



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 company 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 company 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.

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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



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

close cooperation between India and the 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.

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 CONDONES 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.

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 Isaac 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."

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' — 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 Parvish 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 inau-

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

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 Jaguar 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 dekhte 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

for Women, 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."

Health Minister inaugurates Labour Rooms, Cold Chains



PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

In a significant push to strengthen healthcare delivery in rural areas, Health

Minister Dr. Irfan Ansari on Monday inaugurated labour rooms and cold chain facilities at three key Primary Health Centers (PHCs) in

Lavjoda (Patamda), Ghorabandha, and Asanbani (Potka) in East Singhbhum district. Alongside, he formally launched the

statewide Haat-Bazaar Health Camp Campaign, aimed at taking essential medical services to underserved tribal and remote communities.

Speaking at the district-level ceremony held at Town Hall, Sidgora, the Health Minister emphasized the state government's commitment to improving the health system and said that "enhancing infrastructure and deploying trained personnel to every corner of the state is a top priority." Dr. Ansari added that the government is actively recruiting and appointing doctors and paramedical staff from

medical colleges to rural and urban health centers to bridge the care gap.

The occasion also witnessed a celebratory moment for 187 newly appointed contractual health workers, who received their appointment letters under the National Health Mission (NHM). The appointments include 130 ANM-RCHs, 37 Staff Nurses-RCH, 3 GNMs for CHC NCD Clinics, 12 Pharmacists under RBSK, 1 Social Worker, 1 Ophthalmic Assistant, and 3 Nutritional Counselors for MTC.

The program saw participation from a wide range of dignitaries including

Education Minister Ramdas Soren, MLA Baharagora Samir Mohanty, MLA Jugsalai Mangal Kalindi, District Council President Bari Murmu, Vice President Pankaj Kumar, Deputy Commissioner Ananya Mittal, Deputy Development Commissioner Aniket Sachan, SDM Dhalbhum Shatabdi Majumdar, and Civil Surgeon Dr. Sahir Pal.

Health Minister Dr Ansari said that along with the construction of infrastructure in the field of health, doctors and paramedical staff are being appointed from all the medical colleges to the primary health centers of the

state. Under this, appointment letters are being distributed through the District Health Committee. The government is continuously working in this direction to provide education and health facilities to every person of the state. The government's goal is that the health services and system of the state should be the best in the entire country, work is being done in this direction. He said that no one can stop the state from progressing in the education and health system of the state improves.

MLA Baharagora Samir Mohanty expressed his views on setting up dialysis centers

for kidney patients in Ghatsila subdivision and health centers in Gudambanda block. He said that there is a need to further strengthen the health service in rural areas, doctors and health workers should come on time, give proper advice to the patients.

MLA Jugsalai Mangal Kalindi said that women of rural areas have to come to the city for ultrasound. He demanded installation of ultrasound machines in health centres in rural areas. He also congratulated the newly appointed medical staff and wished them a bright future.

Haat-Bazaar Health Campaign launched

Karni Sena leader murder: Police Suspect gang rivalry in Mango area

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Tension gripped the steel city on Sunday night after Vinay Singh, Jharkhand state president of Karni Sena and a prominent Hindu outfit leader, was found brutally murdered near the National Highway-33 under the jurisdiction of the MGM police station. The chilling murder is suspected to have been orchestrated by a notorious criminal gang based in the Mango locality, raising concerns over law and order in the region.



Singh, 40, a resident of Sahara City in Mango, had stepped out of a shop near his residence around 9:30 pm after receiving a phone call. He reportedly rode off on his Scooty toward Dimna Chowk, but never returned. As hours passed without any trace of him, worried family members and associates began a frantic search, which led to a horrifying discovery — Singh's bullet-riddled body lying in a field about 300 metres off the highway near Baliguma.

His licensed pistol and Scooty were recovered from the spot, suggesting he was possibly lured into a trap before being shot at close range. The scene pointed toward a well-planned execution rather than a random

act of violence. Police sources have hinted that the murder was not a spur-of-the-moment crime, but a deliberate and sinister plot hatched by elements from within Singh's own community. According to insider information, Singh had been involved in a long-standing rivalry with a known criminal in the Mango area — a clash of egos and influence rooted in local turf wars. This rivalry, sources claim, reached a breaking point in recent weeks as both men sought to establish dominance in the increasingly tense neighborhood.

SP (Rural) Rishabh Garg, stated, "We have found a strong clue about the gang responsible for the killing of

Vinay Singh. We are working on the lead and hope to crack the case very soon."

Garg also confirmed that the police are analysing call records and surveillance footage to piece together Singh's final moments and identify those involved.

The brazen nature of the murder sent shockwaves through the community and sparked an immediate reaction from Vinay Singh's supporters.

Around midnight, a large group of Karni Sena members and local residents blocked Dimna Chowk, demanding swift action and immediate arrests. The blockade continued for a couple of hours, causing traffic disruption and prompting

additional police deployment to prevent escalation.

Chanting slogans and holding placards, the protesters raised serious questions about public safety and the growing audacity of criminal elements in the city. They expressed deep anguish over the loss of a leader who had been actively engaged in social and religious affairs.

Vinay Singh was known for his outspoken views and rising influence within the Hindu rights circles in Jharkhand. His increasing popularity, particularly among youth in Mango and adjoining areas, had reportedly made him a threat to certain elements operating in the grey zones of crime and politics. His murder, according to political observers, is a blow not just to his followers but also to the fragile peace in an area often caught between development and unrest.

With public pressure mounting, police have intensified their investigation. Forensic teams have visited the crime scene, and surveillance footage from nearby shops and traffic points is being scrutinized. Sources say the police are closing in on key suspects and an official breakthrough may be announced within days.

Seraikela DC congratulated on PM's Excellence Award

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Advocate Sudhir Kumar Pappu extended his heartfelt congratulations to Ravi Shankar Shukla, Deputy Commissioner of Seraikela - Kharsawan, on being conferred the prestigious Prime Minister's Excellence in Public Administration Award 2024.

Pappu hailed the award as a recognition of DC Shukla's "sensitivity towards social concerns, strong administrative capabilities, and exemplary leadership." He emphasized that such recognition sets a benchmark for governance and urged Deputy Commissioners of other districts to emulate Shukla's work ethic and dedication.

"This award is not just an individual achievement, but a symbol of hope and inspiration. If every officer adopts the same commitment, Mahatma Gandhi's vision of inclusive development can truly reach the last person standing," said Pappu.

The award was presented for the outstanding implementation of the Aspirational Block Program by NITI Aayog, which was launched on January 7, 2023, with the goal of transforming 500 backward blocks across India. The program focuses on five key areas — health, education, agriculture, infrastructure, and good governance.

Notably, Gambaria block of Seraikela district emerged as a model of success under this initiative, delivering remarkable outcomes in all five sectors. This achievement not only brought national recognition to the block but also marked a proud moment for the entire state of Jharkhand.

Pappu concluded by applauding the relentless efforts of all officials and frontline workers in the Gambaria block, stating that their contribution has brought honor to the region and demonstrated the power of effective public service.

EFFECT OF LAW OF ATTRACTION IN LIFE



BY DR. MAYANK MURARI

There is no end to our journey in life. So we will never reach the place where we want to separate ourselves from the opposite experience that causes our focus. It must be assumed that life is complex, sometimes hard, disorganized and unbearable. It has no side or end. In this, man has to experience chaos, peace, anger, rest, sadness, and happiness, no matter how favourable to his position. The fabric of this existence is based on duality, such as we cannot do good without evil, such as we cannot say day without night. So in this mystery called life, we are constantly searching for answers. We always want to control our lives, but we do not know how to do it?

We can definitely control our reality. First of all, what is our response to any situation? Can we change our perception and suddenly become the best version of ourselves. It is unavoidable to control the reality of life. There is a very interesting approach to how our thoughts appear in our reality. This is called the rule of attraction. Most people believe that the law of attraction is related to the supernatural world, but I think it is a very simple, solid rule of life. If you want to be negative and you

choose to face life in a pessimistic way, you will attract events, people and experiences that match your frequency. The world famous writers Esther Hicks and Jerry Hicks in your book, In the law of attraction, show how we direct our thoughts, feelings, our entire energy and attention. How to build our life in a fully planned manner so that we can attract and reveal what we want in life. Thoughts alone will not attract anything but when you add emotions to thoughts, it is like fuel that carries out things.

If we think positively, then positive things will happen with us. The events of positive life suggests that when negative things happen to us, our positive attitude can turn those things into less tragic events. What happens in our life or may be. We can control it with the power of our brain. There are elements in life which cannot be controlled by our powerful mind. If we are only positively connected to the universe, then its result is also very favourable. Many times in life it happens that we say that narrowly survived. It does not happen like this! Many times the result is favourable even after there is no good examination. This happens only when we are positively associated with the creation of the universe.

The science of creation says that what we think and which we believe or expect. It is definitely there. This means that we get what we think, whether we want it or not. I fully believe that our mind and body are powerful. It is scientifically proven that if we remain under constant stress then our immune system decreases, which then clearly puts us at risk of dis-

eases. Therefore, we can also understand how our thoughts etc. can make us sick. But apart from this there is a lot. Whatever we send from positive thoughts in the universe, it comes back to us, at least ten times. It is somewhat like thought-deeds and positive thinking. Since the balance of the universe is due to positivity, it is inevitable. We can solve many problems of our life through thought power.

Our thoughts and feelings directly affect our experiences. Ronda Burn says in its famous book mystery that the law of attraction depends on how we want to draw in our lives, how to think about it again. Thoughts are powerful and the way we can easily attract prosperity, happiness and love, similarly we can also attract the opposite of this in our life. There is a lot of power in the mind. I believe that we are all connected in this creation by vague ways. Look around. We are surrounded by living organisms, stars, galaxies, clouds of dust, light and more - the universe is present in everything. Nevertheless, its birth and development is one of the biggest mysteries. We attract the essence of what we think, feel or are verb. If you think positively, you attract positives.

If you think negative, you attract negatives. If we feel poor, you cannot attract prosperity, etc. It violates the rule. Ronda Burn states that thoughts are magnetic and there is a frequency of ideas. As soon as we think, those thoughts are sent to the universe, and it magnetically attracts all the things that are on the same frequency. Everything sent returns to the source and if that source is we are

Inter-Dept Cricket Championship begins at BSL

PNS : BOKARO

The BSL Inter-Departmental Cricket Championship 2025 commenced with great fervour on April 21, 2025, at the BSL Cricket Stadium. Chief Guest Shaligram Singh, Chief General Manager (CED), officially inaugurated the tournament. The event witnessed the presence of GM (TA) A.K. Avinash, GM (L&A) C.R.K. Sudhanshu, Deputy GM (L&A) Alok Kumar, along with a large gathering of cricket enthusiasts and employees. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Guest emphasized that such sports competitions not only foster team spirit and mutual coop-

eration among employees but also promote a healthy sense of competition in the workplace. He encouraged all participants to give their best and extended his best wishes for the tournament.

The opening match of the day saw a thrilling contest between JGOM and SRU, with SRU clinching a narrow 2-wicket victory. In the second match, Iron Zone 1 delivered a dominant performance, defeating RED by 10 wickets in a one-sided affair.

The championship features a total of 16 departmental teams divided into two groups, and the grand finale is scheduled for May 26, 2025.



Organized and malicious effort to snatch land of Muslims: Ansari

VINOD PRASAD : LOHARDAGA

In protest against the Waqf Act 2025, a joint conversation of all the Dehi Anjuman Sadar and Secretary, Imams and Ulema-e-Karam of all the mosques of the district was held at Khadgarha Marriage Hall on Sunday under the aegis of Anjuman Islamia Lohardaga and under the chairmanship of Sadar Abdul Rauf Ansari. Sadar Abdul Rauf Ansari placed the agenda in front of the assembly which included agitation against the Waqf Act 2025, saving Muslim youth from gambling, alcohol and drug addiction spreading in the society, saving Muslim girls and women from outsiders, etc.



He said that the BJP and central government is making an organized and malicious effort to snatch the land of Muslims and make Muslims second class citizens through the Waqf Act. He said that as per the decision taken in the meetings of Anjuman Islamia, on the

coming 25th April, after Namaz Juma Jama Masjid, a human chain will be formed from Powerganj Masjid to protest against the Waqf Act 2025. Black out will be done on 30th April from 9 to 10 PM.

Secretary of Anjuman Islamia Shahid Ahmed Belu and Nazim-e-Aala Haji Abdul Jabbarul Ansari jointly welcomed the guests who came to Izlass, while former Sadar Haji Shaud Alam, Naib Sadar Haji Naeem Khan, Joint Secretary Anwar Ansari, Treasurer Syed Feroz Shah, Farooq Qureshi,

Irshad Alam etc. took care of the arrangements for the guests. The stage was managed by Naib Sadar Syed Arif Hussain and vote of thanks was given by Joint Secretary Altaf Qureshi. Those who addressed the gathering included Mufti Saddam Hussain, Mufti Umar Farooque (Qazi-e-Shariat Darul Qaza Lohardaga), Imam Qari Shamim Rizvi of Jama Masjid, Imam Maulana Minhaj Qasmi of Moti Masjid, Maulana Zakir Hussain, Imam Maulana Abdul Hameed of Masjid-e-Balal,

Imam Hafiz Abdul Rauf of Bangle Wali Masjid, Secretary of Anjuman Islamia Ranchi Tariq Anwar, Convener of Jharkhand Junaid Ahmed, Nazim of Anjuman Islamia Majlis-e-Amma Haji Abdul Jabbarul Ansari, District President of JMM Mojamill Ahmed, former Sadar of Anjuman Islamia Haji Shakeel Ahmed, former Secretary Haji Sajjad Khan. The speakers said that Waqf is a fundamental part of Islamic law, which is derived from the Quran and Hadith (teachings of Prophet Mohammed) and it is a religious act like other worship. But the majority of non-Muslims in the Central Waqf Board and State Waqf Board in the Waqf Act 2025 is a blatant interference in religious matters, which is a blatant violation of Article 26 of the Indian Constitution. It has been claimed that such a law is actually a symbol of the dominance of the majority class, which we completely oppose. It is not acceptable to us under any circumstances. Because it is violating the spirit of the Constitution of India and its basic concept. Through this, an organized and malicious attempt is being made to marginalize the entire community, erase their religious identity and make them second class citizens. The people present in the Ijlas unanimously demanded the Central Government to immediately withdraw the Waqf Act 2025. A large number of people of Dehi Anjuman Islamia and Ulema-e-Karam of the district were present in the program.

BJP leaders join protest against Minister's remark on Constitution

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) staged a strong protest on Monday against a controversial statement made by Jharkhand government minister Hafizul Hasan Ansari, in which he claimed that Shariat is bigger than the Indian Constitution. The BJP condemned the remark as an attack on the nation's unity and democratic values. Led by Jamshedpur President Sudhanshu Ojha, hundreds of BJP workers, including MP Bidyut Baran Mahto, Jamshedpur East MLA Purnima Das Sahu, former state president Dineshanand Goswami, and state spokesperson Amarpreet Singh Kale, marched to the District Deputy Commissioner's office and submitted a memorandum addressed to the Governor, demanding strict action



against the minister. Speaking to the media, Amarpreet Singh Kale sharply criticized the statement, calling it "a direct attack on the unity, integrity, and constitutional framework of the country." He added, "Such remarks are not only unfortunate but also instigate societal division and threaten the democratic fabric of our nation. A person holding a constitutional position who disrespects the Constitution is unfit to continue in office." The BJP's memorandum

urged the minister to take immediate disciplinary action. The protest witnessed the participation of senior party leaders, along with active members of the BJP Mahila Morcha, Yuva Morcha, various Mandal presidents, and hundreds of dedicated workers. The BJP has made it clear that it will not tolerate any attempts to undermine the supremacy of the Constitution and will continue to raise its voice against divisive narratives.

CMPDIL inks MoA with ECL for on Solar Power Projects

PNS : RANCHI

CMPDIL has signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with ECL to implement Solar Power Projects, including Ground Mounted, Rooftop, and Floating installations. The MoA was signed by Sudarshan Prasad, GM (E&M)/HoD, CMPDI and Sarvesh Kumar, GM (E&M)/HoD, ECL, in the presence of S. Nagachari, Director (Technical/CRD), CMPDI, along with other senior officials from both CMPDI and ECL.



Under this agreement, CMPDIL will serve as the Project Management Consultant (PMC),

managing all project phases from initiation to post-award execution. This collaboration aims to accelerate ECL's solar power initiatives, furthering its commitment toward achieving Net Zero Targets and advancing Carbon Neutrality.

Maoist Commander with 1 Crore reward, 7 others, killed in encounter

Security forces recover huge cache of arms and explosives in Lugu pahad area of Bokaro

PNS : RANCHI

In a significant blow to the Maoist insurgency in Jharkhand, a top Maoist commander known as Vivek, who had a bounty of ₹1 crore on his head, was gunned down along with seven other Maoist operatives in a fierce encounter with security forces in the Bokaro district on Monday.

The deadly gun battle unfolded during the early hours of the day in the forested and hilly terrain near the Lugu Pahad area, which is known to be a Maoist stronghold. The operation was carried out jointly by the elite CoBRA battalion of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Jharkhand State Police.

State police informed that the operation was launched based on precise intelligence



Security personnel with seized arms and ammunition pose for a picture in Bokaro on Monday. PNS

inputs indicating the movement of a large group of armed Maoists in the region. Acting swiftly on the information, the joint security team moved into the area, and as they approached the suspected location, the Maoists opened fire, triggering a heavy exchange of gunfire.

The gunfight continued for nearly two hours, during which the security forces retaliated with full force. As a result, eight Maoists, including some high-profile leaders, were neutralized on the spot. Among those killed was Arvind Yadav, who had a bounty of Rs 25 lakh, and

another Maoist, Saheb Ram Manjhi, who carried a reward of ₹10 lakh.

The primary target of the operation, the Maoist commander known by several aliases including Vivek, Prayag Manjhi, Phuchna, and Karan Da, was a notorious figure in the outlawed CPI

(Maoist) organization. He hailed from Dalubuda village in Tundi, located in the Dhanbad district. He had been active for decades and was accused in numerous criminal cases involving violence, extortion, and attacks on security forces.

Following the encounter, a large cache of arms and ammunition was seized from the site. This included sophisticated weapons, cartridges, explosives, wireless communication devices, and Maoist propaganda material. Security forces also recovered bodies from the site and called in local villagers to help with identification.

The operation is being hailed as one of the most successful anti-Maoist actions in the state in recent times and is expected to significantly impact Maoist operations in the region.



Ravi Shankar Shukla, Deputy Commissioner, Seraikella Kharsawan receiving the PM Award for Excellence, 2024 in the category Aspirational Block Programme by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the occasion of Civil Services Day, held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi on Monday. PNS

Transport Minister asks officials to achieve revenue target in time

PNS : RANCHI

A meeting was held in the Project Bhawan Auditorium, Ranchi under the chairmanship of Transport Minister Deepak Biruwa, Transport Secretary Vipra Bhal, Joint Secretary Sangeeta Lal, Joint Secretary Manoj Kumar, Joint Transport Commissioner Pradeep Kumar, Joint Transport Commissioner, Praveen Prakash, Under Secretary Irshad Alam, Raj Kishore Kumar, Meenakshi Bhagat, all Deputy Transport Commissioners - cum - Secretaries, Regional Transport Authority and all District Transport Officers for smooth implementation of the schemes implemented in the Revenue Collection and Transport Department.

In the meeting, the updated status related to the Transport Department and Road Safety in the state was presented and the District Transport Officers were warned for not achieving the target and were directed to complete the target in the coming month. The Minister directed all the Districts and Departments to work in a



Transport Minister Deepak Biruwa holds a meeting with officials in Ranchi on Monday. PNS

planned manner from now onwards to achieve the target of the financial year 2025-26.

Also, work for achieving the revenue target as per the action plan for the next three months. The Minister provided information related to the implementation of new schemes in this financial year.

The new schemes include Guru Ji Prashikshan Driver Scheme by the Government for Heavy Motor Vehicle Training, in which the Government can provide training to unemployed youth and provide them employment.

Further action to be taken for establishment of 11 checkpoints at places adjoining the state border, through which awareness related to heavy motor vehicles, drunk

driving and road safety will also be created.

Mukhyamantri Parivahan Kamgar Yojana - The State Government directed to constitute Jharkhand Transport Welfare Board to provide welfare and social security to all transport workers of unorganized sector by conducting detailed study of schemes/policies applicable in other states and implementing them within the state.

Chief Minister Gram Gaadi Yojana- This scheme has been implemented in the state. For this purpose, instructions have been given to provide the benefits of this scheme to the last beneficiary.

Instructions were given to provide four months training to the newly appointed Motor Vehicle Inspector.

Ex-RU VC releases Dr. Vidya Jha's book

PNS : RANCHI

Former Vice Chancellor of Ranchi University and renowned educationist Dr. Ramesh Chandra Pandey released the book 'Strategic Business Communication, A Practical Approach' based on business communication written by Dr. Vidya Jha here on Monday. The publisher of this book is Iterative International Publisher (IIP). Dr. Vidya Jha is currently working as Deputy Registrar and Assistant Lecturer in Department of Business Management at Sarla Birla University. Prior to this, she has also had a long experience of teaching business management at Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee University and Ranchi Women's College.

After the release, Dr. Ramesh Pandey said that through this book an attempt has been made to reduce the gap between the theory and practical approach of the world of communication. Dr. Pandey said that to reduce this gap, case studies, real life examples and practical strategies have been used. Dr. Pandey said that this book will serve as a handbook for leading leaders, managers, students and people starting their own business in the business world.



ED action is conspiracy to divert public attention: Jignesh Mewani

PNS : RANCHI

Gujarat Congress Working President Jignesh Mewani on Monday in Ranchi said that whenever the BJP government at the Center comes under the scanner on serious and real issues like inflation, unemployment, then the action of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) starts.

Amid protests by Congress workers across the country over the National Herald case, Mewani launched a scathing attack on the central government in a press conference. He alleged that this is a well-planned strategy, through which an attempt is made to scare the opposition and divert the attention of the public from the basic problems. Regarding the National Herald case, he said that there is no solid basis in it, it

has become just a political weapon, which the BJP and RSS are using to suppress the general public and opposition parties, he added.

The Congress Leader asked a sharp question to the central government, "Many big scams have happened in Gujarat, serious allegations have been leveled against the Adani Group as well, but when will the ED investigation start there?" He also added that will the investigation agencies be active only against opposition leaders and parties? At the end of the press conference, Mewani said in clear words, "BJP can do whatever it wants, but Congress workers are not going to be afraid. We will stand firmly in every situation for the protection of democracy and the rights of the people."



Congress MLA Jignesh Mewani addresses a press conference in Ranchi on Monday. JPC President Keshav Mahto Kamlesh and others are also seen in the picture. PNS

Meanwhile, Jharkhand Pradesh Youth Congress workers staged a strong protest outside the ED office in Ranchi against the conspiracy of the Modi government to implicate Sonia Gandhi and Leader of

Opposition Rahul Gandhi in fake cases, which was chaired by Youth Congress State President Abhijeet Raj, Congress Legislature Party Leader Pradeep Yadav attended the program as the chief guest.

Former RIMS director knocks HC door on his removal

PNS : RANCHI

Outgoing RIMS director Dr. Rajkumar has filed a petition in Jharkhand High Court. He has pleaded for justice to the court and said that the allegations on which he was removed from the post are absolutely wrong.

He said that if he had been asked to resign in the RIMS Governing Council meeting or even after that, he would have resigned from the post of RIMS director without wasting a minute, but due to the allegations with which he was humiliated and removed from the post, he had no other option but to knock the doors of the court.

Dr. Rajkumar said that if those people had told him earlier, he would have resigned on his own. He said that he did the right thing throughout his life, never did anything wrong and never earned money in a wrong way. He said that I was not



even given time to present my point of view. I did not get time to present proof. He said that he is not willing to go with the allegations. In such a situation, he has come to the court. He said that he has also attached many proofs with his petition.

RIMS Director Dr. Rajkumar was removed from the post of RIMS Director by Health Minister Dr. Irfan Ansari with immediate effect on the night of 17 April. At that time Dr. Rajkumar was in Delhi. It was said that he was removed from the post due to administrative inefficiency. It was written in the letter that while working on the post of Director, the decisions and instructions given

by the Council of Ministers, Governing Council and the Department in public interest were not followed and Dr. Rajkumar's service was not found satisfactory in fulfilling the objectives set by the RIMS Act, 2002.

Therefore, under Rule-9 (vi) of the RIMS Rules 2002, Dr. Rajkumar is removed from the post of Director, RIMS with immediate effect while giving him three months' salary and allowance in public interest. It was also said that this decision has received the approval of the Chief Minister. Dr. Shashibala Singh has been appointed as the interim director of the Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (Rims) following the abrupt removal of Dr. Raj Kumar on Thursday by the institute's governing council. The official notification of Dr. Singh's appointment was issued on Friday by the authorities.

Accelerate Aadhaar linking for beneficiaries of JMMSY: DC

PNS : RANCHI

While reviewing the progress of Jharkhand Mainiya Samman Yojana (MSY), Ranchi Deputy Commissioner (DC), Manjunath Bhanjantri asked whether the amount for the month of March has reached the accounts of the beneficiaries or not. The concerned officials informed that the amount has been sent to most of the accounts; Aadhaar linking of the remaining is being improved.

The DC directed to prepare panchayat-wise and bank-wise list and remove the errors soon.

In the high-level meeting, Bhanjantri gave clear instructions to all the circle officers that the cases of mutation should be executed in a timely and fair manner. He said that the circles in which the cases of mutation have been rejected without solid reason will be investigated and



Ranchi DC Manjunath Bhanjantri during a meeting in Ranchi on Monday. PNS

departmental action will be taken against the guilty officers.

The DC said that instructions were also given to prepare a list of pending cases and avoid rejection without valid reason. "Along with this, emphasis was laid on settling pending cases in revenue camps, especially in Namkum, Kanke, Ratu and

urban areas. The concerned officers were also asked to be extra cautious to run encroachment-free campaigns around the Collectorate premises and to prevent encroachment again in future," he said.

Instructions were given to the Additional Collector to organize special camps for correction in online register-

2. Bhanjantri said that smooth service should be provided to the citizens by removing the errors coming in digitization. Along with this, the need to stop encroachment on government land and prompt action in related matters was pointed out.

It was asked to ensure weekly review of all the complaints received on the 'Abua Sathi' helpline number (9430328080), so that the problems of the common people can be resolved quickly.

Apart from this, it was asked to organize a meeting with the representatives of all religions regarding DJ related matters, so that the orders of the High Court can be ensured to be followed. The Deputy Commissioner also gave necessary guidelines to the concerned officials regarding the Advocate Gratitude Yatra proposed on May 3 and the program organized at the Eastern

STATE GIRLS WIN 68TH NATIONAL SCHOOL GAMES FOOTBALL COMPETITION

PNS : RANCHI

At the 68th National School Games Football Competition, in the Under 19 competition held in Manipur from April 15, 2025 to April 21, 2025, the girls team of Jharkhand became the champion by defeating the host state Manipur by 2-0.

This victory is not just the result of a game, but is a living proof of the unwavering determination and months of hard work of these daughters who have inscribed their names in golden letters in history by fulfilling the promise made to the departmental minister. The girl's team of Jharkhand displayed their amazing sports skills and unbreakable coordination and won the championship title as Pooja Kumari and Reena Kumari scored one goal each for Jharkhand in the final match.

Expressing happiness over this historic victory, Departmental Minister Ramdas Soren said, "I am proud of the daughters of Jharkhand. They not only displayed a brilliant game,



but also fulfilled their promise made to the State. This victory will also inspire other daughters to work hard to realise their dreams. This victory is not just a trophy, but an inspiration for all those daughters of Jharkhand who want to make their name shine in the field of sports. These daughters have shown that any challenge can be overcome on the strength of tal-

ent and determination. The whole of Jharkhand is proud of these daughters and expects such a brilliant performance from them in the future as well." The Minister also praised the performance of the boys' team and said, "Even though the boys team became the runners-up in the match, but the Jharkhand team proved its talent in front of teams from all over the country in the

entire tournament. Becoming the runners-up is also a big achievement. There is no dearth of talent and ability in our boys. They have shown that Jharkhand is also moving forward in the field of football. This defeat is not the end, but a new beginning."

On the victory of the daughters of Jharkhand, Chief Minister Hemant Soren, Departmental

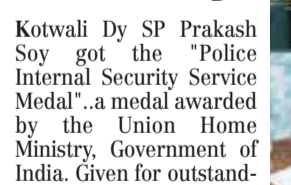
Minister Ramdas Soren, Departmental Secretary Umashankar Singh, Jharkhand Education Project Director Shashi Ranjan, State Program Officer Dheersen Soren and other officials of the Sports Cell have congratulated the entire team.

Before participating in the 68th National School Games Football Competition, the boys and girls team of

Jharkhand had met the Education Minister Ramdas Soren. The Minister had said that the land of Jharkhand is the land of Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Munda and that there is no dearth of sports talent here. "It is a matter of pride that our daughters and sons are going to participate in the national level competition and I have full hope that our team will bring honour and pride to Jharkhand."

Soren had instructed the departmental officials to provide all the necessary facilities to the team. Jharkhand's boys team became the runner-up in the 68th National School Games Football Competition. In the final match, the Jharkhand boys team was defeated by the Kerala team by a margin of 1-3. The Jharkhand's boys team performed brilliantly throughout the tournament. Jharkhand's boys team may have become the runner-up, but they set an unmatched example of hard work, dedication and team spirit. Both the teams are scheduled to leave for Jharkhand from Manipur tomorrow.

Home Ministry awards DSP Prakash Soy



Kotwali Dy SP Prakash Soy got the "Police Internal Security Service Medal", a medal awarded by the Union Home Ministry, Government of India. Given for outstanding contribution in the campaign against Naxals. He has played a big role during the ongoing Naxal operations in Jharkhand. Due to the sacrifice and struggle of many youths, Jharkhand is now rapidly progressing towards becoming Naxal-free.

BAU Veterinary Faculty Dean Dr Sushil Prasad passes away



Renowned animal scientist and Chairman of Animal Production and Management Department of Birsra Agricultural University, Dr Sushil Prasad passed away on Monday morning due to heart attack. He was about 65 years old and was to retire in August this year. After obtaining B.V.Sc. and M.V.Sc. degrees from Ranchi Veterinary College, he started his career as an Assistant Professor from the same college in 1989. During his service, he obtained a PhD degree from Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar. His family includes his wife Savita Prasad and married son Soochit Saurabh.

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.

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 lashed out at the Congress over its decision to hold press conferences across the country on the National Herald case, accusing it of attempting to create an "atmosphere of unrest" to save Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi.

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

— SAMBIT PATRA, BJP NATIONAL SPOKESPERSON

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) recently filed a chargesheet against Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi and others before a special court in New Delhi in the National Herald case, accusing them of allegedly laundering Rs 988 crore.

Patra alleged that money was generated through "bogus donations, bogus advertisement and bogus rent" in the case.

"The ED says the proceeds of crime in the case was worth Rs 988 crore," he said and added, "They are not going to be

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

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.

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 JP 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."



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 Santhal 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



Yadav speaking at a podium during a press conference.

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

paign 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 Bhatauli 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 Ralinde 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.

Condoled 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 petition also pertains to a larger issue. In this view, we are of the opinion that the petitioner can approach the Supreme Court and seek interference in the matters pending there. We are unable to grant any interim relief at this stage. We adjourn the matter sine die (indefinitely)," the HC said. The court said the present case may be genuine but allowing the same may have wider repercussions. This is not a simple case and involves a larger issue, the HC added.

"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

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)

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SANTHOSH MATHEW

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

Proposes "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 Ujjapan 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 Gavai 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 Government 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 government 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 Government 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 Government 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 Government.

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 Governments 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 Government 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 government.

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 Government partnerships for revenue instead of selling directly to farmers, which has impacted the growth and sustainability of most of them in the private market.



SAT KUMAR TOMAR

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 government 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 Romanorum 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 Bélard, 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," Bélard 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 Kilmir 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

Despite a Supreme Court ordering the Donald Trump administration to help facilitate Abrego Garcia's return, the administration has said it has no power to bring him back

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. Herzog also talked about Iran's efforts to achieve nuclear capability and Israel's resolve to foil it at any cost.

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. "It's all dedicated to one purpose, to ensure the defense of the Philippines and to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific."

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, "We have a huge respect for the nation of India and its leadership. Israelis love your country. I can only anxiously wait to visit your country and host your President and Prime Minister in Israel," Herzog told India's newly appointed Ambassador to Israel JP Singh, who presented his credentials at a ceremony at the President's Official residence. "I wish you great success in your term. We can only go from height to height," the Israeli President said, welcoming India's new envoy. He urged India and Israel "to work together on the geostrategic issues, on the strategic issues, getting the hostages back home, preventing Iran (from acquiring nuclear weapons),

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

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Baba Farid University of Health Sciences FARIDKOT Ph. 01639-256232, 256236 VACANCIES Online applications are invited w e f 24.04.2025 to 03.05.2025 from eligible candidates through University website i.e www.bfuis.ac.in for the recruitment to the posts of Psychologist-343 on Contract basis under Department of Directorate Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of Punjab.

PUBLIC NOTICE Public Notice regarding cancellation of property This Public Notice is from M/S JKG Construction Pvt Ltd for Mr Sudarshan Kumar S/O Mr Charan Das and Mrs Suroj Kumari W/O Mr Sudarshan Kumar bearing unit no. B2-505 at JKG Palm Court, Plot No. GH-01D, Sector 16C, Greater Noida West, Uttar Pradesh- 201009.

CHANGE OF NAME I, N.15435405K H/av (N) Gyanendra Devi, R/o-Villa & Po- Diya, Teh & Dist- Panna, M.P.- 488001, declare that in my service documents, my Father's Name is wrongly written as Buddhi Prakash Singh, whereas his correct Name is Buddhiprakash Singh same as entered in his Aadhar & Voter ID Card, which may be amended accordingly.

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NORTHERN RAILWAY Tender Notice Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement System Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001 for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items.

COURT NOTICE PROCLAMATION REGARDING ATTENDANCE OF DEFENDANT (Order 5, Rule 20 of the Code of Civil Procedure) IN THE COURT OF MS. KIRAN BANSAL LD. DJ. (COMM-02) SHAHDARA (CO-02) NO. 208 NEW COURT BUILDING KARKARDOOMA COURTS, DELHI. CS (COMM) NO. 619/2023 RAJEEV KUMAR NAHATA

ARMY PUBLIC SCHOOL, SRINAGAR BB, CANTT, BATWARA (J&K)- 190004 Website: www.apssrinagar.co.in TENDER NOTICE 1. On behalf of the Chairman APS, Srinagar two bid sealed quotations separately i.e Technical and Commercial bids are hereby invited from experienced vendors for the supplying and installation of one 58.5 KVA branded Diesel Generator 3 phase with earthing, full wiring complete installation on ground with complete warranty at Foundation Wing Army Public School, BB Cantt, Srinagar. Vidhyut Rakshak: The system shall include various sensors like fuel and temperature, communication protocol and cloud based platform to enable remote monitoring and management of series of diesel generators thereby enhancing efficiency, reducing downtime and optimizing maintenance processes.

PIRAMAL CAPITAL & HOUSING FINANCE LTD. CIN : L65910MH1984PLC032639 Registered Office: Unit No.-601,6th Floor, Piramal Amiti Building, Piramal Agastya Corporate Park, Kamani Junction, Opp. Fire Station, LBS Marg, Kurla (West), Mumbai - 400070 Branch Address : Dhiraj Baug, Building "A" Ground & 1st Floor, Beside Axis Bank, Opp. Monalisa Building, Agra Road, Hari Niwas Circle, Naupada, Thane (West) - 400 602.

Table with 3 columns: Name of the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s), Demand Notice Date and Amount with NPA date, and Description of secured asset (immovable property). It lists various borrowers and their secured assets across different locations like Noida, Delhi, and Gurgaon.

India hopes for positive BTA: FM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ San Francisco

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said India is "actively engaging" with the new US administration and hopes to conclude the first tranche of the bilateral trade agreement (BTAs) "positively" by fall (September-October) this year.

"We are one of the countries which is actively engaged with the new administration of the United States of America to see how best we can get a bilateral trade agreement done," he said during an interaction with the Indian diaspora here.

"Earlier this year, US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed to launch talks for a bilateral trade deal amid the lurking fear of reciprocal tariff being imposed by Washington.

"Equally, the priority that we gave to engage with the government here is more than obviously seen with the Prime Minister himself visiting the United States in February. You had the

On April 9, US President Trump announced a 90-day suspension of tariffs until July 9 this year, except for those on China and Hong Kong, as about 75 countries approached America for trade deals

Commerce and Trade Minister come. I have come here because I also have the IMF and World Bank meeting.

"I am scheduled to meet the treasury secretary, my counterpart here. So the keenness with which we are engaging with the US administration, even as I talk, I think the US vice-president is in India. He will be engaging with the Prime Minister hopefully this evening or tomorrow," she said.

The US and India have aimed for a bilateral trade agreement (BTA), which is a kind of free trade pact. The two have decided to conclude the proposed BTA in two tranches or phases.

"So, the long and short of engaging

with the US is not just reciprocal tariff-related matter but in the interest of keeping an agreement in mind and in the interest of one of the largest trading partners with whom we need to have agreement we are working in order that by the fall this year we should have first phase of agreement signed," she said.

The US President announced sweeping reciprocal tariffs (or import duties) on a number of countries, including India and China, on April 2.

However, on April 9, he announced a 90-day suspension of these tariffs until July 9 this year, except for those on China and Hong Kong, as about 75 countries approached America for trade deals. China is facing up to 245 per cent duty on its goods entering the US.

"In between all this, the Assistant USTR (US Trade Representative) had visited India to see the progress or to engage with the negotiating team who is dealing with the tariff-related negotiation and the bilateral trade agreement that we want to sign. In fact, the progress of the agreement, or the trade agreement that

we are working on, at least a first tranche is something which we hope to conclude positively by the fall this year," she said.

Responding to a query on India's future global leadership and how the current budget supports this ambition, Sitharaman highlighted India's progress in critical areas like semiconductors, renewable energy — including modular nuclear energy — digital infrastructure, and artificial intelligence (AI).

She further said the government at the Centre is working with the objective to make India a developed nation by 2047.

"Our government's primary focus is Viksit Bharat by 2047 and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emphasised that it can be achieved by looking after the four main 'castes' — Women, Poor, Youth and Farmers," she said.

India's focus is also on the 'Sunrise Sectors' which are important to build our capacities and areas such as Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) where India has emerged as a global leader, she said.

Need 8 million jobs every year next decade: CEA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York

India has to generate 8 million jobs per year at least for the next 10-12 years and raise the share of manufacturing in GDP as it strives to achieve the vision of becoming a developed country by 2047, Chief Economic Advisor to the Government of India V Anantha Nageswaran said.

"We have a vision to achieve a developed India by 2047. The biggest challenge, apart from India's size, is that the external environment is not going to be so benign for the next 10-20 years as one might have had in the last 30 years, starting from 1990 or so," Nageswaran said here Saturday.

"But within this context - that's a given, you can't choose your external environment beyond a point - we have to generate 8 million jobs per year at least for the next 10 to 12 years... And raise the manufacturing share of GDP, in the context of China having achieved such a tremendous manufacturing dominance, especially post-COVID," he said.

Nageswaran was addressing the Columbia India Summit 2025 hosted by the Deepak and Neera Raj Centre on Indian Economic Policies at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University.

He outlined that artificial intelligence, technology, and robotics are challenges that some of the developed countries of today do not have to face in their developmental journey.

"But India, with its size, has to navigate this huge, complex challenge, and there are

no easy answers. If you look at the number of jobs we need to create, it's about 8 million jobs a year. And Artificial Intelligence may have a big role in taking away entry-level jobs, or low IT-enabled services jobs may come under threat," he said.

He added that it is one thing to prepare the population for a world dominated by AI, but it is another thing to ensure that "we find the right balance between labour-centric policies and technology, because technology at the end of the day is not just a choice to be made by technologists. It has to be made by public policymakers."

As India moves towards achieving the vision of 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047, the centennial year of its independence, it has to plug Indian businesses into global value chains as well as create a viable small and medium enterprise sector because manufacturing and MSME both go together. "Countries that became manufacturing powerhouses did not do so without having a viable small and medium enterprise sector," he said.

Nageswaran further said that either investment rates have to rise from where they are or "we have to make sure that we extract maximum possible juice out of existing investments because global capital flows are also going to be affected by ongoing conflicts between nations."

He said that, therefore, it is not that external trade is not going to matter.

"It will matter and we need to focus on that because external competitiveness is also a way to boost domestic innovation, domestic potential growth."

China threatens countries striking trade deals with US

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Beijing

China on Monday threatened to impose countermeasures on countries seeking to strike trade deals with the US at its expense in order to get American tariff exemptions.

In a pre-emptive move to stall a host of nations with whom China has lucrative trade ties from striking exclusive trade deals with the US to get tariff exemptions, the Commerce Ministry spokesperson warned that Beijing will firmly oppose such agreements.

The spokesperson made these remarks in a statement while responding to reports that the US is preparing to pressure other countries to restrict trade ties with China in exchange for tariff exemptions, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

"If such a situation arises, China will not accept it and will resolutely take corresponding countermeasures," the spokesperson said, adding that "trying to trade away others' interests for temporary gains is like bargaining with a tiger for its

skin - it will only backfire."

The ministry warned that it will not tolerate any deals made by foreign governments at the expense of Chinese interests. It added that China has the right to resolve and the capability to safeguard its legitimate rights and interests.

"This is essentially using the banner of 'reciprocity' as a pretext to pursue hegemonic politics and unilateral bullying in the field of international economy and trade," it said.

China's tough stand came against the backdrop of reports that several countries, against whom US President Donald Trump imposed varied tariffs, are now seeking to work out bilateral trade deals with Washington to resume their exports to access the lucrative US market. Last week, the Wall Street Journal reported that the US plans to use tariff negotiations to pressure dozens of countries into imposing new barriers on trade with China.

Several countries and groups, including Japan, the EU and ASEAN, have lucrative trade with both China and the

China's stand comes against the backdrop of reports that several countries, against whom US President Donald Trump imposed tariffs, are now seeking to work out bilateral trade deals with Washington

US. India too is negotiating a new trade deal with the US.

China is already battling Trump's up to 245 per cent tariffs on its exports to the US, which last year amounted to \$ 439.9 billion, by retaliating with 125 per cent levies against American exports.

Any bilateral trade deals by its major trade partners with the US could seriously impact China's overseas trade, which amounted to \$ 3.67 trillion, according to WTO data. This includes exports last year to its largest trade partners like ASEAN (\$ 586.52 billion), EU (\$ 580 billion) and Japan (\$ 167.12 billion) as per official data.

China's firm stand opposing any bilat-

eral deals with the US also comes at a time when its export-dependent economy is on a slowdown mode weighed down by stagnating domestic consumption, the crisis in its housing sector and dwindling business confidence.

Beijing's new threat to its trade partners was expected to leave these countries in a quandary as many of them are major exporters to China.

After Trump set off the tariff war with China while pausing tariffs against other countries, President Xi Jinping visited Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia last week, during which he called for "jointly opposing unilateral bullying."

After Xi's talks with top Vietnamese leaders last week, Trump sounded a warning, saying "That's a lovely meeting. Meeting like trying to figure out, how do we screw the United States of America?" Caught in the US and China trade war, ASEAN countries want to tread carefully. "We can't choose, and we will never choose (between China and the US)," Malaysia's trade minister Tengku Zafrul Aziz said after Xi's visit.

NCLAT upholds liquidation of Sintex

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The insolvency appellate tribunal NCLAT has upheld an NCLT order directing liquidation of debt-ridden Sintex Plastics Technology.

A two-member bench of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) also rejected the submission of an unsuccessful bidder that NCLT passed an order for liquidation even though its lone CoC member had abstained from voting. RBL Bank was the sole member of the Committee of Creditors (CoC) of Sintex, owning 100 per cent votes.

Subhlaxmi Investment Advisory, one of the resolution applicants, had contended before the NCLAT that the sole member of the CoC abstained from voting, therefore, technically, the resolution plan submitted by it was not rejected.

However, rejecting it, the NCLAT said... The very fact that the sole member of the CoC did not vote in favour of the resolution plan submitted by the appellant (Subhlaxmi Investment), there-

fore, it had exercised its commercial wisdom and chose to abstain from voting."

This has been held by the Supreme Court in the case of K Sashidhar that commercial wisdom of the CoC is paramount, therefore, the reason cannot be questioned by the appellant, said NCLAT.

"...So far as the application for liquidation, having been filed without consent of the CoC is concerned, the argument of the appellant is not tenable because in the 6th CoC meeting, there was discussion regarding the possibility of the liquidation and in the course of said discussion, the CoC sought recommendation for the nomination of liquidator," said NCLAT in its order passed on April 4, 2025.

In this regard, erstwhile resolution professional (RP) sent an e-mail to the CoC seeking its consent to file the liquidation application and the nomination of a liquidator, to which the sole member of the CoC gave consent by returning the e-mail on the same.

Moreover, after three extensions, CIRP (Corporate Insolvency Resolution

Process) had expired on March 30, 2024, therefore, the RP had to file an application for liquidation under Section 33(1) of the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code.

The application for the liquidation of Sintex Plastics was filed on April 12, 2024, and the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) allowed it on May 3, 2024, which was challenged before NCLAT.

"Keeping in view the aforesaid facts and circumstances which have also been noticed by the Tribunal, we do not find any error in the impugned order for the purpose of interference, therefore, the present appeal is found to be without any merit and the same is hereby dismissed though without any order as to costs," said NCLT.

Section 12 (1) of IBC mandates a CIRP to be completed within a time frame of 180 days from the date of admission of the application; however, under the request of the RP, NCLT can extend the duration for another 90 days.

It should be mandatorily completed within 330 days, including any extension and the time taken in legal proceedings.

EPFO added 16.10 lakh members in February

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Retirement fund body EPFO added 16.10 lakh new members in February, marking a 3.99 per cent increase compared to the same month last year, according to the latest payroll data released on Monday.

Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) enrolled around 7.39 lakh new subscribers in February 2025, a labour ministry statement said.

This addition of new subscribers can be attributed to growing employment opportunities, increased awareness of employee benefits, and EPFO's successful outreach programs, the ministry stated.

The EPFO has released provisional payroll data for February 2025, revealing a net addition of 16.10 lakh members, according to the statement.

The year-on-year analysis reveals a growth of 3.99 per cent in net payroll additions compared to February 2024, signifying increased employment opportunities and heightened awareness of employee benefits, bolstered by EPFO's effective

A noticeable aspect of the data is the dominance of the 18-25 age group, which accounted for 4.27 lakh new subscribers in February 2025. They formed a significant per cent of the total new subscribers

outreach initiatives.

A noticeable aspect of the data is the dominance of the 18-25 age group, which accounted for 4.27 lakh new subscribers in February 2025. This segment constituted a significant 57.71 per cent of the total new subscribers added during the month.

This is in consonance with the earlier trend, which indicates that most individuals joining the organised workforce are youth, primarily first-time job seekers, it opined.

Further, the net payroll addition for the age group 18-25 for February 2025 is approximately 6.78 lakh, reflecting a growth of 3.01 per cent from the previous year in February 2024.

Approximately 13.18 lakh members, who had exited earlier, rejoined the EPFO in February 2025, the data showed.

This figure depicts a significant 11.85 per cent year-over-year growth compared to February 2024.

These members switched their jobs and re-joined the establishments covered under the ambit of EPFO. Instead of opting for final settlement, they chose to transfer their accumulated funds, thereby safeguarding their long-term financial well-being and extending their social security protection.

As per the data, around 2.08 lakh new female subscribers joined EPFO in February 2025. It depicts year-over-year growth of 1.26 per cent compared to February 2024.

Further, the net female payroll addition during the month stood at around 3.37 lakh, a significant year-over-year growth of 9.23 per cent compared to February 2024. The growth in female member additions is indicative of a broader shift towards a more inclusive and diverse workforce.

Stock markets rally for 5th day; IT, banking gain

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Rallying for the fifth day in a row, benchmark Sensex jumped 855 points to close above the 79,000 mark on heavy buying in banking and IT shares following strong quarterly results and foreign fund inflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 855.30 points or 1.09 per cent to settle at 79,408.50 with 23 of its components ending in green. During the day, it surged 1,081.85 points or 1.37 per cent to 79,635.05. The NSE Nifty climbed 273.90 points or 1.15 per cent to close at 24,125.55 as 39 of its constituents advanced and 11 declined.

In the five-day rally, Sensex jumped by 5,561.35 points or over 7 per cent and Nifty surged by 1,726.40 points, recouping all the losses triggered by imposition of reciprocal tariffs by US President Donald Trump tariffs on April 2.

Among Sensex scrips, Tech Mahindra, IndusInd Bank, Power Grid, Bajaj Finserv, Mahindra & Mahindra, HCL Tech, State Bank of India, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Infosys, HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries were the biggest gainers. Adani Ports, Hindustan Unilever, ITC, Asian Paints and Nestle were among the laggards.

HDFC Bank shares climbed over 1 per cent after the leading private lender reported a 7 per cent growth in its consolidated net profit for the March quarter to ₹18,835 crore.

Infosys shares rallied over 2 per cent

after the company's March quarter net profit rose by 3.3 per cent sequentially.

Reliance Industries shares surged nearly 2 per cent which also boosted the rally in benchmark indices. The BSE midcap gauge surged 2.20 per cent and the small-cap index jumped 1.67 per cent.

On the market rally, Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said, "The bulls took over, which led the Nifty to cross 24k in the third attempt over the last 3 months and fuelled Bank Nifty to touch a new high. The possibility of a bilateral trade agreement with the US is adding optimism in the market." The better results from bank stocks owing to improved asset quality and credit growth attracted investors, analysts said.

"A contrarian bet on IT due to its attractive valuation with an expectation of improvement in spending in the latter half of FY26 is keeping the counter busy. While the dollar index slumps to a three-year low, another layer of uncertainty may attract more FII inflows into the domestic market in the near term," Nair added.

All BSE sectoral indices ended higher, with oil & gas soaring 2.61 per cent, power (2.49 per cent), BSE Focused IT (2.42 per cent), IT (2.31 per cent), realty (2.27 per cent), auto (2.12 per cent) and metal (2 per cent). As many as 2,918 stocks advanced while 1,168 declined and 161 remained unchanged on the BSE.

In the past five days, the BSE benchmark gauge zoomed 5,561.35 points or 7.53 per cent, and the Nifty surged 1,726.40 points or 7.70 per cent.

Rupee gains 25 paise to settle at 85.13 against US dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

The rupee sustained its rally for the fifth straight session and settled with gains of 25 paise at 85.13 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, boosted by a sharp fall in the dollar index and a surge in the domestic equities.

The dollar index has breached the 99 mark and is trading at its lowest level in three years. Moreover, fresh foreign fund inflows and decline in crude oil prices also favoured the rupee, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.15 and moved between the intraday high of 85.03 and the low of 85.19 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 85.13 (provisional), registering a gain of 25 paise over its previous closing level.

On Thursday, the rupee closed 26 paise higher at 85.38 against the US dollar.

The Forex market was closed on Friday on account of Good Friday. In the five trading sessions, the Indian currency has added 155 paise since its April 9 closing mark of 86.68 against the greenback.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a positive bias on weak US Dollar and easing trade tariff worries. Improved global risk appetite and fresh foreign inflows may also support the rupee. However, importer buying of dollars may cap sharp gains. \$/INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 84.80 to 85.35," Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.15 and moved between the intraday high of 85.03 and the low of 85.19 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 85.13

basket of six currencies, was trading lower by 1.13 per cent at 98.10.

The US dollar has been facing sustained pressure, with the Dollar Index (DXY) down over 9 per cent year-to-date. This reflects growing expectations that the Federal Reserve may eventually be forced to pivot, experts said.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, fell 2.80 per cent at \$ 66.06 per barrel in futures trade.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 855.30 points or 1.09 per cent to settle at 79,408.50, while the Nifty rose 273.90 points or 1.15 per cent to 24,125.55.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹4,667.94 crore on a net basis on Thursday, according to exchange data.

Meanwhile, India's forex reserves increased by \$ 1.567 billion to \$ 677.835 billion for the week ended April 11, the Reserve Bank said on Friday.

This is the sixth consecutive week of a rise in the kitty. The overall reserves jumped by \$ 10.872 billion to \$ 676.268 billion in the previous reporting week ended April 4.

Gold hits ₹1 lakh in Delhi on strong US Dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Gold prices inched closer to the psychological mark of ₹1 lakh per 10 grams as the bullion rates surged ₹1,650 in the national capital on Monday on weak dollar and uncertainties over US-China trade war driving demand. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity reached ₹99,800 per 10 grams on Monday. Its value had declined ₹20 to close at ₹98,150 per 10 grams on Friday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity bounced ₹1,600 to hit a fresh peak of ₹99,300 per 10 grams in the local markets. It had fallen marginally to settle at ₹97,700 per 10 grams in the previous market close.

So far this year, the yellow metal prices have risen ₹20,850, or 26.41 per cent, per 10 grams since December 31, last year. Silver prices also appreciated ₹500 to ₹98,500 per kg. The white metal had traded flat at ₹98,000 per kg on Friday.

"This year, gold and silver prices have experienced significant movements due to ongoing trade tensions, rate cut expectations, geopolitical uncertainties and weakening dollar. So far, gold has soared over 25 per cent, including a 6 per cent gain since April 2 tariff announcement by the US administration," Satish Dondapati, Fund Manager at Kotak Mahindra AMC, said.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange, gold futures for June delivery jumped ₹1,621, or 1.7 per cent, to touch a fresh

high of ₹96,875 per 10 grams. In the international markets, spot gold rose to hit a fresh peak of \$ 3,397.18 per ounce. Later, it pared some gains to trade at \$ 3,393.49 per ounce.

Globally, gold futures breached the psychological \$ 3,400-mark for the first time ever, rising \$ 80 per ounce, or 2.4 per cent.

"Gold prices continued their positive momentum and have risen briefly above \$ 3,400 per ounce, as trade tariff related uncertainty, weakness in the US dollar and rising Treasury yields continue to keep the bullion supported."

"There has been increased buying activity among ETF investors, while upcoming festive demand in India is seen fulfilling additional support," Pranav Mer, Vice President, EBG of Commodity & Currency Research at JM Financial Services, said. Kaynat Chainwala, AVP of Commodity Research, Kotak Securities said gold prices continued its rally as the US dollar fell to a new three-year low and safe-haven buying intensified following US President Donald Trump's threat to fire Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell.

Spot silver in the Asian market hours rose nearly 1 per cent to \$ 32.85 per ounce. According to Abans Financial Services' Chief Executive Officer Chintan Mehta, market participants will closely watch President Trump's evolving tariff strategy and its broader economic impact, alongside commentary from Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) members for clues on interest rate direction.

Oscar Piastri wins F1's Saudi Arabian Grand Prix

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Jeddah

Oscar Piastri has shown he has the pace to fight for the Formula 1 title. In winning the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix, he showed he can win an argument, too.

For the first time this season, a penalty played a key role in deciding a race win as Piastri went top of the standings with his victory.

Piastri's two earlier wins this season had been dominant drives from pole position. This time he had to get past four-time champion Max Verstappen.

Verstappen started on pole but went off the track when battling for the lead with Piastri at the very first corner. He stayed in front but got a five-second penalty. Piastri argued he had got in front of Verstappen on the inside of the corner and deserved the place.

"Once I got on the inside, I was not coming out of turn one in second," Piastri said.

"I tried my best. Obviously the stewards had to get involved. I thought I was plenty far enough up and that's what won me the race."

Charles Leclerc was third for Ferrari and Piastri's McLaren teammate, Lando Norris,



finished fourth thanks to a smart strategy and overtaking. Norris had started 10th following a crash in qualifying.

It was the second win in a row for Piastri, who took the victory in Bahrain last week and has three wins from five races this year. He'd only won two before this season.

Piastri leads the standings by 10 points from Norris, with Verstappen two points further back in third.

Piastri was three points behind Norris going into Sunday's race, partly because of a costly spin at his home race in Australia, the first GP of the season.

He becomes the first Australian to lead the F1 standings since Mark Webber — who is now Piastri's manager — in 2010 as a Red Bull driver. No Australian has won the title since Alan Jones in 1980.

A race-deciding decision

Piastri said the penalty was what gave him the win. He had problems keeping up with Verstappen's car before the pit stops without damaging his tires.

Piastri beat Verstappen off the line and was slightly ahead into the first corner, only for Verstappen to run wide across the chicane. Following a crash between Yuki Tsunoda and Pierre Gasly seconds later,

Piastri and Verstappen argued their cases over the radio while lined up behind the safety car. Verstappen accused Piastri of forcing him off but the stewards disagreed and gave the Dutch driver a five-second penalty for driving off-track and gaining an advantage. That was "lovely," Verstappen reacted sarcastically. He had to serve the penalty parked at his pit stop before the crew could touch the car to change tires.

Norris' gamble

Norris recovered to fourth after starting 10th. Norris' strategy was the opposite of most of the field, starting on the slower, longer-lasting hard tires. It meant he briefly led the race after most other drivers had pitted earlier and could have put him in a position to win if there was an incident requiring the safety car or red flag while he was leading.

There nearly was a big crash when Fernando Alonso and Gabriel Bortoleto banged wheels while battling for position near the back of the field. Two-time champion Alonso ran into a runoff area but kept his car under control.

Liverpool victory over Leicester in Premier League

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Manchester

The Premier League title is so close Liverpool can almost touch it. Trent Alexander-Arnold's second-half strike in Liverpool's 1-0 victory over Leicester on Sunday pushed the Merseyside club to within one more win of a record-equalling 20th English league crown. It would not even require that if second-placed Arsenal loses to Crystal Palace on Wednesday. But regardless of any other result, Liverpool knows victory against Tottenham at Anfield next Sunday will be enough to seal the title.

"One win away now, it's very close," said Alexander-Arnold, who tore his jersey off in celebration after his decisive goal.

Arsenal had ensured Liverpool would have to wait a while longer for its crowning moment after routing Ipswich 4-0 earlier Sunday.

And for long periods at the King Power Stadium, Leicester threatened to frustrate the league leader — even having a Conor Coady goal disallowed before Alexander-Arnold's winner.

Defeat confirmed 2016 league champion Leicester's relegation.

Wolves sealed top-flight safety by beating Manchester United 1-0 after Pablo Sarabia's brilliant second-half free kick.

Chelsea moved up to fifth by rallying to beat Fulham 2-1 with two late goals.

One more win. That's all it will take for Liverpool to be crowned champion and

move level with Manchester United's record title haul. And the joy on Alexander-Arnold's face after crashing a left-footed shot past Leicester goalkeeper Mads Hermansen in the 76th minute underlined the importance of the win.

Liverpool struggled to find a breakthrough despite hitting the frame of the goal including twice in the buildup to Alexander-Arnold's strike

While the title has looked destined for Anfield for much of the season, this was the latest occasion in recent weeks when the strains of the campaign have seemed to weigh on Liverpool.

Against a Leicester team that needed to win to hold off relegation, Liverpool struggled to find a breakthrough despite hitting the frame of the goal — including twice in the buildup to Alexander-Arnold's strike. Leicester also saw an effort from Wilfred Ndidi hit the post in the first half and Coady had a goal ruled out for a foul on Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson.

On came Alexander-Arnold, who is widely tipped to join Real Madrid at the end of the season, and he provided the decisive moment.

After a goalmouth scramble had seen Mohamed Salah and Diogo Jota hit the woodwork, Alexander-Arnold's shot went

down to earth after yet another Premier League defeat.

A 15th league loss of the season is a club record high for United in the Premier League era. United has not lost so many games in a league season since the 1989-90 campaign when it was defeated 16 times in England's old Division One.

According to statistician Opta, eight home defeats in the league is the most since United was beaten nine times in 1962-63.

United is already certain to set the club's worst-ever points total in the Premier League. The latest loss left Ruben Amorim's team on 38 points. United's lowest total was 58 in the 2021-22 season.

With five rounds remaining, even a perfect finish would only see United amass 53. "We have to score goals. We need to improve in that area of the game clearly. If you don't score goals, you don't win games," United coach Amorim said.

Wolves, meanwhile, made it five wins in a row in the Premier League — and set a new club best in the Premier League.

Substitute Sarabia had only been on the field for three minutes when he curled a free kick from outside of the area into the top corner.

Wolves moved level on points with United to ensure it would avoid the drop.

Chelsea's Champions League hopes looked set to take a hit when trailing 1-0 to Fulham and with time running out at Craven Cottage.

Bayer Leverkusen draw 1-1 with St Pauli in Bundesliga

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Augsburg

Bayer Leverkusen's hopes of a second consecutive Bundesliga title faded with a 1-1 draw at St. Pauli on Sunday. Patrik Schick put Leverkusen ahead in the first half but Carlo Boukhalfa equalised in the 78th to leave the defending champion eight points behind Bayern Munich with four rounds remaining.

Bayern, which beat Heidenheim 4-0 on Saturday, could clinch the title on Saturday if it beats Mainz and Leverkusen loses to Augsburg.

Last season, Leverkusen completed an unprecedented unbeaten Bundesliga season for its first Germany league title — and also went unbeaten to lift the German Cup.

Dortmund wins after Champions League elimination

Borussia Dortmund beat Borussia Muenchengladbach 3-2 in Dortmund's first game since its Champions League elimination.

Dortmund scored three goals in the space of nine minutes to turn the game around just before halftime.

Fresh off scoring a hat trick against Barcelona on Tuesday, Serhou Guirassy leveled the score in the 41st off Pascal Gross' cross following Ko Itakura's opener for Muenchengladbach.

Felix Nmecha made it 2-1 off a cross

from Yan Couto soon after. Daniel Svensson added a third in the fifth minute of first-half added time with a looping header on the rebound when a Guirassy shot was saved.

Kevin Stoger pulled one back for Muenchengladbach with a second-half penalty. On-loan Chelsea midfielder Carney Chukwuemeka played a prominent role in the buildup to all three of Dortmund's goals after missing the Barcelona loss with injury.

Augsburg rescues a point

A last-second clearance from Cédric Zesiger rescued a point for Augsburg in a 0-0 draw with Eintracht Frankfurt that set back both teams' efforts to qualify for European competition next season.

Frankfurt's Ansgar Knauff seemed certain to score after dribbling past defender Zesiger and goalkeeper Finn Dahmen but Zesiger sprinted back and slid to block Knauff's shot in front of an unguarded net.

Augsburg nearly took the win in the final minutes but Frankfurt goalkeeper Kevin Trapp reacted quickly to push Phillip Tietz's shot around the post.

Frankfurt stays third but has won just four of 12 Bundesliga games since forward Omar Marmoush left for Manchester City in January as teams behind have gained ground.



Saint-Etienne beats Lyon

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Paris

Saint-Etienne boosted its chances of staying in Ligue 1 after winning a match which had been interrupted Sunday when a linesman was hit on the head by a projectile.

Saint-Etienne beat Lyon 2-1 to dent its local rival's hopes of qualifying directly for the Champions League.

The high-octane match was halted for 45 minutes after linesman Mehdi Rahmouni was hit by a projectile — possibly a coin — thrown from the crowd close to halftime at Stade Geoffroy-Guichard. Belgian forward Lucas Stassin scored before and after the interruption to reach 12 league goals and the 20-year-old's scoring prowess could prove crucial to keeping his side up.

Saint-Etienne moved level on points with 16th-placed Le Havre in the relegation-playoff spot, with four games left.

Lyon's goal came from American defender Tanner Tessmann's fine curler from the edge of the penalty area in the 76th minute. It was his first goal for the club. "We needed to start the game better," Tessmann said. "The first half was really bad." French league officials met to decide whether to continue the match and agreed to do so because Rahmouni was not injured.

The match resumed at 10:15 p.m. Local time with the closing stages of the first half, and Rahmouni was given a thumbs up by referee François Letexier and a warm ovation as he took up his position.

Letexier had halted the game in the 45th minute. It was unclear who threw the projectile. There were no away fans

at the match for security reasons due to a high risk of clashes between rival supporters. Saint-Etienne was leading 1-0 at the time. Left back Léo Pétrot curled in a pinpoint cross to Stassin, who headed in from close range and celebrated among the fans.

Stassin was shown a red card in the 23rd minute for a crude foul on Lyon midfielder Corentin Tolisso, who had to be taken off, but Letexier changed his decision following a video review and Stassin received only a yellow card.

The decision enraged Lyon president John Textor. "One of the most obvious red cards one can see is waved off," the American posted on Instagram.

Canada striker Jonathan David scored two goals and set up the other as Lille beat Auxerre 3-1 to maintain its push for a Champions League place next season.

Lille's win moved it provisionally up to fourth place and pressured Lyon, which had to win. The top three sides in France earn an automatic place into Europe's elite club competition, while the side in fourth enters qualifying.

Belgium right back Thomas Meunier gave Lille an early lead after being found by David, who then netted late in the first half with a clinical first-time effort.

After an own-goal from Brazilian defender Alessandro made it 2-1, David ran through deep into injury time and held off defenders before grabbing his 16th league goal of what is likely to be his final season at Lille.

He is expected to move to a leading European club this summer. Since joining Lille in 2020, he has scored 107 goals in 228 games.

Neeraj Chopra Classic javelin event shifted to Bengaluru

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The maiden edition of Neeraj Chopra Classic javelin throw event on May 24 has been shifted from Panchkula to Bengaluru due to lack of adequate lighting at the original venue but the field will be teeming with stars as the likes of Anderson Peters and Thomas Rohler have confirmed their participation.

Peters, who hails from Grenada, is a two-time world champion and Rohler is the gold-medallist from the 2016 Olympics. Chopra said he has also invited Pakistani Olympic champion Arshad Nadeem who is, however, yet to confirm participation.

"I have sent invitation to Arshad and he said he will get back to me after discussing with his coach. As of now he is yet to confirm participation," Chopra told reporters in a virtual media interaction.

The competition has been granted category A status by World Athletics.

"I wanted the event in Panchkula but there are certain issues related to lighting at the stadium there. World Athletics

requirement is 600 lux (a measure of the intensity of light), which is not there (in Panchkula) and it will take time (to install it)," he said.

I wanted the event in Panchkula but there are certain issues related to lighting at the stadium there

— NEERAJ CHOPRA, ATHLETE

"So, we have decided to shift the event to Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru. We have a team there and it will be lot easier for the event to be staged there," said the 27-year-old who is also supported by Bengaluru-based JSW Sports.

The event will be jointly organised by Chopra and JSW Sports in collaboration with the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) and World Athletics, featuring top global as well as Indian javelin throwers.

Besides Peters, who also won a bronze medal in the 2024 Paris Olympics, and Rohler, the participation of Kenyan Julius Yego, a silver-medallist in the 2016 Rio

Olympics besides being a 2015 World Championships gold winner, and American Curtis Thompson, who is the current season leader with 87.76m, has also been confirmed.

"A Brazilian, who qualified for the final in (Paris Olympics) has also confirmed participation," Chopra said without giving name, though it could be Luiz da Silva, who finished 11th in Paris with a best throw of 80.67m.

"I'm very much involved in the organisation of the event, which is a dream come true for me. I am also competing. Yesterday, I spoke to Rohit (Yadav) and three to four Indians will be competing. It will be a very good opportunity to get ranking points for World Championships in Tokyo (in September)."

He said his current coach Jan Zelezny, the legendary world record holder, suggested that the event should be named after the Indian superstar.

"I was talking to Zelezny about this event and he said that it would be good if it is named after me.

Bologna defeats Inter Milan in Serie A

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Rome

Inter Milan has a history of recent struggles at Bologna and Sunday proved no different.

Riccardo Orsolini's stoppage-time bicycle kick lifted Bologna to a 1-0 victory over the Serie A leader and left the Nerazzurri level with second-placed Napoli with five rounds remaining.

"It hurts conceding a goal like that seconds from the end," Inter coach Simone Inzaghi said. "But the season doesn't end here in Bologna. We still have a lot of goals to chase and now we'll bounce back."

The defeat brought back memories of a goalkeeping blunder by Ionut Radu that gifted Bologna a victory three years ago, setting up the title for rival AC Milan. Inter also lost at Bologna the next season in a rain storm.

Inter won at Bologna last season but spent so much energy it couldn't recover in time before getting eliminated by Atletico Madrid in the Champions League four days later. This time, the match was decided when a long throw-in was flicked off by Inter defender Yann Bisseck toward Orsolini, who turned it in with an acrobatic left-footed volley to send the Renato Dall'Ara into delirium. Inter is chasing a



treble this season and also faces big upcoming games in the Champions League and Italian Cup, but coach Simone Inzaghi had labeled the Bologna visit as the biggest match of the season.

Now the Nerazzurri are deadlocked with Antonio Conte's Napoli team, which isn't involved in any other competitions and can devote all of its energy toward chasing a second title in three years.

Napoli won 1-0 at last-placed Monza

on Saturday to heap more pressure onto Inter. Bologna moved up to fourth, one point ahead of Juventus, which visits Parma on Monday.

Inter next faces Milan in the second leg of the Italian Cup semifinals on Wednesday (the first leg finished 1-1). Then after Roma visits the San Siro next weekend, Inter travels to face Barcelona in the first leg of the Champions League semifinals.

Indian women's hockey team leaves for five match series in Australia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bengaluru

The Indian women's hockey team led by Salima Tete has left for Australia to compete in a five-match friendly series starting April 26 in Perth, an engagement that will be crucial preparation for the side ahead of the FIH Pro League's European leg in June.

The team left late on Sunday night. The series will begin with two matches against Australia A on April 26 and 27, followed by three encounters against world No. 5 ranked Australian senior team on May 1, 3, and 4 at the Perth Hockey Stadium.

Led by dynamic midfielder Salima, with experienced forward Navneet Kaur as her deputy, the 26-member squad will use the tour as a preparation ground ahead of the European leg of the Pro League, where India will start its campaign on June 7 against the Netherlands.

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 of 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 Hangargekar, 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 Yadav Mandal, Manvath 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.

Mumbai Indians have encouraged Rohit to bat with aggressive approach: Jayawardene

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Rohit Sharma's aggressive approach with the bat might have drawn criticism for more misses than hits but Mumbai Indians head coach Mahela Jayawardene said the team has backed the former captain to bat at a similar tempo despite its perils.

Rohit stroked his way to a match-winning 45-ball 76 here on Sunday against Chennai Super Kings to banish an ordinary run of scores so far in this IPL season. "Once he comes off like that, you know that he's going to change the game and the momentum and that's going to filter down to the rest of the boys as well, so pretty happy with the approach," Jayawardene told the media in the post-match press conference.

"He never changed his approach. The intent was there from day one, even though he was failing, so that was good for us (in the way) that he was trying to play for the team and how he wanted to do it. We just backed him to do that," he added. Jayawardene said showing situational

awareness is imperative and Rohit was able to execute his plans well against CSK.

"He's been playing at this tempo for a while and that's something that he understands himself. But at the same time, he will understand the game better in situational awareness as well," he said.

He (Rohit) has been playing at this tempo for a while and that's something that he understands himself.

— MAHELA JAYAWARDENE, COACH

"Like today, when Ash (Ravichandran Ashwin) came (on to bowl) as well, he (Rohit) took a little bit of time. He knew that he didn't have to take (on) the long boundary straight away," Jayawardene said. "But those are experienced players making those good decisions out there. He'll still play with that tempo and we've encouraged him to do that because he's a damn good player, we want him to take control of that.

"He has got a couple of other guys who are going to follow him, who will bat

around him as well (to) take that little bit of onus away from certain situations," he added. Jayawardene said MI built match-up situations in the game for Rohit in training to help him be in the right frame of mind. "Rohit does bat in the nets, but there is a different preparation to how he goes about it. For him, there were a couple of good balls he got and then a couple of times that he tried things that didn't work, so you try to fight through those situations," he said.

"For a guy with that kind of experience, you literally leave them be and have those positive conversations and say that, 'let's do the matchups and then see how he gets going' and keep those positive intent."

"That was the very few conversations Polly (Kieron Pollard) had with him, I had with him and he was quite okay about everything. He knows what he needs to do," he added.

Jayawardene said there wasn't much concern around Rohit's string of ordinary scores. "It was just a timing thing that he gets going and then gets through that first three, four overs," he said.

Even if CSK does not qualify, need to get 'secure eleven': Captain MS Dhoni

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

We need to see whether we are playing the right form of cricket," the struggling Chennai Super Kings' skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni said, urging his teammates to do a bit of soul-searching with an eye on the bigger picture of creating a "secure eleven" for the 2026 IPL season.

Dhoni hinted that players "aren't applying themselves" but also said that he is closer to identifying the core for next year. "With all the games that are in front of us that we are supposed to win, we just take it one game at a time and if we lose a few, what will be important for us is to get the right combination for next year," Dhoni said after his team got trounced by nine wickets at the hands of Mumbai Indians in an IPL game here on Sunday evening. "You do not want too many players getting changed, what will be important is to try and qualify, but if not get a secure 11 for next year and come back strong," the skipper said.

If one talks about core, CSK's class of

2026 will not be a 'Dad's Army' like the previous years. A 17-year-old Ayush Mhatre, 20-year-old Shaikh Rasheed, 21-year-old Dewald Brevis, and 22-year-old Vansh Bedi are expected to form the batting core next year with the 25-year-old Rachin Ravindra, skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad and slogger Shivam Dube.

Having already lost six out of eight games, the bottom-placed CSK will find it extremely difficult to win all their remaining six games to make it to the last four stage which looks like a long shot at the moment. "We are successful because we play good cricket and at the same time, when we are not playing good cricket what is important is not to get too emotional about it and at the same time, you want to be practical," he added.

Dhoni rarely gives his opinion on any issue but he did not mince words in dissecting his team's poor batting. CSK has consistently failed to either chase or put up big scores.

"I think we were quite below par, because we all knew that dew will come in the second half and we were in a posi-

tion to exploit the middle overs," Dhoni spoke about lack of cricketing sense among the batters. He wanted his set batters to start slogging slightly earlier.

"I just felt that (Jasprit) Bumrah being one of the best death bowlers in the world right now, once he (Bumrah) started early, that was the time we should have capitalised and started our slog slightly early.

"And if even Bumrah also goes for runs, it's a plus point. I think there were a few overs where we could have got slightly more runs. We needed those runs because 175 with the dew around is not a par score." He was all praise for Mhatre, who smashed everyone out of the park.

"I think as a youngster he batted really well, and that's the kind of approach that is needed where you play your shots and at the same time, you pick your shots that is your strength," the skipper said.

"He went and played his shots and we also have not seen him much. So, it is a good sign for us at the top of the order that if he can keep playing the shots, it will become slightly easier for the middle and lower order."

Shubman Gill take bold decisions: Rashid Khan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Star Afghan spinner Rashid Khan says the pressure of performance in IPL is more than the World Cup and Shubman Gill as the leader of Gujarat Titans has a great opportunity to take bold decisions to prove his credentials as a great captain. Rashid, who plays under Gill at Gujarat Titans, spoke highly of his skipper saying he has all the qualities to be a great leader.

"Shubman has a very bright future as a leader, not just as a batter but in the way he thinks and understands the game," Rashid said on JioHotstar's special series 'Gen Gold'. "He comes with a plan. He's very calm, and when you see him on the ground-the way he manages the team, the bowlers, and the overall environment, he has all the qualities to be a great leader.

"He's captaining in such a big league, and the pressure here is even more than the World Cup. This is the best opportunity for him as a captain to perform under pressure and take bold decisions," said the 26-year-old wily leg-spinner.

Talking about his own brief stint with Titans as skipper when Hardik Pandya was indisposed, Rashid said the opportunity during the 2022 season helped him grow as a leader which helped him do national duty even better.

"It was a dream come true. That experience helped me grow, not just in the league but also when I returned to lead Afghanistan. I started thinking differently," he said. "Compared to 4-5 years ago, I had a shift in mindset. That leadership stint helped me and played a part in Afghanistan reaching the semi-finals in 2024 (of the T20 World Cup)."

BCCI central contracts: Rohit, Virat retained in top grade

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India's Test and ODI captain Rohit Sharma and batting talisman Virat Kohli retained their place in the top category, while the out-of-favour duo of Shreyas Iyer and Ishan Kishan returned to the fold in lower brackets in a 34-strong list of centrally contracted players released by the BCCI on Monday.

The A+ grade, which commands an annual retainership fee of ₹7 crore, also features Ravindra Jadeja and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah much like the last few years. India's Champions Trophy hero Iyer has been the notable comeback in the list, inducted in group B which comes with an annual remuneration of ₹3 crore. Iyer was dropped last season for allegedly ignoring domestic cricket for IPL. Wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan. Dropped for the same reason, also made a comeback in category C, which is worth ₹1 crore annually.

Rishabh Pant, who was demoted to



group B during the 2023-24 season as he didn't play due to his recovery from a life-threatening accident, is back in A category in place of the retired Ravichandran Ashwin. Category A comes with a retainership of ₹5 crore annually.

Category C features the maximum

number of players, 19 in all, with five new entrants in Harshit Rana, Varun Chakravarthy, Abhishek Sharma and Nitish Kumar Reddy and Akash Deep, who earlier had a fast bowling contract.

The only notable name missing in the list is Mumbai all-rounder Shardul

Thakur, who last played for India in the 2023 ODI World Cup game against Bangladesh in Pune.

Fast bowler Avesh Khan, keeper-batters Kona Bharat and Jitesh Sharma have also been excluded from the list.

BCCI central contracts list:

A+ category: Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah, Ravindra Jadeja
A category: Mohammed Siraj, KL Rahul, Shubman Gill, Hardik Pandya, Mohammed Shami, Rishabh Pant
B category: Suryakumar Yadav, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shreyas Iyer
C category: Rinku Singh, Tilak Verma, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Shivam Dube, Ravi Bishnoi, Washington Sundar, Mukesh Kumar, Sanju Samson, Arshdeep Singh, Prasad Krishna, Rajat Patidar, Dhruv Jurel, Sarfaraz Khan, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Ishan Kishan, Abhishek Sharma, Akash Deep, Varun Chakravarthy, Harshit Rana.

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 Yashasvi 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 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," Fleming said of the younger crop.