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GOLDEN TEMPLE DODGED DOOM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Chandigarh/Amritsar

In a chilling revelation, the Indian Army on Monday confirmed that the Pakistani military attempted to target the revered Golden Temple in Amritsar with drones and missiles following India's retaliatory Operation Sindoor. The Indian Army claimed that its air defense forces, anticipating such a nefarious move, successfully intercepted and neutralised all airborne threats, thereby averting what could have been a catastrophic assault on one of India's most sacred religious sites.

Major General Kartik C Seshadri, General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the 15th Infantry Division, disclosed that after failing to strike Indian military installations in the days following the cross-border air strikes under Operation Sindoor, Pakistan resorted to targeting civilian areas and places of religious significance. Among them was the Golden Temple — widely regarded as a symbol of peace, faith, and devotion by millions across the world.

On the early morning of May 8, Pakistani forces launched surface-to-surface and air-to-surface missiles, along with multiple kamikaze drones, in the direction of Amritsar. The Indian Air Defence System, including the indigenous Akash missile batteries and L-70 air defense guns, engaged and neutralised the threats mid-air.

The military operation came in the aftermath of the brutal April 22 terror attack in Pahalagam, in which 26 tourists were gunned down at point-blank range by Pakistan-backed terrorists. In response, India launched Operation Sindoor, targeting and destroying nine terror camps across Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, including Muridke near Lahore — a known hub of terror activity.

The Indian Army has stated that Pakistan's aggression in the days following the Indian offensive was both desperate

and dangerous. Over three days, Pakistan repeatedly tried to strike Indian military cantonments and airbases but failed to breach Indian defenses. As their military efforts collapsed, Pakistan escalated their offensive by attempting to hit civilian populations and religious landmarks.

Major General Seshadri expressed shock over Pakistan's decision to target the Golden Temple, stating that the shrine is not only a cornerstone of Sikh faith but also a spiritual symbol for the entire nation. "We were ready," he said, adding, "Our systems were in place. Every missile and drone aimed at the Golden Temple was intercepted and destroyed before impact."

The Army showcased its operational readiness and technical superiority by using only 10 per cent of its deployed weaponry to repel the aerial offensive. Many of the drones and micro-drones shot down were of Turkish origin. The attacks were thwarted with assistance from local civilians, whose timely alerts and cooperation proved invaluable.

However, the Indian Army's disclosure was met with skepticism from the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC). SGPC secretary Kulwant Singh Mann questioned the veracity of the claims, saying, "No army — neither Pakistan's nor India's — can even imagine targeting the Golden Temple." His comments reflected disbelief that such an act could be contemplated, let alone attempted. Meanwhile, strong political reactions followed the military's revelation. Delhi Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa condemned the attack, calling it an assault on the soul of India. "This was not just a military move; it was a shameless attempt to hurt the sentiments of millions of devotees," he said. Amritsar MP Gurjeet Singh Aujla also saluted the Indian Army for foiling Pakistan's intentions and thanked the soldiers who protected Shri Harmandir Sahib from being harmed.

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Several arrested in Punjab, Haryana, UP for espionage

MONIKA MALIK/MANOJ KUMAR ■ Chandigarh

Nine individuals from Punjab and Haryana have been arrested in the past week for allegedly leaking sensitive military information to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), as Operation Sindoor—India's response to the deadly April 22 Pahalgam terror attack—intensifies its crackdown on espionage networks. The latest arrests include two youths from Punjab and one from Haryana, revealing a deep and growing security concern across the northern border belt.

The Punjab Police on May 15 arrested 19-year-old Sukhpreet Singh of Adiyana village and 20-year-old Karanbir Singh of Chandu Wadala in Gurdaspur, bringing the total espionage-related arrests in the State to four. On the Haryana front, the arrest of

Mohammad Tarif from Kangarka village in Nuh district on May 13 added to five previous apprehensions under similar charges.

Investigations indicate that all nine arrested so far—aged between 18 and 35—were allegedly acting on instructions from ISI handlers. These individuals are ordinary youth from rural and semi-urban backgrounds, reportedly lured through a combination of money, drugs, and manipulation, posing an alarming threat to national security.

According to Gurdaspur SSP Aditya, Sukhpreet and Karanbir were found transmitting classified data related to troop movements and strategic positions across Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir. "Three mobile phones and eight live cartridges (.30 bore) were seized from them. ₹ one lakh had been transferred to their accounts," he revealed, adding that both had past links to drug smuggling

According to Gurdaspur SSP Aditya, Sukhpreet and Karanbir were transmitting data related to troop movements and strategic positions across Punjab, Himachal and J and K

which may have been exploited by Pakistani handlers. DGP Gaurav Yadav confirmed the arrests followed "credible intelligence inputs", and a case under the Official Secrets Act, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, and Arms Act has been registered at Dorangala Police Station.

Meanwhile, in Haryana, Mohammad Tarif was apprehended late Sunday near Bawla village. A resident of Nuh, he is accused of long-standing espionage activities including leaking intelligence on military activities to Pakistan. Police allege he

gave a SIM card to a Pakistan High Commission employee and had travelled to Pakistan himself. A case has been filed against him along with two Pakistani officials—Asif Baloch and Zafar—under Section 152 of the BNS and Sections 3, 4, and 5 of the Official Secrets Act at Sadar Tauru police station. Before his arrest, Tarif attempted to delete messages from his phone, which investigators later confirmed included images, videos, and chats with Pakistani numbers. "He was in constant touch with Pakistani operatives via two SIM cards," an officer said.

Others arrested in Haryana include Armaan (26, Nuh), Devendra Singh Dhillon (25, Kaithal), Jyoti Malhotra (Hisar), Tareef (Nuh), and Nauman Elahi (24, Panipat), a private security guard. All are accused of sharing sensitive data related to strategic installations with Pakistani handlers.

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Allahabad HC junks plea against Sambhal mosque survey

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Prayagraj

The Allahabad High Court on Monday dismissed a plea of the Masjid committee against the survey ordered by a Sambhal court in the Shahi Jama Masjid and Harihar Temple dispute. The court said the order to appoint a court commissioner and the suit were maintainable. Justice Rohit Ranjan Agarwal had previously reserved its order on the matter after hearing counsel for the Masjid committee and plaintiff Hari Shanker Jain aside from the counsel for the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

"This is not a case where any conversion of place of worship is taking place or any religious character of place of worship is being changed. Plaintiffs have only sought right to access to a protected monument declared in the year 1920 under Section 18 of the Act of 1958," the court said.

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Residents being rescued from a waterlogged area after heavy rains in Bengaluru

PTI

The ByStander



PIONEER IN SHORT

SC junks AGR waiver plea by telecom companies

The Supreme Court on Monday dismissed pleas by Vodafone, Airtel, and Tata Teleservices seeking waivers on adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues, calling them "misconceived." The bench, led by Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan, refused to allow withdrawal of the petitions, expressing shock at the requests. Vodafone sought relief from paying ₹30,000 crore in interest and penalties, citing Government ownership and financial stress. The court, however, reiterated its 2021 judgment, rejecting any reassessment of dues. Telecom firms claimed errors in AGR calculations, but the court upheld the finality of the dues. It allowed Government assistance but refused judicial intervention in payment relaxations.

FULL REPORT ON P10

SC orders uniform pension for all retired HC judges

The Supreme Court on Monday ruled that all retired High Court judges must receive uniform pension benefits, regardless of their mode of appointment, tenure, or background. A bench led by Chief Justice BR Gavai said "one rank one pension" must apply to constitutional offices and deemed any differential treatment as discriminatory under Article 14 of the Constitution. The court set annual pensions at ₹13.5 lakh for judges and ₹15 lakh for retired chief justices. It also affirmed pension eligibility for judges appointed after the New Pension Scheme and ruled additional judges are entitled to the same benefits as permanent ones, calling for refunds of NPS contributions to affected judges with accrued dividends.

FULL REPORT ON P5

'Entire nation in shame': SC on MP minister Vijay Shah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday pulled up Madhya Pradesh minister Vijay Shah for his remarks on Colonel Sofiya Qureshi and constituted a three-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the FIR lodged against him. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh told the minister that it had seen his videos where he made the remarks and his apology and wondered if "they were crocodile tears or an attempt to wriggle out of the legal proceedings".

"The entire nation was in shame due to the comments... We saw your videos, you were on the verge of using very filthy language but somehow better sense prevailed or you did not find suitable words. You should be shameful. Entire country is proud of our Army and you made this statement," Justice Surya Kant said. The bench further grilled the minister, "What kind of apology was this? You should have simply admitted your mistake and apologised but you say if you have said this and that... then I apologise. This is not the way to seek apology. The kind of crass comments you made, you should be shameful." Shah was represented by senior advocates Maninder Singh

and Vibha Dutt Makhija

The top court asked the Madhya Pradesh director general of police to constitute a three-member SIT headed by an IG rank officer by Tuesday 10 am also comprising a woman officer to probe the FIR registered following an order of the Madhya Pradesh High Court.

The first report by the SIT, the bench said, should be filed by May 28.

Being a public representative the minister ought to have led by an example and used every single word sensibly, the court further remarked. After drawing severe criticism for his comments made on May 12, the BJP minister said he was ready to apologise 10 times if his statement had hurt anyone and he respected Col Qureshi more than his sister.

An FIR was registered against Shah in Indore district later on May 14 following the high court's order. The FIR was registered under Sections 152 (acts endangering the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India), 196 (1)(b) (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, language, or other similar characteristics) and 197(1)(c) (statement or action that causes or is likely to cause disharmony, enmity, or hatred between different groups) of the BNS.

Road laws optional, violations mandatory

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

Despite strict regulations and hefty fines, chaotic traffic and rule violations remain largely unchanged. As per a report titled "The Great Indian Challan Crisis", in 2024 alone, ₹12,000 crore worth of traffic fines were issued, with a staggering ₹9,000 crore still unpaid. Over eight crore challans were issued last year, roughly one for every second vehicle on the road.

The report highlights more than just numbers; it sheds light on a troubling cultural trend where traffic violations have become the new normal rather than the exception. The Ministry of Road Transport has confirmed this figure.

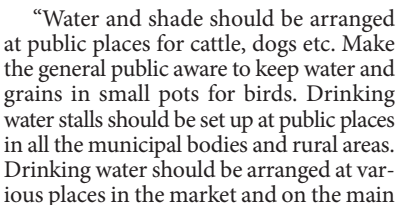
According to report, Gurugram issued approximately 4,500 challans daily while Noida issued over ₹3 lakh in challans in a single month solely for helmet violations. The report said surveys conducted as part of this report, indicate that around 43.9 per cent of drivers claim to follow traffic rules regardless of police presence. However, 31.2 per cent admit to adjusting their driving only when they spot law enforcement, while 17.6 per cent actively look out for police to avoid fines.

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Fast forward your MARKET RETURNS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

She stated that running a drinking water stall at public places is a pious work.



“Water and shade should be arranged at public places for cattle, dogs etc. Make the general public aware to keep water and grains in small pots for birds. Drinking water stalls should be set up at public places in all the municipal bodies and rural areas. Drinking water should be arranged at various places in the market and on the main

“Water supply should be ensured through tankers in the areas most affect-

ees of the departments concerned were present through virtual medium.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The programme concluded with tribute to the brave soldiers of the country.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Sushant Golf City Inspector Anjani Kumar Mishra said that a case has been registered. "The CCTV footage installed

WOMAN KILLED FOR DOWRY

Nagaram police station in-charge Vivek Chaudhary said that a case of dowry death had been registered on the complaint of the family. He said the body had been sent

NOTICE

I Priyanka Meherchand Nathani, Resident House No. 124A/344, 11 Block, Govind Nagar, Kanpur have changed my name after marriage to Priyanka Mohit Hemrajani. In future I should be known and recognized as Priyanka Mohit Hemrajani.

NOTICE

The name of my father is wrongly written as RAMESH LAL AGARWAL in place of RAMESHWAR LAL AGARWAL AND my date of birth is also wrongly written as 30.06.1960 in place of 22.06.1960 in my PAN NO. AANPA6335P, which needs correction.

NOTICE

I Dev Brat Dwivedi S/O Om Prakash Dwivedi R/O 10/575 Indira Nagar Lucknow. I had changed my name from Dev Brat Dubey to Dev Brat Dwivedi vide affidavit dated 09-04-2015 sworn notary Kartikay Kumar Singh Lucknow for all future activities.

NOTICE

Original lease deed dated 04/01/1977 and Original Power of Attorney dated 28/02/1984 are lost somewhere. Whosoever finds it may inform me. Smt. Pragati Agarwal W/o Shri Pramod Kumar Agarwal R/o 128/ H/ 230, H-Block, Kidwai Nagar, Kanpur Mob ~ 9335369865

NOTICE

Parvez Ahmad Kidwai, resident of B/770 Dayanand Nagar, District Barabanki. In place of Ammar Kidwai, my nephew's name should be written and read as Mohd Ammar Kidwai. It is mentioned in the Aadhaar card number 5718 4274 9885.

NOTICE

Before marriage my name was Lakshmi Mandhan D/o Late Manohar Mandhan which after marriage has become Mrs. Saumya Ramani W/o Nikhil Ramani. Now I should be known and recognized by this name only. Saumya Ramani W/o Nikhil Ramani. R/o 118/36, Kaushalpur Gumti No- 5, Kanpur.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from
SHOEB ALAM TO SHOYEB
ALAM for future purpose,
Shoyeb Alam S/o Junaid Alam
R/o M- 16,-A, Yasodha Nagar
Kanpur

NOTICE

MY House No. 117/K/69 situated Plot No. 51 Block - K Scheme No. 1 Kakadu Kanpur Nagar ki original lease deed dated 28/8/1974 Registered Book No. 1 Vol No. 226 to 271 page - 223 to 483 to 522 on 20/11/2011. The said property is registered in the name of Mr. N. 2110 with Duplicate No. 2111 at Freehold Sale Deed Dated 13/8/2006 Registered Book No. 1 Vol No. 5158 Page No. - 159 to 176 SL. No. 4877 Both Registered Sub-Register Kanpur Nagar is lost. It cannot be illegal. This property is already in the possession of S/L. B. Chandra Prasad Code No. 05183 Kanpur Nagar. The information of which was registered on LAR No. 20250000339545 Shailend Kumar Dwivedi and Durgesh Kumar Dwivedi Both S/o. Ramakant Dwivedi R/o. 117/308 P-1 Block Shivpuri, Kanpur Nagar Kanpur.

CHANGE OF NAME

PD(2062)A
I, GARIMA SINGH D/O ASHOK
KUMAR SINGH R/O,BN-003-A
Badri-Nagar Jama-Masjid
Amausi Nadar-Ganj
Manasnagar,Lucknow Uttar-
Pradesh-226023 changed my-
name to GULSHIN.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Thanks to the government's initiatives, 10,336 child labourers have been identified so far. Between 2017-18 and 2024-25, 12,426 child labourers have been rehabilitated educationally,

Through the Labour Welfare Council, eight welfare schemes are currently being implemented for workers in the organized sector. The government has allocated a corpus fund of Rs 40 crore to support these programs. In the current financial year 2024-25 alone, relief amounting to Rs 1.32 crore has been provided to 309 workers.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

All the animals have been sent to the cattle pound located near PGI.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The victim has lodged a complaint at Bijnor police station. He has also complained to the cyber crime portal. Police are investigating the case.

MAN ENDS LIFE

Suraj said that his mother had died of

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath held a Janta Darshan meeting with over 60 complainants on Monday. Interacting with each one-on-one, he inquired about their well-being, listened

VILLAGERS BLOCK ROAD

“The police station and administration were informed about this many times, but no action has been taken,” another villager commented.



Fresh war of words between SP, BJP over DNA row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav and Uttar Pradesh deputy chief minister Brajesh Pathak on Monday continued to trade barbs, with the BJP leader charging that the SP was “born with the DNA of Muslim appeasement” while the SP accused him of indulging in sycophancy and meaningless talk.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also backed Pathak and advised the Samajwadi Party top brass to thoroughly review its social media handles and ensure that the language used there is decent, restrained and dignified.

The BJP leaders were reacting to an alleged objectionable post targeting Pathak that was posted on the Samajwadi Party’s official X handle.

Yadav on Sunday said he has taken assurance from his people that this will not happen again, and hoped that Pathak would as well stop making the kind of statements that triggered it.

The SP had also referred to news clippings where Pathak had referred to “DNA of Samajwadi Party.”

In a post on X, Adityanath said, “Although it is futile to expect any ideal conduct from the Samajwadi Party, but civilised society cannot tolerate their indecent and vulgar statements. The top

leadership of the Samajwadi Party should thoroughly review their social media handles and ensure that the language used there is decent, restrained and dignified.”

Earlier, in a lengthy post on X in Hindi, Pathak said, “Akhilesh Yadav ji, you are very angry on the question of DNA. I said there is a problem in the DNA of Samajwadi Party, (and) you lost your temper just like you were thrown out of power in UP 10 years ago. You should understand that by problem in DNA we do not mean any particular person, but the political thinking of your party.”

“Problem in DNA means that the foundation of your party’s politics has been based on casteism and appeasement and it still is,” charged.

Sharpening his attack, he said Muslim appeasement has been the central part of the SP’s politics and that any political scientist can vouch for it.

“He will explain to you that your party was born with the DNA of Muslim appeasement and this is the bread and butter of your entire politics,” he said.

“Be it education policy, appointments or law and order issues, your governments have repeatedly ignored the rest of the society to please a particular class. This has deepened the

division and distrust in the society. As chief minister, you have withdrawn 14 cases related to terrorists with your signature so that your party’s Muslim appeasement DNA keeps getting nourishment. In such a situation, I can explain very well why you are so agitated by the questioning of DNA. Why are you hurt so much?” Pathak said.

The deputy chief minister also accused the SP of being anti-Dalit and alleged that during the rule of Samajwadi Party, it was repeatedly seen that the rights of Dalits were crushed, they were politically marginalised, and incidents of injustice against them increased.

Hitting back at the BJP leader, Yadav said those who have nothing to do and indulge in idle talk, those who work move forward in life.

The former chief minister also appealed to people to pledge for positive politics and the formation of a PDA (Pichhda, Dalit, Alpsankhyak) government committed to social justice.

“Those who are not valued in their own party, who carry the badge of failure in their ministries, waste time in sycophancy and pointless discussions. I request him to play a constructive role and speak out — even indirectly — against the alleged atrocities committed

on his own community (if the community one per cent considers him as their own) under the BJP-led state government,” he added.

“Be mature, soft-spoken and courteous. Don’t trust those who are not even loyal to their own,” Yadav said, in an apparent reference to the BJP leadership.

“You are not originally theirs, you came from outside and are trying to blend in by imitating them. Don’t let your political exploitation continue,” he said.

Before joining the BJP, Pathak was in the Bahujan Samaj Party.

Yadav advised Pathak to reflect on what happened to others who once considered themselves key figures in the BJP but were later sidelined.

“Today they are nowhere; tomorrow you could be in the same place,” he said.

The SP chief expressed hope that the deputy CM would work to restore “political health” within his own party, while assuring that SP would stand by him in times of crisis.

“We know that time is not far,” he said, hinting that Pathak and his community are no longer in favour with the ruling dispensation. Yadav said this was his “final letter in this series” as he now moves on to focus on public welfare.

Saifullah was mastermind of Rampur attack in 2007

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

After Operation Sindoor, Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist Razaullah Nizamani alias Abu Saifullah was killed by unknown assailants on Sunday in Pakistan’s Sindh province. Saifullah Khalid was involved in the terrorist attack on CRPF Group Centre in Rampur 17 years ago on December 31, 2007. He had trained the terrorists in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and sent them to Rampur for the attack. Seven CRPF personnel were martyred in this attack while a rickshaw puller was also killed.

On January 1, 2008, a report of the terrorist attack on CRPF was filed by the then Inspector of Civil Lines Police Station, Om Prakash Sharma. In this case, eight accused were arrested and a chargesheet was filed. During the investigations, the police produced about 200 witnesses and it came to light that Lashkar-e-Taiba commander Saifullah, killed in Pakistan’s Sindh province on Sunday, had trained terrorists for this attack in a camp in PoK. Saifullah was said to be close to India’s most wanted Hafiz Saeed.

In November 2019, the ADJ court had convicted and awarded death sentence to Imran Shahzad alias Abu Osama alias Ajay alias Asad alias Rameez Raja Owais resident of Samani, Thana Chowki City, District Bhimber, Pakistan (PoK); Mohammad Farooq alias Abu Zulkar Nain, alias Abujad alias Amar Singh resident of Kangri, Thana Sadar, District Gujralwala,

Punjab, Pakistan; Sabauddin alias Sahabuddin alias Sabah alias Sanjeev alias Farhan alias Abu Al Qasim alias Babar alias Muwassir alias Sameer alias Ifhtikhar, resident of Gandhwar, via Pandaul, Thana Sakri, District Madhubani, Bihar; and Mohammad Sharif alias Suhail alias Sajid alias Anwar, alias Ali, resident of Badanpur, Thana Khajuria, District Rampur. Jung Bahadur Khan alias Baba, of Moradabad got life imprisonment while Faheem Arshad Ansari, of Goregaon, West Mumbai, Maharashtra was sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment.

It may be mentioned that on the night of December 31, 2007, at around 2:15 am, terrorists attacked the CRPF Group Centre in Rampur. The terrorists entered inside the Centre firing bullets at the soldiers one after the other from gate number one. Seven CRPF personnel and a rickshaw puller were killed in the attack. Even after a four-hour encounter, the terrorists managed to escape. Later, in a joint operation by the Special Task Force and UP Police, all terrorists were arrested within 40 days of the attack. Three, including the two terrorists from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, were arrested from near Lucknow Charbagh station while the others were arrested near the new roadways bus station in Rampur when they were waiting for a bus to escape. According to police records, AK-47 magazine, 18 cartridges, 6 hand grenades, Pakistani passport, 4 star pistol .30 bore, and some maps of some important places made with pencil were recovered from the accused.

Pacer Mohammed Shami meets CM



Lucknow: Pacer Mohammed Shami met Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at the latter’s official residence in Lucknow ahead of the IPL match between Lucknow Super Giants and Sunrisers Hyderabad on Monday. In a post on X in Hindi, Adityanath said that Shami had a courtesy meeting with him at his official residence in Lucknow. Adityanath also shared a couple of photographs clicked with the fast bowler.

‘Dead’ workers get MGNREGA wages

PREETAM SRIVASTAVA ■ Lucknow

Within a month of disclosure of Indian cricketer Mohammed Shami’s sister, her husband and relatives fraudulently receiving Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) wages under the rural employment scheme without performing any work, now ‘dead’ persons were found registered and receiving wages in Sambhal. Several such disclosures already came up from time to time from various places especially from Bundelkhand and eastern Uttar Pradesh where job cards were issued either to the ‘dead’ or people with forged documents. It may be mentioned that more than 7.43 lakh ‘fake’ job cards under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme were deleted in 2022-23, of which over 2.96 lakh were in Uttar Pradesh, the Centre has said in the Lok Sabha.

In a written response to a question in the Parliament, the then Minister of State for Rural Development Sadhvi Niranjani Jyoti shared data on fake job cards. The data showed 7,43,457 fake job cards were deleted in 2022-23 and 3,06,944 in 2021-22. “Uttar Pradesh accounted for the highest number of deletions on account of job cards being fake. As many as 67,937 fake job cards were deleted in Uttar Pradesh in 2021-23 and the number increased to 2,96,464 in 2022-23,” she had

informed the House.

Reports said that an alleged fraud under the MGNREGA scheme has come to light in a village in Sambhal, with over a dozen individuals shown as labourers and wages withdrawn in their names were found to be ‘dead’. The scam was unearthed in Atarasi village under the Panwasa block of the district, officials said. The current village head, Sunita Yadav, is accused of generating job cards in the names of deceased villagers and withdrawing wages by falsely showing ‘work completed’ on paper. “The case came to my notice around seven months ago. An inquiry was ordered at that time,” Sambhal District Magistrate Rajendra Pensiya disclosed to the local media persons.

“When the misappropriation in any case is below 10 per cent, we proceed with recovery from the official concerned. In this case, a misappropriation of Rs 1.05 lakh was found. The recovery is being made from the village head. Other developmental works in the village are also being investigated,” he added.

Among those listed as labourers was the principal of an inter college. Rishpal Singh, principal of Mulayam Singh Yadav Inter College, said, “A job card was made in my name without my knowledge. I have never worked under MGNREGA, yet my name appeared in the records and money was withdrawn. I was even called in for questioning during the inquiry.” Local resident Sanjeev Kumar said, “My grandfa-

ther Jagat Singh passed away in 2020. We had no idea that wages were being withdrawn in his name. We only found out when officials came to the village to investigate. We have heard that job cards were created in the names of nearly a dozen deceased individuals.”

Nirmal Das, the main complainant in the case, alleged that job cards were made even in the name of the village head’s deceased father-in-law and several of her family members. “Money from government funds were withdrawn in the name of bogus labourers. Some of these people don’t even live in the village anymore. Yet their identities were used to siphon off funds,” Das said.

Earlier in Mainpuri also, during a verification drive of all the 549 gram panchayats of nine blocks by the Chief Development Officer, 384 duplicates and 923 job cards of dead people were found active in just 113 gram panchayats, the verification of which was completed. The CDO got all the names removed from the database.

Last month also, a big irregularity came to light in MNREGA in Amroha district. Cricketer Mohammad Shami’s sister Shabina, a resident of village Palaula in Joya block, is registered as a MNREGA worker. At the same time, Shabina’s husband Gajani and her two brothers-in-law who are pursuing MBBS and LLB have also been shown as withdrawing money from MNREGA.

Khanna conducts surprise inspection of four wards

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh Finance and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna, who is also the minister in-charge of Lucknow district, made a surprise inspection and took stock of cleanliness of the city on Monday morning.

He carried out the surprise inspection of four wards of the municipal corporation and reviewed the cleanliness in these areas. During the inspection, he expressed displeasure over the dirt and clogged drains found in the localities and reprimanded the officials concerned.

Khanna directed the municipal commissioner to deduct two days’ salary of the zonal officer of Zone 1 and the sanitation inspector of Zone 5.

The minister inspected Narhi area of Zone 1, Ahmednagar in Sarojini Nagar ward II of Zone 5, Ram Gali in Natkhera of Guru Nanak ward and Saraswathipuram Colony of Sharda Nagar ward in Zone 8. He directed the municipal corporation officials to make the drains encroachment free at any cost. He said that drainage should not be obstructed and notices should be given to the owners of open plots and they should be asked to get their boundary walls constructed. He also said that the officials related to cleaning work should regularly inspect their respective areas and ensure cleanliness.

During the inspection, the minister took cognisance of the obstruction of the lane adjoining the main road in Narhi area by stairs, obstruction in traffic due to garbage lying on open plots and building material lying on the roads and the drains not being cleaned properly. He expressed displeasure and directed the officials concerned to solve all the problems within a week. He also directed the municipal commissioner to deduct two days’ salary of Zonal Officer Rajesh Verma. Khanna also directed the municipal commissioner to free the municipal corporation land in Sharda Nagar Ward II from illegal occupation by encroachers. He said that this land should be freed from illegal occupation by giving notices to the people concerned and barricading the land.

The minister said that the residents informed him that the pond located there had been encroached. Taking cognisance of this, he directed that all these problems be solved within a month by getting a thorough investigation done. Khanna reached Sarojini Nagar Ward II where he saw drain water overflowing on the road. The officials informed him that approval has been granted for construction of a drain there, on which the minister directed them to find an alternative solution to the problem.

In Guru Nanak ward, people told the minister that a sewer has been built there but only 30 per cent of the drains have been connected



to the sewer line; the drinking water supply in this area is contaminated.

Khanna directed the Jalkal general manager to immediately solve this problem by laying a new pipeline so that pure drinking water can be made available to the people.

Khanna said all the officials associated with cleaning work should regularly inspect their respective areas. He said that the drains should be cleaned regularly and there should be no stag-

nation of water in the drains. Wherever the drains are blocked, they should be cleared, he added.

During the inspection, Municipal Commissioner Gaurav Kumar, Additional Municipal Commissioner Dr Arvind Kumar Rao and Lalit Kumar, Chairman of Cleanliness Promotion Committee Sunil Kumar Mishra along with other senior officers and employees of Lucknow Municipal Corporation were present.

HC: Constitution does not support forced conversions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Prayagraj

Allahabad High Court has observed that though the Indian Constitution gives every citizen the right to freely follow and spread their religion, it does not support forced or fraudulent conversions.

Justice Vinod Diwaker made the observation while rejecting a plea to cancel an FIR against four people accused under the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Act, 2021.

According to the complaint, the accused tried to convert people to Christianity by offering money and free medical care.

The court refused to cancel the case, stating that the charges were serious and valid enough for police investigation.

In its judgment, the court observed, “India’s constitutional framework guarantees the

right to religious freedom under Article 25. This Article confers upon every person the fundamental right to freely profess, practise and propagate religion, subject to public order, morality and health. The use of the word ‘freely’ in Article 25 underscores the voluntary nature of religious belief and expression.”

“However, the Constitution does not endorse forced or fraudulent conversions, nor does it shield coercive or deceptive practices under the guise of religious propagation,” it added.

The court maintained that these limitations are essential to ensure that the exercise of religious freedom does not disrupt the societal fabric or endanger individual and communal well-being.

“The presumption that one religion is inherently superior to other clearly presupposes the moral and spiritual superiority of

one religion over another. Such notion is fundamentally antithetical to the idea of secularism. Indian secularism is rooted in the principle of equal respect for all religions. The state must neither identify with nor favour any religion, but instead maintain a principled equidistance from all religions and faith,” the ruling said.

Commenting on the 2021 Act prohibiting unlawful religious conversion brought in by the Uttar Pradesh government, the court stated that it was enacted to maintain public order, moral integrity and health in alignment with Article 25 of the Constitution.

The May 7 judgment also looked into a legal issue as to whether a police officer can be considered an “aggrieved person” under Section 4 of the 2021 Act. This section generally allows only the victim or close relatives to file a complaint.

Rajnath arriving in city today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will visit his parliamentary constituency Lucknow on Tuesday.

Bharatiya Janata Party metropolitan president Anand Dwivedi said that Defence Minister Rajnath Singh would reach Lucknow airport at 4:30 pm on Tuesday.

From the airport, the defence minister will go directly to Gomti Nagar and participate in the silver jubilee celebrations of Doctor KNS Memorial Hospital.

After the programme, he will reach CCS International Airport at Amausi at 6 pm and leave for Delhi at 6:25 pm.

Young male leopard dies during rescue attempt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bahraich

A male leopard, aged around one to one and a half years old, which was found injured a day earlier along a canal embankment in the Katarniaghat Wildlife Division here, died during the rescue attempt, officials said on Monday. Forest department officials believe it was likely hit by an unidentified vehicle.

Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) B Shivshanker told PTI that the leopard was found near Harkhapur village in the Dharampur Range of the division. “The exact cause cannot be confirmed, but the site condi-

tions suggest the leopard was struck by a vehicle,” he said.

A team of forest staff and veterinarians rushed to the spot upon receiving information. They first considered tranquillising the cat for treatment, but because of its young age feared the sedative might prove fatal, the officer said. Instead, they decided to cage the leopard and transport it for care. Unfortunately, the animal succumbed during the rescue operation, he added. The carcass was brought to the range office, where three veterinarians conducted a post-mortem examination in line with National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) guidelines and standard operating procedures (SOPs).

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Applications are invited for admission to M.Ed., LL.M, B.P.Ed. and M.P.Ed, (through entrance test) in Ch. Charan Singh University campus and affiliated colleges. Application form and admission rules will be available on the University website www.ccsuniversity.ac.in w.e.f. May 19, 2025 to June 19, 2025.

Registrar

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, भिलाई (छ.ग.)					
ई-प्रोक्योरमेंट निविदा सूचना					
क्रमांक / लो.क.वि./ जोन - 1/2025/145/54			भिलाई दिनांक 15/5/25		
एकीकृत पंचायत प्रणाली अंतर्गत सक्षम श्रेणी में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से निम्नलिखित निमाग कार्य हेतु आनलाइन (Online) निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है :-					
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02	नगर पालिक निगम, भिलाई क्षेत्रांतर्गत विपदरत्नीय परिसर परिसर में स्केटिंग ट्रेक निर्माण कार्य।	168490	194.885	04.06.2025	06.06.2025
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‘ONOE’ biggest need of the country: Patel

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

A seminar on the topic of ‘One Nation One Election’ (‘ONOE’) was organised by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in IVaranasi Cantt Vidhan Sabha. The seminar began with lighting of the lamp by the guests on the stage of Subah-e-Banaras, Assi. The chief guest and regional BJP president Dilip Patel said that ONOE was the biggest need of the country. “Frequent elections put a big economic burden on the country”, he said.

State BJP secretary Shankar Giri enumerated many benefits of ONOE. He said that the idea of ONOE would not only streamline the electoral process but can also play an important role in optimising resources, continuity of governance and increasing public confidence. State BJP treasurer Manish Kapoor said that frequent elections lead to code of conduct and development plans were affected by it.

In his presidential address, city BJP president Pradeep Agrahari said that ONOE is a meaningful effort of the vision of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi because it gives equal importance to the spirit of the Constitution as well as the voice of the states and the interest of the public. While



Regional BJP president Dilip Patel addressing a seminar on 'ONOE' at Assi Ghat in Varanasi

proposing the vote of thanks, MLA (Varanasi Cantt) Saurabh Srivastava said that he personally strongly supported the proposal of ONOE of the Kovind Committee and also requests all public servants of the country that in the interest of the country, we all should unanimously support ONOE and try to spread the information about its possible benefits for the general public. The programme was conducted by Amit Rai and welcomed by Abhishek Mishra. On the

occasion, Dr Harendra Rai, Nirmala Singh Patel, Veena Pandey, Vidyasagar Rai, Ashok Patel, Madhup Singh, Dr Anupam Gupta, Nand Ji Pandey, Geeta Shastri, Ramgopal Verma, Shiv Sharan Pathak, Ravi Jaiswal, Saurabh Singh Munna, Srujan Srivastava, Somnath Yadav, Rajesh Kushwaha, Preeti Singh Baghel, Mukesh Gupta, Jitendra Patel, Anurag Sharma, Somnath Yadav, Amit Singh Chintu, Rajiv Singh Patel, Madan Mohan Tiwari and others were present.

20-year-old youth’s body found

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Prayagraj

The body of a 20-year-old youth was found on the bank of Khaderi river in Karolbagh area under Kareli police station on Monday morning, causing a sensation in the area.

On getting information about the matter the Kareli police cordoned off the entire area and informed the higher authorities.

The deceased was identified as Puneet Prajapati, a resident of Alahpur police station area in Ambedkar Nagar district and was living in a rented house in Karela Bagh area of Kareli for some time.

With the promptness of the police, a team of field unit, dog squad and forensic experts reached the spot.

DCP City Zone Abhishek Bharti also inspected the spot and said that the body had been sent for post-mortem examination. The cause of death would be confirmed only after receiving the post-mortem examination report. He assured that the matter was being investigated closely.

Meanwhile, the family members of the deceased have been informed and the police are trying to find out clues with the help of CCTV footage.

Extortion gang busted

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kanpur

Police here have busted an extortion gang, the members of which included a traffic sub-inspector, a home guard and a female Prantiya Rakshak Dal (PRD) jawan, among others.

The gang posed as Special Task Force team (STF) and extorted money from people, a police official said on Monday.

Police have arrested home guard Rajeev Dixit (46), PRD jawan Varsha Chauhan (28), and three others, including Arvind Shukla (42), Anirudh Yadav alias Vinay (28) and Anuj Kumar Yadav alias Dumpy (28). The gang’s mastermind, traffic sub-inspector Ajit Yadav, is absconding. He has been placed under suspension, the official said.

Kalyanpur Assistant Commissioner of Police Abhishek Pandey said the arrests were made after an FIR was lodged on Saturday based on a complaint from Ambika Singh Chandel, a resident of Sharda Nagar, whose house was ‘raided’ on May 8.

In his complaint, Chandel said that a gang of seven to eight people who introduced themselves as STF raided his rented accommodation and beat up his family members, including his sister-in-law and her friend, with sticks.

One of them was in police uniform. They used vehicles with sirens and displayed fake police emblems, ACP Pandey said. “The gang forced Chandel to pay ₹1.40 lakh in cash and make an online

transfer of ₹30,000 after threatening to push him behind bars in fake cases,” said Dinesh Tripathi, Deputy Commissioner of Police (West).

{Our surveillance team, which succeeded in gathering intelligence about the gang, was surprised to discover that one of them was a real cop. A traffic sub-inspector, home guard and a female PRD jawan were part of the extortion gang,” Tripathi said. PRD works for the preservation of public peace. During interrogation of the arrested accused, it was revealed that the traffic sub-inspector, home guard and PRD jawan met in the line of duty recently and formed the gang. They recruited five others to assist them.

The gang mainly targeted those involved in illegal activities such as sex racketeering and gambling.

The modus operandi was to first conduct surveillance and choose locations, then raid those locations dressed in police uniforms and emblems and using vehicles with sirens, said an official. The FIR was registered under Sections 115 (2) (voluntarily causing hurt), 205 (wearing garb or carrying token used by public servant with fraudulent intent), 308 (5) (extortion) and 333 (house-trespass after preparation for hurt, assault or wrongful restraint) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and relevant sections under the Information Technology Act.

Police said they have recovered two four-wheelers, a mobile phone and Rs 3,200 cash from their possession.

Camp to mark IBD Day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

The Department of Gastroenterology, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU) organised an awareness camp on Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) here on Monday. The camp was organised to commemorate World IBD Day, which is celebrated every year on May 19. The main objective of this camp was to make the general public, medical students and healthcare professionals aware of a serious but often poorly understood disease like IBD.

The programme was inaugurated by IMS-BHU Director Prof SN Shankhwar, Medical Superintendent Prof KK Gupta, Dean (Research) Prof Gopal Nath, Head of Gastroenterology Department Dr Devesh Prakash Yadav, Dr SK Shukla, Dr Vinod Kumar, and Dr Anurag Kumar Tiwari jointly garlanded the bust of Mahatma Pt Madan Mohan Malviya.

In his address, Dr Devesh Yadav explained that IBD is a chronic intestinal disease, mainly Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis. The disease shows symptoms like abdominal bloating, pain, persistent diarrhoea, fatigue and weight loss and requires time and consistent treatment. The causes of IBD are clearly varied and scientists believe that it is caused by abnormal activity of the affected person’s immune system. The other causes include genetic and environmental factors. Stress and certain foods can also aggravate IBD symptoms.

Dr Yadav added, “IBD cases are gradually increasing in India, but the level of recognition and awareness is still relatively low. Such camps not only help in raising awareness, but also help patients lead a better life through timely diagnosis and lifestyle modifications.” According to Dr Yadav, if a patient is suffering from symp-



toms like frequent urgency to defecate, abdominal pain, weight loss, lack of appetite and blood in stool, then a gastroenterologist should be consulted for treatment. If found to be suffering from IBD, then one should not panic. It is possible to live a normal or almost normal life by controlling IBD. This disease can affect not only physical but also mental, social and professional life. In such a situation, timely correct diagnosis, regular checkup and patient-centric treatment are very important, he added.

During this camp, Dr Ajay Kumar Yadav, dietician Shivani Tripathi and Ragini Maurya gave free nutritional advice and information about IBD related tests. The participants were also given special guidance on aspects like stress management, balanced diet, and symptom monitoring. Dr Yadav said that there was no permanent treatment for IBD, it could be prevented with a balanced diet and in modern treatment, stool transplant has been developed as a permanent treatment, which has now been started by Dr Yadav in BHU and is being done completely free of cost. In the programme, about 300 patients suffering from IBD and their family members participated. In the end, the participants were also given awareness booklets, important contact details and information regarding follow-up support. The programme was addressed by Dr Vinod Kumar and Dr Anurag Kumar Tiwari.

Prof Mohan to address ISSCT centennial congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

Prof Narendra Mohan, former Director, National Sugar Institute (NSI) and Advisor, Indian Sugar and Bioenergy Manufacturers Association, has been invited to address the sugar industry personnel during the Centennial Congress of International Society of Sugar Cane Technologists (ISSCT) Tbeing held from August 22 to 31 at Cali, Columbia. Delegates from more than 50 countries are likely to participate in the congress.

Prof Mohan will make a presentation on ‘Efficient sugar production with simultaneous diversion of juice and other process intermediates for production of green energy’. The presentation will give insight about business strategy to produce sugar and green energy as per requirement and relative economics. The sugar world will be apprised about the exemplary work taken up by Indian sugar industry in attaining sugar demand-supply balance, while producing green energy in various forms i.e. bio-electricity, ethanol for blending in petrol and compressed bio-gas for use as fuel in vehicles.

Different sugar producing countries across the globe have different challenge and are required to adopt different strategies for producing sugar as per market requirement and other products, particularly green energy, which is likely to help them in attaining economic and environmental sustainability. Emphasising this, Prof Narendra Mohan said certain business models would also be discussed during address and subsequent interaction which are expected to benefit the global sugar industry.

DM’s emphasis on expediting settlement of revenue disputes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

District Magistrate Satyendra Kumar held a review meeting on Sunday of revenue works, revenue courts and tax-extraction works with the officials of the department concerned at the camp office.

The district magistrate laid special emphasis on expediting the settlement of revenue disputes and directed that old revenue disputes be settled on priority. He directed the officials to dispose of the pending and disputed cases, ‘Dakhil Kharij’ etc soon.

Regarding the maintenance of files the district magistrate said that red slips should be pasted on all old case files. All cases of more than three years should be settled on merit basis. While directing the officers to ensure the disposal of public complaints with quality within the stipulated time period, he said that IGRS was the top priority of the government and negligence at any level would not be tolerated.

He said that the disposal of complaints received on IGRS should be timely and with quality. After the disposal of the complaint, feedback should also be taken from the complainant. He told all the officers that at whatever level the complaint is pending or the complainant was dissatisfied, then know the reason for it and ensure quick resolution.

If negligence was found at any level, accountability should be fixed and action should be taken, the district magistrate warned, directing to achieve 100 per cent target within the time limit by improving the recovery of targeted revenue dues. The district magistrate said 100 per cent



recovery should be ensured as per the target. He said that all the departments concerned should coordinate with each other and ensure increase in revenue collection. He directed to issue adverse entry to a mandi secretary Jitendra Singh for not making the expected progress and being absent.

During the review of the revenue of the mining department, the district magistrate directed the soil excavators to excavate the soil only after approval. Strict action would be taken if illegal mining was detected during checking. He directed the mining officer to issue recovery on vehicles caught in illegal mining.

The Transport Department was directed to increase the registration of vehicles and take strict action on overloading while doing enforcement work.

The district magistrate directed the officers to complete the revenue collection as per the target and no laxity would be tolerated. If officers show laxity in revenue collection, strict action would be taken against them.

On the occasion, Additional District Magistrate (City) Alok Kumar Verma, Additional District Magistrate (FR) Vandita Srivastava and others were present.

Farewell ceremony organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

A farewell ceremony was organised for the final year students of the College of Agricultural Engineering, Dairy Technology College, and Fisheries Science College under Chandra Shekhar Azad University of Agriculture and Technology (CSAUA&T), Kanpur.

The event took place in front of the academic complex of the College of Agricultural Engineering, graced by the presence of Dean Dr NK Sharma.

The chief guest on the occasion was Station House Officer (SHO) Vikram Singh, who conveyed his best wishes to all the students for a bright and successful future. Dr Ajit Singh, the newly appointed Dean of the Fisheries Science College, shared insightful thoughts on the significance and purpose of organising farewell events.

The programme was hosted by third-year students, Meenakshi Gautam, Tanishk Tomar, Priya Kushwaha, and Akhilesh Verma.

The final year students presented poems, jokes etc and shared their memorable experiences from their time in the college. The successful execution of the event was made possible due to the key contributions of Dr KK Patel (Associate Dean, Student Welfare), Dr Ashish Kumar, Dr Khushboo Gupta, Pankaj Kumar, Dr Shweta Dubey, Neeraj Sharma, Maliha Khanam, Kasaf Khan, and Manish Sahay. All the professors and administrative staff of the colleges were present on the occasion.

Art exhibition begins



An art exhibition being held at BHU in Varanasi on Monday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

An art exhibition titled ‘Echoes of Khajuraho’ started in Ahivasi Art Gallery, Faculty of Visual Arts, Banaras Hindu University here on Monday. It was inaugurated by Dean of the Faculty of Visual Arts Prof Uttama Dixit. She praised the enthusiasm of the students and encouraged them to continue their efforts.

Dr Suresh Chandra Jangid, curator of the exhibition, said an artist encapsulates the entire environment, lifestyle and geography of the respective place through landscape painting. This genre does not merely cater to the expectations of the aesthetic rather intellectual and philosophical as well. To study and portray the historical, cultural and architectural heritage of India is the

manifestation of the Kalavritta group. This group consists of 20 young artists hailing from different parts of the country.

The exhibition is the culmination of the four-day excursion to Khajuraho recently. Pravin Patel and Mithlesh Prasad Meli mentored Pawan Chaurasia, Rohit Sharma, Shivam Saroj, Ashwani Prajapati, Shivam Yadav, Hemant Kumar, Vivek Maurya, Jyotiraditya Mahapatra, Kunal Vishwakarma, Sandeep Yadav, Rahul Prajapati, Suraj Kumar, Rishikesh Vishwakarma, Himanshu Yadav, Arpita Maurya, Anshu Prajapati, Princi and Anchal Prajapati.

Many artists, including Anil Sharma and Manti Sharma, professors of the faculty, art lovers, research scholars and students were present.

Pledge to create awareness against adulteration

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

The Khadya Vyapar Mandal Varanasi has welcomed crackdown on food adulteration and sale of fake medicines.

Mandal president Navratan Rath, while addressing a meeting held in Sagra on Sunday, said termed this move as historic from the point of view of public health and praised government’s public welfare efforts.

Addressing the meeting, Rath said that the instructions to ensure quality check of daily consumption items like milk, cheese, ghee, oil and spices at the production units itself are commendable. This will help in providing pure and nutritious food items to the consumer, which is the moral responsibility of all of us, he said.

He said that in compliance with the instructions of the government, the officials of the Food Safety and Drug Administration Department should especially take care that no action was taken

against any innocent trader without confirmation.

He stressed that action should be ensured only after complete confirmation on the information or complaint of adulteration, so that strict action is taken against the real culprits and innocent traders remain safe.

At the end of the meeting, all the food traders present unanimously took a pledge to create public awareness against adulteration. The meeting was conducted by Gaurav Rath and the vote of thanks was proposed by Charanjit Singh. Lakhna Lal, Ravi Dhannani, Purushottam Ramani, Ganga Prasad Chaurasia, Gaurav Rath, Pappu Kesari, Anil Sonkar, Deepak Modanwal, Charanjit Singh, Kishore Chhabra, Sushil Jotwani, Rajan Jaiswal, Abhinav Kesari, Umesh Pandit, Rajkumar Chauhan, Ashish Agarwal, Sandeep Baranwal, Raunak Murarka, Dilip Kesari, along with scores of food businessmen were present in the meeting.

Drinking water service launched

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Prayagraj

The St John Ambulance Brigade, North Central Railway (NCR), Prayagraj, has launched a free drinking water service for pedestrians and hospital visitors. The initiative aims to provide relief to people during the scorching heat.

The service was inaugurated by ambulance officers, including Uday Kumar Maurya, Ratan Kumar and Alok Kumar Verma. Four large pitchers of cold water, each with a capacity of 30 litres have been placed outside the Central Hospital and near the Emergency Department. The aim is to serve cold water to pedestrians, patients and their attendants selflessly. The brigade also emphasised the importance

of water conservation, appealing to people to use water judiciously and not to waste it. Thirty-five brigade members, including Om Prakash and Amit Kumar Maurya, participated in the programme. The retired officers like AK Arya, Pawan Kumar and Satish Chandra also joined the initiative.

‘UMANG 2025’

The Jagat Taran Golden Jubilee School in Prayagraj has kicked off its summer camp, ‘UMANG 2025’. The camp offers a wide range of activities catering to diverse student interests. Principal Sushmita Kanungo emphasised the importance of holistic development encouraging students to participate and discover their hidden talents.

11 women honoured



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

The We Care Foundation and Muskuraye Uttar Pradesh Foundation jointly organised the Mother’s Day honour ceremony. The event was inaugurated with the ceremonial lamp lighting by Minister of State for Women’s Welfare, Child Development and Nutrition Pratibha Shukla, Founder Dr Sidhanshu Rai and Coordinator Sangeeta Srivastava.

Minister Pratibha Shukla said, “Women are capable of handling every responsibility and are successfully leading both household and professional domains with excellence.” Dr Sidhanshu Rai emphasised that “a city can only truly develop when women come forward. If given a common social platform, women can accomplish extraordinary feats.”

On the occasion, 11 distinguished women were honoured for their exceptional contribution to society: Prof Mridula Shukla, Vandana Nigam, Neelam Chaturvedi, Bhavna Shukla, Shruti Kakkar, Dr Bindu Singh, Deepti Singh, Surabhi Dwivedi, Dr Manju Jain, Pooja Gupta, and Shivangi Dwivedi. These women have been working remarkably in various fields such as social service, media, healthcare, innovation, education, entertainment and women’s safety.

CONSTRUCTION OF PIERS FOR KNP METRO ELEVATED SECTION

The construction work of more than 50 per cent of the piers (pillars) for the elevated section (Agriculture University – Barra-8) viaduct of Kanpur Metro Rail Project has now been completed. Out of the total 125 piers planned for the approximately 4.5 km long viaduct, 68 have already been constructed. Additionally, of the 72 piers required for stations, 22 have been completed. These metro pillars form the foundation on which pier caps and girders are placed, eventually supporting the tracks and stations.

Metro pillars are constructed on-site as part of the Metro infrastructure. Piling involves digging into the ground and installing iron reinforcement cages. In addition to the pillars, over 75 per cent of the piling and more than 55 per cent of the pile cap work for this section have also been completed.

UPMRC MD Sushil Kumar said, “Civil construction of the elevated section under Corridor-2 of the Kanpur Metro project is progressing swiftly. We have completed over half of the piers for this section and pre-casting of all related structures is also advancing at a fast pace at the casting yard in Naubasta. Our engineering team is working tirelessly to ensure the timely delivery of metro services to the people of Kanpur.”

Rahul targets Jaishankar, calls his silence damning

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Monday launched a fresh attack on External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, saying his silence on the number of aircraft India “lost” after Pakistan was “informed” about the military action under Operation Sindoor is “damning”.

The BJP hit back, accusing him of speaking the “language of Pakistan” and asking whether the Congress party was truly serious about supporting the nation.

Rahul Gandhi had earlier also targeted Jaishankar on the issue, suggesting that the Indian side informed Pakistan ahead of the military strikes on terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). However, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had described Gandhi’s claims that Jaishankar acknowledged India having alerted Pakistan before the launch of Operation Sindoor on May 7 as “utter misrepresentation”.

“EAM Jaishankar’s silence isn’t just telling,

it’s damning. So I’ll ask again: How many Indian aircraft did we lose because Pakistan knew?” he asked in a social media post. “This wasn’t a lapse. It was a crime. And the nation deserves the truth,” Gandhi also said.

The Congress leader earlier shared an undated video clip of Jaishankar and wrote, “Informing Pakistan at the start of our attack was a crime. EAM has publicly admitted that GoI (Government of India) did it.” “Who authorised it? How many aircraft did our air force lose as a result,” the Congress leader asked.

“The external affairs minister had stated that we had warned Pakistan at the start, which is clearly the early phase after Operation Sindoor’s commencement,” the external publicity (XP) division of the ministry said.

“This is being falsely represented as being before the commencement. This utter misrepresentation of facts is being called out,” it said in a brief statement.

Union minister Pralhad Joshi attacked Gandhi saying he misquoted the MEA.

“Rahul Gandhi seems to have learned



Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi

FILE PHOTO

nothing from his past mistakes. He continues to disrespect the Nation’s Armed Forces by questioning how many jets were lost — despite clear statements from the IAF and MEA confirming there were no asset loss-

es. “He misquotes the MEA, even though the DGMO clarified in his May 11 briefing that India had made efforts to communicate with its counterparts. Is the Congress party truly serious about supporting the nation? Their

actions suggest otherwise,” Joshi said in a post on X. BJP IT Department head Amit Malviya said in a social media post, “Rahul Gandhi’s daftness is not merely incidental. It is sinister. Rahul Gandhi must desist from distorting facts. India knows who he truly speaks for,” he added.

BJP national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari alleged that the Congress leader’s comments mirrored Pakistan’s propaganda. “Rahul Gandhi’s ignorance isn’t just random — it’s dangerous,” he said, accusing Gandhi of toeing a “pro-Pakistan line”.

“The deliberate twisting of facts by Rahul Gandhi is not a slip. It’s a calculated move to feed a hostile narrative. When India stands united against terror, he chooses to sow confusion and Pakistan celebrates it,” he added. “Rahul isn’t clueless. He’s complicit. India deserves better than a China-Pak spokesperson as Leader of Opposition,” Bhandari said in another post.

Chairman of AICC Media and Publicity Department Pawan Khera said Rahul Gandhi has asked some questions on the statement of the external affairs minister. This

becomes very important because, in the last week, US President Donald Trump has been repeating in different countries that he mediated to stop the war, he said.

Khera said the statement of the external affairs minister is sensitive because it seems that the terrorists must have fled from their hideouts. “Prime Minister Modi and the Foreign Minister will have to answer why this was done,” he asked.

“The Government should answer how many aircraft did the country lose? What losses did the country suffer? How many terrorists escaped?” he asked.

Khera alleged that the BJP is doing petty politics on issues of national interest and thinks the opposition will remain silent and will not ask questions related to the security of the country.

“We will keep asking questions and if we do not ask, terrorist incidents will continue to take place in the country,” he noted. “We do not know what secrets America and China have about PM Modi, Foreign Minister and BJP leaders, because they never speak in front of America and China.

Supreme Court rules one rank one pension for ex-HC judges

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday directed uniform pension benefits for all retired High Court judges, irrespective of their mode of appointment or tenure, saying “one rank one pension has to be the norm in respect of a constitutional office”.

A bench comprising Chief Justice BR Gavai and Justices Augustine George Masih and K Vinod Chandran held that any classification in pension benefits based on whether judges came from the bar or district judiciary, or whether they were permanent or additional judges, was discriminatory and violative of Article 14 of the Constitution.

“One rank one pension has to be the norm in respect of a constitutional office,” the CJJ, writing a 63-page judgement, said.

Dealing with six issues over the disparity in pensionary and other retiral benefits

to High Court judges, the Supreme Court ruled that they must be granted pensions calculated at a basic annual amount of ₹13.50 lakh whereas the retired chief justices would be entitled to ₹15 lakh per annum.

“The principle of one rank one pension requires all retired judges of the high court to be paid a uniform pension. We find that once a judge assumes the office of the high court judge and enters into a constitutional class, i.e., the class of a high court judge, no differential treatment would be permissible merely on the ground of date of appointment,” it added.

When a high court judge is in office, the bench said, irrespective of their source of entry, they are entitled to the same salary and perquisites.

“When all the judges of the high courts, when in office, are entitled to the same salary, perks and benefits, any discrimina-

tion amongst them on the ground of their source of entry, in our view, would be patently discriminatory and violative of Article 14 of the Constitution of India,” it said. The services of a judicial officer who becomes a high court judge from the judicial services so also the experience of a Member of the Bar who becomes a high court judge from the Bar is required to be taken into consideration, it said.

“That break-in service for a period between the date of retirement as a District Judge and the date of assuming the office as a high court judge cannot be a ground for denial of pension on the basis of salary drawn as a high court judge. The pension of even such Judges has to be on the basis of the salary drawn as HC judges,” it said.

A person who retires as a high court judge even if he was appointed in the state judiciary after the New Pension Scheme (NPS) came into effect would still be enti-

tled to benefit of GPF (general provident fund) under the HCJ [The High Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Act, 1954], it said.

Referring to judgements, it said there was a common thread in all of them barring any discrimination in payment of pension. The bench also dealt with the issue of whether full pension could be denied to a high court judge on the ground that there was a break in service between the date of retirement as a district judge and the date of assuming office as a high court judge. On whether retired high court judges who entered the state judiciary after the NPS came into effect would be entitled to receive pension as high court Judges, the bench they should get the equal pension.

Dealing with the consequential issue on how the amount contributed by such judges and the state respectively under NPS would be treated, the court said, “We find

that, it will be equitable to direct the states to refund the amount contributed by such judges along with the dividend accrued thereon. Insofar as the contribution made by the state along with the dividend accrued thereon is concerned, it should be credited to the account of state.”

The judges, bench pointed out, who retired as additional judges, would also get the pension like permanent high court judges. “The perusal of the definition would show that the definition of a ‘Judge’ is wide enough to include a Chief Justice, an acting Chief Justice, an additional Judge and an acting Judge of the High Court. To bring out any artificial discrimination between a Permanent Judge and an Additional Judge in the term ‘Judge’ as defined in Section 14 of the HCJ Act (the High Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Act) would be doing violence to the definition of a ‘Judge,’” it said.

Union Minister Jitendra Singh urges optimal use of AI in Government working

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Monday suggested use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in identifying IAS officers for domain-specific postings and targeted Government projects.

The Minister’s proposal came during an event in which he launched the electronic civil list, 2025 in the form of an e-book — a digital compendium of serving Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers across the country.

Singh, while unveiling the e-book, said the IAS continues to attract some of the finest minds in the country and plays a vital role in strengthening India’s federal governance.

He highlighted the e-civil list as an important tool for transparency, offering a structured view of the country’s administrative leadership.

Singh, the Minister of State for Personnel, proposed an AI-based search option into the e-civil list.

This enhancement, he noted, could allow domain-specific searches to help identify suitable officers for mission mode and other targeted government projects, while ensuring that access to such features remains appropriately restricted, according to a Personnel Ministry statement.

The minister also stressed the importance of regularly updating the digital list to maintain its relevance and utility.



Union Minister Jitendra Singh

FILE PHOTO

The e-book, published by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), contains comprehensive details of IAS officers - including their name, batch, cadre, present posting, pay level, educational qualifications and retirement dates - as updated on January 1.

It also provides cadre-wise strength, the number of officers retiring over the next five years and appointment data from 1969 onwards.

For the first time, officers’ photographs have been included in the digital document, the statement said.

Designed as a searchable PDF with embedded hyperlinks, the e-book offers a user-friendly interface that enables

instant access to information.

“The civil list is an important resource not just for administrators and decision-makers but also for the general public,” Singh said, adding that the move reflects the Centre’s larger push for digital governance.

The minister described the initiative as part of the Government of India’s Digital India mission, aimed at modernising systems and improving citizen-centric services, the statement said.

By discontinuing the printing of hard copies, the department is also saving on Government expenditure and contributing to eco-friendly governance practices, it added.

Centre opposes Turkish firm Celebi’s plea in Delhi HC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Centre on Monday opposed before the Delhi High Court pleas filed by Turkey based company Celebi Airport Services India Private Limited and another firm challenging the decision of the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security revoking their security clearance in the “interest of national security”.

The security clearance of the firms was revoked by the BCAS days after Turkey backed Pakistan and condemned India’s strikes on terror camps in the neighbouring country. Celebi Airport Services India Pvt Ltd and Celebi Delhi Cargo Terminal Management India Pvt Ltd were overseeing ground handling and cargo terminal functions, respectively.

Representing the Centre, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta submitted before Justice Sachin Datta that disclosure of reasons for revoking the security clearance may not only be counterproductive but will also seriously prejudice national interest and sovereignty and security of the country.

Senior Advocate Mukul Rohatgi, who appeared for Celebi, submitted that neither opportunity of being heard was given to the company nor any reason was mentioned for the revocation. “It appears that it is because of public perception because the shareholding of this company is of Turkish nationals,” he said.

On the court’s query that security clearance is granted under what provision of law, Rohatgi referred to Rule 12 of the

Aircrafts Security Rules. He submitted that the onus is on the government to satisfy the court that there was an apprehension and that the same was so grave that no notice was required to be served.

The court remarked that serving of notice could be counter productive in such cases and that the company may do something which is inimical to the country’s national security the moment notice is served on it. Mehta submitted that the individuals employed by the company in question, who are deployed at airports have access to each corner of the airport as well as the aircraft.

“Government had inputs that it would be hazardous in this scenario, in which the country is in, to leave this activity in the hands of this company,” he said. Mehta also handed over to the court in a sealed cover the inputs received by the Centre.

He said that if in a situation where the government feels that it is a clear case of even a potential threat, clause 9 will come into play and not Rule 12. “There are situations which are contemplated rarely, in which it is not possible to give reasons in the notice. Because disclosure of reasons itself may be counterproductive but also seriously prejudice national interest and sovereignty and security of the country,” he said.

As the court adjourned the hearing to Wednesday, Rohatgi said the petitioners were operating for 17 years with 14,000 employees.

He said that the doctrine of proportionality would be applicable in this case.

Army Chief visits Longewala, lauds troops

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Jaisalmer/New Delhi

Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi on Monday visited Longewala in the forward areas of Rajasthan, where he interacted with troops and congratulated them for their “exemplary role” in the success of Operation Sindoor, officials said.

He also reviewed the joint actions undertaken in coordination with the Indian Air Force and the Border Security Force, they said.

Joint actions of the Indian Army, the Indian Air Force and the Border Security Force during Operation Sindoor not only “blunted enemy intent” but also established a “new normal” in maintaining operational dominance along the western front, the officials said.

The western front had faced attack from Pakistan military, including waves of drone assault into Indian air space after the strategic action by India early on May 7 in retaliation of the Pahalgam attack.

As part of Operation Sindoor, the Indian Army undertook rapid deployment of surveillance assets and air defence systems, in close coordination with the IAF and BSF, a senior official said.

On the western front, the desert stretching from Jaisalmer to the Kutch region witnessed a “swift and coordinated operational response” from

the three forces.

“These joint actions not only blunted enemy intent, but also established a new normal in maintaining operational dominance along the western front. The calibrated positioning of weapon systems and other operational enablers, aligned with civil administration support, ensured effective area domination and neutralisation of potential threats,” the senior official added.

Joint actions of the Indian Army, the Indian Air Force and the BSF during Operation Sindoor not only ‘blunted enemy intent’ but also established a ‘new normal’ in maintaining operational dominance along the western front

During his interaction with soldiers of the Konark Corps, the Army chief acknowledged their valour, unwavering commitment, and dogged determination in defending the international boundary.

Gen Dwivedi praised the troops for their vigilant actions, including the “successful neutralisation of enemy drone incursions”, which effectively prevented any misadventure by the adversary in the desert theatre, the senior official said.

He highlighted the Indian Army’s tradition of honour and its unflinching readiness to “meet future challenges with decisive force”, reaffirming the force’s commitment to safeguarding national sovereignty and ensuring high operational preparedness amid a dynamic security environment, the official said.

Appreciating the fortitude of men and women serving in the harsh desert terrain amid peak summer conditions, Gen Dwivedi conveyed his and the nation’s admiration for their unrelenting service in defence of national objectives, the official said.

Under Operation Sindoor, India on early May 7 destroyed nine terror infrastructures in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK). Following the Indian action, Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, May 9 and May 10.

The two sides reached an understanding on cessation of hostilities on May 10 after four days of confrontations.

There is “no expiry date” to the understanding reached between Indian and Pakistani Directors General of Military Operations (DGMOs) on cessation of hostilities nearly a week back, the Indian Army said on Sunday.

The clarification came following reports that the arrangement between the two militaries on stopping the hostilities was ending on May 18 evening.

Shivraj Singh addresses farmers’ concerns over IWT suspension

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan met a group of farmers from the North Indian states of Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Delhi and Western Uttar Pradesh and briefed them the benefits of keeping the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) with Pakistan in abeyance. After meeting with the Agriculture Minister, the farmers’ groups have extended their support to the government’s decision to put the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) in “abeyance”.

During an interaction with Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, representatives of Samyukta Kisan Morcha, Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU-non-political) and other farmers’ leaders termed it a “historic decision” and affirmed that the farming community stands with the government on the issue.

Chouhan said, “The decision to keep the treaty in abeyance is in the interest of the country and farmers. A comprehensive plan will be chalked out to use the Indus river water for agriculture and other purposes.”

He criticised former Prime Minister



Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan

PTI

Jawaharlal Nehru for signing the treaty despite opposition from experts. “At that time, Nehru not only gave water to Pakistan but also ₹83 crore funds,” Chouhan said, adding that even former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had opposed the treaty in Parliament.

The IWT, signed in 1960, is a landmark agreement between India and Pakistan on sharing the waters of the Indus River system.

The treaty divides the six rivers in the Indus Basin between the two nations. India, under the agreement, has complete control over the three eastern rivers-Ravi, Beas and Sutlej-while Pakistan received rights over the three western rivers-Indus, Jhelum and Chenab. The three rivers that flow into Pakistan account for nearly 80 per cent of the shared basin’s water.

As per the agreement, India is allowed to use water from the western rivers-Indus, Jhelum and Chenab-for hydropower generation and irrigation, but cannot build any structure that diverts or impacts the downstream flow of these rivers.

For Pakistan, these rivers are virtually lifelines, providing irrigation for large areas of cotton and paddy cultivation, as well as a significant portion of horticultural production.

During Monday’s event, Chouhan also felicitated Punjab farmer Goma Singh from Hussainiwalla village on the India-Pakistan border for vacating his house for army personnel during combat. Agriculture secretary Devesh Chaturvedi and ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research) director general M L Jat were also present at the event.

Editor's
TAKE

The Constitution is Supreme

CJI Gavai's remarks that constitutional supremacy must remain non-negotiable are timely and reassuring

At a time when democratic institutions face increasing strain from populist rhetoric and politically charged agendas, Chief Justice of India BR Gavai's recent declaration strikes a powerful chord: "Neither judiciary, nor executive, nor Parliament is supreme. It is the Constitution of India which is supreme." Indeed, CJI Gavai has reaffirmed a foundational truth of Indian democracy — that the legitimacy and limits of all three branches of Government derive not from one another, but from the Constitution itself.

In today's climate, where some political leaders openly question, criticise, and even suggest altering core constitutional principles, this reminder is not just timely — it is essential. CJI Gavai's remarks echo the spirit of India's constitutional framework, one that meticulously balances power between the legislature, executive, and judiciary. But his emphasis on constitutional supremacy also goes deeper — it reasserts the moral and legal compass that ensures the country doesn't slide into majoritarianism or autocracy. In 1973, the Supreme Court's landmark Kesavananda Bharati judgment articulated what is now known as the Basic Structure Doctrine — the idea that while the Constitution can be amended, its core principles (like secularism, federalism, the rule of law, and the separation of powers) are inviolable. CJI Gavai reiterated that this doctrine has been vital in ensuring that India remains a "mazboot desh" — a strong and resilient nation. In recent times, there have been disturbing signs of open hostility towards the Constitution. Some political leaders have questioned the relevance of constitutional values such as secularism or social justice, while others have flirted with the idea of rewriting or drastically altering the Constitution to suit ideological ends.

While constitutional amendments are legally permitted, they are subject to critical filters: Procedural Safeguards — Requiring special majorities in Parliament and, in certain cases, ratification by states. Substantive Limits, As per the Basic Structure Doctrine, no amendment can destroy the foundational principles of the Constitution. To bypass these safeguards or dismiss them as "technicalities" is not just legally reckless — it's democratically dangerous. Even to suggest that the Constitution must be changed is preposterous.

Altering the Constitution with short-term political gains in mind could destabilise the balance of power, erode civil liberties, and lead to catastrophic consequences such as: Majoritarian rule overriding minority rights, dismantling of federal structures and weakening of state powers, Undermining of judicial independence, Curtailment of free speech and dissent. In effect, dismantling the constitutional order would be akin to removing the very ground on which India's democracy stands. The Constitution is not merely a legal document. It is a social contract — a solemn promise among India's 1.4 billion people to coexist with dignity, justice, and equality. As CJI Gavai poignantly noted, it is this shared contract that has enabled India's democracy to survive multiple crises. The Constitution is indeed sacrosanct and above any ill-intended controversies.

Envy, geopolitics and unity

As missiles fly and headlines fade, it is time we look beyond the spectacle and decode the deeper purpose behind these evocative titles — stories etched not just in military annals, but in the very soul of a sovereign India

Envy and jealousy are deeply corrosive emotions. Left unchecked, they cloud human judgment, poison relationships, and, in their darkest form, breed malice toward others. Though these emotions are often discussed in personal or psychological contexts, their imprint is unmistakably evident on the global political stage. In fact, international conflicts often mirror the darker traits of human nature, particularly those described by Thomas Hobbes — marked by selfishness, fear, and an insatiable thirst for power.

From the ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia to China's expansionist moves and the spread of transnational terrorism, it is clear that ideals like peace, harmony, and global equality are still distant dreams. These aspirations are repeatedly undermined by geopolitical competition, mistrust, and deeply rooted envy between states.

Philosopher Bertrand Russell, in *The Conquest of Happiness*, warned that envy is among the most toxic of human emotions. According to him, "Envy is the most unfortunate; not only does the envious person wish to inflict misfortune, but he is also rendered unhappy by envy. Instead of deriving pleasure from what he has, he derives pain from what others have." This insight applies far beyond individuals — it resonates powerfully in international affairs.

Nowhere is this destructive force more evident than in the state-sponsored terrorism that has plagued Jammu and Kashmir for decades. The horrific terrorist attack in Pahalgam, which claimed the lives of 26 innocent civilians and left many others injured, underscores how deeply envy and hostility can rot the conscience of a state. Pakistan's continued support for terrorism, sheltering non-state actors and sustaining militant hideouts, reflects this bitter envy — a resentment of India's unity, growth, and global stature.

The execution and outcome of Operation Sindoor are emblematic of India's strength, resolve, and moral clarity. Our security forces showed unparalleled bravery and tactical brilliance. More importantly, the operation displayed the unity of Indians across political divides—proof that when the nation is under threat, collective identity transcends partisan differences.

India has shown the world that it stands among the top global powers—not only economically and ideologically, but militarily as well. The nation is guided by focused, capable leadership and remains committed to peace while being unafraid to confront threats decisively.

Operation Sindoor offers key lessons for the international community. First, counter-terrorism strategy must be rooted in innovation. We need specialised think tanks and training



programs to prepare the next generation of experts. Coordinated communication among intelligence, law enforcement, and military branches enhances responsiveness and ensures success in dynamic operational environments.

A modern, technologically advanced, and alert security network—with seamless collaboration between the Army, Navy, and Air Force — is essential to counter the complexities of modern terrorism, especially when backed by hostile states. To tackle the threat effectively, the world must move beyond outdated doctrines and foster a shared global vision that promotes collective security.

As transnational terrorism rises, it's time for a comprehensive global anti-terror strategy. This strategy must be multi-layered, collaborative, and built on mutual trust. It should include robust retaliation frameworks to deter state actors that harbor or sponsor terrorism. Only through mature diplomacy combined with firm action can long-term

peace be achieved.

India's approach in the face of these threats serves as a reminder: ethics are not hollow slogans, they must guide decisive action when provoked. We must lead with integrity, grounded in our love for humanity, freedom, justice, and peace. While certain parts of the world remain captive to extremist ideologies, history teaches us that such regressive forces eventually crumble under the weight of truth and progress.

Our youth must be empowered with education and responsibility. Their energy and innovation will be pivotal in realising India's vision for growth and national unity. A sense of devotion to national interest must be instilled early, so they can contribute meaningfully to India's development journey.

The aftermath of the Pahalgam attack saw continued violence, with encounters on May 13 and 15 in volatile regions like Keller (Shopian) and Nadar (Pulwama). These incidents, which led to the elimination of more terrorists, reflect the constantly evolving nature of militant strategies.

There is a pressing need to understand the deeper networks—state-sponsored financing, arms and drug smuggling, and the criminal underworld's ties to terror groups. A detailed grasp of these linkages is essential to dismantle them effectively.

A word of caution: the explosion of misleading narratives and "experts" emerging across news and social media platforms is creating confusion. Terms like "clash of civilisations," "post-truth," and "end of history" are being thrown around recklessly. Many are using sensitive topics like nationalism, secularism, and pluralism to score points rather than to contribute meaningfully to discourse.

There's a troubling competition to appear more "woke," more nationalist, or more pluralistic, often with little grounding in real security concerns. National security, however, is not a subject for empty rhetoric or theatrical debates. It is a sacred issue, requiring thoughtful, informed dialogue and responsible public engagement.

In moments of crisis, opinions will differ. But unity, clarity of purpose, and readiness must remain non-negotiable. We must always remain alert because, as the saying goes, old habits die hard, and our adversaries are always watching.

Let us stand united — with courage, wisdom, and unwavering resolve—to protect what is sacred and build a future rooted in peace and strength.

(The author, a recipient of Bharat Gaurav and Asian Admirable Achievers award is a professor and an expert on strategic affairs. Views are personal)

India's retaliation redefines counter-terror strategy

SECOND Opinion

The massacre of tourists at Pahalgam by the Pak, sponsored terrorists was at a different plane as the heinous crime was committed by asking about the religion of the tourists. The incident sent shock waves down the spine of the nation and the whole nation wanted revenge against the terrorists as well as their handlers. The Government decided to destroy the terrorist training centres leaving their political masters and handlers unscathed and unharmed. This was because the Indian Government wanted to keep the action confined to the punishment of terrorists and the decimation of their training camps and hideouts so that it would not escalate into a full-fledged war.

India was cautious because America wanted to check the speedy growth of India. Uncle Sam does not want to repeat the same mistake they made while supporting China to counter the USSR. America will allow the growth of India only after it becomes a US ally though it wants India to take on China.

Otherwise, it will throw spanners on the charging wheels of the Indian economy. And this is American policy and it has nothing to do with whether Biden is in power or Trump. The Indian Government's decision to suspend the

Indus Water treaty and other punitive actions against Pakistan was again a paradigm shift in our response to terror.

India was successful in destroying terrorist training centres and their hideouts to a large extent without any collateral civil casualty. But Pakistan responded with full strength and then India had to retaliate with all its firepower. The Indian defence system neutralised Pakistani attacks and struck them back with extraordinary precision and effectiveness.

India had distinctly an upper hand when a ceasefire was declared after the DGMOS of India and Pakistan had a telephonic talk regarding this.

The ceasefire had come without the declaration of war. It was so sudden that the whole nation was taken aback. Trump broke the news of ceasefire and bragged his role in it only to be refuted later by himself. The Indian Government never acknowledged the American mediation. Modi also did not refer to America or Trump while addressing the nation after ceasefire. No definitive statement can be made as to what led to sudden ceasefire. Any conclusion drawn would be based on conjecture and surmises.

Operation Sindoor is still on as per our stand. India has emphatically said that Its response would be based on the behaviour of Pakistan and will vary from case to case. Any

act of terror would be met with exemplary punitive action. The terrorists as well as their handlers will be punished. It is a welcome change in our policy. Peace talks would be confined to terror and POK. Any peace talk would be bilateral.

Above all, India would not tolerate any nuclear blackmail. This is a new India, an aggressive India, which has shaken not only Pakistan but America, China and the whole West. This Operation has shown the might of our indigenous technology and the depth of meticulous planning and precise execution by our armed forces.

A full-fledged war needs to be avoided as far as possible and that's what India has done. America wanted India to fight a full-blooded war with China so that both India and China were weakened. But both the nations saw reason and de-escalated the tension on the border. Any war with Pakistan will not arrive at an end easily.

Pakistan will play Ukraine and India will be trapped like Russia in a long-drawn war bleeding our upcoming economy. We need to be very careful while dealing with America. It is not reliable and it is dangerously unpredictable under Trump.

Kissinger once said that the enmity of America is dangerous but its friendship is fatal. Ukraine has lost its mineral wealth and is also going to lose its vast territory. This is the price Ukraine has to pay.

(The writer is a noted political commentator and academician. Views are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Make roads pedestrian friendly

The data shows that nearly 8 lakh road fatalities between 2019-2023, pedestrians accounted for 1.5 lakh or 20 per cent of the deaths. The 'India Status Report on Road Safety', released by the Transportation Research and Injury Prevention Centre of Injury and IIT-Delhi has shown that despite pedestrians' right to use a footpath being guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution, compliance in states remains low.

A Supreme Court panel-directed audit carried out in 24 states found that roads having footpaths across most states and UTs range between 19-73 per cent, with Maharashtra having the maximum number of footpaths. Four cities per state were audited to check for compliance with norms around the footpath's availability, width and height specified by the Indian Road Congress (IRC). In Union Territories like J&K and Pondicherry, only 3 per cent and 5 per cent of the roads had footpaths respectively.

In Bihar and Haryana, 19 per cent-20 per cent of roads had footpaths. In most cases, footpaths were not as per IRC norms, it is reported. The Supreme Court in its order said, It is necessary to have proper footpaths for citizens. They should be such that they should be accessible for persons with disabilities and removal of encroachments is mandatory. This court has recognised that the right of pedestrians to use footpaths is guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

Supervision of Pak's nuclear arms

Indian defence minister Rajnath Singh's call for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) supervision of Pakistan's nuclear arms underscores the volatility of the situation. That he made the statement immediately after the escalation between India and Pakistan shows the gravity of the situation.

While the demand seems to be impractical, the concern it raises cannot be overlooked. The security and credibility of Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme need to be verified in the context of frequent escalation and provocation.

Whenever there is conflict and fight between India and Pakistan, the possession of nuclear weapons by either side changes the situation into a likelihood of a global catastrophe.

Each time India retaliates against a cross-border terrorism, Pakistan threatens India by referring to its nuclear capabilities. India must not take such intimidation lightly. Pakistan's behaviour does not conform to that of a nuclear power and it is against international nuclear conduct. Pakistan must recognise the adverse consequences of mismanagement of nuclear weapons. There is an urgent need to supervise the nuclear arms of all countries including Pakistan by international institutions. When two countries are locked in mistrust a conflict, establishing peace is not easy.

VENU GS | KOLLAM

Tragedy at Gulzar House

The death of a dozen and a half people in the horrific fire at Gulzar House near the historic Charminar in Hyderabad is a tragedy that will not be forgotten for decades by the bereaved families. Expressing condolences on this horrific incident, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced an ex-gratia of ₹2 lakh from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF) for the deceased and ₹50,000 for the injured.

The Telangana Government and the district administration should follow due judicial process to punish the guilty, for their negligence has led to this serious blunder in this fire incident. The demerits of electrical short circuit and violation of the guidelines of the fire department can be exposed during the inspection of the incident site.

This tragic incident underscores the urgent need for stricter enforcement of fire safety norms. To prevent such disasters, regular inspections by fire and electrical safety departments must be mandated, especially in commercial and densely populated areas.

Building owners should be held accountable for installing proper fire-fighting systems, conducting periodic electrical audits, and ensuring emergency exits are accessible. Only through proactive measures, rigorous checks, and responsible governance can such tragedies be avoided.

YUGAL KISHORE SHARMA | FARIDABAD

THE DIPLOMATIC OUTREACH IS A COMMENDABLE EFFORT

The editorial on the diplomatic outreach (19-5-25) is welcome. The programme designed by the Union Government, though not new, is good and timely. Leaders drawn from various parties visiting the assigned countries to explain our position and the inevitability behind the Operation Sindoor is necessary to mobilise the moral and political support of all the nations in our efforts to cleanse Pakistan of terror outfits. Pakistan's prioritised agenda of sheltering, aiding, guiding and training various groups of terrorists each group having its own objectives against different countries render Pakistan a 'terrorists' haven and a global menace rather than an isolated issue of India alone.

The cabinet minister of Pakistan himself has confessed to media that the country's growth has suffered a lot due to its focused programme of promoting terrorism. This confirmation from the horse's mouth needs to be propagated among all the countries for a better understanding about the destructive role of Pakistan.

The country is in the brink of economic collapse. The bailout loan sought by Pakistan from IMF explains its grim economic status. The terrorists, who attribute their destructive activities to religion and God, have actually

killed more people of their own religion. However, having waited all along and having borne all the pains inflicted by the terrorists bred by Pakistan, India had to decide a fight to finish programme that aims at annihilating all the terrorists and their outfits available in Pakistan. Operation Sindoor was hitting the terrorists installations whereas Pakistan, under the guise of retaliations, was hitting the civilians in Indian border villages.

There is a general but valid apprehension that Pak may utilise the likely IMF loan further for its terror promotion activities. Moreover, nuclear weapons available with Pakistan is a danger and there is a dire need to ensure a viable control and monitoring by international agency.

While explaining all such matters to the international communities the programme of diplomatic outreach involving towering personalities of various parties will portray the unity of India to the entire world.

At the same time it is equally important for the Government to explain certain questions posed by various parties. Let a special session of the Parliament be called at an early date to discuss various issues related to the security of the country.

AG RAJMOHAN | ANANTPUR

Overhaul Consumer Protection Act to empower consumers

To genuinely protect consumers, the Act requires deep-rooted reforms — ranging from simplifying complaint processes to enforcing stricter packaging norms and curbing trade malpractices. Without these systemic changes, consumer rights will continue to exist more in policy than in practice

FIRST
Column

Consumer Protection Act 2019 needs root-level changes either in the Act itself or by modifications in rules so that need for filing complaints may not be arise. A very little fraction of consumers approach consumer-forums for their consumer-rights against malpractices of big manufacturers because of very cumbersome procedure and spent of so many man-days in consumer-courts.

Portal Jago-Grahak-Jago on the website of the Department of Consumer Affairs (Government of India) acts like a post office to deliver eye-wash replies from companies against whom complaints are lodged. Consumers are advised to approach Consumer Court if they are not satisfied with the replies of the companies received through the portal. The portal must be made practically effective with the Department made to scrutinise replies from the companies, and take the matter further in case replies are found unsatisfactory.

All companies should compulsorily put on their websites contact details including names of concerned senior officers and Directors. All such websites of companies should compulsorily give details of Government portals and consumer forms. Annual-Maintenance-Contracts (AMCs) should be practically made Extended Warranties since most companies fool consumers by not entertaining many aspects covered under AMCs.

All packaged commodities must be packed in the true metric spirit in either unit of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500, or 1000 and thereafter in multiples of 1000 basic units abolishing any need for printing unit-price on packs. A popular milk brand (Namaste-India) has started packaging milk packs at 950 meters and 1900 meters to look like earlier packs of 1000 meters and 2000 meters respectively. There are so many packages in milk and milk products like 400 mltrs, and 450 mltrs, confusing consumers to look like 500 mltrs.

Commodities like Ghee are packed in litres in packs of 1 or 5 litres, but in kgs in packs of 15 kgs. A uniform system should be for marketing such products either by weight or by volume.

Drug manufacturers at times cheat consumers by packing commonly advertised medicines like cough lozenges in eight per strip rather than the normal ten. Many drug manufacturers started packing medicines in strips of 15 rather than 10 simply to increase sales. The suggested packaging system may be for medicines also unless exemption is sought from the competent authority for dose-wise administration. At times gifts given by manufacturers to promote other products are swallowed by traders. The system should be to tie gifts with marketed products. "Not for sale alone" should be prominently printed on the gift.

Since the Supreme Court has allowed the use of A-4 size paper, any further production of legal-size paper must be banned. A slight modification in A-4 size paper is made from the present 29.5 cms x 21 cms to 30 cms x 20 cms to be in tune with the metric spirit.



Commodities and services with Government-administered prices should be in round figures of rupee one per unit like for petrol-diesel and in multiples of rupee fifty for commodities like LPG refill. Likewise, all postal-tariffs can be in multiples of rupee ten except for ordinary post-cards and registered newspapers which may have subsidised postal-tariff of rupee one. It will not affect consumers, since delivery-persons never return balance coins.

Rounding-off prices can earn extra revenue for the Governments.



extra levy other than Government-taxes. Moreover, the Consumer Protection Act should ban the colo-

MANY DRUG MANUFACTURERS STARTED PACKING MEDICINES IN STRIPS OF 15 RATHER THAN 10 SIMPLY TO INCREASE SALES. THE SUGGESTED PACKAGING SYSTEM MAY BE FOR MEDICINES ALSO UNLESS EXEMPTION IS SOUGHT FROM THE COMPETENT AUTHORITY FOR DOSE-WISE ADMINISTRATION

nial practice of paying tips directing hotels and restaurants to prominently display "No Tips" boards.

India being the largest consumer base, can impose conditions on foreign companies exporting commodities to India to set up their manufacturing units in India especially when many such foreign companies flood Indian markets with products manufactured in countries other than the country of origin. An example is the setting up of the biggest manufacturing plant of Samsung mobile phones in Noida (UP). It will result in huge earnings of foreign exchange by way of export from India rather than the drain of foreign exchange in importing such commodities. The union Government should ban the import of items that are already available in India of much superior quality.

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) should call a meeting of printer manufacturers including representatives of foreign companies to minimise types of ink cartridges. The largest selling foreign company Hewlett-Packard (HP) has too many types of ink cartridges of similar shape and size for their vast range of inkjet and laser printers.

Such standardisation will heavily reduce the cost of ink cartridges. The condition should be that such accessories may be allowed to be manufactured by Indian manufacturers. Standardisation of mobile chargers on lines of electrical plugs and sockets should also be done for mobile phones of all makes and companies.

Union Government should also induce standardisation of common accessories like tyres and batteries so that the same parts may be used in different models of cars produced by various car manufacturers. It will heavily bring down the cost of consumables through their bumper production in extra large numbers in some limited sizes and specifications. It can be achieved by merging some near-sizes and specifications.

Such guidelines though also mentioned in the auto-policy of the Union Government, are never followed in actual practice. There may be just two variants apart from the third with automatic gears, one basic Lx for economy customers and the other Vx with all company-fitted extra accessories and luxuries for affording customers.

Presently there is no limit to the allowed total profit margin on a commodity between the maximum retail price (MRP) and the Ex-factory price of commodities allowing huge total trade margins. Even economically priced generic medicines have printed MRP which is ten times higher than their wholesale price. Such big trade margins induce corruption in purchases.

Moreover, victims are normal consumers, especially in rural areas, who do not have access to and knowledge of wholesale markets. Department of Consumer Affairs must fix the maximum total trade margin for any commodity to bring down the MRP of commodities.

Even renowned confectioners having daily sales in lakhs of rupees, do not issue bills resulting in big losses to the exchequer. Confectioners should be directed to compulsorily stick a copy of the GST invoice on each box of unbranded sweets sold in loose. GST authorities should be advised to have a common GST rate of say 12 per cent on all food items where presently luxury sweets attract a GST rate of just 5 per cent while salted items attract 12 per cent GST giving liberty to confectioners often selling both items to show more sale of sweets to save GST under composite-scheme.

Such can be the case with other unbranded commodities taxable under GST sold loose. Fear psychology should be developed whereby traders may themselves voluntarily issue GST invoices to customers even without being asked for.

National Anti-Profitteering Authority (NAPP) should entertain suggestions coming from experts and members of the public. A consumer forum in Chandigarh once imposed a fine of rupees 9000 on a renowned shoe company for charging rupees three as the cost of paper bags.

But the same company and many famous branded shopping malls, are still charging the cost of paper bags from the shoppers. Department of Consumer Affairs should prohibit by law the "selling" of shopping bags just for packing goods.

(The writer is a RTI consultant. Views expressed are personal)

Trump's Arabia gambit jolts BRICS: New trade pacts signal a shift in alliances

President Donald Trump's Arabia visit has opened up challenges to BRICS, which ties between Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar in an Abrahamic Accord for officially recognising Israel. It has messages for India. Trump on May 16 announced that India has offered a trade deal that proposed almost "no tariffs" on US goods, as the South Asian nation seeks to avert higher import and export costs.

Is BRICS dead? Trump on February 14 issued a blunt warning to BRICS nations, threatening a 100 per cent tariff on all imports into the US if they proceed with launching a common currency. He said just hours before a scheduled meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, dismissing the economic bloc's relevance, declaring, "BRICS is dead."

BRICS is still kicking, but Trump's aggression for a unipolar dollarised world has thawed it a bit as Russia listens to him for a ceasefire with Ukraine and the US-China trade conflict settles for lower tariffs.

His agreements with Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar add further teeth to the anti-BRICS mission. Trump said, "I don't care, but BRICS was put there for a bad purpose, and most of those people don't want it. They don't even want to talk about it now. They're afraid to talk about it because I told them if they want to play games with the dollar, then they're going to be hit with a 100 per cent tariff."

New Delhi is looking to clinch a trade deal with the US within the 90-day pause announced by Trump on April 9, on so-called reciprocal tariffs for major trading partners. On May 8, the White House secured a trade agreement with the United Kingdom, two days after India inked a similar pact with it.

Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates all "wanted to showcase they were open for business, which they were able to do, and they wanted to get the US on side," Dina Esfandiari, Middle East lead for Bloomberg Economics, says. "They wanted to show that they were back in terms of being in America's graces," she said, adding that in return, Trump was able to get massive deals with headline figures. Gulf countries have been looking to revamp their ties with the US, moving away from a transactional oil-for-security understanding to stronger partnerships that are rooted in bilateral investments and shared visions. "It was a 'new dawn' in the US relationship with the Gulf, Jasmine El-Gamal, a Middle East analyst and former adviser to the Pentagon says.

Saudi Arabia did not get a formalised security deal with the US. That would be replacing the ally, Israel. It came closer to it. Last year, the two nations came close to finalising a landmark defence and trade pact — but the deal stalled over the Saudi



insistence that Israel commit to a path toward Palestinian statehood. Trump now gave to Riyadh a handful of arms deals that may pave the way for a wider agreement. At a formal signing ceremony in a gilded ballroom at the Saudi capital's Royal Court, Trump and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman signed memoranda of understanding, letters of intent and other executive agreements spanning different Government agencies.

Saudi Arabia also committed \$600 billion in US investments, including an expansive defence partnership valued at nearly \$142 billion, which the US touts as the "largest defence sales agreement in history." Riyadh did not get a civilian nuclear programme as it insisted on enriching uranium domestically - raising concerns in the US and Israel over nuclear weapons proliferation.

The Saudis are being given massive business opportunities in Syria, as the US lifts sanctions. Trump's tea with Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa, a former jihadist who until recently had a \$10 million US bounty on his head, has opened up billions of dollars in opportunities. Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, have been keen to invest in Syria. The baits are enough to keep off BRICS, the US believes. The Saudis have been silent since they attended the last BRICS summit in October 2024. Qatar's emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, says that talks with Trump, a first visit by the US President on this trip will "give new impetus to the existing strategic cooperation between the two countries."

They signed a host of deals during Trump's visit, including a \$96 billion agreement for Qatar to acquire up to 210 American-made Boeing planes. Trump also accepted a Boeing 747-8 jet from the Qataris, to be used initially as Air Force One, a gift that is stated to influence the Trump admin-

istration. Qatar is the Gulf state with the most formalised security ties with Washington. It hosts the biggest US military installation in the Middle East, which the State Department describes as "indispensable" for US military operations in the region. It even helped the US in its Afghanistan operations.

The UAE's main target from Trump's trip was deeper investments in AI and technology, and while it achieved victories in that regard, the visit fell short of what Abu Dhabi really wanted: unrestricted access to advanced American microchips. Trump gave the UAE a partnership to build a massive data centre in Abu Dhabi to advance AI capabilities with 5 gigawatts of capacity — enough to power a major city. The complex would require 2.5 million chips, bigger than all major AI infra so far. The Arab states got business opportunities in the US, Syria, and in their own countries.

They, however, could not replace the ally Israel and may have to protect it even against their will, a major US gain. The US is India's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade totalling some \$129 billion in 2024. India ran a \$45.7 billion surplus with the US last year, mainly in the form of pharmaceutical products, electrical machinery and jewellery. The Americans have got what they want with various kinds of arm-twisting methods in the region.

Finally, India may get its tariff relief as it extends more to the nutty US relations. India, however, is continuing with BRICS as Union Minister of Power and Housing & Urban Affairs Manohar Lal visits Brazil to attend the BRICS Energy Ministers' Meeting on May 19.

This visit underscores India's determination to actively collaborate with BRICS nations in building a robust, future-oriented, and sustainable energy sector.

(The writer a veteran journalist is a strategic analyst. Views expressed are personal)

The growing mental health crisis among youth: A call for societal reform

There is a silence that is louder than any noise: the silence of a nation hanging by a thread, playing along with its day-to-day life highs and lows. Now that we confidently march through the 21st century with all its scientific and technological achievements, a more hidden and creeping crisis lies beneath. It is not also spoken about in boardrooms, aired on primetime headlines. But it is everywhere — in every classroom, every bedroom, and in the light emitted by millions of phone screens. The youth mental health crisis is more than a public health crisis. It is an accounting of our philosophy, our sociology, and our ethics.

To grasp the magnitude of this affliction, one must move beyond clinical definitions and statistical abstractions. Yes, the World Health Organisation has declared suicide the fourth leading cause of death among 15 to 29-year-olds.

Yes, global anxiety and depression rates among youth have doubled in the past decade. But such data, however alarming, remains inert unless animated by empathy and understanding. Numbers cannot cry, nor can they articulate the numbing void, the silent terror, the daily existential negotiation that many young individuals face in a world increasingly devoid of authentic connection.

But we have to ask, how far down our societal apparatus have we fallen? The solution to this riddle partly contains a paradox. Truly a generation never more connected and yet more radically isolated. What was deemed as the liberating nature of digital spaces that enable democratised discourse, have instead become bastions of perfectionism and performative displays.

The professionally assembled illusion of success on social media has made real selfness questionable. Amidst such a rife atmosphere where young minds still moulding and breaking are perpetually being pitted against one another and their livelihoods, humanity itself, is compared, evaluated, and finally published under brand names. Moreover, rather than a haven for exploration and self-expression, the educational system — if we still dare to call it so — has transformed into a pressure cooker in the same way.

In this world, simply ignorance is less feared than failure, and, numerically, excellence is judged, not by the depth of understanding. The child evolves from seeker to performer, running on a treadmill built by someone else.

Finally, there is home — the sanctuary that should be. Parents, often unthinking agents of the same wider pressures, but well-intentioned nevertheless, become peddlers of the very anxieties they want to shield kids from. The expectations, the overscheduling, the whispered disappointment in anything short of "really awesome" — these are not blips; they are part of



the fabric of society.

What then is to be done? Will we submit to despair, or can we muster the moral imagination to build a different road?

First, let us redefine mental health from a clinical response to a societal imperative. Instead, mental wellness should be a pillar of educational policy — enshrined, not an afterthought. Syllabi need to find room for emotional intelligence, mindfulness, resilience, and compassionate communication alongside algebra and history.

Second, we must destigmatise vulnerability. To be emotionally fragile is not to be weak — it is to be human. Public discourse must elevate voices who speak of their struggles without shame. Let us replace pity with solidarity, and condescension with community. Third, we must invest — not merely in psychiatric infrastructure but in cultural transformation.

Create national frameworks that embed psychological counselling in every academic institution. Encourage peer-led support ecosystems. Mandate mental health days. Incentivise digital detoxification. Reimagine urban spaces to include green sanctuaries for quietude and contemplation.

Finally, we must listen. Not with the intent to reply, but to understand. Listen to the poetry, the pauses, the frustrations, the silences. The youth do not need saving — they need hearing. They do not seek sympathy — they seek space.

The mental health crisis is not merely a medical emergency; it is a civilisational crossroad. How we respond will define the moral tenor of our age. Let it not be said that we excelled in machines but failed our children. Let us, instead, craft a future where the mind is not a battlefield, but a garden. Let that be our most enduring legacy.

(The writer is CEO — Navjivan Health Service. Views expressed are personal)



SHIVAJI SARKAR



MONICA B SOOD

TMC not to send Yusuf Pathan in Operation Sindoor delegation

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) has decided not to send its Lok Sabha MP Yusuf Pathan as a member of the multi-party delegation that the Union Government is sending to different countries to hammer home its logic on Operation Sindoor post Pahalgam terror attack and neutralise the disinformation campaign mounted by Pakistan in its aftermath.

This, because the party thinks that the Centre has no right to unilaterally select members of other parties in such matters.

As the State BJP leaders immediately slammed the TMC for boycotting the all-party delegation Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who is also the TMC chief quickly intervened telling the media men on Monday that it was not a question of boycotting the delegation but a question of “parliamentary and federal ethics.”

“It is wrong to say that we are boycotting the delegation as the TMC has from the beginning made it very clear that we are

with the Central Government on whatever decision it takes on external affairs. We are not boycotting, why we have decided to withdraw him (Pathan) is because it is

The Union Government cannot take unilateral decisions on selecting members from other parties, that is against federal democratic ethics

— MAMATA BANERJEE, CHIEF MINISTER

a matter of parliamentary ethics. You have every right to send a parliamentary delegation comprising representatives from other parties but you have no right to select those representatives, you will have to ask the other parties to nominate their members to such delegation, that is a matter of courtesy and political propriety,” the Chief Minister said before leaving for his business trip to North Bengal.

Pathan a cricketer-turned-politician is a first time MP from Behrampur in Murshidabad district from where he defeated veteran Congress warhorse Adhir

Chowdhury in 2024 general elections.

According to inside sources the Chief Minister was more interested in sending someone like its Rajya Sabha MP Derek O’Brien or Krishnagar MP Mahua Moitra. TMC general secretary and Diamond Harbour MP Abhishek Banerjee too backed the Chief Minister’s decision saying that his party would never accept “unilateral decisions” in a federal democracy.

“It is a good decision to send a delegation to the world to tell other countries what mischief Pakistan has been playing against us for decades. It is the need of the hour to take along with you the world opinion. There is also no problem in selecting your own leaders to be a part of such delegation, if BJP is selecting its own leaders, that is its own decision, but the Union Government cannot take unilateral decisions on selecting members from other parties, that is against federal democratic ethics. Centre should show good intent and call for a wider deliberations from all parties in the Opposition,” Banerjee who is also the nephew of the

Chief Minister said insisting that the decision of his party chief should not be taken as one of a boycott.

“It should not be seen as if we have opted out of the delegation or we are boycotting it. Rather we want to make clear the technical aspects, it is for the TMC as an independent political outfit to decide who will go from our party, not the Union Government,” he said.

The BJP was prompt to react with State party president and Union Minister Sukanta Majumdar saying that the TMC should not have taken it as a political decision. “It is not a political decision but a national duty, they should have considered it, when the Congress Government had sent Atal Behari Vajpayee to lead one such delegation the BJP had not come in the way because we knew that it was a national duty that our leader was going to do, in such matters political identities should be secondary and national identity should be primary,” Majumdar said adding the TMC should stop sensing politics in everything.

Mumbai: Three killed, four injured in families clash

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ Mumbai

Three persons from two families were killed and four others injured in a major clash between the members of two families at Dahisar in north Mumbai. The clash took place on Sunday evening between the members of Gupta and Shaikh families, both residents of Gully number 14 Ganpat Patil Nagar slum at Dahisar (West), a far-flung northern suburb of Mumbai.

While Guptas are fruit and coconut vendors, the Shaikh family is into tailoring. There has been an enmity between the two families for more than three years. So much so that the members had failed cross-complaints against each other in 2022 over a physical assault.

A fresh clash erupted at 5 pm on Sunday when an inebriated Hamid Sheikh arrived at the coconut shop of Ram Gupta and had an altercation with Ram Gupta. At this juncture, both Shaikh and Ram Gupta called their sons to the spot. Ram Gupta along with his sons Amar Gupta, Arvind Gupta, and Amit Gupta initially traded abuses with Hamid Sheikh, along with his sons Armaan Sheikh and Hasan

Sheikh. Later, their war of words turned into a full-fledged fight between the members of the two families – in which knives and koyatas were used.

The clash took place on Sunday evening between the members of Gupta and Shaikh families, both residents of Gully number 14 Ganpat Patil Nagar slum at Dahisar (West), a far-flung northern suburb of Mumbai

During the fight, Ram Gupta (50) Arvind Gupta (23), and Hamid Sheikh (49) sustained severe injuries. They were rushed to Kandivali’s Shatabdi Hospital, where doctors declared them dead.

Those injured in the fight were identified as Amar Gupta, Amit Gupta, Arman Sheikh, and Hasan Sheikh. They are undergoing treatment at Shatabdi Hospital for injuries.

Having registered a cross murder case, the MHB police are investigating the case. The local Crime Branch officials are assisting the investigation team.

GMDA installs CCTV cameras at waste collection points to prevent illegal dumping

PARVESH SHARMA ■ Gurugram

The Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) has successfully installed 29 CCTV cameras at Bandhwari landfill site and 16 CCTV cameras at 14 secondary garbage collection points to monitor waste management operations, prevent illegal dumping and track waste transportation trucks in the city.

Additionally, 26 smart floodlights have also been installed at these locations to for enhanced night monitoring and tracking services. All the 45 CCTV cameras installed in total have been linked with the Integrated Command and Control Center (ICCC) in GMDA.

The surveillance initiative is aimed at 24x7 monitoring of waste sites on real time basis, tracking of garbage vehicles at Bhandwari Site via monitoring of the video feeds of all the cameras.

The Project Plan was approved by Municipal Corporation Gurugram (MCG) after a detailed survey was conducted by a team comprising of GMDA and MCG officials to identify Secondary waste collection locations for installation



of cameras and floodlights at all 14 secondary waste collection points which can be connected to the existing Captive Optical Fiber Network of GMDA.

In addition, for connecting the cameras installed at Bhandwari Refill site, GMDA has laid Optical Fiber cable of around 12 Kms and connected it on captive optical fibre network of GMDA.

Under this project, bullet-type cameras for general surveillance and automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras for tracking vehicles engaged in trans-

portation and dumping of waste. Data from the cameras will be reconciled with waste collection data at secondary points and data on waste segregation.

“The project has been executed by GMDA as a deposit work of the MCG to facilitate improved waste management services in the city. The CCTV cameras will enable the corporation to monitor waste management activities at the secondary collection points and Bhandwari landfill site on real-time basis,” said PK Agarwal, Head, Smart City Division, GMDA.

Ahead of DU Executive Council meet, concerns raised over proposed uniform seniority policy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Ahead of the Delhi University Executive Council meeting, a proposed uniform policy to determine the seniority of college teachers has evoked a mixed response from members of the executive and academic councils.

The proposal will be placed for final approval at the upcoming DU Executive Council (EC) meeting scheduled for May 23. The proposed uniform policy, aimed at streamlining promotions and appointments by addressing longstanding ambiguities in determining faculty seniority, particularly among assistant professors (Level 10), is the outcome of a high-level committee formed in July 2024.

The panel included college principals, EC members, and representatives from SC, ST, and OBC categories. It held five meetings between July 2024 and April 2025 before submitting its final recommendations. According to the proposed policy, the department whose appointments happened first will be treated senior to the other departments.

Within a department, in cases where no common seniority list is prepared, the age of faculty members would be used to deter-

mine seniority among first-ranked candidates across categories. These parallel lists are intended to maintain fairness and clarity in internal appointments, academic committees, and statutory bodies.

However, Prof Maya John, a member of the DU Academic Council and of the committee that framed the policy, has raised serious concerns. “I submitted a dissent note quoting evolving service-related jurisprudence, which I was assured would accompany the final report. It now appears that my Minority Report has not been annexed for the forthcoming EC meeting,” she said in a statement John warned that the policy’s limitations — such as restricting review of seniority to appointments made after April 2022 and its refusal to use the reservation roster to calculate inter se seniority — would deepen discontent among DU faculty. She argued that the university’s current statutes predate the implementation of reservation policies and thus need amendment.

“The denial of weightage to past teaching experience and refusal to push back the cut-off date also deprive many deserving faculty of rightful consideration,” she added. Executive Council member Aman Kumar echoed some of these concerns.

“The policy should be truly universal and not just applicable post-2022. There were major recruitment drives in 2010, 2014, and 2018. What about those teachers?” he asked, calling for the need to revisit the policy’s scope.

However, defending the draft policy, Prof Harendra Tiwari, also an EC member and part of the committee, said the guidelines were formulated in line with those issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).

“The committee conducted five meetings, discussing each provision in depth. The policy ensures equity, social justice, and compliance with legal frameworks while respecting the selection committee’s wisdom,” he said.

Tiwari also clarified that inter se seniority is not typically applicable in colleges due to the existence of a single assistant professor cadre. The DU Executive Council, the university’s highest statutory body chaired by Vice-Chancellor Yogesh Singh, will deliberate on the proposal on May 23. If approved, the policy is expected to bring greater clarity and institutional harmony in faculty appointments, while also aligning with constitutional provisions for reservation.

CM Gupta pays surprise visit to shelter home, meets residents

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Monday carried out a surprise inspection of a shelter home near North Delhi’s Britannia Chowk flyover to review the living conditions and ensure that basic facilities are being provided to the residents. The visit is part of efforts to ensure dignity and care for the city’s homeless population.

During the inspection, the Chief Minister assessed key services including sanitation, drinking water, electricity, toilet facilities, and healthcare support.

She also interacted personally with several residents to hear their grievances and suggestions. Following this, she issued immediate instructions to the concerned officials to address any lapses in service and to ensure that all shelters meet essential standards.

Speaking after the inspection, CM Gupta reaffirmed the Delhi Government’s commitment to ensuring that no one is left to sleep on the streets, regardless of the season.

“The goal is to make every shelter in the city dignified and well-equipped,” she said, adding that providing shelter, food, and respect to the needy remains a top priority for the “triple-engine”

Government.

Special attention was directed at ensuring summer preparedness within the shelter. Gupta instructed officials to ensure adequate fans and coolers are installed immediately and that weather-appropriate bedding is available to all occupants.

We are not just offering a roof over their heads, but are working to connect them with healthcare and essential social services

— REKHA GUPTA, CHIEF MINISTER

She also emphasised the importance of safety, lighting, and regular cleaning to maintain a healthy environment.

In her statement, the Chief Minister highlighted the broader objective of integrating homeless individuals into mainstream society.

“We are not just offering a roof over their heads, but are working to connect them with healthcare and essential social services,” she said.

She called for regular inspections and strict monitoring of food quality and cleanliness across all shelter homes, ensuring transparency and accountability in their operation.

Be within Laxman Rekha: CM Mamata tells school teachers

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Under pressure in an election year from the Opposition for running an alleged “corrupt Government” Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has warned the sacked school teachers — agitating for the past more than a month demanding either restoration of their jobs or publication of the list of “tainted” and “untainted” candidates — to be within the Laxman Rekha.

“I have no problem with agitations and movements organised peacefully but there should not be breaking of laws so as to create problem for other citizens. There is a Laxman Rekha for agitations and they should remain within the Laxman Rekha,” an embarrassed Chief Minister whose Government has been under constant pressure from the 26,000 teachers whose jobs were terminated by the Supreme Court in April after the State Government failed to furnish the list of tainted and untainted teachers so that the honest candidates could be distinguished from ones who had obtained their jobs in exchange of cash.

The immediate context of the Chief Minister’s statement was a clash between the agitating teachers and the police leading to a lathi-charge that left several of

them inured last week.

“We are all human beings, I am not against agitations but there is a Laxman Rekha (limits) to such Andolans, Like I cannot stop anyone from going to my destination no one can stop me from doing so. I will ask them (teachers) to fight their cause legally and not otherwise, we are with them and have sympathy for them,” the Chief Minister said.

The teachers promptly reacted reminding the Chief Minister that as “the Government should also remember that there should be a Laxman Rekha for corruptions and this Government has violated all such Laxman Rekha, which is why we are on the streets.”

The teachers’ recruitment scam has seen former State Education Minister and senior Trinamool Congress leader Partha Chatterjee, some MLAs, senior functionaries like a former Vice Chancellor senior a Chairman of Board of Secondary Education et al cooling their heels in jail for the past more than three years.

As several thousand teachers and non-teaching staff had allegedly obtained their jobs by through backdoor and in lieu of cash, the SC last month decided to cancel the entire panel of 26,000 school staff including teachers and non-teaching staff.

Several arrested in Punjab, Haryana, UP for espionage

Continued from >> P1 Senior intelligence officials told The Pioneer that these arrests are the outcome of months-long digital surveillance, communication intercepts, and cross-border intelligence sharing post-Operation Sindoor. “We tracked their calls, chats, and financial transactions until a clear pattern emerged,” said one source.

DIG Border Range Satinder Singh underscored the seriousness of the threat: “These aren’t isolated incidents. They expose a systematic espionage web aimed at compromising our armed forces.”

Families of the accused, including

Sukhpreet’s, have denied the allegations. “He’s only 19, barely passed 12th, and sells fireworks with me. We own a single acre. He’s never been near the border,” his father stated. However, investigators cite overwhelming digital and financial evidence to the contrary.

As the joint probe by Punjab and Haryana police, aided by central agencies, advances, authorities are now shifting focus from individual arrests to dismantling the broader recruitment apparatus luring Indian youth into espionage-one SIM card, one bank transfer, and one betrayal at a time.

Golden Temple dodged doom

Continued from >> P1 The Indian Army emphasized that the air defense strategy surrounding religious and civilian zones had been bolstered days in advance, based on credible intelligence. On the night of May 7 and early hours of May 8, Pakistan launched a wave of attacks across Indian cities including Jammu, Srinagar, Pathankot, Ludhiana, Chandigarh, and Bhuj - Amritsar being a major focus due

to the presence of the Golden Temple. Despite the immediate cessation of hostilities following a ceasefire on May 10, military officials warned that Operation Sindoor is only “suspended” and not concluded. “Its full potential is yet to unfold,” stated Major General Seshadri, underlining that India’s defenses remain vigilant and robust against any further provocations.

Road laws optional, violations mandatory

Continued from >> P1 Noida issued challans of ₹3 lakh in a single month for helmet violations alone, signalling the fact that even the most basic safety norms are ignored en masse, the report pointed out.

The violations themselves point to a worrying pattern. Overspeeding accounted for nearly 50 per cent all challans issued. Close behind were violations for not wearing helmets or seatbelts, obstructive parking, and signal jumping, offences that not only flout the law but place countless lives at risk.

“Despite strict regulations, enforcement lags behind, and non-compliance continues to thrive. The data points to a system where penalties exist on paper, but deterrence remains weak. ₹12,000 crore in fines isn’t just a financial figure, it is a mirror reflecting how often and easily traffic laws are broken across the country,” the report said.

Citing its data, CARS24 said its finding also “disproves the myth that one segment of road users is more compliant than the other. 55 per cent of challans were issued to four-wheelers, while the

remaining 45 per cent came from two-wheelers”. “This near-equal split underscores one uncomfortable truth: nobody is innocent, and violations cut across vehicle types, cities, and income groups,” it said.

Commenting on the findings, CARS24 Co-Founder Gajendra Jangid said, “Every traffic violation is a silent vote against civic order. If we want safer cities, we need a cultural shift from compliance out of fear to responsibility out of pride.”

Yet despite these alarming trends, consequences often fail to follow. A whopping 75% of fines remain unpaid, revealing a gaping hole in enforcement and public accountability.

But ignoring a challan is no longer risk-free. As the report highlights, non-payment can lead to suspension of driving licenses and registration certificates, hikes in insurance premiums, and even court summons for repeat defaulters. Despite this, compliance rates remain worryingly low. The issue is no longer about a lack of rules, it’s about a lack of urgency in following them.

Allahabad HC junks plea against Sambhal mosque survey

Continued from >> P1 The court was referring to The Ancient Monuments and Archeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958. The Committee of Management, Shahi Jama Masjid, had moved the high court challenging the suit and the Sambhal court order which directed the survey through an advocate commissioner. The court refused to accept the argument of the mosque committee which said the dispute stood settled in 1877 and then a decree was confirmed by the high court as the 1877 verdict was in relation to an old building whereas the “Juma Masjid” was declared as a protected monument under the (The Ancient Monuments Preservation of Monuments) Act of 1904 in 1921.

“If the title suit was decided in favour of revisionist in the year 1877, then, question arises as to why the revisionist had entered into an agreement in the year 1927 subjecting the structure in dispute to the Act of 1904?” it asked. The judgement further noted that the alleged agreement did not reveal the ownership of the revision-

ist (committee) and clearly spoke that the structure needed to be protected in pursuance of the Act of 1904 by the Archaeological Department.

“The entire case set up by revisionist is on the basis of the alleged agreement entered between then collector, Moradabad and the revisionist in the year 1927. Once revisionist himself admitted to the execution of the alleged agreement which was in pursuance of the Act of 1904, prior to the enforcement of the Act of 1991 and cut-off date mentioned therein, he cannot say at this stage that suit is barred by provisions of the Act of 1991,” the court added.

The court went on, “I find that court below had not committed any error, irregularity or illegality in granting leave to institute the suit before the expiry of period of notice under Section 80(2) CPC, as it was never objected by the Government or its officials defendants 1 to 5 and revisionist/defendant 6 being a private person is not covered under the canopy of Section 80.”

The court held that the suit was “not prima facie barred” by the provisions of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991. “In fact, it has been filed seeking right to access to property in dispute under Section 18 (right of access to protected monuments) of the Act of 1958 being a protected monument,” it said.

The court observed no interference was required in the order dated November 19, 2024 passed by the civil court instituting the suit and appointing a commission for local investigation. “Revision fails and is hereby dismissed. Interim order stands vacated. Suit to proceed. No order as to cost,” it held.

Jain and seven others filed the suit before a civil judge senior division, Sambhal contending the Shahi Idgah Mosque was built after demolishing a temple at Sambhal. The mosque, it claimed, was built by Mughal emperor Babur in 1526 after demolishing the Harihar Mandir in Sambhal.

On January 10, Supreme Court directed the Sambhal District Magistrate to

maintain status quo on reviving or allowing prayers at a “private” well located near the entrance of the mosque. Considering a plea of the committee the top court issued notices to the Centre, the director general of the ASI, Sambhal district magistrate and other private Hindu side litigants led by Jain.

On November 24, last year protesters gathered near the mosque and clashed with the security personnel, leading to stone pelting and arson, leaving four dead and several injured. The apex court, on November 29 last year, ordered the Sambhal court to halt proceedings in the case over the mosque and its survey at Chandausi while directing the UP Government to maintain peace and harmony in the violence-hit town. The mosque committee moved the Supreme Court on November 28, challenging the November 19 order of the district court directing the survey of the Mughal-era mosque and sought an ex-parte stay on the operation of the November 19, last year order passed by the civil judge.

UK, EU to meet in official summit since Brexit to discuss closer ties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

The UK and the European Union will meet in London on Monday to discuss closer ties in their first official summit since Brexit.

The meeting between UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and top EU officials, including European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, is intended to pave the way toward a new agreement between both sides.

There is hope that a deal could improve the British economy, which has been hit by a drop in EU trade caused by increased costs and red tape after the United Kingdom left the bloc in 2020.

Resetting relations

Since becoming prime minister in July, Starmer has sought to reset relations with the EU, following years of tensions in the wake of the UK's Brexit referendum on June 23, 2016.

Post-Brexit relations have been governed by a trade agreement negotiated by then Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Starmer thinks that can be improved in a way that boosts trade and bolsters security.

It's unclear what will be announced at the summit, but Starmer said Sunday that there would be a deal, following trade agreements that the UK struck in recent weeks with India and the US.

"Tomorrow, we take another step forwards, with yet more benefits for the United Kingdom as the result of a strength-

ened partnership with the European Union," he said. "It will be good for our jobs, good for our bills and good for our borders."

Seeking a better deal

Since the Labour Party returned to power after 14 years of Conservative government, a period that was largely marked by the time leading up to the Brexit vote and its aftermath, both sides have sought to improve relations.

The meeting between UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and top EU officials, including European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, is intended to pave the way toward a new agreement between both sides

That's been most evident in the more coordinated response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in the wake of a change of approach by Washington following the return of US President Donald Trump. Starmer, who campaigned for the UK

To remain within the EU in the referendum and subsequently sought a second vote, has said that he wants a better deal with the 27-nation bloc that will smooth trade between the two sides and bolster security cooperation, including on defense procurement.

Non-tariff barriers

Though no tariffs are slapped on the export of goods between both sides, an array of non-tariff barriers, including more onerous border checks and laborious paperwork, have made trade more difficult.

Post-Brexit visa restrictions have also hobbled the cross-border activities of service professionals, such as bankers or lawyers, as well as cultural exchanges, including touring bands and school trips.

Before the summit — the first in what are planned to be annual events — Starmer said that good progress had been made in negotiations, while insisting that the UK won't breach his red lines. In its election manifesto last year, Labour said that it wouldn't rejoin the EU's frictionless single market and customs union, nor agree to the free movement of people between the UK and the EU.

Security, defence and youth mobility

Talks on strengthening ties have focused largely on security and defense, and on a youth mobility plan that would allow young Britons and Europeans to live and work temporarily in each other's territory. That remains a politically touchy issue in the UK, seen by some Brexiters as inching back towards free movement — though the UK. Already has youth mobility arrangements with countries including Australia and Canada.

Cabinet Office minister Nick Thomas-Symonds, who is leading negotiations, said

that talks with the EU were going down "to the wire."

The issue of fishing

The summit is expected to lead to more intense discussions on an array of issues, including aligning standards on the sale of agricultural products that could eliminate costly checks on food products exported across the English Channel, closer energy ties and a new fishing pact. While he wouldn't provide details, Thomas-Symonds said that he was confident that trade could be improved for food imports and exports.

"We know we've had lorries waiting for 16 hours, fresh food in the back not able to be exported, because frankly it's just going off, red tape, all the certifications that are required, we absolutely want to reduce that," he said.

Disagreements reportedly remain over fishing, an economically minor but symbolically large issue for the UK. And EU member states such as France. Disputes over the issue nearly derailed a Brexit deal back in 2020.

Starmer's plummeting popularity

As in all negotiations, some of the trade-offs may prove difficult, especially for Starmer, whose popularity has plummeted in recent months.

Earlier this month, the anti-immigration and pro-Brexit Reform UK won big in local elections.

Joe Biden diagnosed with aggressive prostate cancer



Many political leaders sent former US president Joe Biden wishes for his recovery

FILE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Washington

Former US President Joe Biden has been diagnosed with prostate cancer, his office said Sunday.

The finding came after the 82-year-old reported urinary symptoms, which led doctors to discover a nodule on his prostate. He was diagnosed with prostate cancer on Friday, with the cancer cells having spread to the bone.

"While this represents a more aggressive form of the disease, the cancer appears to be hormone-sensitive which allows for effective management," his office said. "The President and his family are reviewing treatment options with his physicians."

Prostate cancers are graded for aggressiveness using what's known as a Gleason score. The scores range from six to 10, with eight, nine and 10 prostate cancers behaving more aggressively. Biden's office said his score was nine, suggesting his cancer is among the most aggressive.

When prostate cancer spreads to other parts of the body, it often spreads to the bones. Metastasised cancer is much harder to treat than localised cancer because it can be hard for drugs to reach all the tumours and completely root out the disease. However, when prostate cancers need hormones to grow, as in Biden's case, they can be susceptible to treatment that deprives the tumors of hormones.

Outcomes have improved in recent decades and patients can expect to live with metastatic prostate cancer for four or five years, said Dr Matthew Smith of Massachusetts General Brigham Cancer Center. "It's very treatable, but not curable," Smith said. "Most men in this situation would be treated with drugs and would not be advised to have either surgery or radiation therapy."

Many political leaders sent Biden their wishes for his recovery.

President Donald Trump, a longtime political opponent, posted on social

media that he was saddened by the news and "we wish Joe a fast and successful recovery." Biden's vice president, Kamala Harris, said on social media that she was keeping him in her family's "hearts and prayers during this time."

"Joe is a fighter — and I know he will face this challenge with the same strength, resilience and optimism that have always defined his life and leadership," Harris wrote.

Former President Barack Obama said his thoughts and prayers were with Biden, his former vice president, lauding his toughness. "Nobody has done more to find breakthrough treatments for cancer in all its forms than Joe and I am certain he will fight this challenge with his trademark resolve and grace," Obama wrote on social media.

The health of Biden was a dominant concern among voters during his time as president. After a calamitous debate performance in June while seeking reelection, Biden abandoned his bid for a second term. Harris became the nominee and lost to Trump, a Republican who returned to the White House after a four-year hiatus.

But in recent days, Biden rejected concerns about his age despite reporting in the new book "Original Sin" by Jake Tapper and Alex Thompson that aides had shielded the public from the extent of his decline while serving as president.

In February 2023, Biden had a skin lesion removed from his chest that was a basal cell carcinoma, a common form of skin cancer. And in November 2021, he had a polyp removed from his colon that was a benign, but potentially pre-cancerous lesion.

In 2022, Biden made a "cancer moonshot" one of his administration's priorities with the goal of halving the cancer death rate over the next 25 years. The initiative was a continuation of his work as vice president to address a disease that had killed his older son, Beau, who died from brain cancer in 2015.

Trump hopes for ceasefire in Russia-Ukraine war

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Washington

US President Donald Trump is hoping separate phone calls Monday with Russian leader Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will make progress toward a ceasefire in the war in Ukraine.

Trump expressed his hopes for a "productive day" Monday — and a ceasefire — in a social media post over the weekend. His effort will also include calls to NATO leaders. Trump has struggled to end a war that began with Russia's invasion in February 2022 and that makes these conversations a serious test of his reputation as a dealmaker after having claimed he would quickly settle the conflict once he was back in the White House, if not even before he took office.

The Republican president is banking on the idea that his force of personality and personal history with Putin will be enough to break any impasse over a pause in the fighting. "His sensibilities are that he's got to get on the phone with President Putin, and that is going to clear up some of the logjam and get us to the place that we need

to get to," said Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff. "I think it's going to be a very successful call." Still, there are fears that Trump has an affinity for Putin that could put Ukraine at a disadvantage with any agreements engineered by the US Government.

Bridget Brink said she resigned last month as the US Ambassador to Ukraine "because the policy since the beginning of the administration was to put pressure on the victim Ukraine, rather than on the aggressor, Russia." Brink said the sign that she needed to depart was an Oval Office meeting in February where Trump and his team openly berated Zelenskyy for not being sufficiently deferential to them.

"I believe that peace at any price is not peace at all," Brink said. "It's appeasement and as we know from history, appeasement only leads to more war."

Trump's frustration about the war had been building before his post Saturday on Truth Social about the coming calls, which he said would begin first with Putin at 10 am on Monday. Trump said his discussion with Putin would focus on stopping the "bloodbath" of the war. It also will cover trade, a sign that Trump might be

seeking to use financial incentives to broker some kind of agreement after Russia's invasion led to severe sanctions by the United States and its allies that have steadily eroded Moscow's ability to grow.

Trump's hope, according to the post, is that "a war that should have never happened will end." His treasury secretary, Scott Bessent, said Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press" that Trump had made it clear that a failure by Putin to negotiate "in good faith" could lead to additional sanctions against Russia.

Bessent suggested the sanctions that began during the administration of Democratic President Joe Biden were inadequate because they did not stop Russia's oil revenues, due to concerns that doing so would increase US Prices. The United States sought to cap Russia's oil revenues while preserving the country's petroleum exports to limit the damage from the inflation that the war produced.

Putin recently rejected an offer by Zelenskyy to meet in-person in Turkey as an alternative to a 30-day ceasefire urged by Ukraine and its Western allies, including Washington.

Singapore octogenarian doctor fined for anti-Islam social media posts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Singapore

An 85-year-old Singapore doctor was fined SGD 10,000 (\$7,700) on Monday for posting remarks "highly insulting towards Islam" on social media. A police report against Kho Kwang Po, 85, said he posted in 2016 and reposted in 2021 remarks on Facebook that were "highly insulting towards Islam".

Another report said he posted seditious content denigrating Islam on Facebook for several years, Channel News Asia reported. Kho, the only person with access to his account, first made the Facebook post on April 21, 2016 and reposted the same content on April 21, 2021, even after being administered a conditional warning over the original post.

The octogenarian's post was available for the public to see, as he had intended the public to view it, Deputy Public Prosecutor Sean Teh told the court. The

prosecution urged the court to fine Kho SGD 10,000, arguing that he made the posts with deliberation.

The accused's Facebook profile was publicly available, thus, the post in question was available for all to view. The accused had been making many Muslim-directed posts over a prolonged period

— SEAN TEH, DEPUTY PUBLIC PROSECUTOR

Teh said the offence would have ordinarily warranted an imprisonment term, but the prosecution had factored in Kho's advanced age, his plea of guilt to the charge of deliberately intending to wound the religious feelings of Muslims and how the posts had not gained significant traction.

"The accused's Facebook profile was

publicly available, thus, the post in question was available for all to view. The accused had been making many Muslim-directed posts over a prolonged period," said Teh.

Kho's lawyers, Kenneth Au-Yong and Josiah Tan, said their client apologised for his misjudgment.

"He is not likely to repeat this offence, and as the prosecution said, he has shown remorse and made a plea of guilt," said Au-Yong. District Judge Eddy Tham said he found the words "objectively insulting".

"As a doctor, you should have known better than to propagate such views on the internet," Judge Tham said.

The district judge added that he had read Kho's plea in mitigation, expressing his remorse, where the doctor had admitted to being overly fixated on what he read on the internet and accepting propaganda without critical examination.

Three killed, several injured in lightning strike at Cambodia's Angkor Wat temple

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bangkok

Three people were killed and several others injured when they were struck by lightning while visiting Cambodia's famous Angkor Wat temple complex. They had been seeking shelter around the main temple of the UNESCO site when the lightning struck late Friday afternoon.

Video posted on social media showed two ambulances arriving in the aftermath and onlookers and site officials carrying out some injured people and helping others out on foot.

Other images showed multiple people being treated in the hospital. The day after the incident, Cambodia's Minister of Tourism Hout Hak issued a statement telling people to take down online posts about it, saying the spreading of "negative information" could harm the country's tourism sector.

Authorities have released no information about the incident, but an official on Monday, speaking on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the issue, confirmed to media that three people — all Cambodian — were killed in the lightning strike.

The Cambodian Red Cross also posted an update saying it had delivered care packages to the families of two of the victims, a 34-year-old man and a 52-year-old woman. The Red Cross refused to comment further by phone.

A spokesman for the Angkor Wat site did not respond to requests for comment, nor did a regional health official.

Cambodia's government under Prime Minister Hun Manet keeps a tight grip on information and has been accused by rights groups of using the court system to prosecute critics and political opponents.

Hun Manet in 2023 succeeded his father, Hun Sen, who was widely criticised

for the suppression of freedom of speech during his nearly four decades of autocratic rule.

Angkor Wat is Cambodia's best-known tourist attraction, attracting some 2.5 million visitors annually and is even featured on the country's flag.

UNESCO calls the site, which sprawls across some 400 square kilometers (155 square miles) and contains the ruins of Khmer Empire capitals from the 9th to the 15th centuries, one of the most important archaeological sites in Southeast Asia.

Cambodia has been actively developing the area to attract more visitors, including opening a new \$1.1 billion Chinese-funded airport in nearby Siem Reap.

Its move to relocate some 10,000 families squatting in the Angkor Wat area to a new settlement has drawn widespread criticism from human rights groups, however, and UNESCO itself has expressed concern.

Israel says it will allow limited amount of humanitarian aid into Gaza

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Deir Al-Balah

After a nearly three-month blockade and warnings by global experts of impending famine, Israel says it will allow a limited amount of humanitarian aid into Gaza even as it launches "extensive" new ground operations there.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says a "starvation crisis" in Gaza would jeopardise the new offensive — the largest since Israel in March ended the ceasefire — and that a "basic" amount of food would be allowed in.

Israel in early March cut off all food, medicine and other supplies to the territory of over two million people to pressure Hamas over ceasefire terms. Over the weekend, Israeli airstrikes killed at least 103 people, including dozens of children, hospitals and medics said.

Defence Minister Israel Katz said the offensive — dubbed Operation Gideon Chariots — was being led with "great force".

Netanyahu had vowed to escalate pressure with the aim of destroying the militant Hamas group that has ruled Gaza for

nearly two decades.

The war in Gaza began on October 7, 2023, when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel, killing 1,200 people and abducting 251 others.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed more than 53,000 Palestinians, many of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count.

UN official says aid trucks are to enter Gaza

A UN official says 20 aid trucks carrying mostly food are expected to go into the Gaza Strip on Monday.

There was no immediate comment from Israeli authorities. The official was not authorised to brief reporters and spoke on condition of anonymity.

A US-backed distribution group welcomes Israel announcement on Gaza aid resumption

A US-backed group expected to run aid distribution in Gaza said Israel's announcement was an "important first step".



Trucks carrying humanitarian aid for the Gaza Strip are seen at the Kerem Shalom Crossing in southern Israel on Monday

PTI

The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation has said its four aid distribution sites would be up and running before the end of the month. It was not clear when the aid

would resume.

The group's head Jake Wood called late on Sunday on international aid groups to join in the new distribution mechanism.

But international aid groups say the mechanism is not practical and won't reach the most vulnerable Palestinians. They also say they won't participate because it doesn't align with their humanitarian principles. Israel says a new aid distribution approach is necessary because it accuses Hamas of siphoning off aid to support its military activities, a claim aid groups dispute. Palestinians say Israeli forces disguised as civilians killed a man in a Gaza raid. Palestinians in Gaza say Israeli forces disguised as civilians and under heavy air cover shot and killed a man and detained his wife and child in a raid Monday on a house in the enclave's south.

The Israeli forces drove a civilian vehicle and raided the home in the city of Khan Younis as airstrikes pounded the surrounding area, residents said.

"We thought that all houses would be bombed," said Mohammed Sarhan, a relative of the man killed and a neighbour, who said the strikes lasted 10 minutes.

Mahmoud Safi, another neighbour, said the Israeli forces carried what appeared to be luggage and blankets on the

top of their white vehicle.

The killed man was identified as Ahmed Sarhan. The reason he was targeted was not immediately known.

The Israeli military had no immediate comment. Freed Israeli hostage pleads with lawmakers to end the war in Gaza

Arbel Yehoud, who was freed after 482 days in captivity in a ceasefire earlier this year, told lawmakers at a parliamentary committee on Monday that they will have blood on their hands "if you do not stop the war".

Yehoud's partner, Ariel Cunio, is still held in Gaza, along with 57 other hostages, 23 of whom are believed to be alive.

She said she was terrified by the sounds of missiles and bombs while she was held captive. She said she would be beaten if her captors' relatives were harmed in Israeli strikes and held in isolation with food "unfit for human consumption and with a level of hygiene like in concentration camps of the Holocaust".

"As someone who was there, I know that only through negotiations is (returning the hostages) possible," she said.

Sindhu, Prannoy eye turnaround at Malaysia Masters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kuala Lumpur

Star Indian shuttlers P V Sindhu and H S Prannoy will look to script a turnaround in fortunes when they lead the country's campaign at the \$475,000 Malaysia Masters Super 500 tournament beginning here on Tuesday.

Both Sindhu and Prannoy have endured a tough phase of late, struggling with form and fitness. The duo lost their respective matches against Indonesia and Denmark in the Sudirman Cup last month — their last competitive outing.

With a two-week break under their belt, the experienced shuttlers will now be eager to rediscover their rhythm at the Axiata Arena.

Two-time Olympic medallist Sindhu, currently ranked world number 16, will open her campaign against Japan's Natsuki Nidaira, ranked 20th in the world.

Prannoy, who has slipped to world number 35, faces a tough opener against fifth seed Kenta Nishimoto of Japan.

In women's singles, 2024 Hylo Open runner-up Malvika Bansod will take on Chiu Pin-Chian of Chinese Taipei, while Unnati Hooda — a semifinalist at the Taipei Open Super 300 — will face compatriot Lin Hsiang Ti.

Aakarshi Kashyap has drawn eighth seed Putri Kusuma Wardani of Indonesia.

In men's singles, Sathish Karunakaran, champion at the 2023 Odisha Masters and 2024 Guwahati Masters, will take on



top seed Anders Antonsen of Denmark.

World junior championships bronze medallist Ayush Shetty, who reached the Taipei Open semifinals, will face Canada's Brian Yang, while Priyanshu Rajawat opens against Singapore's Jia Heng Jason Teh.

In mixed doubles, world number 19 Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto will face a qualifier. Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Shivani Gadde will begin against fourth-seeded Chinese pair Guo Xin Wa and Chen Fang Hui, while Ashith Surya and Amrutha Pramuthesh meet top seeds Jiang Zhen Bang and Wei Ya Xin.

Sathish will also pair up with Aadya Variyath in mixed doubles to face Malaysia's Roy King Yap and Valeriee

Siow. In men's doubles, the pair of Hariharan Amsakarunan and Ruban Kumar Rethinasabapathi will be in action.

Women's doubles will see Indian participation from Kavipriya Selvam and Simran Singhi, Vaishnavi Khadkekar and Alisha Khan, as well as Prerana Alvekar and Mrunmayee Deshpande.

In the qualifiers, Kidambi Srikanth, S Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian, and Tharun Mannepalli will vie for spots in the men's singles main draw, while Anmol Kharb and Tasnim Mir will aim to qualify in the women's section.

Other Indians featuring in the qualification rounds include Mohit Jaglan and Lakshita Jaglan, and the pair of Shivam Sharma and Poorvisha S Ram.

Diksha finishes tied-9th at Dutch Ladies; Hitaashee tied-12th

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Hilversum (Netherlands)

Hilversum (Netherlands), May 19 (PTI) Indian golfer Diksha Dagar came up with steady 71 in the final round to finish tied-9th with an overall score of 4-under 212 in the Dutch Ladies Open, a part of the Ladies European Tour, here. It was the 24-year-old Diksha's fourth top-10 finish as she produced rounds of 71, 70 and 71 over three days.

Behind Diksha, who has been on the Ladies European Tour (LET) since 2019, were rookies Hitaashee Bakshi (71-73-69) at tied-12th, and Avani Prashanth (77-70-67) at t-19th. England's Mimi Rhodes continued her sensational rookie season to claim her third LET title. She finished two



shots clear of the field at the Goyer Golf and Country Club.

Diksha bogeyed once on the front nine but flourished on the back nine as she

birdied the 10th, 12th and 18th holes.

In between, she dropped a bogey on the 16th. Her plan is to get at least one win ahead of her home event, the Hero Indian Open. Hitaashee, playing her first LET event outside India, had an eagle on the Par-4 eighth besides three birdies and one bogey. Avani, who began the week with a 77, produced a superb 5-under 67 with five birdies and no bogeys for the joint second-best score of the day.

Tvesa Malik (74-75) missed the cut and Pranavi Urs withdrew due to medical reasons after the first round.

Rhodes' success was a remarkable third win in the last four starts for the 23-year-old, further solidifying her lead at the top of the Order of Merit standings.

Rhodes entered the final round tied at

Reeling team must stick together: Lionel Messi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Fort Lauderdale (US)

Fort Lauderdale (US), May 19 (AP) After Inter Miami was routed 3-0 by Orlando and fell to 1-5-1 in its last seven matches across all competitions, Lionel Messi, the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner and 2022 World Cup champion — who rarely gives interviews after matches — told Apple TV that it's imperative for the team to stick together.

"It's a difficult time, but we're going to come through this," Messi said in Spanish. "Now we'll really see if we're a team. These are difficult times. When everything is going well it's very easy, but when difficult times come — like now — we have to be more united than ever, be a real team, and get through it."



Inter Miami fell to 6-3-4 in Major League Soccer this season, sixth in the Eastern Conference.

Messi's team set an MLS record for best regular-season mark a year ago, going 22-4-8 — finishing with the most points and top winning percentage in league history. The four regular-season losses tied a league mark for the fewest in a season. But this season looks nothing like the way last season went.

"We're coming off a period of bad results," Messi said. "But we have to keep working and think about what's next. With three or four games left in May, we (have to) finish the best possible way to be able to face the Club World Cup."

That tournament starts June 14. It's the next big event on Inter Miami's calendar - but there may be some other news in the interim, with coach Javier

Mascherano, in a separate Apple TV interview before the match, hinting that the team and Messi may be together longer than first thought.

Messi — who came to the club on a 2 1/2-year deal — is only under contract through the end of this MLS season, though the team has made clear it wants him around through at least 2026, when it plans to move into its long-awaited new stadium near Miami International Airport. The team signed one of Messi's longtime Barcelona and Miami teammates, Jordi Alba, through 2027 last week in what seemed like a sign that keeping Messi may be possible. "Hopefully in a few weeks we can have some news about Leo," Mascherano said.

"I think it will be very, very important for the club, the fans, and for MLS.

Indo-British Rai is 19th, Scheffler wins PGA by five shots

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Charlotte (US)

Indo-British Aaron Rai closed the second Major of the year with a 69 to finish tied 19th, the best among the three players with an Indian connection, at the PGA Championship here.

Rai totalled two-under 282 with rounds of 67-72-74-69. Akshay Bhatia missed the cut, while Sahith Theegala

withdrew with a neck strain. It has been a decent season for Indo-British player, Rai, who has made 11 cuts in 13 starts. Seven of his finishes have been inside Top-25 but only one has been inside Top-10. At the Masters he was T-27 and was T-19 at the PGA. At the top, Scottie Scheffler won the PGA by five shots for this third Major.

Scheffler started the final round with a three-shot lead and was then caught up by Jon Rahm as the two shared

the lead coming into the back at the PGA Championship. With others including Rahm falling apart, Scheffler won by five despite a closing bogey.

Scheffler, two-time Masters champion, simply pulled away on the back nine. After being 2-over for the front nine, he birdied the 10th, 14th and the 15th. He finished at 11-under 273 and picked up his 15th victory in just his sixth year on the PGA TOUR.

Muriel, Pašalic each score goal to help Orlando beat Miami 3-0

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Fort Lauderdale (United States)

Fort Lauderdale (US), May 19 (AP) Luis Muriel scored a goal just before half time, Marco Pašalic added a goal early in the second half and Orlando City beat Inter Miami 3-0 in the Florida Derby to

extend its unbeaten streak to 11 consecutive games. Orlando City (6-2-6) has not lost since it dropped a 2-1 decision to New York City FC on March 8.

Pedro Gallese finished with four saves for his sixth shutout of the season and had the second assist of his five-plus year career in MLS. Luis Muriel opened the scoring in the

43rd minute. Gallese played a perfectly-placed ball ahead from the edge of Orlando's penalty area to a streaking Muriel, who slipped behind the defense, in the attacking third before his rolling finish from the right-center of the area made it 1-0 at half time.

Pašalic scored on a first-touch shot from near the penalty spot to give Orlando a 2-

0 lead in the 53rd. Dagur Thorhallsson capped the scoring in the fourth minute of stoppage time, putting away a cross from Duncan McGuire with a one-touch shot from point-blank range. Oscar Ustari had five saves for for Miami (6-5-2). Luis Suárez returned from a two-game absence (personal reasons).

Alcaraz clear favourite for French Open

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Rome

Carlos Alcaraz is the clear favourite for the French Open. Top-ranked Jannik Sinner is back from his doping ban, though, and building himself back up to full strength day by day.

Those were the verdicts after Alcaraz beat Sinner to win the Italian Open a week before Roland Garros starts on Sunday. Alcaraz's title in Rome boosted his record on clay this season to 15-1.

"On clay right now, you're the best player," Sinner told Alcaraz during the trophy ceremony after the Spaniard's 7-6 (5), 6-1 win Sunday. Sinner held two set points during the first set against Alcaraz in his first tournament following his three-month suspension.

"The level he has played in this tournament is insane after three months without playing," Alcaraz said. "He's going to be better and better. ... He's going to be a really dangerous player in Paris."

If Alcaraz and Sinner meet again in Paris, it will be in the final, because Alcaraz moved up to No. 2 in the rankings on Monday — meaning they will be on opposite sides of the draw at Roland Garros. Alcaraz beat Sinner over five sets in the French Open semifinals en route to the title last year. Alcaraz then also

defended his Wimbledon title for his fourth Grand Slam trophy.

"It was good to play him before two Grand Slams," Sinner said. "Certainly with my movement I need to understand better where to be at certain moments. That's different on clay from hard courts. There are small things I need to improve."

"Clay is the surface where I have the toughest time. There's no use hiding it," the Italian added.

Indeed, Sinner has won only one of his 19 career titles on clay, in Umag, Croatia, in 2022 — when he beat Alcaraz in the final. Sinner's three months away from the sport caught up with him when he couldn't put up a fight in the second set against Alcaraz before his home fans at the Foro Italico.

"I certainly need to increase my intensity and hold it for a longer period of time," Sinner said. "I need to play more matches." The loss to Alcaraz snapped Sinner's 26-match winning streak, which included the Italian's third Grand Slam title at the Australian Open in January.

"Paris will be a completely different tournament," Sinner said. "It's a Grand Slam and that makes for different emotions. The tensions will definitely increase, because Grand Slams are even more important to me."

Lineker to step down from BBC after sharing media post on Zionism

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

Gary Lineker, the England soccer great-turned-media celebrity, will leave his role as a presenter for the BBC after facing criticism for reposting an Instagram story about Zionism which featured a picture of a rat.

The 64-year-old Lineker, who is the British national broadcaster's highest-paid presenter on about 1.3 million pounds (\$1.7 million) a year, was set to leave flagship soccer highlights show "Match of the Day" at the end of this season but remain with the BBC to front other soccer coverage, including next year's men's World Cup.

However, the BBC said Monday in a statement that Lineker will step down entirely from the corporation after the final "Match of the Day" episode next weekend in the wake of his decision to share a post from the group, Palestine Lobby, illustrated with a picture of a rat, titled: "Zionism explained in two minutes."

Rats, linked to disease and dirt, have been used to represent Jews in antisemitic propaganda throughout history, including by the Nazis in 1930s Germany.

"Gary has acknowledged the mistake he made," BBC director-general Tim Davie said. "Accordingly, we have agreed he will step back from further presenting after this season."

Lineker had already apologized for his conduct, saying last week he reposted mate-



rial which he subsequently learned contained "offensive references", adding that he withdrew the post as soon as he became aware of the issue and "would never knowingly share anything antisemitic".

Before Lineker's apology, Davie said the corporation needed people to be the "exemplars of BBC values and follow our social media policies" and that "when someone makes a mistake, it costs us".

"Football has been at the heart of my life for as long as I can remember — both on the pitch and in the studio," Lineker said

in the BBC statement. "I care deeply about the game, and about the work I've done with the BBC over many years. As I've said, I would never consciously repost anything antisemitic — it goes against everything I stand for."

"However, I recognise the error and upset that I caused, and reiterate how sorry I am. Stepping back now feels like the responsible course of action."

In a separate video post on Instagram, Lineker said he had made a "genuine mistake" and "should have been more diligent".

He cost Man United \$69 million, took Ronaldo's No 7 jersey — then things went wrong

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Manchester (England)

Mason Mount joined Manchester United as a rising star of English soccer. He was handed Cristiano Ronaldo's iconic jersey and was expected to be part of a bold rebuild of one of the biggest franchises in sport.

Then things went badly wrong

"It has been difficult, but I have learned a lot from these moments," said Mount ahead of United's Europa League final against Tottenham in Bilbao on Wednesday.

A slew of injuries of injuries has limited the midfielder to just 12 Premier League starts in two seasons since his \$69 million move from Chelsea in 2023.

In that time he's had to watch on as United's onfield decline has continued at an alarming rate, with the 20-time English champion certain to end this season with its lowest points total and league position

in the Premier League era. The Europa League, however, presents an unlikely chance to salvage a historically bad campaign with a major trophy and entry into next season's Champions League. For Mount, who has returned to fitness and form in recent weeks, it is the sort of opportunity he has craved after two years of pain and frustration at Old Trafford.

For United, it is simply lifeline

"As a group, we know the situation we are in. We know the league is not good enough and we have not been good enough in that, but the Europa League is something that we look forward to as a final," Mount said. "We won't forget about what we have done in the league and our league form."

"This is a final. If we can win it, it can be a positive end to a tough season."

Comeback The final is reward for the long hours of rehab work the 26-year-old Mount has put in at United's Carrington training base to overcome a succession of setbacks including calf and hamstring



injuries. He has made only nine starts across all competitions this season, with three of those coming this month.

"It is not always easy. I have had many days at Carrington sitting on the treatment bed where I want to be training," he said. "I have been in the stand watching games

where I want to be playing. "I give everything to continue my rehab to try to get back and be back as quickly as possible. That was always on my mind." Struggles Mount's difficulties at United have been in stark contrast to his time at Chelsea, where he was treated as

a hero after rising through its academy and providing the assist for Kai Havertz's winning goal in the Champions League final of 2021. He became a key part of England's squad, which was runner up at the Euros that year, and started the final against Italy at Wembley. It was a measure of how highly United regarded Mount that he was handed the No7 jersey worn by club greats Eric Cantona, David Beckham and Ronaldo. But instead of going on to create his own memorable moments with the famous number on his back, Mount has watched as United's plummeting form cost former manager Erik ten Hag his job and left current coach Ruben Amorim to preside over the club's worst campaign in Premier League history.

Massive honor In recent weeks, however, Mount has shown flashes of the ability that convinced United to sign him — not least his two goals against Athletic Bilbao in the semifinals of the Europa League.

His second, a shot from just past the

halfway line, was befitting of the number he wears. "I want to score goals, I want to have them moments," he said. "I just haven't had a lot of opportunities to do that, so any time I'm on the pitch I want to show them what I can do. I want to create chances for my teammates and win games and win trophies. "I always had the end goal in my mind that it would come good and something will happen and I'll get a moment where I'll score a few goals or something will happen."

And where as United has struggled to fill the No 7 jersey since Ronaldo first left Old Trafford in 2009, Mount remains convinced he can handle the pressure. "It was a massive, massive honor (to be given it). Obviously I knew before joining what legends have worn the shirt and what it means to the club," he said. "As soon as I knew that there was a possibility of me wearing it, I was never going to turn it down. I always wanted to take that opportunity. It's not been easy up to this point, but I think I'm building."

Shubman Gill is thinking cricketer, says GT Coach

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Shubman Gill is a “thinking cricketer” but it is difficult to predict whether he would be able to replicate his T20 captaincy success in the Test format if handed the reins of the Indian team, feels Gujarat Titans assistant coach Ashish Kapoor. Gill, who led GT to the IPL playoffs this season, is being seen as a potential successor to Rohit Sharma in the traditional format following the latter’s recent retirement.

“If you see Shubman as a batsman, or basically as a cricketer, whether he’s a good thinker or not, I think he’s a good thinker of his own game,” Kapoor said at the post-match press conference on Sunday night.

“I’ve seen him since the Under-16 days. In fact, I’ve done two camps with him at the NCA. Even back then, he used his brain a lot more than many others his age. And that’s a key quality for a captain — to not just think for yourself but for the ten other players as well, and plan how to win matches.”

India are set to play five Tests in England starting June 20 in Leeds, with the announcement of the new Test captain expected this week.

Asked how Gill may fare as a red-ball captain if given the opportunity, Kapoor said it is difficult to judge leadership capabilities based on limited experience. “I’m not an astrologer. We’re watching him lead in T20 cricket, but when Dhoni was named captain for the

WE STILL HAVE CHANCE TO QUALIFY IF WE WIN BOTH GAMES : ABISHEK POREL

Delhi Capitals suffered a crushing 10-wicket defeat against GT despite posting a competitive 199 for three but Abishek Porel believes the team still has a chance to qualify for the playoffs.

“We played good cricket, but we were a little behind in some moments — that’s why we couldn’t win. But we still have two games left, and if we win both, we still have a chance to qualify,” the 22-year-old said. DC mentor Kevin Pietersen has been working closely with Abishek, especially on range-hitting. “The experience with Kevin Pietersen has been great. He guides us on what to do and what to avoid. He appreciates us when we do something right, but more importantly, he supports us the most when we fail. “The entire team management keeps reminding us that we can still bounce back. This is my second season, and ups and downs are part of the game. But I’m learning with every match.”



World Cup (in 2007), he hadn’t captained anywhere. Nobody knew back then that he’d go on to become one of the world’s best captains,” said the former India spinner. “If you had asked someone at that time — even Dhoni himself — what they thought of his captaincy, there would’ve been no answer. You have to observe a player over a period of time before making any judgment. Shubman hasn’t even started yet, so it’s very difficult to say.”

Kapoor also praised Sai Sudharsan for sticking to the traditional cricketing strokes, which helped him emerge as the top run-getter this IPL season. “I think they understand the game well themselves. They’re smart cricketers, smart kids. Sure, you have to keep telling them sometimes, but he analyses his own game. He wants to attack,” Kapoor said.

Focus shifts to rebuilding as CSK, RR face off in contest for pride

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The contest between laggards Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals holds no significance in the context of the play-offs, but both teams will aim to accelerate their rebuilding process with the MS Dhoni-led side looking to transform itself from a ‘dad’s army’ into a young brigade. Tuesday’s match is last of the 2025 edition for the Royals, who have nothing to savour except finding exceptional talent in Vaibhav Suryavanshi, who forced the cricket world to take note of his unexpected coruscating show.

The bad bowling picks at the auction has hurt the Jaipur-based side the most apart from a non-impressive show by the middle order.

If they are at number nine in the table out of 10 teams, mostly it has been because of a mediocre show by their bowlers and over dependence on top order batters. Letting go of Jos Buttler from the squad and not-so-impressive show from Jofra Archer left the Royals with plenty to contend with. The absence of a premier Indian bowler who could put the opposition under the pump has been their biggest bane.

If Mumbai Indians were able to revive their fortunes, it was because they had Jasprit Bumrah and Trent Boult. If Gujarat Titans are a force to reckon with, it is because Mohammad Siraj and Prasidh Krishna have done their job, sharing over 30 wickets between them — even on punishing flat Indian tracks. Royals never had that cushion or luxury. They did cherish a few fiery starts, like the one on Sunday against Punjab Kings when they scored 70-plus runs in the first five overs, but still found a way to lose the contest. This has been their story this season. They can only play for pride and end on a high, avoid the wooden spoon by winning Tuesday match against a side that has already gone into transformation process.

The formula of packing the side with and relying on tried-and-tested players has proven outdated, severely hampering Chennai Super

King’s performance this season. CSK have expected too much from Rahul Tripathy and Deepak Hooda. Their India experience might have earned them contracts with the franchise but they could never be the consistent match winners in pressure situations.

The rebuilding process has started with the infusion of young blood like Ayush Mhatre, Shaik Rasheed, and Urvil Patel. The 20-year-old Mhatre came close to hitting a century against RCB and also did well against SRH and MI. Patel is a late entry but he showed his potential with his cameo against KKR. What they have done so far is a trailer for the next edition. Losing skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad added to the woes of the side. Many hoped that with Dhoni coming back as skipper would change the fortunes of the side but even he could do little with such limited resources.

Much was expected from foreign recruits like Devon Conway and Rachin Ravindra but nothing worked for the CSK. In the past Shane Watson and Dwayne Bravo did wonders for the side but this season none played like them.

At the mini auction CSK will have to sort out their batting combination.

Teams:

Chennai Super Kings: MS Dhoni (c, wk), Shaik Rasheed, Ayush Mhatre, Deepak Hooda, Sam Curran, Ravindra Jadeja, Dewald Brevis, Shivam Dube, Noor Ahmad, Khaleel Ahmed, Matheesha Pathirana, Anshul Kamboj, R Ashwin, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Ramakrishna Ghosh, Jamie Overton, Vijay Shankar, Rahul Tripathi, Shreyas Gopal, Devon Conway, Rachin Ravindra, Mukesh Choudhary, Nathan Ellis, C Andre Siddarth, Vansh Bedi.

Rajasthan Royals: Sanju Samson (c, wk), Ashok Sharma, Nandre Burger, Tushar Deshpande, Shubham Dube, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Wanindu Hasaranga, Shimron Hetmyer, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel, Kumar Kartikeya, Akash Madhwal, Kwena Maphaka, Riyan Parag, Lhuan-dre Pretorius, Kunal Singh Rathore, Vaibhav Suryavanshi, Maheesh Theekshana, Yuvraj Singh.

Free to push his limits: Gagan Narang on Neeraj Chopra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The 90-metre “mental barrier” broken, superstar Neeraj Chopra will now strive to push the limits further to attempt tasks that were previously considered out of reach, reckons Olympic medalist shooter Gagan Narang.

Chopra entered the elusive club when he threw the spear at a distance of 90.23 metres at the Doha Diamond League on Friday. “The monkey is off his back and he is now free to push his limits,” Narang told to media.

“At one limit, that glass ceiling, that mental barrier which probably played on his mind for some time is now broken,” Narang said, as the double Olympic medalist Chopra prepares for major events like the upcoming World Championships, in which he will look to defend the title he won two years ago.

Chopra, however, finished second to Germany’s Julian Weber, who threw 91.06 metres, in Doha. Narang hailed the achievement as “absolutely phenomenal” and “monumental” for Indian athletics, emphasising its broader significance. “It’s not just about the distance, right? It’s about redefining what’s possible for Indian sport, especially on the global

stage. “This is the first competition of the season for him. And there are many more competitions lined up. So, while it’s important to break that barrier, I think getting the right score is important at the right time.” He stressed “that confidence is very, very important” for Chopra to build on this milestone. Narang, who served as India’s Chef de Mission at Paris 2024, drew a parallel with his own experience in shooting, where chasing the perfect 600/600 score was both a mental and physical challenge.

“You know, I was shooting 597, 598, 599. But that 600 — the world record mark - was not coming. I took it personally. And one and a half months later, I broke that record. That mindset — to go beyond what’s seen as the limit — is what we’re witnessing with Neeraj now.”

Narang, however, dismissed such concerns. “I don’t see a problem at all. There is an outlier in every sport. At some point, someone has to break the glass ceiling - Neeraj has done that.” He likened the trajectory to his own shooting career, where early world-beating performances took time to be emulated. “He’s inspired a whole generation. Now others will start chasing that standard. Some may even surpass it in time.”

KKR, RCB pick Shivam Shukla, Muzarabani as replacements

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Kolkata Knight Riders and Royal Challengers Bengaluru have picked Shivam Shukla and Blessing Muzarabani as replacements for their injured players, the IPL said on Monday.

Defending champions KKR, who are already out of playoffs reckoning, have signed Shukla as a replacement for Rovman Powell for the remainder of the season. The West Indian all-rounder needs a surgical intervention of his tonsils. Shukla — a leg-spinner — plays for Madhya Pradesh in domestic cricket and will join KKR for ₹30 lakh. RCB, meanwhile, have picked Muzarabani as replacement for Lungisani Ngidi, who will leave the franchise to join the South African team for national duties. The replacement will be effective from May 26.

Muzarabani — the Zimbabwe pacer — has so far played 70 T20s and has picked 78 wickets. Additionally, he has also represented Zimbabwe in 12 Tests and 55 ODIs. He will join RCB for ₹75 lakh.

News about India pulling out of Asia Cup speculative, says BCCI secretary

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The BCCI on Monday termed as “speculative and imaginary” the report which claimed that it has decided to pull out of men’s Asia Cup and women’s Emerging Teams Asia Cup.

A media report, quoting sources, said that BCCI won’t let Indian teams compete in the two Asian Cricket Council (ACC) events at a time when the cricket body is being headed by a Pakistani and just days back the two neighbouring nations were involved in a military conflict. Pakistan’s interior minister Mohsin Naqvi, who is also PCB Chairman, holds the position of President in the ACC.

Defending champions India are the hosts for the Men’s Asia Cup, to be played in the T20 format, in September while Sri Lanka have been allotted the Women’s Emerging Teams Asia Cup.

“Since this morning, it has come to our notice about some news items about BCCI’s decision not to participate in the Asia Cup and Women’s Emerging Teams Asia Cup, both ACC events. Such news is devoid of any truth as till now, the BCCI has not even discussed or taken any such



steps regarding the ensuing ACC events, leave alone writing anything to the ACC,” BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia to media.

Saikia added that BCCI is focussed on ensuring the smooth conduct of the Indian Premier League (IPL) and the upcoming five-match Test series against England beginning next month.

“At this stage, our prime focus is on the ongoing IPL and the subsequent England

series, both men and women. The Asia Cup matter or any other ACC event issue has not come up for discussion at any level, hence any news or report on that is purely speculative and imaginary.

“It may be said that the BCCI, as and when any discussion on any ACC event takes place and any important decision is reached, the same will be announced through the media,” he added.

Great Scottie! Scheffler pulls away to win PGA Championship

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Charlotte

Scottie Scheffler had every reason to worry the PGA Championship was slipping away. A five-shot lead on the front nine was gone in four holes. Every shot seemed to go left and he didn’t know why. Jon Rahm was peeling off birdies and on the verge of tracking him down Sunday at Quail Hollow. And that’s when Scheffler showed why he has been golf’s No. 1 player for two straight years, why he has compiled more PGA Tour titles quicker than anyone this side of Tiger Woods and Jack Nicklaus since 1950. And why he now has the Wanamaker Trophy to go along with two Masters titles.

Scheffler turned a tense Sunday into another run-away by not missing a shot when the pressure was at its peak, giving himself another pleasant walk to the 18th green with another major title secure in the hands of golf’s best.

“This back nine will be one that I remember for a long time,” Scheffler said. “It was a grind out there. I think at one point on the front I maybe had a four- or five-shot lead, and making the turn, I think I was tied for the lead. “So to step up when I needed to the most, I’ll remember that for a while.”

There was nothing fancy about it, just fairways and greens and holing the putts that eluded Rahm in his first time in serious contention at a major since he won the 2023 Masters and left at the end of the year for LIV Golf. Rahm’s hopes ended when he failed to convert birdie chances on the two easiest holes on the back nine at Quail Hollow, and then finished bogey-double bogey-double bogey. By then the tournament was effective over. It only cost Rahm money. The only comfort for Scheffler was looking across the lake on the par-5 15th to see Rahm in a bunker, leading to bogey on the 16th that gave Scheffler a three-shot cushion. Scheffler recalls thinking, “If I birdie here, it’s going to go a long way.”



He drilled 3-wood just over the back of the green, and from the same spot where Rahm earlier that hit putter 12 feet by the hole, Scheffler coziered it up to a foot for birdie. Scheffler closed with a bogey he could afford for an even-par 71, giving him a five-shot victory and his third major title. Scheffler became the first player since Seve Ballesteros to win his first three majors by three shots or more.

The margin doesn’t match up with the grind. That much was clear when Scheffler raised his arms on the 18th green and then ferociously slammed his cap to the turf, a brand of emotion rarely seen by the 28-year-old Texas star.

“Just a lot of happiness,” he said. “Just maybe thankful as well. It was a long week. I felt like this was as hard as I battled for a tournament in my career.” It was a lot sweeter than last year, when he was arrested outside Valhalla Golf Club for charges

later dropped that he wasn’t following police instructions as they investigated a traffic fatality. No change of that happening at Quail Hollow. He stayed close enough to walk.

Inside the ropes, this was no walk in the park the final margin might suggest. Scheffler had a five-shot lead standing on the sixth tee. But with a shaky swing that led to two bogeys, and with Rahm making three birdies in a four-hole stretch around the turn, they were tied when Scheffler got to the 10th tee. It looked like a duel to the finish, with Bryson DeChambeau doing all he could to get in the mix. Under the most pressure he felt all day, Scheffler didn’t miss a shot off the tee or from the fairway until his lead was back to four shots.

Rahm wound up seven shots behind, but the two-time major champion was the only serious threat. After bogey on the 16th hole, he had to take on a

dangerous pin at the par-3 17th. It bounded over the sunbaked green into the water for double bogey. And his last tee shot went left off the grassy bank and into the stream for another double bogey. All that work to make up a five-shot deficit at the start of the day and Rahm closed with a 73 to tie for eighth. “Yeah, the last three holes, it’s a tough pill to swallow right now,” Rahm said. “I’ll get over it. I’ll move on,” Rahm said.

“Again, there’s a lot more positive than negative to think about this week. I’m really happy I put myself in position and hopefully learn from this and give it another go in the U.S. Open.” DeChambeau birdied the 14th and 15th to get within two shots, but he never had another good look at birdie and bogeyed the 18th for a 70. He tied for second with Harris English (65) and Davis Riley, who overcame a triple bogey on No. 7 to play bogey-free the rest of the way and salvaged a 72. “I’m baffled right now. Just felt like things just didn’t go my way this week,” DeChambeau said. “I drove it as good as I can. ... I gave myself a good chance. I just felt like a couple breaks went a different way.” J.T. Poston, the North Carolina native who also flirted with an outside chance, bogeyed the last two holes for a 73 to tie for fifth. English finished his Sunday-best score as Scheffler was making his way down the third hole. He had a flight to catch that afternoon. He also was the clubhouse leader. But he looked at Scheffler’s name atop the leaderboard and said with a smile, “I don’t see him slipping a whole lot. I see myself catching my flight.” But then Scheffler unable to find his swing. He hit only two fairway on the front nine. He failed to convert birdies on the par-5 seventh and the reachable par-4 eighth. On eight of his nine holes, his miss was to the left. And he was tied with the red-hot Rahm. But part of Scheffler’s greatness is his ability to wear down a field, which he did at the Masters both times he won.



Ben Stokes quits alcohol to aid hamstring injury

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

England’s Test captain Ben Stokes has quit drinking alcohol during his ongoing hamstring injury rehabilitation in an effort to be battle-ready for the upcoming Ashes series against traditional rivals Australia.

The flamboyant cricketer said he gave up drinking at the start of the year in the hope abstinence would hasten his recovery from the injury.

The 33-year-old Stokes had surgery on his left hamstring in December after suffering a tear during the third Test against New Zealand, which ruled him out of action for a prolonged period.

“After my first major injury, I remember the shock of it and after the initial adrenaline had stopped I was thinking, ‘How has this happened?’” Stokes told the Untapped podcast.

(I thought) ‘We did have a bit of a drink four or five nights ago, could that have played a part?’ It wouldn’t have helped.