



India foiled Pak attempts to target religious places

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

It was "new low even for Pakistan" as it targeted places of worship and sent 300 to 400 drones in 36 locations attacking Indian military installations on Thursday. The failed attempt spanned from Leh to Sir Creek and sending of drones was violation of Indian airspace, Government said here on Friday.

Making these assertions here, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said targeting places of worship was with a particular design. He also said Pakistan's farcical denial of its attempts to target installations in India is another example of its duplicity. Addressing the media, he said Pakistan's attack on places of worship and its "preposterous" attempts to put the blame on Indian armed forces is reflective of Islamabad's evil design and efforts to deceive and mislead the world.

Citing Pakistan's attack on a gurdwara in Amritsar and its subsequent attempt to blame it on Indian armed forces, Misri said Islamabad's thinking that India would attack its own cities is the kind of "deranged fantasy" that only the Pakistani state can come up with.

The foreign secretary blasted Pakistan's provocative and escalatory actions to try and target Indian cities and civilian infrastructure using drones on Thursday night.

Misri especially hit out at Pakistan for its "blatantly farcical denial" of these attacks saying it is yet another example of Islamabad's duplicity and the "new depths" that it is plugging to in its "quest for disinformation". Misri was severely critical of Pakistan for targeting religious places with an aim to give a communal colour to the current situation, and pointed to an incident of Pakistan attacking a gurdwara in Poonch and another religious place in Amritsar.

"Instead of owning up to these attacks, Pakistan made the preposterous and outrageous claim that it was the Indian armed forces and the Indian Air Force that was tar-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi, Navy chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi and IAF chief Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh, during a high-level meeting on the security situation in New Delhi PTI

getting cities like Amritsar and trying to put the blame on Pakistan," he said.

"This is nothing but a desperate attempt by Pakistan to disown its acts of aggression; but it is also true to its efforts to deceive and mislead the world. It will not succeed," Misri said. He said that "we would attack our own cities" is the kind of deranged fantasy that only the Pakistani state can come up with. Perhaps they do it because they are well versed in such action as their history would show, he said.

Misri described it as a "blatant lie" Pakistan's allegations of India targeting the Nankana Sahib Gurdwara using a drone. "This is again yet another blatant lie and part of Pakistan's disinformation campaign. As we saw in the Pahalgam attack, Pakistan is again trying desperately to impart a communal hue to the situation with an intention to create discord," he said. "Again, we are not surprised. India's steadfast unity in itself is a challenge to Pakistan," he said. Misri said in view of the existing security scenario, the Kartarpur Sahib corridor has been suspended.

On India's strikes on Bahawalpur's Markaz Subhan Allah - the nerve centre of Jaish-e-Mohammed linked to the killing of Daniel Pearl, a journalist with The Wall Street Journal, Misri said the terror outfit was "directly or indirectly" responsible for his death. "Bahawalpur is the headquarters of the Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist group that is proscribed by the UN. Its leader Masood Azhar, is a proscribed individual," he said, responding to a question. "You brought up the connection with the tragic death or killing of Daniel Pearl of the Wall Street Journal.

The JEM was in some way directly or indirectly responsible for the death of Daniel Pearl," he said. "But the real connection is through Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, the British Pakistani jihadi who was held in India but was finally released in 2000 and he was the person who lured Daniel Pearl to his...Murder," Misri said.

Addressing the media at the press briefing, Wing Commander Vyomika Singh said Pakistan conducted an unprovoked aerial assault on May 7 at approximately 8.30pm.

Enemy drones lose sight in India

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

Pakistan, for the second consecutive night, launched swarm drone attacks on multiple locations across several North Indian cities of Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir and Rajasthan. At the time of going to press, the Indian air defence systems were able to successfully neutralise the threat.

According to ground reports, a suspected drone attack was also reported from Srinagar airport and in the holy city of Amritsar near the revered Golden Temple late Friday evening. Both these attacks were thwarted successfully.

The attack came a day after India thwarted attempts by the Pakistan military to hit Indian military installations and religious sites using drones and missiles. The sky was lit up in the Baramulla district as the Indian military shot down Pakistani drones. Blasts were heard and sirens sounded in the Jammu region and south Kashmir as many parts of the Union Territory plunged into darkness. In Srinagar, mosque loudspeakers were used to persuade locals to switch off their lights as a precautionary measure.

Officials said the drones were also engaged in Udhampur and Nagrota of Jammu and Punjab. Heavy cross-border shelling was underway along the International Border (IB) in Suchetgarh and Ramgarh sectors of Jammu and Samba districts.

From Srinagar and Jammu to Punjab's multiple districts and Jaisalmer and Jodhpur in Rajasthan, a vast stretch of the border areas plunged into darkness with public announcements made, urging people to switch off their lights as a precautionary measure. According to defence sources, "Drones have been sighted at 26 locations ranging from Baramulla in the North to Bhuj in the South, along both the International Border and the Line of Control with Pakistan. These include suspected armed drones posing potential threats to civilian and military targets".

"The locations include Baramulla, Srinagar, Avantipora, Nagrota, Jammu, Ferozpur, Pathankot, Fazilka, Lalgah

Jatta, Jaisalmer, Barmer, Bhuj, Kuarbet and Lakhi Nala", they added.

Sirens rang out in Pokaran, and a complete blackout was imposed in the region. The blackout in Jodhpur, originally scheduled to begin at midnight, was implemented immediately. Barmer, Sriganganagar, and Phalodi also went completely dark.

According to them, an armed drone targeted a civilian area in Ferozpur, resulting in severe injuries to members of a local family. The injured have been provided medical assistance, and the area has been sanitised by security forces.

Defence sources maintained the Indian

In Samba, a major infiltration bid was supported by the Pakistani Rangers. According to BSF, cover fire was provided to them from a nearby Pakistani Rangers post

Armed Forces are maintaining a high state of alert, and all such aerial threats are being tracked and engaged using counter-drone systems. The situation is under close and constant watch, and prompt action is being taken wherever necessary.

Earlier, the alert troops of the Border Security Force (BSF) foiled a major infiltration attempt along the International Border in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district in the early hours of Friday, killing seven heavily armed terrorists.

The beleaguered Pakistan army had also fired 300-400 drones on Thursday across several Indian cities. The attacks were intercepted by India's air defence systems, including the S-400 missile defence system, preventing significant damage. "On the night of May 7 and 8, the Pakistan army violated Indian airspace several times over the entire western border to target military infrastructure. Not only this, the Pakistani army also fired heavy-calibre weapons along the Line of Control. Around 300 to 400 drones were used to attempt infiltration

at 36 locations," said the Government

"The possible purpose of such large-scale aerial intrusions was to test air defence systems and collect intelligence. Forensic investigation of the wreckage of the drones is being done. Initial reports suggest that they are Turkish Asisguard Songar drones..." the Government added.

In Jammu, the drone attack was launched by the Pakistan army around 8.00 p.m. Jammu city plunged into darkness after blasts were heard and sirens sounded in the region.

"Intermittent sounds of blasts, probably heavy artillery, can now be heard from where I am," Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said in a post on X. He also posted a picture of the city in darkness, captioning the post as, "Blackout in Jammu now. Sirens can be heard across the city." "It's my earnest appeal to everyone in & around Jammu please stay off the streets, stay at home or at the nearest place you can comfortably stay at for the next few hours. Ignore rumours, don't spread unsubstantiated or unverified stories & we will get through this together," the Chief Minister added.

In Samba, the major infiltration bid was supported by the Pakistani Rangers. According to BSF, adequate cover fire was provided to the group of terrorists from a nearby Dhandhar post of the Pakistani Rangers. The suspicious movement of a heavily armed group of infiltrators was caught on camera with the help of thermal imagers by the BSF troops around 11.00 p.m. near the Samba border.

Confirming the same, the BSF spokesman of the Jammu frontier posted on X, "At around 2300 hours on 8 May 2025, BSF foiled a major infiltration bid at the International Boundary in Samba district, J&K".

A video also showed BSF troops causing extensive damage to the Pakistani post Dhandhar while killing at least seven terrorists to foil a major infiltration bid.

Tension between the two neighbours soared after the Indian Armed Forces on Wednesday conducted precision strikes targeting terror launchpads in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, PoK, in response to the April 22 attack.

Srimandir under tight security amid Operation Sindoor

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Amid intensified national security measures under Operation Sindoor 2.0, the iconic Jagannath Temple in Puri came under a special security spotlight on Friday. In a first-of-its-kind move, the Odisha Government has deployed a dedicated police force solely for the protection of the Srimandir, underlining the Centre's and State's joint emphasis on safeguarding vital religious and cultural landmarks.

Over 150 police personnel have been inducted into this exclusive unit, which will remain stationed in and around the temple premises to ensure round-the-clock security. The force has received specialised training in handling sensitive religious zones and responding swiftly to emerging threats. A comprehensive security briefing was conducted earlier in the day to establish operational clarity and coordination.



Night-long patrolling, strict vehicle checks, road blockades and identification verification are being carried out across Puri city, particularly around the Srimandir corridor. Several checkpoints have been set up at entry and exit routes, with all vehicles subjected to rigorous inspection.

Simultaneously, surprise raids are being conducted in hotels and lodges throughout the city. Police are verifying the identity documents of guests to prevent any infiltration or presence of suspicious individuals. Hotel owners

have been instructed to maintain detailed guest registers and extend full cooperation to the enforcement teams.

Sources confirmed that the deployment of this dedicated police unit is a component of the larger national strategy under Operation Sindoor 2.0, which seeks to fortify critical religious and public institutions amid rising external and internal threats. While primarily aimed at countering cross-border aggression, the operation has a significant internal security dimension as well.

Top police officials reiterated that the measures are not ad hoc but part of a long-term security framework to ensure the safety of devotees and tourists. The public has largely welcomed the initiative, viewing it as a proactive step to protect one of India's most sacred pilgrimage sites.

Notably, a team from the National Security Guard (NSG) had visited the Jagannath Temple to assess the security preparedness and had made several recommendations, which are now being implemented.

'A prosperous Odisha will be built by 2036'

■ "36-for-36" initiatives outlined
■ State targets 500-billion dollar economy

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Friday unveiled a roadmap to transform Odisha into a 500-billion dollar economy by 2036, coinciding with the State's centenary of formation. As part of the vision, 36 top-priority initiatives dubbed "36 for 36" have been identified across critical sectors to uplift the lives of every citizen, especially the most marginalised.

Speaking at a State-level consultative workshop on "Vision Odisha 2036 and 2047" held at the Lok Seva Bhawan, Majhi described the initiative as a promise to future generations and a blueprint for the aspirations of 4.5 crore Odias. The draft vision document, which has already been prepared, will soon be finalised after inputs from experts and

stakeholders, he said. "This document is not just a government plan; it is a roadmap for the dreams of every Odia," said the CM. "It is our aspirational commitment to ensure Odisha becomes a bright star in the Viksit Bharat."

The workshop witnessed participation from senior administrators, academics, industry leaders, public representatives, civil society members and cultural figures, who shared valuable insights with the state leadership.

Similar regional consultations will soon be held in Sambalpur, Baleswar and Jeypore to expand the dialogue and gather feedback.

Highlighting the government's commitment to inclusive growth, Majhi said the "36 for 36" initiatives would focus on key sectors including economy, industry,



education, healthcare, infrastructure, agriculture, tourism, science, innovation, women empowerment, rural development, tribal welfare and preservation of Odia language, culture and identity. The CM further stated that a "whole-of-government approach" would be adopted to implement the Vision 2036 with clear action plans and coordination across departments.

Lauding Prime Minister Modi's vision of a Developed India by 2047, Majhi said Odisha would play a pivotal role in achieving this national goal. "Our government is determined to create a prosperous, developed and proud

Odisha by 2036," he affirmed.

The workshop witnessed the presence of several dignitaries, including Deputy CM Pravatī Parida, Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari, Food Supplies, Consumer Welfare, Science and Technology Minister Krushna Chandra Patra, Law, Excise and Works Minister Prithviraj Harichandan, Cooperation, Handlooms, Textiles and Handicrafts Minister Pradeep Bal Samanta, Industries and Skill Development Minister Sampad Chandra Swain, Ekamra MLA Babu Singh, Bhubaneswar Mayor Sulochana Das, Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja and Development Commissioner Anu Garg.

CM assures safety in State amid India-Pak tensions

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has assured the State's residents of their safety and the government's preparedness amidst escalating India-Pakistan tensions. In a statement on Friday, he emphasised continuous surveillance and assessment of the situation.

Majhi stated that existing preparedness plans for safeguarding vital installations are being reviewed. Security measures have been intensified at critical locations such as Chandipur (Integrated Test Range-ITR) and Puri (Jagannath Temple) due to potential threats from the Bay of Bengal.

The government is actively working to ensure safe return of Odia people currently outside the state. A 24-hour help

desk has been established at the Resident Commissioner's Office in New Delhi to assist those affected. Efforts are also underway to relocate Odia students studying in Jammu to safer areas in Delhi.

"There is nothing to panic," the CM assured, reiterating vigilant monitoring of the situation. "Vital installations in the State at Chandipur and Puri are under strict vigil. Security measures have been beefed up and thorough searches are underway at several other significant locations," he stated.

Majhi confirmed that crucial installations and monuments across Odisha, including Bhubaneswar, the Hirakud Dam in Burla and Paradip Port, have enhanced security. Reports also indicate tightened security at the vital power stations in Talcher.

In Kendrapada

Muslim man marries off hapless Hindu Nepali girl

Bears all expenses of wedding as per Hindu rituals

RAJESH BEHERA ■ Kendrapada

As a burning example of communal harmony at coastal Kendrapada district, a minority community person acted the role of Good Samaritan for solemnizing the marriage of an orphan Nepali Hindu girl by spending money from his own purse.

Sheikh Liaquat Hossain of Manakarpur under Kendrapada helped 27 years old hapless orphan Nepali Hindu girl, Lalita Kumari Oli, by arranging and bearing all the marriage expenses. Lalita tied the nuptial knots on Thursday with Rajesh

Behera of Mehendipur village under Kendrapada Sadar police limits. The marriage was held at the Baladevew temple.

As Liaquat belongs to a minority community, so he could not enter into the temple for which he asked one of his Hindu friends, Bichitranda Sahani, to complete the kanyadaan.

According to Liaquat, the orphan Nepali girl, who was in love with Rajesh, informed him about her love relationship with the youth and she wanted to marry Rajesh. So, Liaquat sent a marriage proposal as per Hindu customs to Rajesh's family. Negotiation was made and finally Rajesh's family agreed to accept Lalita as their daughter-in-law. Later, the marriage date was fixed



by a priest. Lalita wished that her marriage would be held at Baladevew temple. To fulfil

her wish, Liaquat also arranged the marriage with the help of his Hindu friends. As per customs, Liaquat pro-

vided furniture, gold ornaments and other household items as dowry to the bridegroom. He also bore the expenses of organising a marriage feast for around 250 persons, including baratis, at Yatri Niwas, located at Baladevew Ratha Danda.

"I am happy that Lalita, who is like my daughter, got married. But I failed to perform the kanyadaan ritual of Lalita as the marriage was organized at the temple. I pray Almighty that Lalita and her husband live a peaceful and blissful marital life," said Liaquat.

Lalita lost her mother when she was only 3 years old. As a result, she moved with her father Sher Bahadur from Kathmandu city in re-

mote Nepal to work in Kendrapada district. Her father started working as a night watchman in a landlord's family in Kendrapada. Sher Bahadur nurtured Lalita with great love and devotion. When she was only 13 years old, her father placed her in RIESWA Swadhar Gruha in Mankarpur for her safety and went to Nepal to attend a meeting of Nepali people in 2009. However, he didn't return.

At this point, Liaquat, who is the director of the RIESWA Institute, came to the rescue of the helpless girl. He groomed her and gave her education. And, finally, he married her off like a responsible father does to her daughter.

In wake of cross-border attack

Odisha students evacuated from Jammu

NALINI SAHU ■ Bhubaneswar

A group of students from Odisha, studying at the Central Sanskrit University in Jammu, found themselves in a harrowing situation following a cross-border attack launched by Pakistan on Thursday night. Though the Indian Army successfully neutralised the drones and other weapons fired from across the border, the students endured hours of anxiety before being safely evacuated.

As a precautionary measure, the university authorities instructed all students to vacate the campus amid escalating tensions. Responding promptly, the Odisha Government and the university administration made swift arrangements for the safe return of students from the state.



Narrating their ordeal after reaching New Delhi on Friday, one of the students said, "We were terrified after seeing swarms of drones hovering above. Although we had fears, our faith in the Indian Army remained strong. Thankfully, all threats were neutralised."

Jitendra Prasad, a student

from Sambalpur, confirmed that all Odisha students had been safely moved to New Delhi. "The Odisha Government and the Union ministry of home affairs coordinated with us and took every step necessary for our safety," he added.

The Odisha government,

acting with urgency, announced a comprehensive evacuation plan. The office of the Resident Commission in New Delhi set up a 24x7 control room to monitor the situation and released a dedicated helpline for students and their families. A special train was arranged to ferry

students from Jammu to Delhi with plans underway for their onward journey to Odisha.

Five senior officers were deputed to oversee the operation, managing logistics, student safety, medical support, and coordination with railway authorities.

Another student, recounting the tense moments, said, "We saw around 40 to 50 drones in the sky while on the train. The air defence systems successfully brought them down, but it was a terrifying experience."

He further added that after reaching Delhi, the students were provided with proper food and lodging, and that arrangements were being made in phases for their return to their respective hometowns like Sambalpur and Baleswar.

Security beefed up at Hirakud Dam

Tourists' entry prohibited
NALINI SAHU / NIMAI CHARAN SAHU ■ Bhubaneswar/Sambalpur



Authorities have intensified surveillance at the Hirakud Dam in Sambalpur and prohibited tourist entry into the premises until further notice. The decision, taken as a preventive measure, comes amid growing concerns over the safety of critical national infrastructure.

The Sambalpur district administration, in coordination with State and Central security agencies, has rolled out heightened security protocols at the Hirakud Dam, Asia's longest earthen dam and a vital resource for irrigation, power generation and flood management.

As part of the enhanced arrangements, security personnel at the dam site have been equipped with modern arms, including Light Machine

Guns (LMGs) and advanced surveillance equipment to bolster vigilance and rapid response capabilities.

"The decision to restrict public entry has been made purely in the interest of public safety and national security," a senior official said. Notices have been prominently displayed at entry points, and police personnel have been deployed to enforce the restrictions and manage public movement in the area.

While officials have not cited any specific intelligence inputs prompting the move, it coincides with nationwide ef-

orts to secure vital assets in light of rising regional tensions and evolving security challenges.

Local residents, meanwhile, have urged authorities to consider deploying air defence systems and other advanced protective measures at the site. Authorities have assured the public that the restriction is temporary and will be reviewed based on periodic assessments of the security situation. The Hirakud Dam, built across the Mahanadi river, holds immense strategic and economic importance for Odisha.

Cong holds Tricolour Yatra to honour Armed Forces

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

In a heartfelt tribute to the bravery of the Indian Army and armed forces, the Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) organised a Tricolour Yatra on Friday under the leadership of PCC president Bhakta Charan Das. The event, aimed at commemorating the sacrifices made by Indian soldiers, started from Ram Mandir Square and culminated at Master Canteen Square.

Congress workers, carrying the national flag, marched along chanting patriotic slogans like "Jai Hind" and "Jai Jawan". The Sevadal also organized a special tribute cer-

emony to honor the Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force for their role in safeguarding the nation. Patriotic songs were played through public address systems to enhance the event's emotional resonance.

Speaking at the event, PCC president Das praised the unwavering courage of the Indian Army, who have stood firm against terrorism and threats to the nation. "The Congress party stands proudly with the Indian armed forces, and we remain united against terrorism," Das stated. He emphasised that the entire nation is behind the forces in this critical battle.

Odisha PCC in-charge Ajay Kumar Lallu joined in the



praise, highlighting the immense sacrifices made by India's armed forces at the borders, ensuring the security and integrity of the country.

The event was attended by several key Congress leaders, including former PCC president Niranjan Pattnaik, senior party members Sarat Raut, Jagannath Pattnaik, Jayadev Jena, Prasad Harichandan, Sarat Rout, Srikant Jena, Tara Prasad Bihnipati, Jagannath Pattnaik, Suresh Rautaray, Sameer Rautaray, Shibanan Ray, Anant Prasad Sethi, Ramesh Jena, Bishwajit Dash, Mohammad Moqim, Ranjit Patra and others, who participated in the yatra and showed solidarity with the armed forces and national unity.

OMFED to market Chilika buffalo milk



Farmers' meet held
PNS ■ Puri

A farmers' meet was organised by the SAMPARK organisation in Brahmagiri, Puri, focused on the conservation and promotion of the Chilika buffalo, an indigenous breed thriving in both salty and fresh waters of Chilika lake.

Various stakeholders, including the Director of Animal Husbandry and the Managing Director of OMFED Vijay Amruta Kulange participated in the meeting and held discussions with the farmers about the various issues they face.

He suggested the formation of a cooperative society to ensure fair market prices for Chilika Maanshi milk.

Chief Executive Officer of Odisha Livestock Research and Development Society (OLRDS), Hadibandhu Bhoi was also present and interacted with the farmers.

They assured the farmers of immediate assistance under the NREGA scheme. With OMFED's support, bulk milling chilling units will soon be established at Satapada, Manikapatna, Kurupal, Kruushnaprasadgarh, Maluda, and Gambhari in the Brahmagiri-Kruushnaprasad area. He also promised that regular milk production will

be documented, and high-yielding buffaloes will receive special incentives.

Additionally, he proposed the rotation of male buffaloes (Pandas) among herds for breed conservation.

Further assistance was pledged for digging ponds in various panchayats under different government schemes. In the initial phase, milk collection centers will be set up in Satapada, Manikapatna, Kurupal, Kruushnaprasadgarh, Maluda, and Gambhari.

The collected buffalo milk will be sold at affordable prices through OMFED. Products like ghee and khua will also be made from the milk.

He informed that various schemes are being prepared with the support of both State and central governments for the conservation and promotion of the Chilika buffalo.

The OLRDS had recently sent a letter to SAMPARK addressing various demands raised regarding the Chilika buffalo.

The letter mentioned that arrangements are being made to provide shelters for the Chilika buffaloes. Additionally, under the Goo Sampada Bima Yojana and the National Animal Husbandry Mission, farmers will be able to insure their buffaloes by contributing only 15% of the insurance premium.

IIT-BBS, TCS iON ink pact on Cloud Systems

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar and TCS iON have signed an MoU to launch a Certificate Program on Cloud Systems and Infrastructure Management, on May 8.

The MoU was signed between Dean (Sponsored Research and Industrial Consultancy), IIT Bhubaneswar Prof Dinakar Pasla and Global Head, TCS, iON, V Ramaswamy in the presence of Dean (Continuing Education), IIT Bhubaneswar Prof V Pandu Ranga and programme coordinator Dr Padmalochan Bera. On behalf of TCS iON, Aditi Srivastava, Academic AL-

liance Lead; Abhijit Lahiri, Product Manager, Learning Programs-Higher Education and Debashis Roy, Domain Consultant Learning Programs-Higher Education were also present on the occasion, along with senior faculty members and staff of IIT Bhubaneswar.

The programme will cover theoretical, practical and applied use cases in the fields of Cloud Systems and related technologies. Internationally acclaimed academicians, researchers and industry professionals with proven knowledge, experience and demonstrable ability in the field of Cloud Computing and AI will conduct sessions in the programme.

Suspicious bag triggers panic at BBSR airport

Two flights cancelled amid security alert
RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Panic gripped the Biju Pattnaik International Airport here on Friday after a suspicious, unclaimed bag was spotted inside the terminal, prompting an immediate response from airport security. CISF personnel swiftly cordoned off the area, evacuated passengers nearby, and called in the Bomb Disposal and Dog Squads to examine

the bag.

After a thorough scan and search, the bag was found to contain baby diapers and a mobile charger. It was later identified as belonging to a woman passenger who had arrived from Hyderabad. She returned to claim the luggage, and her travel details were verified by airport authorities before it was handed over to a relative. Officials urged flyers to remain vigilant and report unattended items.

The security scare came a

day after two flights from the Bhubaneswar airport were cancelled-one due to airspace restrictions linked to heightened national security alerts, and another over technical issues. The cancelled flights included a service to Hindon in Ghaziabad, which has been temporarily shut under central government directives, and another to Patna, grounded for the second day due to technical faults.

Airport Director Prasanna Pradhan confirmed the disruptions and

said they were precautionary in nature amid nationwide alerts under 'Operation Sindoor'. While Bhubaneswar lies outside the conflict-sensitive zones, indirect constraints affected operations.

He further informed that a new daily flight from Bhubaneswar to Visakhapatnam will begin in June though final details are awaited. Other airport operations remain unaffected, and normal services are expected to resume once airspace restrictions are lifted.

In Khordha dist Businessman shot by robbers in daylight

Robbed of silver worth lakhs
PNS ■ Khordha

In a brazen daylight robbery in Balugaon town in Khordha district on Friday, a businessman was shot and robbed by a gang of armed men on a busy road.

According to police sources, the victim, a well-known gold and silver trader from Umakantapur, was travelling with a consignment of silver when he was intercepted by five unidentified assailants riding two motorcycles.

The attackers, who are suspected to have been tracking the trader's movements, intercepted him on a relatively isolated stretch of road and opened fire without warning.

Eyewitnesses reported hearing two gun shots. One bullet struck the businessman in the chest while another hit his hand, causing him to collapse on the roadside. The as-

sailants then snatched a bag containing approximately 15 kilograms of silver and fled the scene before locals.

The injured trader was rushed to a nearby hospital and later shifted to hospital, where his condition was stated to be serious.

The Balugaon police have launched a hunt to track down the culprits. Checkpoints have been set up at all major exit points of the town and CCTV footage from surrounding areas is being reviewed to identify the suspects. Senior police officials, including the SDPO, visited the crime scene and assured the public of swift action.

"This appears to be a well-planned robbery by a professional gang. We are collecting evidence and hopeful of making arrests soon," said a police official.

The locals have demanded the installation of more surveillance cameras and stricter policing in the Balugaon area.

State Award ceremony

Governor lauds role of Scouts and Guides

Urges them to lead with values and compassion
RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Governor Dr Hari Babu Kambhampati called upon the members of the Odisha State Bharat Scouts and Guides to be the torchbearers of a brighter, disciplined future for the nation. The Governor made these remarks as the chief guest at the State Award Distribution Ceremony at the Bhavan on Friday.

The Governor emphasised that the nation requires greater dedication, discipline, and moral values from its youths than ever before. He appreciated the critical role of Scouts and Guides in nurturing responsible citizens through service, self-reliance



and integrity.

"The State Award is your journey but a milestone," said Dr Kambhampati, urging the awardees to embody and carry forward values such as compassion, integrity and leadership in all their endeavours.

As the Chief Patron of the Odisha State Bharat Scouts and Guides, the Governor expressed his pride in the organisation's achievements, including its active presence in even the remotest parts of the State. He lauded the Odisha State Branch for winning numerous accolades at the na-

tional level. He also praised the Scout Masters, Guides, Trainers and Volunteers for their dedication in promoting values such as respect for nature, teamwork and selfless service.

The First Lady of Odisha Jayashree Kambhampati graced the occasion with her

presence.

In his speech, Minister of School and Mass Education Nityananda Gond underlined the importance of the Bharat Scouts and Guides in imparting essential education that fosters discipline and the ability to face challenges.

Higher Education, Sports

and Youth Services and Odia Language, Literature, and Culture Minister Suryabanshi Suraj also addressed the gathering, praising Scouts and Guides for their unwavering commitment to education, culture, and nation-building.

Odisha State Bharat Scouts and Guides Chief Commissioner Dr Kali Prasad Mishra welcomed the dignitaries and participants.

During the ceremony, members of the Odisha State Bharat Scouts and Guides were honoured in eight different categories for their exceptional contributions.

In a notable highlight, Padma Shri Devi Prasanna Patnaik was presented with the prestigious Utkal Jyoti award in recognition of his invaluable contributions to arts.

As Indo-Pak conflict escalates Odisha on high alert; defence preparedness intensifies

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar
As Indo-Pak tensions deepen following the success of Operation Sindoor, India has stepped up defence readiness across the country. In Odisha, multiple strategic installations have been placed under heightened surveillance as the state braces for any possible escalation.

The port is under strict watch, and CISF personnel are conducting thorough checks at all entry points," confirmed an officer of Paradip Port. All docked vessels are being monitored round-the-clock, and patrolling in restricted areas has been intensified.

The engines for the Indian Air Force's fighter jets manufacturing unit Sukhoi Divisions of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) at Sunabeda in Koraput district

have been placed on high alert. Security measures have been significantly tightened, with restricted access protocols and enhanced perimeter monitoring.

Access to tourist sites such as Hirakud Dam, Kendrapada Lighthouse, Gopalpur Port and Puri Srimandir has been temporarily restricted in view of security concerns. Security has also been tightened in Chandipur, home to a key missile testing facility.

Meanwhile, war veterans at the Army Air Defence College, located on the outskirts of Brahmapur in Ganjam district, have voiced their readiness to return to service. Many of them, who had served in the wars of 1962, 1971, and 1999, participated in a symbolic flag-hoisting ceremony and pledged solidarity with India's active forces. "Our uniforms may be retired, but our spirit remains battle-ready," said one veteran.

Amid Indo-Pak tensions Emergency security meet held at DRDO

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar
An emergency security meeting was convened on Friday to assess and reinforce the security measures at critical Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) facilities in Chandipur, amidst rising tensions between India and Pakistan. The meeting, chaired by Eastern Range Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Dr Satyajit Naik, addressed the heightened threat environment

posed by the ongoing conflict. Following the meeting, Dr Naik emphasised the importance of securing India's defence infrastructure, saying, "In this period of rising national security concerns, it is crucial to maintain the highest level of vigilance at all strategic installations. Our defence assets are under constant scrutiny, and we are prepared to counter any potential threat with immediate response protocols in place."

The focus of the meeting was on the Integrated Test Range (ITR) and the Proof and Experimental Establishment (PXE) in Chandipur, both of which play a significant role in India's defence and missile testing programs. Given the ongoing Indo-Pak tensions, the security measures at these installations were thoroughly reviewed by senior officials from the Baleswar district police, coastal security and intelligence agencies.

Dr Naik added, "The coordination between national and regional security agencies is stronger than ever. The Balasore SP has been instructed to ensure seamless coordination with DRDO and related entities. Our objective is clear, to safeguard India's defence capabilities at all costs."

The meeting, initially scheduled to take place at the DRDO office, was held within the PXE campus, ensuring heightened security.

TPSODL issues 1,229 notices for power line encroachment

PNS ■ Brahmapur
In a major step towards ensuring public safety and safeguarding power infrastructure, TP Southern Odisha Distribution Limited (TPSODL) has issued 1,229 notices to individuals and establishments for unauthorized constructions under or dangerously close to overhead electricity lines across its operational areas in southern Odisha.

The action, part of TPSODL's ongoing safety and compliance drive, covers eight districts. The maximum number of notices were served in Ganjam (655), followed by Koraput (160), Malkangiri (131), Gajapati (104), Nabarangpur (83), Rayagada (55) and Boudh (38).

Unauthorized constructions near electricity lines pose a serious threat to life and property, and also hamper routine maintenance and emergency restoration work. TPSODL has taken this step in accordance with the Electricity Act, 2003 and CEA Safety Regulations 2023.

As per the Act, no building or structure is permitted under

or near overhead lines without prior approval which may result in disconnection of power supply and appropriate legal action. TPSODL CEO Amit Kumar Garg said: "We urge everyone to strictly avoid construction near electrical lines and to take necessary permissions beforehand."

TPSODL has also rolled out an intensive awareness campaign to educate consumers about these dangers. The campaign includes village meetings, audio-visual vans, posters, Nukkad Natak, and door-to-door outreach, especially in rural and semi-urban areas.

TPSODL urges all consumers to take prior approval from the appropriate authority before initiating any construction near electricity lines and to never undertake construction under or close to electrical infrastructure. Violations will be treated seriously in accordance with the law. Consumers who have received notices must act immediately to rectify the situation. Non-compliance will lead to enforcement actions as prescribed under the Act, a release by the company said.

Gangadahaani School centenary CM stresses on character-building education

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar
Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Thursday visited Ganjam district to attend the centenary celebrations of Khallikote's Gangadahaani Government Upgraded High School in Ganjam district. Prior to the event, he offered prayers at the Maa Tara Tarini Shrine and reviewed ongoing development projects with district officials and local representatives.

Addressing students, faculty and alumni, the CM said education must go beyond earning certificates and focus on shaping responsible citizens. "Schools are not merely buildings with classrooms, they are temples of learning where character is forged. Each brick of this institution tells a story of resilience and aspiration," he remarked.

Calling for value-based education, Majhi said, "True



education is one that uplifts humanity. We must produce students who uphold peace and knowledge, not hatred. Unlike our neighbours who misuse education for destruction, we believe in Buddha not war; in Jagannath not jihad."

He urged students to stay rooted in their culture and

community, and to commit themselves to the nation's progress. "There is no shortcut to success, only hard work. Let knowledge be your greatest wealth," he remarked.

Majhi praised the school's century-long legacy, calling it a beacon of education in the region. "It's a matter of pride for students to belong to an

institution that has been shaping minds for 100 years," he said, while felicitating teachers and alumni.

Later, the CM chaired a review meeting with local leaders and district officials to discuss the region's development priorities and chart a roadmap for infrastructure, education and public services.

In Bhubaneswar Cong holds blood donation camp to honour soldiers



RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar
To honour India's brave soldiers who have displayed extraordinary courage and taken decisive retaliatory action against Pakistan, the Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) on Thursday organised a blood donation camp at Congress Bhawan here.

Inaugurating the camp, OPCC president Bhakta Charan Das said the initiative was a symbolic tribute to the nation's jawans who continue to serve in the most adverse conditions. "Our soldiers have shown unparalleled dedication in defending the country and avenging acts of aggression. Today's blood donation camp is a mark of respect and support for their sacrifices," Das said.

A large number of senior Congress leaders and party workers participated in the event. Notable among them were former OPCC president Jaydev Jena, former ministers Suresh Kumar Routray, Nagendra Pradhan, and Shibananda Ray along with leaders such as Sameer Kumar Routray, Manoj Singh, Manoranjan Das, Navajyoti Pattnaik, Ranjit Patra, Mohammad Imdad, Prakash Mishra, Sushanta Tripathy, Satyabrata Nayak, Pradeep Mahapatra, Sudhanshu Deo, Udit Pradhan, Bijayananda Chaulia, Manas Mallik, Siddharth Das, Prakash Jena, Lingaraj Sahu, Rajkishore Barik, Prasanna Nayak, Sanjay Kumar Mandal, Umesh Chandra Das, Deba Prasad Nayak and Biranchu Nayak.

K'pada BSF Jawan's kin, villagers lit diyas post Op Sindoor

Pray for brave Armed Forces
RAJESH BEHERA ■ Kendrapada
The fellow villagers and family members of a BSF Jawan of Kendrapada district, who was engaged in search operations at Baramulla sector after Pahalgam terror attack, seemed happy and lit diyas at the local Bana Durga temple over India's revenge against Pakistan by launching 'Operation Sindoor.'

"We the fellow villagers lit diyas before Maa Bana Durga for our beloved Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the brave Armed forces, which



were engaged in Operation Sindoor. Besides, we also prayed for the families which lost their near and dear ones in Pahalgam terror attack," said Sadashiba Bedi, father of BSF Jawan Shasikanta Bedi. Sadashiba, who hails from

coastal Dangamal village under Talachua Marine PS, said his son, who is the eldest one among his children, joined the BSF about 2 years back and was engaged in Baramulla sector. "I am a proud father that my son is also a part of the team doing search operations of Pahalgam terrorist attack," he said.

"I talked with my son last time on Wednesday. He told me he was busy in search operations and cut the phone," said Sadashiba.

"With the ongoing war like situation at the boarder, we as parents are worried at home. But at the same time, we are happy for our son as he is en-

gaged in guarding the motherland," he said further, adding, "Maa Bana Durga will bless my son and protect him ever."

When asked to the family members and fellow villagers about Operation Sindoor, they said, "It was a befitting revenge taken by India against Pakistan."

India significantly degraded the operational capability of these terror outfits. Even in the air strike, 10 members of the family of JeM chief Maulana Masood Azhar and four of his aides are stated to have been killed in the air missile strikes, which is a great feat, they described.

Filmmaker Mishra 1st speaker at CIFEJ meet in Athens

SUDHIR MISHRA ■ Balangir
The International Centre of Films for Children and Young People (CIFEJ) held its symposium at the European Parliament Liaison Office in Athens, Greece, on May 5.

The symposium, titled CIFEJ: "Storytelling through Kids & Media: Audience Development Across Regional, National and Cultural Borders for Future Generations," marked the official launch of the International Centre of Films for Children and Young People (CIFEJ) operations in Athens.

It was hosted by the Hellenic Film and Audio-visual Center-Creative Greece, in collaboration with CIFEJ and supported by the Ministry of Culture and the European Parliament Liaison Office in Greece.

Indian filmmaker, Jitendra Mishra made history as the first speaker from India at the symposium

"As the elected president of the International Centre of Films for Children and Young People-CIFEJ, it was a privi-



lege to deliver a speech at the prestigious European Parliament Liaison Office in Athens," said Jitendra Mishra.

"I'm reminded that language has never been the real barrier-it is the power and intent of the message that counts. It's not about how you say it, it's about what you say," Mishra said further.

The symposium featured contributions from international speakers and long-standing institutions, including the CIFEJ Board of Directors, UNESCO (which initiated CIFEJ in 1955), and the

European Children's Film Association (ECFA). Discussions focused on Greece's role in CIFEJ's global activities, international collaboration, and the future challenges and opportunities in children's and youth audio-visual content.

Notably, Mishra is an acclaimed Indian filmmaker, producer, and promoter of meaningful cinema, recognized for pioneering innovative approaches to film production, distribution, and promotion worldwide. With over 100 films to his credit including The Last

Color, Buried Seeds, Desires of the Heart, Human Oak, I Am Kalam, Saint of Brooklyn and Barefoot Empress, he has earned numerous national and international accolades. He is the Festival Director of SIFFCY (Smile International Film Festival for Children & Youth), one of India's premier festivals for young audiences, organized by Smile Foundation in partnership with the European Union this year. Mishra has also served as a jury member at more than 50 international film festivals and forums.

ଟୀକାକରଣ

ଠିକ୍ ସମୟରେ ଘଟିବ ଟୀକାଦେବ ଆପଣଙ୍କ ଶିଶୁକୁ ସୁରକ୍ଷିତ ରଖନ୍ତୁ ।

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୬ ସପ୍ତାହ (ଦେବ ମାସ)	ଡିପିଜି-୧, ପେଣ୍ଟାଭାଲେଣ୍ଟ-୧, ଏମ୍‌ଆଇପିଜି-୧, ଆଇଜିଜି-୧, ପିପିଜି-୧
୧୦ ସପ୍ତାହ (ଅଦେବ ମାସ)	ଡିପିଜି-୨, ପେଣ୍ଟାଭାଲେଣ୍ଟ-୨, ଆଇଜିଜି-୨
୧୪ ସପ୍ତାହ (ସାଦେ ଚିନି ମାସ)	ଡିପିଜି-୩, ପେଣ୍ଟାଭାଲେଣ୍ଟ-୩, ଏମ୍‌ଆଇପିଜି-୨, ଆଇଜିଜି-୩, ପିପିଜି-୨
୯-୧୨ ମାସ	ଏମ୍‌ଆଇ-୧, ଭିଟାମିନ୍-କ***, ପିପିଜି ଦୁଇର, କେର-୧** ଏମ୍‌ଆଇପିଜି-୩
୧୬-୨୪ ମାସ	ଏମ୍‌ଆଇ-୨, ଭିଟାମିନ୍-କ***, ଡିପିଜି ଦୁଇର-୧, ଡିପିଜି ଦୁଇର-୧, କେର-୨**
୫-୬ ବର୍ଷ	ଡିପିଜି ଦୁଇର-୨
୧୦ ବର୍ଷ	ଡି.ଡି
୧୬ ବର୍ଷ	ଡି.ଡି
ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱଚରା ମହିଳା	ଡି.ଡି-୧, ଡି.ଡି-୨, ଡି.ଡି ଦୁଇର*

* ଯଦି ୩ ବର୍ଷ ଭିତରେ ଡିପିଜି/ଡିପିଜି ଟୀକାର ଦୁଇଟି ମାତ୍ରା ନେଇଥିବେ ।

** କେବଳ କେର ପ୍ରଦାନ କିମ୍ବା ମାନକ ନିମନ୍ତେ

*** ଭିଟାମିନ୍-କ, ୯ ମାସରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇ ୫ ବର୍ଷ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ପ୍ରତି ୬ ମାସ ବ୍ୟବଧାନରେ ଦିଆଯାଏ ।

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ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଏକାଡେମୀ

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Jaishankar speaks to UK counterpart David Lammy on India-Pakistan tensions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

As the conflict between India and Pakistan spirals, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday held a phone conversation with his British counterpart David Lammy and conveyed to him that there must be "zero-tolerance" to terrorism.

The Jaishankar-Lammy conversation came against the backdrop of efforts by India's strategic partners to reduce tensions between New Delhi and Islamabad. "Our discussions centered around countering terrorism, for which there must be zero-tolerance," the external affairs minister said in a social media post.

Jaishankar held phone conversations with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Italian Deputy Prime Minister Antonio Tajani and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas on Thursday.

Tensions between India and Pakistan soared significantly following India's Operation Sindoor on early Wednesday and Pakistan's subsequent unsuccessful attempt to attack 15 Indian cities.

US State Department Spokesperson Tammy Bruce said Rubio emphasised the need for immediate de-escalation.

"He expressed US support for direct



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday held a phone conversation with British counterpart David Lammy. FILE PHOTO

dialogue between India and Pakistan and encouraged continued efforts to improve communications," she said.

"The secretary reiterated his condolences for the horrific terrorist attack in Pahalgam and reaffirmed the United States' commitment to work with India in

the fight against terrorism," Bruce added. On his phone talks with Kallas, Jaishankar said: "Discussed ongoing developments with EU HRVP @kajakallas."

"India has been measured in its actions. However, any escalation will get a firm

response," he added. On India-Pakistan tensions, the European Union said it is "monitoring closely and with great concern the growing tensions in the region and the ensuing consequences, including the possible loss of more lives."

"The EU calls on both parties to exercise restraint, to de-escalate tensions and desist from further attacks to safeguard civilian lives on both sides," it said. "The EU urges both sides to engage in dialogue."

"It is vital that India and Pakistan also live up to their obligations under international law and take all measures possible to protect civilian lives," it added. The EU said it will work with all parties to de-escalate the situation.

The British foreign secretary on Wednesday said current tensions between India and Pakistan are a serious concern. "The UK government is urging India and Pakistan to show restraint and engage in direct dialogue to find a swift, diplomatic path forward," he said.

"The UK was clear in its condemnation of the horrific terrorist attack in Pahalgam last month.

"We need all sides to work urgently to see regional stability restored and ensure protection of civilians," he added.

IDY 2025 to be globally inspiring: Ayush Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The International Day of Yoga (IDY) this year will not just be successful but also inspirational for the entire world, Union Ayush Minister Prataprao Jadhav said.

International Day of Yoga, observed annually on June 21, has grown into a global cultural and wellness movement since its inception by the United Nations in 2015 at the initiative of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The minister chaired a review meeting on May 7 here to assess the ongoing preparations for the upcoming IDY which will be celebrated on June 21 across the globe. During the meeting, Jadhav reiterated the government's vision to make this year's celebration of yoga truly extraordinary and globally impactful. While addressing the officials, he stated that "we will work with utmost sincerity and commitment to ensure that International Day of Yoga 2025 is not only a grand success but also serves as a source of inspiration for the entire world". He encouraged all stakeholders to approach the event with renewed energy and unity, stating that the efforts should reflect the spirit of Yoga for One Earth, One Health. "Let us reach every corner of the country and every part of

the globe with the message of holistic well-being through yoga," he added.

The meeting saw participation from senior officials of the Ministry of Ayush.

The review focused on the planning and implementation of major initiatives such as Yoga Sangam, which

Four accused, identified as Vikash Kumar, Satyam Kumar, Devmani Rai and Ahmad Ansari, were previously charged by the local police under the Arms Act

integrates yoga with institutions like schools, hospitals and corporates and Harit Yoga, which promotes eco-consciousness through yoga-linked plantation drives.

The other initiatives such as Yoga Connect, which engages global and diaspora communities in yoga celebration and Yoga Bandhan, which fosters social unity and shared wellness through mass participation, were also reviewed.

Jadhav also emphasised the importance of engaging the youth, educational institutions and community leaders to amplify the message and participation in IDY 2025.

Delhi HC closes case after Ramdev pledges no more offensive remarks against Rooh Afza

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Friday closed a case after Yoga guru Ramdev pledged not to pass any further disparaging remarks against Hamdard's Rooh Afza.

Justice Amit Bansal said the averments of Ramdev and Patanjali Foods Ltd in their affidavits were binding on them and decreed the suit in favour of Hamdard National Foundation India.

The court had previously ordered removal of the controversial online content and asked Ramdev and Patanjali to file their undertaking.

The court passed the order while dealing with a lawsuit by Hamdard National Foundation India against Ramdev and his Patanjali Foods Ltd over the controversial remarks.

Hamdard claimed while promoting Patanjali's "gulab sharbat", Ramdev alleged the money earned from Hamdard's Rooh Afza was used to build madrasas and mosques.

On April 22, the court sought an affidavit from Ramdev and Patanjali assuring to "not issue any statements, social media posts or disparaging videos or advertisements in future similar to those which are subject matter of the present suit in respect of products of the competitors".

Ramdev's remark of "sharbat jihad" on Hamdard's Rooh Afza, the court said, was indefensible and shook its conscience, prompting the Yoga guru to assure he would immediately take down the related videos and social media posts.

Hamdard's counsel had said instead of taking down the objectionable YouTube video in terms of an earlier order, the defendant had only made it private.

Ramdev's counsel, on the other hand, said he had "great respect for the court" and its directions would be complied with.

On May 1, after the court warned of initiating contempt action against Ramdev, his lawyer assured that certain objectionable content which was subsequently published would also be deleted within 24 hours.

NIA chargesheets four for supplying arms to Naxals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has chargesheeted four accused for their involvement in supplying weapons to the Naxals and other criminal elements, an official statement issued on Friday said. The four accused, identified as Vikash Kumar, Satyam Kumar, Devmani Rai and Ahmad Ansari, were previously charged by the local police under the Arms Act, it said.

As per the NIA, which has been investigating the case since May last year, the accused "had conspired and were actively involved in the illegal procurement and smuggling of prohibited bore weapons to Naxalites and other criminal elements", said the statement issued by the probe agency. They had also raised and utilised funds for procurement of these arms as part of a conspiracy, aimed at disturbing the nation's unity, integrity, security and sovereignty, it added.

In its supplementary chargesheet filed before the NIA Special Court in Patna on Thursday, the NIA has now charged all four under Section 120B of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Sections 13 and 18

of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, the statement said.

The chargesheet followed an investigation in a case related to the seizure of an AK-47 rifle in Bihar's Muzaffarpur.

The NIA said that the Muzaffarpur Rail Police had initially on May 7, 2024, recovered an AK-47 butt and a rifle lens from Vikash and Satyam.

Four accused, identified as Vikash Kumar, Satyam Kumar, Devmani Rai and Ahmad Ansari, were previously charged by the local police under the Arms Act

"The duo disclosed during investigation that they had supplied an AK-47 rifle and five live rounds to Devmani Rai alias Anish, a resident of Mankauli under Fakuli PS, Muzaffarpur," the statement said. "A search of Devmani's house later led to the recovery of the rifle and the live rounds. All three, along with accused Ahmad Ansari, were arrested in the case," it added.

Birla urges IAS officers to build legacy of service guided by Indian values and democratic deals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla urged the young civil servants to leave a legacy of service, guided by Indian values and democratic ideals. He also urged them to bring the sense of purpose, discipline, and service to their own roles in governance and public administration. Birla made these remarks while addressing IAS Officer Trainees of 2023 batch, in Parliament premises on Friday.

Birla exhorted the young officers to dedicate themselves to the vision of Viksit Bharat—a developed India that is just, inclusive, innovative, and globally respected. He called on them to make this vision their daily motivation and guiding principle. Whether it is addressing the needs of backward and tribal areas, using technology to improve the lives of the poor, or ensuring last-mile delivery of services, he said the future of India depends on the strength and dedication of its civil servants.

He encouraged the trainees to engage in daily self-evaluation and strive to make tangible differences in the lives of citizens through transparent, responsive governance. He invoked the vision of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who believed



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla with IAS officer trainees during a group photo before the inauguration of their study visit to the Parliament House in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

that a strong and principled administrative system was essential for safeguarding India's unity and democracy in the turbulent period following independence. Shri Birla emphasised that the Indian civil service must always be guided by the spirit of Indian culture, remain sensitive to public sentiment and support the continuous deepening of democracy.

He said that administrative systems should ensure vigilant compliance with policies while always remaining people-

centric and transparent. Lok Sabha Speaker has emphasised the need for greater adoption of technology by IAS officers to enhance governance efficiency, transparency, and service delivery.

Highlighting the transformative role of digital tools in today's administrative landscape, the Speaker urged officers to proactively integrate emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, and e-governance platforms into their daily functioning.

BHISHM cubes deployed at Jammu hospital amidst India-Pakistan conflict

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi



Union Health Minister JP Nadda during a meeting with senior officials of the ministry to review health infrastructure preparedness across hospitals in the country. PTI

Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog Hita and Maitri (BHISHM) cubes, the indigenous portable modular medical facility, are being deployed at prominent hospitals such as AIIMS Jammu and Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) Srinagar near India's border under the government's Aarogya Maitri project to bolster medical readiness, officials said on Friday.

The development comes on the heels of Union Health Minister JP Nadda on Friday reviewing health infrastructure preparedness across hospitals in the country amid the ongoing Operation Sindoor and the ongoing India-Pakistan military conflict, official sources said.

These BHISHM cubes are also being stationed in other Institutes of National Importance (INIs) across India, including AIIMS in Rishikesh, Bilaspur and Delhi, they said.

"We are also providing operational training to the respective medical institutes where BHISHM cubes have been

deployed. So far two BHISHM cubes have been deployed at AIIMS, Jammu and more are being diverted to this centre.

"Besides, around 35 other BHISHM cubes so far have been deployed across other Institutes of National Importance (INIs) across India," said Air Vice Marshal Dr Tanmoy Roy, HLL Lifecare.

Dr Roy said HLL Life Care Ltd under the Union Health Ministry is the nodal agency for the procurement and deployment of Aarogya Maitri Cube.

BHISHM cubes are portable and rapidly deployable modular medical facilities to provide emergency lifesaving clinical care in the event of disaster or public health emergencies.

Each cube is equipped with medicines and surgical equipment for basic operations, and it has the capacity to handle around 200 diverse emergency cases.

The cube comprises 72 easily transportable components, designed for versatile delivery methods including hand-carry, bicycle or even drone transport.

The aid cube is equipped with several innovative tools designed to enhance disaster response and medical support dur-

ing emergencies. It integrates Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data analytics to facilitate effective coordination, real-time monitoring and efficient management of medical services in the field.

Being robust, waterproof and lightweight, the cubes are also built to withstand harsh conditions. Their flexible configuration allows deployment in diverse emergency scenarios. The system can be quickly dispatched via airdrop or ground transportation, ensuring swift response to crises anywhere.

In the wake of Operation Sindoor, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday chaired a high-level meeting with secretaries of various ministries and called for continued alertness and clear communication, while reaffirming the government's commitment to national security and operational preparedness.

The Indian armed forces are on high alert in the wake of the current hostilities between New Delhi and Islamabad following the Pahalgam terrorist attack of April 22 and India's strike on terror targets in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) in retaliation.

Congress launches Jai Hind Yatra to back Indian soldiers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

History is witness that whenever someone challenged India's self-respect, they got a befitting reply, the Congress said on Friday and asserted that its Jai Hind Yatra, being taken out across the country, was in support of India's brave soldiers.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said once again India had been challenged and its tolerance and patience tested, with terrorists having ruthlessly killed innocent people.

They will have to pay the price for this, Ramesh asserted. "History is witness... Whenever someone has challenged the self-respect and self-esteem of India, we have given them a befitting reply," the Congress leader said in a social media post in Hindi.

"When our soldiers roar with passion to sacrifice every drop of their blood to protect this land, the heart of the enemy shivers. Once again we have been challenged, our tolerance and patience tested. The terrorists have ruthlessly killed our innocent

people, they will have to pay the price for this," Ramesh said.

Every single Congress worker stands with the country's army in this difficult time, he added. "We are taking out a Jai Hind Yatra across the country today in support of our brave soldiers. We are proud of our soldiers. 'Jai Hind ki Sena,'" Ramesh said. The Congress also reiterated its solidarity with the government in whatever decision it takes against Pakistan.

Congress spokesperson Ragini Nayak said Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi had consistently said "we are with the government of India in thought, word and deed".

"If the Indian government takes any major decision against Pakistan, then our full cooperation and support is with the government. Today, we will reiterate this message through the Jai Hind Yatra," she said during a press conference at the party's 24, Akbar Road, headquarters.

The Indian Army is working day and night to give a befitting reply to the attacks of Pakistan and, in such a situation, "it is

On the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday, India neutralised the Pakistan military's attempt to hit military stations in Jammu, Pathankot, Udhampur and some other locations with missiles and drones

our duty to come together to boost the morale of the Indian Army," she said.

The Congress appeals that it is the responsibility of the government to prioritise the safety of people in all villages and cities near the India-Pakistan border, Nayak said. "We express our deepest condolences to those who lost their lives in Poonch and it is also the government's responsibility to take care of their families and provide prompt treatment to the injured," she said.

"It is hoped that the government will take strong steps in this direction. The Indian Army will take revenge from

Pakistan for the blood of innocent Indians," she added. On the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday, India neutralised the Pakistan military's attempt to hit military stations in Jammu, Pathankot, Udhampur and some other locations with missiles and drones.

On Thursday afternoon, the defence ministry said the Indian Armed Forces had foiled Pakistan's attempts to target military installations in 15 cities in the country's northern and western parts.

It said the Pakistani military attempted to target Awantipura, Srinagar, Jammu, Pathankot, Amritsar, Kapurthala, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Adampur, Bhatinda, Chandigarh, Nal, Phalodi, Uttarlai and Bhuj. Defence Minister Singh on Thursday said no limit would become an obstacle to protect India's sovereignty and the nation was fully prepared for such responses.

Early on Wednesday, the Indian Armed Forces carried out missile strikes on nine terror targets in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Pakistan under Operation Sindoor in response to the April 22 Pahalgam attack.

Government dismisses Rajouri, Jalandhar attack claims as fake

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi/Jammu

The government on Friday dismissed claims of a suicide attack on an Army brigade in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri and a drone attack in Punjab's Jalandhar by certain social media handles as "fake news".

The Press Information Bureau's (PIB) Fact Check Unit found that there was no "fidayeen" or suicide attack on any Army cantonment in Jammu and Kashmir, while the video claiming to be of a drone attack in Jalandhar pertained to a farm fire.

The district collector of Jalandhar has confirmed it to be disinformation, the PIB said.

"A total of seven videos were fact-checked between 22:00 hours on May 8, 2025, and 06:30 hours on May 9. A list of the fact-checked videos, along with their links, has been compiled," the

PIB said. It found that an old video shared on social media claiming to be of Pakistan's missile attack on India was actually of an explosive attack that took place in Beirut, Lebanon, in 2020.

In another case, a video claiming the destruction of an Indian Army post by Pakistani forces was found to be fabricated.

The Fact Check Unit verified that there was no such unit as the "20 Raj Battalion" in the Indian Army, as claimed in the video. "A barrage of coordinated disinformation has been carried out by certain social media handles in general and mainstream media in particular in Pakistan with the sole objective to instill fear among the Indian masses," a PIB statement said.

The Fact Check Unit also said that a video of an explosion on an oil tanker dating back to July 7, 2021, was passed off as an attack on the Hazira Port in Gujarat.

Bookings slump on Jammu-bound trains amid tensions on border

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Lucknow

At a time when trains to the north are typically packed beyond capacity, the Jammu-bound trains from Lucknow are now running with hundreds of vacant seats. This rare development during the summer rush is being attributed to rising tension along the India-Pakistan border following Operation Sindoor.

What once was a travel route with lengthy waiting lists now tells a story of growing unease and uncertainty.

Railway data accessed by this reporter reveals a stunning drop in bookings. On Friday, the Jammu Tawi Summer Special (04609) had over 125 vacant berths.

Even more striking, as many as 557 seats in the Third AC Economy class remain unbooked for May 16, with similar vacancies observed on subsequent dates — 496, 531, 543 and 557 seats going unsold.

“We have not seen this kind of slump in summer bookings to Jammu in years,” said Kuldeep Tiwari, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager (DCM), Northern Railway, Lucknow Division. “Usually there is a long waiting list by March-end,

especially with pilgrims and families visiting Jammu and Kashmir. But this year, there has been a clear drop after tensions flared.”

As many as 557 seats in the Third AC Economy class remain unbooked for May 16, with similar vacancies observed on subsequent dates — 496, 531, 543, and 557 seats going unsold

The impact is not restricted to a single train. The Kolkata-Jammu Tawi Express (13151) and Begumpura Express are also showing thin waitlists. The once-overbooked Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Express, popular among pilgrims, now has just one waitlisted passenger in Sleeper Class and six in Third AC for Friday. Among the affected is Neelam Sharma, a resident of Alambagh, Lucknow, who had planned a family trip to Vaishno Devi. “We booked tickets in April, but after hearing about the border tensions and watching the news about troop movement and air alerts, we decid-

ed to cancel,” she said. “It is not worth the risk — our children were scared.”

In a startling development on Thursday, several passengers traveling on Jammu-bound trains — including the Begumpura Express and Kolkata-Jammu Tawi Express — chose to disembark mid-journey. According to railway sources, nearly 580 passengers departed Lucknow for Jammu that day, but many got off at intermediate stations such as Bareilly, Moradabad, and Saharanpur, opting instead to return home via buses or private vehicles.

“We have never seen passengers alighting en masse before their destination like this,” said a train conductor who requested anonymity. “Some cited family pressure, others spoke of fear from news about airspace closures and security alerts.” DCM Kuldeep Tiwari added, “There are no plans to curtail train routes at this moment. However, any decisions regarding route termination or travel suspension will be made only after orders from the Railway Board, based on intelligence inputs.”

The travel disruption is not limited to the railways. Flight operations between Lucknow and Chandigarh — a key trans-

it point to Jammu — have been suspended until May 10. IndiGo confirmed the cancellation of flights 6E 6552 (Lucknow to Chandigarh) and 6E 146 (Chandigarh to Lucknow), citing operational constraints due to suspended activity at Chandigarh Airport.

Additionally, international flights to Dammam and Sharjah have faced delays due to airspace restrictions and increased pre-flight security checks.

The cumulative effect is being felt by tour operators and pilgrimage planners. Manoj Jaiswal, who runs a travel agency near Lucknow Junction, said, “We usually send at least 30–40 groups to Vaishno Devi during May-June. This time, half our bookings have been canceled. Clients are postponing trips indefinitely.”

As Indo-Pak tensions persist, it is evident that public sentiment is shifting toward safety over sentimentality — even in the face of long-cherished religious or holiday plans. “There is love for the shrine and the beauty of Jammu and Kashmir,” said Narendra Srivastava, a university student from Barabanki, “but no one wants to end up stranded or worse. Everyone’s watching the news and weighing their options carefully.”

MP goes into alert mode

GIRISH SHARMA ■ Bhopal

In view of the rising tensions along the India-Pakistan border, the Madhya Pradesh Government has moved into a heightened state of alert, with special emphasis on preparedness across strategic locations like Gwalior.

As a result, all police and medical staff in Madhya Pradesh have been placed on standby with immediate effect.

Leaves have been cancelled for personnel across these sectors to ensure maximum availability of manpower. District administrations have been instructed to monitor the supply and distribution of essential items such as food, medicines, and fuel, and to maintain uninterrupted access to emergency services.

In Gwalior, one of the state’s most sensitive locations due to the presence of the Indian Air Force’s Maharajpur Air Base, which houses Mirage 2000 fighter jets — security arrangements have been significantly stepped up.

The Air Force station, along with other critical defence and research facilities including the Army cantonment and DRDO laboratory, are under strict surveillance. Armed patrolling has been intensified, night-watch teams have been deployed in key areas, and drone flights have been banned across the city to eliminate the risk of unauthorised aerial surveillance or sabotage.

While talking to The Pioneer, Gwalior Superintendent of Police Dharamveer Singh said, “We are on high alert and taking every measure necessary to maintain peace and ensure readiness for any contingency. Surveillance has been increased at all vital points, and our teams are working round the clock in coordination with intelligence agencies.”

In a significant move reflecting civil defence readiness, all major government hospitals in Gwalior have also been brought under emergency protocol. Special signage of Hospital is being erected prominently on rooftops and entry points of these hospitals to clearly designate them in case of any aerial activity or emergency response needs. Hospital administrators have been instructed to keep ICUs, trauma wards, and emergency supplies ready at all times. Ambulance services have been placed on high mobility, and drills are being conducted to test responsiveness in crisis scenarios.

While there is no immediate threat to public life, these developments indicate the state government’s proactive approach to civil defence in light of national security concerns. Citizens are urged to stay calm, follow official advisories, and immediately report any suspicious activity.

The Madhya Pradesh government has assured the public that all necessary measures are being taken to safeguard the state’s security and maintain order.



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and World Bank President Ajay Banga during a meeting in Lucknow

PTI

CM Yogi slams Pakistan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

On Friday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath participated in a commemorative event marking Maharana Pratap Jayanti, where he paid heartfelt tribute to valiant warriors such as Maharana Pratap, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, and Guru Gobind Singh.

Taking a strong stance against terrorism, he targeted Pakistan, stating that the country has crossed all limits of audacity and now faces an existential crisis. He asserted that Pakistan’s terrorist face has been fully exposed to the world.

Referring to the brutal terrorist attack on Indian tourists in Pahalgam on 22 April, Yogi Adityanath said the incident had stirred the conscience of every Indian and strengthened the resolve for decisive retaliation. He stated that under the firm leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Indian armed forces had delivered a robust and appropriate response to such provocations. As a result, he noted, Pakistan now finds itself globally isolated and severely weakened.

Condemning Pakistan’s continued patronage of terrorism, CM Yogi pointed out the shocking participation of senior Pakistani military officials and politicians at the funerals of terrorists who were neutralised in Indian counter-terrorism operations. “This not only proves Pakistan’s patronage of terrorists but also shows its deep-rooted complicity,” he said, adding that Pakistan is now visibly struggling for survival.

In his address, the Chief Minister called on citizens to remain united and firmly stand by the Indian armed forces. He cautioned against the spread of misinformation and rumours on social media, urging people to stay alert and expose anti-national elements. “Every

Indian must support our forces and expose anti-national elements. We must move forward with unity under the guidance of our central leadership,” he emphasised.

CM Yogi reiterated that India will emerge victorious in every circumstance, and Uttar Pradesh stands unwaveringly with the nation’s defenders. Drawing inspiration from history, he said the birth anniversaries of warriors like Maharana Pratap serve as reminders of India’s legacy of resistance and bravery. Recalling the historic Battle of Haldighati, the Chief Minister highlighted how Maharana Pratap, with the support of Vanvasi and Girivasi warriors, forced Emperor Akbar’s massive army to retreat — showcasing the triumph of courage over might.

On the occasion, Legislative Council members Rakesh Singh and Manvendra Singh were congratulated for beautifying a major intersection in the city, which will now be named Maharana Pratap Singh Chowk.

CM Yogi recalled that it was in 1998 that he had first proposed the installation of Maharana Pratap’s statue at this location. Subsequently, similar statues were installed in cities like Lucknow, Gorakhpur, and Prayagraj, with support from leaders like Kalyan Singh and Rajnath Singh.

The event was attended by Legislative Council Chairman Kunwar Manvendra Singh, Cabinet Ministers Suresh Khanna, Swatantra Dev Singh, Rakesh Sachan, and Dayashankar Singh, as well as public representatives including Acharya Shantanu Maharaj, Mayankeshwar Sharan Singh, Dinesh Pratap Singh, MP Brijlal, Sanjay Seth, Jai Pratap Singh, Rakesh Singh, Manvendra Singh, Santosh Singh, Kaushal Kishore, Dara Singh Chauhan, and other dignitaries.

Muslims across UP condemn Pakistan, back Indian Army

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Lucknow

The first Friday namaz after the launch of Operation Sindoor witnessed an outpouring of patriotism from the Muslim community across Uttar Pradesh. From Lucknow to Varanasi and Sambhal, worshippers condemned Pakistan’s aggression and raised slogans in support of the Indian Army and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In a significant development reflecting national solidarity, large gatherings at mosques turned into scenes of protest against Pakistan. In Lucknow, noted Islamic scholar Maulana Khalid Rashid Farangi Mahali stated, “Muslims of India stand united with the nation. We strongly oppose this cowardly attack by Pakistan and demand a fitting reply.”

In Sambhal’s Jama Masjid, a rare display of nationalist unity unfolded as hundreds of worshippers raised slogans of “Hindustan Zindabad,” “Indian Army Zindabad,” and “Pakistan Murdabad” after the Friday prayers. The congregation sent a clear message of loyalty to the nation.

Community representatives expressed full support for the government and the armed forces. “Forty crore Muslims of India are with PM Modi,” said Shad Adil, who also mentioned that prayers were offered for India’s prosperity and global



Muslims hold a tri-colour and placards as they celebrate Indian armed forces’ ‘Operation Sindoor’ after Friday prayers in Prayagraj on Friday

PTI

peace. “Pakistan cannot stand before India,” he added.

Masood Hussain Farooqi voiced his readiness to sacrifice for the nation, saying, “I am willing to give my blood for Hindustan.” Echoing the sentiment, Hussain Saifi remarked, “Pakistan survives on India’s mercy. If India cuts off water, Pakistan will become a desert.”

Worshippers also condemned attacks on mosques by Pakistan and asserted that

such acts would be answered with strength. Special prayers for peace, unity, and the safety of Indian soldiers were offered in several mosques.

Statewide Security Stepped Up
In response to the heightened India-Pakistan tensions, the Uttar Pradesh government has put the entire state on high alert. Intensive checking is being conducted at hotels, railway stations, religious places, and other crowded locations. In

Lucknow, police personnel on leave have been called back to duty with immediate effect.

Special security measures have been implemented at key religious sites including the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Krishna Janmasthan in Mathura, and Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi. Every visitor is undergoing strict screening.

Major medical institutions like KGMU and SGPGI in Lucknow have been placed on alert. Seven Indian Air Force stations under the Central Air Command are also on high alert.

Security along the India-Nepal border has been intensified. Drone surveillance is being conducted in border villages, and every individual crossing into India is being screened and their identity verified.

Amidst the nationwide support for Operation Sindoor, former Pilibhit MP Varun Gandhi posted on X (formerly Twitter) after a year-long hiatus. In his message, he praised Prime Minister Modi and the Indian Army, writing:

“The entire nation salutes the valor and sacrifice of our brave soldiers. Under PM Modi’s strong leadership, India has shown the world it will never retreat from defending humanity and justice.”

Gandhi’s last post was on March 28, 2024, shortly after being denied a ticket from Pilibhit.

Akhilesh Yadav dons Rajput symbolism

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Lucknow

In a calculated political move to reclaim cultural icons and widen his support base, Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav on Friday made a bold outreach to the Rajput community by donning the traditional Mewari Safa and demanding a two-day public holiday on the birth anniversary of Maharana Pratap.

The gesture, made during a press conference at SP headquarters in Lucknow, came amidst backlash over controversial remarks by a senior SP leader against Rajput king Rana Sanga.

“Maharana Pratap is not the pride of a single caste — he is a national hero who symbolises courage and resistance, values that transcend caste lines,” said Akhilesh, addressing a gathering that included prominent Kshatriya leaders and intellectuals. He further pledged, “If voted to power, we will install the grandest statue of Maharana Pratap on the Gomti Riverfront in Lucknow, with a golden sword in his hand.” The SP chief’s shift in tone and symbolism is widely seen as damage control after senior party leader Rana Sanga triggered protests from Rajput

groups, especially the Karni Sena. Political observers note that Yadav’s embrace of Rajput iconography is a strategic response to the BJP’s long-standing dominance over upper caste sentiments.

“By wearing the saffron-checked turban—a symbol of Rajput pride—and making bold commitments to honor Maharana Pratap, Akhilesh Yadav is clearly trying to bridge the trust gap with a community that has traditionally leaned towards the BJP,” said a senior political analyst. “Whether this will translate into electoral dividends, especially in key constituencies with high Rajput populations, remains to be seen.”

The Rajput community constitutes nearly 10 per cent of Uttar Pradesh’s electorate and holds sway in over 100 assembly constituencies, making them a critical demographic in the run-up to the 2027 state elections. Recognising this, the SP appears to be recalibrating its outreach strategy — shifting from its traditional Yadav-Muslim base to embrace upper caste groups who may be disillusioned with the BJP.

Responding to questions about Ramji Lal Suman’s remarks, Akhilesh avoided direct criticism but offered a veiled rebuke: “One should leave behind histo-

ry that divides, not unites.”

Beyond symbolism, Akhilesh used the occasion to launch a sharp critique of the BJP’s economic policies. “BJP’s agenda never had space for employment or entrepreneurship. That is why they are now targeting traditional markets and age-old fairs that support local economies,” he said. He also alleged that the central government was quietly issuing Letters of Intent (LOIs) on key policies during a time of national tension—“That is not how democracy works,” he remarked, without offering further details.

The event was attended by several influential Kshatriya leaders within the SP, including former minister Arvind Singh Gope, ex-MLC Udayveer Singh, and former MP Arvind Singh, signaling a united front and the party’s commitment to expanding its caste coalition.

Akhilesh’s latest outreach is being viewed as part of a larger strategy to undercut the BJP’s cultural nationalism by offering an inclusive, development-oriented reinterpretation of history. In doing so, the SP hopes to carve a broader narrative that blends caste neutrality with economic justice — an approach that could redefine the contours of Uttar Pradesh politics in the years ahead.

RSS congratulates Government, armed forces over ‘Operation Sindoor’

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ Mumbai

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Indian armed forces for launching “Operation Sindoor” against Pak-sponsored terrorists and their supporting ecosystem following the cowardly attack on unarmed tourists at Pahalgam.

In a joint statement issued on Friday, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat and general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale said: “We congratulate the central government leadership and our armed forces for decisive action ‘Operation Sindoor’ taken against Pak-sponsored terrorists and their supporting ecosystem following the cowardly attack on unarmed tourists at Pahalgam.”

Endorsing the military action taken by the Government, the two RSS leaders said: “This action to serve justice to aggrieved families and the entire country in the brutal massacre of Hindu tourists has enhanced self-respect and morale in the whole country. We totally agree that military action being taken against terrorists, their infrastructure and support systems in Pakistan is necessary and inevitable for the security of the country.” “In this hour of national crisis, the entire country stands with government and armed forces in spirit and action,” Bhagwat and Hosabale said.

Condemning the attacks being carried out by Pakistani army on religious places and civilian settlement areas on the border of Bharat, the RSS leaders expressed heartfelt condolences to families of victims in these savage, inhuman attacks.

“In this challenging time, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh appeals to all citizens to ensure full compliance of instructions being given by the government and administration,” they said. Calling for precautions to ensure against the anti-national forces to succeed in disrupting social unity and harmony, the two RSS leaders said: “Along with this, while discharging our sacred civic duty, we all have to be cautious and do not let any conspiracy of anti-national forces to succeed in disrupting social unity and harmony.”

“All citizens are requested to display their patriotism and be ready to cooperate with the army and civic administration wherever and however required and strengthen all efforts to maintain national unity and security,” Bhagwat and Hosabale said.

CM Mamata warns traders against hoarding during crisis hours

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has warned a section of business community against black-marketing of essential commodities saying such attempts would be strongly dealt with. The order came following reports that a section of traders particularly in the wholesale markets were hoarding items, in turn, jacking up price of essential commodities like potato, egg, edible oil etc sources said.

“Love for the motherland is not to be shown on the streets but in spirit too,” Banerjee said reminding how the country should remain united in every respect from family affairs to the battle front.

“A situation has arisen after the Pahalgam attack by terrorists when many innocent people were killed, in that respect it is a necessity that we should be prepared for certain situations, our stocks should be kept ready, in that context it is necessary that people do not indulge in

blackmarketing of essential commodities taking advantage of the situation. We are keeping a strong watch on the hoarders, traders are asked not to supply produce through the borders to make money,” Banerjee said adding this was the time for everyone to remain united not only in words but also in their acts.

The Chief Minister has also asked the respective departments to ensure that Sufal Bangla stores (Government run outlets) should remain open with increased supplies. “We have around 700 outlets and we will have 100 more. These stores are doing good job,” but at the same time their efficiency should be increased during the hour of need, she said.

Banerjee’s instruction to the top officials including the State Director General of Police came at a time when there were reports of some unscrupulous traders hoarding essential commodities allowing price of food products to shoot up.

“There is plenty of supplies and there is no need to panic, only we will have to



ensure that such things are not hoarded and artificial scarcity is not created. The DGP has to keep track of this and hold virtual meetings on a regular basis,” Banerjee said asking the departmental ministers and people’s representatives to keep a strong vigil on the situation too.

Banerjee’s statement came within hours of the Government cancelling leaves of all the Government employees.

The Chief Minister had earlier requested the private schools to announce summer vacations earlier than schedule “though this is not an order.” A number

of schools had followed her instructions and had announced summer vacation sources said.

Elsewhere the authorities at the Netaji Subhas International Airport too issued circulars cancelling leaves of its staff particularly those associated with the security system, sources said. “The repair work at the second landing strip too has been suspended for now and a state of alert has been sounded,” a senior official said.

Meanwhile, in a parallel development the Special Task Force of the State police arrested two terror operatives reportedly linked to Bangladesh’s banned terrorist group Jamat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). The arrests were made following raids at some locations at Nalhati and Murshidabad. The terror moles have been identified as Ajmol Hossain (28) and Saheb Ali Khan (28). Murarai is not very far from Khagragarh village where two JMB terrorists were killed while making bombs in October 2014.

Editor's TAKE

A humble shepherd with a global vision

Revered for his humility, Pope Leo XIV is poised to shape a new chapter for the Church

In a historic and unexpected turn, Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost has been elected as the 267th pope of the Roman Catholic Church, taking the name Pope Leo XIV. His election on May 8, 2025, marks the first time an American has ascended to the papacy, signaling a significant shift in the Church's global orientation.

Born in Chicago in 1955, Pope Leo XIV brings a rich tapestry of experiences to the papacy. His extensive missionary work in Peru, where he served as a bishop, and his leadership roles within the Augustinian order and the Vatican's Dicastery for Bishops, reflect a deep commitment to pastoral care and global outreach. Known for his reserved demeanor and thoughtful deliberation, he is often described as a "bridge builder" who seeks unity within the diverse tapestry of the Catholic Church.

His choice of the name Leo XIV pays homage to Pope Leo XIII, renowned for his advocacy of workers' rights and social justice. This selection underscores Pope Leo XIV's dedication to continuing a legacy of compassion and inclusivity.

Pope Leo XIV's election carries significant implications for the intersection of faith and politics, particularly in the United States. He has been an outspoken critic of nationalist policies, including those associated with former President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance, especially concerning immigration and social justice issues. While maintaining traditional Church teachings on matters like same-sex marriage and abortion, he emphasises the importance of pastoral sensitivity and the dignity of every individual.

His nuanced positions reflect a commitment to upholding doctrinal integrity while engaging with contemporary societal challenges. This approach aims to foster dialogue and understanding within a polarised global landscape.

The process leading to Pope Leo XIV's election was marked by thoughtful deliberation among the College of Cardinals. Following the death of Pope Francis in April 2025, 133 cardinal electors convened in the Sistine Chapel, engaging in a conclave guided by centuries-old traditions and the apostolic constitution *Universi Dominici Gregis*. After four ballots over two days, Cardinal Prevost emerged as a consensus candidate, reflecting a desire for continuity with Pope Francis's reformist agenda and a commitment to global inclusivity.

In his inaugural address, Pope Leo XIV emphasised themes of unity, peace, and pastoral care. He called for the Church to be a beacon of hope and a bridge in a fractured world. His leadership is expected to continue the synodal approach championed by his predecessor, promoting greater lay participation, environmental stewardship, and a compassionate outreach to marginalised communities.

As the Catholic Church embarks on this new chapter under Pope Leo XIV, his blend of humility, global experience, and commitment to social justice positions him to navigate the complexities of the modern world while staying rooted in the timeless teachings of the faith.

The Catholic Church, one of the oldest institutions in human history, has undergone profound transformations over the centuries — spiritually, politically, and culturally. Rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostolic tradition, the Church has had to continuously adapt to changing times while maintaining its theological foundations. In its early centuries, the Church faced persecution before eventually becoming intertwined with state power in the Roman Empire. The medieval period saw it wield immense political influence, often blurring the lines between spiritual authority and temporal control. However, this power was challenged by events such as the Great Schism and the Protestant Reformation, which forced the Church to re-evaluate its structures and doctrines.

The 20th century marked a particularly significant era of change. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was a watershed moment, modernising Church practices — introducing the use of vernacular languages in liturgy, promoting ecumenical dialogue, and encouraging greater engagement with the modern world. This opened the Church to a more pastoral and inclusive approach, focusing not only on doctrinal purity but also on social justice, human rights, and global outreach.

In recent decades, under popes like John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and especially Francis, the Church has further grappled with issues like secularism, clerical abuse, gender roles, and the role of laity. Pope Francis's emphasis on mercy, care for the poor, and environmental stewardship has redefined the Church's mission for many in the 21st century.

Now, with the election of Pope Leo XIV, the first American pontiff, the Church stands at another pivotal juncture. His leadership signals a continued embrace of reform, cultural diversity, and moral courage in facing the world's pressing social and political challenges. Through centuries of change, the Catholic Church has shown a remarkable ability to evolve — slowly, at times painfully, but always with a deep concern for its spiritual mission and global relevance.

India's power and resolve

The Prime Minister's decision to rely on the armed forces reflects a deeper commitment to professionalism, affirming that India's future depends on capable, values-driven experts and globally aligned views

After almost two weeks of the Pahalgam massacre, India retaliated by carrying out cross-border strikes with precision and depth. According to a press release under Operation Sindoor, altogether nine terror camps and headquarters of Jaish and Lashkar were targeted in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir. While India showed its strong will to strike back by carrying out cross-border strikes, the strategic message was beyond punishment this time.

Until now, India's strike-back pattern suggested punitive deterrence with a limited hitting range. Uri strikes in 2016 and Balakot Strikes in 2019 demonstrated India's capability to enforce punitive deterrence against Pakistan by sending the strategic message that any undesirable behaviour will be met with a swift and severe response. In fact, after the Parliament attacks, India launched Operation Parakram, which was also an attempt to demonstrate an act of punitive deterrence, but punitive deterrence became an ineffective strike-back option as Pakistan built a perception that India's deterrence behaviour could be sustained with the ability to counter-strike as they were credible and had a limited hitting range. Pakistan's perception was demonstrated in Operation Swift Retort when Pakistan swiftly acted the next day after the Balakot strikes by breaching India's airspace with JF-17s and attempting to carry out air strikes on non-military targets in J&K. While the escalation ladder was in a pretty controlled state from both sides. Still, India's larger objectives of enforcing deterrence against Pakistan remain quite faint as both states resorted to punitive deterrence, almost seroing down the effectiveness of deterrence on Pakistan. Consequently, Pakistan didn't learn its lessons. It continued its terror operations in J&K and even shaped its sub-conventional tactics to such an extent that it could launch deep terror strikes with an element of plausible deniability. Creating offshoots and front organisations like The Resistance Front.

The echo to configure strong offensive deterrence was found in former Chief of Army Staff General Krishnaswamy Sundarji's vision paper — India's Army Perspective Plan 2000. He argued that for Pakistan, we have to adopt a maximised offensive deterrence ranging from seizure of territory to destruction of Pakistan's military and economic capabilities. Similarly, another former Chief of Army Staff, General Sundarajan Padmanabhan, who oversaw India's Operation Parakram, said, "Perpetrator would be punished so severely that its continuation thereafter in any form would be in doubt." Both the Generals echoed, maximum and credible deterrence against Pakistan, not aiming to punish



Pakistan but to escalate deterrence and offensive measures to such extent that Pakistan's sub-conventional warfare capability gets eroded but this erosion requires continuity in delivery of credible deterrence such as done in Operation Sindoor.

Operation Sindoor demonstrated three key swift shifts from earlier striking patterns. First, India expanded its striking horizon by going beyond Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir and striking deep inside Pakistan by targeting key cities—Bhawalpur and Muridke. Second, multiple targets increase operational selectivity, which was limited to only one or two camps until now — third — Attempt to push Multi Domain

ABHINAV NARAYAN

Deterrence against Pakistan. India's five-pointed diplomatic strike after a few days of attack which notably included keeping the Indus Water Treaty in abeyance to isolating Pakistan's diplomatic and economic potential was an attempt to bring double squeeze strategy into play by exploiting and exacerbating Pakistan's internal weakness at one end and strategically isolating at the global stage—miserable failure of Pakistan at UNSC closed-door meeting despite launching renewed decades-old narrative of "false flag" is one testament of strategic isolation.

Earlier, India's isolatory approach towards Pakistan had demonstrated ordinary diplomatic measures, but this time India attempt-

ed to demonstrate some extraordinary diplomatic measures, adding the actual element of multi-domain deterrence. Overall, this time, India's strategic response demonstrated its capability to impose a sustained, credible and multi-dimensional deterrence against Pakistan.

Operation Sindoor echoes the beginning of a shift from immediate deterrence to long-term credible deterrence against Pakistan. The idea of long-term credible deterrence can push Pakistan to the margins if India continues to develop its long-term deterrence by adding more credibility by precisely striking the Octopus — the head of terror outfits in future. This shift in deterrence against Pakistan will force Pakistan to realise the new strategic reality that any misadventure would be met with an overwhelming response, not limited to plain responses. India's Operation Sindoor also gives a glimpse that India is also chalking a path of integrated deterrence and gradually departing from the traditional notion of deterrence, a similar move that the United States did in its National Defence Strategy after realising increasing threats and risks to its strategic security especially after 9/11 and began to sharpen its integrated deterrence in modern time after realising increased threat from rising threat from Russia and China in a heightened strategic completion environment.

The threat of the escalation ladder spiralling is one major issue in the retaliation cycle between India and Pakistan. This gets further aggravated if the Pakistan leadership is strongly tilted towards Islamic generals— from Zia, Musharraf, Parvez Kayani, to Asim Munir. Though India has already made it clear that its actions are calculative, precise, and non-

escalatory, targeting only terrorists, Pakistan has tried to play with fire when it comes to controlling escalations from unprovoked offensives at the border to launching nuclear rhetoric. After India's thunderbolt response, Pakistan's top echelons may be in a dilemma in delivering a reaction while considering the escalation factor, as the onus of escalation is now on Pakistan. Last year, Pakistan carried out limited air strikes in response to Iran's retaliatory response against anti-Iran terror groups in the bordering region of Pakistan. Similarly, Pakistan might opt for limited air-to-cross-border strikes but may also exercise in-depth strikes. At present, Pakistan is attempting to flare up by indiscriminate shelling against civilians in J&K's bordering regions. Poonch is one of the worst-hit areas by Pakistan's shelling.

Whatever Pakistan's response, Asim Munir must realise that he is already suffering with high costs, with his nation getting humiliated and bleeding. If Munir attempts to deliver a miscalculated response, then the escalation ladder might spiral, and he might get consumed by his fire. Pakistan must also realise that it does not have many options; it cannot afford to put its strategic security at more risk, especially when Pakistan's western frontier is almost smoked by TTP and Baloch fighters. It's high time that Pakistan realises that now, higher costs and risks are involved in coercing India after it has demonstrated a swift shift in its deterrence against Pakistan by showing both power and resolve.

(The writer is an advocate and a columnist. Views are personal)

The Power of choice and faith

SECOND Opinion

BY BARBARA O'NEILL

My journey into the world of mental health began early, shaped by personal experience and a natural call to care. I was just 18 or 19 when I found myself taking care of my mother, who was wheelchair-bound. At the same time, I was studying psychology at night, and it quickly became clear that nursing — especially psychiatric nursing — was where my heart belonged. Even while enjoying the life of a young adult, I was deeply curious: What causes mental illness? What pushes a person to the edge?

One case I'll never forget involved a man admitted in utter crisis. His wife had left him, his business collapsed, his home was destroyed in a fire, and his son became a paraplegic — all in a short span of time. He had reached breaking point. But with coordinated care from social workers, financial advisors, and mental health professionals, his life began to mend. Just a week later, he walked out of the facility with a bag in his hand and hope in his heart. That experience taught me a vital truth: with the right support, people can recover—even from the depths of despair.

At 25, my path took a spiritual turn when I became a Christian. Around the same time, I developed a deep interest in natural remedies and a holistic approach to raising my children. A pivotal moment came when I was given a book

called Psycho-Dietetics, published in 1976. It explored how American doctors were using minerals, vitamins, and lifestyle changes to support mental health. That book lit a fire in me. It launched a lifelong pursuit of natural, empowering, and faith-aligned ways to support the mind.

I've always believed in raising independent thinkers — emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. I didn't spoon-feed my children; I wanted them to think, question, and grow strong from within. That same principle guides my approach to care: give people tools they can use on their own, not just within the walls of a clinic. In recent years, especially amid global upheaval and restrictions, many people have started to look inward and upward for answers. The need for holistic self-care—mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual — has never been clearer. People are realising that healing is not just something that happens in a doctor's office; it starts with taking responsibility for one's own well-being.

Mental health is complex, but one truth remains: our mindset matters. Depression is often a state of mind — though this may be difficult to hear, it carries weight. Therapies like Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) help us see that while we can't always change our circumstances, we can choose our responses. Gratitude, even in suffering, is one of the most powerful tools. In a world gripped by fear and uncertainty, we must remember the profound power of choice. It is central to mental freedom, parenting, and spiritual growth. When we choose to trust God in adversity, we're not simply holding onto hope—we're resisting fear itself. But this choice also reveals a deeper spiritual truth: God is not a tyrant. He gives us freedom,

even when it means people sometimes choose wrongly and others suffer. Still, in reclaiming our minds from destructive patterns, this freedom becomes our greatest strength. We are not victims of our thoughts. We can choose what we focus on. As Dr Neil Nedley says, "The mind stayed on Him is a choice." Sometimes, that choice starts with "fake it till you make it." It may sound hollow, but it's a powerful truth-repetition creates reality. Just like going to the gym builds identity over time, practicing hope reshapes our inner dialogue.

Living in the present is also vital. We're often robbed of today by regrets or fears of tomorrow. But as one speaker said, "Love today. Love where you are. Love what's happening — because you'll never have that moment again." Gratitude brings healing. Even when self-critical, pause and reframe. Maybe your feet look odd — but they carry you. You are free.

Lastly, mental wellness is deeply rooted in the physical laws of health, where simple, consistent habits yield profound results. Breathing through the nose, rather than the mouth, enhances oxygenation and naturally filters the air we take in, supporting clearer thinking and calmness.

Regular movement, exposure to sunlight, and quality sleep are equally vital — research shows that just ten nights of six-hour sleep can reduce brain function by up to 50 per cent. Hydration and proper nutrition, particularly with omega-3 fatty acids, form the building blocks of cognitive and emotional balance. Faith doesn't remove fear, but it gives us the courage to keep walking, step by step.

(The author is a world renowned holistic healer and advocate of transformative wellness. Views are personal)

Leaderspeak



Our response was targeted and measured. It is not our intention to escalate the situation. However, if there are military attacks on us, there should be no doubt that it will be met with a very very firm response. As a neighbour and close partner, it is important that you have a good understanding of the situation.

S JAISHANKAR, MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Letters to the Editor

Caste census must bridge gaps

Madam — The move to conduct a caste-based census must be viewed with thoughtful consideration. Data can be a tool for progress if it promotes fairness and opportunity, not division. Global principles emphasise equal dignity, social cohesion, and the recognition of merit beyond inherited identity. While marginalised communities deserve focused support, categorising citizens primarily by caste may risk reinforcing societal barriers.

Instead, emphasis should be placed on gathering data related to education, employment, and healthcare disparities. Nation-building thrives when every citizen feels valued as part of one collective future. Let us ensure that any data collection fosters inclusion, not fragmentation. Policy must balance historical realities with a shared vision for equity and unity. Progress lies not in highlighting our differences but in bridging them meaningfully.

In conclusion, the call for a caste-based census must be grounded in a vision that uplifts rather than divides. While acknowledging historical injustices, we must prioritise data that addresses real developmental gaps — education, employment, healthcare — without deepening social fault lines. The aim should be to craft policies that empower the marginalised while reinforcing our shared national identity. India's progress depends on fostering unity through inclusion, not fragmentation through labels.

HASNAIN RABBANI | MUMBAI

Rohit Sharma calls it a day gracefully

Madam — Unfortunately, an underachiever in Whites called it a day for reasons known only to him. India captain Rohit Sharma has retired from Test cricket. It comes after reports in the Indian media that he would be removed as captain for the Test series in England this summer. Rohit gave nonchalant joy whenever in form and in mood. Retires when still good enough to play for couple of years.

In his test Career, Sharma played 67 Test matches, scoring 4,301 runs at an average of 40.57, including 12 centuries and 18 half-centuries. As a captain he succeeded Virat Kohli as Test captain in 2022 and led India in 24 matches, winning 12. In his ODI Career Rohit Sharma will continue to play ODIs and has recently led the team to the 2025 Champions Trophy title.

His T20 Career ended as he retired from T20 internationals after India's victory in the 2024 — T20 World Cup. A graceful exit, Rohit Sharma bows out of Test cricket with 4,301 runs in 67 matches, 12 centuries, and a captain that saw India win half of his 24 Tests in charge. Though his departure follows whispers of a captaincy change, Rohit exits with dignity intact, still capable, still cherished. Having led India to triumphs in the 2024 T20 World Cup and 2025 Champions Trophy, his legacy lives on. Sometimes, it is best to leave them wanting more.

JAYANTHY SUBRAMANIAM | MUMBAI

Operation Sindoor: Precision Strike

Madam — On May 7, India launched Operation Sindoor, a precision military strike targeting nine terrorist hubs in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK). This decisive action followed the April 22 Pahalgam attack that killed 26 civilians, mostly tourists. Between 1:05 AM and 1:30 AM, Rafale Jets armed with SCALP missiles hit camps run by Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba. Notably, Indian forces avoided Pakistani military targets, signaling a calculated and focused counterterrorism mission. The operation highlights India's evolving military doctrine — marked by swift retaliation, strategic restraint, and intelligence-based targeting.

It reinforces India's stance of measured but firm responses to cross-border terrorism while bolstering its defense credibility. Geopolitically, the strike comes amid Pakistan's internal instability and seeks the risk of regional escalation. Islamabad is likely to seek diplomatic support, especially from China and Turkey. China's stance will be closely watched, given its Indo-Pacific ambitions. Western nations, particularly the US, may support India's right to self-defense while calling for calm. Beyond immediate security implications, Operation Sindoor could influence economic and diplomatic ties, including trade dynamics and water-sharing talks. As India aligns military action with broader national strategy, its assertive posture may mark a significant shift in South Asia's geopolitical landscape.

AMARJEET KUMAR | HAZARIBAGH

PAKISTAN LEANS ON CHINA FOR ARMS SUPPLIES

Since the US having cut off arms supplies to Pakistan in the wake of the changed geopolitical situation in Afghanistan, cash-strapped Islamabad has been increasingly leaning on China in recent years to fill the gap.

According to data compiled by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), China was the largest supplier of military hardware to Pakistan, accounting for as much as 81 per cent of the country's total imports, followed by the Netherlands at 5.5 per cent and Turkey at 3.8 per cent. Turkish President Erdogan expressed solidarity with Pakistan amid rising tensions with India following Operation Sindoor.

The total arms imports from China between 2019 and 2023 alone were valued at \$5.28 billion, which accounted for 63 per cent of Pakistan's total arms imports, according to SIPRI data.

Pakistan has been getting defence hardware from China that ranges from fighter jets for the air force to sub-

marines and frigates for the country's navy and artillery guns for the Pakistan Army. The JF-17 Thunder fighter jet is a flagship project of China-Pakistan military cooperation. The JF-17 is currently a mainstay of the Pakistan Air Force after the US stopped supplying its F-16s. Production of the jets started in 2007, and deliveries are ongoing, with each delivery introducing upgraded modern variants.

In 2015, Pakistan ordered eight Type-041 Yuan-class conventional submarines from China, four of which were to be built in China, and four to be made under license in Pakistan at Karachi Shipyard. Delivery schedule for these submarines runs from 2022 to 2028, with the deal valued at \$5 billion. Pakistan has also got Chinese SH-15 155mm self-propelled artillery guns for deployment to the Indian border. With this the Pakistan having full support of mighty China currently which is worrisome for India.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

Victory's veil: The allied legacy of moral evasion

Eighty years on, the Allied victory is still hailed as a triumph over tyranny — but behind the celebration lies a legacy of deceit, injustice, and moral compromise. The victors fashioned a postwar world less defined by liberation than by selective memory and calculated impunity

FIRST Column



When President Harry Truman read the plea from Manhattan Project scientists urging a reconsideration of the atomic bomb's use on Japan, his response likely showed no moral hesitation or remorse. Instead, his actions reinforced a postwar global order based not on liberty, but on selective memory and perverse exoneration.

Eighty years after Victory in Europe Day, the dominant Western narrative continues to present the war's outcome as a triumph of virtue, ignoring the uncomfortable ethical compromises and strategic duplicities that underpinned it. The mythology of liberation has become sacrosanct, while the darker aspects — such as rendition, racial internment, scientific justification of war crimes, and indifference to colonial sacrifice — remain marginalised or erased. The obliteration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki — while dressed in the procedural lexicon of wartime necessity — was, in fact, the Western world's inaugural postbellum moral abdication. The bombings were less a denouement of global conflict and more a vulgar display of technological supremacy calculated to dissuade Soviet assertiveness. The horror, therefore, was not simply that a nuclear Rubicon had been crossed, but that it was done with an exultatory grin, and later justified with the antiseptic language of 'strategic imperatives'. It is no longer speculative fiction but a matter of record, buried in declassified memoranda, that alternatives existed — namely, Japan's increasing willingness to consider surrender if the Emperor were retained. Truman's decision was not an exigency of war, but a deliberate theatricality of dominance. The supposed Allied moral high ground crumbled further when Operation Paperclip was set into motion.

Over 1,600 Nazi scientists, including unrepentant perpetrators of ghastly human experimentation, were clandestinely ferried into the United States under the auspices of national security and scientific utility. Wernher von Braun, a man whose rockets were lubricated by the blood of enslaved labourers at Mittelwerk, became a lauded patriarch of American aerospace triumph. The apologia was monstrously bureaucratic — his past affiliations were 'scrubbed' to sanitise his assimilation into American exceptionalism. In a 1947 CIA memo, the chilling intent is laid bare: "It is not desirable that the public or press become aware..." — a line that resounds like a macabre hymn to state-sanctioned impunity. This institutional duplicity was not uniquely American.

The British intelligence establishment had its own euphemistically elegant form of deceit. Through the "Double Cross System," MI5 successfully manipulated German intelligence via double agents, such as the legendary Juan Pujol García, to misdirect Axis expectations about D-Day. Though tactically ingenious, this also reveals an alarming precedent: deception, once wielded in wartime, quickly transmogrifies into peacetime governance. The ability to deceive a foreign enemy soon turned inward —

domestic populations were no longer sacrosanct from psychological warfare, propaganda, and informational obfuscation. Simultaneously, the West turned a wilfully blind eye to Soviet atrocities for the sake of fragile alliances. The Katyn Forest massacre, wherein Stalin's NKVD executed over 22,000 Polish officers, was known to the Roosevelt and Churchill administrations.

Declassified communications confirm that both leaders opted for calculated silence, fearing the rupture of wartime unity. One CIA memo chillingly advised that "public disclosure not advised due to diplomatic concerns." In those words lies the DNA of postwar moral relativism: truth subjugated to expediency.

Even within the triumphant United States, the internment of over 110,000 Japanese Americans — a move unreplicated in scale or racial homogeneity for any other ethnic group — was executed under the pretence of national security, yet dripped with racial animus. The true indictment emerges not just

from the camps themselves, but from what came after. Thousands of Japanese American men volunteered to fight for a nation that caged their families. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team, largely composed of these internees' sons, became the most decorated unit of its size in US military history. Their leader, Senator Daniel Inouye, once said, "We fought not just the enemy, but the prejudice of our own country. Still, we fought."

That their legacy was received with patronising nods rather than substantive restitution only amplifies the grotesquerie of their sacrifice. Meanwhile, British colonial troops — 2.5 million strong from India, Africa, and the Caribbean — were deployed across the world's war fronts, shedding blood for a Crown that had no intention of emancipating them.

In Burma, Indian troops bore the brunt of the jungle war, their bodies discarded in the colonial ledger as expendable assets. Their gallantry was neither commemorated with equitable pensions nor with places in British collective memory. A veteran of the Burma Campaign once lamented: "We fought for the British, yet after the war, they forgot us. My medals mean little without respect." Postwar Britain, engrossed in rebuilding its own wounded self-image, had no space for the sepia-toned loyalty of its colonial wards. Simultaneously,

the Soviet Union — while lionised for its monumental military sacrifice — was also the architect of unspeakable internal savageries. The Holodomor, the Great Purge, and mass deportations — these were not aberrations but policies. The Red Army's entry into Berlin was marked not only by military triumph but by a tidal wave of civilian rapes and looting, acts that were obfuscated or trivialised in postwar historiography.

Allied complicity in whitewashing these crimes was another ethical forfeiture. The myths of the 'liberator' prevailed, even as countless women were left psychologically eviscerated by the supposed liberators themselves. There were no clean hands in this war — not among the Allies, not among the Axis, and certainly not among the institutions that shaped the postwar order. The psychological experiments of Unit 731 in Japan, which included live vivisections and plague dissemination, should have led to Nuremberg-style prosecutions in the Pacific. Instead, many of its physicians were rewarded with amnesty by the United States in exchange for their data on biological warfare. "Data on human experimentation is valuable..." read a US Army report in 1947.

It is difficult to concoct a phrase more morally desiccated. Nor was the West's complicity confined to acts of commission; its sins of omission reverberate just as loudly. The Jewish partisans in Eastern Europe, those who rose from the ashes of ghettos to sabotage Nazi convoys and derail genocide, were rarely included in the triumphalist Allied narrative. Their resistance did not conform to the clean binaries of statehood or military discipline — it was desperate, feral, and incandescently courageous. Faye Schulman, one such partisan, wrote: "I vowed never to be taken alive again. The forest became my freedom, my gun my answer."

The war also eviscerated any illusions of gender equality. Thousands of women risked and gave — their lives in resistance movements, logistics, and espionage. Noor Inayat Khan, a British Muslim spy of Indian heritage, refused to betray her comrades under Gestapo torture and was eventually executed at Dachau. Her last known words were: "I have nothing more to say." Yet after the war, women were largely herded back into domestic anonymity, their wartime roles ossified as aberrations rather than recognised contributions to victory. The truth is that, while the West defeated fascism with the indispensable support of the Global South and poorer nations, it merely adopted fascist mechanisms, cloaked them in democratic rhetoric, and integrated them into the Cold War order. What followed was not peace, but a cover-up, where impunity was dressed as security and complicity as strategy. The moral divide between Axis villainy and Allied virtue crumbles, revealing a postwar world shaped not by justice, but by duplicity, omission, and a profound fear of moral reckoning.

EVEN WITHIN THE TRIUMPHANT UNITED STATES, THE INTERNMENT OF OVER 110,000 JAPANESE AMERICANS — A MOVE UNREPLICATED IN SCALE OR RACIAL HOMOGENEITY FOR ANY OTHER ETHNIC GROUP — WAS EXECUTED UNDER THE PRETENCE OF NATIONAL SECURITY, YET DRIPPED WITH RACIAL ANIMUS



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

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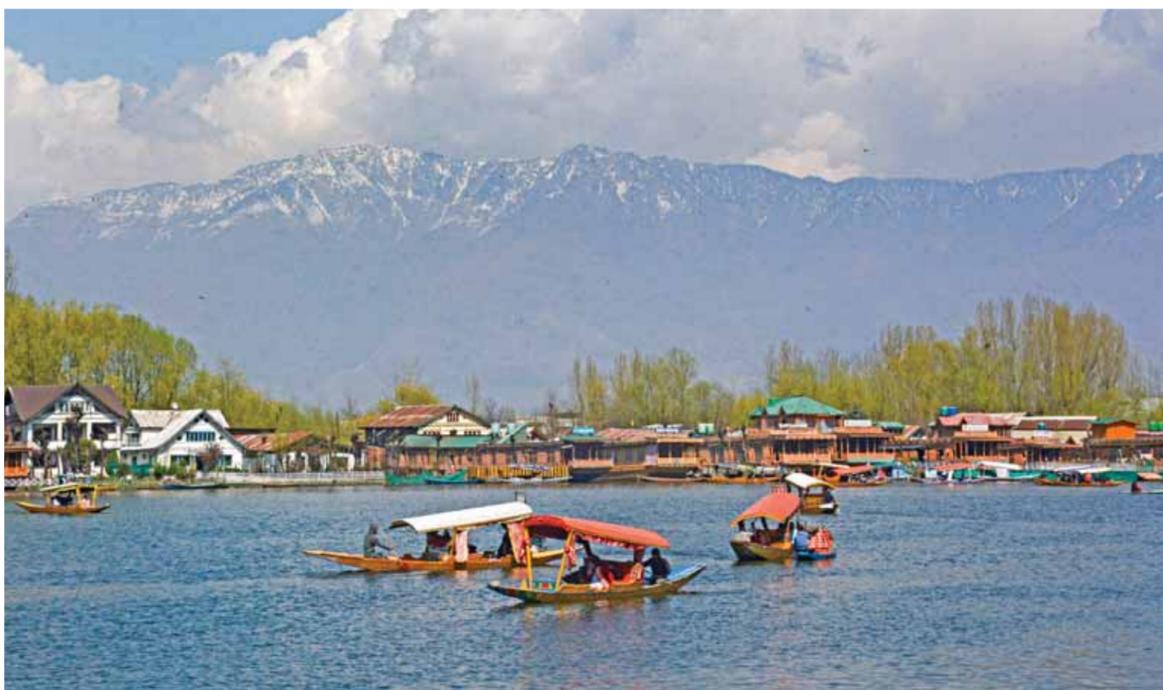
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(The writer is a columnist and political analyst based in Colombo. Views are personal)

Time for the People of J&K to Rise and Shine!

Once plagued by instability, Jammu and Kashmir is now witnessing a transformative resurgence in tourism, infrastructure, and investment, ushering in a new era of growth, opportunity, and national integration



ANIL RAJPUT

ment and sentiment was first and foremost reflected through the tourist arrivals that broke all records. In 2021, 1.13 crore tourists visited the UT; 1.89 crore in 2022; this increased to 2.12 crores in 2023 and 2.36 crores in 2024. This has also resulted in many multinational and domestic hotel chains opening new properties in the UT, and the region currently offers 62,488 registered tourist beds across

hotels, guest houses and houseboats. In addition, J&K is developing 75 new tourist destinations, 75 heritage/cultural sites, 75 Sufism/religious sites and 75 adventure treks/sites — potentially attracting tourists for all the four seasons.

According to a Government survey, J&K welcomed 7 lakh tourists in 1987, and this went down to a mere 6,000 three years later. This proves the sheer economic damage that the State suffered due to instability and mischievous propaganda of vested interests. Things improved a little post-1989, and unfortunately the region was embattled in the Kargil War in 1999. Things did take a turn for the better, and by 2010 — 30 years after 1980 — the number of tourist arrivals touched the 5-lakh mark, going on to show that despite some recovery, the State made no real progress in this area in 30 years due to the prevailing uncertainties and an environment of terror.

ACCORDING TO A GOVERNMENT SURVEY, J&K WELCOMED 7 LAKH TOURISTS IN 1987, AND THIS WENT DOWN TO A MERE 6,000 THREE YEARS LATER. THIS PROVES THE SHEER ECONOMIC DAMAGE THAT THE STATE SUFFERED DUE TO INSTABILITY AND MISCHIEVOUS PROPAGANDA OF VESTED INTERESTS.

There has also been a massive increase in the daily flights to Srinagar, which is today witnessing around 45–50 daily flights in summer and 35–37 flights in the winters. To complete a full circle, as many as 300 movies and web series were shot in J&K in two years (2022 and 2023) — a clear signal that the atmosphere was back to the pre-1989 days. In fact, here it is critical to mention the laudable and impactful steps that the Central and the UT Government have taken since 2019: the Prime Minister's Development Package — 2015 was accelerated and 53 projects pertaining to 15 ministries are being implemented at a cost of ₹58,477 crores in various sectors such as roads, power, health, education, tourism, agriculture, skill development and much more — out of these, 29 projects have been completed with many others in advanced stages of production.

A new Central Sector Scheme was notified in 2021 for the industrial development of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir, with an outlay of ₹28,400

crores. In addition, J&K has received investment applications of more than ₹54,000 crores, out of which projects worth more than ₹36,000 crores have been allotted industrial land. The construction work of 17,601 km of roads under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana was completed up to March 2022, and this has connected over 2,074 places. Two AIIMS, seven new medical colleges, two cancer institutes and 15 nursing colleges have been taken up and operationalised, along with reviving power projects for about 3,000 MW capacity.

Three major irrigation projects that include Ravi Canal (₹62 crore), third stage of Tral Lift Irrigation Scheme (₹45 crore) and the comprehensive flood management plan of river Jhelum and its tributaries — Phase I, costing ₹400 crores — have been completed. In addition, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir has carried out recruitment in the public sector from 2019 onwards, totalling nearly 30 thousand employments. Another 5.2 lakh persons are estimated to be employed through self-employment schemes from August 2019 up to June 2022. A hundred per cent saturation has also been achieved in 17 individual beneficiary-centric schemes, including Saubhagya, Ujala, Ujjwala and Indradhanush schemes. Therefore, things really began to look up, and the period from 2019 onwards is actually the golden period for the Valley and the UT of J&K.

That is, till the recent and most unfortunate and orchestrated attack that happened at one of the UT's most famous tourist destinations — Pahalgam. It was clear that the recent development of the region, and the overall environment of prosperity, did not go well with a neighbouring state which has an evil eye on J&K — and their frustration led to this desperate attempt to damage the economy and derail the progress being made by the local population. It has always been the people of the UT who have, today and in the past, remained the biggest sufferers and have paid a steep price for such senseless acts. It is my firm belief that the best is yet to come for the Valley and its people. Ultimately, the answer for J&K's growth and a bright future lies in the local Kashmiri's resolve and ability to recognise and call out the sinister agenda of external forces. They need to awaken and defeat these evil designs for their own good, and for this to happen — cooperating and trusting the local administration, which has always tried to ensure their safety and security, along with that of their future generations — is the need of the hour!

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

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In 2019, when the Government took the bold step of abolishing Article 370, and firmly conveyed its position — that enough is enough — J&K once again began an era of unprecedented economic and all-round progress. The improved overall environ-

ment and sentiment was first and foremost reflected through the tourist arrivals that broke all records. In 2021, 1.13 crore tourists visited the UT; 1.89 crore in 2022; this increased to 2.12 crores in 2023 and 2.36 crores in 2024. This has also resulted in many multinational and domestic hotel chains opening new properties in the UT, and the region currently offers 62,488 registered tourist beds across

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Indian envoy to UK calls on Pakistan to take 'off-ramp'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

India's response to Pakistan's original conflict escalation with the terrorist attacks in Pahalgam last month was "precise, targeted" and focussed solely on terror infrastructure but Pakistan has chosen to continue to escalate the matter instead of taking an "off-ramp" to end the crisis, the Indian High Commissioner to the UK has said. Vikram Doraiswami was interviewed by a series of UK media outlets on Thursday to present India's stance on the rising tensions between India and Pakistan. He told 'Sky News' that the international community can intervene by pointing out the opportunity for an off-ramp to Pakistan.

He also displayed an image live on air of US-designated terrorist Abdur Rauf leading prayers for the terrorists killed in Operation Sindoor, also presented during a briefing by Foreign Secretary Vikram Mistry in New Delhi.

"Everybody knows that for the last 30 years, Pakistan has used this (terrorism) as a means of sub-critical warfare against India," said Doraiswami. "If the international community really wants to be able



The Indian High Commissioner Vikram Doraiswami

fears a further escalation of conflict in the region, the envoy asserted that the "original escalation" is Pakistan-sponsored terror groups attacking and shooting civilians in Pahalgam on April 22. "Our response thereafter was precise, targeted, reasonable and moderate. It was focused principally and solely on terrorist infrastructure. We did not strike the Pakistani military establishment. We did not strike national infrastructure, and we made it abundantly clear... that the object of this exercise was clearly to avoid military escalation - a fact actually acknowledged in a left handed way, of course, by the Pakistani side in terms of their own official statements which said that the airspace hadn't been violated," said Doraiswami.

to look at this and worry about it, the simple solution is to tell Pakistan it has an opportunity for an off-ramp. These are things that the world should have com-

pelled Pakistan to do 30 years ago, and to compel them to implement their promises about taking down this infrastructure. It has not done so," he said. Asked if India

The High Commissioner was also pressed on media reports around Indian jets being allegedly shot down, claims that remain unsubstantiated.

Imran Khan's party files petition seeking his jail release

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Islamabad

Jailed former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan's party on Friday filed a petition in the High Court here seeking his release from jail, claiming a threat to his life due to the impact of the prolonged detention on his health and in view of the current situation with India.

Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf party, in a WhatsApp message, said that the party's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur approached the Islamabad High Court for the release of the party founder.

Khan, 72, has been incarcerated in Adiala Jail of Rawalpindi, the garrison city, since mid-2023 in connection with multiple cases.

"The Islamabad High Court has been approached for the release of Imran Khan. An application has been filed by Chief Minister KP Ali Amin," the party said.

"It has been requested that in view of the current war situation with India, for national harmony and solidarity, and due to the fear of a drone attack in Adiala Jail, he be immediately released on parole/probation."

The court has not set any date for the hearing of the plea.

Speaking to the media at the Islamabad High Court premises, Gandapur described the PTI founder as a leader of the Muslim Ummah (community) and expressed hope for justice.

Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf party, in a WhatsApp message, said that the party's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur approached the Islamabad High Court for the release of the party founder

He expressed concern about the lack of law and order in the country, stating that they have knocked on all doors seeking justice.

Gandapur argued in the petition that Khan's prolonged detention due to politically motivated cases is violating the basic rights of the PTI founder.

He stated that the Constitution provides a remedy for release on parole to avoid such detention. The petitioner further mentioned that there is a risk of health deterioration due to prolonged imprisonment.

We are at war with the terrorists, India states to US

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York

India is at war with the terrorists and will bring justice to victims of the Pahalgam attack by holding the "lowlifes, subhuman monsters" accountable, Indian Ambassador to the US Vinay Kwatra has said, underscoring that in no world would these terrorists be allowed a free pass.

"The frame and the template in which we look at is the terror template. April 22 was the most heinous terrorist act," Kwatra said in an interview to CNN on Thursday.

The interview comes as India ramps up its diplomatic offensive against Pakistan following the military confrontation triggered by the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack that had cross border linkages.

"It is nobody's case to say that these terrorists should be given a free pass, and that's precisely what we did the day before yesterday, held them accountable," Kwatra said and described India's action as "a very precise, calibrated, measured response to these terrorists."

"We are at war with the terrorists, and we will, as I said, bring justice to the victims and hold them accountable," he said answering a question if India is at war with Pakistan. "Our foremost objective in this was (to) hold these lowlifes, sub-human monsters accountable and bring justice to the victims."

India launched 'Operation Sindoor' on May 7, striking terror factories at nine locations in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in retaliation for the Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 civilians and for which The Resistance Front (TRF), a front for the UN-proscribed Pakistani terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba, had claimed responsibility.

Underscoring the fact that four terrorists backed by Pakistan killed 26 civilians, Kwatra said "in no world would you allow such terrorists to be given a free pass. And that is precisely what we did the day before yesterday."

"We carried out a very precise, calibrated, measured response to these terrorists, to their factories, to their integrated facilities, which they run out of Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. (We) took them out where they train them, they equip them, organise them, those are the facilities we took out."

"It is nobody's case to say that such terrorists should be given a free pass, wherever they are located."

He added that from a large number of Congressmen, Senators to the whole world, they all appreciate that India should respond and bring accountability for these terrorists and justice for the victims.

Kwatra asserted that the original escalation and the original breakout of ten-

sion happened on April 22, when four terrorists backed by Pakistan carried out "brutal, subhuman, monstrous kind of killings" of 26 civilians, including a Nepali national.

He said the terrorists killed the civilians on the basis of religion, identifying and killing "all non-Muslims."

"So what we did the day before yesterday was essentially our response to terror," Kwatra said, adding that India's response has been very measured, calibrated and proportionate.

Responding to a question on explosions being heard in Kashmir, Kwatra said Pakistan has again decided to stand with the terrorists. "Rather than take action against them, they are essentially lending them support," he said.

"We wouldn't be surprised if they are themselves involved in this, but that's what the message," which Pakistan is telling the world that it is with terrorists, it is not with the rest of the civilised world, the rest of humanity."

"Pakistan's belief lies in perpetrating these proxies of terror killings, brutal killings of innocent civilians," he said.

To a comment that Pakistan has denied involvement in the attacks, Kwatra said that "denial and obfuscation" has always been the first part of Pakistan's strategy.

"They have this unique characteristic where they assume responsibility of their past actions in future, not in the present moment," he said as he asked where was Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, who plotted the September 11 attacks in the US, found. The killer of American journalist Daniel Pearl or perpetrators of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks found?

Responding to a question, Kwatra said that with Operation Sindoor, "we, from our perspective, had brought a certain finality to it, but it was, of course, subject to whether Pakistan has brought finality to it. Pakistan chose to escalate it further. Now it's duty-bound for us to respond to that."

When asked how concerned should the world be that the tensions between India and Pakistan could escalate into a nuclear war, the Indian envoy said, "I think the world should be concerned about the fact that Pakistan's support to terrorism and terrorist activities continues."

"I think that's what the world should be concerned about. And I think that's what the world should tell Pakistan - to stop supporting terrorism. I think that's the crux of the question," he asserted.

When asked if he thinks it could get to the point of nuclear weapons, he said: "That's for you to ask Pakistan for that."

He also drew attention to what he called was "Pakistan's old habit of mis-information campaign."

US to stay out of war: Vance on India-Pakistan tensions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York

Amid escalating tensions between India and Pakistan, the US has said it is not going to get involved in a war that's "fundamentally none of our business."

While the US cannot control India and Pakistan, it can encourage the two nuclear-armed neighbours to de-escalate, Vice President J D Vance said in an interview with Fox News on Thursday.

"Look, we're concerned about any time nuclear powers collide and have a major conflict," Vance said when asked how concerned the Trump administration is about a potential nuclear war between India and Pakistan.

Vance quoted US President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio who have said that Washington wants the tensions to "de-escalate" as quickly as possible.

"We can't control these countries though. Fundamentally, India has its gripes with Pakistan. Pakistan has responded to India. What we can do is try to encourage these folks to de-escalate a little bit. But we're not going to get involved in the middle of war that's fundamentally none of our business and has nothing to do with America's ability to control it," the vice president said.

"America can't tell the Indians to lay down their arms. We can't tell the Pakistanis to lay down their arms. And so we're going to continue to pursue this thing through diplomatic channels. Our hope and our expectation is that this is not going to spiral into a broader regional war or, God forbid, a nuclear conflict, but sure, we're worried about these things."

"But I think the job of diplomacy, but also the job of cooler heads in India and Pakistan is to make sure this doesn't become a nuclear war. If it happened of course it would be disastrous. Right now



US Vice President J D Vance

we don't think that's going to happen," he said.

Vance, Second Lady Usha Vance and their three children were on their first official visit to India when terrorists killed 26 people, mostly tourists, in Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir on April 22.

Two weeks after the attack, India launched Operation Sindoor on Wednesday, targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. On Thursday night, India neutralised Pakistan military's attempt to hit military stations in Jammu, Pathankot, Udhampur and some other locations with missiles and drones as tensions soared between the two countries amid fears of a wider military conflict.

After the Indian military foiled the Pakistani attempts, the defence ministry said India remains "fully prepared to defend its sovereignty and ensure the safe-

ty of its people."

Earlier on Thursday, Secretary of State Rubio spoke separately with India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, emphasising the need for immediate de-escalation.

In his call with Jaishankar, Rubio expressed US support for direct dialogue between India and Pakistan and encouraged continued efforts to improve communications. He reiterated his condolences for the horrific terrorist attack in Pahalgam and reaffirmed the US' commitment to work with India in the fight against terrorism.

In his conversation with Sharif, Rubio reiterated his calls for Pakistan to take concrete steps to end any support for terrorist groups.

In a press briefing on Thursday, State Department Spokesperson Tammy Bruce

said Rubio underlined the need for de-escalation in his conversations with Jaishankar and Sharif.

"...At this moment in time, there is like one thing that has to stop, which is a back-and-forth and a continuation of this, and that is what we're focused on right now," she said.

The message from the Secretary of State and from the United States "is that the violence should stop, that military action, war, as we've seen in that region, certainly in the Middle East, has clearly for generations proven that it is not a solution because it never ends."

"There has to be a change in that regard. So obviously, when it comes to solving a problem, this administration has made itself clear, that war, the military, more violence is not a solution. Diplomacy is a solution, new ideas to stop generational violence and problems."

Asked if Rubio offered to mediate between the two countries, Bruce said, "We are not going to be speaking about the details. That is certainly our policy."

The US continues to urge India and Pakistan to work towards a responsible solution. Washington remains engaged with both governments at multiple levels, she said.

The US wants the perpetrators to be held accountable and are supportive of any efforts to that end, she added.

Bruce told reporters that Rubio underlined that the conflict should not escalate.

"Clearly this has been an issue for decades and... With what we saw over the last few weeks after the terrorist attack, it was not surprising but very, very disappointing. But... It should not escalate."

"And communication was fundamentally key, that there should be talks, that there should not be silence and that America obviously was in the centre of this in speaking with a variety of leaders of both countries over the last two days," Bruce said.

Pakistan says economic affairs ministry's X account hacked after post seeking loans

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Islamabad/New Delhi

Pakistan on Friday said that the X account of its ministry of economic affairs was hacked and an appeal was posted on it for more international loans to meet the "heavy losses" caused by the current tensions with India.

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting issued a 'FAKE TWEET ALERT', saying the account was "hacked".

An official also confirmed that the X account has been hacked, and "work was going to switch off the account".

The hacking led to a fake appeal by the Economic Affairs Division of the ministry,

calling for more loans and urging the international community to help defuse the tensions with India following the Pahalgam terror attack. The tensions caused the stock market in Pakistan to tumble.

"Government of Pakistan appeals to International Partners for more loans after heavy losses 'inflicted' by enemy. Amid escalating war and stocks crash, we urge international partners to help de-escalate. Nation urged to remain steadfast," the post on the account said.

Interestingly, 'inflicted' was misspelt in the post, leading to suspicion as official handling accounts seldom make such glaring mistakes.

The post came after the Pakistan Stock

Exchange fell by more than 6,000 points on Thursday. However, the market recovered on Friday and gained more than 1,000 points in the morning trading session.

The timing of the post was also intriguing as it coincided with a meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) executive board to decide on the next installment of a \$7 billion loan agreed last year.

Pakistan is expected to get more than \$2 billion as part of the second tranche of the loans and a new loan which the fund approved to combat the impact of environmental changes. Earlier, India's Press Information Bureau had took a swipe at the fashion the economic affairs division of Pakistan was seeking alms.

Nepal's human rights group protests outside Indian, Pakistan embassies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kathmandu

Nepalese human rights group staged demonstrations outside the Indian and Pakistani embassies here on Friday, urging both nations to end ongoing tensions and promote peace in South Asia.

The Human Rights and Peace Society organised the protests, led by activist Krishna Pahadi and HURPES president Renuka Paudel.

The group condemned terrorism and extremism, emphasising that peace is the only path forward for the region.

Demonstrators carried placards with slogans such as, "No one will win in war, only humanity gets defeated," "Terrorism is deplorable in all times," "In peace all will win," and "Let's make South Asia a war-free zone."

The activists also raised concerns over specific issues, with slogans questioning the suspension of the Indus Water Treaty and Pakistan's protection of those involved in the Pahalgam terror attack.

"How lawful to suspend the Sindhu Water Agreement?" "Why did Pakistan protect those who attacked tourists in Pahalgam?" and "Why Pakistan, who itself is victim of terrorism and extremism is harboring terrorism?" were the other slogans the placards were displaying. A memorandum addressed to the Indian government was handed over to Indian Embassy officials in Kathmandu, while a similar letter for Pakistan was sent via email after embassy officials declined to accept it, the HURPES said in a press release.

Kim supervised missile tests simulating nuclear strikes: North Korea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised tests of short-range ballistic missile systems that simulated nuclear counterstrikes against US and South Korean forces, state media said Friday, as the North continued to blame its rivals for escalating tensions through their joint military exercises.

The report came a day after South Korea's military detected multiple launches from North Korea's eastern coast and assessed that the tests could also be related to the country's weapons exports to Russia during its war in Ukraine.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said Thursday's tests involved a mobile ballistic missile system apparently modelled after Russia's Iskander, as well as 600-millimetre multiple rocket launchers that South Korean officials classify as ballistic due to their self-

propulsion and guided flight. Both are part of a growing lineup of weapons systems that the North says could be armed with "tactical" nuclear weapons for battlefield use. KCNA said the tests were intended to train military units operating missile and rocket systems to more effectively execute attacks under the North's nuclear weapons control system and ensure a swift response to a nuclear crisis.

The agency criticised the United States and its "vassal states" for expanding joint military exercises on and around the Korean Peninsula, which the North claims are preparations for nuclear war, and said Thursday's launches demonstrated the "rapid counteraction posture" of its forces.

Kim stressed the need to strengthen the role of his nuclear forces in both deterring and fighting war, and called for continued efforts to improve combat readiness and precision strike capabilities, KCNA said. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said



multiple missiles of various types were launched from the area around the eastern port city of Wonsan on Thursday from about 8:10 to 9:20 am, with the farthest travelling about 800 kilometres. Lee Sung Joon, spokesperson for the Joint Chiefs, said in a briefing the North Korean launches were possibly intended to test the performance of weapons it plans to export, as the country continues to send military equipment and troops to fuel Russia's warfighting against Ukraine.

Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani told reporters that none of the North Korean missiles reached Japan's exclusive economic zone and there was no damage to vessels or aircraft in the area.

It was the North's first known ballistic activity since March 10, when it fired several ballistic missiles hours after US and South Korean troops began an annual combined military exercise, and the country's sixth launch event of the year.

Russia holds Victory Day parade for 80th anniversary

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Moscow

Russia marked the 80th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II with a massive military parade on Red Square on Friday attended by President Vladimir Putin and foreign leaders, including Chinese President Xi Jinping and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Victory Day, which is celebrated in Russia on May 9, is the country's most important secular holiday.

The parade and other ceremonies underline Moscow's efforts to project its global power and cement the alliances it has forged while seeking a counterbalance to the West amid the conflict in Ukraine that has dragged into a fourth year.

World War II is a rare event in the nation's divisive history under Communist rule that is revered by all political groups, and the Kremlin has used that sentiment to encourage national pride and underline Russia's position as a global power.

The Soviet Union lost 27 million people in what it calls the Great Patriotic War in 1941-45, an enormous sacrifice that left a deep scar in the national psyche.

Speaking at the parade, Putin hailed Russian troops fighting in Ukraine, saying that "we are proud of their courage and determination, their spiritual force that always has brought us victory."

The parade featured over 11,500 troops and more than 180 military vehicles, including tanks, armoured infantry

vehicles and artillery used on the battlefield in Ukraine. As a reminder of Russia's nuclear might, launchers for the Yars nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles rolled across Red Square.

Fighter jets of Russian air force's aerobatic teams flew by in close formation followed by jets that trailed smoke in the colours of the national flag.

After the show, Putin shook hands with Russian military officers who led the troops on Red Square. He also talked to a group of medal-bedecked senior North Korean officers who watched the parade, hugging one of them.

Last month, Putin thanked North Korea for fighting alongside Russian troops against Ukrainian forces and hailed their sacrifices as Pyongyang confirmed its deployment for the first time. The Russian and North Korean statements that underlined their expanding military partnerships came after Russia said that its troops have fully reclaimed the Kursk region that Ukrainian forces seized in a



Military troops in Red Square before the Victory Day military parade in Moscow in Russia

surprise incursion last year. Festivities this year were overshadowed by Ukrainian drone attacks targeting Moscow and severe disruptions at the capital's airports.

Russian flag carrier Aeroflot on Wednesday morning cancelled more than 100 flights to and from Moscow, and delayed over 140 others as the military were repelling repeated Ukrainian drone attacks on the capital.

Russian authorities have tightened security ahead of the parade and cellphone internet outages have been reported amid electronic countermeasures aimed at foiling more potential drone attacks. Putin had declared a unilateral 72-hour ceasefire starting May 7 to coincide with the Victory Day celebrations, but warned that Russian troops will

retaliate to any attacks.

Moscow has been reluctant to accept a U.S.-proposed 30-day truce that Ukraine has accepted, linking it to a halt in Western arms supplies to Ukraine and Kyiv's mobilisation effort, conditions Ukraine and its Western allies have rejected.

Ukrainian authorities reported scores of Russian strikes on Friday that killed at least two people in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions and damaged buildings. As the Red Square parade and other festivities unfolded in Moscow, dozens of European officials were meeting in Lviv, in western Ukraine, to endorse the creation of a special tribunal tasked to prosecute Russian officials accused of war crimes.

Public Notice: My Client VIMAL KUMAR son of Late Shri Prabhoo Dayal, resident of H.No. IV/3500, Upper Ground Floor, Plot No. 87, Dr. Ambedkar, Gali No. 10, Vishwas Nagar, Shahdara, Delhi-110032 declare that my Client is the sole and absolute owner of the said property. There is no other legal heir or claimant to this property in any manner whatsoever.

Public Notice: Following properties are available for immediate sale: 1. Freehold property, measuring 300 sq. yards, Ground Floor, Gulmohar Park, fully constructed along with 28% undivided night/share in the land underneath. 2. Basement, measuring 300 sq. yards, located in Gulmohar Park, New Delhi comprising of large flat along with utilities along with 12% undivided and indivisible rights in the land underneath.

Public Notice: Notice is hereby given on behalf of Mr. Rakesh Pandey who is purchasing the Property No. S.E.25, area measuring 297.70 Sq. Meters, situated at Shastri Nagar, Ghaziabad, U.P., and this property was owned by Mr. S.C. Goyal (Sushil Chand Goyal) through Freehold Deed executed by GDA in favour of him Regd. sub Document No. 470, Book No. 1, Volume No. 24, on pages 208-212, registered on dated 27.12.2008 (SRO-Ghaziabad-V). Further upon demise of Sushil Chand Goyal his legal heirs namely Mr. Chand Goyal & Mr. Mohit Goyal mutate the name through Mutation Letter dated 21.11.2014 in respect of said property. Now, Mr. Chand Goyal & Mr. Mohit Goyal intending to sell the said property, Mr. Rakesh Pandey is intend to mortgage against the financial assistance from Axis Finance Limited. To comply the requirements of BANK/NFC, we give this public notice that if any person(s) having any objection regarding ownership and/or creating mortgage of the said property is/are hereby requested to intimate in writing to the undersigned about his objections within 10 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances. Laxmi Legal LLP, Plot No. 136, (Basement) Uday Park, New Delhi-110049, Contact # 011-40046316

Public Notice: Rattan Lal Raina, S/o Late Shri A.N. Raina, R/o House No. 45, Sector 1A, South Extension, Tikuda Nagar, Jammu (J&K), through my duly authorized Power of Attorney holder Shri Hira Lal Dasi, S/o Late Shri Mohan Lal Dasi, R/o 206-B, Pocket B, Mayur Vihar, Phase - III, East Delhi (hereinafter referred to as "the Applicant"). That I am the legal heir and representative of my late sister Vijay Raina, in whose name the following properties were allotted by M/s Ansal Housing Limited, formerly known as M/s Ansal Housing & Construction Limited. 1. Plot No. C-F-289, Area 150 Sq. Yds, Golf Link - 1, Greater Noida. 2. Plot No. C-E-124, Area 239 Sq. Yds, Golf Link - 1, Greater Noida. 3. Plot No. B0-32, Area 299 Sq. Yds, Golf Link - 2, Greater Noida. 4. Plot No. A-E-044, Area 239 Sq. Yds, Golf Link - 2, Greater Noida. 5. Flat No. A-902, Neel Padam - 1, Sector - 5, Vaishali, Ghaziabad, U.P. That the original allotment letters, payment receipts, and all other related documents pertaining to the above properties have been inadvertently lost/misplaced while in transit from the residence of my GPA holder Shri Hira Lal Dasi to the office of M/s Ansal Housing Limited. If found, please contact, 9810866407.

Public Notice: Be it known to the public at large that my client Mrs. Panchi W/o Mr. Ram Prasad R/O E-131, Vishwakarma Colony, M.B. Road, Lal Kuan, Jaitpur, South Delhi, Delhi-110044 has disowned, debarred, and disinherited his son namely Mr. Preetam Singh, and all his movable and immovable properties, and my client shall not be responsible for any immoral or moral activities from them i.e., Mr. Preetam Singh, in present or future from today if anybody deals with them, will do so at their own risk, cost and consequences and my client shall not be responsible in this regard in any manner and my client further declares that my client shall not be liable for any act or deed done by them i.e., Mr. Preetam Singh at their above-said residence or anywhere, in any manner whatsoever.

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Public Notice: This is to inform to general public that my clients Sh. Balwinder Singh S/o Jinderjit Singh and Smt. Rajkaur Kaur W/o Sh. Balwinder Singh R/O WZ B-53, Punjabi Market, Vishnu Garden Part-I, West Delhi, Delhi-110018 hereby declare that they have disowned and disinherited their son Sh. Parvinder Singh and their daughter-in-law Mrs. Neha from all their immovable and movable properties and also sever all their relations from their said son and his wife. Any person dealing with him or his wife shall be doing so at his own risk, consequences and cost, for which my clients will not be responsible in any manner.

Public Notice: This is to inform to you that Sh. Shri Pal Bhat is and Mr. Rajeshwar Dewji is the owner of Plot No. 120-B, Block-B, Sec-51 Noida Gautam Buddha Nagar, UP that Mr. Ashutosh Kacker S/O S.K. Kacker R/O Directors Bungalow New Delhi executed a General Power of Attorney in favour of Dr. S.K. Kacker Dated-13 Nov 1992 has lost any where. If anyone find this Original Document or have any objection regarding this document kindly inform me on my given mobile number 9911004142 within 7 days from the date of the notice.

Public Notice: Be it known to all that my client [M. R. SAMEE DEEN S/o Sh. Kapoor and [M. HOOR BANU W/o Sh. Samee Deen both R/o E-73, Gali No. 3, Subahar Vihar, North Concha, Delhi-110053, have disowned their son and daughter-in-law namely "IMRAN IDRIS" and "GULAFSHA KHATOON" respectively and severed all their relations social and financial with them due to their disobedience. They have debarred them from inheriting their properties movable and immovable. They shall not be responsible for any of their acts, deeds and things. Anybody dealing with them shall be doing so at his/her own risk and costs.

Public Notice: This is to inform the Public at large that Smt. Sudeeha Sengupta W/o. Sh. Ashish Sengupta and Sh. Arghya Sengupta S/o. Smt. Sudeeha Sengupta are presently the absolute joint Title Holders in possession of "Entire First Floor of Freehold Built Up Residential Property Bearing Plot No. 313, Block - A, Defence Colony, New Delhi measuring 217.00 sq. yards", hereinafter referred to as "Schedule Property" vide Sale Deed dated 16.02.2016 registered as Regn. No. 1607, Book No. 1, Vol. No. 71, pp. 167-172 on 21.06.2016 in the Office of the Sub Registrar - (V), Defence Colony, New Delhi. That the erstwhile Title Holders of the Schedule Plot, i.e. "Plot No. A-313, Defence Colony, New Delhi", had lost / misplaced the original title deeds and other documents pertaining to the Schedule Plot, which are (i) Power of Attorney executed by Sh. Fauji Singh in favour of Sh. Sewa Singh, (ii) Lease Deed dated 23.04.1977 (iii) Transfer Letter dated 30.04.1977 (iv) Death Certificate of Sh. Fauji Singh, (v) Deed of Relinquishment dated 08.09.1992, (vi) Deed of Relinquishment dated 23.12.1995, (vii) Mutation Letter (MCD) dated 03.12.1995, (viii) Conveyance Deed dated 11.12.1997, (ix) Sanction for Construction Letter dated 04.01.1998 and (x) Completion Cum Occupancy Certificate, which remain lost / misplaced / untraceable as on date and in lieu of which Information Report dated 09.05.2025 from Delhi. That the erstwhile Title Holders of the Schedule Property are desirous to alienate the Schedule Property to intending Purchaser(s), who have applied for a housing loan with the State Bank of India, Home Loan Centre, South Extension, Part - I, New Delhi (Branch Code - 16683). Thus, this notice is issued to the Public at large, i.e. any Person(s), Company(ies), Authority(ies), Society(ies), Organisation(s), Financial Institution(s), Bank(s), HUF(s) etc. having any knowledge, custody or possession of the above mentioned, lost, misplaced or otherwise having any claims, rights, title, interests, possession etc. in the Schedule Property Schedule Plot, by way of Ownership, Possession, Inheritance, Sale, Mortgage, Exchange, Charge, Lien, Gift, Trust, Encumbrance etc., may come forward with supporting documents, to be delivered to the undersigned within 15 days from the date of this Publication or to sbi.16683@sbi.co.in, post expiration of which, any claim(s) or objection(s), if raised or received, shall be treated as null & void and is waived. 2822896120, Joti Kashyap, Advocate Address: Chamber No. 6, Block-C, Karikardoma Court, New Delhi-110032, Contact: +91 99716 26467

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TRAI recommends spectrum fee for satcom operators

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Telecom regulator TRAI on Friday released its recommendations on pricing of spectrum to be given for satellite-based internet services, suggesting a levy of 4 per cent of annual revenues as fee on operators like Elon Musk's Starlink. Operators offering services in urban areas would have to shell out an additional ₹500 per subscribers annually, TRAI said in its recommendations to the Department of Telecommunications (DoT). No additional levy would be applicable for services in rural areas.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) recommended that satellite broadband spectrum be allotted for five years, which can be extended by another two years. The 4 per cent of adjusted gross revenue (AGR) spectrum charge would be for both geostationary orbit (GSO) and NGSO (non-Geostationary orbit) opera-

tors. These would be subject to a minimum annual spectrum charge of ₹3,500 per MHz. Releasing the recommendations, TRAI chairman Anil Kumar Lahoti said satcom services once available can play a vital role in taking connectivity to under-served areas where telecom networks are not available. They also play a critical role in disasters, in rescue and relief operations.

Starlink earlier this week got a Letter of Intent (LoI) for the start of its services. It now has to procure a license before starting services in India.

SpaceX, the aerospace company led by Elon Musk, has already tied up with rivals Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel to bring Starlink's broadband internet services to India. Both Indian firms will offer Starlink equipment through their network and also support customer installation and activation on devices.

Over the past few months, rivals Jio and Airtel had come together to demand an



auction for awarding spectrum for satellite services in India. Musk on the other hand lobbied for administrative allocation as per international norm. In October last year, the government sided with Musk on the issue of allocating airwaves, to be used for offering low latency internet services using satellite, at a pre-decided price through administrative route.

Both Jio, India's largest wireless carrier, and Airtel, the No 2 player in the world's most-populous nation, where data usage is rapidly rising, feared lower entry cost will chip away some of their subscriber base.

Based on the recommendations of TRAI, the DoT would now go to the Cabinet for pricing of satellite spectrum and once approved any satcom wanting to offer services in India can apply.

Starlink is the world's largest Low-Earth-Orbit (LEO) constellation operated by SpaceX. Bharti already partners with Eutelsat OneWeb, the second largest LEO

constellation. Similarly, Jio Platforms has a joint venture with SES, a leading global satellite-based content connectivity solutions provider.

Jio Space Technology Ltd, where Jio holds 51 per cent and SES 49 per cent, is to use multi-orbit space networks that is a combination of geostationary (GEO) and medium earth orbit (MEO) satellite constellations capable of delivering multi-giga-bit links and capacity to enterprises, mobile backhaul and retail customers across the length and breadth of India and neighbouring regions.

Eutelsat OneWeb, in which Airtel is the single-largest shareholder with a 21.2 per cent share, and Jio's joint venture with SES has already secured GMPCS licenses and IN-SPACe approvals.

Starlink currently operates over 6,000 LEO satellites, while Amazon's Kuiper project plans to deploy 3,236 satellites starting in early 2025.

India, New Zealand FTA talks conclude

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The five-day talks between India and New Zealand for a proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA), aimed at boosting bilateral trade and investment, will conclude on Friday, an official said.

After a gap of about ten years, the two countries on March 16, 2025 announced resumption of negotiations for the FTA.

"The first round of negotiations started on May 5 here," the official said.

India and New Zealand began negotiating the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) in April 2010 to boost trade in goods, services, and investment. However, after ten rounds of discussions, the talks stalled in February 2015. With bilateral trade continuing to grow steadily, surpassing \$1 billion during April-January 2025, the FTA would help unlock new avenues for businesses and consumers.

According to the think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), a major challenge in the renewed talks will be the disparity in tariff structures.

New Zealand's average import tariff is only 2.3 per cent, with over half of its tariff lines already duty-free, meaning Indian goods already have substantial access to its market. In contrast, India's average tariff stands at 17.8 per cent, meaning it

would have to make significant reductions, making a traditional FTA less attractive for India. "As talks resume, both countries will need to find common ground on these issues to move forward successfully," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

Earlier New Zealand has demanded greater access to India's dairy market, which India has resisted to protect its domestic industry that supports millions of farmers.

Currently, India's dairy imports from New Zealand are minimal (around \$0.57 million). The country has not given duty concessions in the sector in any of its trade pacts. New Zealand may look for duty concessions on products like meat and wine. The bilateral trade between the two countries stood at \$873.4 million (exports \$538.33 million and imports \$335 million) in 2023-24 as against \$1.02 billion in 2022-23. India's key goods exports to New Zealand include clothing, fabrics, and home textiles; medicines and medical supplies; refined petrol; agricultural equipment and machinery such as tractors and irrigation tools; auto; iron and steel; paper products; electronics; shrimps; diamonds; and basmati rice.

The main imports are agricultural goods, minerals, apples, kiwifruit, meat products such as lamb, mutton, milk albu-

min, lactose syrup, coking coal, logs and sawn timber, wool, and scrap metals.

In FY24, India's services exports to New Zealand stood at \$214.1 million, while New Zealand's services exports to India totalled \$456.5 million.

India's key services exports include IT and software services, provided by companies such as Infosys and HCL, along with telecommunications services to support New Zealand's digital infrastructure.

India also exports healthcare services, including medical tourism, pharmaceutical research, and telemedicine. Financial services are another important area, with Indian banks and fintech companies offering digital payment solutions.

New Zealand's services exports to India are led by education services, with thousands of Indian students pursuing higher education in New Zealand.

Tourism services are also significant, as Indian tourists are drawn to New Zealand's natural landscapes and adventure activities.

New Zealand provides fintech services, offering digital solutions to India's financial sector, and specialised aviation training programmes for pilots and cabin crew.

Additionally, New Zealand firms offer niche IT services such as data analytics and automation solutions.

India imposes anti-dumping duty imported solar glass

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India has imposed an anti-dumping duty of up to \$664 per tonne on imports of a certain type of solar glass from China and Vietnam for five years in a bid to protect domestic manufacturers from cheap imports from these two countries, according to a government notification. The duty was imposed after the commerce ministry's investigation arm Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) recommended for the same after conducting a detailed probe on the dumping of 'Textured Toughened (Tempered) Coated and Uncoated Glass' from China and Vietnam.

Commonly used in solar panels, these glasses are also referred to as Solar Glass, Low Iron Solar Glass, Solar PV Glass, High Transmission Photovoltaic Glass, and Tempered Low Iron Patterned Solar Glass. It has concluded in its findings that there is a substantial increase in the volume of dumped imports of the glass from these countries in absolute and relative terms. "The anti-dumping duty imposed under this notification shall be effective for a period of five years from the date of imposition of the provisional anti-dumping duty, that is, December 4, 2024, unless

revoked, amended or superseded earlier," the finance ministry said in a notification.

The imposed duty will be in the range of \$570 per tonne and \$664 per tonne. The DGTR conducted the probe following applications regarding the same from Borosil Renewables Ltd on behalf of the domestic industry.

In a BSE filing, Borosil has hailed the decision and said that it will encourage rapid and significant growth in domestic manufacturing of solar glass.

Anti-dumping probes are conducted by countries to determine whether domestic industries have been hurt because of a surge in cheap imports.

As a countermeasure, they impose these duties under the multilateral regime of the Geneva-based World Trade Organization (WTO). Both India and China are members of the multilateral organisations, which deals with global trade norms.

The duty is aimed at ensuring fair trading practices and creating a level-playing field for domestic producers vis-a-vis foreign producers and exporters.

India has already imposed anti-dumping duty on several products to tackle cheap imports from various countries, including China.

Britannia Q4 profit rises 4.2 pc sales up 9 pc at Rs 4,375.6 cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Bakery food company Britannia Industries Ltd has reported a 4.2 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to ₹559.13 crore for the March quarter of FY25, despite subdued demand and a challenging operating environment. The company had posted a net profit of ₹536.61 crore in the same quarter a year ago, according to a late-night regulatory filing on Thursday by Britannia Industries.

Britannia Industries' revenue from the product sales rose 9 per cent to ₹4,375.57.30 crore in the March quarter. Its revenue from the operation increased 8.9 per cent to ₹4,432.19 crore in the March quarter from ₹4,069.36 crore in the corresponding period of the previous year.

Commenting on the results, Vice Chairman & Managing Director Varun Berry said, "With a high single-digit value growth of 9 per cent during the last quarter of the year amidst a tight consumption scenario, the performance underscores our resilience in a challenging operating environment."

No need for panic buying: Oil firms assure of fuel stocks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), the nation's largest oil firm, on Friday said ample stocks of petrol, diesel and cooking gas LPG are available in the country and there is no need for panic buying of fuel.

The statement comes after social media was flooded with posts and videos showing people queuing at petrol pumps to stock fuel as tensions between India and Pakistan escalated. "Indian Oil has ample fuel stocks across the country and our supply lines are operating smoothly," IOC said in a post on X. "There is no need for panic buying, fuel and LPG are readily available at all our outlets."

Panic buying was mostly witnessed in states bordering Pakistan. Several towns in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab enforced blackouts after Pakistan's armed forces launched multiple attacks using drones and other munitions along the entire western border on the intervening night of May 8-9. The Indian Army said the attacks were "effectively repulsed".

These had led to a fear of escalation in

tension and panic buying.

"Help us serve you better by staying calm and avoiding unnecessary rush. This will keep our supply lines running seamlessly and ensure uninterrupted fuel access for all," IOC said.

India on Wednesday struck at nine sites in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Pakistan, its deepest strikes inside Pakistan in decades, in retaliation for a deadly terrorist attack two weeks before. Thereafter, Pakistan attempted to unleash drones and missiles at Indian military targets in more than a dozen cities and towns, many of them home to air force bases. IOC advised the citizens to stay calm and avoid unnecessary rush, which will help the company in keeping their supply lines running seamlessly and ensure uninterrupted fuel access for all. Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) in a statement assured that sufficient petrol, diesel, CNG, and LPG are available across its vast nationwide network. "All BPCL fuel stations and LPG distributors across its nationwide network are operating smoothly and are fully equipped to meet the energy needs of consumers," it said.

Booking platforms halt offerings to Turkey, Azerbaijan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Amid escalating tensions with Pakistan, various online booking platforms on Friday announced suspension of new travel offerings to countries, including Turkey and Azerbaijan for their "support" to Pakistan and advised customers to avoid "non-essential" travel to these destinations, while urging Indians to exercise "utmost caution" before planning trips to sensitive regions.

Cox & Kings said it has decided to temporarily pause all new travel offerings to Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Turkey.

"In light of recent developments, we have decided to pause all new travel offerings to Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Turkey. This decision is driven by our commitment to uphold principles that matter deeply to us and the people of our country. We also advise Indian travellers to exercise discretion and avoid any non-essential travel to these destinations until there is greater clarity and alignment in the broader geopolitical environment," said Karan Agarwal, Director, Cox & Kings.

"Travel Advisory — Following the Pahalgam attack and escalating tensions between India & Pakistan, travellers are



urged to stay aware. As Turkey & Azerbaijan have shown support for Pakistan, we strongly recommend visiting only if absolutely necessary," EaseMyTrip said in a post on X, formerly Twitter, on Thursday evening. EaseMyTrip Founder and Chairman Nishant Pitti also took to X, saying he was "deeply concerned" by the recent developments and advising all its customers to exercise utmost caution and stay updated on official travel advisories

before planning trips to sensitive regions.

Travomint said the company has suspended the sale of all travel packages to Turkey and Azerbaijan to support Indians' call for boycotting these two countries.

"Due to the escalating tensions with Pakistan and countries like Turkey and Azerbaijan supporting it, we at Travomint have taken a firm and responsible stand. We have decided to support the Indians' call for boycotting Turkey and Azerbaijan.

With immediate effect, Travomint has suspended the sale of all travel packages to these countries," Travomint Chairman and CEO Alok K Singh said in a statement.

In addition to this, he said, no cancellation fees will be charged on existing bookings to Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Emergency flight bookings will be available in case of any emergency or urgent need, Singh said.

Meanwhile, Vice President of Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Association of India (FHRAI) and Hotel And Restaurant Association (Western India) - HRAWI spokesperson Pradeep Shetty shared that there have been cancellations for hotels in states including Rajasthan, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, among others.

"There are cancellations... We are observing the situation closely," he told PTI. India on Wednesday carried out strikes on nine sites in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Pakistan, marking its deepest strikes inside Pakistan in decades, in retaliation for a deadly terrorist attack two weeks before. Thereafter, Pakistan attempted to unleash drones and missiles at Indian military targets in more than a dozen cities and towns, many of them home to air force bases.

Trade unions ready for May 20 strike but will review situation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Central trade unions on Friday said they are ready for the workers' nation-wide strike scheduled on May 20, but will review the evolving situation in the country due to escalating tensions between India and Pakistan.

A joint platform of central trade unions and independent sectoral federations said in a statement that preparations on general strike on May 20 is determinedly progressing and situation will be reviewed again on May 15 amid tension at Indo-Pak border.

"We call upon all workers to be in the front to maintain the unity and harmony among the masses," the statement said. If further said that the members of the platform met on Thursday and reviewed the preparations for the scheduled nation-wide general strike. The members also condemned unequivocally the Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 civilians were killed. It was resolved that the central trade unions will meet again on 15th May to review the situation as it evolves further, it said. The platform has ten central trade unions on board, including INTUC, AITUC, HMS, CITU, AIUTUC, TUCC, SEWA, AICTTU, LPE, and UTUC.

Rupee closes at 85.41 against US dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

The rupee pared its initial losses and settled for the day higher by 17 paise at 85.41 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, as likely intervention by the Reserve Bank of India helped contain excess depreciation of the rupee.

Forex traders said the rupee opened on a weak note on the escalation of hostility between India and Pakistan, however, RBI intervened to prevent major weakness.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.88 and moved between the intra-day high of 85.32 and the low of 85.88 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 85.41 (provisional), registering a gain of 17 paise over its previous closing level.

On Thursday, the rupee saw its steepest single-day fall in more than two-and-a-half years and settled 81 paise lower at 85.58 against the US dollar on Thursday, weighed down by heightened geopolitical tensions between India and Pakistan. "Indian rupee opened weak on Friday amid flaring up of geopolitical tensions across the border. Weak domestic markets and a rise in crude oil prices also weighed on the rupee."

"However, the domestic currency recovered in the latter half of the day on reports of selling of dollars by the Reserve Bank of India as well as a correction in the US dollar index," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan.

On the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday, India neutralised the Pakistan military's attempt to hit military



stations in Jammu, Pathankot, Udhampur and some other locations with missiles and drones.

Pakistan's armed forces launched multiple attacks using drones and other munitions along the entire western border on the intervening night of May 8-9, which were "effectively repulsed", the Indian Army said on Friday. Pakistani troops also resorted to "numerous ceasefire violations" along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir, the Indian Army said in an early morning post on X.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading lower by 0.26 per cent at 100.38.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 1.80 per cent to USD 63.97 per barrel in futures trade.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias as the geopolitical tensions between India and Pakistan may continue to weigh on the domestic unit. Rising crude oil prices and risk aversion in the domestic markets may further pressurise the rupee."

"However, FII inflows may support the rupee at lower levels. Any de-escalation of tensions over the weekend may also support the rupee at lower levels," Choudhary added. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 880.34 points, or 1.10 per cent, to close at 79,454.47, while the Nifty fell 265.80 points or 1.10 per cent to settle at 24,008.00. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 2,007.96 crore on a net basis on Thursday, according to exchange data.

SBI sells stake in Yes Bank to Sumitomo corporation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Hong Kong

State Bank of India (SBI) and seven other lenders on Friday announced selling 20 per cent of their combined stakes in Yes Bank to Japan's Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation (SMBC) for a consideration of Rs 13,483 crore, making it the largest cross-border investment in the Indian banking sector.

Following completion of the transaction, SMBC will become the single largest shareholder of Mumbai-based Yes Bank.

Of the 20 per cent stake, SBI would dilute 13.19 per cent stake in Yes Bank in favour of SMBC for a consideration of Rs 8,889 crore, while 6.81 per cent shareholding will be offloaded by seven other lenders -- Axis Bank, Bandhan Bank, Federal Bank, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, IDFC First Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank -- for about Rs 4,594 crore. SBI and the seven investor lenders had invested in the bank as part of the YES Bank Reconstruction Scheme in March 2020. The share sale is proposed to take place at a price of Rs 21.50 per equity share, it said.

The executive committee of the central board (ECCB) of the bank in the meeting has accorded approval to divest 413.44 crore shares or equivalent to 13.19 per cent stake in Yes Bank for a consideration of Rs 8,888.97 crore, SBI said in a regulatory filing.

SBI, which currently holds 24 per cent stake in Yes Bank, will be left with a little over 10 per cent stake after the dilution.

Among other lenders, HDFC Bank had 2.75 per cent, ICICI Bank 2.39 per cent, Kotak Mahindra Bank 1.21 per cent, Axis Bank 1.01 per cent, IDFC First Bank 0.92 per cent, Federal Bank 0.76 per cent and Bandhan Bank 0.70 per cent as on March 31, 2025.

"This transaction is the largest cross-border investment in the Indian banking sector...The transaction is a significant milestone to drive YES Bank's next phase of growth, profitability and value creation and we expect to leverage SMBC's global expertise in this phase," Yes Bank said in a separate filing.

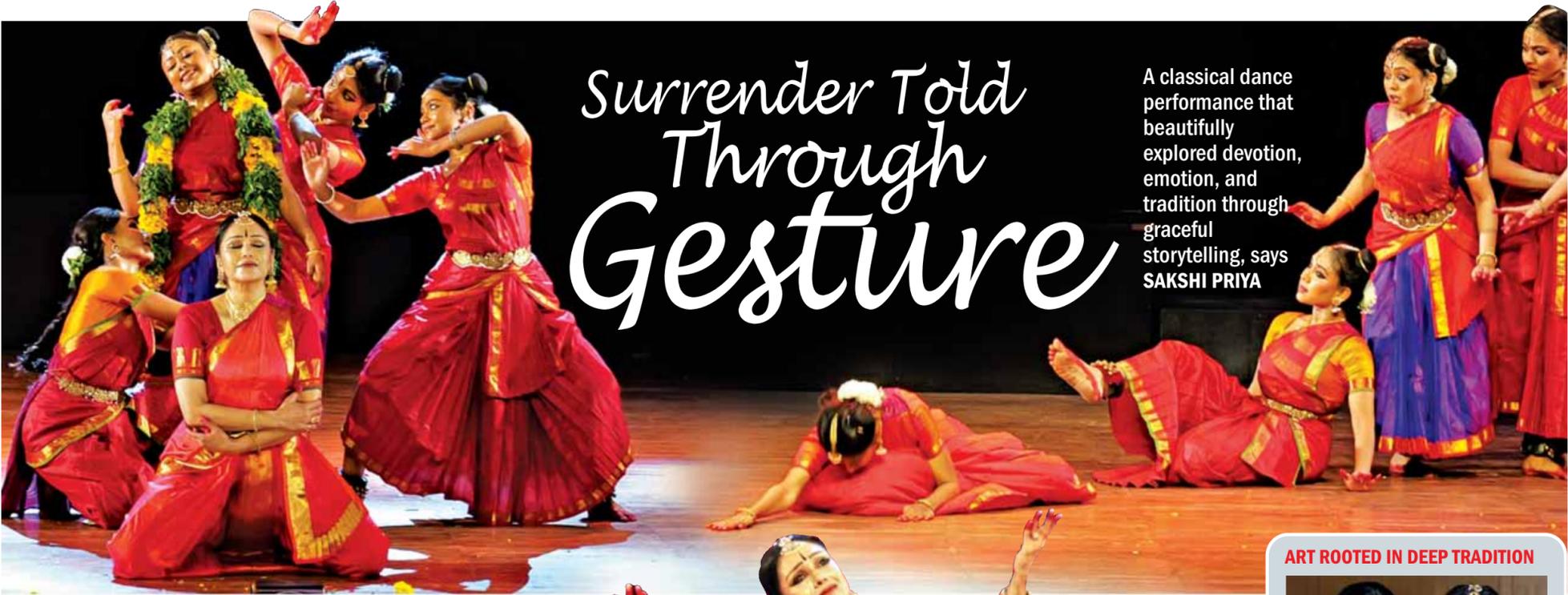
The transaction is subject to the necessary regulatory and statutory approvals including from the Reserve Bank of India and Competition Commission of India and will be subject to customary closing conditions, it said.

SMBC is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group, Inc (SMFG). SMFG is the second largest banking group in Japan with total assets of USD 2 trillion as of December 2024 with strong global presence.

SMBC is among the leading foreign banks in India and SMFG's wholly-owned subsidiary SMFG India Credit Company Limited is among the largest diversified NBFCs in India.

Surrender Told Through Gesture

A classical dance performance that beautifully explored devotion, emotion, and tradition through graceful storytelling, says SAKSHI PRIYA



To witness true devotion is to see the soul dance and in this performance, the dancer became the voice of Andalus's longing. HCL Concerts' recent presentation of **Maalyada — Andalus's Sacred Garland** was an experience that left the audience quietly moved.

Choreographed by Rama Vaidyanathan and based on *Maalyada*, *The Sacred Garland*, the book by Jeysundhar D, the work drew from Andalus's *Thiruppavai* and was accompanied by live music composed by Sudha Raghuraman. From the first movement, an emotional thread work through the performance. It avoided flourish and showmanship, focusing instead on a sincere portrayal of devotion. The approach resonated deeply, creating a mood that stayed well beyond the final curtain.

Nine Pathways to Bhakti

The choreography followed *Nava Vidha Bhakti* — the nine traditional forms of devotion, with coherence and emotional precision. Rama Vaidyanathan shared the stage with four of her disciples: Sayani Chakraborty, Reshika Sivakumar, Vaishnavi Dhole, and Shubhamani Chandrashekar. Together, they built a rhythm of gesture and meaning that gave shape to Andalus's spiritual longing.

The journey began with *Shravanam*, the act of listening. Each gesture was attentive, almost reverential. In *Smaranam*, expressions carried a quiet ache, recalling Krishna with intimacy. *Sankeethanam* brought a sense of lyrical energy, measured and full of clarity. *Pada Sevanam* offered one of the most touching moments of the evening. The portrayal of Andalus at Krishna's feet carried a

stillness that seemed to hold time. In *Sakhyam*, devotion as friendship was expressed with gentle warmth, while *Dasyaminvoket* episodes from Krishna's life as the protector, each sequence distinct in mood and intention. The final section, *Atma Nivedanam*, a complete surrender, felt stripped of all ornament, pure, steady and heartfelt. The silence that followed in the auditorium was its own applause.



Music and Light in Dialogue with Dance

The live music — led by Sudha Raghuraman (vocal), Sumod Sreedharan (percussion), Raghuraman Govindarajan and Himanshu Srivastava (flute), and Sannidhi Vaidyanathan (mridangam) — provided an elegant and responsive framework. Rather than seeking prominence, the musicians supported the dancers with sensitivity. Their presence added emotional texture, allowing the audience to absorb each moment more fully.

Lighting by Gaurav Sharma played a restrained yet vital role. Gentle shifts in tone allowed the stage to adapt to each form of devotion. The production design was thoughtful, avoiding spectacle in favour of intimacy.

Celebrating Golden Year

This performance also coincided with a special milestone: this is the 50th year of Ganesa Natyalaya which is run by Rama Vaidyanathan, the Bharatanatyam institution founded by the late Guru Saroja Vaidyanathan. Celebrated through the *Swarna Saroja Festival*, the institution has grown from a small classroom to a cultural landmark.

The Institution has also been active in outreach, offering Bharatanatyam training to underprivileged students through collaborations with organisations such as the Guild of Service, Aravindam Foundation, and SARVAM. Over the past year alone, more than 35 events have been held across national and international platforms.

ART ROOTED IN DEEP TRADITION



Sudha Raghuraman and Rama Vaidyanathan brought together music and movement in a deeply reflective performance. Sudha's rich, emotive vocals blend effortlessly with Rama's expressive Bharatanatyam with grace and clarity rooted in artistic grace.

This context gave the performance an added layer of depth. It stood not only as an artistic interpretation of Andalus's devotion, but also as a reflection of a long-standing commitment to preserving and evolving the Bharatanatyam tradition.

A Performance Rooted in Feeling

Throughout the evening, the performance avoided grand gestures in favour of quiet strength. Every movement was anchored in intention. The performance led with clarity, allowing each dancer to bring her own energy to the stage. Rather than overpowering the space, the ensemble shaped it together, with balance, care and deep respect for the material. There was no distance between emotion and execution. Every section felt like a step in a spiritual journey, one shared between dancer and audience, saint and seeker.

A moving tribute to Andalus's devotion, told with restraint and rare emotional clarity. For those present, it felt less like watching a performance and more like being invited into a sacred conversation. Few evenings in recent memory have offered such stillness, such grace, and such honesty on stage.

CAN ART STILL MOVE US TO SILENCE IN A WORLD FULL OF NOISE?

Maalyada — Andalus's Sacred Garland, answers with a resounding yes — not through spectacle, but through sincerity. What stayed beyond the performance wasn't just choreography or technique, it was the emotional honesty work into each moment. This was an evening where Bharatanatyam spoke not to the intellect alone,

but to something quieter and deeper. In a time where tradition is often repackaged to suit trends, *Maalyada* held its ground — anchored in faith, simplicity and artistic integrity. The live music, careful lighting and absence of excess allowed the focus to remain on the essence of devotion. It was a moment of living it.

An Artist's Map of the Soul

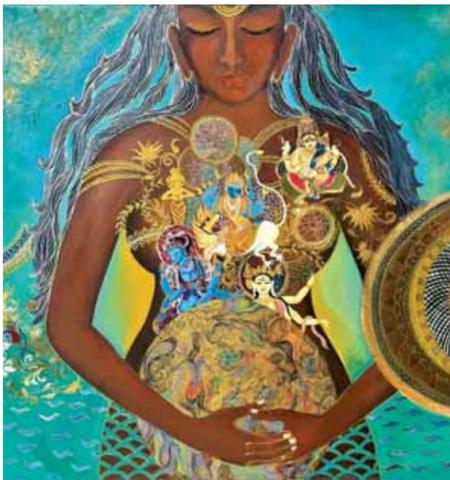
BY TEAM VIVA

Some exhibitions speak; others whisper. Shinee Sharma's *The Journey of Soul* does neither — it listens. The works in this collection do not impose meaning but create space for it, drawing viewers into a dialogue with the unseen.

The exhibition is structured as a spiritual pilgrimage, beginning with *Hiranya Garbha*. Here, Sharma explores cosmic origins through a careful balance of form and emptiness. The golden tones suggest creation's first moments, while the deliberate negative space around them carries equal weight. This series establishes the exhibition's visual language — one where absence is as articulate as presence.

The Five That Form the World translates elemental energies into visual terms. Earth appears not as literal soil but through dense, textured layers of pigment. Water emerges in fluid brushstrokes that seem to ripple across the canvas.

Each element maintains its distinct character while contributing to a cohesive whole, much like the philosophical concepts they represent. In the *Maya* series, Sharma's technique becomes particularly compelling. Semi-transparent layers of paint create figures that appear



THE EXHIBITION SUCCEEDS BY CREATING CONDITIONS FOR THEIR DISCOVERY. IN AN ART WORLD OFTEN DOMINATED BY SPECTACLE, SHARMA'S QUIET CONFIDENCE IN HER MATERIALS AND IDEAS FEELS PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT.

solid from one angle yet dissolve when viewed differently. This literal visual trickery mirrors the exhibition's thematic concern with perception and reality. The artist's control of medium here is precise — each brushstroke serves both the immediate image and the larger philosophical inquiry. The final section, *The Gate of Liberation*, employs a restrained palette of deep blues and blacks punctuated by subtle metallic accents. The compositions are simpler but no less powerful, with geometric elements suggesting architectural thresholds. These works feel like inviting viewers to stand before them as one might at an actual gate — contemplating whether to cross, and what might lie beyond. Sharma's background in Sanskrit and philosophy informs every artistic decision, from colour choices to compositional structures.

The works reward close viewing — the texture of a particular brushstroke or the careful placement of a symbolic element often reveals deeper layers of meaning. The Tokyo showing attracted particular attention for how these deeply Indian philosophical concepts resonated with Japanese audiences.

How Paper Became Art's Living

A centuries-spanning exhibition reveals how artists have transformed humble sheets into vessels of memory and rebellion, says SAKSHI PRIYA

In an art world increasingly dominated by large-scale installations and digital spectacles, there's something quietly subversive about an exhibition that insists we pay attention to the humble sheet of paper. **Paper Alchemy: Tracing Memories** through Time does exactly this, revealing how this fragile medium has borne witness to centuries of artistic evolution in India. The exhibition opens with delicate Company School works that immediately challenge our expectations. The precision of botanical studies and architectural renderings demonstrates how paper became a meeting ground for cross-cultural exchange long before globalisation became a buzzword.

This exhibition of works on paper transforms what many consider a preliminary medium into the main event, proving that artistic significance isn't measured in square footage. These aren't dry documentation but vibrant encounters between European techniques and Indian subjects. The precision of botanical illustrations and architectural studies shows paper serving as both witness and participant in cultural exchange. The Bengal School section demonstrates paper's emotional range. Abanindranath Tagore's wash paintings use the medium's absorbency to create dreamlike images where forms emerge and dissolve like memories.

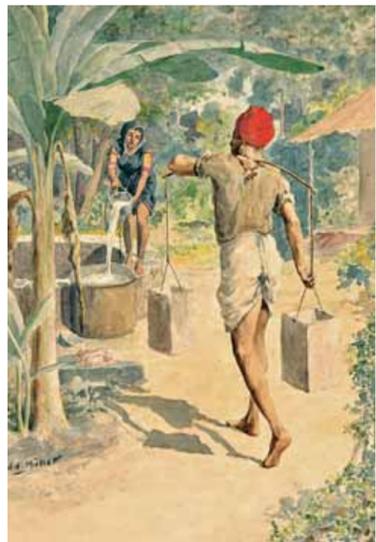
The way pigment interacts with fibers becomes a metaphor for history itself — certain details remain sharp while others fade into suggestion. Modernist works bring a different energy. The Progressive Artists' sketches and prints capture creative urgency, their spontaneous marks preserved



GREAT BANYAN ART REVEALS ITS EXQUISITE PRIVATE PAPER COLLECTION FOR THE FIRST TIME IN "PAPER ALCHEMY," PRESENTING 100+ MASTERWORKS THAT TRACE THREE CENTURIES OF ARTISTIC INNOVATION ON PAPER.

in ink and graphite. Souza's aggressive lines and Husain's fluid figures show artists testing ideas, using paper's immediacy to their advantage. These works remind us that some of the most vital art happens in notebooks, not just on canvases.

Contemporary artists push paper's possibilities further. Atul Dodiya and others treat the medium as raw material to be cut, layered and reconstructed. These pieces acknowledge paper's history while reinventing its potential, mirroring India's own balancing of tradition and innovation. The journey begins with pioneering British artists who shaped



early visual narratives of India. William Hodges' aquatints from *Select Views in India* (1780-1783), including *A View of a Mosque at Rajmaha*, *A View of the Jungle Terry*, demonstrate his groundbreaking approach to Indian landscapes. The Daniells' meticulous architectural studies like *Gate of the Tomb of Emperor Akbar* and *Govinda Ram Mittee's Pagoda*, Calcutta, from their *Oriental Scenery* series showcase their unparalleled documentary precision blended with artistic vision.

In an age of digital reproduction, *Paper Alchemy* feels particularly relevant. It celebrates the physical artifact while demonstrating how limitations can spark creativity. The exhibition doesn't overwhelm with spectacle, but invites a deeper engagement. Here, paper is an active collaborator in the artistic process, recording every decision and accident with equal fidelity.



Chopra, Rohit, Kohli back Indian armed forces amid conflict with Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India's sporting icons, including Neeraj Chopra, PV Sindhu, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, have come out in strong support of the country's armed forces for their strikes on terror infrastructure in Pakistan, hailing them as "the soul of our nation."

India on Thursday night swiftly thwarted Pakistan's attempts to strike its military bases with drones and missiles including in Jammu and Pathankot after foiling similar bids at 15 places in northern and western regions of the country, as tension soared between the two neighbours amid fears of a larger conflict.

"With every passing moment, with every decision taken I feel extremely proud of our Indian Army, Indian Airforce & Indian Navy. Our warriors are standing tall for our nation's pride. It's important for every Indian to be responsible and refrain from spreading or believing any fake news. Stay safe, everyone! #OperationSindoor #JaiHind," Rohit wrote on his X account on Friday.



Modern-day great Kohli posted his tribute on his Instagram page.

"We stand in solidarity with, and salute our armed forces for fiercely protecting our country in these difficult times. We are forever indebted to our heroes for their unwavering bravery and heartfelt gratitude for

the sacrifices they and their families make for our great nation," Kohli wrote.

"We are proud of our Brave Indian Armed Forces who are fighting for our nation against Terrorism. Let's do our part and make sure to follow guidelines to ensure everyone's safety during this time,"

double Olympic-medallist Chopra posted. Two-time Olympic medallist shuttler Sindhu also paid tribute to the courage of Indian armed forces.

"To the brave men and women of the Indian Armed Forces — your courage, discipline, and sacrifice are the soul of our nation. In moments like OperationSindoor, we're reminded of the silent strength and selfless service that keep our tricolour flying high. India stands with you. Jai Hind" Sindhu posted.

Thursday's IPL match between Punjab Kings and Delhi Capitals in Dharamsala was called off due to security reasons following air raid alerts in nearby areas, prompting the BCCI to suspend the league indefinitely.

Former opener Sehwaag blamed Pakistan for the current situation.

"War has been chosen by Pakistan when they had an opportunity to keep quiet. They have escalated to save it's terrorist assets, speaks so much about them. Our forces will reply in the most appropriate manner, a manner Pakistan will never forget," Sehwaag posted on X.

Monitoring situation in India, Pakistan: Cricket Australia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Sydney

Cricket Australia (CA) on Friday said it is "closely monitoring" the escalating tensions between India and Pakistan given that over 20 Australian players and coaches are currently involved in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL) and the Pakistan Super League.

The IPL was thrown into uncertainty on Thursday after air raid alerts in nearby cities forced the match between Delhi Capitals (DC) and Punjab Kings (PBKS) to be abandoned midway in Dharamsala.

The disruption has prompted the BCCI and IPL organisers to review the unfolding situation and consider their next steps.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has decided to shift the remaining matches of the Pakistan Super League to the UAE due to growing security concerns.

"We continue to closely monitor the situation in Pakistan and India, including obtaining regular advice and updates from the Australian Government, the PCB, BCCI and local government

authorities" "..."And maintaining communication with our players and support staff currently in the region," CA said in a statement.

Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head and coaches Ricky Ponting and Brad Haddin are involved in the IPL while the likes of former batter David Warner, pacers Ben Dwarshuis, Riley Meredith and Sean Abbott are competing in the PSL.

According to local media reports, several Australian players have expressed concerns about their safety and are keen to leave India as soon as possible.

IPL chairman Arun Dhimal on Thursday said government directives are being awaited before deciding on whether to continue with the league.

"We are reviewing the situation right now. It is an evolving situation. We haven't received any directive from the government. Obviously the decision will be taken keeping all the logistics in mind," Dhimal said on Thursday night.

However, he confirmed that Friday's match between Lucknow Super Giants and Royal Challengers Bengaluru would go ahead "as of now."

Yashasvi Jaiswal wants to continue playing for Mumbai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal has requested the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) to allow him to remain with the domestic giants, a month after asking for a No Objection Certificate (NOC) to switch to Goa.

In April, Jaiswal surprised everyone by writing to the MCA to seek its approval for a shock move to Goa. On its part, the MCA too had swiftly approved Jaiswal's request.

PTI is in possession of Jaiswal's email to the MCA in which he said he is available to represent Mumbai in the next domestic season.

"I the undersigned would request your goodwill to consider my request in withdrawing my NOC given to me as I had some family plans in shifting to Goa which for now has been curtailed!" Jaiswal wrote.

"So I sincerely request MCA to allow

me to play for Mumbai this season! I have not submitted the NOC to BCCI nor to Goa Cricket Association!" he added.

Jaiswal, who moved from Uttar Pradesh's Bhadohi to Mumbai as a young player and rose through the ranks to make his debut across formats for India over the last couple of years, was also believed to have shifted to Goa from Mumbai owing to the prospect of becoming their captain.

A packed international calendar perhaps would not have allowed the 23-year-old Jaiswal a lot of time to spend with Goa, but becoming their skipper would have given him some experience in major leadership roles.

The secretary of the Goa Cricket Association, Shamba Desai had earlier confirmed to PTI that Jaiswal would be their captain with the Goa team being promoted from Plate division to Elite ahead of the 2025-26 season.

Why scrapping of Asia Cup is best option for BCCI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The currently suspended Indian Premier League's (IPL) 16 remaining games can be completed during a 10 to 12 days window in September as the Asia Cup is now uncertain due to the rising armed hostilities between India and Pakistan.

It would be a miracle if Asia Cup, which is supposed to be hosted by India (at a supposedly neutral venue), goes ahead given the raging conflict which was triggered by the killing of 26 people in a terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam.

The nearly non-existent sporting ties are unlikely to resume at any level till tensions ease. The Asia Cup was given a 19-day window in September where at least two Indo-Pak matches were to take place apart from the possibility of a final clash between the bitter rivals which would have assured the broadcasters of high advertising revenue.

"It is extremely bad optics if cricket continues when there is a possibility of war

with a rogue nation (Pakistan). Sports can continue when everything is normal. Plus it is very natural for foreign players and coaches to be wary and wanting to return home," a senior BCCI official told PTI on condition of anonymity after the league was suspended indefinitely on Friday.

Incidentally, the Asian Cricket Council is now headed by Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Mohsin Naqvi and the onus will be on him to deal with financial losses that the Asia Cup cancellation would cause.

It is understood that the BCCI top brass' decision to suspend the league was well thought out call as only a handful of matches are left which can be completed in a 10-day window with possible double-headers.

The options for BCCI?

The IPL has a dedicated window from March end to May end during which no international cricket is scheduled allowing the best of world cricket to ply their trade in the league. Now that the schedule has gone haywire, the BCCI will have to

explore the available options.

The Indian team will be touring England from first week of June to first week of August and that schedule cannot be changed. The only period that looks good right now is between the second and fourth week of September where the BCCI can also negotiate with the various cricket boards to allow their players (except for freelancers who don't need permission) to come back and complete the assignment.

Why not August?

In August, India have a six-match white ball away series against Bangladesh which could have been stalled for IPL. However, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB)'s "The Hundred" will be played between August 5 to 31 where most of the top T20 players, who also play in IPL, will be taking part.

Most IPL franchise owners like Reliance and RPSG group have bought stakes in "The Hundred".

Also Australia will be hosting South Africa for a six-match white ball series

through the month of August so players from both countries won't be available.

Why September is best option

From August 15 till September 22, the Caribbean Premier League will also be held where some of the top West Indies players are going to take part. But during the second week of September, a fair number of West Indies players can be made available for their respective IPL teams.

England and South Africa have a six-match white-ball series from September 2 to 14. Given the cordial relationship that BCCI shares with both the ECB and Cricket South Africa, it can request them to allow the players important to their IPL teams to be released during the window.

After All SA20 is also a league that runs on investment from IPL franchises.

By end of September, India's WTC (World Test Championship) commitments against the West Indies and South Africa will commence followed by a white-ball tour of Australia in October-November.

Chelsea advances to Conference League final against Real Betis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

Chelsea rested its regular starters and still comfortably advanced to the Conference League final by beating Djurgården 1-0 in their semi-final second leg. The Premier League club advanced 5-1 on aggregate to set up a May 28 title match against Real Betis, which prevailed in extra time for a 4-3 aggregate win over Fiorentina to reach its first European final. At Stamford Bridge, midfielder Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall collected a through pass from Tyrque George before scoring the winner with a low left-footed shot in the 38th minute.

"Amazing to be in the final," Dewsbury-Hall told TNT Sports. "We set our sights at the start of the season to get as far as we can in this tournament and it has been a long couple of months but one more game to go and hopefully we can lift that trophy!" Chelsea remains on course to become the first club to win all major European competitions. The Blues have claimed the Champions League (2012, '21), the Europa League (2013, '19), Cup Winners' Cup (1971, '98) and Super Cup (1998, '21). The final takes place in Wroclaw, Poland. Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca used only Marc Cucurella from the team that beat the new Premier League champion Liverpool 3-1 on Sunday.

Sixteen-year-old midfielder Reggie Walsh was given his first career start and drew frequent fouls from the opposition defense. When he was used as substitute in the first leg, he became the third youngest player for Chelsea, the club said. The Conference League champion is rewarded with a place in the second-tier Europa League next season, hardly a desirable bonus for Chelsea given that it is fighting in the Premier League for a Champions League spot. Chelsea, in fifth place in the Premier League, should have fresh legs Sunday when it plays at Newcastle. In Florence, Antony crossed for substitute Abdessamad Ezzalzouli in the 97th minute to score past goalkeeper David De Gea for a 2-2 draw that sent Betis to the final. Ezzalzouli also scored in the first-leg 2-1 victory in Sevilla last week. Betis increased its aggregate lead from the first leg to 3-1 with a goal from Antony in the 30th. The midfielder, who is at Betis on loan from Manchester United, netted with a curling free kick that hit the post before bouncing into the net for his fourth goal in the competition.

Fiorentina's equaliser — on the evening — came four minutes later from a header by Robin Gosens off a corner kick. Gosens made it 3-3 on aggregate before the interval, heading home again from another corner.

UAE set to decline PCB request to host PSL games

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

The Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) plans to conduct the remaining Pakistan Super League (PSL) matches in the UAE may not succeed as the Emirates Cricket Board is "unlikely to approve" its request due to the border tensions between India and Pakistan.

A source close to the developments in the Emirates Cricket Board (ECB) has indicated that the Board is set to reject the request from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), which has already announced that the PSL would be held in the UAE.

The source has cited "security concerns potentially emanating from the rising tension between India and Pakistan."

It is learnt that the recent developments have made the Emirates Cricket Board "vary of being perceived as an ally of PCB", which it believes the act of hosting the PSL may suggest.

"The Emirates Cricket Board has enjoyed a strong relationship with BCCI in recent years having hosted the 'India' edition of the ICC T20 World Cup 2021, editions of the IPL as well as India matches during ICC Champions Trophy

2025," the source further stated.

Dubai is also the headquarter of the International Cricket Council, which is currently headed by former BCCI secretary Jay Shah.

"The UAE has a diverse South Asian population which enjoys cricket. Hosting a tournament like the PSL in the midst of such tense circumstances could vitiate harmony, pose security risks and stir unnecessary friction between communities," the source said.

The PCB said early this morning that the last eight PSL fixtures, which were previously scheduled in Rawalpindi, Multan and Lahore, will now be staged in the UAE.

Schedule of matches, outlining the dates and venues, will be shared in due course, a statement said.

On Thursday, the PCB called off a scheduled match between Peshawar Zalmi and Karachi Kings at the Rawalpindi stadium.

India launched missile attacks on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan Occupied Jammu and Kashmir a fortnight after the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people were killed.

Manchester United, Tottenham reach Europa League final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Manchester

For Manchester United or Tottenham, a miserable campaign will end in Europa League glory. Despite both teams languishing in the bottom half of the Premier League, the Champions League is now just one game away.

That's the reward on offer after the two troubled English clubs advanced to the final of Europe's second-tier competition on Thursday. United beat Athletic Bilbao 4-1 in the semifinal second leg at Old Trafford and won 7-1 on aggregate. Tottenham won 2-0 away at Bodø/Glimt to seal a 5-1 aggregate victory. It sets up an all-English Europa League final for the second time in six years after Chelsea beat Arsenal to lift the trophy in 2019. "If we don't win the final, it means nothing for us," United coach Ruben Amorim said. "It's hard to describe what it's like to be manager of this club. You want to give them (the fans) something, because we've been so disappointing in the Premier League." United came back from 1-0 down at halftime against Bilbao, with Mason Mount coming off the bench to score twice after the break. Casemiro and Rasmus Hojlund were also on target. Dominic Solanke and Pedro Porro struck for Tottenham against Bodø/Glimt in Norway. The final is in Bilbao on May 21. "It's an unbelievable feeling," Spurs defender Micky van de Ven said. "We've had a tough season, but we're one game away from winning silverware." A major title, alone, would be enough to salvage what has otherwise been a season to forget for both United and Spurs. But the added prize of a place in the lucrative Champions League would put the winner back among Europe's elite next term. That hasn't looked likely for either team for most of the campaign as they have languished closer to the relegation zone than the top five. United is 15th in the standings having lost a club record 16 games in the Premier League.

FIFA's President Infantino plans to visit Saudi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Geneva

FIFA President Gianni Infantino will go to Saudi Arabia next week during US President Donald Trump's state visit while the soccer body's 211 member federations gather at their annual Congress being held in Paraguay.

It is unprecedented in modern times for a FIFA president to skip any part of the days-long congress program, where FIFA voters in soccer's six continental bodies caucus ahead of the main meeting often called the sport's parliament.

"The FIFA president has accepted invitations to attend a series of important events with world leaders, where FIFA World Cups will also be discussed," soccer's governing body said in a statement.

Infantino also is expected to visit Qatar, the 2022 World Cup host which also is on the US President's Middle East tour sched-



ule. Infantino's close ties to Trump during the president's first term have grown stronger in about 10 meetings together since December, including Tuesday at the

White House with a task force to oversee federal plans for the 2026 World Cup being co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,
NATIONAL HIGHWAY DIVISION, KESINGA.
A/Po-Kesinga, Dist-Kalahandi, (Odisha), Pin-7560012. E-mail:esnh_kans@gmail.com
BID IDENTIFICATION No: EENHKSNG-Online-01/2025-26.
No.1083 /Dated,07.05.2025
E-procurement notice

1.	The The Execution Engineer, National Highway Division, Kesinga on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites Percentage Rate bids in Single cover System in ONLINE MODE.
2.	No. of works :- 02 (Two) Nos.
3.	Estimated Cost :- (1) Rs. 9,60,224.00 (approx) (2) Rs.47,68,172.00 (approx)
4.	Tender Cost :- (1) Rs. 4,00,000/- Each paper. (2) Rs. 6,000/- Each paper
5.	Class of Contractor :- (1) "D" & "C" Class Contractor (2) "B" Class Contractor
6.	Availability of bid document in the :- 11.00 Hrs of 17.05.2025 to 17.00 Hrs of 31.05.2025
7.	Date of Opening of Tenders :- 02.06.2025
8.	The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the Web Site www.tendersodisha.gov.in. Only Any Corrigendum / Addendum/cancellation of tender will be displayed in the website said only.
9.	Authority reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.
10.	Any Changes of rule or addition by the Govt. time to time will be implementation as per Govt. Notification.

OIPR-340181/100012526
Superintending Engineer
N.H. Division, Kesinga

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
e-Procurement Notice, ANGUL (R&B) DIVISION
Bid Identification No.05 of 2025-26
e-mail ID- angulrbdivision@yahoo.co.in

1.	Number of Works	: 02 (Two) number of Electrical works
2.	Approximate estimated cost	: Varies from 6.60 lakh to 44.61 lakh
3.	Period of completion	: 02 (Two) to 03 (Three) Calendar months
4.	Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal	: Dt. 13.05.2025 at 10.00 A.M.
5.	Last date / Time for receipt of bid in the portal	: Dt. 22.05.2025 up to 5.00 P.M.
6.	Date of opening Bid	: Dt. 23.05.2025 at 11.00 A.M.
7.	Name and address of the Office Inviting Bid	: Superintending Engineer, Angul (R&B) Division, Angul
8.	The bidders must participate in ONLINE bidding only.	

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>
Superintending Engineer,
Angul (R&B) Division

OIPR-34074/11/0029/2526

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, CHOUDWAR
CUTTACK (ODISHA) PIN- 754071
Phone No 0671-2394272 (0) Fax No- 0671-2394272
e-mail: choudwarmunicipality@gmail.com

E-Procurement Notice
Tender Ref No- CHM-SAN- 01/2025-26
Tender Call Notice No. 770/ Date. 07.05.2025

1.	Name of the Work	: Individual Sanitation works as published the website
2.	No of works put to tender	: 02 Nos. individual work
3.	Estimated Cost Per Month	: Rs. 24,19,120.00 & Rs. 22,18,012.00
4.	Date and time of availability	: from 11.00 AM of Dt. 13.05.2025
5.	Pre-Bid Meeting	: 11.00 AM of Dt.19.05.2025
6.	Last date/Time for the receipt of bids(Online)	: 5.30 PM of dt.27.05.2025
7.	Last date/Time for the receipt of bids(hardcopy)	: 01.00 PM of dt.29.05.2025
8.	Date and Time of opening of Technical bid	: 11.00 AM of dt.30.05.2025
9.	Date and Time of opening of Financial bid	: Intimated later
10.	Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid	: Executive Officer, Choudwar Municipality

Further details can be from the e-procurement portal <https://tenderorissa.gov.in>
Executive Officer
Choudwar Municipality

OIPR-13138/11/0032/2526

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION: RAYAGADA
Letter No 1830
Date: 08.05.2025
1st Corrigendum

In continuation to this office Bid Identification No. EERWRGD-Online-11/2024-25 this office letter No. 1013 dated 01.03.2025 partial modification of TCN has been made as follows.

Sl No.	Item	Time Schedule as per Original TCN	Time Schedule as per Corrigendum Notice
1	Availability of tender online for bidding	11.03.2025 at 11.00 AM to 25.03.2025 upto 5.00 PM	09.05.2025 at 11.00 AM to 23.05.2025 upto 5.00 PM
2	Date & Time of Opening Tender	25.03.2025 at 5.30 PM	23.05.2025 at 5.30 PM

Sl no.	Sl no. work	Estimated cost as per original TCN (Rs.in Lakh)	Revised Estimated cost as per corrigendum notice (Rs.in Lakh)	EMD cost as per Original TCN	Required EMD cost as per corrigendum Notice
1	5	58.83	56.92	Rs. 58,830/-	Rs. 56,920/-

Sl. No. of work 1 to 4 is hereby cancelled due to unavoidable circumstances.
All other terms and conditions remain unchanged.
Executive Engineer
Rural Works Division
Rayagada
OIPR-25072/11/0021/2526