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RAKSHA MANTRI BRIEFS PRIME MINISTER

RAHUL DATTA ■ New Delhi

Amidst the preparedness to fight against terror, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh briefed Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack. Rajnath arrived at PM's residence and he was joined by National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, top brass of the defence and ministry bureaucrats.

The crucial meeting came a day after Singh met the Chief of General Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan to discuss the key decisions taken up by the military to counter Pakistan following the horrific terrorist attack in Pahalgam. Sources said General Chauhan briefed the Defence Minister on critical military decisions to counter Pakistan following the attack. Singh had also chaired an all-party meeting three days ago to discuss the security situation in the region.

There was however no official word on Singh's meeting with PM Modi however sources said the meeting was scheduled following the briefing by Chief of General Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan to the Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. A Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence also met on Monday afternoon to further review preparedness and the Government's response to the situation while the Opposition demanded a Special Parliament Session to be convened to discuss the current situation prevailing in country following the terror activities.

Since the attack, teams from the National Investigation Agency (NIA) have been stationed in Pahalgam, intensifying evidence collection and investigations. The Indian Army remains on high alert, launching extensive search operations to neutralise the terrorists behind the assault. The teams, led by an IG, DIG, and SP from the anti-terror agency, are questioning eyewitnesses who observed the April 22 attack.

On April 23, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), chaired by Prime Minister Modi, held an emergency meeting, strongly condemning the attack and expressing condolences to the victims' families. The CCS noted the cross-border linkages to the attack and pointed out that it came amid successful elections and growing development in Jammu and Kashmir.

Citing "cross-border linkages" to the horrific attack, India has promised severe punishment to those involved in the strike that triggered wide-spread outrage within India and abroad.

In the briefing to the CCS, cross-border linkages of attack were highlighted. It was noted that this attack came in the wake of the holding successful elections in the Union Territory

In the briefing to the CCS, the cross-border linkages of the terrorist attack were brought out. It was noted that this attack came in the wake of the successful holding of elections in the Union Territory and its steady progress towards economic growth and development.

As a security measure, India has decided to withdraw its own Defence, Navy, and Air Advisors from the Indian High Commission in Islamabad. These posts in the respective High Commissions are deemed annulled. Five support staff of the Service Advisors will also be withdrawn from both High Commissions. The overall strength of the high commissions will be brought down to 30 from the present 55 through further reductions, to be effective by 1 May 2025.

On Sunday, the prime minister said the "perpetrators and conspirators" of the Pahalgam attack will be "served with the harshest response". "The whole world stands with 140 crore Indians in our fight against terrorism. I once again assure the affected families that they will get justice, and justice will be done, The perpetrators and conspirators of this attack will be served with the harshest response," Modi said in his 'Mann ki Baat' address.

Meanwhile Opposition MPs on Monday called for convening a special session of Parliament in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack. Rajya Sabha RJD MP Manoj Jha wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while Communist Party of India (CPI) MP P Sandosh Kumar sent a letter to Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, urging them to convene a special session of Parliament to express the will of the nation and send a message of unity.

Independent Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal too requested political parties to urge the Government to convene a special session of Parliament as early as possible in May.

The former Union minister has called for passing a resolution condemning the Pahalgam terror attack to convey the message to the world that the country is united.

Jha, in his letter addressed to the prime minister, said the Parliament of India stands as the cornerstone of the republic and the highest forum for democratic expression. "At this time of grief and testing, the Parliament must come together to pay heartfelt homage to the victims of the Pahalgam attack, honour their memory, and reaffirm our shared commitment to the ideals of unity, justice and peace," Jha said.

Kumar, a CPI MP from Rajya Sabha, in his letter addressed to Rijiju, said the special session would allow members across party lines to come together to mourn the loss and express the will of the nation. He said the attack did not only cause immense sorrow to the victims' kin but also shook the "collective conscience of our nation."

Nervous Pakistan continues to play dirty

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

Sensing the mood of the Indian establishment in the aftermath of the horrific killing of 26 tourists in Pahalgam, the troops of the Pakistan army remain on their tenterhooks, anticipating 'punitive strikes' on the 'terror factories' located along the line of control to launch heavily armed infiltrators inside the Indian territory.

For the last four days, the Pakistan army has been resorting to 'unprovoked' ceasefire violations across different sectors in Jammu and Kashmir.

According to a Defence Spokesman, late Sunday night Pakistan army resorted to unprovoked firing in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch and Kupwara districts. A defence spokesperson in Jammu said, "During the night of April 27-28, Pakistan Army posts initiated unprovoked small arms fire across the LoC in areas opposite Kupwara and Poonch districts." Indian troops responded swiftly and effectively, he added. There were no reports of any casualties, he added.

According to field reports, the army has been keeping a close eye on the cross LoC activities especially along the possible routes of infiltration.

A fresh assessment was made by the security forces, suggesting that despite remaining on high alert, the Pakistan army is also providing cover fire to a small group of infiltrators to sneak into the Indian territory. It is for the same reason, local villagers in the border areas of Rajouri and Poonch districts have spotted the presence of suspicious men in the forward areas and alerted the security forces to launch searches to capture them before they could launch a fresh strike targeting Indian security personnel. The local villagers living in the direct line of fire in the frontier districts of Rajouri and Poonch are also spending sleepless nights amid heightened tensions in the region.

At several places, the farmers have started harvesting their maize crop to prevent heavy losses in the wake of escalating tensions in the region.

The local villagers have also started cleaning the community bunkers to ensure the safety of their loved ones. The Indian army is maintaining a close liaison with the villagers and, wherever necessary, providing training to the members of the Village Defence Guards to maintain a tight vigil during the night.The army has advised these VDG groups to assist the local police during the night to maintain a tight vigil in the area.

Security personnel keep vigil in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terrorist attack in Srinagar PTI

Meanwhile, the teams of Jammu and Kashmir police and the National Investigations Agency have widened the scope of investigation by detaining a large number of service providers, active overground workers, pony wallahs, and others to gather vital clues about the Pahalgam terror attack.

The exact number of people questioned so far could not be ascertained immediately, as the local police authorities are still collecting vital clues.

With a series of amateur videos surfacing on social media, the intelligence agencies are carefully scanning the details to identify the perpetrators behind the attack.Several tourists present on the spot on April 22 have shared images and videos with the investigating agencies as responsible citizens to provide clues.

Meanwhile, a massive hunt is going on in the South Kashmir district of Anantnag to capture the group of terrorists behind the attack. The security forces have been combing the entire area for six days but have failed to hunt them down.

The security forces remain deployed at various locations in the adjoining areas bordering the Anantnag district. The local villagers in the region have been directed to share information about any suspicious movement in their areas in real time with the local police and army authorities. On the other hand, the Baisaran valley and other local getaways remain out of bounds for tourists arriving in Pahalgam.

The ByStander

At least 24 arrested for objectionable posts following J and K terror attack

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Lucknow

The Uttar Pradesh Police have registered a case against noted folk singer and poetess Neha Singh Rathore, accusing her of making provocative social media posts that allegedly threatened national unity and incited communal disharmony in the aftermath of the recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir.

The complaint was lodged by Abhay Pratap Singh at the Hazratganj police station in Lucknow. In his statement, Singh alleged that Rathore, through her Twitter (now X) handle @nehafolksinger, made several objectionable remarks targeting a particular religious community at a time when the nation was mourning the brutal killing of 26 individuals, most of them tourists. According to reports, the assailants had selectively targeted victims based on their religious affiliation.

Folk singer Neha Rathore has been charged for endangering the sovereignty and integrity of India, and promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion

The complainant asserted that while the entire country was grappling with grief and outrage over the Pahalgam incident, Rathore's posts sought to "incite one community against another," thereby undermining national integrity and public tranquillity. The remarks, Singh contended, had the potential to disturb the peace and endanger the sovereignty and unity of India. In one of her posts, Neha Singh Rathore wrote:

"Why this selective outrage? Are the lives of people from a particular faith less valuable? Hatred has no religion, but unfortunately, some are using religion to spread hatred openly. Justice for all innocent lives lost - not just slogans, but actions." In a subsequent post, she further criticised perceived selective condemnation of violence, stating:

"Silence in the face of such tragedies deepens divisions. Hypocrisy and hate crimes must be called out, regardless of the faith of the victims or the perpetrators." Following the complaint, the police registered a First Information Report (FIR) against Rathore under several sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the new criminal code that has replaced the colonial-era Indian Penal Code (IPC). She has been charged under Section 152 of the BNS, which pertains to acts endangering the sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India, as well as sections related to promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion and disturbing public order.

ABVP gets a foot in the door in JNU red fortress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Left-backed candidates secured three of the four key posts in the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) elections, maintaining their stronghold over the premier university even as the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS)-affiliated Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) broke a nine-year drought to win the post of joint secretary.

According to the results announced by JNUSU election commission early on Monday, Nitish Kumar of the All India Students' Association (AISA) secured 1,702 votes to win the post of president. His closest competitor, Shikha Swaraj of the ABVP secured 1,430 votes, while the Students' Federation of India (SFI)-supported Tayabba Ahmed polled 918 votes. Manisha of the Democratic Students' Federation (DSF) won the post of vice-president by securing 1,150 votes, ahead of the ABVP's Nittu Goutham who polled 1,116 votes. The DSF also bagged the general secretary's post, with Munteha Fatima polling 1,520 votes, ahead of the ABVP's Kunal Rai, who secured 1,406 votes.

The ABVP clinched the post of joint secretary, with Vaibhav Meena polling 1,518 votes, ahead of AISA's Naresh Kumar (1,433 votes) and Progressive Students' Association (PSA) candidate Nigam Kumari (1,256 votes). Vaibhav Meena's win marked the first time the ABVP has bagged a central panel post since Saurav Sharma's victory on the same post in 2015-16. The last time the ABVP won the post of president was in 2000-01 when Sandeep Mahapatra had emerged victorious.

This year's election saw a split in the Left alliance, with the AISA and the DSF contesting as one bloc while the SFI and the All India Students' Federation (AISF) formed a coalition with the Birsa Ambedkar Phule Students' Association (BAPSA) and the PSA.

PIONEER IN SHORT

India, France sign ₹64,000 crore deal for 26 Rafale jets

India and France signed an intergovernmental agreement on Monday for the acquisition of 26 Rafale-Marine fighter jets, valued at approximately ₹64,000 crore, to bolster the Indian Navy's air power. The deal includes setting up production and maintenance facilities in India, technology transfer for integrating indigenous weapons, and delivery of the jets by 2030. The aircraft, to be deployed on INS Vikrant, will enhance joint capabilities with the Indian Air Force. Signed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his French counterpart Sebastien Lecornu, the pact also covers weapons, spares, and training, marking a major step in Indo-French defence cooperation.

PIB debunks false claims of Indian Army document leak

The Press Information Bureau (PIB) has flagged false claims by pro-Pakistan social media accounts alleging a leak of confidential Indian Army preparedness documents. PIB Fact Check confirmed on X that the documents are fake, urging the public to avoid spreading unverified information and rely on official sources. The disinformation follows a terror attack in Pahalgam on April 22, where 26 people were killed. In response, the Cabinet Committee on Security, led by PM Modi, ordered heightened vigilance. The Defence Ministry also warned against a fraudulent WhatsApp message claiming the Government is seeking donations for army modernisation, calling it misleading and fake.

Honour killing must get strong punishment: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday said upheld the conviction of 11 accused for the "dastardly murder" of a young couple in Tamil Nadu in July 2003 and said honour killing must get a strong measure of punishment. A bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Prashant Kumar Mishra refused to interfere with the Madras High Court's June 2022 verdict that upheld the conviction and sentence of the accused persons, including two police officers.

The bench said the victims — Murugesan and Kannagi — who were in their early twenties were killed by administering poison in full view of a large number of villagers. The masterminds and the main perpetrators of this "macabre act" were none other than the father and brother of the woman, it added. The top court observed the reason behind the murder was that Kannagi belonged to the "Vanniyar" community whereas Murugesan was a Dalit from the same village in Cuddalore district. The couple secretly married in May 2003.

"So, at the root of this crime is the deeply entrenched hierarchical caste system in India, and ironically, this most dishonourable act goes by the name of honour-killing," the bench said in its 73-page verdict. Advocate Priyadharshni Rahul appeared for Murugesan's family.

"A crime is an act against the State. But a wicked and odious crime, as the one we have just dealt with, is the ugly reality of our deeply entrenched caste structure. Honour-killing, as these are called, must get a strong measure of punishment," it said.

The bench awarded a compensation of ₹5 lakh to Murugesan's kin and said the amount was liable to be paid by Tamil Nadu Government. On the role of the police officers, the bench said both committed the offences under Section 217 of IPC and the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 as they neglected their duties and disobeyed the law by not registering the FIR at the first instance with the intention to save the culprits.

Witnesses turning hostile was underlined to be one of the key events in the case. The bench noted the many reason for witnesses turning hostile was the delay caused in the trial

Witnesses turning hostile was underlined to be one of the key events in the case. The bench noted one of the many reasons for witnesses turning hostile was the long delay usually caused in a trial. The court underscored the presence of "enough material" placed by the prosecution in the trial court turning sufficient to prove the guilt of the accused beyond a reasonable doubt.

The bench directed those on bail in the case to surrender within two weeks to undergo their remaining sentence. Of the total 15 accused who faced trial in the case, 13 were convicted.

Cases against CWG scam accused closed

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

Bringing down curtains on a 13-year-old case, a special court on Monday accepted the Enforcement Directorate's closure report in a money laundering case against Suresh Kalmadi, the former head of the organising committee of 2010 Commonwealth Games and then secretary general Lalit Bhanot and others. The acceptance of the closure report brings to end the money laundering angle in the alleged scam, which took place 15 years ago.

The allegations of corruption in conducting the 2010-Commonwealth Games (CWG) triggered a huge political uproar in the country, leading to filing of several criminal and money laundering cases, including the present one. Kalmadi and others were accused of misconduct in award and execution of two important contracts for the games.

Special judge Sanjeev Aggarwal noted the CBI had already closed the corruption case, based on which the ED started its money laundering probe and accepted the report, which also named CWG OC's then COO, Vijay Kumar Gautam, its then treasurer, A K Matto, Event Knowledge Service (EKS), Switzerland, and CEO, Craig Gordon MeLatchey.

The judge noted ED's submission that the offence of money laundering was not found during its investigation. "Since during the investigations, the prosecution has failed to make out a offence under section 3 (money laundering) of the PMLA...

As no offence under section 3 of the PMLA has been made out or has been committed, despite discreet investigations by the ED, therefore, there is no reason to continue with the present ECIR, as a consequence, the closure report filed by the ED stands accepted," the judge held.

The sole money laundering investigation was initiated by the ED based on the case lodged by the CBI.According to the CBI, the works contracts related to Commonwealth Games were Games Workforce Service (GWS) and Games Planning, Project & Risk Management Services (GPPRMS). An undue pecuniary gain was caused by the accused persons to the to the consortium of EKS and Ernst and Young, by way of awarding the two contracts in a deliberate and wrongful manner and caused corresponding loss of ₹30 crore to OC, CWG, the CBI alleged.

The CBI later filed a closure report in January 2014, saying "no incriminating evidence surfaced during the investigation in the matter" and the allegations in the FIR could not be substantiated against the accused persons. The Games took place in Delhi from 3 to 14 October, 2010. Even before the event, the collapse of a new pedestrian bridge near the CWG main venue-Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium-made international news.

The event changed the face of Delhi but ultimately unseated the Congress Government, led by Sheila Dikshit. Every aspect of the city beautification and games management-from upgrading street lighting to renovation of stadiums-was marred by allegations of mismanagement and irregularities. A CAG audit report pointed out that Government procedures had not been adhered to to meet the delay in the timelines. "Inexplicable delays in decision making-which put pressure on timelines, and thereby, led to the creation of an artificial or consciously created sense of urgency. Since the target date was immovable, such delays could only be overcome by seeking, and liberally granting, waivers to laid down Governmental procedures," the report noted.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered at least 19 FIRs. However, in the last 15 years, nobody has been able to fix the responsibility for the 'scam'. At least 11 FIRs have been closed, so far. These included FIRs related to the construction of badminton and squash courts at Siri Fort Stadium and another related to the upgrade and renovation of the Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee Swimming Pool Complex. The first conviction came five years after the 'scam' in August 2015 on an FIR that pertained to the upgradation of street lighting in Delhi.

NEET 2025: 3810 candidates expected to appear, Section 144 imposed

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

In preparation for the successful, fair, and malpractice-free conduct of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) 2025 on May 4, a high-level meeting was convened at the Collectorate Auditorium, Jamshedpur under the joint chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Ananya Mittal and Senior Superintendent of Police Kishore Kaushal.

This year, the NEET exam in East Singhbhum district will be held across eight centers spread over five educational institutions, with 3810 candidates expected to appear. The examination will be conducted from 2 PM to 5 PM, with entry into the centers allowed from 11 AM and strictly closing at 1:30 PM.

During the meeting, Ananya Mittal emphasized that ensuring the fairness, transparency, and integrity of the NEET examination is a top priority for the district administration. He directed officials to implement stringent measures, including:Installation of CCTV cameras and continuous monitoring at all centers, Strict identity verification at entry points, Enforcement of Section 144 within the examination premises, Availability of medical and emergency services, Setting up help desks and clear information boards for the convenience of candidates. The Deputy Commissioner warned that no negligence would be tolerated, and instructed administrative and police officials to maintain vigilant patrolling around examination centers to monitor any suspicious activities. He stressed on timely reporting, smooth crowd control, confidentiality of examination materials, and emergency preparedness. "We must ensure that candidates do not face any inconvenience and that the examination is conducted peacefully and flawlessly," he added.

Senior Superintendent of Police Kishore Kaushal informed that adequate deployment of police forces will be made at each center. Control rooms will be established not only at the district level but also at individual centers. Candidates will be allowed to enter centers only with valid admit cards and photographs, and will be prohibited from carrying electronic devices, stationery, jewelry, or any unauthorized items. He also instructed Deputy Superintendents of Police to inspect hotels, restaurants, and lodging facilities to prevent any malpractice or irregularity.

The meeting was attended by ADM Law and Order Aniket Sachan, SDM Dhalbhum Shatabdi Majumdar, City SP Kumar Shivashish, ACMO Jogeshwar Prasad, District Public Relations Officer Panchanan Oraon, DIO Kishore Prasad, CO Mango Brajesh Srivastava, DEO Manoj Kumar, Deputy Superintendents of Police, Center Superintendents, and other concerned administrative and police officials.

THE WONDER YEARS AT DAV SHYAMALI

BY SOUMI DAS

This year, I am teaching XIth graders after a long hiatus. My own school, where I studied grade XI, was a very reputed institution in Ranchi as it churned out a record number of students making it to the IITs and medical colleges of the country. So it was a place which drew the "cream" of students. But since I had opted for Humanities, I was spared the competition, the peer pressure and accompanying anxiety of these two "imposters" as Rudyard Kipling would have put it. Humanities was truly a light as air feeling, especially if you liked the subjects you opted for: History, Political Science, Economics, English and Hindi in my case. The teachers were excellent in my small town part of the world, and Mrs Shyamali Bhattacharya who taught us Political Science made Marxism and "withering away of the state" come alive with such impact that her voice still echoes in my ears. Then there was Mrs Ranjana Shrivastava, who taught Economics, with such clarity that almost all her students scored about 90 per cent, and if one attended her classes, half of one's learning was complete. Mrs Chanda, the history teacher regaled us with anecdotes on historical figures from Aurangzeb to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, asking us to think of them as humans with frailties and limitations, like teenagers, like all of us, she once said. Mrs Sunanda Ray taught us to love English literature and would come up with interesting turns of phrase to pep up her lectures, "you spear your food with a a fork"...and her interpretation of Shaw's extract of Arms and the Man, and the expression "Raina looked at life through rose-tinted glasses", while casting a knowing glance across the classroom drew suppressed giggles.

DAV Shyamali as the school was then called, had a star-studded galaxy of teachers, and its alumni are today scattered the world over, with a huge concentration in the US Silicon Valley.

Rohit Prasad, who leads Amazon's AI thrust, and the lead mind behind Alexa, is a well-recognised alumnus.

The most famous old boy of course is Captain Cool MS Dhoni.

The school was a visual delight with murals, installation art, mosaics, and sculptures, all made by artist Haren Thakur, from Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan, who was also the art teacher at DAV Shyamali.

A few of the Science Teachers, like Mr DR Singh and Mr AK Singh, stopped by to talk to Humanities students, motivating everyone to prepare for the UPSC exams or the Defence Forces. I remember one conversation with AK Singh Sir, who said every student who passes out of DAV Shyamali comes back, because sooner than later, they figure out their paths in life, and once they do that they want to come back, and stand in front of the institution once again.

After many many years of passing out, I did visit the school , the name had changed, the colours looked brighter, a few new walls had come up, and even the adjoining field where Dhoni played his school day matches appeared to have shrunk...but the feeling that Mr AK Singh had spoken about in 1993, was like a warm embrace of security and confidence.

Now when I see XIth graders in school worried about marks, about the pressure of coaching institutes, and the heat of the rat race, I am reminded of my own father, who was always gentle and happily acquiesced to requests from petrified students to sign as an "uncle" to help them collect their report cards if they had not done too well. Just a few marks less than the coveted eighty or seventy or whatever benchmark percent set by parents, were enough to trigger rage at home and instil fear in students.

My father would smile and agree readily. He always had a twinkle in his eye and looked amused inviting a reciprocal response from the strictest of teachers.

Looking back and looking ahead, I feel the last two years of school can either be a challenge or the sheer joy of wonder to students, depending on the institutions they are in, and the teachers and parents nurturing them.

Looking back, I think both in my case did the best they could with love and thoughtfulness. And that perhaps is the reason why so many DAV Shyamali students have success stories to narrate when they come calling.

Garhwa DC holds Road Safety Committee meeting

NITYANAND DUBEY : GARHWA

Deputy Commissioner, Garhwa Shekhar Jamuar, presided over a Road Safety Committee review meeting. During the meeting, the DC issued several instructions to officials with the aim of decreasing the number of road accidents. The District Transport Officer, Dheeraj Prakash, reported that between January 2025 and March 2025, there were 47 road accidents, which led to 28 deaths and 35 injuries.

The Assistant Engineer of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) was instructed to reroute large vehicles away from the city's heavily populated areas and onto the Garhwa bypass. This measure is intended to reduce traffic congestion in Garhwa. Furthermore, measures such as speed bumps, rumble strips, reflective markings, and signage should be implemented where rural roads intersect with NHAI roads, and in the vicinity of schools along these routes, to improve road safety and minimise accidents.

The attending Assistant Engineer was directed to implement suitable road safety measures within a week at road construction sites to reduce road accidents. NHAI was also instructed to arrange for ambulances and life support systems at strategic points along its roads. The Executive Engineers of the National Highway Division, Medininagar, and the Road Construction Department, Road Division Garhwa, were instructed to expedite and finalise work on the district's three accident black spots: Annaraj Valley, Gulria Dhoda, and Budha Paras (Tedhi Pul).

The meeting also addressed the establishment of a traffic police station in Garhwa district to reinforce road safety measures, the enforcement of the Motor Vehicles Act, and the installation of CCTV cameras in key locations throughout the city. The District Transport Officer, Garhwa, was instructed to take action against drivers or owners found without helmets, speeding, using tinted windows, underage driving, or performing stunts, and to suspend their driving licences.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner assessed the current situation regarding road accidents, black spots, road encroachment, and awareness programmes, offering essential guidance to the relevant authorities. Alongside the officials mentioned above, Superintendent of Police Deepak Kumar Pandey, District Education Officer Kaiser Raza, District Education Superintendent Anurag Minj, representatives from the offices of Members of Parliament and Members of the Legislative Assembly, and other members of the Road Safety Committee were in attendance.

Marathoner sets benchmark with Procam Slam Achievement

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Subramanian Srinivasan, fondly known as Chinnu in local circles, has scripted history in the world of sports through his unwavering hard work and dedication. A passionate marathoner for the past 15 years, Subramanian recently achieved a remarkable milestone by winning the prestigious "Procam Slam Award", a rare honor among India's running community.

The Procam Slam Challenge, organized by Procam International, requires participants to complete four premier marathons across India—Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, and Bengaluru—within a single season. Subramanian successfully conquered this challenge during the 2024-25 season, participating in: October 2024: Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon (21.097 km), December 2024: TSK 25K in Kolkata (25 km), January 2025: Tata Mumbai Marathon (42.195 km) and April 2025: TCS World 10K Bengaluru (10 km).

By completing all four races, he earned the coveted Procam Slam Medal and a Certificate of Achievement, marking his name among an elite group of runners who have accomplished this feat.

Subramanian, who has now participated in 29 marathons so far, credits his fitness and endurance to consistent training and post-run body care. Sharing his mantra for health, he emphasized, "Proper exercise and taking care of the body after running are very important. I jog at least 10 km daily and practice yoga regularly, which keeps me fit and away from the doctor."

School students learn about growing online threats

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR:

In a significant step towards combating the rising threat of cyber crimes, the District Education Department of East Singhbhum in collaboration with Cyber Peace Sansthan organized an extensive cyber awareness program aimed at educating students about the importance of cyber security. The event, which focused on raising awareness about the risks associated with the digital world, was conducted at Loyola School on Monday.

The cyber awareness session witnessed an overwhelming participation of over 1200 students from various private and government schools in the district. The main objective of the program was to provide students with the tools and knowledge needed to safeguard themselves from online threats, frauds, and other forms of cyber crime. With technology playing an increasingly central role in daily life, the need for digital literacy and online safety has never been more critical.

The program was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner, Ananya Mittal, who attended the event as the chief guest. Mittal spoke to the students about the growing prevalence of cyber crimes, especially among young individuals who are more active in the digital world. He expressed concern about the rising cases of cyber fraud, identity theft, and online scams that have been affecting individuals across the country. Mittal emphasized that cyber security is no longer just an individual concern but a collective responsibility, urging students to be proactive in their digital interactions.

In his address, Mittal highlighted several key measures to protect oneself in the online space. He discussed the importance of practicing safe online behavior, such as avoiding clicking on suspicious links or emails, safeguarding personal information, and setting strong, unique passwords for various online accounts. He also spoke about the importance of verifying information before sharing it online, as well as avoiding giving personal details to unknown websites or platforms.

"Awareness is the first and most effective line of defense against cyber crimes," Mittal stated. "By remaining vigilant and practicing safe online habits, you can protect yourself from falling victim to digital fraud and contribute to building a safer online environment for everyone."

Furthermore, Mittal encouraged students to report any suspicious online activity immediately. He advised them to reach out to the cyber police station or the concerned authorities in case they become victims of cyber crimes, frauds, or hacking attempts. According to him, timely reporting could help in taking appropriate action and preventing further damage.

The program also included a detailed technical session led by Kriti Srivastava, a trainer from Cyber Peace Sansthan, who provided students with practical measures for maintaining online security. During the session, Srivastava explained various tools and resources available to help individuals protect their privacy on the internet. She also introduced the students to some reliable websites that can be used to verify the authenticity of news and other information circulating on social media.

The event also witnessed the presence of several dignitaries, including District Transport Officer Dhananjay, District Education Officer Ashish Kumar, State Coordinator of Cyber Peace Institute Tarak Das, as well as the Principal of Loyola School and other teachers.

Celebrating Values and Vision: National Seminar concludes at Swami Dharmabandhu College of Education

PNS : RANCHI

A two-day National Seminar on Value Education, organized by the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) of Swami Dharmabandhu College of Education, concluded with an inspiring and culturally rich valedictory session. The event opened with the auspicious lamp lighting ceremony, followed by a soulful welcome song and a graceful Ganesh Vandana welcome dance.

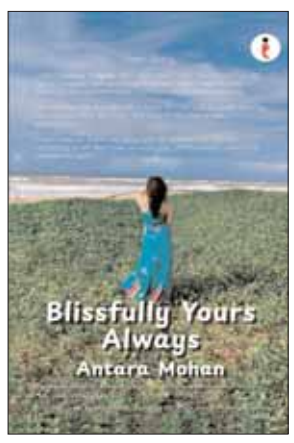
The welcome address was delivered by the Principal,Dr. Sarika Kumari setting the tone for an intellectually stimulating day. The seminar was meticulously coordinated under the guidance of Convenor Fauzia Khanam and Co-Convenor Ranjan Kumar Das.

Following the felicitation of esteemed guests, the gathering was addressed by Director Dr. Nazir Ansari, Special Guest Professor Dr. Sadique Razaque and Distinguished Guest Dr. Nirmal Mandal, Registrar of Radha Govind University, shared their thoughts on institutional commitment to holistic education.

Technical Session 1, presided over by Professor Dr. Mritunjay Prasad, featured keynote speeches from Professor Dr. Abhijeet Kumar Pal , Professor and Head department of Education West Bengal State University ,Barasat, Kolkata. Dr. Pal discussed the philosophical foundations of value education and its application in modern pedagogical practices and development of ethical leadership and moral consciousness in students.Certificates were distributed to all participating delegates in recognition of their valuable contribution. The vote of thanks was delivered by Assistant professor Manoj Kumar, who expressed sincere gratitude to all dignitaries, participants, and organizers. The event was smoothly anchored by Assistant Professor Anshu Bala, with hosting by Shahbaz Khan and co-host Ankita Kumari.

The seminar proved to be a perfect blend of cultural expression and academic depth, reinforcing the mission of Swami Dharmabandhu College of Education in promoting value-based education for a better tomorrow.

One Afternoon at Starmark Bookstore, One Book by Antara Mohan, and a Dream to Study Vedanta Under Swami Parthasarathy



BY RADHA A KAPOOR

I still remember that afternoon so vividly.

I was visiting Kolkata from Ranchi for a short work trip — a city buzzing with life, so different from the quieter pace I was used to.

In between meetings, I had a few hours to spare. Almost on a whim, I decided to visit South City Mall. Maybe just a little window shopping, I thought.

As I wandered through the mall, something pulled me towards Starmark Bookstore.

It was one of those moments you can't explain — like a little nudge from the universe.

I wasn't even looking for anything special.

But then, tucked between bestsellers and glossy covers, I found it — Blissfully Yours Always by Antara Mohan.

Something about the title just spoke to me. Blissfully Yours Always — isn't that what I had been secretly wishing for all along, stuck in a job that left me drained and restless?

I picked it up and started flipping through the pages. Within minutes, I knew this was no ordinary book.

It felt like someone had written down all the things I had been feeling but hadn't found the courage to say out loud.

Curious, I asked one of the Starmark staff members about it. That's when they told me that Antara Mohan had actually launched her book right there at Starmark!

A wave of regret washed over me — Oh, if only I had come earlier... I could have attended the launch, met the author, thanked her.

I bought the book instantly and started reading it that night, curled up in my hotel room. Page after page, Antara's words wrapped around me like a warm hug.

They broke me down, only to lift me up again — gently, lovingly.

Two chapters, in particular, stayed with me long after I closed the book.

The first was "From Rat Race to Inner Grace."

It felt like Antara was holding a mirror to my life — the mindless chase for titles, salaries, promotions, with no real joy at the end of it. Her honest, soul-stirring words made me question everything I had been pursuing. Was this really the life I was meant to live?

The second chapter that left me in tears was "I Wish Slaughterhouses Had Glass Walls." Antara writes so beautifully — yet powerfully — about the hidden cruelty behind the food choices we make every day.

I have been a meat-eater all my life. But that night, as I read about the silent suffering of innocent animals, something shifted inside me.

I promised myself to begin reducing my meat consumption — not as a punishment, but as an act of love.

Love for the voiceless, for the planet, and for my own evolving self.

Another chapter that I found deeply moving was "Unmasking Pretension."

Antara captures how today's world — of Instagram weddings, designer clothes, and curated lives — often pulls us away from authenticity.

Reading her words made me realize how easily I had been swept away by appearances.

Now, I crave a life lived from the heart, not for the camera. And somewhere between all these beautiful chapters, a new dream took seed within me. I found myself longing to leave behind my corporate job — the one I thought defined me — and go to the Vedanta Academy. To learn under the great Swami A. Parthasarathy.

To attend Sunandaji's classes.

To memorize the beautiful Vedantic quotes and poems that Antara so often references.

To live a life rooted in wisdom, simplicity, and true joy.

Blissfully Yours Always is not just a book.

It is a whisper from the soul, a soft yet strong reminder that there is another way to live — a way filled with grace, purpose, and peace. If you, too, have ever felt like you were chasing the wrong things, if you've ever ached for a more meaningful life — please read this book. Let it touch you the way it touched me.

Let it break you open, so you can rebuild yourself closer to who you were always meant to be.

As for me, Radha Kapoor from Ranchi, my journey has just begun.

But because of Antara Mohan and Blissfully Yours Always, I know now — my heart is pointed in the right direction.

And I hope yours will be too.

The Pioneer
RANCHI | TUESDAY | APRIL, 29 , 2025

HC stays Govt order to remove RIMS director Dr Rajkumar

PNS : RANCHI

The Jharkhand High Court today stayed the removal order of Dr Rajkumar, Director of the State's largest medical college and hospital, the Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS).

The court of Justice Deepak Roshan issued an immediate stay on the order and directed that notice be issued to the State government and others concerned, with instructions to file a reply by affidavit.

A detailed hearing of the case will be held on 6 May. The court observed that the dismissal order was stigmatic, which is against the law, and stated that the proper removal procedure should have been followed beforehand.

It further noted that Dr Rajkumar should have been given an opportunity to respond before any action was taken. He was dismissed on the grounds of "public interest".

On 17 April, a letter signed by Health Minister Irfan Ansari was issued, dismissing Dr Rajkumar from his post as Director of RIMS. Subsequently, Dr Rajkumar challenged the order in the High Court.

Dr Rajkumar, who previously served as a professor in the department of neurosurgery at Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences, Lucknow, was appointed for a three-year term on January 31, 2024.

Dr. Raj Kumar was appointed as the Director of RIMS for a three-year term, but was removed just 14 months into his tenure. Challenging his dismissal, Dr. Rajkumar moved the High Court against the Governing Council's decision.

Sources revealed that an altercation between Dr. Rajkumar and Health Minister Dr. Irfan Ansari during a RIMS Governing Body meeting might have been the primary reason for his removal.

Following the court's decision, Leader of the Opposition Babulal Marandi alleged that Dr Rajkumar had been removed after he refused to make an illegal payment of several crores of rupees under pressure from the Health Minister and departmental officials during a Governing Council meeting.

Marandi further stated that the High Court's decision had exposed what he described as a conspiracy by the Hemant Soren government to turn a prestigious health institution like RIMS into a pasture for looting.

He urged all honest and dutiful officers of the State to resist participating in the corrupt practices of the government and to follow the example of Dr Rajkumar in fighting to protect Jharkhand from being plundered.

Marandi once again appealed to Chief Minister Hemant Soren to order a CBI inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the removal of the RIMS Director for resisting improper payment pressures.

He also called for ministers who exert pressure on officers to commit illegal acts to be removed from the Cabinet, warning that failure to act would leave the government vulnerable to further scandals in the future.

State Govt active for safe return of migrant workers

Email sent to Indian Embassy and MEA for immediate action

PNS : RANCHI

On the instructions of Chief Minister Hemant Soren, taking immediate action on the kidnapping of migrant workers in Niger, efforts have been intensified for the safe return of the five workers by mailing the Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian Embassy. It is known that on April 27, former MLA Vinod Kumar Singh had informed the State Migrant Control Room about the kidnapping and disappearance of five migrant workers of Village Dondlo and Mundro (Thana Bagodar, District Giridih). Action was demanded for their safe return by mentioning the names of the migrant workers and their passports.

All the workers were working in the KPTC project of the company working in the field of transmission line in Niger (South Africa region). On 25/04/2025 (Friday), these five workers were kidnapped by some armed men, and since the kidnapping, there has been no trace of them and the family members have expressed concern. The State Migrant Control Room took immediate action and contacted the Project Head/Country Manager and obtained updated information about the incident.

According to the information, all the workers were working in the Telabari area, 25–30 km away from the company site. It was a completely military operation, in which a total of 26 local and 12 workers from other countries were involved. 12 people have also been reported dead in this incident. The company, Governor's Office, Indian Ambassador and Indian Embassy there are actively working on this matter.

The State Migrant Control Room verified the matter on 28/04/2025 and sent an email to the Protector of Immigrants, Ranchi, Indian Embassy and Ministry of External Affairs for immediate necessary action and requested action on priority basis for the safe return of the five workers. Today, the Indian Embassy and the company have again been informed through control room conversation and email that the Embassy of India in Niger is aware of the unfortunate incident and are taking up the matter with the concerned Nigerian authorities for the safe and early release of the citizens.

Migrant laborers who were kidnapped include Faljit Mahato (Father – Narayan Mahato, Passport No. W7735287), Raju Kumar (Father – Fagu Mahato, Passport No. R6801714), Chandrika Mahato (Father – Shankar Mahato, Passport No. X7456752), Sanjay Mahato (Father – Jageshwar Mahato, Passport No. X7453938) and Uttam Mahato (Father – Talo Mahato, Passport No. X8970245).

Chief Minister Hemant Soren addressed the Indian diaspora at a dinner hosted by the Embassy of India in Sweden. He urged them to act as ambassadors for India in the Nordics and invited them to explore investment opportunities in Jharkhand. PNS

CONG READIES FOR SAVE CONSTITUTION CAMPAIGN

PNS : RANCHI

An important meeting of district nodal officers and members of the central control room has been called at Congress Bhawan, Ranchi on 29/4/2025 for the success of the Constitution Bachao Abhiyan organized by Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee. On this occasion, State President Keshav Mahato Kamlesh and State Coordinator of the program Dr. Pradeep Kumar Balmuchu will be present.

Chief Spokesperson of the State Congress Committee Lal Kishore Nath Shahdev said that for the success of the 40-day Constitution Bachao Abhiyan program, district-wise nodal officers have been appointed, who will visit the district and hold meetings till April 28 and will give their report to the State President in the meeting and will discuss the possible dates of the Constitution Bachao Rally to be held in the districts. Shahdeo said that for the purpose of wide publicity in the program, State President Keshav Mahato Kamlesh has given responsibility to Congress leaders to hold press conferences at 6 places in the state on 30 April 2025, in which Rakesh Sinha, Satish Pal Munjini for Ranchi, Sanjay Pandey and Khurshid Hasan Rumi for Jamshedpur, Sonal Shanti, Shantanu Mishra, Rishikesh Singh for Daltonganj, Rajiv Ranjan Prasad, Riazul Ansari for Hazaribagh, Shamsher Alam, Shyamal Kishore Singh, Rajendra Das for Deoghar and Lal Kishore Nath Shahdeo and Shakeel Ahmed Ansari for Dhanbad have been selected. Shahdeo said that while on one hand the nodal officers are visiting the districts and ensuring the success of the state level Save Constitution Maha Rally to be held on May 3, on the other hand, the State Congress President is continuously holding meetings with MPs, MLAs and state officials.

JMM, SP pose fresh challenges for INDIA bloc ahead of Bihar polls

ALOK MOHIT : PATNA

Seat-sharing talks in the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) have hit a fresh roadblock in poll-bound Bihar with the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and Samajwadi Party (SP) showing interest in contesting the state assembly elections later this year.

Creating new challenges for the already complicated alliance negotiations, the JMM is reported to have submitted a list 12 constituencies it intends to contest to its INDIA bloc ally, Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD).

Making the matter worse for the alliance, Samajwadi Party MP Afzal Ansari on Monday met RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav in Patna, fuelling speculation about its keenness to contest seats bordering Uttar Pradesh, where the party claims significant influence.

Sources in Patna said the discussions between Ghazipur MP and Tejashwi centered around the Samajwadi Party joining the INDIA, referred to as Mahagatbandhan in Bihar, as it could potentially strengthen the alliance on seats bordering Uttar Pradesh.

The JMM is said to have demanded 12 seats in Bihar's districts contiguous with Jharkhand and having a substantial tribal population. The party, which currently heads an alliance government in Jharkhand, has identified Tarapur, Katoria, Manihari, Banka, Pirpainti, Rampur, Thakurganj, Rupauli, Banmankhi, Jamalpur, Jhajha, and Chakai as its preferred constituencies.

JMM sources said the RJD should reciprocally accommodate it in the Bihar assembly elections as it gave respectable representation to Tejashwi-led party in the Jharkhand polls. "We also deserve a respectable representation in Bihar," the JMM sources said.

After Jharkhand was carved out of Bihar in 2000, the influence of JMM in Bihar has diminished significantly. With limited presence in some border areas, JMM's vote share in Bihar has remained below 0.5 per cent since then. The lone electoral success for the party in Bihar came in 2010 when its candidate won the Chakai assembly seat.

The demands from JMM and SP have created additional problems for the INDIA bloc as the Congress is already pressing for at least 70 seats—as in 2020 elections-- and Left parties are seeking increased representation.

Although the RJD, largest constituent of the INDIA bloc in Bihar, finds itself in a difficult position, it sought to downplay the recent developments.

"With 243 total seats in the Bihar assembly, there is enough room for seat-sharing without major difficulties," an RJD leader said.

Agriculture minister visits National Meat Research Center in Telangana

NMRC can play the role of knowledge partner in reviving the closed bacon factory in Ranchi'

PNS : RANCHI

The hope of reviving the bacon factory closed for years in Ranchi has once again risen. The National Meat Research Center can play the role of knowledge partner in breathing life into this closed factory.

Actually, this hope has risen in the course of the Hyderabad visit of Jharkhand's Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Cooperative Minister Shilpi Neha Tirkey and departmental officials.

On Monday, the Minister visited the National Meat Research Center located at Chengicherla in Hyderabad along with the departmental officials of Jharkhand.

During this, a long discussion was also held with the officials of the research center. There is a discussion about the work and technology of the National Meat Research Center across the country. With changing times, this research center has succeeded in adopting new technology and moving forward. After the meeting with the Telangana government as well as the officials of the research center, Tirkey said that she got a chance to understand a lot by coming here. The experience and technology of the National Meat Research Center can be used to revive the closed bacon factory in the state. This center can be useful as a knowledge partner for Jharkhand. Not only this, there was a long discussion on which scheme will prove helpful in enriching the livestock farmers of Jharkhand.

Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Cooperative Minister Shilpi Neha Tirkey visits the National Meat Research Center located at Chengicherla in Hyderabad along with the departmental officials of Jharkhand on Monday. PNS

In future, efforts will be made to move in this direction by making better coordination with the National Meat Research Center Hyderabad. In the meeting held at the National Meat Research Center, Jharkhand's Special Secretary Gopal Ji Tiwari, Pradeep Kumar Hazari, Fisheries Director H N Dwivedi and Telangana government officials were present.

3 Pakistani children from Ranchi sent to Delhi

PNS : RANCHI

After the Pahalgam attack, the Central government is continuing its efforts to send back Pakistani citizens. The deadline to send them back was 27 April but on 28 April also some Pakistani citizens were sent to Pakistan via Wagah border. Three minor children living in Ranchi were also sent to Pakistan on Monday, they have been sent from Ranchi to Delhi.

After the deadline is over, the decision on how these three children will go to Pakistan will be taken in Delhi. According to the guidelines issued by the central government, all three children were instructed to leave Ranchi soon. All three children have gone to Delhi with their families. Now all three children will be sent to Pakistan through the Indian Embassy and the Pakistani Embassy in Delhi. All three children had come to their grandmother's house in Doranda, Ranchi to celebrate summer vacation.

After the decision taken by the Indian government, more than 1000 Indians have returned to India from Pakistan so far. At the same time, the return of Pakistani citizens living in India to their country continues. Currently 10 citizens are living in Jharkhand after coming from Pakistan. All of them are living in Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Hazaribagh. Out of these 10, seven Pakistani citizens are living in Jharkhand on long term visa, while three Pakistani minor children are now being sent to Pakistan from Ranchi.

BJP alleges Minister possess fake doctorate degree

PNS : RANCHI

State BJP spokesperson Ajay Sah today alleged that the doctorate degree (Ph.D degree) received by minister Hafizul Ansari was obtained from a fake university, which he described as "Bharat Virtual Open Educational University" – an institution that has neither the right to use the word university nor is recognized to confer any kind of academic degree.

He said that as is clear in Section 22 of the UGC Act 1956. Neither the UGC, nor the Government of India nor the Jharkhand government has given any recognition to this fake university.

Ajay Sah further said that Hafizul Ansari, after not being able to obtain a degree from recognized universities operating under the Indian Constitution, obtained a PhD degree from a fake university run by such people, following Sharia law, which is purely a paper institution. He alleged that this institution is run by some people of the Muslim community and it has no legal existence.

BJP State Spokespersons Ajay Shah alongwith Rafia Naaz during a press conference in Ranchi on Monday. PNS

Sah also claimed that this fake university claims its affiliation with "Central Christian University, Africa", while a thorough investigation revealed that the Chancellor of this university, Dr. Usman, was conferred the title of Professor by an institution in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Based on this revelation, Sah made a serious allegation that the entire network of Minister Hafizul Ansari's title seems to be linked to Pakistan.

Sah also alleged that the conduct of the minister shows that he gives priority to Sharia law over the Indian Constitution in his actions and decisions. He said that when such serious questions related to a state minister arise, it is no longer just a personal matter, but becomes a question of the state's prestige and constitutional values.

Finally, Ajay Sah demanded that there should be a high-level investigation of the Pakistan link in this entire episode so that the truth can come out and if there has been any violation of law, strict action can be taken against it. State spokesperson Rafia Naz was also present in the press conference.

312 students to graduate during 64th Convocation of XISS

PNS : RANCHI

Xavier Institute of Social Service (XISS), Ranchi will host its 64th Annual Convocation Ceremony during which 312 graduating students of batch 2023–2025 will get their PGDM diplomas on 3 May 2025.

Shilpi Neha Tirkey, Minister of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry & Cooperative of Jharkhand, will be the Chief Guest for the event, while, the Guest of Honor will be Guilherme Vaz, an International Development Consultant. They will address the graduates from the programmes of Marketing Management, Financial Management, Rural Management, and Human Resources Management who have joined several companies across the country as new hires.

The Fr Michael Van den Bogaert SJ Memorial "Distinguished Alumni Award" will be given to Ashok Kumar Singh, an alumnus of the Rural Development Department from the batch of 1979-81. He is a distinguished development sector leader and Founder Director of Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra (SSK), Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

As many as 24 top rank holders amidst them from all programmes will be bestowed with medals. Four students will receive cash prizes worth Rs 1.62 lakhs during the ceremony. Meanwhile, 24 students will be awarded with the Institutional Scholarships worth Rs 7.6 lakhs under the Fr Michael Van den Bogaert SJ Memorial Scholarships for meritorious students of SC/ST category, Fr Michael Albert Windey SJ Memorial Scholarship for meritorious students on the whole open to all, and Fr Louis Francken SJ Memorial Scholarship for overall performance of all categories of students.

Employees will also be rewarded for their long service to the Institution. The ceremony will see the participation of students from across the country along with their parents and esteemed alumni as well.

Pankaj Udhas, Shekhar Kapur among Padma awardees

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Former chief of Suzuki Motor late Osamu Suzuki, late singer Pankaj Udhas, former Bihar deputy chief minister late Sushil Kumar Modi, and publisher of Tamil daily Dinamalar, Lakshmipathy Ramasubbaiyer, were among the 71 prominent personalities conferred with Padma awards by President Droupadi Murmu on Monday.

Altogether 139 distinguished persons were named for the country's civilian awards — Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri — on the eve of the 76th Republic Day on January 25.

While 71 of them were given the awards at the Rashtrapati Bhavan's majestic Durbar Hall on Monday in the presence of Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, among others, the remaining will be conferred with the decorations at a separate function to be held soon.

Veteran actor Shekhar Kapur, cricketer Ravichandran Ashwin, hockey player P R Sreejesh, chairman of Asian Institute of Gastroenterology and AIG Hospitals, D Nageshwar Reddy, violinist Lakshminarayana Subramaniam and Telugu superstar Nandamuri Balakrishna, also known as Balayya, were the other prominent persons conferred with the Padma awards by Murmu.

Among the awardees, four received Padma Vibhushan — Suzuki (Posthumous), Subramaniam, Reddy and Malayalam author and film director MT Vasudevan Nair (Posthumous).

A total of 10 distinguished personalities were conferred with Padma Bhushan.

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

They include Udhas (Posthumous), Sushil Kumar Modi (Posthumous), Balakrishna, Kapur, Sreejesh, Tamil actor S Ajith Kumar, chairperson of Zydus Lifesciences, Pankaj Patel, and Vinod Dham, an Indian-American engineer, who is widely known as the 'Father of the Pentium'.

As many as 57 prominent personalities were conferred with Padma Shri.

These include former chairperson of the State Bank of India, Arundhati Bhattacharya, industrialist Pawan Kumar Goenka, wildlife researcher and Marathi author Maruti Bhujangrao Chitampalli, who gave unique dictionaries on birds, animals and trees, and master puppeteer Bhimavva Doddabalappa Shillekyathara, who was one of the first women to practise Togalu Gombeyaata (leather puppetry) art form.

Former AIIMS and SGPGI director A K Mahapatra and Punjabi singer Jaspinder Narula Kaul were also given Padma Shri.

This year, the Padma awards were given to 30 unsung heroes, including 100-year-old Libia Lobo Sardesai, who played an important role in Goa's freedom movement. She co-founded an underground radio station — 'Voz da Liberdabe (Voice of Freedom)' — in a forested area in 1955 to rally people against Portuguese rule.

The awards are given in various disciplines and fields such as art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports and civil service, among others.

Padma Vibhushan is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service; Padma Bhushan for distinguished service of high order, and Padma Shri for distinguished service in any field.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India and France on Monday inked an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to procure 26 naval variants of Rafale fighter jets at a cost of around Rs 64,000 crore for the Indian Navy.

The pact provides for setting up of a production facility for Rafale fuselage as well as maintenance, repair and overhaul facilities for aircraft engines, sensors and weapons in India, according to the Defence Ministry.

In line with the Government's thrust on Aatmanirbhar Bharat, the agreement includes Transfer of Technology for integration of indigenous weapons in India. It also includes setting up of production facility for Rafale Fuselage as well as Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul facilities for aircraft engine, sensors and weapons in India.

The deal is expected to generate thousands of jobs and revenue for a large number of MSMEs in setting up, production and running of these facilities.

The IGA has been signed by Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh and Minister of Armed Forces of France Sebastien Lecornu. The signed copies of the agreement, aircraft package supply protocol and weapons package supply protocol were exchanged by Indian and French officials in the presence of Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh at Nausena Bhawan. The ministry said the delivery of the aircraft would be completed by 2030, with the crew undergoing training in France and India.

India is procuring the jets for deployment on board aircraft carrier INS Vikrant. Manufactured by French defence major Dassault Aviation, the Rafale-Marine is a carrier-borne combat-ready aircraft with proven operational capabilities in the maritime environment.

The sealing of the mega deal came three weeks after the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi cleared the procurement.

Under the terms of reference, the delivery of the jets will have to start around five years after the signing of the contract. In July 2023, the defence ministry accorded the initial approval for the mega acquisition following a series of deliberations and evaluation tests of the platform.

Under the deal, the Indian Navy will also get associated ancillary equipment including weapon systems and spares from Dassault Aviation.

The Defence Ministry said that the Rafale-Marine has commonality with the Rafale being operated by the Indian Air Force (IAF).

"Its procurement will substantially enhance joint operational capability, besides optimising training and logistics for the aircraft for both Indian Navy and IAF," it said in a statement.

"The induction would lead to the addition of a potent force multiplier to the Indian Navy's aircraft carriers, substantially boosting the nation's air power at sea," it said

Manufactured by France's Dassault Aviation, the Rafale-Marine is a carrier-borne combat-ready aircraft with proven operational capabilities in maritime environment. The delivery of these aircraft would be completed by 2030, with the crew undergoing training in France and India.

Rafale-Marine has commonality with the Rafale being operated by IAF.

Naresh Tikait speaking 'language of Pakistan': BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The BJP on Monday accused Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) president Naresh Tikait of speaking the "language of Pakistan" after he took exception to the government's decision of putting in abeyance the Indus Waters Treaty in consequence to the Pahalgam terror attack. Tikait in a video clip that made rounds on social media condemned the Pahalgam terror strike and called for the strictest action against those involved.

But he also remarked that the Narendra Modi government should not have suspended the Indus Waters treaty with Pakistan as it would affect the common people, especially farmers, in the neighbouring country. BJP Kisan Morcha president and MP Rajkumar Chahar lashed out at Tikait and demanded that he apologise for his remarks.

"Naresh Tikait is speaking the language of Pakistan. He says the government's decision to stop water was wrong. He says that all Pakistanis are not culprits, only some people did that (terror strike)," he charged. "I strongly condemn his remarks. He should be ashamed of making such comments. He has spoken against India. He should apologise to the people of the country," Chahar added.

The BJP leader said that the Modi government had taken tough decisions against Pakistan which included suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty after the Pahalgam terror attack. "In the coming days, more effective decisions will be taken," he added.

Delhi Cabinet Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma also slammed the Tikait for voicing views against the Indian government's decision to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty, saying the farmers of India have always sweated in the fields for the pride of the tricolour and sacrificed their sons to protect the country." Verma said Tikait's statement has exposed the real face of those who do politics of power by pretending to be patriots.

"If leaders like Tikait brothers, who pursue politics in the name of farmers, have so much sympathy for Pakistan, then it would be better that they leave India and go to Pakistan," he said.

Verma's Cabinet colleague Manjinder Singh Sira also slammed Tikait, saying the BKU leader was indulging in anti-national activities under the garb of trans-border farmer unity. "Those who are worried about the farmers of Pakistan today are neither true citizens of India nor true well-wishers of the farmers," he said. Sirsa also trained his guns on Tikait and asked, "Should we continue giving water to those who want to shed our blood?"

Meanwhile, BKU national spokesperson Rakesh Tikait also reportedly raised questions on the government's line of action post-Pahalgam, saying the probe agencies should catch those who stand to benefit from the incident.

Delhi court extends Tahawwur's custody for 12 days

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

A Delhi court on Monday extended by 12 more days the NIA custody of 26/11 Mumbai attack accused Tahawwur Hussain Rana. Special NIA judge Chander Jit Singh extended Rana's custody on NIA's request after his previous 18-day remand got over. Rana was produced in court with his face covered amid tight security.

Senior advocate Dayan Krishnan and special public prosecutor Narender Mann are representing the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in the matter which is taking place in chamber. Advocate Piyush Sachdeva from Delhi Legal Services Authority is representing Rana. In its previous remand order, the court directed the NIA to conduct Rana's medical examination every 24 hours, and allow him to meet his lawyer every alternate day.

The court allowed Rana to use only a "soft-tip pen" and meet his lawyer in the presence of the NIA officials, who would be out of an audible distance.

During the arguments on the last occasion, the NIA said Rana's custody was required to piece together the full scope of the conspiracy, and submitted he was required to be taken to various locations for retracing the events that took place 17 years ago.

Rana, a close associate of 26/11 main conspirator David Coleman Headley alias Daood Gilani, a US citizen, was brought to India after the US Supreme Court on April 4 dismissed his review plea against his extradition to India.

On November 26, 2008, a group of 10 Pakistani terrorists went on a rampage, carrying out a coordinated attack on a railway station, two luxury hotels and a Jewish centre, after they sneaked into India's financial capital using the sea route in the Arabian Sea.

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

Congress distances itself from leaders making controversial comments on Pahalgam attack

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Congress on Monday distanced itself from the controversial comments of some of its leaders on the Pahalgam terror attack, saying that only the recent CWC resolution and the views expressed by AICC chief Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi and authorised AICC office-bearers represent its position.

The statement came after the BJP asked Kharge and Rahul if their call for national unity was merely a formality and cited comments of Congress leaders questioning the need for war with Pakistan and the Pahalgan terror attack victims' account that terrorists marked out non-Muslims. Congress leaders likes Vijay Wadettiwar, Mani Shankar Aiyar, Shashi Tharoor, Tariq Hameed Karra and Saifuddin Soz have triggered a row on the Pahalgam terror attack. The BJP alleged that some from the opposition party were speaking "Pakistan's language".

The Congress Working Committee had termed the Pahalgam attack masterminded by Pakistan as a direct assault on the values of our republic. It also called for a comprehensive examination of intelligence failures and security lapses.

Both Kharge and Rahul had expressed support to the government on whatever action it takes on the matter. Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "The Congress Working Committee had met on April 24, 2025, and passed a resolution on the brutal terror attack on tourists in Pahalgam two days earlier. "Thereafter, on the evening of April 24, 2025, the Congress President and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha attended the all-party meeting and put forward the party's views." "Some Congress leaders have been speaking to the media. They speak for themselves and do not reflect the Congress' views.

"There should be absolutely no doubt whatsoever at this most sensitive of times that the CWC resolution, the views expressed by Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi and the views of authorised AICC office-bearers ALONE represent the position of the Congress (sic)," Ramesh said in a post on X.

Aiyar, during a book release event here on Saturday, had wondered whether the April 22 terror attack in the tourist spot of Baisaran that left 26 dead, was a result of "unresolved questions of the Partition".

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

Former Jammu and Kashmir Congress president Saifuddin Soz, Prasad said, criticised India's decision to put the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance as the river is Pakistan's lifeline. The BJP leader asserted that Soz has asked the Indian government to take into Pakistan's official claim that it was not involved in the attack.

Tharoor's comments on the Pahalgam terror attack, in which he reportedly said there was some failure but no country can ever have a "foolproof, 100-per cent intelligence", have come under attack from within the Congress with party leader Udit Raj hitting out at him. Raj has said that being a Congressman, he should ask when will Prime Minister Narendra Modi teach Pakistan a lesson. "According to you Congress should guarantee foolproof intelligence to BJP and nothing should be asked of the BJP," Raj said in a post on X.

"Shashi Tharoor said no country has 100 per cent foolproof intelligence? At the time of 26/11 Mumbai attack, Modi ji had said after reaching Mumbai from Gujarat that it is the failure of the central government.

"He also said that the problem is the Centre and not the border. How did the terrorists come when the intelligence, BSF and CRPF are with the Centre. Tharoor ji, ask from Modi ji," said Raj, who is the chairman of the "Unorganised Workers and Employees Congress Other Than Professionals".The Congress Working Committee, in a resolution, on Thursday said the cowardly Pahalgam attack masterminded by Pakistan is a direct assault on the values of our republic. It also accused the BJP of exploiting the tragedy to promote discord and polarisation at a time when unity is most needed.

The CWC, chaired by Kharge, asserted that it is imperative that a comprehensive analysis is conducted into the intelligence failures and security lapses that enabled such an attack in a Union Territory, which is directly under the purview of the Union home ministry.

"This cowardly and calculated act of terror, masterminded by Pakistan, is a direct assault on the values of our Republic. The deliberate targeting of Hindus was done to inflame passions across the country. We appeal for calm in the face of this grave provocation and reaffirm our collective strength in the face of adversity," the resolution had said.

BJP questions Kharge, Rahul Gandhi over issue

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The BJP on Monday questioned Congress Chief Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi on Monday over the comments of several of their colleagues, some of whom have questioned the need for a war with Pakistan and the Pahalgam terror attack victims' account that the terrorists had marked out non-Muslims, asking if their call for national unity was merely a formality.

Addressing a press conference here, former Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad also lashed out at Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav for saying that he will not visit the grieving family of Shubham Dwivedi, one of the 26 people, mostly tourists, shot dead by terrorists at Pahalgam, as he had no relations with them. Yadav had, however, added that he would ask his party members to visit the Kanpur-based family and alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), at times, incites people in mourning to misbehave on such occasions.

This is the height of insensitivity, Prasad said and noted that some Congress leaders even went on to question the accounts of Pahalgam attack victims, including Dwivedi's wife, that the terrorists had identified their victims by religion. Prasad named a number of Congress leaders, including Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, senior Maharashtra leader Vijay Wadettiwar, Karnataka minister RB Timmapur and Gandhi's brother-in-law Robert Vadra, for their controversial comments to target the opposition party's leadership.

"Do Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge have no control over their party? Or both of them made pro-forma comments while letting others the freedom to speak as they wished?" he asked, adding that the remarks of the opposition leaders are being used in Pakistan, including by its media, to defame India. Has any warning been given to these Congress leaders or have they been asked to apologise, Prasad asked of the opposition party's leadership. He said Kharge, the Congress president, and Gandhi, the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha, had extended their support to the BJP-led Centre at an all-party meeting over the countermeasures being considered by it following the Pahalgam attack, and said this reflected the strength of India's mature democracy.

However, several Congress leaders have made comments that appeared to be part of a pattern, Ravi Shankar Prasad said, wondering if the top leadership of the opposition party merely responded in a perfunctory manner in the wake of the attack. Former Jammu and Kashmir Congress president Saifuddin Soz, he said, has criticised India's decision to put the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance as the river is Pakistan's lifeline. The BJP leader added that Soz has asked the Indian government to take into Pakistan's official claim that it was not involved in the attack.

Siddaramaiah has expressed his opposition to a war with Pakistan and subsequently, clarified that it should be pursued only as a last resort. When the world is with India after the terror strike, be it the United States, France or Saudi Arabia, these leaders are making such shameless and irresponsible remarks, Prasad said, reiterating PM Narendra Modi's assertion that the perpetrators of the Pahalgam attack and those who conspired with them will be pursued to the end of the world and subjected to the harshest punishment.

This is the height of insensitivity, he said, adding that the likes of Wadettiwar and Timmapur too have also questioned the account of some of the victims that the terrorists had identified non-Muslims before shooting them dead.

Wadettiwar had asked if the terrorists had time to ask the victims about their religion, a view also shared by Timmapur. A few days ago, Vadra alleged that Muslims are being targeted by the government, promoting its Hindutva ideology, as he hinted at links between terror activities and anger in a society. Prasad said when the country should speak in one voice, many Congress leaders are making such irresponsible statements.

Noting that he was the BJP's chief spokesperson during the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack in 2008, when the Congress-led UPA was in power, Prasad said he was instructed by his leadership to affirm the party's support to the government headed by then PM Manmohan Singh.

Government ensure no lapses in upcoming NEET-UG exam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Ministry of Education is holding a series of meetings with district magistrates and superintendents of police from all states and Union territories to ensure there are no lapses in the upcoming medical entrance exam NEET-UG, sources said on Monday.

The May 4 exam will be conducted in more than 550 cities at over 5,000 centres across the country. The Ministry has been working on a "fool-proof" plan after the last year's exam was blistered by irregularities, including paper leaks.

"To ensure smooth, fair and secure conduct of NEET-UG, a series of meetings have been held with DMs and SPs of all states and UTs. The district-level coordination committees are being fully activated to manage logistics, security and crisis response," a source said to media.

"There will be multi-layered frisking by district police in addition to NTA-designated security at the centres. The transport of confidential materials like question papers and OMR sheets will be under full police escort. Coaching centres and digital platforms will be monitored to prevent organised cheating networks," the source added. Duty Magistrates are being deployed for mandatory inspection of all examination centres, while there will be personal visits by DMs and SPs to exam centres to assess preparedness.

Under scrutiny over last year's irregularities in NEET-UG and PhD entrance NET, the Centre had last year set up a panel to ensure "transparent, smooth and fair" conduct of exams by the National Testing Agency, or NTA.

Last year, the UGC-NET (University Grants Commission - National Eligibility Test) was cancelled as the ministry received input that its integrity had been compromised. Both matters are being investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Two other exams — CSIR-UGC NET, NEET-PG — were cancelled at the last moment as a preemptive step.

This year, more than 23 lakh candidates are expected to appear for the exam which determines whether they will it to a medical college in the country.

The NTA had on Saturday a opened a platform to report suspicious claims regarding NEET-UG.

Jammu and Kashmir Assembly condemns Pahalgam attack

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

Lashing out at the neighboring country for not understanding that it has once again 'murdered humanity' by launching a strike on the tourists, holidaying in Pahalgam, the President of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, Farooq Abdullah, has demanded 'stern' action against Pakistan to prevent similar attacks in the future.

On the other hand, the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly unanimously passed a resolution on Monday condemning the heinous, cowardly act that resulted in the loss of 26 innocent lives in Pahalgam on April 22.

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also sent out a message of condemnation of the Pahalgam massacre and said that people across J&K are holding protests against the ghastly terror attack that claimed 26 lives on April 22.

Referring to his previous stand on holding a dialogue with Pakistan, Abdullah Monday told reporters outside the J&K Assembly, "I used to favour dialogue with Pakistan every time.

"How will we answer those who lost their loved ones? Are we doing justice? Not Balakot, today the nation wants such action to be taken so that these kinds of attacks never happen". Abdullah strongly criticised Pakistan's actions, stating that they have "murdered humanity" and should not expect India to compromise on its principles.

Targeting Pakistan further, the JKNC Chief emphasised India's unity, rejecting the two-nation theory and asserting that Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians are all one. He assured that India will give a befitting reply to those responsible for the attack.

"We regret that our neighbour today also does not understand that it has murdered humanity. If they think that we will go with Pakistan by doing this, we should clear their misunderstanding. We did not go with them in 1947, so why will we go today? We threw the two-nation theory into the water at that time.

Today, we are also not ready to accept the two-nation theory. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Christian, we are all one. We will give a befitting reply to them," Farooq Abdullah said.

Meanwhile, the resolution, moved by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary during a special session of the Assembly, was passed by voice vote. At the beginning of the session, House members observed a two-minute silence to pay homage to the 26 people killed in the tragedy last week.

Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather condemned the killing of innocent tourists from various parts of the country.

"We pay homage to the victims and extend our condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones," he said.

"The Legislative Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir reaffirms its unwavering commitment to foster an environment of peace, development, and inclusive prosperity for all its citizens, and to resolutely defeat the nefarious designs of those who seek to disturb the communal harmony and progress of the nation and of Jammu and Kashmir," the resolution stated. Concluding a discussion on the resolution, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who also holds the tourism portfolio, condemned the Pahalgam terror attack and admitted that he had failed in his responsibility of ensuring a safe return for tourists. "None of us supports this. It has hollowed us from within. In 26 years, this is the first time I've seen people come out of their homes like this. From Kathua to Kupwara, there is hardly any town or village where people have not come out of their homes to condemn this attack," he said.

President of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference Farooq Abdullah PIONEER PHOTO

He added that an attack of such a large scale has been carried out after 21 years in Baisaran. "I did not know how to apologise to the families of the deceased... Being the host, I was responsible for sending the tourists back safely.

I couldn't do it. I do not have the words to seek an apology," the Chief Minister added. Among the 26 people who lost their lives was a young Navy officer, Lieutenant Vinay Narwal, who got married on April 16, just six days before the attack. His wife, Himanshi, stood beside his tricolour-draped coffin to bid him a final goodbye after his mortal remains arrived in Delhi.

Omar Abdullah, while mentioning the Navy officer's wife during his speech, said, "What should I tell the widow of the Navy officer who had got married just a few days ago? I have no words to console her. Many family members of the victims asked me what their crime was. I had no answer."

Further, he remembered the pony rider Syed Adil Hussain Shah, who died trying to save the tourists during the attack.

He was the only local and only Muslim who died in the dastardly attack in which terrorists singled out men, asked for their religious identity and shot dead Hindus. "Adil, without bothering about his life, saved many tourists. He laid down his life. Instead of fleeing, he decided to save them," Omar Abdullah said.

The Chief Minister further said that he would not use the situation in Pahalgam to demand statehood or Jammu and Kashmir from the central government.

"I won't demand statehood on the dead bodies. We will demand statehood on some other occasion," he said while speaking in the Assembly.

"My brand of politics is not so cheap that I would demand statehood at the cost of 26 lives," he said, asserting that politics must have its limits, especially when human lives are involved.

Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly, Sunil Sharma, said the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, will not remain silent and will give a befitting reply to the deadly Pahalgam attack.

He also said that every single word in this special session of the House is being scrutinised as the eyes of the whole country are on us.

Addressing the Assembly, Sharma said Pakistan has been trying to keep its narrative alive through some miscreants, but the people after 35 years have given a strong reply by staying united and sending a message to the world that no ploys can divide them.

400 jobless Bengal school employees demand Mamata's intervention

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kolkata

Over 400 people, among the 25,753 teaching and non-teaching staff rendered jobless following the Supreme Court order on April 3, on Monday blocked the Hazra Crossing in south Kolkata demanding an audience with West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Traffic came to a standstill for nearly an hour along the busy Asutosh Mukherjee Road-Hazra Road crossing as protesters voiced their anger at being labelled "tainted" despite qualifying in the 2016 WBSSC Recruitment Test. They demanded to be reinstated or at least allowed to work until December 31, following the court's directive that allowed some teachers to continue temporarily.

As police tried to stop them from moving towards the CM's official residence in Kalighat area, around one km away, the protesters scuffled with police and squatted in the middle of the road.

Some of them were forced to board waiting police vehicles, while others were persuaded to move to the side of road.

United Teaching and Non-Teaching Forum members, sit on the road after police stopped them marching towards WB CM Mamata Banerjee's residence in Kolkata on Monday PTI

One protester, a woman lying in the middle of the road, refused to budge even after a senior police officer folded his hands and pleaded with her to move aside.

Another protester, holding up a photo of her OMR sheet, accused the SSC of playing a "divisive game" by excluding her name from the list of "not specifically tainted" candidates submitted to the district inspector of schools in Cooch Behar.

"We are facing social humiliation despite clearing the SSC exams fairly before 2016," said one teacher, who did not want to be named.

"If the Supreme Court itself said it couldn't distinguish between tainted and untainted candidates due to the corruption in the recruitment process, why is the state government isolating us?"

Bipul Jana, a former non-teaching staff member from a South 24 Parganas school, added, "While the SSC has sent lists of untainted teachers to respective DI offices in every region, no thought has been spared for the Group C and D staff. We earned our jobs in a fair way in 2016, but we are staring at an uncertain future because of the large-scale irregularities committed by a section of the ruling party and government officials at that time."

He also criticised the Chief Minister's announcement of a temporary allowance, saying, "The ₹25,000 monthly allowance for Group C and ₹20,000 for Group D employees until December 31 is simply not enough."

The blockade, organised by the United Teaching and Non-Teaching Employees Forum, lasted around 40 minutes before police managed to clear the area.

The Supreme Court has scrapped the entire 2016 WBSSC recruitment panel, resulting in 25,753 teachers and non-teaching staff losing their jobs.

The court later allowed "untainted" teachers to continue until December 31, but this relief was not extended to Group C and Group D staff.

MP MLAs to receive Apple iPads

GIRISH SHARMA ■ Bhopal

In a significant move towards modernizing legislative functioning, all 230 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in Madhya Pradesh will soon be provided with Apple iPads under the ambitious e-Vidhan initiative.

The process of completing formalities is in its final stage, with a unanimous consensus reached among all members.

Official sources said that three meetings in this regard have been convened in this regard in past two months. In the meetings, members emphasised the necessity of equipping legislators with secure and efficient devices, considering the evolving demands of legislative and constituency work and the critical need for robust data protection.

The consensus to provide Apple iPads — known for their high security standards and performance — reflects a broader national trend where several state assemblies have opted for Apple devices for their legislators.

The National Informatics Centre (NIC) will play a pivotal role in finalising the distribution process.

Once deployed, the e-Vidhan system will enable MLAs to access legislative documents, reference materials, and constituency data digitally, thereby enhancing legislative functioning and reducing dependency on paper-based processes.

Principal Secretary of the Madhya Pradesh Assembly, AP Singh, told *The Pioneer* that the process of laying lines has begun within the State Assembly premises.

The Public Works Department (PWD) of Madhya Pradesh is overseeing the execution of this work, while the procurement of iPads has been entrusted to the National Informatics Centre (NIC).

He informed that the cost of procuring the iPads will be shared between the Central and State Governments, with the Centre bearing 60 percent and the Madhya Pradesh Government covering the remaining 40 percent.

This approach is consistent with the Centre's push to promote digital governance under the broader framework of Digital India.

Notably, the move towards digitisation had been initiated earlier. On March 1, 2023, while presenting the State Budget for the fiscal year 2023–24, Finance Minister Jagdish Devda had earmarked ₹5 lakh per legislator for setting up e-office infrastructure.

The provision was made under the Madhya Pradesh Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2005, signaling a long-term vision to reduce physical paperwork and enhance administrative efficiency.

Once the e-Vidhan system is operational, Madhya Pradesh will join the league of 19 other Indian states that have already implemented similar initiatives.

The platform is expected to not only make Assembly proceedings more transparent and efficient but also significantly cut costs — saving crores of rupees annually that are currently spent on printing and distributing legislative documents.

Assembly Principal Secretary AP Singh expressed optimism that the distribution of iPads would be completed soon with NIC's assistance.

He further highlighted that moving to a fully digital platform will allow members to access all legislative material with just a click, facilitate real-time referencing during debates and foster inter-state innovation exchange by connecting all Assemblies through a unified digital system.

Kharge slams PM Modi for skipping Pahalgam terror meet

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge with party leader and former Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot during a rally in Jaipur PTI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Jaipur

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi for skipping the all-party meeting called to discuss the Pahalgam terror attack that left 26 people dead.

"It is the misfortune of the country that when the pride of the country was hurt, you (PM Modi) were giving an election speech in Bihar," he said addressing the 'Samvidhan Bachao' rally here.

"Leaders of all parties attended the all-party meeting, but it is sad that PM Modi did not come to that meeting. Was Bihar far away?

"The PM should have come to the all-party meeting and explained the plan. What help does he need from us?" he said. Further attacking the Prime Minister, he said, "Modi gave inflation and unemployment.

Such people weaken the country. The 56-inch chest has shrinked."

In the run up to the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, Modi had said that it takes a 56-inch chest to convert Uttar Pradesh into Gujarat in terms of development. Kharge said Congress leaders had decided that it will support the government in its action as the country is supreme.

"Country is supreme, then come parties, religion. Everyone should be united for country," he said.

He said the Congress talks about unity but the BJP talks of breaking it.

"In this country, the Constitution is supreme and our democracy runs under the Constitution," he said.

Attacking the government over alleged misuse of investigative agencies and raids on Congress leaders, he said, "Whenever Congress grows, these people try to suppress it. We are not the ones to be suppressed."

He alleged that BJP leaders are trying to weaken everyone but they cannot weaken democracy by filing "false" cases against people.

Encroachments on India-Nepal border removed

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Lucknow

In a determined move to safeguard national security and preserve government land holdings, the Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government has initiated a robust campaign to remove illegal encroachments and shut down unauthorised madrasas operating within close proximity to the India-Nepal international border.

A special operation conducted between April 25 and April 27 witnessed significant action across several border districts, where longstanding illegal occupations and unrecognised religious establishments had proliferated.

In Bahraich district, a comprehensive survey in Nanpara tehsil — covering the critical 0 to 10-kilometre stretch along the international boundary — identified 227 instances of unauthorised encroachment on government land.

Prior to the special operation, 63 illegal structures had already been dismantled. During the three-day drive, authorities succeeded in removing an additional 26 encroachments. Consequently, government land occupied by a total of 89 illegal settlers has now been reclaimed.

Notably, officials reported that none of the sites cleared during this phase involved madrasas or educational structures, offering a degree of administrative relief. The district of Shravasti saw a focused effort to curb the operation of unrecognised madrasas. In Jamunha tehsil, seven madrasas, and in Bhinga tehsil, ten madrasas were found operating without requisite documentation and official sanction. As a result, all 17 institutions were ordered to cease operations immediately. Simultaneously, within a 0 to 15-kilometre radius along the Nepal border, proceedings have been initiated under Section 67 of the Uttar Pradesh Revenue Code in 119 cases involving temporary and permanent illegal encroachments. Investigations in Siddharthnagar district's Naugarh tehsil confirmed the construction of five madrasas and mosques without legal authorisation within the 10-kilometre border zone.

Pursuant to directives from senior administrative authorities, inquiries and subsequent legal actions are underway. In Shohratgarh tehsil, six additional sites of unlawful construction have been identified.

Meanwhile, in Maharajganj district, government land encroachments were detected at three locations in Pharenda tehsil, ten in Nautanwa tehsil and six in Nichlaul tehsil. While one matter remains sub judice, eviction and demolition activities under Section 67(1) of the Revenue Code are actively progressing in all other instances. In Balrampur district, officials have recorded seven cases of illegal occupation — five in Balrampur tehsil and two in Tulsipur tehsil. Following identification, two encroachers voluntarily vacated the premises, while eviction proceedings continue against the remaining individuals. The Uttar Pradesh government has reiterated its uncompromising stance against any form of illegal encroachment or unauthorised madrasa activity within 10 kilometres of the Nepal border.

All district administrations have been instructed to expedite eviction processes, ensure the demolition of unlawful structures, and maintain continuous surveillance along the international boundary to prevent future violations.

SP MP Suman demands Z-category security

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Agra

Samajwadi Party (SP) Rajya Sabha member Ramji Lal Suman has alleged a conspiracy to assassinate him, blaming the state government after his convoy was attacked at the Gabhana toll plaza in Aligarh district.

During the attack, the windows of his vehicle were smashed. The MP later returned safely to Agra under police protection.

Addressing a press conference at his residence in Sanjay Place, Agra, Suman said the attack appeared to be a meticulously planned ambush intended to eliminate him.

"The way the attackers targeted my vehicle clearly shows that my murder is being orchestrated by the government. This was not an accident but a deliberate and deadly conspiracy," he stated.

Suman pointed out that this was not the first attempt on his life. Recalling a previous incident, he said, "On March 26, members of the Karni Sena attacked my residence.

Despite two FIRs being registered in connection with that attack, no arrests have been made till date.

This shows the level of protection the attackers are receiving from the police and the government." He further alleged that on April 12, Karni Sena activists organised a protest at Garhi Rami, openly brandishing swords and firearms.

Samajwadi Party (SP) Rajya Sabha member Ramji Lal Suman FILE PHOTO

"Even during that incident, police and administrative officials chose to turn a blind eye. Their inaction reflects a deliberate strategy to let such elements operate fearlessly under state patronage," he charged.

Warning the government, Suman said, "Today it is an MP under attack. If such incidents continue unchecked, it raises serious questions about the safety of ordinary citizens. Should anything happen to me, the government will be solely responsible."

Following the attack, senior SP leaders rallied behind Suman, strongly condemning the incident and demanding immediate action.

SP district president Shri Krishna Verma and city president Chaudhary Wajid Nisar stated, "In a government where elected representatives are unsafe, the security of the common man becomes a farce."

SP leader Shabbir Abbas demanded that Ramji Lal Suman be provided with Z-category security, citing the repeated threats and attacks on him.

Several other SP members, including MP representative Dharmendra Yadav, Salim Shah, Muin Babu, Rajpal Yadav, Mamta Taploo, Rahul Bharti, Santosh Jatav, Laxmi Dhangar and Diwakar Gurjar, also condemned the attack and expressed solidarity with Suman.

Party leaders have warned of statewide protests if immediate security measures are not taken and the culprits are not apprehended.

Meanwhile, the local police have initiated an investigation into the incident, but no arrests have been reported so far.

Editor's TAKE

Sweltering heat grips northern India

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Leaderspeak

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

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

UCC on the horizon

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Court had also declared Triple Talaq unconstitutional, promoting gender justice. Minority groups feel that personal laws are vital to cultural and religious identities, and implementing a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) could infringe on religious freedom under Article 25 of the Constitution. India currently has separate personal laws for various religious communities, including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Parsis, which govern issues like marriage, divorce, and inheritance. The UCC supporters argue for one law for all citizens.

KALYANI SHANKAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rekindling spirituality in public service

SECOND Opinion

BY KANISHK

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

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

It manifests in the policymaker, the volunteer, the social worker, the diplomat — all united by a common purpose: the greater good. Leadership, in this realm, cannot rely on knowledge alone. Knowledge is inert until shaped by reflection, compassion, and inner values. Spiritual wisdom breathes life into decisions, offering clarity and courage when doubt or fatigue sets in. Without this grounding, even the most brilliant minds may falter — confusion creeps in, cynicism sets root, and leadership loses its compass. Leadership today is often misunderstood as a position of authority, but real leadership stems from authenticity. It is not found in designations but discovered in one's depth of conviction and steadiness of spirit. Authority may be granted by position, but legitimacy is earned through inner alignment. Spiritually grounded leaders do not chase applause — they pursue truth and inspire through vision and integrity. They don't act from ambition, but from an attunement to the pulse of humanity. Such leadership stirs hope, cuts through cynicism, and dissolves indifference.

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

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

A quiet spiritual awakening is unfolding. This awakening isn't about IQ or even EQ, but a higher dimension — Spiritual Quotient (SQ): the ability to see beyond the immediate, to act with purpose and compassion. Without SQ, institutions crumble under their own weight; fatigue replaces idealism, and burnout overtakes brilliance. When a leader is spiritually aligned, their institutions reflect that purpose. This generates "spiritual capital" — the shared conscience of a community that guides its ethos. When such spiritual clarity guides governance, it becomes more than administration — it becomes dharma in action. The ancient Indian ideal of Ram Rajya embodied this: a just society led by humility, where governance was sacred, and transformation flowed from values, not mandates. Great nations and institutions outlive their founders when their leaders' spiritual fire seeps into collective consciousness.

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

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

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

Letters to the Editor

Indo-Pak staff is ominous

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

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

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

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

RS NARULA | PATIALA

International Dance Day

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

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

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

DR B MADHUSUDHAN REDDY | KARIMNAGAR

Houses of alleged terrorists demolished

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

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

BHAGWAN THADANI I MUMBAI

TEACH PAKISTAN A LESSON BUT WITH CAUTION

The content of the article, ' No Indus water to Pak..' (284-25), though carries some emotional touch, will be endorsed by many. It is true, Pandit Nehru was gentle enough and stood firm on international norms, a humane approach and tried to live up to the theory of Love thy Neighbour. The recipient not reciprocating the best of sentiments and gestures demonstrated by the Indus Water Treaty is a fallout of the misplaced priority of focusing more on communal agenda than on developing the country. India has waited enough and suspension of the treaty should sensitise the ruling dispensation to shun its communal agenda and focus on peoples' welfare besides establishing peace with all. Pakistan is falling in debt trap besides living with the menace of terrorism. All these make clear that the leadership in Pakistan is not prepared to change its course. India's decision to deprive Indus water, which is a lifeline for Pakistan, suits the situation of this day. However, it is to be kept in mind that there is possibility of our action becoming a precedent that turns against as we have China on the other side with a major river flowing through its soil into India. Basic fact Pakistan needs to understand is that it has wasted decades in pursuing communal agenda in the process of which it has lagged far behind India in every aspect, besides living with the pains inflicted by terrorism.

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

AG RAJMOHAN I ANANTPUR

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

India's grand rewrite of communication order

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

FIRST Column

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

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

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

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

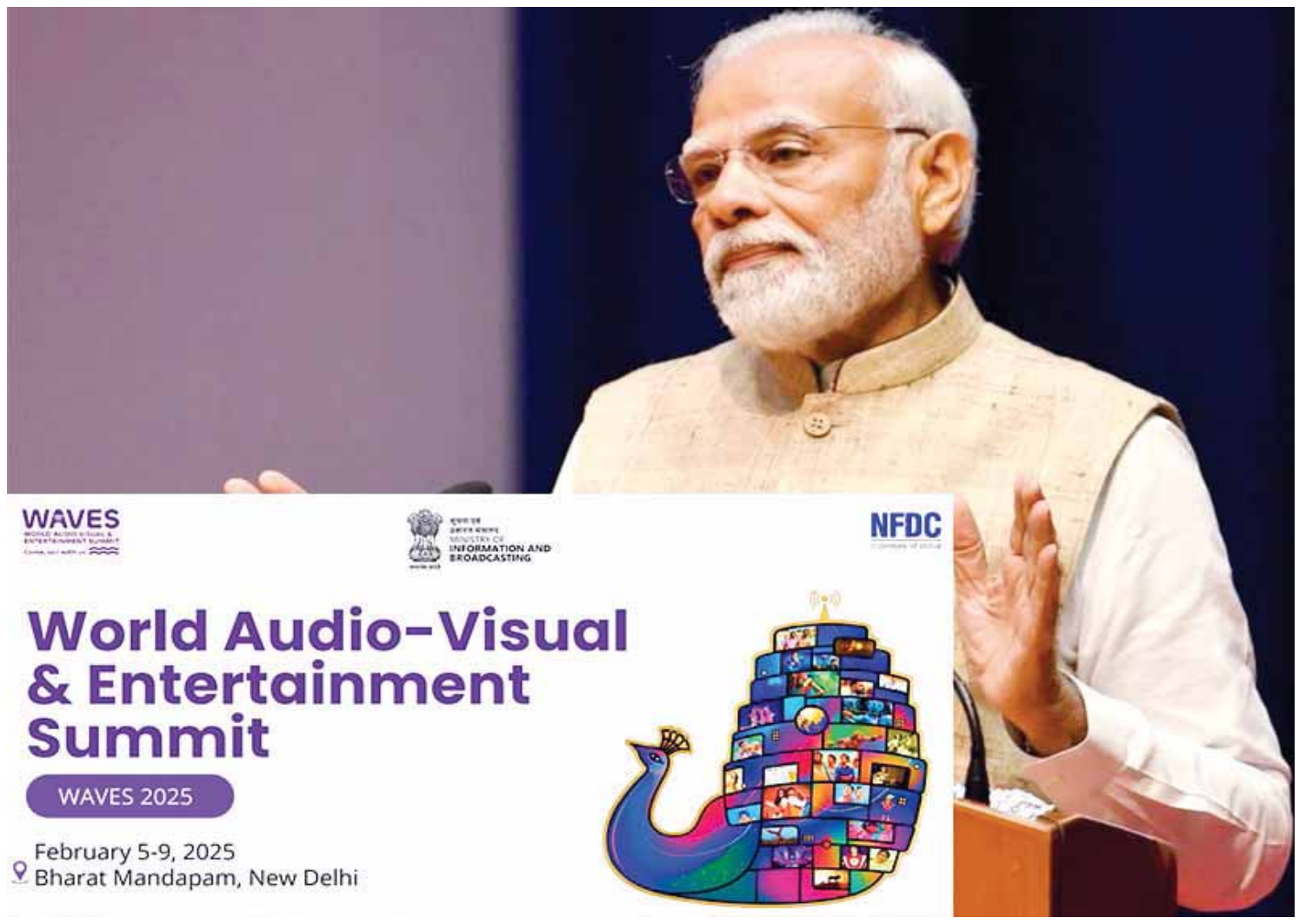
From the outset, WAVES has been propelled by an unflinching commitment to innovation and ideation. As the inaugural edition, it places "Communication First" not just as a slogan but as an organising principle. For perhaps the first time, a summit in the M&E space has been imagined as a "Communication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

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

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

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

The themes and templates curated under this banner are refreshingly forward — looking. They tackle not just today's industry pain points but anticipate tomorrow's cultural, economic, and technological shifts. From decentralisation of narratives and platform-neutral storytelling to immersive formats and multilingual access, WAVES has laid down a clear thesis: the future belongs to those who dare to reimagine.



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

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

WAVES 2025 emerges at a moment when the "Creator Economy" is reshaping global production — consumption cycles. Here, India is not a passive participant but a proactive architect; fusing its demographic dividend, cultural wealth, and technological prowess into an unbeatable formula for soft power.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Why a new linguistic survey is crucial for cooperative India

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BINOD ANAND

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

The result is a fragmented approach that fails to execute cooperative economic frameworks effectively. Consider this: a rural marketing executive knows precisely how to communicate with farmers in their dialect to sell fertilisers or machinery, but a Government financial literacy campaign in the same village may miss its mark simply because it is not available in the local language. This gap in understanding not only undermines the potential of Government schemes like PM-KISAN and FPOs (Farmer Producer Organisations) but also impedes the inclusive growth of cooperatives.

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

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

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

Further, the promotion of Indigenous languages will encourage knowledge sharing of traditional farming techniques, watershed management practices, and sustainable agriculture. With more accurate linguistic and physiological density data, policymakers can design hyper-localised interventions that cater to each region's unique challenges.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Death toll in Iran port explosion reaches 46

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

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

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

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

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

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

The Iranian military denied receiving the chemical shipment. Social media footage of the explosion saw reddish-hued smoke rising from the fire just before the detonation.

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

New York protests against the Pahalgam attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

US airstrike kills 68 African migrants: Houthi rebels

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ethiopians and other African migrants for years have landed in Yemen, braving the war-torn nation to try and reach Saudi Arabia for work. The Houthi rebels allegedly make tens of thousands of dollars a week smuggling migrants over the border. Migrants from Ethiopia have found themselves detained, abused and even killed in Saudi Arabia and Yemen during the war. An Oct. 3, 2022, letter to the kingdom from the UN said its investigators "received concerning allegations of cross-border artillery shelling and small arms fire allegedly by Saudi security forces, causing the deaths of up to 430 and injuring 650 migrants." Monday's alleged strike recalled a similar strike by a Saudi-led coalition battling the Houthis back in 2022 on the same compound, which caused a collapse killing 66 detainees and wounding 113 others, a United Nations report later said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Singapore: condolences offered to victims of Pahalgam attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Singapore

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Minister Piyush Goyal arrives in London to begin UK, tour

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal FILE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

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

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

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

"Talks have been ongoing since they were relaunched in February, and we will only sign a deal that is in the best interests of the British people and drives growth across the UK," the spokesperson said. The relaunch of the negotiations, following a hiatus for general elections in both countries last year, is aimed at clinching an agreement that is expected to significantly enhance the estimated GBP 41 billion a year India-UK trade partnership.

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

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Beijing

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

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

For his part, Wang said China was closely following the developments, stressing that combating terrorism was a shared responsibility of the entire world while reaffirming Beijing's consistent support for Pakistan's firm counterterrorism efforts, it added.

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

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

China hopes both sides will remain restrained, move toward each other, and work together to de-escalate the situation, he added. Dar emphasised that Pakistan had consistently and firmly fought terrorism and was against any actions that could lead to an escalation of the situation, according to the report.

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

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

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

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

Rare exposition of sacred Buddha tooth relic ends

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colombo

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

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

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

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

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

"We are so pleased that it has come to an end. But we are left with the bigger task of removing various temporary structures put up in the town," Indika Kumari, the Municipal Commissioner of Kandy, told reporters.

She said the cleaning operations commenced last night itself.

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

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

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

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

Seven killed, Nine injured in bomb blast in northwest Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Peshawar

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Major power outage in Spain

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Barcelona

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

It is rare to have such a widespread outage there. Spanish generator Red Eléctrica said it affected the Iberian peninsula and the incident is being assessed. The countries have a combined population of more than 50 million people. It was not immediately clear how many were affected. Spain's public broadcaster RTVE said a major power outage hit several regions of the country just after midday local time, leaving its newsroom, Spain's parliament in Madrid and subway stations across the country in the dark.

A graph on Spain's electricity network website showing demand across the country indicated a steep drop around 12.15 pm from 27,500MW to near 15,000MW.

A couple of hours later, Spain's electricity network operator said it was recovering power in the north and south of the peninsula, which would help to progressively restore the electricity supply nationwide. In Portugal, a country of some 10.6 million people, the outage hit the capital, Lisbon, and surrounding areas, as well as northern and southern parts of the country. Portugal's government said the incident appeared to stem from problems outside the country, an official told national news agency Lusa.

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

"It looks like it was a problem with the distribution network, apparently in Spain. It's still being ascertained," Cabinet Minister Leitão Amaro was quoted as saying. Portuguese distributor E-Redes said the outage was due to "a problem with the European electricity system," according to Portuguese newspaper Expresso.

The company said it was compelled to cut power in specific areas to stabilise the network, according to Expresso. E-Redes said parts of France also were affected. Several Lisbon subway cars were evacuated, reports said. Also in Portugal, courts stopped work and ATMs and electronic payment systems were affected. Traffic lights in Lisbon stopped working. It was not possible to make calls on mobile phone networks, though some apps were working.

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Toronto

Canadians will decide Monday whether to extend the Liberal Party's decade in power or instead hand control to the Conservatives. They'll pick either Prime Minister Mark Carney or opposition leader Pierre Poilievre to lead the way forward, but the election is also a referendum of sorts on someone who isn't even Canadian: Donald Trump.

Until the American president won a second term and began threatening Canada's economy and sovereignty, even suggesting the country should become the 51st state, the Liberals looked headed for defeat. Canadians go the polls as the country grapples with the aftermath of a fatal car ramming attack on Saturday in Vancouver. The tragedy on the eve of the election prompted the suspension of campaigning for several hours. Police ruled out terrorism and said the suspect is a local man with a history of mental health issues.

Trump's truculence has infuriated many Canadians, leading many to cancel US vacations, refuse to buy American goods and possibly even vote early - a record 7.3 million Canadians cast ballots before election day. Trump also put Poilievre and the Conservative Party on the back foot after they appeared headed for an easy victory only months ago.

"The Americans want to break us so they can own us," Carney said recently, laying out what he saw as the stakes for the election. "Those aren't just words. That's what's at risk."

Poilievre, a populist firebrand who campaigned with Trump-like bravado, had hoped to make the election a referendum on former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, whose popularity declined toward the end of his decade in power as food and housing prices rose and immigration surged. But then Trump became the dominant issue, and Poilievre's similarities to the bombastic president could cost him. "He appeals to the same sense of grievance," Canadian historian Robert Bothwell said of the Conservative leader. "It's like Trump standing there saying 'I am your retribution.'"

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

Foreign policy hasn't dominated a Canadian election this much since 1988, when, ironically, free trade with the United States was the prevailing issue.

Whichever candidate emerges as prime minister will face a litany of challenges.

Canada has been dealing with a cost of living crisis for some time. And more than 75 percent of its exports go to the US, so Trump's threat to impose sweeping tariffs and his desire to get the North American automakers to move Canada's production south could severely damage the Canadian economy.

Immigrants detained at illegal nightclub in Colorado

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colorado Springs

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

Video posted online by the Drug Enforcement Administration showed agents announcing their presence outside the building and ordering patrons to leave with their hands up. Other videos showed dozens of people fleeing the building through its entrance after federal agents smashed a window. Later, dozens of suspects were shown in handcuffs standing on a sidewalk waiting to be transported. During his second stint as US president, Donald Trump's unprecedented campaign of immigration enforcement has pushed the limits of executive power, and he has clashed with federal judges trying to restrain him.

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

The crackdown has included detaining more than 1,000 international college students, some of whom have seen their legal status restored, at least temporarily. The policies have slowed immigration at the southern border to a relative trickle.

On Sunday, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement took the club-going immigrants into custody, said Jonathan Pullen, special agent in charge of the DEA's Rocky Mountain Division.

"Colorado Springs is waking up to a safer community today," he said. The city, Colorado's second largest, lies about 113 kilometres south of Denver. More than 300 law enforcement officers and officials from multiple agencies responded to the nightclub, which had been under investigation for several months for alleged activities including drug trafficking, prostitution and "crimes of violence", Pullen said at a news conference. Cocaine was among the drugs found, he said.

"When the cops showed up at the door, most of the drugs hit the floor," Pullen said. An undisclosed number of guns were seized, he said. "Nothing good ever happens after 3 am," the DEA's Rocky Mountain Division posted on the social platform X.

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

Journalists swarm cardinals at Vatican gates sincerely

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Vatican City

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

A date for the start of the highly anticipated conclave could come as soon as Monday.

In a chaotic scene, journalists shouted out questions about the mood inside, whether there was unity, and when the conclave would begin.

A reporter for a satirical Italian television program repeatedly asked whether an Italian cardinal who has been convicted by the Vatican criminal court on finance-related charges would be allowed to vote.

"There is the hope of unity," said Argentine Cardinal Ángel Sixto Rossi, the 66-year-old archbishop of Cordoba who was made a cardinal by Francis in 2023.

Many cardinals cited the desire to continue Francis' pastoral focus on people who are marginalised and against war.

But conservatives in the ranks may be more focused on forging unity and refocusing the church back to core doctrines emphasized by St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, rather than continuing Francis' social justice focus and outreach to women and gays.

British Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the 79-year-old archbishop of Westminster, was adamant that the church must strive for unity, and he downplayed divisions.

"The role of the pope is to essentially hold us together and that's the grace we've been given from God," said Nichols.

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

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

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

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

The last 20 were appointed in early December.

"We've got all week," Nichols said as he arrived Monday. Only cardinals under 80 are eligible to vote, and it is not clear how many of the 135 will participate. A Spanish cardinal has already said he won't come to Rome for health reasons.

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

Francis in 2020 forced Becciu to resign as head of the Vatican's saint-making office and renounce his rights as a cardinal because of allegations of embezzlement and financial fraud. Becciu denied any wrongdoing but was put on trial in the Vatican criminal court and convicted of finance-related charges in December, 2023.

He is appealing the conviction and has participated in the pre-conclave meetings, but there is a lingering question about whether he is entitled to vote.

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

Russia, Ukraine trade strikes as talks enter critical week

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kyiv

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

The Russian Defence Ministry said its forces downed 119 Ukrainian drones overnight, most of them over Russia's Bryansk border region. In Ukraine, air raid sirens rang out across the country Monday morning. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage. The outcome of a push by US President Donald Trump's administration to swiftly end the fighting remains unclear, clouded by conflicting claims and doubts about how far each side might be willing to compromise amid deep hostility and mistrust. The clock is ticking on Washington's engagement in efforts to resolve Europe's biggest conflict since World War II that has cost tens of thousands of lives. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Sunday that this week would be "very critical." The US needs to "make a determination about whether this is an endeavour that we want to continue to be involved in," he said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

American military aid has been crucial for Ukraine's war effort, and further help could be at risk if the Trump administration walks away from attempts to end the war. Trump said at the weekend he harbours doubts about Russian President Vladimir Putin's sincerity in pursuing a deal, as Russian forces have continued to strike civilian areas of Ukraine with cruise and ballistic missiles while the talks have proceeded. But on Friday, Trump described a brokered settlement on the war as "close." Western European officials have accused the Kremlin of dragging its feet on peace talks so that Russian forces, which are bigger than Ukraine's and have battlefield momentum, can capture more Ukrainian land.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Information is given to the general public at large by my client Mr. Rajnish Kumar who intends to purchase the Freehold Residential Ground Floor (without Roof/Terrace rights), Built-Up on Property bearing no. B-171, area measuring 100 sq. yds., out of Khasra no. 10/18, situated at Colony- Sainik Nagar, Village- Matiala, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi-110059, from Mr. Gaurav Madan who was the owner of the aforesaid property by virtue of Relinquishment Deed regd. dated 27.01.2025, executed by Mr. Shamit Madan (Doc. No. 2025/25/II/2817), Mr. Rajnish Kumar intend to seek a loan from Aavas Financiers Limited, any person(s), Bank/NBFC/institution(s) having any claim and/or objection/or litigation in respect of the said property shall communicate the same to the undersigned at our address within 07 days from the publication of this notice with documentary evidence in support thereof, failing which all the claim, of such person(s)/institution(s) shall not be binding upon the said property or purchaser.

Viksha Legal
Ram Prakash Pandey, (Advocate)
Mob. 9711281479, 2E/23, 3rd Floor, Jhandewalan Extn., N.D. 110055

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to all concern that I, Shivendra Kumar Sheoliha is the owner of Flat No. 630, 3rd Floor Sector-37, Arun Vihar, Noida (U.P) that the flat was purchased from Col. Trilok Singh Anand S/o Shri Sona Singh Anand R/o 103, DIN CGHS Sector-4, Plot No.7, Dwarika, New Delhi-110045, that the said property was sold on GPA Executed in favour of Shivendra Kumar Sheoliha, Which is registered at Sub Registrar Noida Dated- 22.01.2000. Further Agreement to sell was executed on Rs.100/- non Judicial Stamp Paper Duly Notarized on 22.01.2000, But Not registered at Sub Registrar Noida. So it is informed to all concern that the said property is going to be sold out as such if any one has/have any objection he/she may file his/her objection along with the sufficient proof in the Residential Department of the Noida Authority within 30 Days from the date of publication of this notice.

Shivendra Kumar Sheoliha

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice is given to the general public that my clientess Smt. Ritu Aggarwal W/o Late Shri Deepak Aggarwal R/o H.No. D-121, 2nd Floor, Kamla Nagar, Delhi-110007, has severed all relations with her son namely, Mr. Harshul Aggarwal S/o Late Shri Deepak Aggarwal R/o H.No. D-121, 2nd Floor, Kamla Nagar, Delhi-110007. She has disowned and disinherited him from all her properties moveable and immovable including property No. D-121, 2nd Floor, Kamla Nagar, Delhi-110007. He has no right, title or interest in the above said property or any other moveable or immovable properties owned or possessed by my clientess. Any person dealing with him in connection with the above said property or any other matter concerning him shall be doing the same at his own risk and consequences. The mother of my clientess Smt. Veena Jain, her Brother Mr. Neeraj Jain and her Sister Smt. Neha Jain are also not responsible directly or indirectly for the acts and omissions of Mr. Harshul Aggarwal. My clients shall not be held responsible for any of the acts of Mr. Harshul Aggarwal.

For and on behalf of
M/S LITIGATORS
M.S. Khan Advocate
4805/24, 3rd, 4th Floor, Krishna House, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj, New Delhi-110002
Mob.: 9818416099

Quarterage Developers Private Limited
Corp. Office: 1332 D, Sultan Singh Building, Kashmere Gate, Delhi-110006
Tel: 0130-4091004, 4091005
E-mail: theparkergroup@yahoo.com
Web: theparkergroup.in
CIN No. U70109DL2018PTC333106

PUBLIC NOTICE

We M/s Quarterage Developers Pvt. Ltd. (here in referred as company) Is in process of undertaking the development of plotted colony under Deen Dayal Aawas Yojna in the revenue estate of Nagal and Patla sector- 63/64, Sonipat in accordance with license no.95 of 2024 granted by Director, Town and country planning, Chandigarh.
where as the license for 12.975 acers was earlier granted by DTCP. Now the license company has proposed and additional license to the already granted license for an area admeasuring 2.56875 acers adding to the already license land for which the company has already obtained the LOI from the DTCP vide memo no.LC-476-B/JE(MK)/ 2025/15366 dated- 25/04/2025
As per condition no.11 of the said LOI, the developer company has to seek suggestions/objection before the grant of license from the general public. Accordingly vide this public notice, objections (if any) are here by invited from any person in the said colony and general public on the proposed of changes of the layout plan and proposed additional license for which the LOI has been granted.
A copy of the earlier approved layout plan and the layout plan now proposed to be revised as per the new LOI, same is available for perusal on the company website and at the office of the undersigned or at the office of DTP Sonipat and STP Rohtak
If any person having any objection on the proposed revision may file his / her objection within 15 days of the publication of this notice in the office of DTP Sonipat or STP Rohtak falling which it will be assumed and understood that no objection to proposed revision in the layout plan
Place: New Delhi | Date: 29/04/2025

PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD.
(Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall Patiala-147001)
Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813 Website- www.pspscl.in
Mobile No. 96461-55525

E-Tender Enq. No.611/P-3/EMPW-12986 Dated 25-04-2025
Dy. Chief Engineer / Headquarter (Procurement Cell-3) GGSSTP, Roopnagar invites E-Tender ID No. 2025_POWER_139345_1 for Repair of Conveyor Belt Structure of Coal Handling Plant, GGSSTP, Rupnagar. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to **https://eproc.punjab.gov.in** from dated **25-04-2025 / 17:00** Noon onwards.
Note:- Corrigendum & Addendum, if any will be published online at **https://eproc.punjab.gov.in**
RTP-43/25
76155/12/4186/2023/43917 Dated CHD :- 4/28/2025

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences
Sadiq Road, Faridkot -151203 Ph. 01639-256232, 256236

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot
(Admission Branch)
Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot
Admission Notice for PPMET (Basic B.Sc. Nursing) Course, session 2025
Online applications are invited alongwith requisite fee for admission to Basic B.Sc. Nursing course in all the Govt./University constituent /Private colleges of Punjab through University website from **30.04.2025 to 20.05.2025.** Prospectus for admission to Basic B.Sc. Nursing course will be available on university website from **30.04.2025.** The Entrance Test (PPMET-2025) for admission to Basic B.Sc. Nursing course will be conducted on **07.06.2024**
Note:- Any Notification/Corrigendum/Amendment by Govt. of Punjab will be followed. For Prospectus/fee details/schedule/online counseling/details & updates visit us at: **www.bfuhs.ac.in.**
REGISTRAR
00/12/421/2023/43907 Dated CHD :- 4/28/2025

CAN FIN HOMES LTD
Can Fin Homes Ltd (Sponsor : CANARA BANK)
CIN : L85110KA1987PLC008699,
Above Canara Bank Building, First Floor, Plot No C – 3, Sector – 1, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, Pin Code : 201301,
E-mail : noida@canfinhomes.com, Ph No : 0120 – 2970164/65/67, 7625079126

APPENDIX- IV-A [See proviso to rule 9 (1)]
Sale notice for sale of immovable properties

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 9 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 NOTICE is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Can Fin Homes Ltd., Noida Branch, will be sold by holding e-auction on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on **20-05-2025,** for recovery of **Rs. 26,10,348/-** (Rupees Twenty Six Lakh Ten Thousand Three Hundred Forty Eight Only) due to Can Fin Homes Ltd. from **Mr. Amit Negi S/o Dhan Singh Negi, Mrs. Rashi Negi W/o Amit Negi, (Borrowers) And Mr. Abhay Kumar Singh S/o Brij Pal Singh (Guarantors), As On 28-04-2025,** together with further interest and other charges thereon. The reserve price will be **Rs. 14,50,000/- (Rupees Fourteen Lakh Fifty Thousand Only) and the earnest money deposit will be Rs. 1,45,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Forty Five Thousand Only)**
(Description Of The Immovable Property)
Flat No.405, Fourth Floor, Tower –C, Ashiyan Khasra No. 118, Chipiyana Bujurg, Pargana & Tehsil Dadri, Gautam Budh Nagar,UP.
Bounded By: East : Plot, West: Plot, North: Gda Colony South : Road 20 Ft Wide
Known Encumbrance-: Nil
The detailed terms and conditions of the sale are provided in the official website of Can Fin Homes Ltd., (https://www.canfinhomes.com/SearchAuction.aspx).
Link for participating in e-auction: https://bankeauctionwizard.com
Place: Noida **Authorized Officer**
Date: 28-04-2024 **Can Fin Homes Ltd**

ग्रेटर नौएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण
प्लाट सख्या-01, सैक्टर-नॉलेज पार्क-4 ग्रेटर नौएडा सिटी, जिला-गौतमबुद्ध नगर (उ0प्र0)

सार्वजनिक सूचना

ग्रेटर नौएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण के अन्तर्गत M/s Future World Green Homes Pvt. Ltd. भूखण्ड संख्या-GH-16E, Sector-01, Greater Noida को दिनांक 10.06.2015 को मानचित्र स्वीकृति प्रदान की गयी थी। तदोपरान्त विकासकर्ता द्वारा (Group Project) का पुनरीक्षित मानचित्र स्वीकृति हेतु आवेदन संख्या-16613 दिनांक 24.03.2025 के माध्यम से आवेदन किया गया है। तत्क्रम में UP-Apartment Act&-2010, Amendment 2016 in Section-4 Sub Section-B के अन्तर्गत परियोजना के आवंटियो से आपत्ति / सुझाव आमंत्रित किये जाने का प्रावधान है। इस सम्बन्ध में विकासकर्ता द्वारा प्रस्तुत स्वीकृति मानचित्र एवं Declarations as per UP Apartment Act-2010 परीक्षण किसी भी कार्यदिवस में सुबह 9.30 से सायं 6:00 बजे के मध्य नियोजन विभाग में तथा प्राधिकरण की वेबसाईट पर किया जा सकता है।

अतः उपरोक्त परियोजना के आवटियों द्वारा Sanction Map एवं Declarations as per UP Apartment Act-2010 के सम्बन्ध में सूचना प्रकाशित करने के 30 दिनों के अन्दर आपत्तिया / सुझाव आमंत्रित की जाती है। उपरोक्त के निहितार्थ अपनी आपत्तिया लिखित रूप में अपने आवंटन पत्र, नाम, पता एवं दूरभाष नम्बर के साथ कार्यालय समय व कार्यदिवस में ग्रेटर नौएडा प्राधिकरण के मुख्य प्रशासनिक कार्यालय, भूखण्ड संख्या-1, सैक्टर-नॉलेज पार्क-4, ग्रेटर नौएडा में स्थित महाप्रबन्धक (नियोजन / वास्तु0) को सम्बोधित करते हुए सूचना प्रकाशित होने के 30 दिवसों के अन्दर जमा करायी जा सकती है।

महाप्रबन्धक (नियो0/वास्तु0)
ग्रेटर नौएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण

सार्वजनिक सूचना

मैं मंजू पत्नी श्री वेद पाल निवासी ग्राम सलेमपुर गुर्जर परगना दनकौर तहसील सदर जिला गौतमबुधनगर मेरे मकान की चेन डीड (रजिस्ट्री) तसलिमन पत्नी श्री मुनतयाज अली व श्रीमती बिलकिश पत्नी श्री नवाब अली के नाम दिनांक 15 02-2011 वही संख्या 1 जिल्द संख्या 7981 पृष्ठ सं 15 से 28 पर क्रमांक 2534 रजिस्टर किया गया IN-UP3327118472018 3X जो खो गई हैं खाता सं 000136 के खेत नंबर 478 रकबा 2.364 हेक्टेयर में से केवल 0.7008 हेक्टेयर का 1/2 भाग रकबा 0.3504 हेक्टेयर में से केवल 120 वर्ग गज अर्थात 100.३३ वर्ग मीटर खली प्लाट को विक्रय किया हैं। FIR NO:- LR No: 2786876/2025 Date :26/04/2025 अगर किसी व्यक्ति को यह मिलता हैं तो कृपया उसको इस पते पर (सलेमपुर गुर्जर परगना दनकौर तहसील सदर जिला गौतमबुधनगर) वापस कर दे। Mobile :-9315285066

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all that my client Mr. Dayanand Bhardwaj, S/o Late Sh. Nand Lal Bhardwaj, R/o X-7, Shivaji Gali, Mohalla Ram Nagar, Raghubar Pura No.1, Gandhi Nagar, Delhi-110031 has debarred, disinherited from all moveable & non-moveable assets, & disassociated and severed all his relation with his daughter namely Ms. Deepika Sharma, W/o Mr. Vaibhav Sharma, R/o E-22, Dronacharya Apartments, Mayur Vihar Phase-I, Delhi-110091 from all his relations as she is having quite disobedient & hostile behavior towards my client & she is not under the control of my client. My client will not be responsible for any dealings & acts in the society at large done by her.

Sidharth Joshi (Advocate)

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

LOST & FOUND

I, Kavita Kohli D/o- Darshan Lal Kohli, R/o- D2/111, Janakpuri, New Delhi- 110058, declare that I have lost the Original Share Certificates of Hexaware Technologies Limited, vide Folio No. 01140086, Certificate No. 3264 Distinctive No. 336801 to 336880 (80 shares) and Certificate No. 52222, Distinctive No. 288879590 to 288879669 (80 shares), if found contact : 9811296477.

PD(1938)C

CHANGE OF NAME

I, JC-473536M Nb/Sub Brajesh Singh R/o- Vill & Post- Pulawali, Thana- Umari, Teh & Dist- Bhind, M.P.- 477331, have changed my daughter's name from Jahnvi Singh Kushwah to Janvi Kushwah, vide affidavit dated 28/04/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1939)C

I, Rattni Devi, Mother of JC-471331Y Sub Maj Hony/Lt. Azad Singh, R/o- Khudan (242), Jhajjar, Haryana-124108, have changed my name from Rattni Devi to Ratni Devi, vide affidavit dated 28/04/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1940)C

I, B Sai Reddy, Father of-No.16026559X Hav/Clk B Dinesh Kumar Reddy, R/o- H. No. 5/60/2/A4, Vill & Teh- Pebbair, Dist- Mahbubnagar, Telangana- 509104, have changed my name from B Sai Reddy to Busi Reddy Sai Reddy, vide affidavit dated 28/04/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1941)C

I, B Vijaya Laxmi, Mother of-No.16026559X Hav/Clk B Dinesh Kumar Reddy, R/o- H. No. 5/60/2/A4, Vill & Teh- Pebbair, Dist- Mahbubnagar, Telangana- 509104, have changed my name from B Vijaya Laxmi to Busi Reddy Vijaya Laxmi, vide affidavit dated 28/04/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1942)C

I, Remika Subba W/o- No. 10136688P L/Nk Chef Dipesh Kumar Chhetri, R/o- Hum Busty Takdah, Hum Tukdah Khasmahal, Darjeeling, W.B.-734222, have changed my name from Remika Subba to Rimika Subba Chhetri, vide affidavit dated 28/04/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1943)C

I, No.14834530Y SEP/MT Takalkar Raju Gajanan R/o- Vill & Teh- Akot, Dist- Akola, Maharashtra- 444101, declare that in my service records, my father's name is wrongly recorded as Gajanan Takalkar, whereas his correct name is Gajanan Shriram Takalkar, which may be amended accordingly.

PD(1944)C

I, No.14834530Y SEP/MT Takalkar Raju Gajanan, R/o- Vill & Teh- Akot, Dist- Akola, Maharashtra- 444101, declare that in my service records, my mother's name is wrongly recorded as Leela, whereas her correct name is Lilabai Gajanan Takalkar, which may be amended accordingly.

PD(1945)C

I, Sakshi Patel spouse of No.14668083H Rank Nk Brajesh Kumar Kurmi, R/o- Vill/PO- Chhulla, Teh- Garhakota, Dist- Sagar, M.P.-470232, Now at Unit - 6121 (I) FWC (608 EME BN) C/O 56 APO, declare that I have changed my name from Sakshi Patel to Sakshi Kurmi, vide affidavit No. IN-DL75606654637183X, Dated 28/04/2025 by Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1946)C

I, No.14868907K NK/MT Om Prakash Singh, R/o- Vill- Bhakura, Post- Lauharfarna, Teh- Ara Sadar, Dist- Bhojpur, Bihar- 802315, declare that in my service records, my wife's name is wrongly recorded as Soni Singh, whereas her correct name is Soni Kumari, which may be amended accordingly.

PD(1947)C

PUBLIC NOTICE

We, **(1) SATISH KUMAR TIWARI (2) SURESH KUMAR TIWARI (3) SANJEEV KUMAR TIWARI (4) SUSHMA PANDIT (5) SARITA PANDEY, owners of FLAT NO. 126A, GROUND FLOOR, POCKET-C, TRILOKPURI RESIDENTIAL SCHEME, MAYUR VIHAR PHASE-II, DELHI, VIDE DDA FILE NO. F23(57)1985/06/NP.** The original document i.e. **DEMAND LETTER** of the above said property have been lost or misplaced by us and not traceable inspite of his best efforts. An F.I.R./NCR to this effect has been lodged in the Police Station, Crime Branch, Delhi (LR No.2755434/2025 dated **16.04.2025.**
Any person(s) claiming any rights, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above Address/Phone No.9312603681 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objection with respect to this property, can personally inform or write to Deputy Director LAB(Housing) or Director LAB(Housing), Vikas Sadan, New Delhi.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the ownership of **residential property bearing No. 38, Block-A, Sector-39, Noida, Uttar Pradesh,** originally allotted to **Late Sh. Nachhatar Singh Gharyal S/o Sh. Joginder Singh Gharyal,** who passed away on **01.01.1999,** leaving behind a **registered WILL executed on 02.09.1996 vide Document no. 41841, SR IV, DELHI** in the name of **Sh. Mohan Singh Gharyal S/o Sh. Joginder Singh Gharyal, and Mr. Daljeet Singh Gharyal S/o Late Sh. Mohan Singh Gharyal.**
It is stated that **Late Sh. Mohan Singh Gharyal S/o Sh. Joginder Singh Gharyal,** real brother of the allottee and intermediate beneficiary, also expired on **03.01.2023.**
In accordance with a registered WILL the said property is now proposed to be transferred in respect of 100% share to **Mr. Daljeet Singh Gharyal S/o Late Sh. Mohan Singh Gharyal.**
Any person having any objection, claim, or interest in the said property is hereby requested to submit the same in writing to the Residential Plots (R) of Noida Authority along with sufficient supporting documents within 30 days from the date of this publication. Failing which, the transfer shall be effected, and no claims shall be entertained thereafter.

Daljeet Singh Gharyal
(Transferor)

India to be competitive on many products: Scindia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

To a question on how he sees the US tariff situation playing out, the Minister said that the whole question of tariffs has to be seen from a comparative matrix point of view. "So if you're a country that I used to compete with and the tariffs that have been put on you are possibly today double of what mine are. Where I used to be uncompetitive vis-a-vis you, I now become competitive. So, I think it is important to look at it not only from purely India-centric point of view but from a comparative matrix point of view," Scindia said.

The Minister expressed confidence that for many products in many areas, India will emerge fiercely and much more competitive than prior to the tariffs being in place. India has transformed itself from an infrastructure standpoint, and from an exporting nation standpoint as well, he said terming it "a monumental change".

"...You have to understand where we stand as an economy....Today, India stands very tall...We're today going to become the third-largest economy by 2028. We're today at almost a $4 trillion economy, $5 trillion by 2028, close to $6 trillion by 2030," the minister said. From a country that used to import an overwhelming majority of its mobile phone requirement and produced merely 5 crore units, India is producing over 35 to 40 crore mobile phones, today.

"Our exports are over ₹1,75,000 crore purely on mobiles," he said.

Bullet train to be operational by 2028: Devendra Fadnavis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Adding 50-GW renewable energy yearly can end coal imports by 2029'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

Attari is near Amritsar in Punjab.

A Delhi-based importer said that the closure of the land route will definitely impact imports of dry fruits from both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

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

Sensex jumps 1,006 points, foreign fund inflows

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

"And we're committed to keep investing in the success of developers of all sizes as they build apps that make an important impact and enrich people's lives," according to him. The study from Professor Pingali took a close look at the key drivers shaping the App Store ecosystem in India, including increased app usage in sectors like food delivery, travel, gaming, and entertainment. In 2024 alone, it found that App Store developers generated ₹38,906 crore ($4.65 billion) in total billings and sales from the sale of physical goods and services, ₹3,014 crore ($352.9 million) from in-app advertising, and ₹2,527 crore ($302 million) from digital goods and services.

Since its launch more than fifteen years ago, developers have more ways than ever to monetise their apps and build successful businesses on the App Store, resulting in a healthy and dynamic ecosystem. In 2024, developers active in India have been successful across a diverse range of app categories such as games, health, and fitness, lifestyle and utilities, as per the study. The App Store's ecosystem of innovation provides Apple developers around the world with a global distribution platform across 175 storefronts.

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

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

UP aims to triple exports in five years

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

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

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

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

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

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

For example, he said, the proposed policy seeks to provide up to ₹10 crore as capital subsidy to investors to build export infrastructure.

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

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

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

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

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

On Friday, China announced it would exempt some US imports from its steep 125 per cent tariffs, though it denied that any formal trade talks were underway.

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

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

"With tensions brewing among major powers, and regional strains like the growing friction between India and Pakistan, demand for gold as a safe-haven asset is expected to rise, making it a preferred hedge against market volatility and uncertainty," he added. The local bullion markets were closed on Friday due to traders' protest against the terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam.

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

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

On the global front, spot gold fell nearly one per cent to trade at $3,291.04 per ounce. "Gold traded weak amid the US opening tariff talks with multiple nations and growing expectations of a possible China-US trade agreement according to US President Donald Trump. Additionally, optimism around a potential Russia-Ukraine peace deal further weighed on safe-haven demand for gold," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said. Spot silver in the Asian market hours traded 0.2 per cent lower at $33.05 per ounce.

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

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

INBRIEF

GNDU CELEBRATES EARTH DAY

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

DNA DAY CELEBRATE AT GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY

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

VEDANTA LEVERAGES AI TO TRANSFORM SAFETY

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

NATIONAL SEMINAR PUNJABI LITERATURE HELD AT GNDU

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

Liverpool wins Premier League

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Liverpool

A selfie with Mohamed Salah. An impromptu sing-along with Arne Slot. Fireworks and flares. It was party time at Anfield on Sunday as Liverpool sealed the Premier League title in style.

The 5-1 rout of Tottenham was almost a side issue as a record-equaling 20th English league championship was confirmed — matching the achievement of Liverpool's great rival Manchester United.

"Everyone was sitting on the bus saying there is no way we are going to lose the game," said Slot, standing in the middle of the field after being dowsed in champagne by his players.

Fans had turned up long before kick-off, lining the streets around the stadium in anticipation of a title celebration. And despite going behind to an early goal from Dominic Solanke, Liverpool did not let them down — racing to a 3-1 lead by half-time to effectively ensure there would be no further delay to a title victory that has looked likely for much of the season.

CLUB GREATS

The smell of sulfur filled the air early in the day as red smoke canisters were let off outside the famous stadium that has been home to so many championship-winning Liverpool teams. Flags were hung from nearby houses.

Inside the ground, giant banners floated across the stands, celebrating icons past and present. Slot has joined that list of club greats in only his first season after replacing Jurgen Klopp. He also joins a select group of managers by winning the title in his first year in the Premier League — following Jose Mourinho, Carlo Ancelotti, Manuel Pellegrini and Antonio Conte.

He has managed it with plenty to spare, with Liverpool 15 points ahead of second-placed Arsenal with four rounds of the season to go.

TRIBUTE TO KLOPP

Slot is also the first Dutch coach to win the Premier League, which is some feat considering serial trophy winners like Louis van Gaal, Guus Hiddink and Erik ten Hag have all managed in English soccer's top flight.

"It's always special to win something. It's even more special if you're the first one, and even more special at a club where it's not common that you win the league every year," said Slot, who paid tribute to his predecessor by singing Klopp's name to fans after the final whistle.

Klopp had led Liverpool to a full set of trophies in more than eight years in charge, including the Champions League and that long-awaited Premier League. Few could have expected Slot to have such an instant impact in his first year in a new country — halting Manchester City's dominance of English soccer at the first attempt. Slot thanked Liverpool's owners for their faith in hiring him from Dutch team Feyenoord last year.

City manager Pep Guardiola was quick to congratulate Slot on a "well deserved" victory.

SPECIAL DAY

This was Liverpool's second title in five years, having ended a 30-year wait to be champion in 2020. But this time there was a crucial difference as the triumph was shared with supporters.

Five years ago Liverpool had to finish off the season behind closed doors as the UK Faced lockdown restrictions because of the COVID pandemic. Now there was a packed stadium to erupt at the final whistle and watch as the players danced and embraced on field.

Throughout the match a packed Anfield crowd had been in rapturous voice, singing the club's anthem "You'll Never Walk Alone" in the final moments.

It was reprised later as Slot and his players stood facing the famed Kop stand to be serenaded by fans.

Having spent 206 days at the top of the standings, Liverpool only needed one more point to be confirmed champion.

For a brief moment Solanke's 12th-minute header had threatened to spoil the party, but the home team powered back with strikes from Luis Diaz, Alexis Mac Allister and Cody Gapko before halftime. Salah added another after the break and Destiny Udogie's own-goal rounded off the rout.

In the end, the victory was so comfortable that Salah even had time to pose for a selfie in front of the crowd after scoring his 33rd goal of the season in all competitions.

Rasmus Hojlund scored in added time to salvage a 1-1 draw for Manchester United at Bournemouth in the other Premier League game on Sunday.

Manchester City beats Forest 2-0 to reach FA Cup final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

Even Manchester City's worst season under Pep Guardiola could still end with a trophy.

On the day it was officially deposed as Premier League champion, City reached the FA Cup final for the third year in a row by beating Nottingham Forest 2-0 at Wembley Stadium to maintain a chance of salvaging something from a dismal campaign. City scored early Sunday in each half as Rico Lewis put his team ahead in just the second minute and defender Josko Gvardiol doubled the lead in the 51st with a header from a corner.

Forest hit the woodwork three times after that but could not get a consolation goal in its first FA Cup semifinal since 1991. The win gives Pep Guardiola's team a chance to salvage something from a disappointing campaign where its hopes of a fifth straight Premier League title disappeared early and it failed to even reach the round of 16 in the Champions League.

City will play Crystal Palace in the final on May 17. "Unfortunately, the season has not been as we wanted, but we are still in another FA Cup final," said City midfielder Mateo Kovacic, who set up the opening goal. "So it's good that we want to finish it in a strong way." Liverpool clinched the Premier League title at the same time as City was playing, and even an FA Cup title would be a mere consolation for a club that has dominated English soccer under Guardiola. Even Guardiola made it clear that winning the cup would not make this a successful season.

"Noooo," the Spaniard said emphatically. "The season has not been good. We are a thousand million points behind Liverpool. But of course the damage will be (smaller)." That's currently 21 points behind Liverpool for the record, but City still has work to do just to secure a Champions League spot for next season. Forest is one of the teams trying to finish above City, meaning there's little time to dwell on this loss.

"Tomorrow we will wake up and see that we have a lot to fight for," Forest manager Nuno Espirito Santo said.

EMPTY SEATS

The jaded feeling among City fans was made evident by the 5,000 or so empty seats at Wembley in the sky blue half but the supporters who did make the trip had reason to celebrate early.

Lewis scored with his team's first chance when he was teed up by Kovacic just outside the area, turned to face the goal and hit a low show inside the left post.

Forest hardly had a whiff at goal in the first half but had a chance to get right back in the game just after the restart. Halftime substitute Anthony Elanga almost scored with his first touch when Callum Hudson-Odoi picked him out with a low cross into the area, but the Swede put his effort wide.

Instead, City made it 2-0 minutes later.

A chaotic sequence where Forest goalkeeper Matz Sels made three saves in quick succession ended in a corner after City had a strong appeal for handball waved away. Any debate about whether it should have been a penalty ended when Gvardiol rose unchallenged to head home the corner from close range.

Morgan Gibbs-White then hit the woodwork twice, first blasting a volley against the crossbar and later hitting the post from a tight angle after he pounced on a poor back pass and rounded goalkeeper Stefan Ortega.

Taiwo Awoniyi also hit the post in the 79th and Ortega kept out Gibbs-White's effort from the rebound as Forest just couldn't find a breakthrough.

"It's devastating. … I hold my hand up and apologise. I should have scored at least one of them," Gibbs-White said about his chances.

India face Indonesia in BWF Sudirman Cup Final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Xiamen (China)

Faced with a herculean task to trump a formidable Indonesia and stay afloat in the competition, an under-strength India will need its struggling singles stars to deliver the goods in a must-win Group D contest at the BWF Sudirman Cup Finals here on Tuesday.

India's campaign began on a disastrous start on Sunday with a 1-4 defeat to Denmark, a result that put their qualification for the knockout stage in serious jeopardy. With only two teams progressing from Group D, India must secure a win against Indonesia to keep their hopes alive otherwise, their third and final group match against England will be reduced to just a formality.

The poor form of their star singles players — Lakshya Sen, HS Prannoy, and PV Sindhu has not helped the team.

However, there is some hope for India. Lakshya has defeated Indonesia's top men's singles player Jonatan Christie in their last two encounters — at the Paris Olympics and the All England Championships.

In the women's singles, with Indonesia's top player Gregoria Mariska Tunjung pulling out, Sindhu will face world No. 11 Putri Kusuma Wardani, a player she has beaten twice before.

Despite this, Indonesia boast a strong contingent of doubles players, including Fajar Alfian, Muhammad Rian Ardianto, Leo Rolly Carnando, Muhammad Shohibul Fikri, and Daniel Marthin — all ranked among the world's top 10.

With India's top men's doubles duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty absent, the inexperienced pairing of Hariharan Amsakarunan and Ruban Kumar Rethinasabapathi will face an uphill battle in what is likely to be a tough contest.

In the women's doubles, Febriana Dwipuji Kusuma and Amallia Cahaya Pratiwi are ranked world No. 8, and without Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand, Tanisha Crasto and Shruti Mishra will be hoping to build on their encouraging performance against Denmark, which was the lone bright spot for India in their opening match.

In the mixed doubles, India's Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha will face the challenge of overcoming world No. 21 Rinov Rivaldy and Pitha Haningtyas Mentari of Indonesia.

Back in February, India had suffered a setback at the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championship, where they were eliminated in the quarterfinals in Qingdao, despite fielding a strong squad and they would like to avoid a league stage exit here.

India's best-ever performance at the Sudirman Cup has been two quarterfinal finishes: in 2011 and 2017.

While India has made significant progress in recent years - highlighted by their historic Thomas Cup win in 2022 and the Badminton Asia Women's Team Championships title in 2024 - the absence of key doubles pairs has dampened their prospects in the ongoing Sudirman Cup.

Marseille beat Brest 4-1 to reclaim second place in Ligue 1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Paris

Amine Gouiri scored with a stunning overhead kick on his way to a hat trick as Marseille beat Brest 4-1 to reclaim second place in Ligue 1, strengthening its chances of qualifying automatically for next season's Champions League.

Marseille is two points ahead of third-placed Lille and three ahead of fourth-placed Monaco with three games left.

Lyon, Nice and Strasbourg are one point behind Monaco and separated on goal difference in what promises to be a hectic race to the line for a place in Europe's elite club competition. Paris Saint-Germain had already clinched a record-extending 13th Ligue 1 crown. The top three sides in France qualify automatically for the Champions League, with the side finishing fourth entering qualifying.

Gouiri has earned a reputation as one of the most skillful yet inconsistent forwards in French soccer but he is changing that this season with a highlight-reel collection of goals.

After he put Marseille ahead in the eighth minute with a fine angled drive from the right of the penalty area, sloppy defending allowed Brest striker Abdallah Sima to equalise in the 26th.

Marseille regained the lead in the 37th when club top scorer Mason Greenwood's deflected strike wrong-footed the goalkeeper. Then came Gouiri's wonder goal just before halftime.

Marseille regained the lead in the 37 minute, when club top scorer Mason Greenwood's deflected strike wrong-footed the goalkeeper

He positioned himself near the penalty spot to control Greenwood's cross from the right on his chest, and then shifted his body to score with an overhead shot with his right foot.

Two months ago Marseille coach Roberto De Zerbi said the 25-year-old Gouiri has the potential to become one of the best strikers in Europe, after he scored two outstanding goals when Marseille routed Saint-Etienne 5-1.

Gouiri completed his hat trick against Brest in the 63rd, beating the offside trap to latch onto France midfielder Adrien Rabiot's pass and calmly slotting the ball into the bottom corner.

Gouiri, who joined from Rennes for 22 million euros ($23 million) in the January transfer window, received an ovation at Stade Velodrome when he was taken off after his third goal.

LILLE GAINS MOMENTUM

Earlier Sunday, Lille kept up its push for an automatic spot with a 2-0 win at Angers for its third straight victory.

Brazilian defender Alexsandro put Lille ahead in first-half stoppage time when he headed in Hakon Haraldsson's free kick from the right.

Haraldsson doubled Lille's lead shortly after halftime when he was set up by striker Chuba Akpom.

Monaco dropped points on Saturday following a 1-1 draw at lowly Le Havre, while Lyon, Nice and Strasbourg all won their games.

NANTES CLOSER TO SAFETY

Nantes picked up a useful point in its fight to avoid relegation following a 0-0 draw with Toulouse.

Toulouse held on despite having French striker Noah Edjouma sent off late in the first half and avoided a sixth straight loss.

But Nantes striker Mostafa Mohamed fluffed a golden chance from three meters out midway through the second half.

Nantes is in 14th place and four points clear of Le Havre in 16th and the relegation-promotion playoff spot.

OTHER MATCHES

Rock-bottom Montpellier was already relegated on Saturday because of Le Havre's draw but at least stopped a 12th consecutive defeat with a 0-0 home draw with Reims. Also, midtable Auxerre romped to a 4-0 win at Lens with two goals from striker Ado Onaiwu and one each from forward Gaëtan Perrin and Dutch defender Ki-Jana Hoever.

Cristiano Ronaldo's Al-Nassr dominating in Asian Champions League Elite

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Jeddah

Big-spending Saudi clubs including Cristiano Ronaldo's Al-Nassr are dominating the Asian Champions League Elite, accounting for all but one of the semifinalists in action this week.

In three quarterfinals played on the weekend, the three Saudi Pro League teams won with a combined scoreline of 14-1. At least one is guaranteed a place in the final on May 3 as four-time champion Al-Hilal meets two-time finalist Al-Ahli in the first of the two semis at Jeddah.

On Wednesday, Al-Nassr takes on Japan's Kawasaki Frontale, the only non-Saudi club still in contention for the continental title. Kawasaki edged 2011 champion Al Sadd of Qatar 3-2 after extra time on Sunday to advance to the semifinals for the first time.

With all playoff games taking place in Jeddah, there is home advantage and big crowds supporting the three domestic clubs that are laden with high-profile international stars. In the summer transfer window of 2023, Saudi clubs spent almost $1 billion and it's making a difference in Asian competition.

Al-Nassr thumped last season's runnerup Yokohama F.Marinos of Japan 4-1 on Saturday, with goals coming from Ronaldo, former Liverpool star Sadio Mane and two from Jhon Duran, who signed from Premier League club Aston Villa in January in a deal reportedly worth more than $80 million.

"When you come here, the teams are playing Premier League-level football," Yokohama's interim coach Patrick Kisnorbo said. "I don't think it's a technical issue but sometimes these things happen. We have to move forward."

The journey to Jeddah was also a punishing one for teams in the middle of domestic seasons in East Asia.

"Our local league is our priority," Buriram United coach Osmar Loss said after his Thai club lost 3-0 to Al-Ahli on Saturday. "It's a long trip to Jeddah and back and I needed to protect our main players." In the most lopsided of the quarterfinals, South Korean club Gwangju FC, making its first appearance in the tournament, was thrashed 7-0 by Al-Hilal on Friday.

Al-Hilal now faces Jeddah club Al-Ahli on Tuesday in a bid to reach its 10th title match in the Asian competition. Al-Ahli, fourth in the domestic league, had a 3-2 win over Al-Hilal in February with all three goals scored by England striker Ivan Toney. With other former Premier League stars such as Riyad Mahrez and Roberto Firmino on the scoresheet against Buriram United, coach Matthias Jaissle believes Al-Ahli is well placed to advance to a third final and then to capture a first title.

"I congratulated the players for making it to the semifinals but from now on, they have to focus on what's best – rehabilitate, rest, and get back to the best physical level to perform against Al Hilal," Jaissle said.

Theegala, Rai finish 18th in Zurich Classic

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Avondale

Indian-origin golfers Sahith Theegala and Aaron Rai finished a creditable tied 18th after turning in one-under 71 in the final round of the Zurich Classic here.

The pair signed off with a total of 21-under 267 as old friends Andrew Novak and Ben Griffin combined to win the title, which was the first PGA Tour win for both. They totalled 28-under 260. Danish identical twins, Nicolai and Rasmus Hojgaard, narrowly missed out their first PGA Tour win and finished second just a stroke adrift after carding 68 in the final round.

The tournament featured 80 teams of two which faced off over four rounds played in four-ball and foursome format alternately. Defending champion team of Masters winner Rory McIlroy and fellow Irishman Shane Lowry was in contention through 12 holes but ultimately scored even-par 72 in the final round to aggregate 22-under and finish tied 12th.

Theegala, who has been having a modest season, and Rai had two birdies against a bogey in the final round. Theegala, who is now being sponsored by the Hero group, has played 13 events and made the cut in 12. However, he has finished in the top-25 only twice.

In the world rankings, another Indian-American Akshay Bhatia was placed 26th, followed by Rai (27th) and Theegala (28th) at the beginning of the week ahead of Zurich Classic.

In terms of FedEx Cup rankings, Bhatia is 30th and Rai is 42nd and Theegala is lying 95th with a good part of the season, including three Majors, still ahead of them.

Griffin drained a clutch birdie putt from nearly 35 feet on the 17th hole, and the tandem combined for a one-under 71 in alternate-shot play Sunday to become first-time PGA TOUR winners.

Scott McTominay two goals hepls Napoli defeat Torino 2-0 in Serie A

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Rome

There are still streamers and banners hanging over the city's streets and piazzas celebrating Napoli's Serie A title two seasons ago.

Now there might be another championship to celebrate.

Scott McTominay scored two first-half goals and Napoli beat Torino 2-0 on Sunday to move three points clear of Inter Milan with four rounds remaining in the Italian league.

Inter lost 1-0 at home to Roma earlier for its third consecutive defeat.

Despite losing Victor Osimhen in September and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia in January, Napoli is in position to claim its second title in three seasons. That's a shorter span than the two championships in four seasons with Diego Maradona in 1987 and 1990. McTominay has scored five goals in three matches.

"Obviously we're now leading the race. But for us it's keep calm, keep everything relaxed and go game by game, because this game's not important unless we win the next one and the next one after that," McTominay said. "So for us it's calm and see where that gets us."

The Scotland international put Napoli ahead seven minutes in at the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona after redirecting a pass from Andre-Frank Anguissa. Then he doubled the advantage shortly before halftime with a similar goal, redirecting a cross amid four defenders.

With 11 league goals, McTominay set the record for a Scottish player in Serie A, overtaking Denis Law, who had 10 with Torino in 1961-62.

Philip Billing nearly made it 3-0 for Napoli when his header hit the crossbar in the second half.

Napoli hadn't had sole possession of the lead since February.

INTER MISSING THURAM

Marcus Thuram has missed three matches and Inter has lost all three without scoring a single goal.

Roma's attacking midfielder Matias Soulé scored midway through the first half in Milan by redirecting a deflection as the Giallorossi produced one chance after another.

For Inter, the defeat followed a 1-0 loss at Bologna in the league a week ago and a 3-0 midweek loss to AC Milan in an Italian Cup semifinal derby.

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IPL: Delhi Capitals eye comeback against KKR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Delhi Capitals (DC) would aim for an improved batting effort in the middle overs when they face a struggling Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in their Indian Premier League match here on Tuesday.

DC have suffered two defeats in their last four matches, including a loss to Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Sunday, and will look to avoid any hiccups at the business end of the tournament.

Abhishek Porel has batted with plenty of aggressive intent at the top of the order but veteran Faf fu Plessis will quickly need to get used to the slow nature of surface at Kotla after struggling in his comeback game. KL Rahul has been DC's leading run-getter this season but could not accelerate against the spinners on Sunday night. He would back himself to take on the likes of Sunil Narine and Varun Chakaravarthy. .

With quality spinners in their ranks, KKR could pose a stiff challenge for the home. The Ajinkya Rahane led-side is slightly low on confidence after a tough outing against Punjab Kings in a rain-hit match.

A solid innings is expected from Karun Nair to ensure Rahul isn't left to shoulder the burden alone in the middle-order.

In the bowling department, DC skipper Axar Patel led from the front with two wickets but found little support from others. Star pacer Mitchell Starc, who went wicketless against RCB, will look to exploit the weaknesses in his former team, while Kuldeep Yadav, with his deceptive googlies, remains a threat in the middle overs.

DC's fielding has also left much to be desired against RCB, with Porel dropping a crucial catch of Krunal Pandya on Sunday night.

KKR, meanwhile, have managed just seven points so far and are placed seventh in the standings, having failed to collect any

points from their last three matches, including two losses and a no-result.

Rahane will be desperate to arrest the slide and keep their playoff hopes alive, with another defeat making the task tougher. Issues have cropped up across departments for KKR.

Their batting lacks a settled look, with Quinton de Kock and Rahmanullah Gurbaz being rotated in the opening slot alongside Narine, while the side has relied heavily on Rahane and youngster Angkrish Raghuvanshi to score runs. The middle-order trio of Venkatesh Iyer, Andre Russell, Rinku Singh and Ramandeep Singh has struggled to make a significant impact.

Bowling has been another area of concern, with KKR failing to break opening stands, allowing teams to post big totals — as seen in the last game where PBKS added 120 for the opening wicket. While KKR managed to pull things back at the death, it will require a collective effort from Chakaravarthy, Vaibhav Arora, and Harshit Rana to stem the flow of runs against DC.

Teams

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

Kolkata Knight Riders: Ajinkya Rahane (c), Rinku Singh, Quinton de Kock (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Rovman Powell, Manish Pandey, Luvnith Sisodia, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Moeen Ali, Ramandeep Singh, Andre Russell, Anrich Nortje, Vaibhav Arora, Mayank Markande, Spencer Johnson, Harshit Rana, Sunil Narine, Varun Chakaravarthy, Chetan Sakariya.

People are forgetting importance of partnerships: Kohli

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Indian superstar Virat Kohli has underlined the importance of stitching partnerships in T20 cricket, especially on wickets where heaving the willow from the word go is not possible.

The pitches in the IPL thus far have been on the slower side, not allowing the batters to go hammer and tongs from ball one. However, the likes of Kohli and K L Rahul have flourished in challenging batting conditions.

Kohli collected his sixth half-century in 10 IPL innings against Delhi Capitals on Sunday, helping RCB maintain their unbeaten run away from home.

"It was a top win, especially looking at the surface. We saw a few games here and this wicket played out differently compared to those. Whenever there's a chase on, I keep checking with the dugout, whether we're on course," Kohli, who played a second-fiddle to Krunal Pandya, said after the win.

Kohli elaborated on his batting methodology, saying he analyses the conditions and changes his style of play accordingly. "(What) the total (is) on the board. What the conditions are like. Who are the bowlers that are due to bowl. Who are the bowlers that are going to be hard to get away," Kohli explained when asked how he plans the chase.

"I try and make sure my singles and doubles don't stop so that the game doesn't get stagnant. People are forgetting the importance of partnerships and that's

coming to the fore in this tournament to try and dominate the bowlers through partnerships and professionalism."

Krunal, who struggled initially to get going, eventually hit his first fifty in IPL in nine years.

"Krunal was outstanding, he can make an impact and it was just about time. We've communicated beautifully, Krunal kept telling me to stay while he took his chances," said Kohli.

After Kohli's dismissal, Tim David smashed 19 runs off just five balls to knock off the winning runs.

Talking about the finishers, Kohli said: "We have the extra power in Tim David, there's Jitesh as well. That firepower at the back end of the innings definitely helps you. And now Romario as well."

He also praised the low-profile spin duo of Krunal and Suyash Sharma. "Hazlewood and Bhuvi are world-class bowlers, there's a reason why Josh has the Purple Cap.

"Krunal was outstanding the way he varied his pace. Suyash has been the dark horse for us, even if he doesn't have the wickets. Our spinners keep attacking in the middle overs."

We were 10-15 runs short: Axar

Delhi Capitals skipper Axar Patel said his team was 10-15 runs short of a competitive total and rued the missed chances on the field after the six-wicket loss to RCB. "I thought in the first innings, the wicket was a bit tough but due to dew, it eased out in the second innings. We don't think anything we could have done different. If a batter could have accelerated, we could have got 10-15 runs extra.

"KL was batting well so I wanted him at number four. One side of the ground was shorter as well so we sent him at number four."

Adjudged the Player of the Match for his all-round show, Krunal, who took one wicket along with his unbeaten 73, said he was happy to perform for his new team.

"It is always good to see the results. Sometimes when you have put the hard work behind the scenes and feels good when it comes off. It is quite satisfying," he said. "My role was clear. If we lose three early wickets, I can go and make sure we stitch a partnership. We have such great power hitters — David, Jitesh and Shepherd. We can take down the bowling. Glad that I fulfilled my role."

"When Virat is at the other end, it is quite easy. First 20 balls, It was scratchy for me. But he kept backing me. Then I got his mojo. So, a lot of credit to Virat."

On his bowling, Krunal said: " I have always been an economical bowler. As a bowler, I have always wanted to be one step ahead. I have worked on my bowling. So, if you see the variations in speed.

"Knowing the batsmen's strength, I am trying to use it to my advantage. Glad it is using my favour."

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colombo

Their campaign off to a dominant start, a confident India will look to maintain momentum when they face South Africa in their second match of the women's tri-series here on Tuesday.

The Indian team extended its winning streak in ODIs to seven matches with a comprehensive nine-wicket victory over hosts Sri Lanka in the tournament opener on Sunday.

The 'Women in Blue' excelled across all three departments. The bowlers, led by the spinners Sneh Rana, Deepti Sharma and Shree Charani, restricted Sri Lanka to a sub-par total, while the top three — Pratika Rawal, Smriti Mandhana, and Harleen Deol — played fluent innings with the bat.

Their fielding was razor-sharp as well, and they will be confident of producing a similar performance against a South African side they haven't lost to in this format since March 2022.

India had beaten South Africa 3-0 the last time the two teams met in a 50-over series. The Indian players have also enjoyed recent game time in the Women's Premier League, adding to the squad's match readiness.

Spinners are once again expected to play a crucial role. However, the Indian team will continue to closely monitor the performance of its pacers in the absence of key players as it looks to identify a core group ahead of the 50-over World Cup, to be held at home later this year.

Meanwhile, South Africa, who open their campaign on Tuesday, are trying to find their rhythm under new coach Mandla Mashimbyi, who was appointed last year.

The 44-year-old, however, has no prior coaching experience in women's cricket.

South Africa will be without senior all-rounder Marizanne Kapp, who has been rested for the series, but they will lean on the in-form Sune Luus, Laura Wolvaardt, Nadine de Klerk, and Chloe Tryon. Masabata Klaas, along with allrounders Annerie Dercksen and de Klerk, will shoulder the pace duties.

Teams

India: Pratika Rawal, Smriti Mandhana, Harleen Deol, Harmanpreet Kaur(c), Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh(w), Deepti Sharma, Kashvee Gautam, Arundhati Reddy, Sneh Rana, Nallapureddy Charani, Yastika Bhatia, Amanjot Kaur, Tejal Hasabnis, Shuchi Upadhyay.

South Africa: Laura Wolvaardt(c), Tazmin Brits, Sune Luus, Annerie Dercksen, Lara Goodall, Nadine de Klerk, Chloe Tryon, Sinalo Jafta(w), Nonkululeko Mlaba, Masabata Klaas, Ayabonga Khaka, Karabo Meso, Miane Smit, Nondumiso Shangase, Seshnie Naidu.

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Former India left-arm spinner Sunil Joshi has thrown his hat in the ring for the post of spin bowling coach at BCCI's Centre of Excellence (COE) that was vacated by Sairaj Bahutule earlier this year. The COE was earlier known as the National Cricket Academy when it was based out of the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru. It remains in the city but is now operational from a new location after BCCI purchased land to build a more expansive facility.

Bahutule resigned to become an assistant coach in IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals. The 54-year-old Joshi, who played 15 Tests and 69 ODIs for India between 1996 and 2002, is currently working with Ricky Ponting in the Punjab Kings IPL team and has also coached Uttar Pradesh during the domestic season.

He has also worked with Bangladesh's national men's team as its spin bowling consultant.

According to sources in the BCCI, Joshi appeared for his interview online in front of a three-member panel comprising COE's Head of Cricket VVS Laxman, chairman of men's selection committee Ajit Agarkar and General Manager (Cricket Operations) Abbey Kuruvilla.

There were four others, who appeared for the interview in person, including India U-19 women's team coach Nooshin Al Khadeer, who was an off-spinner during her playing days.

She represented the country in five Tests and 78 WODIs and has been working in the erstwhile NCA setup for some years now. Another strong candidate is believed to be Rakesh Dhruv, a former Gujarat and Saurashtra left-arm spinner. Veteran off-spinner Pritam Gandhe, a domestic doyen from Vidarbha, has also been interviewed for the post.

When a senior BCCI official was asked about the interviews for the position, he said: "Obviously, Sunil Joshi has the best CV out of all the other candidates. In case of Nooshin, the BCCI is also going to have an elaborate women's wing with dedicated staff for international, national and domestic age-group women's cricketers."

"While playing elite level does embellish the CV and Sunil is the only (men's) Test cricketer among those who appeared for interview, his biggest plus is considerable experience in elite level coaching.

"He has coached multiple first-class teams, has been a part of IPL coaching set-up and also coached senior men's international team. And do not forget, he is from Bengaluru, which makes a lot of sense logistically," he said.

But even Dhruv cannot be ruled out as he has played a lot of cricket for Saurashtra and Gujarat. Most of the candidates were asked about their vision for the role.

The chosen candidate will be expected to not just provide technical insight to international stars like Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav or Washington Sundar but also work with a host of India A, India U-19 and top domestic performers.

Twelve teams to compete in Arjan Singh Memorial hockey tournament

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chandigarh

Twelve teams will compete in the sixth edition of the Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh Memorial hockey tournament to be held here from April 29 to May 6. Air Force Hockey team from Bangladesh will be one of the 12 sides taking part in the tournament, Air Marshal S Sivakumar said on Monday.

The other participating teams include Indian Air Force, Chandigarh XI, Punjab & Sind Bank, Central Industrial Security Force, Army XI, Indian Navy, Indian Railways and Rail Coach Factory.

The tournament winning team will get a prize money of ₹three lakh while the runners-up side will pocket ₹two lakh. Man of the match for each match will get Rs 10,000 while the player of the tournament will pocket ₹25,000.

The matches will be played at Raghbir Singh Bhola Hockey Ground, 3 Base Repair Depot, Air Force Station here on league-cum-knockout basis.

Air Force Sports Control Board has been organising the prestigious hockey tournament in the memory of legendary late Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh at 3 BRD, Air Force Station, Chandigarh since 2018.

> To promote hockey, the game in which our country has excelled for so many years in the international arena and to bring back its glory
>
> — YS PANGHAL, ORGANISING SECRETARY

"Considering the eminence of the tournament in the Indian hockey scenario and the initiatives being taken by the Air Force Sports Control Board to encourage hockey at all levels, an all out effort is being made to promote the event," Sivakumar said.

Sivakumar said the organisers are hoping participation of more overseas teams, including from the UK, in next year's edition.

The organisers also plan to hold the event alternately in Chandigarh and Bengaluru beginning next year, he said.

Group Captain Y S Panghal, Organising Secretary of the event, briefed about the tournament.

"Our air warriors have toiled hard and proved their mettle at all competitive levels and have brought laurels to the country as well as the Indian Air Force," Panghal said. "To promote hockey, the game in which our country has excelled for so many years in the international arena and to bring back its glory, it is strongly felt that there should be quality tournaments in the country where emerging talent competes and gets exposure to the fast pace game.

"This has resulted in the evolution of the Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh Memorial Hockey tournament since 2018," Panghal said.

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

KL Rahul is best placed to bat at number four and keep wickets for India in next year's T20 World Cup, believes Delhi Capitals (DC) mentor Kevin Pietersen.

With his intent in the shortest format being questioned in the past, Rahul has tweaked his approach to be the leading run-getter for Delhi Capitals this season.

The competition for the wicket-keeper-batter's slot in the national team is stiff with Rishabh Pant, Sanju Samson, Dhruv Jurel and Ishan Kishan being the other options for the selectors.

Rahul has not been a part of India's T20 setup since the 2022 World Cup but Pietersen reckons not only has he done enough to warrant a comeback, he is best suited for the wicket-keeper-batter's role.

"I'd bat KL at four for India in T20 cricket. I think you guys have got plenty of opening batters.

"But the way KL Rahul is playing cricket now, he would be my first choice to bat at four, and keep wickets for India," said Pietersen in response to a query after DC's loss to Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Sunday night.

At the start of the season, Rahul himself had talked about his renewed approach towards the T20 format.

Besides the stellar show in IPL, it was Rahul's recent performances for India in ODI cricket that left a huge impression on Pietersen, one of the best batters to have played for England.

"KL has been playing in a very positive manner since. Mid to late last year. We saw how he finished off a couple of the games for India and almost sealed the deal in the Champions Trophy in Dubai.

"I've had a lot of incredibly brilliant conversations with him about batting, a lot of deep and meaningful conversations because when you grow up as a youngster like he did, you get taught defence, elbow up, play in the V," he explained.

The big-hitter said it is not easy to change that approach after hitting the thirties. "You've got to change it and you've got to become a different kind of player for a dif-

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

The next T20 World Cup will be jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

Fine with tough batting surfaces in T20s

Scores in the range of 250 were a common occurrence last IPL but the slower nature of pitches has made batting tougher this season. Pietersen has no issues with that. "On wickets like these (the one at Feroz Shah Kotla), you've got to be methodical, you've got to find rhythm. Virat (Kohli) found rhythm this evening. KL got rhythm," he said.

"And I think that's where you see the true batter. The real batter that can come out there, and sort of monitor the situation, and it looks effortless... Is it good for T20 cricket to have the occasional wicket like this? I do not think it's a bad thing," he added.

Pietersen was not in favour of bowlers "just being served up into the stands every single ball". "...I don't think every night people want to see that. I don't really want to see it every night," Pietersen said.

Foundations can be laid in IPL

He has played in the IPL and more recently been a part of the commentary panel. This season, he is back in the dugout as a member of DC support staff. The 44-year-old spoke about his role in the team.

"I always knew that when I was playing franchise cricket, that no particular coach could change you over that four to six week period, or eight week period," he conceded.

However, he cited his interactions with Abhishek Porel to stress that changes introduced during the tournament can become permanent if persisted with over a period of time.

"Last night I was working on something. We are five weeks into the tournament, we have only got three or four weeks left of the tournament. And I said to him, I said, 'Abhi, this is not going to work for you tomorrow.'

"It might not work for you the next week. But if you keep working on it, in the next month, two months, three months, four months, I promise you this is going to help your game. And it's going to take you to a level where you're going to become a more destructive batter.

"So I think that's the key. Trying to lay foundations now, and then also just mentally, trying to switch a few players on, and make them think better," he added.

शपथ–पत्र

मैं, सुनीता देवी, पति उदय सिंह, पता– ग्राम–चन्द्रपुर, पोस्ट + थाना – पांकी, जिला – पलामू, झारखण्ड। यह कि पहचान पत्र तथा राशन कार्ड में मेरा नाम सुनीता देवी एवं पति का नाम उदय सिंह दर्ज है। यह कि आधार कार्ड में मेरा नाम दपति देवी पति उदय नाथ सिंह है। मेरा नाम सुनीता देवी पति का नाम उदय सिंह तथा दपति देवी पति उदय नाथ सिंह दोनों नामों का एक ही व्यक्ति यानि कि मै एवं मेरे पति ही है। इसका शपथ पत्र संख्या 1025, दिनांक– 07 मार्च 2025 है।

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