Deoria case are ongoing.

Goa mourns Pope's death

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Panaji

The Goa Church condoled the demise of Pope Francis on Monday, calling it "sad news for the universal church" but also asserted it was "a moment of giving thanks to God" for providing the leadership of "this great man."

Pope Francis, history's first Latin American pontiff who charmed the world with his humility and concern for the poor but alienated conservatives over climate change and critiques of capitalism, died Monday. He was 88.

"It is a sad news for the universal church. But at the same time, it is a moment of giving thanks to God. God has led the church for the last almost 12 years now with the leadership of this great man, a man of God. That is why it is also a moment for the church to thank God," Fr Henry Falcao, Director of St Joseph Vaz Renewal Centre at Old Goa, told media. Informing that the mourning period will continue till the funeral takes place, Falcao said it is also a time for the church to pray intensely so that God provides a leader, a new Pope who will guide in these difficult times.

"In these difficult times, the Pope was so vocal. He spoke so much against war. He was a man of peace, he was the man for the poor. It is also a humble prayer of church. These days of mourning are also the days of intense prayer and silence," Falcao said. The priest said the church is in the Easter season, adding the Easter feast continues for next 50 days.

"We are believers in the resurrection of Christ. It gives us hope. God will lead the church, and guide the church by the Holy Spirit," he said. Fr Ralin de Souza of Rector of Don Bosco, Fatorda in South Goa said the death of Pope Francis is truly a moment of big transition.

Assam CM condoles Pope Francis death

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Chief Ministers of several states on Monday condoled the passing away of Pope Francis and paid rich tributes to him. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sharma recalled his efforts for significant reforms in the church. "It is with deep sadness that we receive the news of the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis," Sharma said in a social media post.

"His pontificate was defined by tireless efforts for peace, a strong voice for the vulnerable and significant reforms in the Church. He inspired millions, far beyond the Catholic Church, with his humility and dedication to work till his last breath," he said.

Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang said, "Deeply saddened to learn of the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis. His profound wisdom, compassion, and relentless pursuit of peace and unity touched countless lives across the globe," adding he was not just a spiritual leader but a beacon of hope and humility. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin praised him as a compassionate and progressive voice. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan described Pope Francis as an ardent advocate for the poor and the marginalised.

In a message, the Chief Minister said Pope Francis leaves behind a legacy marked by compassion, inclusivity, and a profound commitment to social justice. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in his tributes said his life was a message of love for the poor and hope for the world.

Condoling the demise of Pope Francis, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said his life embodied humility, love, and compassion, which have inspired countless souls. Meghalaya is a Christian-majority state. Sangma also recalled his meeting with the Pope in December 2022.

The state BJP also mourned the death of the Pope. "Meghalaya BJP expresses its profound grief at the passing of Pope Francis and stands in solidarity with the



Global Church, as well as with people of the state, a vast majority of whom are Christian, in this moment of grief," the party's state president Rikman G Momin said in a statement. He said the Pope's universal message of love continues to act as a beacon for people across all faiths.

Joining millions of mourners across the globe, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee termed the death of Pope Francis as "a loss for the humanity."

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu in his message said Pope Francis inspired millions through his humility, compassion and message of peace. "On behalf of the people of Andhra Pradesh, I extend our heartfelt condolences to the global Catholic community and all those touched by his (Pope) profound legacy," said Naidu in a social media post. Naidu also said Pope Francis was a beacon of hope, who guided humanity with love and kindness.

Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma recalled his great contributions to humanity. "I express my profound sorrow at the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis," Lalduhoma said in a social media post.

Mizoram is a Christian-majority state.

The Chief Minister also hailed the Catholic leader as a symbol of humility, compassion and moral leadership and recalled his service to humanity. Odisha Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati and Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi condoled the death of Pope Francis, and praised his compassion for the people in distress.

"Hon'ble Governor Shri @DrHariBabuK expressed deep sorrow over the passing of #PopeFrancis, the first Latin American pope. He said that the Pope's unwavering dedication to promoting peace, compassion, and unity profoundly touched the hearts of millions around the world," Governor Odisha said in a social media post. Majhi also said he was deeply saddened by the death of Pope Francis, who will always be remembered for his compassion and humility.

"As the first Latin American leader of the Roman Catholic Church, he inspired millions across the world with his message of unity and love. My heartfelt condolences to the global Catholic community," he said in a social media post.

Woman seeks surrogacy: HC directs her to SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

The Bombay High Court on Monday said allowing a 36-year-old divorced woman to go for surrogacy may have wider repercussions and wondered if it would ultimately lead to commercialization of surrogacy. A division bench of Justices GS Kulkarni and Advait Sethna said it has to also consider the rights of the child born and not just that of the woman. The court was hearing a petition filed by the woman, divorced with two children who are in the custody of their father, seeking to go for surrogacy.

The woman in her plea, filed through advocate Tejas Dande, said she cannot conceive as she had medically removed her uterus and does not intend to also remarry. Her application was rejected on the ground that she already has two children and, hence, does not fall under the definition of "intending woman" under the Surrogacy Act.

Under the Act, a widow or divorcee can opt for surrogacy if she does not have any surviving child or if the surviving child has any life threatening ailment. The bench noted that the Supreme Court was seized of several matters related to the definition of "intending woman" and if a single unmarried woman also falls under this purview.

"This may lead to commercialisation of surrogacy. There are some rights of the child too once born. We cannot just think about women's rights. Look at the repercussions," the court said. The bench questioned what happens if in future an unmarried couple seeks to go for surrogacy but then later they separate. "Is that the intention of the legislation? Is it permissible under law?" the court questioned.

The woman in her plea sought a direction to National and State Assisted Reproductive Technology and Surrogacy Board to grant her a certificate of medical indication under Surrogacy (Regulation) Act and to allow her to undergo the consequential procedures required for surrogacy.

As per the plea, the woman got married in 2002 and has two children. In 2012, she underwent a hysterectomy procedure. In 2017, the woman got divorced and the two children are presently in the custody of their father and she has no access to them.

The woman now wishes to have a child through assisted reproductive techniques and since she has no uterus the only option available is surrogacy. The woman's advocate Tejas Dande said she falls under the definition of "intending woman", that is a single person or divorcee under the Surrogacy Act.

As per the petition, the woman's eggs could be used for the surrogacy procedure and that a recommendation letter was addressed by the medical director of a private hospital in Pune to the civil surgeon of the district hospital there. "Being a divorcee and living alone, the petitioner who is still young seeks to resort to surrogacy for achieving motherhood. The petitioner does not have any mother-child relation with her two children," the petition said.

Editor's TAKE

Visa shock for Indian students

US revokes hundreds of student visas: 50 per cent affected are Indian students

In a move that has sparked concern across academic and diplomatic circles, the Trump administration has revoked student visas for hundreds of international students, with a staggering 50 per cent of the affected individuals hailing from India. The American Immigration Lawyers' Association (AILA) has revealed this information. AILA collected 327 reports of visa revocations and Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) terminations from students, attorneys, and university personnel. What is of concern to India is that this move disproportionately affects Indian nationals, followed by students from China (14 per cent), South Korea, Nepal, and Bangladesh. There are serious concerns about the transparency and consistency of the process, as the actions lack proper oversight and are leaving students with little to no recourse. The revocations are not only a personal and academic setback for the students involved but also reflect a growing unease in the international student community. Many have described the process as abrupt and arbitrary, with limited opportunities to appeal SEVIS terminations or clarify misunderstandings. For Indian students, who comprise one of the largest populations of international students in the United States, this development is deeply unsettling. These students invest heavily — both financially and emotionally — in pursuing higher education in the US. The visa revocations interrupt academic progress, affect employment opportunities tied to their studies, and, in many cases, may force them to leave the country abruptly. The psychological toll is equally significant. Students face uncertainty, fear of deportation, and the potential stigma of visa termination, which could affect future travel and academic prospects.

The ramifications of this policy move extend beyond individual students to American educational institutions. International students are a vital source of revenue for US universities, contributing billions of dollars annually through tuition and living expenses. Many graduate programmes in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) — areas critical to US innovation — rely heavily on international talent, particularly from India and China. With increasing visa uncertainties, universities may find it harder to attract top global students. This could result in lower enrolment numbers, loss of funding, and a diminished reputation for academic inclusiveness and excellence. Moreover, such measures may deter future applicants, who may opt for more welcoming countries such as Canada, Australia, or Germany. While the Trump administration has not offered detailed justifications for these specific revocations, the actions are consistent with its broader immigration stance.

Throughout his presidency, Donald Trump emphasised tightening immigration controls and "putting Americans first," often casting a sceptical eye on visa programmes — even those meant for students and skilled workers. One reason for these revocations may be tied to concerns about misuse of visa programmes, fraudulent enrolment, or security vetting. However, critics argue that such justifications are being applied too broadly, punishing legitimate students and tarnishing the US's image as a global education hub.

The Trump administration's decision to revoke a significant number of student visas, disproportionately affecting Indian nationals, marks a troubling development in US immigration policy. If left unchecked, such policies could shift global student mobility away from the US, undermining the nation's historical status as the premier destination for higher education.

India's expanding maritime vision

As India reimagines its role in the Indo-Pacific, this quiet yet profound pivot signals not only a strategic response to China's growing presence, but also a deeper civilisational reawakening rooted in partnership, not patronage

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi first outlined India's SAGAR vision — Security and Growth for All in the Region — in 2015 during a visit to Mauritius, few could have predicted how it would evolve into a sweeping geopolitical doctrine encompassing not only the Indian Ocean but the western coasts of Africa and beyond. Nearly a decade later, India's maritime strategy is undergoing a quiet yet profound transformation. From SAGAR, the nation is now navigating toward Mahasagar — literally, the "Great Ocean" — signalling a decisive pivot in India's foreign and security policy with Africa in clear sight. The SAGAR initiative, initially conceived to promote maritime security and economic cooperation among Indian Ocean nations, has served as a foundation for India's role as a "net security provider" in the region. But today's reality demands more than regional stewardship. The increasing footprint of China in the Indian Ocean, from Gwadar to Djibouti, and the growing strategic relevance of the western Indian Ocean island states, have prompted India to recalibrate. The shift to Mahasagar (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security And Growth Across Regions) represents not just a change in terminology but a fundamental reimagining of India's role in the Indo-Pacific.

At the heart of this transformation lies Mauritius, a small island nation with outsized significance. More than a maritime partner, Mauritius shares a cultural and civilisational bond with India that predates diplomatic relations. Home to a large Indian-origin population, Mauritius has become a trusted partner in India's security calculus. Over the years, India has extended grants, built infrastructure, supplied patrol vessels and aircraft, and helped set up coastal surveillance radar systems across the Mauritian archipelago. But it is the development of the Agalega Islands — with an airstrip and jetty capable of supporting military-grade assets — that best symbolises the quiet assertiveness of the Mahasagar vision.

Critics argue that India's investment in Agalega mimics the Chinese playbook of dual-use port development seen in Hambantota and Gwadar. However, the crucial difference lies in the nature of India's partnerships. Unlike China's debt-driven port diplomacy, India's maritime engagement rests on mutual respect, development cooperation, and the principle of shared security. The Indo-Mauritian relationship is one of kinship diplomacy — one that grows not just from strategic needs but from shared history and people-to-people ties.



But the Mahasagar doctrine does not stop at Mauritius. It casts a wider net — one that spans from Seychelles and Madagascar to Kenya, Mozambique, and Tanzania. India is increasing its naval engagements, signing logistics and defence agreements, and offering capacity-building assistance across the African coast. The logic is strategic: the western Indian Ocean is not just a transit zone but a critical maritime highway for global trade, energy routes, and naval mobility. With China making aggressive inroads through the Belt and Road Initiative and military bases like the one in Djibouti, India is asserting its own footprint — not by coercion, but through collaboration. The pivot to Mahasagar also highlights India's ambition to become a blue-water navy with global reach. Indian naval ships are now a common sight in African ports. Naval exercises, hydrographic surveys, humanitarian missions, and training programmes have become regular features of India-Africa maritime relations. The Indian Navy is no longer a regional patrol force; it is fast becoming a symbol of India's strategic confidence, capable of shaping the security architecture of the



SANTHOSH MATHEW

entire Indo-Pacific. Importantly, this transformation is not purely militaristic. The Mahasagar vision also embraces the idea of the blue economy — a sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and ecosystem health. India's support for maritime infrastructure, fisheries development, and coastal tourism in partner countries underscores its commitment to holistic maritime growth. It is a model that seeks not just security but shared prosperity.

The messaging is also clear. As China intensifies its presence through military bases and commercial ports, India is building friendships. Where Beijing offers loans, India offers trust. Where China sets up surveillance posts, India establishes radar stations with shared access. Where China builds harbours that could dock submarines, India helps build coast guard stations to fight piracy, smuggling, and maritime crime. This contrast is not lost on African nations seeking partners who respect sovereignty and sustainability. Domestically, the Mahasagar strategy aligns with India's broader geopolitical identity. As a civilisational power with ancient maritime traditions — from Chola expeditions to trade with East Africa and the Gulf — India is reclaiming its historical place in the oceanic realm. The Indian Ocean is not a frontier — it is India's historical highway, linking cultures, religions, and com-

merce. By integrating Africa into this vision, India is not expanding its reach; it is reawakening a dormant maritime consciousness. In geopolitical terms, this shift could not come at a more crucial time. As the global order becomes increasingly multipolar and the Indo-Pacific emerges as the new theatre of strategic competition, India's Mahasagar doctrine provides a distinct alternative.

It blends hard power with soft diplomacy, regional ambition with global responsibility, and tradition with modern strategy. It positions India not just as a counterweight to China, but as a civilisational ally to Africa — one whose rise is guided by partnership, not patronage. What began in 2015 as a regional security initiative has now matured into a grand ocean dream. The journey from SAGAR to Mahasagar is more than a maritime shift — it is a statement of intent.

It tells the world that India is ready to lead not by dominance, but by example. And in doing so, it has found a natural partner in Africa and a reliable anchor in Mauritius. "An ocean for all, free and open, where every nation may sail in peace and security," aptly said Woodrow Wilson.

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

India's demographic dividend at risk

SECOND Opinion

BY KAJLEEN KAUR

India boasts a demographic dividend, with a working-age population (15-64 years) of around 67 per cent, which can propel economic growth. This momentous opportunity, however, necessitates optimising the potential of the available labour force by ensuring a reduction in unemployment and underemployment and building human capital.

The macroeconomic growth models explain long-term sustainable progress as a function of labour force growth and technology built over time with human capital. India faces no dearth in population and therefore labour force, but it lacks education, which is necessary to develop individuals' productivity and foster technological advancements. Besides, the economy languishes with high unemployment, which fails to realise the so-called "demographic dividend".

The India Employment Report 2024 shows the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) at 52 per cent, compared to 76 per cent in China. This indicates that nearly half of the possible dividend is forfeited.

To further add to the woes, the female LFPR stands at 37 per cent in India, compared to an average of 70 per cent in China. This places India as the 13th lowest female LFPR.

The report also highlights that India's youth grapples with soaring unemployment rates. Shockingly, they account for 83 per cent of the unemployed workforce. Even more disappointing is the share of youngsters with higher education in the total unemployed, which has almost doubled from 35.2 per cent in 2000 to 65 per cent in 2022.

This brings to the surface the grave reality that a large portion of the potential labour force capable of contributing to growth is dissipated.

More particularly, India adds 3 million graduates annually, but 33 per cent of them are unemployed or underemployed (CMIE, 2024). There exists a wide gap between industry requirements and the education system.

Only 15 per cent of our workforce has formal vocational training, compared to 70 per cent in South Korea (UNESCO). However, the Government's initiatives like Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme, and Skill India Digital Hub are trying to bridge this divide. The Economic Survey 2023-24 notes that the Indian economy needs to generate an average of nearly 78.5 lakh jobs annually until 2030, in the non-farm sector, to cater to the rising workforce. This is further distressed as around 90 per cent of the workforce is engaged in informal work, facing irregular work and income, absence of social security benefits, and sub-standard working conditions.

The manufacturing sector, which has huge untapped potential to absorb unskilled and semi-skilled labour that

moves away from agriculture, contributes only 14 per cent to the GDP in India as compared to 27 per cent in China. While the agrarian sector employs 43 per cent of the workforce, it contributes only 16 per cent to GDP. India's economic growth has been primarily driven by the services sector, which lacks employment absorption because of skill intensity.

Additionally, the advent of artificial intelligence is undeniably a threat to the already dismal employment situation, further aggravating the population-to-opportunities mismatch. There is an ardent need to prioritise labour-intensive manufacturing to engage unskilled labour, along with concentrated efforts to support MSMEs.

Moreover, the transforming nature of employment, such as the gig workforce, is expected to form 6.7 per cent of the non-agricultural workforce or 4.1 per cent of the total livelihood in India by 2029-30; the labour policy must ensure a robust minimum level of employment quality.

Most importantly, for India to harness its demographic dividend and not make it a missed opportunity, investment in skilled education is needed to nurture a workforce equipped with employable skills.

India's demographic dividend offers immense potential, but without addressing unemployment, skill gaps, and informal employment, it risks becoming a lost opportunity.

The writer is Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, SGGSC, University of Delhi. Views are personal

Leaderspeak



Very sad news on the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis. On behalf of the people of Latvia I express my deep condolences to all the Catholics and the Church. Pope Francis was compassionate and kind human being and he will be greatly missed.

EDGARS RINKEVICS, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA

Letters to the Editor

SC reins in overreaching Governor

Madam — The Supreme Court has issued a timely and firm reminder to Governors across various states that they are not political gatekeepers or watchdogs, but constitutional functionaries. They are duty-bound to act within the framework of the Constitution, and failure to do so will invite judicial intervention — as seen recently in Tamil Nadu. The case involving Governor R N Ravi is a stark example. His tenure has been marred by political friction, constitutional brinkmanship, and disregard for democratic norms. The Supreme Court made it unequivocally clear: Governors cannot stall the legislative process or undermine the will of elected Governments. Under the Constitution, a Governor may return a bill once for reconsideration or reserve it for the President. Prolonged delays — stretching into years — are unacceptable. Such actions are not only unconstitutional but also a dereliction of duty.

This ruling brings much-needed clarity and alignment between state and central governance. Just as the President must assent to a re-passed bill by Parliament, Governors must do the same at the state level. They have no veto powers based on political preference. By reaffirming that legislatures, not unelected officials, are the cornerstone of democracy, the Supreme Court has upheld the spirit of federalism. Its directive is both appropriate and timely.

RK JAIN | BARWANI

UNESCO recognises Bhagavad Gita

Madam — This refers to the recent news, "Manuscripts of Bhagavad Gita, Natyashastra added to UNESCO register" (April 19). It is a matter of immense pride for the spiritual and cultural communities in India and abroad that manuscripts of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita and Bharat Muni's Natyashastra have been included in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.

The Bhagavad Gita holds a timeless place in the spiritual consciousness of India. The guidance imparted by Lord Krishna to Arjuna, through 700 verses across 18 chapters, offers eternal wisdom and remains relevant to this day.

Its teachings continue to illuminate the path for followers of Sanatan Dharma and inspire philosophical discourse worldwide. Similarly, the Natyashastra — an ancient treatise on performing arts — underscores India's deep-rooted cultural traditions.

This international recognition reinforces the richness of India's intellectual and spiritual legacy. The inclusion of the Bhagavad Gita and Natyashastra manuscripts in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register is a proud moment for India.

This global recognition highlights the enduring spiritual, philosophical, and cultural significance of these ancient texts, reaffirming India's profound contributions to the world's intellectual and artistic heritage.

YUGAL KISHORE SHARMA | FARIDABAD

Made in India gets global traction

Madam — India's "Made in India" initiative is gaining strong traction, positioning the country as a rising global manufacturing hub. Several developments signal this shift: India now produces 20 per cent of the world's iPhones, there's a notable rise in exports of Indian-manufactured weapons, and countries such as Canada are exploring collaboration on Vande Bharat Express trains.

The ongoing trade conflict between the United States and China is likely to accelerate this trend. With China threatening to withhold rare earth materials crucial for the manufacturing of weapons and electronics, the U.S. defence and tech sectors could face significant disruption.

This presents a unique opportunity for India to step up and fill the gap. Now is the opportune moment for India to aggressively promote its manufacturing sector.

With the right policies and strategic investments, this shift could lead to a substantial economic boost and elevate India's position in the global supply chain.

India's growing manufacturing capabilities, from iPhones to defence exports, signal its emergence as a global industrial hub.

Amid US-China trade tensions, India has a unique chance to fill critical supply chain gaps. Strategic investments now can propel economic growth and cement India's role in global manufacturing leadership.

AMARJEET KUMAR | HAZARIBAGH

BANGLADESH MUST END TARGETED VIOLENCE AGAINST HINDUS

Propos "Protect minorities without excuses: India tells Bangladesh" (The Pioneer, April 20), the recent brutal killing of Bhabesh Chandra Roy — vice-president of the Biral unit of the Bangladesh Puja Udayan Parishad and a respected Hindu community leader — has shocked and saddened many. In just the past two months, there have been 76 attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh, leading to 23 deaths.

These attacks have intensified following the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina amid student-led protests. Since then, the Hindu minority has faced relentless violence, property destruction, and severe harassment. Under the interim Government led by Muhammad Yunus, the situation has deteriorated further, with perpetrators enjoying impunity.

This pattern points to a systemic targeting of Hindus and an alarming disregard for basic human rights. The atroci-

ties against minorities not only weaken the secular fabric of Bangladesh but also strain its ties with India. Despite repeated diplomatic appeals and condemnations from India, the persecution continues unabated. It is imperative that Bangladesh acts swiftly to protect its minorities and uphold justice.

In light of ongoing violence against Hindus in Bangladesh, including the recent killing of Bhabesh Chandra Roy, India has rightly urged Dhaka to act without excuses.

Since Sheikh Hasina's ouster, attacks on minorities have surged under the interim Muhammad Yunus-led Government. With over 70 incidents in just two months, the impunity of perpetrators is deeply troubling.

Bangladesh must urgently uphold minority rights, restore law and order, and prevent further erosion of its secular and diplomatic standing — else it runs the risk of total breakdown.

N. SADHASIVA REDDY | BENGALURU

The Supreme Court roars for the forests

The Supreme Court has once again stepped in with unprecedented urgency and resolve. In a suo motu intervention, the Court expressed outrage at the illegal felling of over 100 acres of forest land in Telangana

FIRST
Column

The Supreme Court of India, on December 12, 1996, in its epoch-making order on TN Godavarman Thirumullapad vs Union of India and Others, had set into motion a marvellous judicial intervention on forest conservation in the country — and the rest is the history of an innumerable number of orders in correcting the several wrong decisions affecting forest and wildlife conservation in the country.

After 29 years of experience of judicial intervention, in yet another suo motu intervention on April 3, 2025 — thanks to the students of Hyderabad University and the media — the Supreme Court Bench headed by Justice B R Gvai and Augustine George Masih, helped by Senior Advocate K Parmeshwar (the amicus curiae in the Godavarman forest cases, who alerted the Court to media reports about the deforestation), acted.

The Bench acted swiftly, expressing shock at the scale of the tree felling and the use of heavy machinery to clear approximately 100 acres in just a few days — directing the Registrar General of Andhra High Court to visit the site of the felling and submit the report the same day in the afternoon of April 3 itself.

The Registrar General, after visiting the site in the afternoon, sent the report; and then the Bench, in a very forthright, acerbic tone, warned the state Chief Secretary and senior bureaucrats of putting them in jail in the same location by constructing a temporary jail.

The Court comments are scathing for the Telangana Governemnt but in favour of trees, wildlife and the natural environment, which are part of our ecosystem but cannot speak and protest, yet they are the resource base for human survival.

The Court heard the case again on 16 April and again warned the Chief Secretary and other officers of sending them to imprisonment for felling trees over 100 acres if the damage was not addressed through a restoration plan and directed the Telangana governemnt to submit the same in the next four weeks.

While hearing the case, the Bench reiterated that the 1996 Supreme Court order is sacrosanct in defining what constitutes forests — irrespective of the status of the land.

The Bench, while reiterating its warning to the officers of state, directed the state Chief Wildlife Warden to ensure protection to wildlife and asked for a restoration plan for the 100-acre felled forests, while also stating that high-rise buildings cannot be made in the company of wildlife. It made it clear that the State Governemnt had to take permission for felling of all kinds of trees — be it recorded forests or otherwise — if it comes under the purview of deemed forests as outlined in the 1996 order of the Supreme Court.

So, the die has been cast so far as the definition of forest is concerned, coming as it did after



the Forest Conservation (Amendment) Act was passed by Parliament in 2023. The amendment primarily clarifies the scope of forest land and simplifies procedures for certain activities.

The amendment clarifies that forest land includes areas notified under the Indian Forest Act, 1927, or recorded in Governemnt records as forest land as on the 1980 Act's enforcement date.

The Act exempts certain types of land from its purview, such as land within 100 km of India's border needed for national security projects, small roadside amenities, and public roads leading to a habitation.

Now, the observations of the Supreme Court Bench have restored the 1996 order of the Supreme Court, and hence all states are duty-bound to obtain permission for non-forest use of



VK BAHUGUNA

THE BENCH, WHILE REITERATING ITS WARNING TO THE OFFICERS OF STATE, DIRECTED THE STATE CHIEF WILDLIFE WARDEN TO ENSURE PROTECTION TO WILDLIFE AND ASKED FOR A RESTORATION PLAN FOR THE 100-ACRE FELLED FORESTS, WHILE ALSO STATING THAT HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS CANNOT BE MADE IN THE COMPANY OF WILDLIFE

deemed forest land.

Now let us examine the context of such virulent observations of sending state officers to jail by the Apex Court on April 3, as well as reiterating it on April 16, 2025. After this, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has also sought a report from the Telangana Governemnt.

It is a stark fact that the forests of the country are not in good shape — and the most important reason is the public apathy for conservation of forests at all levels, be it the public at large, administrative or political leaders of all hues, though they keep tom-tomming on solemn occasions and provide lip service to the forests, biodiversity and river systems.

This is quite revealed from the way our Governemnts function at both the Centre and state level. We need to look at the State of Forest Report 2023, which clearly brought out that more than 37 per cent of tree cover out of the 82 million ha of forest and tree cover is created by the farmers of the country — and it is worth pondering the fate of forest-related biodiversity on these

farmers' land.

Another grim reminder is the lack of adequate regeneration in recorded forests, as only 48 per cent of the forest areas have adequate regeneration. The degradation is also increasing, as 46,000 ha of recorded forests have nearly completely lost their tree cover.

There is a need that the IAS and IFS officers sitting in the Ministry decide to change this matrix of degradation and work sincerely to ensure a policy framework for better forest and biodiversity management.

This writer is very forthright in asking the forest service mandarins to get over the clique syndrome and speak in a single voice for the trees, wild animals and our rivers and rivulets. The professionalism these days is seen more in acquiescence and lobbying than in standing for the real cause.

It is because of this that the Supreme Court Bench made these sarcastic comments — and it is time now that the officers work honestly and balance the need for development with conservation. Once they stand firm and truthful, then the political masters shall follow.

There is a need for increasing the budget of the forestry sector and empowerment of communities under the Joint Forest Management Programme.

But one of the biggest causes of deforestation is the lopsided and open-ended implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, who — along with foreign-funded NGOs and 'Jhola chhap' social activists and phoney foresters — portray the romantic vision of promoting encroachments on forest land.

They must desist or must be sidelined by the Governemnt and asked to work to make the land so far allotted to tribals productive so that their socio-economic status improves.

It is hoped that this intervention of the Apex Court will force all concerned to change track. In conclusion, the Supreme Court's timely intervention once again underscores the vital role of the judiciary in safeguarding India's forests and wildlife.

The strong stance taken by the Court, including warnings of imprisonment for errant officials — reaffirms the sanctity of the 1996 Godavarman order and its relevance despite recent legislative changes. It also highlights the growing civic engagement, especially from students and media, in environmental issues.

Moving forward, it is imperative for administrative leadership and policymakers to prioritise ecological integrity, implement restoration measures, and foster genuine, professional commitment to forest conservation — balancing development with sustainability for future generations.

(The writer is former Director-General & Chancellor of ICFRE, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. Views are personal)

Bridging the agritech divide with advanced farming technology

As the agriculture sector stands at a crossroads, scalable innovations like satellite-based sensing, region-specific tools, and inclusive pricing models offer a path toward a more sustainable and tech-enabled agricultural future

The farming industry is one of the significant pillars of the Indian economy, contributing a significant 16 per cent of India's GDP and engaging more than half of the country's population. However, to date, there has been a slow uptake of advanced technologies in agriculture. While several agritech start-ups have been launched and well-funded by investors, the connection between these ventures and farmers remains a challenge. One of the main problems that these start-ups have to contend with is that of high costs, which tend to be associated with technology.

There are many tools — including those used in precision farming, machinery such as weather stations, and sensors that can be applied to the soil — that hold the future of increased yields and sustainable farming. However, the cost associated with such technologies might be unaffordable for small farmers, who form the largest percentage of India's farming community. Devices such as IoT sensors can cost hundreds of dollars per year, meaning that while a slight increase in yield for such farmers is hard to come by, the devices do not offer value for money.

More than 80 per cent of farmers in India are marginal farmers, cultivating landholdings of less than five acres. These marginal lands are often fragmented into multiple smaller plots, allowing farmers to grow different crops on the same holding.

This fragmentation poses a challenge for agritech solutions designed for large-scale farming. However, satellite-based data solutions can bridge this gap by providing precise, farm-specific insights even for farms having an area of only a quarter of an acre (about 10,000 square feet), enabling even smallholder farmers to optimise their crop management and improve productivity.

The policies of the Indian agricultural sector fluctuate, and some crucial aspects like water — which is a basic necessity for agriculture — are controlled by the state governemnt.

While such interventions as subsidies and grants are useful, they have led to a situation where agritech remains a state-subsidised model rather than a market-driven one.



Many new agritechs have come to depend on these Governemnt partnerships for revenue instead of selling directly to farmers, which has impacted the growth and sustainability of most of them in the private market.

Among the challenges that have limited the embrace of agritech is ignorance among farmers. It is essential to understand that large-scale farmers might invest time and resources to evaluate and consider adopting new technologies, while smallholder farmers are more likely to

make decisions by word of mouth or based on regular practices. This is mainly due to the poor devel-

opment of facilities and capacity-building to form the basis for adopting innovations in farming technologies.

Cost-Effective Solutions

The first area of intervention for farmer uptake can be increased through improved adoption of technologies that are cheaper to develop. Although IoT-based sensors are costly, satellite remote sensing is feasible.

While IoT sensors can cost several hundred dollars and give localised information, satellite technology offers information for the whole farm area at a considerably lower cost — usually less than 5 per cent of the price of sensors. Satellite remote sensing, combined with artificial intelligence and machine learning, can be used to monitor soil nutrient levels, manage pest and disease risks, and support irrigation water management across large areas of farmland.

These solutions are especially practical and accessible for smallholder farm-

ers. In this way, satellite-based solutions represent a constrained set of technological tools whereby agritech companies can propose complete and high-quality products and services at more competitive prices.

Localised Solutions

Given the highly heterogeneous climate of the country and the different farming practices followed across regions, it can be said that a market solution carved in one casting will not fit this agritech market. Start-ups must provide region-specific products.

They can, therefore, apply different ways of ensuring their solution reaches farms in varying regions so that farmers can adopt it.

Pricing Models

Long-term, technology must be accessible to small and marginal farmers and useful even for field crops like wheat — especially in terms of the ultimate cost

of the technology delivered to the farm. A scholar cited that the cost of any new technology farmers must consider has to be less than or equal to 10 per cent of the total farming cost. This is crucial for adoption.

Affordability is another value that agritech start-ups should embrace, enabling them to offer their products at a cheaper cost and within reach of many farmers. Other revenue models that can be used include fee-for-service or usage plans in which the farmer pays only for what is used.

Fostering Education

Guaranteeing extensive use of such technology — even if it is cheap — requires more education and support. Agritech companies must incorporate education campaigns as a key means of informing farmers about the benefits of using these products.

This might be achievable through human capital development programmes,

farmer organisations or local associations. This paper contends that hands-on training and demonstrations enable farmers to overcome hesitance stemming from a lack of familiarity. Current strategies point to the need to make technology simple and easy to use to minimise the chances of farmers being unable to adopt it on the farm.

Government and Private Sector Collaboration

Although major funding is currently being attracted to agritech start-ups via governemnt grants, the long-term model will require the involvement of both public and private entities.

This implies a need for policies that encourage agritech growth while avoiding excessive dependence on state subsidies. This includes strengthening policy content, creating private-sector incentives, and guaranteeing support for farmers transitioning to better technologies. Scaling efforts via public-private partnerships may help deliver appropriate support to farmers.

Final Thoughts

The Indian agritech industry is at a turning point. Although there is hope in the power of technology to transform agriculture, challenges such as cost, accessibility and uptake remain significant. High-end technologies like IoT sensors and UAVs are often too expensive for small and marginal farmers.

However, affordable and scalable solutions — such as satellite remote sensing, regionalised products, optional pricing structures and farmers' sensitisation — are available. When combined with agricultural expertise and AI/ML, satellite remote sensing emerges as a practical and inclusive solution, making advanced technology accessible even to small and marginal farmers.

India, being one of the top agricultural producers globally, has a wealth of insights from its diverse farming landscape. These learnings not only improve Indian agriculture but are also leveraged globally to assist small and marginal farmers elsewhere.

(The writer is Founder, Co-founder & CEO, Satyukt Analytics. Views are personal)

Rites and rituals that follow the death of a Pope

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Vatican City

The death of a pope sets in motion a series of carefully orchestrated rites and rituals well before the conclave to elect his successor begins. They involve the certification of death and public display of his body for the faithful to pay their respects, followed by the funeral and burial.

Pope Francis, who died on Monday, revised various rites last year, simplifying the funeral rituals to emphasize his role as a mere bishop and allowing for burial outside the Vatican in keeping with his wishes. But the core elements remain, including the three key moments that must be observed between the death of a pope and his burial.

The reforms are incorporated into the slim red volume "Ordo Exsequiarum Romani Pontificis," Latin for "Rite of Burial for Roman Pontiffs."

Why were changes to the funeral rites necessary?

While popes often tinker with the rules regulating the conclave that elects their successor, a revision of the papal funeral rites hadn't been undertaken since 2000.

The changes became necessary after Francis expressed his own wishes, and after Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI died on Dec. 31, 2022. For Benedict, the Vatican had to work out the novelty of a funeral for the first retired pope in 600 years.

A few months later, Francis revealed he was working with the Vatican's master of liturgical ceremonies, Archbishop Diego Ravelli, to overhaul the entire book of rites to simplify them.

In explaining the reforms, Ravelli said the changes aimed "to emphasise even

more that the Roman Pontiff's funeral is that of a pastor and disciple of Christ and not of a powerful man of this world.

THE DECLARATION OF DEATH: The three main stations, or moments, occur first in his home, then in St. Peter's Basilica, and then in the place of burial.

The reform allows for the formal confirmation of death to occur in Francis' personal chapel rather than his bedroom. It is unclear why, the change may be more practical than anything since Francis chose to live in a small suite in the Vatican's Santa Marta hotel rather than the Apostolic Palace. He has a personal chapel at Santa Marta.

Upon the pope's death, the head of the Vatican health service examines the body, ascertains the cause of death and writes a report. The body is dressed in white.

The body rests in the pope's personal chapel for the ritual pronouncement of death, presided over by the camerlengo, the Vatican official who runs the Holy See administration between the death or resignation of one pope and the election of another. The camerlengo is American Cardinal Kevin Farrell, one of Francis' most trusted aides.

In a change from the past, the rite no longer requires the body to be placed in the traditional three coffins made of cypress, lead and oak. Now, the pope's body is placed in a wooden coffin, with a zinc coffin inside. The pope is dressed in red liturgical vestments, his miter - the traditional headdress of bishops - and the pallium woolen stole, a kind of scarf. The Pasqual candle, a large, decorated candle used at Easter, is placed nearby.

The camerlengo drafts the formal declaration of death, attaching the certificate



that had been prepared by the health service chief.

The master of liturgical celebrations, Ravelli, then decides when other faithful can pay their respects before the coffin is moved to St. Peter's Basilica for public viewing.

ONCE IN THE BASILICA: When the body is brought into the basilica, the Litany of Saints chant is sung. The camerlengo leads the procession.

In another change, the pope's body is no longer placed on an elevated bier. Rather, the simplified wooden coffin is placed facing the pews, with the Pasqual candle nearby.

THE SEALING OF THE COFFIN: The night before the funeral, the camerlengo presides over the closing and sealing of the coffin, in the presence of other senior cardinals. A white cloth is placed over the pope's face. A bag containing coins minted during

his papacy is placed in the coffin along with a one-page written account of his papacy - known in Italian as a "rogito," a word indicating an official deed. It is read aloud by the master of liturgical ceremonies and then rolled up and slipped inside a cylindrical tube that is placed inside the coffin. Another copy is kept in the Vatican archives. The covers of both the zinc coffin and the wooden one bear a cross and the papal coat of arms.

Francis' coat of arms, which he kept from when he was bishop, features a shield and the monogram of his Jesuit order, with the words "Miserando atque eligendo," Latin for "Having had mercy, he called him." It comes from an episode in the Gospel where Christ picks a seemingly unworthy person to follow him.

THE FUNERAL AND BURIAL: The funeral is presided over by the dean of the College of Cardinals or, if that is not possible, by the vice dean or another senior cardinal. The current dean is Italian Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, 91. The vice dean is Argentine Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, 81. Francis earlier this year extended both of their five-year terms rather than appoint new ones.

Francis' reform allows for burial outside the Vatican, with the camerlengo presiding. Various seals are impressed on the coffin, and it is placed inside the tomb.

Francis has said he wants to be buried not in St. Peter's Basilica or its grottoes, where most popes are buried, but in the St. Mary Major Basilica across town. His choice reflects his veneration of an icon of the Virgin Mary that is located there, the Salus Populi Romani (Salvation of the people of Rome). After every foreign trip, Francis would go to the basilica to pray before the Byzantine-style painting that features an image of Mary, draped in a blue robe, holding the infant Jesus who in turn holds a jewelled golden book.

"It's my great devotion," Francis told Mexico's N+ in revealing his future burial plans. "The place is already prepared."

With the burial, the Catholic Church begins nine days of official mourning, known as the "novemdiales" and the conclave begins.

Hindu temple vandalised in Canada's Surrey

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Toronto

A temple in Canada's Surrey has been defaced by vandals with pro-Khalistan graffiti at its entrance and the pillars, authorities said.

The incident took place on April 19 at the Shree Lakshmi Narayana Mandir in Surrey, the temple said in a statement.

"It is with deep sorrow that we inform the community of a disturbing incident that took place in the early hours of April 19, 2025, at approximately 3:00 AM. Two unidentified individuals vandalised the Shree Lakshmi Narayana Mandir in Surrey by defacing the entrance sign and the temple pillars with the word 'Khalistan', the statement said.

Also, the security camera was stolen during this act.

"We strongly condemn this hateful act of vandalism and theft, which is not only a crime but a direct attack on a sacred space that serves as a spiritual and cultural centre for many families, including elderly members and children," it said.

"An FIR has been officially registered with the Surrey Police, and we are cooperating fully with the authorities in their investigation," the statement added.

"We urge members of the public and leaders at all levels of government to join us in condemning this hate crime. Attacks on places of worship have no place in a respectful and diverse society of Canada," it said.

Russian attacks Kherson during Easter ceasefire three killed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kyiv

Russian attacks during the 30-hour Easter ceasefire unilaterally declared by President Vladimir Putin over the weekend killed three people in Ukraine's southern Kherson region, the local governor said Monday.

Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin wrote on Telegram that the casualties occurred over the last 24 hours, adding that three others were wounded. Overall, Russia violated the ceasefire more than 2,900 times,

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a Telegram statement in the early hours on Monday. Zelenskyy said that Russian forces carried out 96 assault operations along the front line, shelled Ukrainian positions more than 1,800 times and used hundreds of drones during the course of the ceasefire.

"The nature of Ukrainian actions will continue to be mirror-like: we will respond to silence with silence, and our blows will be a defense against Russian blows. Actions always speak louder than words,"

he said. Putin announced a temporary Easter truce on Saturday, citing humanitarian reasons. Ukraine said that it would reciprocate any genuine ceasefire by Moscow, but voiced skepticism over the Kremlin's intentions. Both sides traded accusations of violations shortly after.

The ceasefire expired at midnight (2100 GMT) following Easter Sunday.

Overnight into Monday, the Russian forces fired three missiles at Ukraine's southern regions of Kherson and Mykolaiv regions, as well as 96 Shahed

drones targeting other parts of the country, Ukraine's Air Force reported. It said it downed 42 drones, while 47 others were jammed mid-flight.

In the Dnipropetrovsk region, Russian drones sparked a fire at an "outbuilding" and a "food enterprise," Gov. Serhii Lysak wrote on Telegram. No one was injured in the attack, he said. An unspecified infrastructure object was damaged in the Cherkasy region overnight, Gov. Ihor Taburets said on Telegram.

The Russian Defence Ministry, in a

statement on Monday, maintained that Moscow's forces "strictly observed the ceasefire and remained at previously occupied lines and positions." It accused Ukraine of violating the ceasefire 4,900 times, including six attempts at assault operations, 1,404 attacks from artillery, multiple rocket launchers and mortars, and 3,316 drone strikes targeting Russian troops.

The ministry said that once the ceasefire expired, the Russian military "resumed the special military operation" in Ukraine.

Zelenskyy says Russia feigning 'ceasefire' as attacks continue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kyiv

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russia on Sunday of creating a false appearance of honouring an Easter ceasefire, saying Moscow continued to launch attacks after Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a unilateral temporary truce.

"As of Easter morning, we can say that the Russian army is trying to create a general impression of a ceasefire, but in some places, it does not abandon individual attempts to advance and inflict losses on Ukraine," Zelenskyy said in a post on X.

Despite Putin's declaration of an Easter ceasefire, Zelenskyy said Sunday morning that Ukrainian forces had recorded 59 instances of Russian shelling and five assaults by units along the front line, as well as dozens of drone strikes.

In later updates, Zelenskyy said that

despite Ukraine declaring a symmetrical approach to Russian actions, "the trend of increasing the use of heavy weaponry by Russian forces continues." He said, however, that it was "a good thing, at least, that there were no air raid sirens." He noted that some Ukrainian troops were killed in a Russian "ambush" on Sunday in the Donetsk region, and said the Russian soldiers responsible would be "eliminated."

Russia's Defence Ministry accused Ukrainian forces of overnight attacks in the Donetsk region despite the ceasefire. It said Ukraine had sent 48 drones into Russian territory. According to the ministry, there were "dead and wounded among the civilian population," without giving details. It claimed Russian troops had strictly observed the truce.

Russia-installed officials in the partially occupied Ukrainian region of Kherson also said Ukrainian forces had launched



attacks. Zelenskyy said that Russia must fully adhere to the ceasefire conditions and reiterated Ukraine's offer to extend the truce for 30 days when it ends midnight

Sunday. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiha said Moscow had not responded to Kyiv's proposal.

"In practice, either Putin does not have

full control over his army, or the situation proves that in Russia, they have no intention of making a genuine move toward ending the war, and are only interested in favourable PR coverage," Zelenskyy wrote.

Just hours after announcing the ceasefire, Putin attended an Easter service late Saturday at Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour led by Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church and a vocal supporter of Putin and the war in Ukraine.

Putin offered no details on how the ceasefire would be monitored or whether it would cover airstrikes or ongoing ground battles that rage around the clock.

His announcement came after US President Donald Trump said Friday that negotiations between Ukraine and Russia are "coming to a head" and insisted that neither side is "playing" him in his push to end the grinding three-year war.

Trump might help Canadian Carney

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Toronto

Mark Carney's political career is only months old, and it's already been a roller-coaster ride. The former central banker appeared destined to become one of Canada's shortest-serving prime ministers until President Donald Trump picked a fight with the US's northern neighbour.

Carney, who was sworn in on March 14 following Justin Trudeau's resignation and a Liberal Party leadership race, now leads in the polls heading into the April 28 parliamentary elections, marking a dramatic turnaround for a party that seemed headed for a crushing defeat until the American president started attacking Canada's economy and sovereignty almost daily.

Trump's trade war and threats to make

Canada the 51st state have infuriated Canadians and led to a surge in Canadian nationalism that has helped Liberals flip the election narrative. In a mid-January poll by Nanos, Liberals trailed the Conservative Party by 47% to 20%.

In the latest Nanos poll, which was conducted during a three-day period that ended April 19, the Liberals led by six percentage points. The January poll had a margin of error 3.1 points while the latest poll had a 2.7-point margin.

"Timing is everything in politics and Carney entered the political arena at a most favorable time," said Daniel Béland, a political science professor at McGill University in Montreal.

Carney's opponent is Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre, a career politician and firebrand populist who has campaigned with Trump-like swagger, even

taking a page from the "America First" president by adopting the slogan "Canada First." "This election is a test about whether Canada will embrace or reject populism," Béland said, suggesting many voters view Carney as reassuring because of his experience and calm.

"Without the Trump effect, the Conservatives would probably be in a much stronger position in the polls right now. If Trump wasn't currently in the White House, it would be hard to imagine the Liberals being the favorites in this federal race, considering how unpopular they were just a few months ago."

Who is Carney? Carney navigated crises when he ran Canada's central bank and when he later became the first non-UK citizen to run the Bank of England since its founding in 1694.

More Democratic lawmakers visiting El Salvador on Abrego Garcia's behalf

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Washington

Four House Democratic lawmakers have travelled to El Salvador to call attention to the plight of a man the Trump administration deported to a Salvadoran prison and has refused to help return - even after the Supreme Court ruled that it was the government's duty to do so.

Reps. Yassamin Ansari of Arizona, Maxine Dexter of Oregon, Maxwell Frost of Florida and Robert Garcia of California arrived in the Central American nation on Sunday to investigate the condition of Kilmor Abrego Garcia, who had lived in the United States for more than a decade.

The Trump administration deported him, a move that administration officials have said in court filings was erroneous. But despite a Supreme Court ordering the Trump administration to help facilitate Abrego Garcia's return, the administration has said it has no power to bring him back, a choice being scrutinised by federal courts as potentially in violation of judicial rulings.

"To see the Trump administration so blatantly and egregiously defy the Supreme Court and have no regard for due process is extremely alarming to me," Ansari said in an interview.

"Even with all of the illegal actions we've seen over the last couple of months, I think this is the one that terrifies me the most when it comes to the future of our democracy." The quartet's trip comes after Sen. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland travelled to El Salvador last week and met Abrego Garcia and Salvadoran officials. Abrego Garcia had lived in Maryland with his wife and

three children, who are American citizens, before he was deported on March 15. Abrego Garcia's protected legal status prohibited him from being deported to El Salvador. He was deported on one of three planes filled with alleged migrant gang members.

Garcia said he and Frost sent a letter last week to House Oversight Committee Chair James Comer, R-Ky., requesting that an official delegation go to El Salvador to investigate Abrego Garcia's condition and push for his return, but received no response.

Ansari said more Democrats would be travelling to El Salvador in the coming days and weeks.

"Those of us in the House who are here greatly admire and support what Sen. Van Hollen did," Garcia said.

Of Abrego Garcia, he said, "His family knew that he was safe, but he's not home, and so we've got to continue the pressure, and we've got to ensure that the rule of law in the United States is allowed."

Justice Department lawyers said in court last week that they have no power to advance Abrego Garcia's return because he is in a foreign country's custody.

Administration officials also claimed in public comments that Abrego Garcia was

engaged in human trafficking and terrorism and therefore correctly deported.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said that if Abrego Garcia were to return to the US, "he would immediately be deported again."

Van Hollen unsuccessfully lobbied the Salvadoran government for Abrego Garcia's return. He told NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday that the United States is facing a "constitutional crisis" if the Trump administration does not follow the Supreme Court's order to push to bring Abrego Garcia back.

It's a warning Democrats are increasingly amplifying. Rather than debate President Donald Trump's headline immigration policy or the merits of the administration's invocation of national security to carry out deportations, Democratic lawmakers are zeroing in on the issue of due process, with some noting that the Supreme Court and lower court federal judges found Abrego Garcia was deported without a proper hearing.

"The government's argument, moreover, implies that it could deport and incarcerate any person, including US citizens, without legal consequence, so long as it does so before a court can intervene," Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote in the court's ruling in Abrego Garcia's case.

Said Garcia: "They're trying to demonize him, and we're not here to defend him. He deserves due process, and everyone deserves due process. ... What he did or may have done, that has to be decided by a judge." Several House Republicans have visited El Salvador's Terrorism Confinement Centre, the prison where Abrego Garcia is being held, and lauded the facility for what they view as El Salvador's tough-on-crime policies.

Drones pose increasing risk to airliners

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Washington

A commercial airliner was on final approach to San Francisco's international airport in November when the crew spotted a drone outside the cockpit window. By then it was too late "to take evasive action," the pilots reported, and the quadcopter passed by their windshield, not 300 feet away.

A month earlier, a jetliner was flying at an altitude of 4,000 feet near Miami's international airport when its pilots reported a "close encounter" with a drone. In August, a drone came within 50 feet of clipping the left wing of a passenger jet as it departed Newark International Airport. The incidents were all classified as "near midair collisions" - any one of



which could have had catastrophic consequences, according to aviation safety experts. They were also not isolated encounters.

An Associated Press analysis of an aviation safety database reveals that drones last year accounted for nearly two-thirds of reported near midair collisions involving commercial passenger planes taking

off and landing at the country's top 30 busiest airports. That was the highest percentage of such near misses since 2020, when air traffic dropped during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first reports of near misses involving drones were logged in 2014, the AP found. The number of such encounters spiked the following year. Over the last decade, drones accounted for 51% - 122 of 240 - of reported near misses, according to AP's analysis.

Passenger jets have long been subject to risks around airports - whether from bird strikes or congested airspace - as was made clear by the January collision between a military helicopter and commercial jet near Washington, D.C., that killed 67 people.

Israeli President urges India to further deepen ties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Jerusalem

Israeli President Isaac Herzog on Monday urged India to further deepen bilateral ties by working together on geostrategic issues, especially emphasising on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) project, which he described as the "future of the world".

moving towards peace and inclusion, connectivity and of course enhancing the incredible relations between our people". Touching upon areas of cooperation between the two countries, Herzog described the IMEC as the "future of the world", which has the potential to change the entire geostrategic situation of the globe.



Minister Narendra Modi to Washington in February, US President Donald Trump said he agreed with the Indian leader to enhance the scope of the project, linking it right up to America. Singh emphasised the strategic partnership between India and Israel, noting that they had stood by each other in the hour of crisis.

ship. We are engaged with each other in a number of areas — in agriculture, water management, IT sector as well as defence cooperation. IMEC is a very important initiative," Singh said. "As you know, the agreement (IMEC) was signed when India was heading the G20 Presidency and this will connect the big Indian civilisation with Europe and the Atlantic shores and it will pass through this region. Similarly, I2U2 is another initiative which is very important for both the countries," the Indian envoy noted. The I2U2 group, comprising India, Israel, the US and the UAE, emerged during the visit of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to Israel in October 2021 when the foreign ministers of the four countries held a virtual meet, announcing that they intend to advance physical connectivity between countries in the Middle East region, among others.

safe return of all the hostages. "We all are passing through a very difficult phase and for us dialogue and diplomacy is the way we can achieve peace in the region. I know that Israel, in particular, is passing through a very difficult phase. We hope and pray for an early and safe return of all the hostages," he said. Herzog responded, saying, "This is our highest priority. We want to see all our hostages back home. Till the last one of them. They are going through hell and we are very worried and disturbed by it". "I would add that it requires enormous international effort and I also want to thank your government and your Prime Minister for standing near Israel and with Israel from day one, October 7th. I met your Prime Minister in the previous Climate Conference in UAE and I know he has extremely good relations with our Prime Minister. Our governments enjoy strong relations," he added.

United States says allied forces can repel Asian aggression

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Manila

Thousands of allied American and Filipino forces opened annual combat drills on Monday that are set to include repelling an island attack to simulate the defense of the Philippine archipelago and seas in a "full-scale battle scenario" that has antagonised China.

meaning shoulder to shoulder in Tagalog, are not aimed at any particular country. "It's joint training with the US forces to increase our capability in securing our territory and, of course, it will increase our capabilities and our preparedness and responsiveness to any eventuality," Lorenzo said.

The annual Balikatan military exercises between the longtime treaty allies are scheduled from April 21 to May 9 with about 9,000 American and 5,000 Filipino military personnel. Fighter jets, warships and an array of weaponry including a US Marine anti-ship missile system will be involved, US and Philippine military officials said. China has steadfastly opposed such war drills in or near the disputed South China Sea and in northern Philippine provinces close to Taiwan, especially if they involve US and allied forces that Beijing says aim to contain it and, consequently, threaten regional stability and peace. "We are ready," US Marine Corps Lt. Gen. James Glynn told a news conference when asked if US and Philippine forces have built up the capability to address any major act of aggression in the Taiwan Straits or the South China Sea after years of joint combat exercises. "Our combined strength... possesses a degree of lethality for a force that possesses an indomitable warrior ethos and spirit," Glynn said in a speech in the opening ceremony of the annual combat-readiness exercises.

A Philippine military statement described this year's largescale combat exercises as "a full-scale battle scenario meticulously designed to rigorously test and enhance the combined capabilities of both nations' armed forces under the most realistic and challenging conditions". Aside from US and Philippine military personnel, Australia plans to deploy about 260 participants, an Australian military officer said. Several countries including Japan intend to send military observers. A mid-range missile system, which was deployed to the northern Philippines by the US Army last year, will be used again in the combat exercises, US and Philippine military officials said without offering additional details.

"All of us want to resolve any regional conflict peacefully but should deterrence fail, we need to be prepared," said Glynn, who previously helped lead special operations forces against the Islamic State and served in Fallujah, Iraq.

Philippine army Maj. Gen. Francisco Lorenzo said the exercises during Balikatan, "It's all dedicated to one purpose, to ensure the defense of the Philippines and to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific."

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Notice is hereby given on behalf of Mrs. Anupam with respect to Entire Third Floor, with roof rights...

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PROCLAMATION REQUIRING ATTENDANCE OF DEFENDANT (Order 5, Rule 20 of the Code of Civil Procedure) IN THE COURT OF MS. KIRAN BANSAL...

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FOR INVITING OBJECTIONS REGARDING CONTINUATION OF REGISTRATION OF THE PROJECT NAMED "THE VALLEY" (HARERA RC NO 20 OF 2018) LOCATED AT SECTOR 78, GURUGRAM BEING DEVELOPED BY M/S AMETEK BUILDTECH INDIA PVT. LTD.

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THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Surendra Kumar Aggarwal S/o Kanti Prasad R/o 102, Menka-2, Amrapali Royal, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad (U.P.) 201014 have changed my name to Surendra Kumar Aggarwal for all purposes.

I, Lava Kush Singh, Father of- No. 16017341K Hav Dheerendra Singh, R/o- VPO- Bharoli Khurd, Dist- Bhind, M.P.- 477557, have changed my name from Lava Kush Singh to Lav Kush Singh, vide affidavit dated 21/04/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

I, Ram Sakhi Devi, Mother of- No. 16017341K Hav Dheerendra Singh, R/o- VPO- Bharoli Khurd, Dist- Bhind, M.P.- 477557, have changed my name from Ram Sakhi Devi to Ram Shree, vide affidavit dated 21/04/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

I, Shaktuntala Devi, Mother of- No.10136742X NK Surendra Singh, R/o- VPO- Arya Nagar, Teh- Badhra, Dist- Bhiwani, Haryana-127308, have changed my name from Shaktuntala Devi to Shakuntla, vide affidavit dated 21/04/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

I, Daljeet Singh Lamba, S/o, Shri Kishan Singh Lamba, R/o C-77/3, third floor, Fateh Nagar, Tilak Nagar West Delhi, delhi - 110018, that I have changed my name from Daljeet Singh Lamba to Daljit Singh Lamba permanently. (both are one and the same person).

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DEMAND NOTICE Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 3 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The undersigned is the Authorised Officer of Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited (PCHFL) under Securitisation And Reconstruction Of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (the said Act).

Table with 3 columns: Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s), Demand Notice Date and Amount with NPA date, Description of secured asset (immovable property). Includes entries for various borrowers like Kanti Prasad, Anil Kumar, etc.

IPL: Delhi Capitals take on LSG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lucknow

Delhi Capitals (DC) will expect a more productive effort from their openers when they visit the 'City of Nawabs' to face an increasingly confident Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) in an IPL match here on Tuesday. The Capitals' opening has been a bit of roulette so far this season with Faf du Plessis, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Abhishek Porel and the latest entrant Karun Nair coming in at the pole position.

In fact, in the last five matches they had three different opening combinations between those four batters, producing partnerships of 23, 34, 0, 9, 0.

It also had to do with the injury of Du Plessis, and the South African's fitness will be closely watched ahead of this match.

Thus far, it looked like a minor glitch because the Capitals have won five of their seven matches and the middle-order under the aegis of KL Rahul too worked like a well-oiled machine.

But Lucknow's competent bowling unit of Digvesh Rathi, Ravi Bishnoi, Avesh Khan and Shardul Thakur, though he is a bit expensive, has choked the opposition without much fanfare.

The way Avesh excelled in the 18th and 20th over against Rajasthan Royals in LSG's two-run win is an example of that.

It might have also doubled the confidence of the Super Giants that they can pull off wins from any situation.

Therefore, the Capitals will not like to leave the task of building the innings to



Rahul and his middle-order colleagues as they have been doing so often this time.

Instead, the DC management will like to see their middle-order driving in the early advantage given to them by the top two. In contrast, the Lucknow outfit has a solid top three with Mitchell Marsh, Nicholas Pooran and Aiden Markram firing more often than not and it has given them an edge over opponents in the Power Play phase.

It's ironic that the personal form of DC and LSG skippers is going in exactly the opposite direction of their teams' fortunes.

Both DC and LSG have 10 points and

a win will keep them safely perched in the higher echelons of the points table ahead of the jostlers.

But the lukewarm form of skipper Rishabh Pant has been a massive issue for LSG. He has merely 106 runs from eight games and 63 of those came in a single match. His strike-rate of 98 is also a tad worrisome.

Against Delhi, Pant will have to deal with an excellent bowling unit comprising Mitchell Starc, Kuldeep Yadav, Vipraj Nigam and Mukesh Kumar.

But much like LSG, the Delhi side too will have some concerns about their skip-

per — Axar Patel. Axar has led well and made 140 runs at a strike-rate of 159, but those improvements have masked his diminishing returns as a bowler — just a solitary wicket from seven matches at an economy of 9.36.

It seems that the added responsibility of captaining the side and the demands batting higher up in the order have forced Axar to neglect his primary skills.

The DC management might want him to address this disparity at the earliest so that they can have more variety in their attack.

Teams

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

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

If you doubt yourself, you put pressure on yourself: Rohit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Star batter Rohit Sharma asserted that he never doubted his abilities amidst a prolonged lean patch, and termed the glorious fifty against Chennai Super Kings (CSK) as a validation of the faith he has in his skill sets.

'Player of the Match' Rohit slammed four boundaries and six maximums in his unbeaten 45-ball 76 to guide Mumbai Indians to a nine-wicket win over the Super Kings. It was Rohit's first fifty of this IPL season after scores of 0, 8, 13, 17, 18, and 26 in the previous matches.

'After being here for a long time, it's easy to start doubting yourself and start doing different things. It was important for me to practice well, hit the ball well. When you are clear in your mind, things like this can happen,' said Rohit.

The former MI skipper said pressure would mount if a player began to doubt his own abilities.

'It has been a while (getting a big score) but if you doubt yourself, you put pressure on yourself. It is important to balance how you want to play. Today I wanted to hit the ball but it was also important to hold the shape and extend the arms.'

'And then if the ball is in the arc, I want to try what I always do. It has not been happening consistently but I am not going to doubt myself,' he added.

With one of the stands at the

Wankhede Stadium to be built in his honour, Rohit, who played most of his formative cricket here, said it was a "huge honour" for him.

'Looks pretty far! Huge honour. I used to come here as a kid and watch the game. We were not allowed to come here at some stage. I grew up playing at this ground, now to have that stand, huge honour. "Do not know how I will react when it actually comes up. Satisfying part was to finish the game.'

Mumbai Indians have jumped to sixth spot on the table with four wins and Rohit said the team was building up the momentum. 'We are peaking at the right time, winning three on the trot. Winning back-to-back is important, we stand in a good position,' he said.

MI skipper Hardik Pandya said he was never overly perturbed by Rohit's lack of runs as he knew they would come soon. 'The way Rohit and Suryakumar bat, it is a relief from outside. You don't have to worry about Rohit's form. He's gonna come good like this.'

'We knew when he comes good, the opposition will be out. SKY (Surya) complimented him,' Hardik said.

'Percentage cricket is high, we are not trying magical stuff and sticking to simple cricket. Knew they (CSK) were behind the game and wanted to keep it tight. The fast bowlers went for runs and we knew 175 was below par,' said Pandya.

IPL: Ayush Mhatre debut marks shift in CSK's with experience-first philosophy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

For a side which has thrived on experienced players for its five IPL titles, it was uncharacteristic of Chennai Super Kings to promote a 17-year-old Ayush Mhatre barely days after he joined the camp. It was only last Monday when domestic giants Mumbai's newest batting talent Mhatre joined the CSK ranks for an IPL marred by lack of form and courage from batters, made worse by a season-ending injury to skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad.

Mhatre's debut against MI might have come as a surprise for those who have seen CSK taking their own time before putting faith in young players. But his story will now be that point in history

when the IPL powerhouse ended its own tradition with a "view to the future".

In a mere 18 minutes in the middle, Mhatre gave a fine account of himself for someone who wants to be purely known as an "aggressive batsman", something that he said after breaking Yashvir Jaiswal's List A record for being the youngest to score 150 or more. On Sunday, he struck four fours and two sixes for a 15-ball 32.

Mhatre's brisk knock didn't last long but it gave CSK the spark they've been missing in the powerplay most of this IPL, putting him in a very small group of players to watch out for in the future including Rajasthan Royals' Vaibhav Sooryavanshi. It also rightfully earned him a pat on the back from senior pros Rohit Sharma and Suryakumar Yadav.

'We have had a few players through at our trainings and he was a player that stood out,' CSK head coach Stephen Fleming told the media after the match.

'It's still very hard when you're in a net situation to get a true gauge of a player, but from a skill set (perspective), he was very impressive and a very composed young man which is often just as important. "Both MS (Dhoni) and I were very impressed with the way he held himself together for the trial, and when the opportunity came up — we have obviously got a view to the future — he was a name that was pretty easy to pick," he added.

Fleming acknowledged CSK's situation of carrying several out-of-form batters and Mhatre's familiarity with his hometown Mumbai and the Wankhede



Stadium spurred them to hand him the debut. 'Probably the position (that) we're in, and with the injury to Rutu and with form for others, it made it quite an easy decision to get him in there,' Fleming said. 'A stage that seems big — but it's (the) one that's familiar — so we banked on him being comfortable with his surroundings and he certainly looked all that.

It was an impressive debut," he added.

From a far away suburb of Virar, Mhatre learnt his cricket in Mumbai taking early morning days into the city and putting in the hard yards. He rose through the ranks quickly before an unfortunate road accident involving Musheer Khan paved the way for the 17-year-old to be picked, and Mhatre made the most of the opportunity.

His maiden century in Ranji Trophy was not merely a ton but a knock long enough to tell that there was plenty of substance in his fledgling career. Mhatre scored 176 for his maiden First-Class ton which came off 232 balls with 22 fours and four sixes as Mumbai took down Maharashtra by nine wickets. He scored 471 runs in eight matches at 33.64 with

two centuries and one fifty in his debut Ranji season.

In the premier 50-overs domestic competition Vijay Hazare Trophy, Mhatre's successful run persisted as he scored 458 runs in seven matches at 65.42 with two centuries and a fifty to finish eighth in the overall list of highest run-scorers.

Mhatre is not alone, 20-year-old Shaikh Rasheed, 21-year-old Dewald Brevis, and 22-year-old Vansh Bedi are also expected to form CSK's batting core next year. 'Is it sustainable in tricky conditions? I don't know. Is the subtlety of the game going to keep growing? I'm concerned. But in terms of what they're bringing and how they're playing their first games, it is certainly impressive,' Floeming said of the younger crop.



Balanced Growth in Agriculture, Skill Development, Tourism and Industry Paving the Way for "Developed Bastar" Viksit Bastar ki oar

Once deprived of development due to prolonged Naxalite violence, Bastar region is now witnessing systematic efforts aimed at eradicating the problem under a well-planned strategy. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Shri Vishnu Deo Sai, the Government of Chhattisgarh is working with firm commitment on two fronts — formulating an effective strategy to ensure complete elimination of Naxalism within a stipulated timeframe, and simultaneously implementing a comprehensive roadmap for inclusive development in Bastar. Special emphasis is being laid on agriculture, tourism, industry, and skill development. A development model has been designed based on the available resources and the geographical and social conditions of Bastar, laying a strong foundation for a newly developed and prosperous region.

A Vision for Vibrant Tourism: Glass Bridges, Guided Tours, and the Bastar Tourism Circuit

Bastar Dussehra holds a unique historical and cultural identity, and plans are now underway to showcase it on the international stage. This initiative aims not only to boost tourism but also to bring global recognition to Bastar's traditional handicrafts, local cuisine, and rich cultural expressions. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, the government is committed to transforming Bastar into a major tourism hub. Plans include the development of the Bastar Tourism Circuit, construction of a transparent glass bridge at the Tirathgarh Waterfalls, and training local youth to serve as professional tourist guides. These steps are expected to generate employment, attract investment, and raise cultural awareness simultaneously.



success in tackling extremism in Bastar's Maoist-affected areas. With aggressive operations against Naxalites, this year has witnessed the highest number of Maoists neutralized. The government now aims to rebrand Bastar as a peaceful, vibrant tourist destination. Highlighting the natural beauty of Chitrakote Waterfalls—often referred to as India's "Niagara Falls"—the Chief Minister has vowed to make it a major state asset. A call for peace talks has also been extended to insurgents. Under a new rehabilitation policy, surrendered Naxalites and victims of violence will be provided with 15,000 housing units, skill training, and a monthly stipend of Rs 10,000. The recent recognition of Dhudmaras village in Bastar as one of the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO stands as a powerful testament to the region's growing global appeal.

Rural Empowerment through Agricultural Innovation

The foundation of Bastar's economy continues to rest on agriculture and a forest-based lifestyle. As part of the "Viksit Bastar" (Developed Bastar) initiative, several efforts are being made to double farmers' incomes. A special focus is being placed on processing, branding, and marketing of agricultural produce. Promoting millets like Kodo, Kutki, and Ragl is a key component of the "Millet Mission," which aims to enhance both nutritional

value and income for local farmers. Besides, to drive agricultural mechanization, Custom Hiring Centers are being established at the block level across the region. This initiative is designed to connect small-scale farmers with modern agricultural tools and resources, empowering them for a more productive and sustainable future.

Empowered Youth Developed Bastar

For years, the youth of Bastar were left with two stark choices—migrating to urban areas in search of opportunity, or falling prey to misleading paths laid out by extremist groups. The "Viksit Bastar" initiative aims to transform this reality at its roots.



With an ambitious goal of providing skill training to 90,000 youth and employment to 40,000 individuals, the initiative places a strong focus on empowerment through opportunity. A key highlight of this strategy is the "Rehabilitation Policy 2025 for Surrendered Naxalites," which offers structured support in employment, training, and social reintegration. This is not merely a law-and-order solution—it is a bold step toward achieving social harmony. On-ground progress is evident with the establishment of 32 new skill development centers across the region.

Taking the vision further, Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai has launched a revolutionary initiative for school children in the Naxal-affected districts of Kanker and Kondagaon. Under this programme, students will receive education in Robotics and Artificial Intelligence (AI), a forward-looking effort aimed specifically at enhancing the skills of tribal children and preparing them for a technology-driven future.

Meeting with the PM: Dialogues for Bastar's Future

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai recently met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi to discuss important issues related to the development of Chhattisgarh. During the meeting, the Chief Minister presented the framework of a comprehensive Master Plan for Bastar's Development, outlining a strategic roadmap designed to transform the region. This series of initiatives—centered around six key agendas and 19 action points—focuses on turning Naxal-affected areas into hubs of infrastructure, industry, and tourism.

The plan envisions Bastar as a thriving industrial zone, with industries dedicated to the processing of bamboo, minor forest produce, and other natural resources. To support this transformation, the proposal includes expanding the number of ITIs and polytechnic institutes to boost education and skill development, particularly among youth.

Technical education and modern skill training are prioritized to create a skilled workforce ready for emerging industries. Furthermore, the plan integrates efforts for balanced industrial growth under a new industrial policy, promotes cultural



"Bastar is now moving towards peace. Our government's goal is to ensure a life of dignity for its people. We will not only focus on skill development, but also empower the local population to become self-reliant through the sustainable use of local resources. This will enable the youth of Bastar to become self-sufficient and showcase their talents across the country and the world."

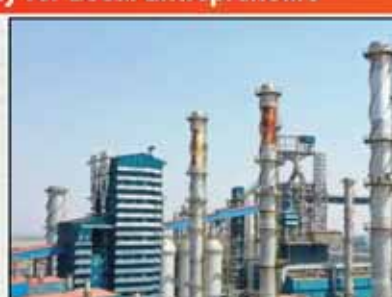
-Vishnu Deo Sai
Chief Minister, Chhattisgarh

and tourism-based development, and outlines specific actions under the new Rehabilitation Policy for Surrendered Naxalites. This holistic approach aims to build a peaceful, prosperous, and progressive Bastar.

Industry: A Golden Opportunity for Local Entrepreneurs

The State Government is making concerted efforts to integrate local youth, budding entrepreneurs, and surrendered Naxalites into the mainstream of entrepreneurship under the 'Viksit Bastar' initiative.

The new industrial policy has made special provisions for this region, such as reimbursement of royalty for steel industries for a period of 15 years, and a 40 per cent wage subsidy for five



Dawn of Socio-Economic Transformation in Bastar

Amidst the grandeur of nature in the Bastar region of Chhattisgarh lies the long shadow of developmental failures. For decades, the area remained entangled in the complexities of Naxalism, unemployment, migration, and neglect. However, it is now steadily moving towards change.

Under the leadership of Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, the state government has launched a series of initiatives under the banner "Towards a Developed Bastar", aimed at the comprehensive development of the region.

These initiatives provide a concrete framework for inclusive growth, social reconstruction, and economic empowerment in Bastar. More than just a collection of schemes, they reflect a new vision of governance that seeks to integrate development with security, culture, and human dignity.



years to industries providing employment to surrendered Naxalites. This initiative is expected not only to strengthen the region's social fabric but also to encourage the private sector to fulfill its social responsibilities.