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Happening today

● **INDIA AND NEW ZEALAND** will sign a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that will remove tariffs on 100% of India's exports to New Zealand, and either sharply reduce or remove tariffs on 95% of current imports from New Zealand.

● **PRIME MINISTER** Narendra Modi will begin a two-day visit to Sikkim during which he will hold a roadshow and participate in the closing ceremony of Sikkim's 50th statehood year celebrations.

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Business as Usual

By EP UNNY



IDEA EXCHANGE



'We view our seafarers as national soldiers. We will never let them feel lonely under any circumstances'
SARBANANDA SONOWAL
 UNION MINISTER FOR PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS
 PAGE 15

TRUMP, MELANIA, VANCE EVACUATED FROM WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENTS' DINNER

Close call for Trump as gunman opens fire near his event venue

President, admn officials likely targets: Acting AG; shooter held, said was 'Friendly Federal Assassin'

Bo Erickson, Nandita Bose, Jana Winter & Steve Holland
 Washington, April 26

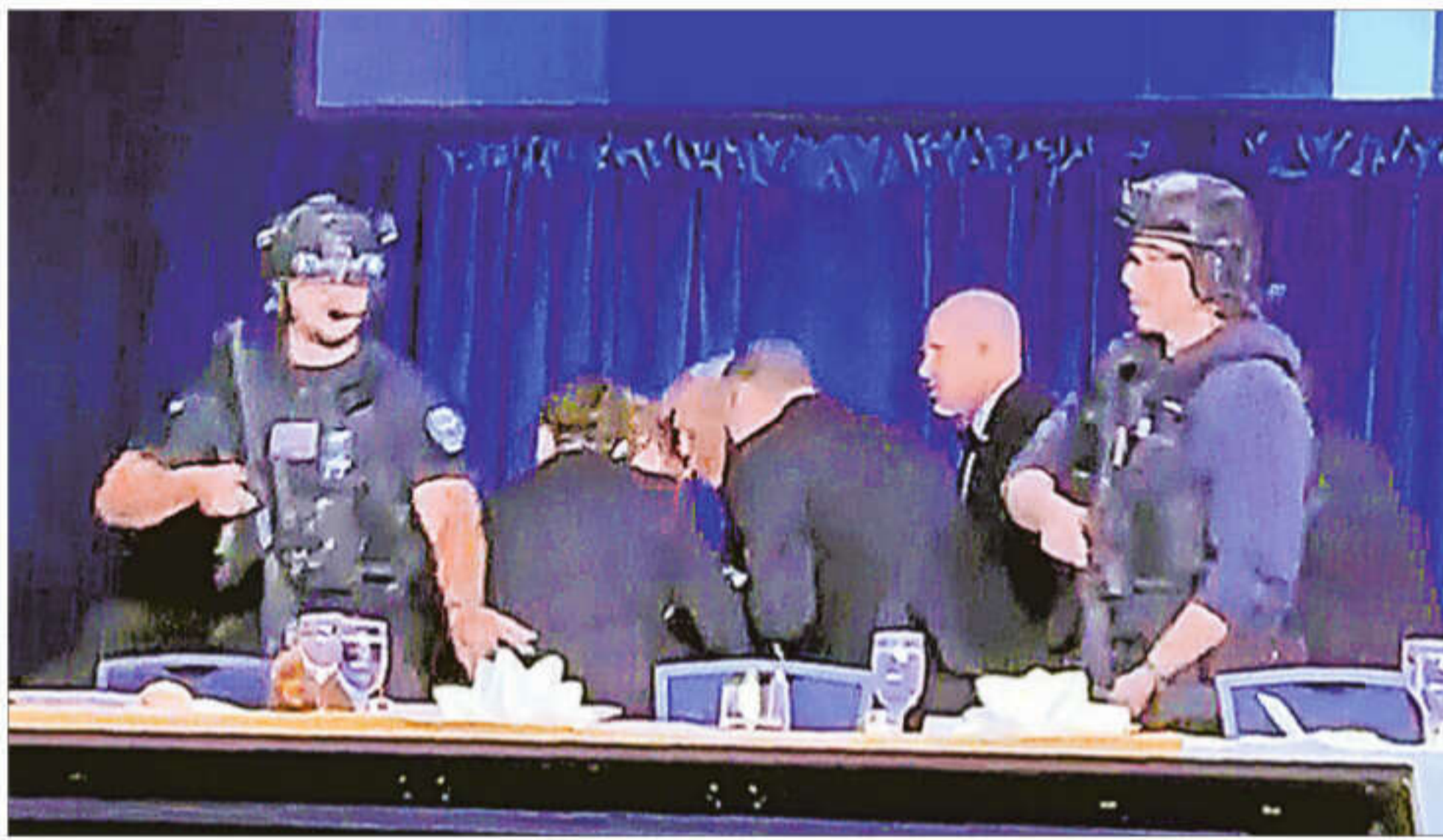
US PRESIDENT Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump were rushed out of the White House Correspondents' Association dinner in Washington by Secret Service agents Saturday night after a man opened fire on security personnel nearby.

The man fired a shotgun at a Secret Service agent at a checkpoint in the Washington Hilton hotel before being tackled and arrested. Trump told reporters at a hastily arranged briefing at the White House later that the officer was saved by his bulletproof vest and is in "good shape".

US Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche said Sunday that President Trump and officials in his administration were the likely targets.

"It does appear that he did, in fact, have set out to target folks that work in the administration, likely including the President," Blanche told *NBC News*' "Meet the Press", adding that the suspect likely travelled by train from Los Angeles to Chicago and then to Washington.

The suspect will be charged in federal court Monday with assault of a federal officer, discharging a firearm and
 »CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



US President Donald Trump being rushed out of the Washington Hilton hotel. REUTERS

INSIDE PAGES 12, 7



THE BALLROOM TERROR: THUDS, EERIE SILENCE AND FEAR

RELIEVED THAT TRUMP, MELANIA, VANCE ARE SAFE, SAYS PM MODI

The shooter: Caltech grad, game developer, award-winning tutor

Reuters
 Los Angeles, April 26

THE SUSPECT arrested in the White House Correspondents' Dinner shooting was identified by a law enforcement official as Cole Tomas Allen, a Los Angeles-area man who appears from social media sites to be a Caltech graduate working as a part-time teacher and game developer.

The official said Allen, approximately 31 years of age, is a resident of Torrance, Califor-



President Trump shared a photo of the suspect, whom an official identified as Cole Tomas Allen

nia, a coastal town that is part of the South Bay area adjacent to Los Angeles abutting Santa Monica Bay.

The chief of the District of Columbia police department said investigators believe the suspect was a guest at the Washington Hilton hotel, where the annual dinner was taking place.

Facebook postings appearing to relate to Cole show that
 »CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Chadha could not have defected or split AAP – if his Bill had passed

Jatin Anand
 New Delhi, April 26

IF THE first legislation he had proposed as Rajya Sabha's youngest member four years ago had become law, Raghav Chadha would not have been able to exit the AAP, along with six other party members of the House, and "merge with" the BJP, an announcement he made two days ago citing a two-thirds majority of AAP's House strength of 10.

In fact, had his proposed Bill been enacted, Chadha would have needed the support of seven, not six, from his party to cross over. And the present team would have been barred from contesting elections for six years for splitting the party.

Because the Constitution (Amendment) Bill that Chadha, then a trusted aide of AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal, brought to the House as a Private Member's
 »CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Raghav Chadha entered RS as AAP member in May 2022. FILE

EXPRESS interview

'Chadha, Maliwal, Pathak decided to leave due to their issues with AAP, approached rest'
VIKRAMJIT SINGH SAHNEY
 ONE OF THE 7 MP'S WHO QUIT AAP
 PAGE 3

Hansraj suspends 30 students for 'defaming college on social media'

Principal says students 'our children', but wrong to make 'false allegations'

Vidheesha Kuntamalla
 New Delhi, April 26

OVER THE past week, at least 30 students have been suspended at Hansraj College for reasons that include "defaming the College through social media platforms", and "use of derogatory language".

The extraordinary disciplinary action at one of Delhi University's top colleges came through five notices issued by the administration between April 20 and 25. The notices, which did not specify the length of the suspensions, also referred to the violence and in-

discipline during the college festival earlier this month. Among the suspended students are all four office-bearers of the students' union, who have been barred from entering the college premises except to write their examinations.

Principal Rama Sharma defended the action, saying it was necessary to restore order on campus. It was "wrong" on the part of the students "to put false allegations on the college and defame it on social media", Sharma told *The Indian Express* on Sunday.

The first notice, issued on
 »CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Govt's online content blocking orders double to 24,000 in a year, over half on X

'Interim measure' of urgent blocking on the rise due to AI & deep fakes

Ritu Sarin
 New Delhi, April 26

THE NUMBER of online content blocking orders passed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has doubled in the past one year, with authorities pointing to the surge of deep fakes on social media as well as objectionable posts and content generated by Artificial Intelligence on a variety of platforms.

Officials in the Ministry said that currently, roughly 60% of orders for blocking URLs were for content on X (formerly Twitter); 25% for Facebook and

Instagram; and 5% for YouTube. While Parliament had, in 2023, been informed that an average of 6,000 blocking orders were being passed by MeitY, senior officials told *The Indian Express* that this number increased to around 12,600 in 2024 and 24,300 in 2025, both till December.

Requests to MeitY for blocking online content and subsequent blocking orders peaked during Operation Sindoor in May 2025 and has remained "very high" ever since. Sources said more than half the requests and complaints came
 »CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

SECOND PHASE OF VOTING ON APRIL 29

Anger at TMC, trust in Didi: As campaign ends today, women face a choice and a paradox

DECISION 2026
 WEST BENGAL

Neerja Chowdhury
 Kolkata, Canning, April 26

"NOW WE go to Didi when we have a problem. If the BJP comes to power, will we go to Delhi to seek help?" asks a young woman set to vote for the first time on Wednesday in the second phase of the West Bengal Assembly elections.

The conversation takes place a stone's throw from Mamata Banerjee's two-room house on Harish Chatterjee Street in south



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee campaigns in Bhabanipur, Sunday. EXPRESS

Kolkata's Bhabanipur neighbourhood, where she has con-

tinued to live even as the Chief Minister. After a drawn-out campaign over the past month and a hectic last couple of weeks, campaigning in West Bengal will conclude on Monday.

Bhabanipur is a small urban constituency in the heart of Kolkata that sent Banerjee to the Assembly in a 2011 bypoll after she ended the Left's 34-year run in power and then again five years later. In 2021, Bhabanipur again sent the TMC chief to the Assembly in a bypoll after she lost the main battle to her former associate and now Leader of Opposition (LoP) Suwendu Adhikari in Nandigram.

Bhabanipur is more than just another constituency.
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NATION PAGE 7

GULF OUTREACH: DOVAL MEETS UAE PRESIDENT

CENTRE-LADAKH TALKS TO RESUME NEXT MONTH

GREEN CORRIDOR FROM FEROSH SHAH KOTLA TO RAJINDER NAGAR

How a cop, an ex-cricketer, got South African bowler to hospital in 11 mins

Prithraj Raj
 New Delhi, April 26

A DRIVE that usually takes 25-30 minutes through central Delhi's evening traffic was cut to just 11 minutes on Saturday, as a rare "green corridor" rushed South African bowler Lungi Ngidi from Feroz Shah Kotla to BLK Max Hospital in Rajinder Nagar after a heavy on-field fall during an IPL match.

At the centre of the operation was ACP Sanjay Singh, an



ACP Sanjay Singh, who led the op

ex-cricketer who has shared the field with Gautam Gambhir and Virat Kohli.

Ngidi fell on his neck and

head while attempting a catch at mid-off during the clash between Delhi Capitals and Punjab Kings. He was treated on the field, but concern over the severity of the injury quickly escalated. At 6:16 pm, an ambulance left the stadium. By 6:27 pm, it had reached the hospital, covering roughly 10 km at peak hour in less than half the usual time.

The sequence moved fast, but not by chance.
 »CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

● { RAGHU RAI • 1942-2026 }

He caught a nation's pulse, frame by frame, black & white — and all in between

Vandana Kalra
 New Delhi, April 26

RAGHU RAI's foray into photography was rather fortuitous. A civil engineer who was on a professional break, it was during a visit to his elder brother, photographer S Paul, in Delhi in the early 1960s

that Rai was introduced to the nuances of the medium. Accompanying a friend to a village in Haryana, he took what was among his first photographs: a donkey gazing straight into the camera. Impressed by the image, Paul sent it to *The Times* in London, where it was published, earning

Rai not just prize money but more significantly also a career in photography that was to stay with him until he passed away in Delhi on Sunday. He was 83 and had been suffering from cancer.

Tenacious, observant and deeply curious, born in Jhang (Pakistan), Rai instilled life into every photograph that he took and captured the pulse of the nation. "More than a professional photographer, I became an explorer of life," he said in an interview to *The Indian Express* in 2024. Though that life has now ended, the moments he recorded will remain forever in



A camera rested on his chest, the ideal companion in his final journey, Raghu Rai was cremated in New Delhi, Sunday. ABHINAV SAHA
 MORE REPORTS, PAGE 4

the form of his rich archive that spans from photojournalism to documentation and portraits of some of the most recognised figures from across different



fields, politics to culture. "Some artists transcend art categories and labels and are extraordinary in the way they gather and live through the

breadth of their experiences. I don't think India was explored any better or as expansively as by Raghu Rai, who was sharp and deeply incisive, and empa-

thetic, always on the move and slept with a loaded camera next to him. Not a mere witness, the intensity with which he would seek was absolutely infectious and inspiring," says Roobina Karode, Artistic Director and Chief Curator at Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA), who curated his 2024 exhibition Raghu Rai: A Thousand Lives at KNMA with Devika Daulet Singh.

One of India's foremost photojournalists, the 1972 Padma Shri awardee also recorded a spectrum of the country's history, including photographs of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale in Amritsar's Golden Temple complex shortly before Oper-

ation Blue Star in 1984, the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, the poignant plight of the refugees during the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971 and the crackdown during the Emergency years.

In 1977, Rai became the first Indian photographer to be invited to join Magnum Photos upon nomination by legendary French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson, who had reportedly seen his photographs at an exhibition in Paris in 1971. The latter's humanist approach echoed in Rai's own practice, including his frames of the rhythms of Old Delhi and the serene ghats of Ganga, landscapes across terrains and the Mahakumbh.

Also testament to his inclination to introspect and archive are his several exhibitions and over 40 books, including *A Day in the Life of India*; *Picturing Time: The Greatest Photographs of Raghu Rai*; *India, My Land & Its People*; *The Album: Friends and Family*; and *Tibet in Exile*. His *People: His Finest Portraits* brought together the little known and the well-recognised, including former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, shehnai maestro Ustad Bismillah Khan, Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa and Satyajit Ray.

Pramod Kapoor, founder and publisher of Roli Books
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Swachh Mission

Russia's Ambassador to India Denis Alipov with diplomats and staff members during a cleanliness drive at the Russian Embassy in New Delhi. The embassy's X handle stated that the event was held as part of Russia's 'We Stand for Cleanliness' campaign. PTI

Naidu steps in as 'panic buying' forces many petrol pumps to shut in Andhra

Sreenivas Janyala
Hyderabad, April 26

ANDHRA PRADESH Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has directed district authorities to take action to prevent panic buying of fuel in several cities and towns, which has led to the closure of over 400 fuel outlets on Sunday.

The Chief Minister directed district collectors to immediately implement an action plan to address the issue and submit a report by evening on the measures taken.

Sources said that over the weekend, there was panic buying due to alarming posts on social media that the US-Iran war would escalate, leading to a fuel shortage. Thousands of people lined up outside fuel stations at several locations, purchasing more fuel than required, officials said.

Officials at the CM's Office said that most of the fuel outlets that closed by Sunday afternoon did so to prevent panic buying rather than due to empty stocks. Several district

collectors directed local petrol pumps to close temporarily to prevent panic buying. CM Naidu held a teleconference with Chief Secretary G Sai Prasad and senior officials to assess the situation. Officials informed the Chief Minister that out of the total 4,510 fuel outlets in the state, nearly 421 had been shut.

They said that 10,345 kilolitres of petrol and 14,156 kilolitres of diesel had been supplied to dealers on Saturday, and that panic buying had led to a heavy rush at many outlets. The officials said that under normal circumstances, daily sales in the state stood at an average of 6,330 kilolitres of petrol and 9,048 kilolitres of diesel. However, due to public concern over fuel shortage, fuel purchases have risen sharply. On Saturday alone, petrol sales touched 8,489 kilolitres and diesel sales increased to 10,556 kilolitres. Officials explained that the sudden increase in sales has caused stocks to deplete rapidly at several outlets.

Punjab withdraws Harbhajan's protection, Centre deploys CRPF

Anju Agnihotri Chaba
Jalandhar, April 26

THE PUNJAB government has withdrawn the Y-category security cover provided to Rajya Sabha MP Harbhajan Singh and Punjab Police personnel deployed at his residence in the Chhoti Baradari locality, Jalandhar, were recalled with immediate effect.

Shortly thereafter, the Centre stepped in to provide security through the CRPF, with personnel now stationed outside his residence.

The state government withdrew the police security cover on Saturday, officials said. The former cricketer is one of the seven MPs who switched to the BJP from the AAP alongside

Raghav Chadha. The political fallout following the exit of the AAP MPs continued to intensify on Sunday, as a massive protest was observed near Harbhajan's residence as well as against Ashok Mittal.

The development comes close on the heels of a similar move involving Chadha, whose Z+ category security cover by Punjab was withdrawn and subsequently replaced by Central security. Meanwhile, protests were reported against the AAP turncoats in parts of Punjab. Demonstrations took place in Ludhiana, Jalandhar and Amritsar against the MPs including Ashok Mittal, Harbhajan Singh, Vikramjit Singh, Sahni, Rajinder Gupta and others.

Close call for Trump

attempting to kill a federal officer, Blanche said, adding he did not know if there was an Iran connection to the attack.

(AP adds: The shooting suspect had written about targeting Trump administration officials, and his family raised concerns with law enforcement before the event, Trump said on Fox News. A law enforcement official said the attacker described himself as a "Friendly Federal Assassin," railing against the Trump administration's policies and actions, including US strikes on drug smuggling boats in the eastern Pacific).

The President has survived two previous attempts on his life since 2024, a period of deepening political polarisation in the United States.

A law enforcement official identified the suspect as Cole Tomas Allen, a Los Angeles-area resident about 31 years of age. Little was immediately known about Allen's background, but social media postings suggested he was a teacher in Torrance, California near Los Angeles.

Washington interim police chief Jeffery Carroll said the suspect was armed with a shot-

gun, a handgun and multiple knives. He was taken to a local hospital to be evaluated, Carroll said. Based on preliminary information, he was believed to have been a guest at the hotel, Carroll added.

A focus of the investigation is likely to be how the gunman was able to smuggle the shotgun into the hotel, which hosts the annual White House Correspondents' Association dinner, a marquee fixture of Washington's social calendar.

The black-tie event was attended by many members of Trump's cabinet and other senior administration officials amid heavy security. It was the first time Trump was attending the event as President, having boycotted it in previous years.

Afterward, Trump addressed reporters, many still in evening attire, in an extraordinary late-night press conference in the White House briefing room, flanked by members of his cabinet and Vice President JD Vance. His wife Melania looked on from the sidelines and demurred when he asked her whether she wanted to talk about the events of the evening. The venue for the dinner

was the scene of an attempt on the life of President Ronald Reagan, who was shot and wounded by a would-be assassin outside the hotel in 1981.

Closed-circuit TV footage released by Trump on Truth Social showed the suspect running rapidly through a security checkpoint, momentarily catching security personnel off-guard before they drew their weapons.

No shots were fired at the gunman who got through two checkpoints before being brought down.

"You know, he charged from 50 yards away, so he was very far away from the room. He was moving. He was really moving," Trump said after the gala dinner was cancelled. Officials believe he is a "lone wolf", Trump said.

Video footage of the event shows Trump and his wife sitting at a banquet table on stage in conversation with someone when a commotion at the rear of the ballroom - caused by the noise of gunshots - triggers a ripple of gasps through the room.

People started screaming "Get down, get down!" Many of the 2,600 attendees dressed in tuxedos and ball gowns took cover under tables as security personnel drew their weapons, with some pushing cabinet sec-

retaries to the floor and covering them with their bodies while others formed a protective cordon.

Security personnel in combat fatigues stormed the stage pointing rifles into the ballroom as Trump, his wife and Vance were evacuated. Cabinet members who had been sitting at tables dotted around the vast room were escorted out by their security details one by one.

Trump stayed backstage for about one hour after being hustled from the stage, a source told Reuters. He later said he had not wanted to leave the event, a remark that echoed images of him defiantly pumping his fist after narrowly escaping an assassination attempt in Butler, Pennsylvania, in 2024.

In that attempt, Trump was shot and wounded in his upper ear by a 20-year-old gunman, who was shot dead by security personnel.

Just over two months after the Butler shooting, Secret Service agents spotted a man wielding a gun and hiding in bushes at the Trump International Golf Club in West Palm Beach, Florida, while Trump was on the course. It was deemed an assassination attempt and the suspect was sentenced to life in prison in February. -REUTERS

Content blocking

from nodal officers in the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of External Affairs, and the rest from other Ministries, Departments and individuals.

According to sources, several of these blocking orders were for taking down URLs of Instagram, Facebook and YouTube posts of political parties and politicians. Some politicians have also complained to the Home Ministry or MeitY about fake social media posts using their name and images.

The most recent "high-profile" complaint to the Home Ministry and MeitY came earlier this month from Congress MP Shashi Tharoor. Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Tharoor said deep fake videos of him had emerged. "It was best that I put up my complaints in writing. The fake content was apparently being generated from Pakistan and I am told, at least in India the fake content has been blocked," he said.

The Congress MP had referred to the incident in an April 9 post on X. He wrote, "There are an alarming number of deep-

fake videos circulating of me, with convincing-sounding AI generated voice-overs over genuine footage of old interviews, having 'me' saying things I have never said. Disappointed that so many on social media are believing these lies and issuing baseless comments attacking me for purported views that I have not expressed..."

The blocking orders are passed under provisions of Section 69A of the Information Technology Act 2000, which empowers the Government to block public access to computer resources on any of these five grounds: maintain the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity; safeguard its defence and security; maintain friendly relations with foreign states; preserve public order; and investigate offences.

Similar to rules and guidelines for the interception of electronic communications, Section 69A stipulates the procedure before a final blocking order can be passed.

● MeitY has a Designated Officer to head the "Blocking Com-

mittee". The Committee includes representatives, or "nodal officers", from the Ministries of Law and Justice, Home and Information and Broadcasting, and the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), as its members, either of Joint Secretary rank or above.

● Each blocking order passed by the Committee needs final approval of the Secretary, MeitY. Officials told *The Indian Express* that for each sitting, mostly virtual, of the "Blocking Committee", officials from global social media companies such as Meta as well as XAI (owned by Elon Musk) are present to present their views on a case-by-case basis.

What is important, they said, is that the "Blocking Committee" earlier used to convene mostly once a week but now has virtual sittings several times a week.

Section 69A also has an "emergency" clause whereby the Designated Officer has to put down in writing as to why the "interim measure" of issuing an urgent blocking order was being issued without the sitting of the Committee. The order then has to be approved by the Commit-

tee within 48 hours.

A senior official said the "interim" measure was also being increasingly used. "With the explosion of AI posts and the flood of deep fakes, we are now frequently issuing blocking orders under the emergency clause. Several requests also come to us from state governments for urgent intervention when a situation arises..." the official said.

Information on the extent of blocking of "objectionable" URLs has been coming in bits and pieces, with the Government refraining from providing the complete data even to Parliament and via RTI. In 2023, the then IT Minister of State Rajeev Chandrashekar informed Parliament that his Ministry had blocked 36,838 URLs between January 2018 and October 2023, roughly 6,000 a year.

On March 18 this year, *The Indian Express* reported that inter-Ministerial discussions were on for the Government to allow four other Ministries, namely Home Affairs, External Affairs, Defence, and Information and Broadcasting, to also issue blocking orders to social media platforms in addition to MeitY under Section 69A of the IT Act.

Ex-cricketer cop

The moment ACP Singh, who was posted at the stadium, saw the seriousness of the fall, he took the call to trigger a green corridor, a rare emergency route in which traffic lights are manually synchronised to allow uninterrupted passage.

"We had no other option. Ngidi is an international cricketer, and the fall was nasty. The moment we were told about the situation, we started thinking how to take the ambulance without any fuss," ACP Singh told *The Indian Express*. "I have played cricket, and I understand there are situations when things can turn very bad due to an on-field injury."

It was instinct, policing and a cricketer's understanding of injury, all rolled into one.

"The decision to make a green corridor was taken on the spot. I asked the driver how he would go. He responded that he would follow Google Maps. Given that it was 6 pm and peak hour, we decided to create a green corridor as it was an extremely important situation," he said. "But, we took the longer route because the other roads were severely blocked due to high traffic."

That split-second call to avoid the obvious route proved decisive. A veteran of more than two decades with Delhi Traffic Police, ACP Singh leaned on his knowledge of the city and overruled the algorithm. "I know the routes around very well. So, when the driver told me he would follow Google Maps, I

was sure that he would get caught in the traffic. I asked the control room and told them we are moving. The information was relayed quickly, and we got every major junction on the way empty," he said.

Green corridors are usually reserved for organ transport or extreme emergencies, and often planned well in advance. This one was improvised in minutes. "It's the rarest thing and is mostly done to move the ambulances or respond to distress calls. It was the first time that a green corridor was executed so quickly. Usually, it's planned," ACP Singh said.

Nishant Gupta, DCP, Traffic Police, Central Range, said it took close to 60 officers to execute the movement successfully. "We are ready for such situations, but yesterday (Saturday) was an unprecedented situation. There wasn't enough time to mobilise any

kind of security escort or force to accompany the ambulance. So, when ACP Sanjay left with the ambulance, we all kept coordinating on our wireless sets to make sure there was no blockage anywhere. I think close to 60 officers were involved for those 11 minutes as the ambulance moved from the stadium to the hospital," he told *The Indian Express*.

After reaching BLK Max Hospital, Ngidi was admitted to the emergency ward and reported stable following scans and examination. He was discharged from the hospital later that night. Both Delhi Capitals and IPL confirmed it via their social media handles. "Ngidi is stable and will be discharged from the hospital later," the accounts posted.

Ngidi also took to Instagram to thank everyone for their wishes. "Thank you for the messages, all good," he posted.

Hansraj students

April 20, targeted a single student, Parth Srivastava, who, the college said, had been "found involved in acts of indiscipline, including defamation of the institution and use of derogatory language against Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff".

Srivastava, the notice said, had been given "multiple opportunities" to appear before a disciplinary committee, but he had "neither expressed remorse nor acknowledged his conduct". Srivastava, a former president of the students' union, acknowledged that he had posted videos on social media criticising the college administration, including on issues of fee hikes and the functioning of the institution. But he claimed that he had not been heard.

"They didn't even care to send an email to me...no show-cause notice was published...no proper hearing was done," Sri-

vastava told *The Indian Express*. He said he had already moved the Delhi High Court against the college. "It (the action) was completely arbitrary in nature," Srivastava said.

A second notice issued the same day named 14 students for being involved in "acts of indiscipline, physical violence, and disruption of campus order" during the annual fest on April 8 and 9.

Videos from the time showed chaos outside the college gates, with students purportedly clashing physically with each other.

A third notice, issued on April 22, placed another four students under suspension citing a "serious incident of physical violence...on 15th April, 2026".

The next notice, issued the following day, accused seven students of involvement in "acts

of defaming the College through social media platforms and engaging in activities that have adversely affected the academic environment".

The students were suspended "pending further inquiry and final decision".

Abhijit Singh, the president of the students' union, alleged that "a lot of people [were]...more active...in the social media campaign", but still, "these seven were suspended intentionally". Some students were targeted because they intended to contest elections to the union, Singh said.

The last notice, issued on April 25, suspended the president, vice-president, secretary and joint secretary of the union. "In view of the serious incident of violence, misconduct, and breach of discipline...the Students' Welfare and Discipline Committee has recommended the suspension of the office bearers," the notice said.

Singh said the union was targeted for protesting against per-

missions for the fest and subsequently, against the disciplinary proceedings notified over the preceding days. "This is discriminatory action," he said.

Principal Sharma, however, said: "Maximum students come to Hansraj College to study; their academic performance should not be disturbed... This is a very prestigious college."

She described the suspended students as "our children", and said, "We only want them to realise their mistake, not to ruin their future... Students can approach us instead of defaming the college on social media."

The principal said two college committees track CCTV footage to keep an eye on the activities of students on campus and ensure discipline.

Hansraj students had protested in February against the wedding of the principal's son on campus, which they alleged had shut off access to the college grounds. Tensions over fest permissions had begun soon afterward.

The shooter: Caltech grad, game developer

he was named "Teacher of the Month" in December 2024 by the Torrance office of C2 Education, a nationwide private test-preparation and tutoring service for college-bound students.

A LinkedIn profile in the suspect's name describes him as a "mechanical engineer and computer scientist by degree, independent game developer by experience, teacher by birth." He obtained a Bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from the California Institute of Technology in 2017, and a Master's degree in computer science from California State University at Dominguez Hills in 2025, according to the profile. Caltech said in a statement that a person of that name graduated in 2017.

Under job experience, the post shows he has worked for the past several years as a part-time teacher for C2 Education and as a self-employed game developer. He previously worked as a mechanical engineer for a company called IJK Controls in South Pasadena for a year before that as a Caltech teaching assistant.

The profile also includes a local newspaper article "on a robotics competition my team won" at Caltech in 2016. Under "Causes," it lists only: "Science and Technology."

(AP adds: Bin Tang, a computer science professor at California State University-Dominguez Hills, said Allen took a

few of his classes before graduating. "He was a very good student indeed, always sitting in the first row of my class, paying attention, and frequently emailing me with coursework questions. Soft spoken, very polite, a good fellow. I am very shocked to see the news," Tang wrote in an email.

Allen contributed \$25 to Democratic Party political action committee in support of Kamala Harris for president in 2024, according to federal campaign finance records.

Allen also posted that he had developed a video game for the Steam platform based on molecular chemistry. A post under Allen's name said he was working to develop a new "top-down shooter" combat game set in outer space.

A spokesperson for the California Institute of Technology said a person named Cole Allen had earned an undergraduate degree in 2017, but that the school had no other information to disclose immediately.

A student named Cole Allen graduated with a master's degree from California State University, Dominguez Hills, in 2025, according to a statement from that school. "The university cannot confirm if this is the same suspect identified in the April 25 shooting at the White House Correspondents Dinner," the statement read, adding that the university "unequivocally condemns this act of violence, as well as all forms of violence."

Chadha's first Bill as AAP member in RS

Bill on August 5, 2022 — this was three months after he entered Rajya Sabha — sought a stiffer anti-defection law, one that would require a three-fourths majority, not two-thirds, to engineer a legitimate split.

Citing "nefarious floor crossing by legislators in total disregard of the democratic wishes of the electorate who returned them", Chadha's proposed Bill sought to strengthen anti-defection norms through more stringent provisions for the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, which pertains to disqualification of elected representatives on ground of defection.

The proposed legislation, according to its objectives, aimed to "strengthen our democracy and help our public representatives in becoming informed law makers rather than political party workers" by amending Articles 102 and 191 of the Constitution and increasing the threshold for inter-party mergers from 2/3rd to 3/4th of a party's legislative strength through an amendment to the Tenth Schedule.

It also proposed that if MPs or MLAs change their party after winning the election, they be banned from contesting elections for six years and, to "prevent 'Resort Politics'", such elected representatives must mandatorily appear before the Chair "within 7 days of withdrawing support to a govern-

ment", risking disqualification in case of non-compliance.

"...In Tenth Schedule to the Constitution...for sub-paragraph (2) of paragraph 4, the following shall be substituted:— (2) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) of this paragraph, the merger of the original political party of a member of a House shall be deemed to have taken place if, and only if, not less than three-fourth of the members of the Legislature party concerned have agreed to such merger..." the Bill, listed against Chadha's name as part of his Rajya Sabha record, stated.

Article 102 (2) of the Constitution states "A person shall be disqualified for being a member of either House of Parliament if he is so disqualified under the Tenth Schedule." According to 191 (2), "A person shall be disqualified for being a member of the Legislative Assembly or Legislative Council of a State if he is so disqualified under the Tenth Schedule."

While the anti-defection law, the Bill stated, envisaged "the prevention of horse-trading" of legislators, the problem was still "notoriously prevalent", and there was "rampant misuse of Tenth Schedule" and instances of it being bypassed "are a blot on our democracy".

That Bill remains pending. Chadha's office did not respond to a request from *The Indian Express* for a comment.

He caught a nation's pulse, frame by frame

who developed a close friendship with Rai after he published his book *The Sikhs* in 1983, says, "He was a perfectionist and a genius who knew what commanded attention. Fiercely critical of his own work, he would discard several of his images and shared only the best. Photography was his life's joy. Accompanying him on several shoots, I remember his impromptu singing, including songs of Kumar Gandharva, whom he deeply admired."

Rajeev Lochan, artist and former director of National Gallery of Modern Art, who presented his 2008 retrospective at the institution, recalls, "Bohemian on one side, serious on the end, he held a passion for life in every respect."

Rai's work also inspired generations of photographers. Having closely followed his work for over 40 years, photographer Rohit Chawla says, "Raghu Rai didn't just photograph India, he

expanded its visual vocabulary. At a time when most were content recording events, he was constructing meaning within the frame layering foreground, edge, and accident into something far more enduring than reportage. What set him apart wasn't access or subject, but intent. He could be dismissive, even impatient with mediocrity, but that came from a fierce clarity about what photography demanded. With Raghu, the image was never casual, it was earned. And in that rigour, he quietly set the benchmark for generations who followed."

Even in his later years, Rai continued to photograph with the same devotion that marked his foray into becoming one of the most prolific visual chroniclers of contemporary India. "Extremely curious, he was a brilliant storyteller whose zeal for photography continued till the very end," says Karode of KNMA.

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Skywatch

Forecast: April 27, 2026:
Partly cloudy sky, heat wave conditions at few places

MAX: 43-45
6°C above normal

MIN: 26-28
2.2°C above normal

• Sunrise: 5:44 AM (April 28)
• Sunset: 6:54 PM (April 27)
• Moonrise: 3:04 PM (April 27)
• Moonset: 3:36 AM (April 28)

AQI Tracker

Ashok Vihar
Poor
AQI: 221

Bawana
Poor
AQI: 243

ITO
Moderate
AQI: 159

Dwarka
Poor
AQI: 286

● Good (0-50)
● Satisfactory (51-100)
● Moderate (101-200)
● Poor (201-300)
● Very Poor (301-400)
● Severe (401-500)

'Chadha, Maliwal, Pathak decided to leave due to their issues with AAP, then approached others'

Punjab on ventilator support, CM doesn't value suggestions: Sahney

Divya Goyal Gopal
Ludhiana, April 26

SIX OF the seven AAP Rajya Sabha members who have crossed over to the BJP are from Punjab. Vikramjit Singh Sahney, one of the six, says "Punjab is on ventilator support", that Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann "neither values suggestions for Punjab's betterment nor has he ever guided us on what issues concerning Punjab should be raised in Parliament".

Sixty-four-year-old Sahney, who is a businessman, a social worker known for running skill centres for the youth and a Padma Shri recipient, tells *The Indian Express* why he joined hands with AAP, what led to his exit, his equation with Chief Minister Mann, and his concerns about Punjab.

Edited excerpts:
What made you accept AAP's Rajya Sabha nomination in 2022 despite your closeness to both the BJP and Congress?

Raghav Chadha was the first from AAP to approach me with the proposal, and I agreed.

I had clearly told them about my links with both the BJP and Congress beforehand. The only mandate AAP gave me was to work for Punjab and raise the state's issues in Parliament, so I

agreed. They never asked me to join the party formally, and I never did. I had also told them that, as part of my philanthropic work, I had promoted several Central government initiatives, such as 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao', but they had no issue with that.

In 2022, Chadha met me at the World Economic Forum in Davos and said Arvind Kejriwal was looking for credible Punjabi faces to fill Rajya Sabha seats, even across party lines.

When I met Kejriwal, he appreciated that I had cross-party links. He tweeted that he was sending two Padma Shri awardees, Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal and me, to Rajya Sabha. Neither of us formally joined AAP. I remain grateful to him for sending me to Rajya Sabha.

They knew politics was never my forte, and campaigning and electoral politics were never my space. My mandate was to work for the state of Punjab and raise its concerns. I am now running six world-class youth skill training centres in Punjab, including the largest in Ludhiana, as well as drug rehabilitation centres and other initiatives. I was working for Punjab even before the AAP came to power. During Covid, when Captain Amarinder Singh was Chief Minister, we arranged

EXPRESS interview



VIKRAMJIT SINGH SAHNEY
AAP MP WHO JOINED BJP

thousands of oxygen cylinders for Punjab hospitals. My only aim has always been to see Punjab prosper, regardless of which party is in power. Unfortunately, that is not happening.

Was your decision to switch to the BJP influenced by Raghav Chadha?

It was a collective decision by all seven of us, including Chadha, Swati Maliwal, Ashok Mittal, Sandeep Pathak and Rajinder Gupta. My association with AAP was limited to raising Punjab's issues in Parliament. I also helped the Punjab government evacuate youth stranded abroad because of my links with the BJP-led Centre.

How did matters deteriorate that you had to exit?

The decline began when three of AAP's core members, Chadha, Pathak and Maliwal, were sidelined. They were the backbone of the party. In the

2022 Punjab Assembly polls, Pathak distributed 94 tickets in Punjab. Chadha and he virtually ran the campaign and helped the party secure a thumping majority. Maliwal was a key pillar in Delhi.

I was never part of AAP's political bureau, but it was evident that the party had fallen out with some of its most trusted people. First came the fallout with Maliwal. After AAP's defeat in the 2025 Delhi Assembly polls, Pathak became deeply frustrated. Chadha still tried to make things work, but after that defeat, his wings, too, were clipped. He was asked to leave Punjab and was made chairman of an advisory board that never functioned. The final blow came when he was stripped of the (AAP) Deputy Leader's position in the Rajya Sabha. That affected all of us. The question we asked ourselves was: What is Punjab's future with this party?

AAP alleges that Central agencies were used as pressure tactics. Your response?

That is completely false. It began with Chadha, Maliwal and Pathak deciding to leave because of their issues with the party. They then approached the rest of us. Even if Ashok Mittal left because of ED pressure, and I am not saying he did, what about the others? At least in my case, I was never approached by the BJP. **FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM**

Among AAP defectors, Maliwal most regular in RS, Harbhajan the least

Jatin Anand
New Delhi, April 26

OF THE seven Rajya Sabha MPs of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) who have defected to the BJP, Swati Maliwal, Ashok Kumar Mittal, and Raghav Chadha have been the most regular in the Upper House, attendance records from Parliament show.

Cricketer Harbhajan Singh and businessmen Rajinder Gupta and Vikramjeet Singh Sahney were in the House much less, the data show.

These MPs have spent different lengths of time in RS, so comparisons of attendance are only indicative. In general, however, Maliwal and Harbhajan have been seen the most and least frequently respectively.

According to Rajya Sabha Secretariat records, the 256th, 257th, and 258th sessions in 2022 saw average attendance of 159, 178, and 175 respectively in the 245-member House.

These figures for the 259th, 260th, 261st, and 262nd sessions (2023) were 167, 186, 197, and 168 respectively. And for the 263rd, 264th, 265th, and 266th sessions (2024), the average attendance was 170, 192, 184, and 183 respectively.

Maliwal, who entered the Upper House in January 2024, asked 105 questions, tabled five Bills, served on two Committees and participated in 17 debates.

And Chadha, the former Arvind Kejriwal aide who triggered the mutiny on Friday, clocked an attendance of 82.44% since entering RS in May 2022. He asked 350 questions, tabled nine Bills, was part of three Parliamentary Committees and participated in 332 debates.

Mittal, the founder of Lovely Professional University, who too entered the House in May 2022, has so far logged an attendance of 84.96%, asked 361 questions and participated in 341 debates.

Sandeep Pathak, the AAP's general secretary, Organisation, who too has switched to the BJP, has logged 78.95% attendance since entering RS in May 2022.

Gupta and Sahney, by contrast, have logged an attendance of 56% and 56.49% since October 2025 and July 2022 respectively.

Harbhajan, who was elected in April-May 2022, has the lowest attendance record of 25.95%. He was present at 34 of the 131 sittings of the House, and asked 172 questions.

CM unveils heatwave action plan

Express News Service
New Delhi, April 26

SCIENTIFIC MAPPING of thermal hotspots, ORS for school children, 'cool rooms' for heatwave patients, misting systems at bus stops, and dedicated water points for stray animals and birds — these are among the key measures being taken by the Delhi government as part of its Heat Wave Action Plan 2026 to combat rising temperatures.

The plan comes against the backdrop of the Capital battling scorching heat, with the city recording a maximum temperature of 42 degrees Celsius on Sunday — 3.1 notches above the seasonal average, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

On the plan, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said that it places special emphasis on protecting vulnerable groups such as school children and construction workers, while also extending support to animals and birds by ensuring access to water.

Under the plan, school-children may be given ORS before they leave school, if required, to reduce the risk of dehydration during their commute.

To combat the heat, officials

said that high-pressure misting systems will be installed at bus stops, while anti-smog guns will be used to cool densely built-up areas. Reflective coating has already been applied over nearly 28,674 sq ft at Kashmere Gate ISBT to reduce indoor temperatures.

As part of the government's efforts to cater to the needs of heatwave patients, more than 30 hospitals have set up dedicated five-bed 'cool rooms', the CM said. The Health department has placed over 339 health centres across 13 districts on alert, as per the official statement. Workers will also be provided with drinking water, caps, and *gamchas* for protection against the sun, while first-aid kits and ice packs will be kept available at worksites, officials said. The CM said that construction workers could be asked to halt outdoor work between 12 noon and 3 pm during severe heatwave conditions.

Gupta also directed the DDA, the Education Department, and the DJB to ensure water supply for animals and birds. Water containers for birds and dedicated water points for stray animals are being installed across parks, bus depots, and school campuses, officials said.

Rahul meets Gargi students, says 'the magician has run out of tricks, Young India can see through him'

Express News Service
New Delhi, April 26

LEADER OF Opposition Rahul Gandhi met with students of Gargi College, during which the students described an incident in which individuals allegedly linked to the ABVP had entered the campus after breaking through the college gates in the

presence of police earlier this month.

The Congress leader posted a video of the interaction on X on Sunday, saying he had "really enjoyed meeting the young women from Gargi College and Delhi University", and that it was now clear that "the magician has run out of tricks" and "Young India can see right

through him." "Gen Z is our future — and Gen Z women will lead the way," Rahul posted. "It is our duty to open every door for them. The future of our country is in safe hands."

The video also showed Rahul discussing women's reservation, delimitation, and issues of caste inequality and gender with the women.

He also raised the Manipur issue, saying, "If the Government of India decides that there needs to be peace in Manipur, it's a five-minute job."

Rahul Gandhi urged the students to engage more deeply with politics.

"The more you empower women in India, the better it is," he said.

11K booked for traffic violation in 3-hr drive

New Delhi: The Delhi Traffic Police booked over 11,800 motorists during a special three-hour enforcement drive conducted across the city, targeting improper parking and wrong-side driving, officials said.

The intensive drive was carried out on Saturday across all traffic ranges and districts as part of efforts to curb congestion

and enhance road safety, they said.

"During the operation, more than 8,500 motorists were booked for improper or obstructive parking. Vehicles parked in no-parking zones, near intersections, on footpaths, and along busy roads and market areas were targeted, with many being towed away," an officer said. PTI

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CD Ratio
80.21%

CRAR
18.61%

PCR
97.32%

Net NPA
0.27%

GNPA
2.17%

| AUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER / YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2026 | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ₹ in Lakh | | | | | |
| Sl. No. | Particulars | Quarter Ended 31.03.2026 (Audited) | Quarter Ended 31.03.2025 (Audited) | Year Ended 31.03.2026 (Audited) | Year Ended 31.03.2025 (Audited) |
| 1. | Total Income from Operations (net) | 736522 | 813679 | 2974098 | 2947353 |
| 2. | Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items) | 124711 | 103614 | 437349 | 383355 |
| 3. | Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items) | 124711 | 103614 | 437349 | 383355 |
| 4. | Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items) | 80115 | 65243 | 276786 | 244496 |
| 5. | Total Comprehensive income for the period (comprising Profit/Loss) for the period (after tax) and other comprehensive income (after tax) | Refer Note 2 | | | |
| 6. | Paid Up Equity Share Capital | 1253956 | 1253956 | 1253956 | 1253956 |
| 7. | Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserves) | 1756007 | 1541844 | 1756007 | 1541844 |
| 8. | Securities Premium Account | 504211 | 504211 | 504211 | 504211 |
| 9. | Net Worth | 2446221 | 2110741 | 2446221 | 2110741 |
| 10. | Paid up Debt Capital / Outstanding Debt | 0.09 | 0.07 | 0.09 | 0.07 |
| 11. | Debt Equity Ratio | 0.70 | 0.93 | 0.70 | 0.93 |
| 12. | Earning Per Share (of ₹10/- each) (for continuing and discontinued operations) | | | | |
| | 1. Basic : | 0.64 | 0.54 | 2.21 | 2.04 |
| | 2. Diluted : | 0.64 | 0.54 | 2.21 | 2.04 |
| 13. | Capital Redemption Reserve | - | - | - | - |
| 14. | Debt Redemption Reserve | - | - | - | - |

Notes : 1. The above is an extract of the detailed format of quarterly and yearly ended financial results filed with the Stock Exchanges under regulation 33 and 52 of the Listing Regulations. The full format of the quarterly and yearly ended financial results is available on the websites of the Stock Exchanges (www.nseindia.com and www.bseindia.com) and Bank's Website (www.uco.bank.in/investors) 2. Information relating to total comprehensive income and other comprehensive income is not furnished as Ind AS is not yet made applicable to the bank.

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In Loving Memory of

(10.02.1923 - 27.04.2013)

Justice Avadh Behari Rohatgi

(Former Judge, Delhi High Court & Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India)

Thirteen years have passed by but the pain of your passing away still persists.
We all miss you tremendously.

- : Fondly Remembered by : -

Vasudha & Mukul Rohatgi, Senior Advocate (Daughter-in-law & Son)
Madhulika & Dr. Rajiv Singla (Daughter & Son-in-law)
Bahaar & Nikhil Rohatgi, Advocates (Grand Daughter-in-law & Grandson)
Mehar & Sameer Rohatgi, Advocate (Grand Daughter-in-law & Grandson)
Agastya Rohatgi (Great Grandson)
Nyra Rohatgi (Great Grand Daughter)
Rohatgi and Sanghi Parivar

{ RAGHU RAI • 1942-2026 }

Fans, memories in Rai's final frame

Man who captured India in iconic pictures passes on, with a camera and roll of film for company. PM lauds 'extraordinary sensitivity' of Rai's work.

Anusree KC
New Delhi, April 26

A CAMERA rested on his chest, the ideal companion in his final journey. Beside the camera was a roll of Kodak Colorplus 200 film in its little yellow box that was once ubiquitous but is rarely seen these days. Together, these two objects summed up the life, work, and genius of Raghu Rai.

Family, friends, and a community of admirers that had grown around his work bade farewell to the master photographer and photojournalist at the Lodhi Cremation Ground on Sunday evening.

Artists, journalists, editors, photographers, and many ordinary fans stood with Rai's wife Gurmeet Sangha Rai and their

EXPRESS ARCHIVE PHOTO



four children, Nitin, Lagan, Purvai, and Avani. Rai passed away early on Sunday at age 83.

In his tribute posted on X, Prime Minister Narendra Modi described Rai as a "creative stalwart who captured India's vibrancy through his lens", the "extraordinary sensitivity, depth and diversity" of whose work "brought people closer to the different aspects of life in India".

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said Rai's "lens chronicled the soul of India for over six decades - its people, its struggles, its joys, and its defining moments".

"His passing is an irreparable loss to the world of photography and culture," the PM wrote.

Several others including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, MPs Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Shashi Tha-

roor, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, and BJD leader Naveen Patnaik mourned Rai's passing.

Among those present at the cremation were former MP Maneka Gandhi, India Today founder and editor-in-chief Aroon Purie, founder of ThePrint Shekhar Gupta, artists Bharti Kher, Subodh Gupta, and Jatin Das, and designer Rajeev Sethi.

Also present were photojournalists Gunder Osan of Press Trust of India, Bandedep Singh of India Today, and Praveen Jain of ThePrint, and photographers Samar Singh Jodha, Sondeep Shankar, Aditya Arya, Prashanth Vishwanathan, and Swapan Parekh.

Actor and filmmaker Nandita Das, cardiologist Dr Naresh Trehan, and journalist Madhu Trehan were also in attendance.

Sondeep Shankar said he first met Rai in 1972 as a second-year student at St. Stephen's College.

He had entered a photography competition with pictures he took with a camera he had borrowed from his uncle, and Rai, the judge, gave him the first prize.

"I tasked him why he had chosen my picture. He said, 'You've taken pictures of what's happening around you, what students are doing today. You're showing life,'" Shankar said.

Rai was a straight-talking mentor - "He would tell you on your face if your work was bad," Shankar said.

Photographer, filmmaker, and graphic designer Parthiv Shah said he first encountered Rai's work as a student at the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad.

Rai, Shah said, would immerse himself completely in the subjects of his work.

"He would follow Indira Gandhi for years. He understood how she would sit, what she was going to do. A photographer has to anticipate the next moment. Rai was a master of that. And that can only happen if you're close to the subject," Shah said.

Photojournalist and photographer Prashant Panjiar said he was handpicked by Rai to join India Today in 1986.

"He was a larger-than-life personality. Hugely magnanimous. He could be very tough and very warm, sometimes in the same breath," Panjiar said.

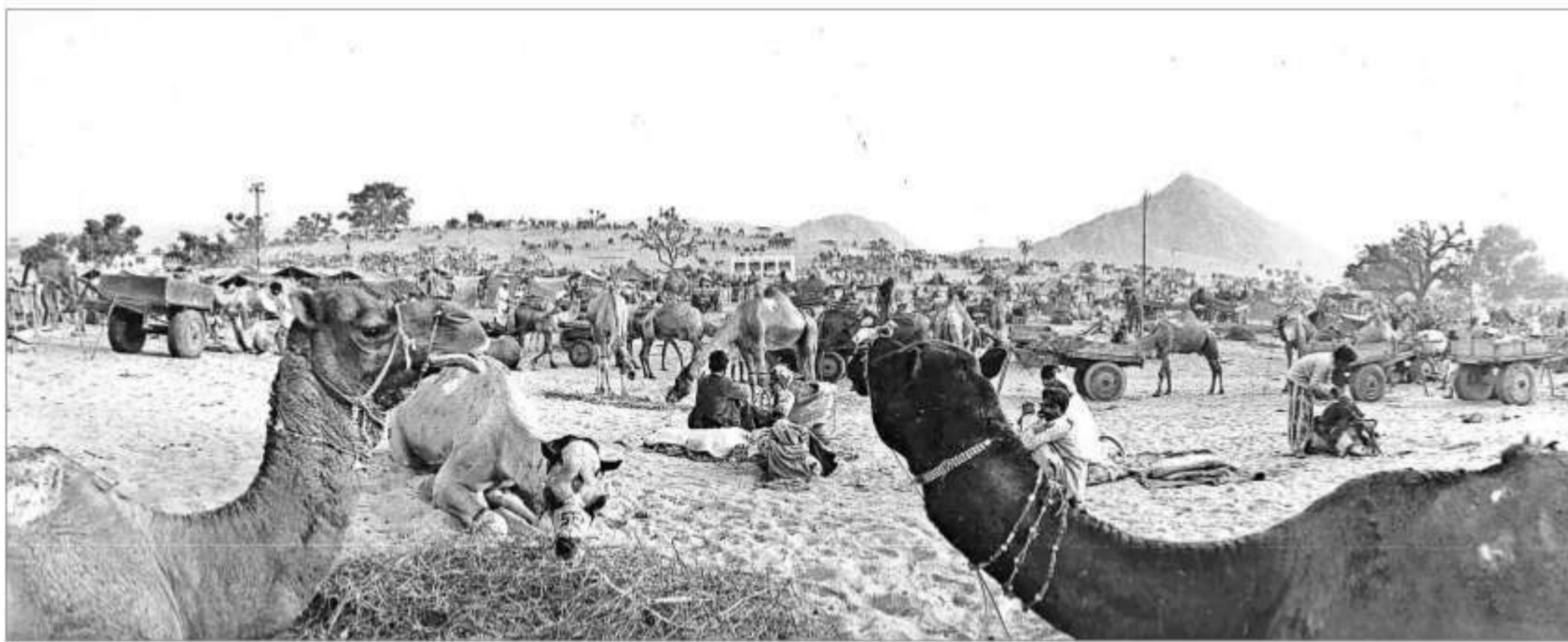
"He would say, 'Go to the art department, make sure your picture is used well. Fight for your space. Don't just give it away,'" Panjiar recalled.

Aditya Arya, photographer and director of Museo Camera, said he had known Rai from the 1970s onward.

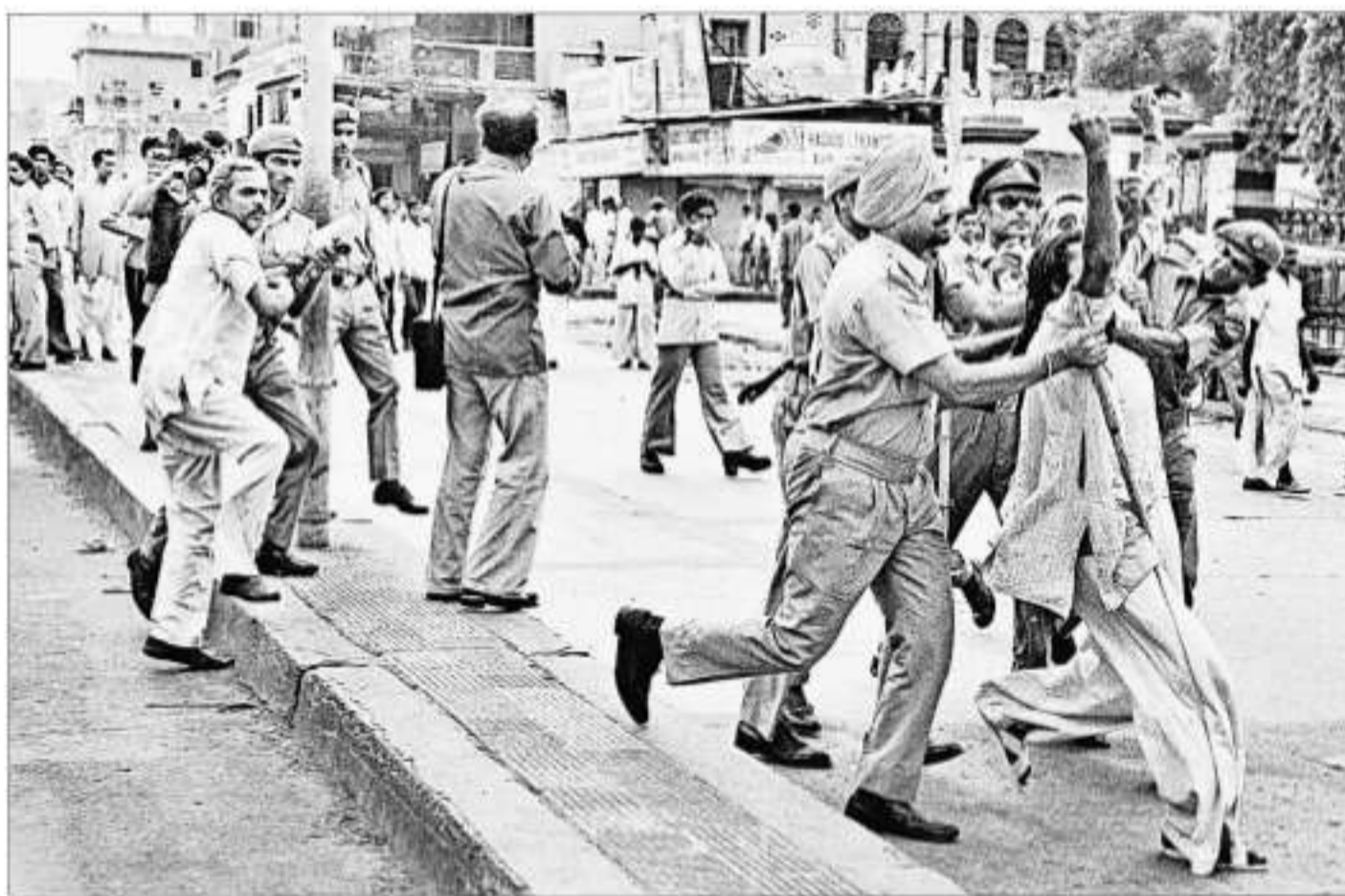
"He was so polite and so nice to everyone... There are many photographers, but very few have the ability to teach and to mentor. He had that," Arya said.

Also, "He had a great sense of light and composition. His images were like a celebration of the moment, whether it was journalistic work or travel or anything else."

A memorial for Rai will be held on May 2 at the Chinmaya Mission Centre on Lodhi Road at 6 pm.



PHOTOS RAGHU RAI TOOK FOR THE INDIAN EXPRESS: (Clockwise from top): At the cattle fair in Pushkar Mela; an inside view of the Red Fort; Hindustani classical singer Pandit Mallikarjun Mansur's last photograph taken at his house in Dharwad, Karnataka three days before his death in 1992; protesters being arrested in Chandni Chowk a day after the Emergency was declared in 1975; Indira Gandhi and Varun Gandhi at Sanjay Gandhi's death anniversary at Shantivan.



'Footprint across the world': DMRC's global arm appoints Sanjay Jamuar as first CEO

Devansh Mittal
New Delhi, April 26



Sanjay Jamuar

WITH AN eye on expanding the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation's (DMRC) international footprint, Sanjay Jamuar, who holds a vast experience in similar international projects, has been appointed as the first Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of DMRC's dedicated global arm — the Delhi Metro International Limited (DMIL).

DMRC is one of the biggest players outside China globally for execution of metro projects and operations. Its dedicated global arm — established with government support to expand DMRC's presence — is aimed at targeting domestic and international clients, seeking expertise and advisory work.

DMRC had rebranded its subsidiary Delhi Metro Last Mile Services Limited as DMIL on August 25 last year. Last November, Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) Manohar Lal had announced that the DMRC — through DMIL — will act as the nodal agency on behalf of the MoHUA for executing consultancy, construction, turnkey projects, management services, and operation and maintenance-related projects in India and abroad.

A DMRC spokesperson said

that Jamuar, a former Indian Railway Traffic Service (IRTS) officer, has experience across Indian Railways, DMRC, and international assignments in the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Middle East and Europe. He holds a postgraduate diploma in strategic leadership from UK-based Warwick Business School and has pursued research in Transport Economics at the University of Leeds. According to the DMRC, Jamuar was also the first employee in the O&M department when he joined the corporation in 1998. "Coming back to DMRC is like a homecoming for him," read an official post on X.

"DMIL has the mandate to offer advisory services to other authorities and lenders to help develop, improve and prepare long-term plans for metro and transit systems," read the statement. It added, "... The DMIL is now expected to further expand DMRC's footprint across the world."

Delivery agent is killed, friend injured as policeman opens fire after argument

Express News Service
New Delhi, April 26

PANDAV KUMAR (21), a delivery agent working with an online platform, was standing with a group of about six persons, around 2 am on Sunday outside a rented home in Southwest Delhi's Jaffarpur Kalan where they had just attended the birthday celebration of his fellow villager Rupesh Kumar's two-year-old son.

A policeman, who was allegedly not on duty, saw them and started asking questions. Minutes later, as the questioning al-

legedly blew up into an altercation, the policeman, identified as Neeraj, shot at Pandav, who was declared dead at a hospital, according to his family. His friend, Krishan, was also injured in the gunfire.

Neeraj, posted with the Special Cell of the Delhi Police, was arrested within hours of the registration of the case, said officers.

According to police, information was received at the Jaffarpur Kalan police station around 2:30 am on Sunday. "On April 26, at about 2:30 am, information was received from

RTR Hospital regarding two persons admitted with gunshot injuries, of whom one was declared brought dead," said DCP (Dwarka) Kushal Pal Singh.

The deceased, who hailed from Khagaria village of Bihar's Munger district, was living at a rented home in Southwest Delhi's Bindapur. Krishan lived with him, said officers.

Police said the incident took place around 2 am. A group of six people — along with Rupesh — were standing near his house, chatting. Neeraj allegedly approached the group and got into an argument.

Rupesh, who claimed to be an eyewitness, told police that when Neeraj was told that all of them hailed from Bihar, he became enraged and made objectionable comments about them being outsiders. He then allegedly started boasting about having a pistol worth Rs 6.

Police said Neeraj, who was allegedly drunk, then pulled out a firearm and fired at Pandav.

Pandav was his family's sole breadwinner. "The accused should get strict punishment. My son had just gone to attend a birthday party," said his mother.

● CIVIC EXPERTS, RESIDENTS RAISE ACTION, SAY THE DRIVE WAS LONG DUE

7,500 illegal structures razed in five-day drive in upscale Gurgaon

Abhimanyu Hazarika
Gurgaon, April 26

AMID THE rubble of cement and fallen trees, a man in a sun hat, white mask and sunglasses stood beside an earthmover. He ordered the earthmover operator to raze an alleged illegal structure built along a road in DLF Phase 1 — one of Gurgaon's most upscale neighbourhoods.

The man giving the orders was District Town Planner (DTP) (Enforcement) Amit Madholia. He oversaw a five-day anti-encroachment drive from April 18 to 22, spanning eight private licensed colonies in Gurgaon — the majority along the upscale Golf Course

Road. The drive resulted in the removal of over 7,500 structures and the recovery of more than 200 km of roads that had allegedly been encroached upon by private occupants, officials said.

The drive carried out by the city's Town and Country Planning (Enforcement) Department (DTCP) and supervised by Madholia saw the deployment of earthmovers to raze alleged illegal extended lawns, permanent guard rooms, and paved ramps, officials said.

The drive came against the backdrop of Additional Chief Secretary Anurag Agarwal, on April 17, directing departments to ensure the immediate re-



District Town Planner (DTP) Amit Madholia. EXPRESS

moval of encroachments from Right of Way (ROW) areas, seeking a detailed report by April 22.

"Our teams have worked tirelessly to clear 216 km of road that had been occupied by illegal structures for years," Madholia said. "This action is part of a time-bound mandate to restore the city's infrastructure. We gave people the opportunity to remove encroachments voluntarily. Now, strict action will continue without any exemptions."

His remarks come against the backdrop of opposition from several RWAs, which have decried the drive, alleging that they were not granted sufficient notice.

Officials said the drive was carried out after Punjab and Haryana High Court's April 2 interim stay on stilt-plus-4-

5 hurt as SWISS flight aborts takeoff at IGIA

Express News Service
New Delhi, April 26

FOUR PASSENGERS and a crew member were injured after a Zurich-bound Swiss International Air Lines flight aborted takeoff at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) on early Sunday due to an issue with one of its engines, the airline said.

An emergency was declared at the airport following the incident on Runway 28/10. The airline has established a taskforce for investigation. The incident involved flight LX147 — operated by an Airbus A330 — it had 228 passengers, and four infants

on board, apart from 13 crew members. As per the airline, an issue with one of the engines was detected shortly after 1 am.

Smoke could be seen, said sources, coming out from one of the front landing wheels of the aircraft. The crew aborted the takeoff, said the airline evacuated the aircraft after assessing the situation. "All passengers and crew evacuated the aircraft via the emergency slides. For a small number of individuals who were unable to use the slides, stairs were provided," an airline spokesperson said.

Swiss International Air Lines is known as SWISS.

storey constructions to reclaim the city's ROW from private encroachment, clearing up nearly 215 km of road length, originally planned at widths of 9 to 24 metres, which had, over the years, shrunk into cramped passageways.

With the DTCP concluding its phase, the Haryana Shahari Vikas Pradhikaran on last Friday announced a large-scale demolition drive scheduled to run from April 27 to July 1. Officials said the drive will be carried out across 29 HSPV sectors.

Meanwhile, several civic experts and residents have come out in support of the drive.

Sarika Panda Bhatt, co-founder of the Raahgiri Foun-

datation, an NGO, highlighted the severe social cost of overlooking encroachments by the elite while pushing for walkable neighbourhoods. "It is not just cars that encroach, but private property too. Nothing should obstruct pedestrians, and this was long due," Bhatt said.

Bhawani Shankar Tripathy, a resident of Sector 23A explained the legal framework surrounding ROW. "The government maintains total control over the ROW to lay, maintain utility services. Public spaces are strictly for public usage. Ramps connecting the road to a house must be flat, must end before the road edge, and cannot consume road space...."



PM: Ma crying, infiltrators on Maati, Manush leaving



DECISION 2026 BENGAL

Tanusree Bose
Kolkata, April 26

Lying Low

AT A grand public meeting to mark BSP founder Kanshi Ram's death anniversary on October 9 last year, party president Mayawati had announced that she and other top party leaders will soon reach out to the masses, giving hope to party workers of a possible revival in the party's fortunes. Nothing much has changed five months later though. Mayawati is even missing from campaigning in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, where the party has fielded candidates. On Friday, party national convener Akash Anand addressed an indoor meeting of workers in New Barrackpore, his first in West Bengal this poll season. Earlier this month, he addressed a rally in Tamil Nadu.

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Sunday launched a scathing attack on TMC claiming that the ruling party in the state has already suffered a decisive setback in first phase of West Bengal elections.

The PM maintained that TMC was "rattled by the high turnout" and urged voters to further increase participation in the final phase of voting.

Addressing a rally in Bongaon, North 24 Parganas district, Modi said, "In the first phase of the election, the TMC's ego has been shattered and in the second phase BJP's victory will be ensured."

Alleging that law and order has broken down in the state,



Prime Minister Narendra Modi in North Kolkata on Sunday. PARTHA PAUL

Reaching out to the Matua and Namasudra communities, a decisive voting bloc in Bongaon, PM made a "guarantee": "I would say to the Matua-Namasudra and all other refugee families you will also get citizenship through the CAA, you will get a permanent address, you will get every document, every right that any Indian gets."

Warning infiltrators, he said, "Whoever has entered Bengal illegally, whoever is living here with fake documents, must leave Bengal and Hindustan before April 29. Otherwise, after May 4, every infiltrator will be driven out. TMC will no longer be able to protect any infiltrator."

At Arambag, the PM promised that if BJP comes to power, Ayushman Bharat-PM Jan Arogya Yojana will be cleared by the Cabinet in its first meeting. "The area around the Hooghly was once a hub for mills and factories, but now they are closing down. Only one factory had flourished: the syndicate of cut money and commission," Modi said. WITHPTIINPUTS

32 lakh voters have been retained due to my efforts, says Mamata

Atri Mitra
Kolkata, April 26

A DAY after Union Home Minister Amit Shah claimed that BJP has won 110 of the 152 seats that went to polls in the first phase on April 23, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday asserted that TMC has already crossed the 100-mark and will score a double century after the second phase concludes.

Campaigning in her constituency Bhabanipur, the TMC chief urged women to "protect" the EVMs until the day of counting on May 4. "Some people say I have a tacit understanding with the BJP. I would like to remind those making such claims that they did not unite and turn up to give a deputation to the Election Commission (EC) when people were being harassed and troubled due to Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. I fought for the people. I went to Delhi, to the EC and to the Supreme Court. Due to my efforts, 32 lakh voters were retained. All legitimate voters will be re-enrolled sooner or later. However, I am sad that many legitimate voters did not get



AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal in Kolkata on Sunday. PTI

BJP wants to snatch citizenship rights: Kejriwal

Kolkata: AAP leader and former Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday alleged that a BJP-EC conspiracy led to the deletion of 90 lakh voters from electoral rolls in West Bengal under SIR exercise, claiming it was part of a larger plan to target citizenship documents. At an election rally in Kolkata's Rashbehari, Kejriwal also accused PM Narendra Modi of "insulting" the people by deploying 3.5 lakh security forces for the polls. He urged those whose names were allegedly deleted from rolls will support TMC. "Didi has to win this fight against the BJP, which wants to take away your citizenship rights as part of a bigger game plan to win the polls," he said. PTI

justice," she said.

Banerjee reiterated that she won't allow the implementation of the NRC. "We won't let anyone forcibly occupy Waqf property. The Muslim women have fought vehemently. So has our party. A case has been filed in the court... Bengal exemp-

plifies the spirit of brotherhood," she said.

Referring to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Banerjee said, "He is thinking he will win some seats by spreading fear. If you try to spread fear, you must remember we know how to fight back. We will fight and win."

Will form squad to curb cattle smuggling in Bengal, says Shah

Press Trust of India
Ranaghat, Tehatta, April 26



Union Home Minister Amit Shah campaigns in Nadia district's Ranaghat on Sunday. PTI

UNION HOME Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said if the BJP is voted to power in West Bengal, it would set up a special squad to curb cattle smuggling and end "goonda raj" and "syndicate raj" in the state.

Addressing rallies at Tehatta and Ranaghat in Nadia district, Shah alleged that successive Congress governments and the TMC under CM Mamata Banerjee had adopted a soft approach towards terrorism, claiming that "terrorists were served biryani" during their rule.

Speaking in Ranaghat, Shah alleged that most of the cattle smuggling takes place through Nadia district. "Cattle smuggling has been the highest in this district. It has happened in such a manner that it will take

"During the rule of Congress and Mamata Banerjee governments, terrorists were being fed biryani. After Narendra Modi became PM, India answered terror attacks with surgical strikes and air strikes," he said, adding, "Modi has freed this country from terrorism and Naxalism."

He said a BJP government would identify infiltrators in the state and take action. "There will be an end to goonda raj and syndicate raj in Bengal if BJP forms government. Do not be afraid to come out and vote," he said.

"Banerjee is protesting against me for saying I will set right the goons by hanging them upside down. What should be done then? Should we embrace them? ... If you are so fond of them, keep them at your home and feed them 'aloo posto'," Shah said.

71 years for Mamata Banerjee to wash off her sins. After forming the government in West Bengal, we will form a special squad to stop the menace," he said.

Face Value

CONGRESS CIRCLES in Delhi and Lucknow are abuzz with the possibility of the UP unit getting a new president. A section of leaders in UP and Delhi feel that appointing a Dalit face could benefit the party in next year's Assembly polls in the state. The name of a Dalit leader, who has recently won the trust of Rahul Gandhi, is doing the rounds in party circles. While a decision is yet to be made by the Congress high command, some senior leaders in the party think incumbent state chief Ajay Rai should continue.

Bengal: EC orders special drive to arrest bomb makers

Express News Service
New Delhi, April 26

THE ELECTION Commission on Sunday instructed West Bengal Police to carry out a special drive to arrest bomb makers, after the recovery of bombs and bomb-making material from an abandoned house in South 24 Parganas earlier in the day, an EC official said.

The EC's directive comes three days before polling in the final phase of the West Bengal Assembly elections on April 29.

Earlier in the day, the West Bengal Police recovered bombs and explosive material from Majherhat, in Uttar Kashipur police station area of the district.

"During the operation, a significant cache of suspected explosive materials was recovered from an abandoned house near a burial ground. The seizure includes 79 crude bomb-like objects, approximately 3.37 kg of gunpowder, 1.61 kg of sulphur, jute ropes, and 10 packets of roll caps, with the assistance of the Bomb Disposal Squad. All materials have been seized as per prescribed procedure. Further investigation is underway," the West Bengal Police said on X.

Later in the day, the NIA registered an FIR and took over the investigation.

The Commissioner of Police of Kolkata, DCPs, SPs and other officers had been informed that if any explosives are found in their jurisdiction, the officer concerned would face action, the official said. All such materials should be seized in the next 24 hours, the EC official said.

Pawan Khera moves SC against anticipatory bail plea rejection

New Delhi: Congress leader Pawan Khera on Sunday moved the Supreme Court against an order of Gauhati High Court which rejected his anticipatory bail petition in connection with his allegations that Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife possessed multiple passports and undisclosed properties abroad.

According to the apex court case status, the matter is yet to be assigned to a bench.

On April 24, Justice Parthiv Jyoti Saikia had rejected Khera's anticipatory bail application after the Congress leader was asked by the Supreme Court to approach HC. PTI

BHARAT YOGA YATRA, DELHI - 2026
YOG SADHANA SATRA - STEP INTO SPIRITUALITY

In the presence of
Paramacharya Sri Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati Ji, spiritual heir of Bihar School of Yoga Vishwa Yogapeeth, Ganga Darshan, Munger.

New Delhi - 1st, 2nd, 3rd MAY 2026
Venue : Thyagaraj Sports Stadium
Near INA Market, New Delhi - 110038

PROGRAMME : YOG SADHANA SATRA - STEP INTO SPIRITUALITY

| Day | Date | Timing |
|----------|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Friday | 01st May, 2026 | Morning, 6.30 am to 8.30 am |
| | | Afternoon, 6.00 pm to 8.00 pm |
| Saturday | 02nd May, 2026 | Morning, 6.30 am to 8.30 am |
| | | Afternoon, 6.00 pm to 8.00 pm |
| Sunday | 03rd May, 2026 | Morning, 6.30 am to 8.30 am |
| | | Afternoon, 6.00 pm to 8.00 pm |

Swami Shivrajanand Saraswati
Convener (Delhi)
YOG SADHANA SATRA - STEP INTO SPIRITUALITY
Mobile No.: 83558 28101, 98687 12174
ADMISSION FREE

TRAFFIC ADVISORY
DELHI CAPITALS VS ROYAL CHALLENGERS BENGALURU
7:00PM TO 11:30PM

ARUN JAITLEY STADIUM, FERESHAH KOTLA GROUND, NEW DELHI

DELHI POLICE SHANTI SEWA NYAYA

LEGEND
 - PICK UP POINT SHUTTLE SERVICE (Red arrow)
 - DROP OFF POINT SHUTTLE SERVICE (Blue arrow)
 - TAXI (DROP OFF / PICK UP LANE) (Yellow arrow)
 - THOSE NOT HAVING PARKING LABEL TO FOLLOW RED (Red line)
 - THOSE HAVING PARKING LABEL MAY FOLLOW BLUE ARROWS. (Blue line)
 - Park & Ride Free Parking Mata Sundari Road, Rajghat Power House Road, Velodrome Road, Service Road of Rajghat & Shantivan Both Sides (Green line)

DIVERSION / RESTRICTION ON NEED BASIS
On need basis, there will be traffic diversions / restrictions on Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg and JLN Marg on 27.04.2026 from 05:00 PM to 01:00 AM. No heavy or commercial vehicles will be allowed on the roads from (1) Daryaganj to Delhi Gate Chowk on BSZ Marg (2) Delhi Gate Chowk towards Guru Nanak Chowk on JLN Marg and (3) ITO to Delhi Gate Chowk on BSZ Marg. Commuters are requested to avoid the following roads from 05:00 PM to 01:00 AM on the day of match when the spectators would be coming to the stadium and congestion is expected:
 - JLN Marg from Rajghat to Delhi Gate up to R/A Kamia Market (Both Carriageways)
 - Asaf Ali Road from Turkman Gate to Delhi Gate
 - BSZ Marg from Delhi Gate to Ramcharan Aggarwal Chowk / ITO Chowk (Both Carriageways)

ENTRY TO THE STADIUM
 (I) Gate Nos. 1 to 8 are located on the southern side of the Stadium & entry to these enclosures are from Bahadurshah Zafar Marg.
 (II) Gate Nos. 10 to 15 are located on the Eastern side of the Stadium on the road and entry is from JLN Marg Next to Ambedkar Stadium Bus Terminal.
 (III) Gate Nos. 16, 17 & 18 are located on the Western side of the Stadium & entry is from Bahadurshah Zafar Marg near Petrol Pump.

FREE PARK & RIDE
For spectators, unlabelled vehicles' park & ride facility has been created at the following places -
 - Park & Ride Free Parking Mata Sundari Road, Rajghat Power House Road, Velodrome Road, Service Road of Rajghat & Shantivan Both Sides

PARKING
 - Labeled Vehicles: Limited parking is available for labelled vehicles in the proximity of the Stadium. Display of car parking label on windscreen is mandatory. Vehicle number must be written on the parking label. Those who do not display parking label with vehicle number will not be allowed in the proximity of the stadium.
 - General Vehicles: Car parking label holders are advised to take Ring Road, JLN Marg, Asaf Ali Road or Bahadurshah Zafar Marg 'U' turn at Delhi Gate is allowed. Entry to parking lots P1, P2, P3, VIP and VVIP shall be from Bahadurshah Zafar Marg only from near the Vikram Nagar Cut, Shaheed Park.

Nearest Metro Station:
 Delhi Gate, (Gate No. 4 & 5)
 ITO (Gate No. 3, 4 & 5)

RIDE METRO/FREE SHUTTLE BUS FOR HASSLE FREE JOURNEY
Free Shuttle bus service provided by DELHI CAPITALS
Free Parking : 1. Mata Sundari Road 2. Rajghat Power House Road 3. Velodrome Road 4. Service Road of Rajghat & Shantivan Both Sides

SECURITY INSTRUCTIONS: Spectators visiting the stadium are requested not to bring the following prohibited items:
 - Earphones/Headphones, Laptop, Camera, Helmet, Backpack, Eatables, Water Bottles, Lighter & Match Box, Knives & Arms

24 Hours Traffic Helpline: 011-25844444 / 1095

OBITUARY
Lt Col Ashok Kumar Khullar (Retd)
(13 Dec 1943 - 25 Apr 2026)

With deep sorrow, the 9th GORKHA RIFLES fraternity inform you of the sad demise of Lt Col Ashok Kumar Khullar (Retd), 3/9 GR (CHINDITS) who passed away on 25th Apr 2026. He was commissioned into 3/9 GR on 09 Feb 1964 and superannuated from service on 31 Dec 1995. We stand together with the family in this hour of grief and pray for eternal peace to the departed soul.

Lt Gen Zubin A Minwalla, UYSM, AVSM, YSM, Col 9th GORKHA RIFLES and All Members of 9th Gorkha Rifles Family

Ministry of Culture Government of India

Centre for Contemporary Studies Prime Ministers Museum and Library
Cordially invites you to a Talk on **Rethinking the Sarda Act: Women's Mobilisation towards Reproductive Reforms (1920-1930)** by **Dr. Dipti Tripathi** Junior Fellow, PMML
28 April 2026 at 3:00 pm
Venue: Seminar Room Prime Ministers Museum and Library Teen Murti House, New Delhi

All are Welcome.
Those wishing to have their names added to the email list may please email us at: rajnishpmml@gmail.com
CBC- 09142/11/0007/2627

• IMAGE OF THE DAY



STAR FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD: Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren at a roadshow in support of TMC's Shibpur candidate Rana Chatterjee, in Howrah on Sunday. PTI

AT GROUND ZERO OF MAMATA'S PATH TO POWER

In abandoned Nano factory's shadow, jobs crisis laid bare

TMC MLA says Singur has seen progress, locals point to migration

Ravik Bhattacharya & Atri Mitra
Singur, April 26

JUST BESIDE what was meant to be the Nano manufacturing plant, abandoned by the Tatas and now reduced to rubble overgrown with wild vegetation, 70-year-old Sheikh Md Ali says his son was forced to migrate to Uttarakhand, where he works as a gold artisan, because of what unfolded here two decades ago.

"I have seen it all. How the Nano factory was proposed. How shops and other businesses began to grow around it. My son trained here and worked as an apprentice for Rs 4,500 a month. Then the agitation started and everything stopped," says Ali, a resident of Joymollah village and a farmer who received compensation from the then Left government for his land.

The Singur anti-land acquisition agitation that began in 2006, along with that of Nandigram, proved pivotal for the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and catapulted Mamata Banerjee to power in 2011.

Though the Supreme Court in 2016 termed the acquisition process illegal and the land was returned by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, large tracts still remain uncultivable. The state government continues to provide Rs 2,000 and 16 kg of rice to 3,611 families classified as unwilling farmers.

Two decades on, Singur remains the symbol of the government's failure to bring industries to the state and a lack of jobs and migration are key issues. Just before the ongoing Assembly elections were announced, the TMC government launched the Yuva Sathi scheme, offering a monthly stipend of Rs 1,500 under Yuva Sathi scheme, but that is pocket money," he says.

While the BJP and other Opposition parties have targeted Banerjee over her government's track record on creating jobs, the CM has emphasised job creation as a priority.

Alli, however, seems unimpressed. "Will this Rs 1,500 secure a job for unemployed youth? Will Rs 2,000 and 16 kg of rice secure a family's future in Singur? How long will my son



Despite getting aid, locals who gave their land for the Tata Motors plant say lack of industries is hurting job prospects. PARTHA PAUL

• Constituency watch

The TMC has held the seat since 2011 but its vote share has reduced over the past three polls

| YEAR | WINNER | VOTE SHARE |
|------|--------|------------|
| 2021 | TMC | 48.15% |
| 2016 | TMC | 49.23% |
| 2011 | TMC | 57.61% |

have to work in other states like most youths here?" he asks. "Look at the land. It neither gave jobs nor can it be cultivated. For 18 years (since Tatas left), it has been like this," he adds.

Jobs on voters' minds

About 10 feet away, a group of youths are perched on a makeshift bamboo "machan (loft)". All of them are gold artisans working in different parts of the country, like many of their peers from Singur.

Sheikh Imran (26), whose name was deleted during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), works in Almora in Uttarakhand. "Here, there is no work. In Almora, we earn Rs 30,000-35,000 per month. Why will we stay here? I also get Rs 1,500 under Yuva Sathi scheme, but that is pocket money," he says.

About half a kilometre away, at Beraber market, Saikat Dhara (25) runs a fertiliser shop. A trained farmer, he is the grandson of Dudhkumar Dhara, one of the prominent faces of the anti-acquisition movement.

"We lost 5.5 bighas of land inside the project area. After getting it back following the Supreme Court order, we could cultivate only 2.5 bighas," he says, adding that people want both industry and agriculture. "Without industrialisation, financial condition will not improve. Let's see what happens after the election," he says.

Bandana Das (60) says industries should be set up through "due process". "We bought shops for my two sons, who could not

get jobs," she adds.

The 'ghost' site

A glance at the abandoned site tells its own story. Amid grassland and rubble lie pipes scattered along the internal roads. Following complaints, a new canal has been dug to address waterlogging.

"I have 10 cottahs of land inside the project area, which is now covered with wild grass and bushes. I cannot cultivate it as the soil has chunks of concrete, stones and iron. My four brothers and I survive on land outside project area. I think it is time industry returns," says Ajit Hambhir (46) of Beraber.

Tata Motors announced the Nano factory on May 18, 2006, following which the Left Front government acquired 997.5 acres across six mouzas — Gopalnagar, Beraber, Bajemelia, Khaserber, Singherber and Joymollah — for the project.

In December 2007, Banerjee, then Leader of the Opposition, undertook a 26-day hunger strike against the Left government's move. The protests forced Tata Motors to withdraw on October 3, 2008.

With only about 30% of the returned land cultivable, some villagers took up pisciculture with government support but the initiative failed.

This time, both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Banerjee have held rallies near Singur. In 2021, the TMC's Becharam Manna won the seat. "I am confident of winning. They have not forgotten the Singur agitation. Development has taken place here," says Manna, who will be up against the BJP's Arup Kumar Das and Debashis Chatterjee of the CPI(M).

About 25 km away, near the Hindustan Motors plant in Hooghly's Uttarpara, Sonali Basu (30) disagrees. "Nothing has happened in Singur. Here too, the Hindustan Motors plant shut down in May 2014. Where will we get jobs? Unemployment is a serious issue," she says.

I HEREBY DECLARE



Jharna Sardar, 41
TMC CANDIDATE FROM SANDESHKHALI
TOTAL ASSETS 2021
2.58 L Did not contest
MOVABLE **IMMOVABLE**
₹58,000 **₹2 lakh**
LIABILITIES: Nil
EDUCATION: Postgraduate
PENDING CRIMINAL CASES: Nil



Sanat Sardar, 47
BJP CANDIDATE FROM SANDESHKHALI
TOTAL ASSETS 2021
₹87.88 L Did not contest
MOVABLE **IMMOVABLE**
₹17.88 lakh **₹70 lakh**
LIABILITIES: ₹28.47 lakh
EDUCATION: Postgraduate
PENDING CRIMINAL CASES: 1

POLLS THE R G KAR A to Z

rape and murder case has been a major campaign issue, with the BJP using it to target the TMC over women's safety. The BJP has fielded the victim's mother.

In 44 border seats, TMC led BJP in 2021, avg win margin twice as high

Lalmani Verma
Lucknow, April 26

• ALL IN NUMBERS

44 Assembly seats of Bengal share a border with Bangladesh

SEATS WON IN 2021
TMC **27** BJP **17**

BORDER STATS

- India shares a 4,096-km border with Bangladesh
- 2,126 km of this lies in West Bengal
- 563 km yet to be fenced

SOURCE: RAJYA SABHA

represent border constituencies. However, the TMC's average victory margin in these border constituencies — 38,835 votes — was more than double that of the BJP (15,795).

These 44 constituencies are spread across the districts of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur, Darjeeling, Malda, Murshidabad, Nadia, North 24 Parganas, and South 24 Parganas — regions known to have a sizeable Muslim population.

Of these, 13 constituencies in Nadia, North 24 Parganas, and



South 24 Parganas are scheduled to vote on April 29. In 2021, the TMC won eight of these constituencies, while the BJP won five.

Poll promise

In its manifesto titled *Bhoro-shar Shopoth* (Pledge of trust), the BJP has promised strict measures to curb "illegal infiltration" and address what it claims is a "silent demographic invasion". It has pledged to ensure land allocation for fencing along the border within 45 days of forming the government.

What the numbers say

There are 44 Assembly constituencies in West Bengal that share a boundary with Bangladesh. Of these, the TMC won 27 seats (12.55% of its total 215 seats), while the BJP secured 17 (22% of its 77 seats). Among the 44 Muslim MLAs in the 294-member House, 43 belong to the TMC, and 12 of them — nearly 28% —

known." Just then, a frail, elderly woman walking up from the other side of the street says quite loudly, "This time she is going (to get voted out)." The Bengal election is about Mamata, and for both her supporters and opponents, she is the central issue. To understand how this election is playing out, The Indian Express spoke to women in Kolkata and the villages of Canning Purba and Canning Paschim constituencies in the South 24 Parganas, a TMC stronghold, since the "mahila" vote this time is even more crucial for Didi. Mamata's M (Mahila) plus M (minority) vote bank has seen her through in the past and the minority community seems to be standing solidly behind her this time, too.

Many women admire Mamata because of her never-say-die spirit, and others for "taking care of the poor" through the many welfare schemes she has put in place. A 39-year-old HR professional drinking bharer cha — bhar is a small, unglazed, disposable clay cup — on Russel Street says the TMC supremo "represents power" and that she "is holding her own despite all the criticism".

A woman at the Pyara Bagan slum in Bhabanipur says she will vote for the TMC because "Didi has given us so many facilities (like the Lakshmi Bhandar scheme under which an estimated 24 crore women receive Rs 1,500 per month)". But she admits that a few women, "maybe one or two in 10", won't vote for her like last time. "But this is Didi's state and she will come back. Sarkar badlega par dheere dheere badlega (the government will change but slowly)." For women considering change, the reason is that they want more. Four such women at the SSKM government hospital, which is beautifully lit at night, are unhappy with the lack of livelihoods in the state and complain that the government is not doing enough to create jobs. "My daughter has completed her graduation and is not getting a job anywhere," says one of the women.

Women in Canning also echo these sentiments, saying inflation has wiped out the benefits of the Rs 1,500 they receive from the government. They also express concern about how the R G Kar rape and murder case was handled by the



Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee interacts with local vegetable vendors in Kolkata on Sunday. ANI

government and the issue of women's safety. But not one woman speaks of the Constitution Amendment Bill linked to delimitation and operationalising women's reservation in Parliament and state Assemblies, something the TMC voted against. Either the women do not know, or they do not care. Nobody knows how the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls — and the deletion of 91 lakh names — will ac-

tually pan out politically, or who stands to gain from the unprecedented voter turnout of 93.2% in the first phase of polling held on April 23.

Dissatisfied voters

There is undoubtedly a dissatisfaction with the TMC, possibly more than was initially talked about. But, and this is the curious part, despite people's unhappiness with the TMC, there isn't the same kind of

anger evident against Mamata Banerjee personally. People make a distinction between the TMC and its leader. Even as women talk about change, they add a caveat about what Didi has done for them.

The CM seems to stand like a "chattan (rock)" against the deluge that may have otherwise swept the TMC out of power. In Deewar, Shashi Kapoor uttered the iconic dialogue of "Mere paas maa hai (I have mother on

my side)." For many Bengalis, it is a case of "Humare paas Didi hai (we have Didi on our side)".

Despite criticism of the "goondagardi," "extortion," and the "corruption of TMC lumpens" who "get things done" and also deliver votes in the districts, the CM still evokes sympathy among sections of people.

Win or lose, Mamata Banerjee is a phenomenon of a kind the country has not seen. Here is a woman who first broke away from the Congress and went on to replace it in West Bengal. Within 13 years of coming into existence, she replaced the Left Front government that had been entrenched in power for 34 years. She has kept an ascendant BJP, up from three seats in 2016 to 77 in 2021, at bay in Bengal so far in five elections, including Assembly and parliamentary polls.

Mamata was under pressure even in 2021 but won convincingly, though many gave the credit to Prashant Kishor's "magic". That she does not belong to a political family but has had to claw her way up to power adds to her appeal. She has subalternised Bengal politics, with women at the heart of it.

Neeraja Chowdhury, Contributing Editor, The Indian Express, has covered the last 11 Lok Sabha elections. She is the author of *How Prime Ministers Decide*.

• FROM PAGE 1

As campaign for Bengal elections ends today, women face a choice and a paradox

Drive through its streets — past Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's home on Elgin Road, the house where Jyoti Basu lived before he became the CM, the expansive building with a red facade that was the last Congress CM Siddhartha Shankar Ray's residence, the ancestral home of Dr Syama Prasad Mookenji, the house where filmstar Uttam Kumar lived, or past the famous Kalighat temple where Ma Kali blesses all — it becomes apparent that Bhabanipur is a constituency that has influenced the psyche, and history, of Bengal.

Many in the CM's neighbourhood recall the way "Didi (elder sister)", as she is popularly referred to by her admirers as well as rivals, would swing into action, wading through waterlogged streets during the rains, or how she sat beside the body of the son of one of the women throughout the night.

However, a few hundred metres away, another group of women point their fingers at the sky and say: "God will decide what happens on May 4." As they warm up, one of them puts her finger on her lips and whispers, "Sssh, we want change... and the reasons for it are well

known." Just then, a frail, elderly woman walking up from the other side of the street says quite loudly, "This time she is going (to get voted out)." The Bengal election is about Mamata, and for both her supporters and opponents, she is the central issue. To understand how this election is playing out, The Indian Express spoke to women in Kolkata and the villages of Canning Purba and Canning Paschim constituencies in the South 24 Parganas, a TMC stronghold, since the "mahila" vote this time is even more crucial for Didi. Mamata's M (Mahila) plus M (minority) vote bank has seen her through in the past and the minority community seems to be standing solidly behind her this time, too.

Many women admire Mamata because of her never-say-die spirit, and others for "taking care of the poor" through the many welfare schemes she has put in place. A 39-year-old HR professional drinking bharer cha — bhar is a small, unglazed, disposable clay cup — on Russel Street says the TMC supremo "represents power" and that she "is holding her own despite all the criticism".

A woman at the Pyara Bagan slum in Bhabanipur says she will vote for the TMC because "Didi has given us so many facilities (like the Lakshmi Bhandar scheme under which an estimated 24 crore women receive Rs 1,500 per month)". But she admits that a few women, "maybe one or two in 10", won't vote for her like last time. "But this is Didi's state and she will come back. Sarkar badlega par dheere dheere badlega (the government will change but slowly)." For women considering change, the reason is that they want more. Four such women at the SSKM government hospital, which is beautifully lit at night, are unhappy with the lack of livelihoods in the state and complain that the government is not doing enough to create jobs. "My daughter has completed her graduation and is not getting a job anywhere," says one of the women.

Women in Canning also echo these sentiments, saying inflation has wiped out the benefits of the Rs 1,500 they receive from the government. They also express concern about how the R G Kar rape and murder case was handled by the

government and the issue of women's safety. But not one woman speaks of the Constitution Amendment Bill linked to delimitation and operationalising women's reservation in Parliament and state Assemblies, something the TMC voted against. Either the women do not know, or they do not care. Nobody knows how the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls — and the deletion of 91 lakh names — will ac-

tually pan out politically, or who stands to gain from the unprecedented voter turnout of 93.2% in the first phase of polling held on April 23.

There is undoubtedly a dissatisfaction with the TMC, possibly more than was initially talked about. But, and this is the curious part, despite people's unhappiness with the TMC, there isn't the same kind of

anger evident against Mamata Banerjee personally. People make a distinction between the TMC and its leader. Even as women talk about change, they add a caveat about what Didi has done for them.

The CM seems to stand like a "chattan (rock)" against the deluge that may have otherwise swept the TMC out of power. In Deewar, Shashi Kapoor uttered the iconic dialogue of "Mere paas maa hai (I have mother on

my side)." For many Bengalis, it is a case of "Humare paas Didi hai (we have Didi on our side)".

Despite criticism of the "goondagardi," "extortion," and the "corruption of TMC lumpens" who "get things done" and also deliver votes in the districts, the CM still evokes sympathy among sections of people.

Win or lose, Mamata Banerjee is a phenomenon of a kind the country has not seen. Here is a woman who first broke away from the Congress and went on to replace it in West Bengal. Within 13 years of coming into existence, she replaced the Left Front government that had been entrenched in power for 34 years. She has kept an ascendant BJP, up from three seats in 2016 to 77 in 2021, at bay in Bengal so far in five elections, including Assembly and parliamentary polls.

Mamata was under pressure even in 2021 but won convincingly, though many gave the credit to Prashant Kishor's "magic". That she does not belong to a political family but has had to claw her way up to power adds to her appeal. She has subalternised Bengal politics, with women at the heart of it.

This time, with her back to the wall, she has played the "B" card, invoking Bengali nationalism to push back the BJP and paint it as being synonymous with "Delhi", whose influence the state has resisted for half a century. At nukkad meetings everywhere, TMC leaders have warned people that if the BJP comes to power, the state will lose its Bengali character, altering its cultural practices, food habits, and ways of worship.

To counter this onslaught, BJP leader Anurag Thakur ate fish in front of the cameras, and Union Home Minister Amit Shah promised that if the BJP came to power, the CM would be someone who was born in Bengal, studied in the state, and spoke Bengali.

Making a bid for Chief Minister's post for the fourth straight time, the feisty Mamata Banerjee is facing the most important battle of her life: tougher, many feel, than the fight she put up to oust the Left in 2011.

MANN KI BAAT

‘Historic’: PM on Kalpakkam n-reactor attaining criticality

Express News Service
New Delhi, April 26

UNDERLINING INDIA'S continuing strides in its civil nuclear programme, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his monthly Mann Ki Baat address on Sunday, expressed gratitude to the nation's scientists for making a significant contribution to nation-building.

India's civil nuclear programme, he said, has greatly helped everyone, from agriculture to modern innovators, and benefited our industrial growth besides the energy sector and the healthcare sector.

The PM also spoke on the wind energy sector, biodiversity, Gautam Buddha's teaching, and the ongoing Census.

"Just a few days ago, our nuclear scientists enhanced India's pride with another major achievement. The Fast Breeder Reactor in Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu, has achieved Criticality. Actually, Criticality is the stage during which a reactor successfully attains a self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction for the first time. This stage signifies the reactor entering the operational phase. This is a historic milestone in India's nuclear energy journey," he said.

PM HAILS STRIDES IN BAMBOO SECTOR

Talking about success achieved in the Northeast in the bamboo sector, PM Narendra Modi highlighted the change after the definition of bamboo was altered. "According to the law made by the British, bamboo was defined as a tree, and the rules associated with it were very strict. As a result, people here started moving away from bamboo-related businesses," he said. "In 2017, we removed bamboo from the tree category. Today, the bamboo sector is flourishing throughout the Northeast. People are continuously innovating and adding value to it," he said. ENS

clear energy journey," he said. The PM said the nuclear reactor is built entirely using indigenous technology.

Recalling that in 2024 he had witnessed the core loading of the reactor in Kalpakkam, PM Modi congratulated those who had contributed to India's nuclear programme, adding that their efforts also energise the resolve for a Viksit Bharat.

Besides, PM Modi urged citizens to wholeheartedly participate in what will be the world's largest Census.

"The national Census isn't just a government task. It's the responsibility of all of us. Your participation is crucial. The information you provide is completely secure, kept confidential, and protected with digital security. Let's make Census 2027 a success," he said.

Stating that wind power was propelling India forward, the PM said India has recently achieved a major milestone in the field with the wind energy generation capacity now having exceeded 56 gigawatts.

Extending best wishes in advance for Buddha Purnima, which is on May 1, he said, "Amid the tensions and conflicts the world is going through today, Buddha's teachings have become even more important."

"Blackbucks have started re-appearing in Chhattisgarh... This marks the return of our lost heritage," he said. Similar hope, the PM said, was visible in the conservation of the Great Indian Bustard, the Godavan. PM also spoke of India's achievement in the European Girls Mathematical Olympiad in France.

Doval meets UAE President, gives New Delhi's Gulf outreach a push

Security, strategic ties amid West Asia turmoil high on NSA's agenda

Shubhajit Roy
New Delhi, April 26

AMID THE turmoil in West Asia, NSA Ajit Doval met UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi on Saturday, a week after he went to Saudi Arabia.

NSA Doval's visits are being seen as part of Delhi's high-level outreach to the Gulf countries amid the war in West Asia, which is currently on a ceasefire. Trade with the energy-rich UAE has been disrupted due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz in the last two months. Only 10 Indian ships have been able to pass through the strait during this period.

PM Narendra Modi has spoken to leaders of UAE, Saudi and other Gulf countries in last two months, at least twice, and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has also been in touch



NSA Ajit Doval with UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi on Saturday. PTI

with his counterparts from these countries. Doval's visit is an important outreach given that he has been coordinating with the Emirati establishment on security and strategic issues, especially related to counter-terrorism cooperation.

During the meeting, both sides discussed ways to strengthen the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two countries and enhance cooperation on energy security amid evolving regional develop-

ments. According to the Indian Embassy in the UAE, Doval, during his meeting with the UAE President, conveyed greetings from Prime Minister Modi and also discussed measures to deepen bilateral ties, the regional security situation, and other issues of mutual interest.

"He (Doval) called on President HH Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Conveyed greetings of PM Narendra Modi. Measures to deepen the Comprehensive Strategic Partner-

E. EXPLAINED

Managing impact on energy supplies

With the closure of the Strait of Hormuz severely impacting India's energy supplies, the Narendra Modi government has been proactively interacting with the Gulf nations to soften this war-time blow. NSA Doval's visit adds a security and strategic angle to this outreach. The UAE is home to about 4.7 million Indians — making the country a key and natural partner for India in West Asia.

ship, the regional situation, and other issues of mutual interest were discussed," the Embassy said in a post on X.

The UAE state-run news agency WAM further reported on the meeting, saying that Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed received Doval, following which greetings were exchanged between the leadership of both countries.

Doval conveyed PM Modi's greetings and best wishes for the UAE's continued progress and prosperity, while the UAE President reciprocated with his greetings for the Indian leadership and wished further development and prosperity for India and its people, as per WAM.

The discussions also focused on recent developments in West Asia and their implications for regional and international security and stability, along with global energy security concerns.

The meeting was also attended by Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, and Ali bin Hammad Al Shamsi, Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for National Security.

This is the second high-level meeting between the two countries in one month.

Earlier in the month, Jaishankar met the UAE President as part of his two-nation tour. The External Affairs Minister pointed out the robustness of the India-UAE strategic partnership, noting that the ongoing dialogue between the two nations remains strong and transparent despite a complex regional environment.

US shooting: PM says relieved Trump, Melania & Vance safe

Express News Service
New Delhi, April 26

AFTER A gunman tried to breach the ballroom at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner attended by US President Donald Trump and fired on a security agent at a checkpoint in the Washington Hilton hotel, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday he was relieved that Trump, First Lady Melania Trump and Vice President J D Vance were safe and unharmed in the incident.

Modi said on X, "Violence has no place in a democracy

and must be unequivocally condemned".

"Relieved to learn that President Trump, the First Lady and Vice President are safe and unharmed following the recent security incident at a Washington DC hotel. I extend my best wishes for their continued safety and well-being. Violence has no place in a democracy and must be unequivocally condemned," Modi said.

Modi had reacted similarly after an assassination attempt on Trump at a rally on July 14, 2024, when he was the Presidential candidate.

Talks between Centre, Ladakh groups set to resume next month

Naveed Iqbal
Srinagar, April 26

TALKS BETWEEN the Centre and Ladakh are set to resume next month. Ladakh L-G V K Saxena announced Sunday that the Union Ministry of Home Affairs has decided to convene a meeting of the sub-committee for political dialogue on May 22.

He said Union Home Minister Amit Shah will be in Leh for two days from April 30. The L-G said that on May 1, Shah will pay his respects to the Holy Relics of Lord Buddha on Buddha Purnima and share his thoughts on "spiritual significance of the sacred exposition in Ladakh from 1-14 May".

Saxena said the visit underscores the commitment of the Centre towards the development of Ladakh.

The sub-committee is part of the High-Powered Committee (HPC) headed by MoS for Home Nityanand Rai to address concerns of the Ladakhi people. Since it was carved out

as a UT without a legislature from the former state of J&K, the people of Ladakh have been demanding greater political representation, and repeated agitations have taken place in the region led by two socio-political representative bodies — the Apex Body Leh and the Kargil Democratic Alliance.

On the talks, Saxena said, "This will carry forward the process of constructive democratic dialogue with key stakeholders of Ladakh and pave the way for an enduring solution to meet the aspirations of the people of Ladakh."

A meeting of the HPC was scheduled on October 6 last year. But after four locals were killed in police firing during a protest in September, the groups refused to engage with the Centre till a set of demands, including a judicial inquiry, were met.

These demands were subsequently met, and climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, who was detained under NSA, was also released in March this year.

After Thrissur tragedy, Kerala's big churches drop fireworks display

Shaju Philip
Thiruvananthapuram, April 26

IN THE wake of the April 21 fireworks tragedy in Thrissur that left 14 people dead, several prominent churches in Kerala have abandoned plans for fireworks displays, a major attraction of their annual festivals.

In Thrissur, a manufacturing unit engaged by a temple to prepare fireworks for the annual Thrissur Pooram witnessed multiple blasts on April 21, leading to deaths and severe injuries. Following the tragedy, the Pooram fireworks spectacle and festivities were abandoned.

In the aftermath of this, the St. Joseph's Church at Pavaratty in Thrissur dropped its three-day fireworks display as a mark of respect towards the workers

who died. "The fireworks at the church had been held every year in the last week of April in a grand way. But this time, the church has decided to avoid it as a mark of respect towards the deceased," said a church official.

Moreover, under the Malankara Orthodox denomination, five churches have decided to conduct their annual festivals without the fireworks.

Prominent among them is the St George Orthodox Church at Puthuppally in Kottayam district, a leading pilgrimage centre. The church has decided to use the money for fireworks towards charitable schemes.

The St George Orthodox Church at Chandanappally in Pathanamthitta has also decided to use the money kept aside for the spectacle to build a house for a poor family.



Government of Haryana

Heartiest Greetings

on the Birth Anniversary of

Sant Shri Dhanna Bhagat Ji

April 27, 2026

Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana

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Ghazipur: Prohibitory orders after girl's death

Express News Service
Lucknow, April 26

THE GHAZIPUR district administration has imposed prohibitory orders under BNSS Section 163 across the district till April 30, restricting any form of assembly, protest or political mobilisation in view of possible law and order concerns linked to the death of a teenage girl on April 15.

The restrictions come amid rising political tensions, with Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav announcing that he will visit Ghazipur on April 29 following an attack on an SP delegation that had earlier tried to reach the village.

"No political party, group or individual will be allowed to gather, enter the district to stage protests, or organise demonstrations related to the incident," DM Anupam Shukla said.

Police also flagged the circulation of "misleading and unverified" information about the incident by "mischievous elements" and some political workers.

Earlier on Sunday, the SP president launched a sharp attack on the UP government over the death of the teenage girl, alleging attempts to "change statements" of the victim's family.

Sharing a video of the victim's father on X, Yadav said, "Changing statements does not change the truth. Uttar Pradesh has never seen such a weak CM, under whose watch poor and helpless victims are pressured to alter their statements."

In the video, the girl's father

can be purportedly heard accusing a village head of intimidation and alleging that stones were pelted when an SP delegation had gone to meet the family. He also claimed that a police officer was injured while trying to protect him. On Saturday, however, the victim's father told reporters that he did not want political leaders to visit his home for "political mileage".

He also said that the district officials have assured him of strict action against the accused and expressed satisfaction with the police investigation.

Yadav asked why there was a delay in lodging the FIR in the case, why statements were allegedly altered, and why the victim's family was being "harassed". He also claimed that the Ghazipur incident mirrored the Hathras case, claiming both involved families from marginalised backgrounds and "dominant elements" as perpetrators.

In Hathras, a Dalit girl was allegedly gangraped on September 14, 2020. She later died at a Delhi hospital on September 29.

Varanasi Zone ADGP, Piyush Mordia, said the girl in Ghazipur had gone missing on the night of April 14, and her body was found about 3 km from her home in the Ganga early the next morning.

Based on a complaint by the family, an FIR has been registered, and the main accused has been arrested, the officer said.

Senior police and administrative officials have met the victim's family, Mordia said, noting that the father has sought a speedy trial.

WITH PTI INPUTS

Brawl at gym trainer's birthday party leads to three murders

Manish Sahu
Lucknow, April 26

A DISPUTE, allegedly over smearing cake on the face of a gym trainer during his birthday celebration, at a gym in Uttar Pradesh's Bulandshahr on Saturday night took a violent turn, leaving three youths dead. All three were shot in the head.

During preliminary inquiry, the police learned that the incident took place during trainer Jeetu's birthday celebration. An argument over smearing of cake on his face broke out between two groups, which suddenly escalated into firing

by the trainer and his associates, said the police.

The deceased were identified as Amar Saini, 26, Manish Saini, 23, and Akash Saini, 22. All three were members of the same family and worked out at the gym.

"Three persons, identified as Naresh, Rupesh, and Mayank, have been arrested in connection with the case so far," said Superintendent of Police, Bulandshahr, Antriksh Jain.

Police suggested that a rivalry and competition for local dominance between the two groups may have led to the escalation.

STATE GOVT CONSIDERING ACCOMMODATING THESE TEACHERS: MINORITY AFFAIRS MINISTER

Hired to modernise madrasas, later rendered destitute, 21,000 UP teachers cling to new hope

Manish Sahu
Lucknow, April 26

A POSTGRADUATE in English, 56-year-old Mohammad Muslim sells fruits from a handcart to make ends meet. Now, about five years after the Madrasa Modernisation Scheme was discontinued by the Centre, leaving around 21,000 teachers employed as part of it destitute, Muslim hopes "our *achche din* (good days)" may return.

Uttar Pradesh Minority Affairs Minister Danish Azad Ansari has said that the state government is considering accommodating these "modern teachers" following an in-principle decision taken at a meeting with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. A detailed action plan will be drawn up soon, Ansari said, adding that the teachers who have made "significant contributions" will not be denied their rights.

Teachers like Muslim, who is a resident of Ghazipur, taught subjects such as Hindi, English, Mathematics, Science and Social Sciences to about 10 lakh students at 7,442 madrasas across the state as part of the modernisation scheme, which was envisaged as a bridge between mainstream and religious edu-

cation in madrasas.

Ashraf Ali, who is the president of the body representing these teachers, the Madrasa Adhunikaran Shikshak Ekta Samiti, says a government initiative like this would benefit not only the educators but also students. Ali points out that after the scheme was brought in, students from madrasas could transition more easily into mainstream education. "Earlier, they would find it difficult to secure admission in other schools."

Teachers say that, while not much, the salaries had been a support. Even when they stopped, many continued their work in madrasas, hoping their dues would be cleared soon. Alongside, many took up odd jobs — such as vending, tailoring, driving rickshaws, and farming — to support their families.

Muslim says he used to teach 53 students English, Hindi and Social Sciences from 8 am to 1 pm, at Madrasa Quadria Gulshan in Ghazipur, and sell fruits later in the day. Now, the latter is his only means of making a living. "It has been difficult to provide for my family, my wife and four daughters. My wife took up tailoring work... Today, despite holding a postgraduate degree, a Bachelors in Elementary Edu-



Laiqa Fatima now stitches clothes to support her family. She also teaches at a madrasa in Azamgarh for a modest pay. VISHAL SRIVASTAV

cation, and a Basic Training Certificate, I sell fruits by the roadside."

Ansari told *The Indian Express* the government is exploring ways to accommodate those who earlier worked as modern teachers and that the Director and Principal Secretary of the Minority Affairs Department have been instructed to formulate a policy for their adjustment. The officials, Ansari said, are currently working on the proposal and efforts are underway to arrive at "a workable solution".

The Madrasa Modernisation Scheme was conceived in 1993-94 by the P V Narasimha Rao-led government at the Centre, and in 2008 renamed as the Scheme for Providing Quality Education

in Madrasas. Not limited to Muslim teachers alone, it provided for appointment of up to three "modern teachers" in madrasas.

The Centre and states were to pay the salaries of these teachers in the ratio of 60:40 under the scheme, with teachers who were graduates entitled to Rs 6,000 per month and those with postgraduate degrees Rs 12,000. However, salaries under the scheme remained irregular throughout. In 2016, the then Samajwadi Party government in Uttar Pradesh increased the honorarium to the two categories of teachers by Rs 2,000 and Rs 3,000, respectively.

In April 2021, the scheme was shifted from the Union Ministry of Education to the Union Min-

istry of Minority Affairs. And soon after, it was discontinued. Says Ashraf: "In 2020-21, the government paid modern teachers salaries for 10 months. This reignited hopes, but then the wages stopped." In 2024, the UP government stopped the payment of honorariums as well.

Shakir Ali and his wife are among the "modern teachers" who have continued to turn up to hold classes, with several madrasa committees retaining such educators on a small pay.

Ali, a postgraduate who teaches English and Mathematics at Madrasa Jamia Abul Ghaus in the Mohammadpurl locality of Ghazipur, earlier drove a rented e-rickshaw, and now takes private tuitions. His wife, a graduate, is employed at the same madrasa, which has about 300 students. It has three "modern teachers", besides nine for religious education.

Laiqa Fatima, a resident of Meerapur village in Azamgarh, also continues to teach at a madrasa for a modest pay. The management and students requested her to stay on, she says. Madrasa Neyaz Jafari in Dewait village where she works has 138 children, and three "modern teachers".

A postgraduate in sociology,

Laiqa says she joined in 2016. Her husband Naseem Haider had lost his job at the time. Haider later found work as a private taxi driver, and for a while the family thought they had turned a corner. "But after our salaries stopped, we slipped back into financial hardship," Laiqa says. So she began stitching clothes after school hours to support the family.

One of her colleagues is Meraj Fatima, a postgraduate in political science. Meraj says: "My husband worked as a chauffeur in Saudi Arabia but could not send money home regularly. A few months after Laiqa joined, I too took up a position at the same madrasa."

That proved invaluable when her husband returned to India around four years ago. When he opened a bag shop, they were "stable" for a while, she says — till the Madrasa Modernisation Scheme was halted.

The madrasa's manager Niyaz Haider says they can pay Laiqa and Meraj very little, given their limited resources. Hoping that the Adityanath government will rehabilitate teachers such as her, Meraj says: "I hope it will not only ease our financial burden but also of many others in similar circumstances."

HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF STATE TOURISM DEPARTMENT TODAY

US tourist rape case: Karnataka faces challenge of regulating thousands of homestays

Atiya Firdos
Bengaluru, April 26

THE RECENT sexual assault allegations at a Kodagu homestay have prompted a review of Karnataka's enforcement gaps, with the state tourism department calling a high-level meeting Monday with the police and other law enforcement authorities to tighten implementation mechanisms across Karnataka.

This comes days after a US national reported being sexually assaulted at a homestay in Kodagu. It also comes a year after the alleged gang-rape of two women in Hampi, which led to tighter regulations, particularly in remote tourist areas.

Authorities are now considering stricter employee verification, in light of the arrest of two people, including a staff member at the Kodagu homestay, over the allegations.

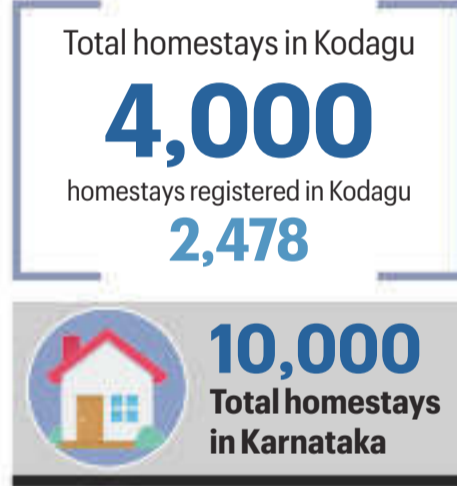
A senior official with the tourism department told *The Indian Express* that while SOPs already exist, enforcement re-

mains fragmented, with no centralised system to track compliance across the state's growing number of homestays.

"The focus now is on how to more effectively monitor the implementation of rules," the official said. "We will convene a meeting with all concerned authorities to review the situation and assess how existing guidelines can be more effectively implemented and monitored on the ground."

Officials pointed out that in the Kodagu case, the cook — allegedly the main accused — had been hired from outside, raising concerns over whether police verification procedures were followed. The department is now considering making it compulsory for homestay owners to ensure all staff hired undergo police verification and their details shared with local police. There is also a proposal to mandate displaying the Karnataka State Police (KSP) app QR code at registered homestays to improve traceability and reporting by

Many homestays are not registered



guests and authorities.

In March last year, three men attacked a group of tourists on a late-night outing near Hampi. Two women, including a foreigner, were gang-raped, and a male tourist from Odisha died after being pushed into a canal.

Following this, the government introduced stricter guidelines. Homestay owners were asked to inform local police before taking guests to secluded

areas, particularly at night. It became mandatory to maintain detailed guest records and to share this information with police. CCTVs were required in common areas, and owners were made responsible for guest safety.

The Kodagu Homestay Association estimates that the district has nearly 4,000 homestays, of which only 2,478 are officially registered. The Kodagu homestay was registered, with authorities cancelling its licence after the incident.

Guidelines issued after the Hampi incident require law enforcement authorities to conduct mandatory vetting of the staff at these homestays.

The challenge, however, lies in implementation, with officials admitting that enforcement of staff verification has been patchy given the practical hurdles. According to officials, while police verification and related processes can cost around Rs 500-1,500 per employee, in practice, the overall cost can be

higher due to documentation and coordination requirements. In addition, many workers stay for short periods, often leaving within two to three months, making it difficult for homestay owners to complete verification for every hire.

A senior Karnataka tourism department official said: "We have sought a detailed report from Kodagu district administration to examine whether there were any lapses, in employee verification and adherence to safety protocols at the homestay. Based on findings, we will take a call on measures to strengthen enforcement."

But members of the Kodagu Homestay Association allege that factors such as inconsistent verification fee structures across jurisdictions, long procedure and demands for "informal payments/bribes" during approval stage discourage compliance.

"This makes the process cumbersome," one member said.

PM to inaugurate Ganga Expressway in Hardoi on April 29

Express News Service
New Delhi, April 26

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi will inaugurate the six-lane Ganga Expressway, a 594-km greenfield road connecting Western, Central and Eastern regions of UP, on April 29.

The new expressway, built at a cost of around Rs 36,230 crore, is expected to "significantly reduce" travel time between Meerut and Prayagraj from the current 10-12 hours to approximately 6 hours. In a statement on Sunday, the PMO said, "The Prime Minister will inaugurate the Ganga Expressway in Hardoi district, marking a significant milestone in the development of world-class infrastructure in the country..."

"The expressway traverses 12 districts — Meerut, Bulandshahr, Hapur, Amroha, Sambhal, Badaun, Shahjahanpur, Hardoi, Unnao, Raebareli, Pratapgarh, and Prayagraj — thereby connecting Western, Central, and Eastern regions of Uttar Pradesh through a single seamless high-speed corridor," the statement said.

'No one wants to return': Meet the Haryana youths choosing to stay back in Israel despite conflict

Sukhbir Siwach
Chandigarh, April 26

IN 2024, nearly 180 youths from Haryana went to Israel to work as construction workers engaged in tiling, steel fixing, carpentry and plastering. They are now reluctant to return despite the ongoing tensions in the region following the recent war between Israel and Iran — the reason being their earnings. They now earn far more than they did back home; some earn over Rs 3 lakh a month depending on their qualifications, and many send nearly Rs 1.5 lakh monthly to their families in Haryana.

Ramesh Chander Jangra is among the youths who went to Israel. After completing a diploma from the Industrial Training Institute (ITI), he began working as a construction worker in his village Karela, Jind. At the age of 40, in early 2024, he earned Rs 30,000 a month.

In June that year, he joined a construction company in Israel. Today, Jangra earns nearly Rs 1.6 lakh a month. And he saves an average of Rs 1.35 lakh to send back home after an expense of about Rs 25,000. His family including two children are in Haryana. Jangra, who lives in Jerusa-

“Many of us earlier earned just Rs 20,000 in our villages or small towns, but now we save Rs 2 lakh monthly.”

PRAVEEN VATS, ONE OF THE YOUTHS IN ISRAEL

lem, is not ready to move to India even amid the ongoing tensions. "We are living here normally. Even when the war was on, Israel's strong anti-missile system intercepted incoming missiles. We don't want to leave Israel at this stage as we have a five-year contract in the first phase."

Another youth from Jind's Badhana, Nishan Thakur (23), also moved to Israel in June, 2024, after completing a technical course at an ITI. His family owns just an acre of land, which prompted him to move when the government initiated the selection process. "Instead of working eight hours a day, I put in 12 hours... make over Rs 30 lakh annually doing foundation and drilling work. After taxes and expenses, I save about Rs 2 lakh monthly to

send home."

Praveen Vats (33) is among the highest-earning youths from Haryana in Israel. With a diploma in mechanical engineering from a Haryana polytechnic, he moved in April 2024.

"I was earning Rs 38,000 a month in Hisar while working for a steel company, with six years of experience. In Israel, I work twelve hours daily, earn Rs 48 lakh annually and send Rs 3 lakh monthly home after expenses." Married in 2017, Vats's wife is a clerk in the Haryana local bodies department.

He said, "No one wants to return... Many of us earlier earned just Rs 20,000 in our villages or small towns, but now we save Rs 2 lakh monthly."

On February 12, 2026, Vats returned to India for vacation, but his leave was extended as Israel suspended international flights during the war. He is scheduled to fly back soon. He works in steel fixing and iron bending for construction projects.

Encouraged by the positive response, the Haryana Kaushal Rozgar Nigam (HKRN) has issued advertisements to send 7,600 more eligible beneficiaries to Israel.

Fadnavis backs ex-CJI amid row over meeting Bageshwar priest

Manoj More
Pune, April 26

MAHARASHTRA CHIEF Minister Devendra Fadnavis defended former Chief Justice of India B R Gavai on Sunday after he was criticised for his meeting with Dharendra Shastri, the chief priest of Bageshwar Dham in Madhya Pradesh.

Meanwhile, after his remarks about Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj came under Opposition fire, Shastri Sunday apologised for his comment, adding that his statement has been taken out of context on social media.

Activist Shyam Manav, founder-president of the Andhashradha Nirmoolan Samiti, criticised Justice Gavai on April 25, stating that the former CJI had now lost the right to invoke the name of Dr B R Ambedkar.

"Who is Shyam Manav to say this? Who gave him this right? Is he the one distributing certificates? Lately, Shyam Manav speaks only for publicity. Since no one pays attention to him, he makes such statements daily to stay in the news," Fadnavis said.

Referring to the meeting between Gavai and Shastri, Manav had said, "If Bhushan Gavai, despite holding a supreme position like that of a justice, bows before Dharendra Shastri, then



Dharendra Shastri has apologised for his remarks on Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj

he should no longer claim the legacy of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. Bhushan Gavai claims to follow Ambedkarite ideology. But if he is seeking blessings by falling at the feet of Dharendra Shastri, he should never take Ambedkar's name again. He has lost that right."

Challenging Dharendra Shastri, Manav said, "If Shastri truly possesses 'divine vision', he should accept the Anti-Superstition Committee's challenge and win the Rs 80 lakh prize."

On Saturday the CM had said that there was no evidence backing Shastri's statement that Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was tired of fighting wars. A row erupted after Shastri claimed at a programme in Nagpur that Chhatrapati Shi-

vaji Maharaj had expressed his desire to renounce his responsibilities because he was tired of warfare, and approached his "guru" Samartha Ramdas with his crown.

Both the Congress and the Sharad Pawar-led NCP criticised Shastri. The Congress said the priest was following RSS ideology.


Following the backlash, Shastri issued an apology while stating that his remark has been misinterpreted.

"Since yesterday, my statement has been taken out of context on social media. We cannot insult the very person who inspired our concept of a Hindu Rashtra. We cannot even imagine doing so in our dreams. If Hindutva in this country are alive today, it is because of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. The Maratha Empire belongs to all of us. We all revere the Chhatrapati," he said.

"There was not even a 1% intention to insult him. My speech was meant to glorify the greatness of a Guru and show how much Chhatrapati respected saints and sages. We have tried to build our character by looking at his bravery; there can be no insult to him. If anyone's sentiments were hurt, I seek their forgiveness," he added.


SALUTE THE SOLDIER

BORDER SECURITY FORCE



CONSTABLE
BHIM SINGH
03.03.1970
27.04.2002

Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Constable Bhim Singh on his Balidan Divas. On this day, he sustained fatal bullet injuries while fighting militants near Kumbi Bazar area, Imphal, Manipur and succumbed to injuries while being evacuated to RIMS hospital, Imphal.




Sh. Charu Chandra Pathak
Asstt. Comdt.


"Sashastra Seema Bal" fondly remembers the selfless and valiant act of the braveheart Shri Charu Chandra Pathak, Assistant Commandant (PMG) of 07th Bn SSB, who made the supreme sacrifice for the Nation. On this day, 22 years ago, he attained martyrdom while bravely retaliating against a militant attack at Congress Bhawan in Srinagar (J&K), displaying exceptional courage and unwavering commitment to duty. In recognition of his bravery and supreme sacrifice for the Nation, Shri Charu Chandra Pathak, Assistant Commandant (PMG) was posthumously awarded the Police Medal for Gallantry on Republic Day, 2005. He will always be remembered for his courage, valor, and ultimate sacrifice in service of the Nation.

"SASHASTRA SEEMA BAL"

CENTRAL RESERVE POLICE FORCE




Veer Balidani
Sub Inspector
Nashiruddin Sarkar
128 Bn
15-10-1969 To
27-04-2024



Veer Balidani
Head Constable
Arup Saini
128 Bn
22-08-1983 To
27-04-2024

DG and all Ranks of #CRPF pay solemn tribute to Sub Inspector Nashiruddin Sarkar and Head Constable Arup Saini of 128 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice after being grievously injured while countering an attack on their outpost by insurgents in Bishnupur district, Manipur on 27 April 2024. #CRPF salutes the bravehearts and pledges never to let their sacrifice go in vain.



Veer Balidani
Constable
Ram Kewal
8 Bn
30-04-1968 To
27-04-1996

DG and all Ranks of #CRPF pay solemn tribute to Constable Ram Kewal of 8 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice after being grievously injured while countering an ambush by insurgents in Dimapur, Nagaland on 27 April 1996. #CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.

@ieExplained

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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

CLIMATE

Why below-average rains don't rule out flood threat

The new monsoon worry is the number of extreme rainfall events. Rainfall has been happening in shorter and more intense spells



AMITABH SINHA

THE INDIA Meteorological Department (IMD) has said the country will receive only 92% of normal rainfall this monsoon. However, this forecast does not capture the intra-seasonal and regional variations in rainfall, a standard feature of the Indian monsoon.

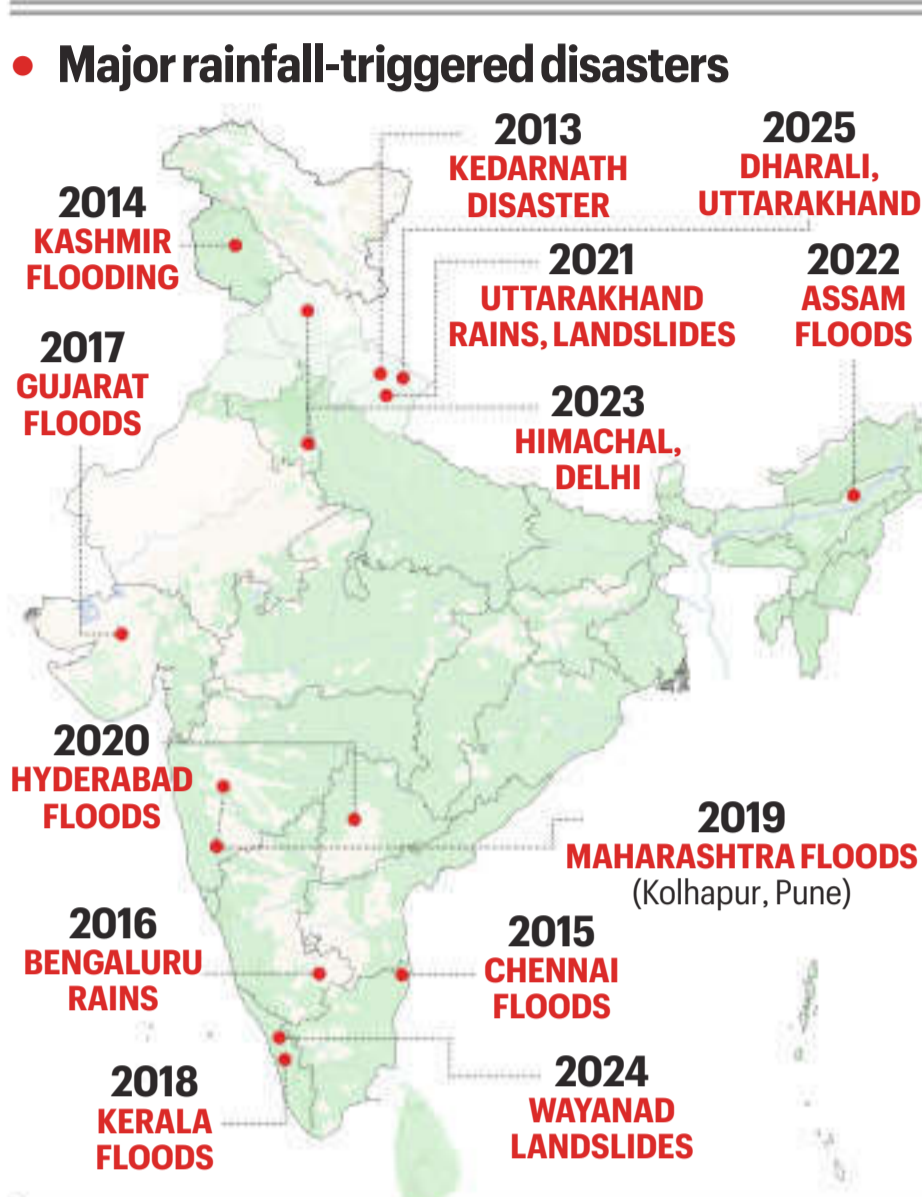
The below-normal rainfall forecast, for example, is no indicator of the number of extreme rainfall events likely to occur this coming season. Such events have been steadily increasing over the last decade or two, and have routinely turned into, or triggered, large-scale disasters. Several studies have linked the increasing trend of such incidents in recent years to climate change.

In the past decade or so, starting with the Kedarnath tragedy in 2013, India has seen at least one major rainfall-related disaster every year. In some years, like 2023, there have been multiple such incidents. The overall extent of monsoon rainfall over the country as a whole has had no bearing on the frequency or severity of extreme rainfall events. Such disaster-inducing rainfall incidents have happened even in the years when the overall rainfall during the season was relatively low, like in 2015, 2018 or 2023.

Climate impact

IMD classifies any rainfall above 21 cm in a 24-hour period as extremely heavy rain. Typically, such events account for less than 0.1% of all recorded rainfall events in the country. But their number seems to be increasing. In the four-year period between 2008 and 2011, for example, the maximum number of extremely heavy rainfall events in any season was 64 (in 2008), according to IMD's Annual Monsoon Reports. This number has been consistently above 100 every year since 2017. In 2024, as many as 181 extreme rainfall events were recorded, while last year this number was 160.

Part of this rise in the numbers can be attributed to a lowering of the threshold for a rainfall incident to qualify as extremely heavy. Before 2016, only rainfall above 244.5 mm in a 24-hour period was classified as extremely heavy. This was lowered to 204.5 mm (sometimes rounded off as 21 cm) in 2016. But the increasing trend of



Extreme heavy rainfall events



| Year | Extremely Heavy Rainfall Incidents (>21 cm in 24-hour period) | Number of stations reporting record-breaking rainfall events (over 24 hours) |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2016 | 89 | 12 |
| 2017 | 113 | 16 |
| 2018 | 128 | 12 |
| 2019 | NA | 21 |
| 2020 | 144 | 14 |
| 2021 | 111 | 36 |
| 2022 | 132 | 43 |
| 2023 | 159 | 28 |
| 2024 | 181 | 28 |
| 2025 | 160 | 26 |

SOURCE: IMD ANNUAL MONSOON REPORTS

such incidents is evident even at the higher threshold level.

More than the frequency, the increasing intensity of extreme rainfall events is a cause for worry. Rainfall has been happening in shorter, and more intense, spells than earlier, raising chances of triggering a disaster.

Rising trend

Starting with the Kedarnath tragedy in 2013, India has seen at least one major rainfall-related disaster every year

The overall extent of monsoon rain has had no bearing on the frequency or severity of extreme rainfall events

A disaster a year

For more than a decade now, India has seen at least one major rainfall-induced disaster during the monsoon. Some of these, like the Jammu and Kashmir flooding of 2014, the Chennai urban flooding of 2015 and the Kerala floods of 2018, have been record-breaking, once-in-a-century, or once-in-50-years kind of events.

Almost every major city in the country — Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kochi, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Srinagar, Chandigarh, Gurgaon, Lucknow, Guwahati, Kolkata — has seen at least one major flooding event in the last 10 years, many classified as disasters. Cities like Chennai, Bengaluru, and Mumbai have witnessed multiple such events during this time.

Part of the blame for this urban flooding can, of course, be put on poor urban planning, unregulated development, construc-

tion on flood-plains, water bodies, or water channels, and municipal apathy. But it is also true that many of these disaster situations were triggered by unprecedented rainfall events.

In the first week of September of 2014, for example, Jammu and Kashmir received record-breaking rainfall. The overall rainfall for the month of September turned out to be the highest in over 100 years. The resultant floods, possibly the worst ever in the last one century, killed over 280 people, damaged more than 2.5 lakh houses, and destroyed around 6.5 lakh hectares of crop area according to official estimates.

Similarly, the 2018 Kerala flooding in August was triggered by exceptionally high rainfall, the maximum since 1931, according to IMD records. Bengaluru has seen its 24-hour highest rainfall record broken twice in the last 10 years.

Difficult to predict

Such extraordinarily high rainfall is extremely difficult to predict. In many such cases, the IMD can see the chances of very heavy rainfall and issues appropriate alerts, but whether the eventual rainfall would be in the range of 250 mm or 500 mm cannot

be said with any reasonable degree of certainty. This is an inherent limitation of weather science. Weather is an extremely chaotic system, with very small changes in initial conditions giving rise to big differences in the end result.

A denser observational network, better modelling, and an increase in computational capabilities can help improve the forecast, but eliminating uncertainty altogether is not possible. The more granular the forecast, in time as well as in location, the greater is the uncertainty.

It is fairly established now that climate change is further exacerbating this uncertainty. Under the influence of climate change, extreme weather events have become more frequent and more intense, posing a much bigger challenge to meteorologists.

This trend is being seen globally, not just in India. And it is not restricted to rainfall events. Other weather events, like drought or heat waves, have also been showing a similar trend.

Managing rain-induced disasters

Until a few years ago, the possibility of rainfall deficiency was the biggest concern of policymakers during the monsoon season. That is because the potential of drought had serious implications for food security, rural incomes, and overall economy. Over the years, India has become more resilient to rainfall deficiencies and has been able to minimise their impact.

But excessive, localised rainfall, particularly in large, densely populated, urban agglomerations, has emerged as the new headache during the monsoon, and needs urgent attention. Since the Chennai floods of 2015, a variety of agencies have been working together to reduce the risks of urban flooding in major cities, but the results are yet to be seen. To a large extent, it is an urban planning and municipal governance issue. But its impact is big.

Floods in general, not just urban flooding, killed nearly 17,500 people in the 10-year period between 2012 and 2021, according to a government statement in response to a question in Rajya Sabha in 2023. The report of the Sixteenth Finance Commission pointed out that floods accounted for over 55% of all expenditure on disasters by states between 2019-20 and 2023-24.

Besides, disruption in cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, or Chennai has very large economic consequences, apart from the direct toll on life and property.

SCIENCE

Role heat and humidity play in India's firecracker factory blasts

Arav Shah
New Delhi, April 26

TWO SEPARATE firecracker accidents killed dozens of people last week. On April 21, at least 14 people were killed in Kerala's Thrissur district after two explosions, seconds apart, ripped through a firework assembly unit. The incident, which came days ahead of the Thrissur Pooram festival, prompted the state government to scrap the annual event's famed fireworks display.

On April 19, a massive explosion at a fireworks factory in Tamil Nadu's Virudhunagar district left at least 23 people dead. Virudhunagar manufactures 90% of the fireworks in India.

The Kerala government has ordered a judicial probe into the Thrissur incident. In the Virudhunagar incident, investigators are expected to examine potential safety lapses or mishandling of combustible chemicals.

India regularly sees explosions in firecracker factories. In the firework manufacturing hub of Virudhunagar, for instance,

more than 100 people died in firecracker unit accidents between 2022 and mid-2025. While part of the reason for such accidents lies in the chemical raw materials themselves, climate, safety violations and lack of enforcement also play a key part.

How a firework functions

There are four components in a firecracker: an oxidiser, fuel, 'stars' and a binder. The oxidisers are chemicals that release oxygen to allow the explosion to take place. The most commonly used oxidisers are nitrates, chlorates and perchlorates. The core explosive is generally black powder, a mixture comprising 10% sulphur, 15% charcoal, and 75% potassium nitrate.

The oxidiser breaks down the chemical bonds of the fuel, releasing energy and heat — in other words, causing the explosion.

The 'stars' are solid chemical lumps responsible for creating the bright colours and light usually associated with fireworks. Aluminium compounds produce brilliant whites, barium nitrate produces blues

Dangerous combination

Dry heatwaves in the day with heightened humidity in the mornings and evenings can introduce moisture into the facilities

If moisture interacts with poorly stored chemical compounds, it can trigger an exothermic reaction

light. Binders are used to hold the mixture of the firecracker together in a paste.

How weather affects safety

The primary risk in handling such volatile chemicals in large quantities together is the accumulation of static energy.

Low-humidity environments prevent the safe dissipation of static charges in the air, which is exacerbated in the summer. As a result, basic movements on the factory floor, such as mixing dry chemical powders or sliding materials across a workbench, can generate an invisible static spark capable of igniting ambient chemical dust.

Virudhunagar, for instance, is located in a hot, arid area that sees little rainfall because of the Western Ghats barrier.

However, it's not just dry weather that poses a danger.

The variability of high, dry heatwaves in the day with heightened humidity in the mornings and evenings may introduce moisture into the facilities. If moisture interacts with poorly stored chemical compounds, it can trigger a reaction.

In standard, safe procedures, chemical slurries mixed with water must be dried carefully under shadow platform sheds to avoid dangerous heat accumulation. However, if dampness seeps into volatile chemical piles, which are subsequently baked dry by the intense summer sun, the chemicals become highly unstable and can spontaneously combust.

Even without an explosion, stagnant summer heat effectively traps the toxic chemical dust generated during the mixing process close to the ground, drastically increasing the oxidative potential of the air.

The human factor

The explosion risk on the factory floor is compounded by a system where workers are paid by the pieces produced, driven by market demand. This piece-rate system can incentivise speed over safety protocols.

Over the past decade, probe into numerous explosions have found raw, volatile materials and finished fireworks stockpiled in cramped, unventilated spaces far beyond the legally permissible limits.

DEFENCE

In Chinese military's new Atlas drone swarm system, much to worry for India

importantly, it is a very small, independent unit that is easy to hide, camouflage, and operate from remote corners.

What is this system?

The Atlas system can simultaneously launch up to 96 small- and medium-sized speed drones that can form defensive structures and precision formations.

The launch time between drones is less than three seconds. Thus, within 300 seconds, the system can launch all 96 drones. For context, amid the recent West Asia war, the US advanced E-3 Sentry AWACS aircraft at the Prince Sultan Airbase in Saudi Arabia was destroyed by a swarm of 29 drones and a few ballistic missiles.

Purely on scale, in the US, the Department of War's "Perdix" and Defense Advanced Research Project Agency's "Offset" systems can launch 103 micro-drones and 250 unmanned systems, respectively. Even China's "mothership" (*Jiu Tian*) can launch up to 100-150 drones.

But Atlas stands out for its intelligence because, in modern military warfare,

counting drones is an outdated metric. The real victory lies in the cognitive test: can these 90 to 100 drones think individually and as a unit, reroute, identify, reidentify targets, and execute multiple strikes — all with only one human touchpoint? It is here that the Atlas Drone Swarm system outshines its competitors, at least theoretically.

The Atlas system has undergone multiple advanced tests. This includes the March test, when the PLA conducted the first full media demonstration for it.

Who is the manufacturer?

China Electronic Technology Group Corporation (CETC) (*zhongguo dianzi keji jitan gongsi*), established in 2002, one of the leaders of China's push for achieving civil-military integration, has manufactured the Atlas system. It is a state-owned electronics and telecommunications conglomerate and works with the PLA.

CETC has been responsible for China's major defence electronic breakthroughs, including the technology that gave China its first nuclear bomb, guided mis-



The Atlas drone swarm operations system. CHINA MILITARY ONLINE

ile, and geo-orbital satellite.

What is the role of drones in the PLA?

Conceptually, as detailed in the 2020 version of *The Science of Military Strategy*, a publication of China's Academy of Military Science, "intelligentisation" (*zhi neng hua*) is a defining paradigm of future conflicts. The 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) explicitly stated that future wars will be "uncrewed and intelligent".

In the past 50 years, China has consistently learned from others' wars. For instance, the two Gulf Wars compelled the PLA to pursue a strategy of winning local wars under informed conditions. Similarly, China is taking notes on drone use from recent conflicts, including the Russia-Ukraine war, the Israel-Palestine conflict, India's Operation Sindoor, and the US's Operation Epic Fury.

On the ground, the intelligent guesswork is that China has tens of thousands of unmanned aerial vehicles across all four variants — smaller drones, medium-altitude long-endurance, high-altitude long-endurance, and advanced, novel, and stealth drones. These have been deployed across all PLA theatre commands and military districts and have been regularly included in operations in the Taiwan Strait, the South China Sea, and around the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India. Some of them are also tested in Ukraine, Gaza, and with Houthis Rebels around the Red Sea area.

In the past 18 months, the PLA has also tested a "drone mothership" capable of re-

leasing 100-150 smaller loitering drones.

What are the implications for India?

The Atlas system can confuse and overwhelm Taiwan's and India's air defences, forcing these countries to waste multiple resources on eliminating them, which is difficult given its mobility and camouflage.

Furthermore, the system's algorithm-driven kill chain and autonomous, independent target identification make it lethal against strategically valuable targets.

Especially on the India front, Tibet's advanced road and rail network enables quick deployment and launch. These swarms could also be used to disturb the Indian army's logistics and infrastructure lines by attacking the approach roads to India's forward-deployed posts. Behind enemy lines, attacks isolate the forward posts.

Finally, counter-jamming these swarms is challenging since they share information and adjust formations and targets without central human intervention.

LONGER VERSION ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM/EXPLAINED

How a 'lost tribe' in Northeast India forged ties with Israel

Nikita Mohta
New Delhi, April 26

AROUND 250 members of the B'nei Menashe Jewish community of Manipur and Mizoram, who claim descent from one of the "10 lost tribes of Israel", landed in Tel Aviv last week.

The B'nei Menashe, numbering around 7,000, belong to the Mizo and Kuki tribal communities across the two states. Though thousands of community members have migrated to Israel since the 1990s, the batch that arrived in Israel last week was the first to go under an Israeli government relocation programme. More are supposed to follow them.

What are the lost tribes of Israel?

Around 722 BCE, the Assyrian empire conquered northern Israel and resettled many of the people living there. According to Jewish tradition, the banished people were part of 10 tribes — Reuben, Simeon, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Ephraim and Manasseh. For centuries, Western Jews have searched for the descendants of these "lost tribes" around the world, including in the Indian subcontinent.

The Jewish community of Mizoram and Manipur believes it is descended from the largest of these tribes — Manasseh. B'nei Menashe literally means "sons" of Menashe or Manasseh. The community's members believe their exiled tribe headed east, wandering for centuries through Persia (modern-day Iran) and Afghanistan before settling in what is today Northeast India.

How did Christianity pave the way for Judaism?

Academic Gideon Elazar, in *Jewish Communities in Modern Asia* (2023), writes: "The identification of different groups of people in the region of upland Southeast Asia... as remnants of the tribes began with the highly successful efforts of Protestant missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century."

In 1951, a Mizo mystic named Chhalianthanga, or Mela Chala, claimed he had seen in a dream that Mizos, Kukis and Chins were descendants of ancient Israelite tribes, said Sayan Lodh, a PhD researcher at Presidency University, Kolkata, whose research focuses on Judaizing movements in India. The Judaizing movement among the Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribes in Manipur and Mizoram actively developed after the late 1970s, he told *The Indian Express*. According to Lodh, propelling the movement was an Israeli organisation called Amishav, led by a Rabbi called Eliyahu Avichail, which aimed to bring all the scattered tribes to Israel "to fulfill the conditions for the coming of the Messiah".

The Mizo Israel Zionist Organization, to establish ties with Jews and the state of Israel, was founded in 1974. Lodh said the locals gradually began to research Israel, contacted the Jewish communities of Bombay and Calcutta, and even sent a letter to the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament). "By the 1980s, their transformation into Judaism was complete, with help from Amishav," said Lodh.

How were relations with modern Israel established?

It was Rabbi Avichail who saw a connection between the Biblical figure of Menashe and an ancestral figure invoked by the Kukis (Manmasi) and Mizos (Manasia).

Avichail and others also set out to demonstrate that the B'nei Menashe maintained oral traditions associating them with the land of Israel, as well as certain Jewish practices.

In 2005, Lodh said, the Chief Rabbinate of Israel (the ultimate authority on Jewish religious matters within Israel) declared the B'nei Menashe the "Lost Seed of Israel", officially recognising them as a lost tribe, based on inconclusive DNA evidence produced by scientists in Kolkata.

However, scientists at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa rejected these results and conducted their own tests, which were also inconclusive. In both cases, traces of the Cohen modal haplotype (a genetic marker found in some individuals identifying as Cohanim) were detected in a few samples.

These findings, along with the Rabbinate's ruling, led Israel to permit the migration of the B'nei Menashe to Israel.



EXPERT EXPLAINS
SUYASH DESAI

NON-RESIDENT FELLOW WITH FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE, PHILADELPHIA

THE CHINESE People's Liberation Army (PLA) unveiled its new Atlas drone swarm system (*arelati*) last month. The system combines features like simultaneous mass launch, nearly 100 drones, and a single human touchpoint to control them all.

The system is like a mini-battlefield network on wheels, where drones are truck-launched, remotely navigated by a single operator, and capable of scouting, communicating, confusing, and attacking defenses across a large perimeter. More im-

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Season of scarcity, rich for reform

CROPS NEED water and nutrients for growth and sufficient grain yields. The signals on both fronts aren't encouraging for the upcoming agricultural year. The India Meteorological Department has forecast a "below normal" southwest monsoon, with nationwide rainfall during June-September at 92 per cent of the long period average for the season. Even if the anticipated El Niño becomes a "strong" event only towards the end of the four-month season, its association with warmer-than-normal winters can also have an impact on the 2026-27 rabi crop, in addition to the one whose planting will start in a month's time. But more than water – improved irrigation coverage has over the years made Indian agriculture relatively resilient against subnormal rains – it is plant nutrients that should be real cause for concern.

The current supply shock in fertilisers is unprecedented. Prices of urea and di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) imported into India haven't yet surged to the highs of late-2021 to mid-2022 (just before and after Russia's invasion of Ukraine) or even the 2008 global food crisis. But those were largely price shocks. The ongoing one, from the conflict in West Asia, is a supply shock that extends beyond finished fertilisers to key raw materials/intermediates such as natural gas, ammonia and sulphur too. The crisis today isn't of prices alone, but of availability itself. The Strait of Hormuz's effective closure has affected around one-third of the world's seaborne fertiliser trade. With other major producers like Russia (which has a one-fifth share of the global trade) and China (India's biggest urea and DAP supplier till 2023-24) also prioritising domestic availability and restricting exports, the shortages would only mount. India will feel the pressure, especially as it has hardly any gas, rock phosphate, potash or mineable sulphur reserves and is predominantly import dependent in plant nutrients.

2026-27 could well be a perfect storm for Indian agriculture, but also an opportunity for reforms where kicking the can down the road isn't an option any longer. There are limits to subsidising products whose supply is itself in question. In the case of fertilisers, the focus must be on augmenting availability – including of alternative nutrient sources – rather than artificial underpricing that would only aggravate shortages. The government should muster the courage to deregulate retail prices of urea, DAP and all other fertilisers. Replace the existing product-wise subsidy regime with a flat per-acre payment of, say, Rs 5,000 for all cultivating farmers. The monies from both the fertiliser subsidy and PM-Kisan can be redirected and repurposed towards what can become a genuinely pro-farmer direct income support scheme.

In Raghu Rai's eyes, every moment had a meaning

RAGHU RAI believed that every subject has a story that demands attention and every frame has the potential to reveal itself as an act of discovery. Driven by relentless curiosity and keen observation, he gave India some of its most enduring photographs that chronicle not just its festivities and high points but also its critical moments and contradictions. With his death, India has lost not just one of its finest photographers but also a maverick who could find meaning in almost anything and anywhere: From the corridors of political power to the bustling streets of Old Delhi; from the mundaneness of every life to the disasters that upended life and livelihoods. A photographer for life, he did not simply document India but was very much part of every photograph that carries his imprint.

A photojournalist for over three decades, what distinguished him was not the access that he had but his firm resolve to be an active participant on the ground during moments that defined India's history. The 1971 war, for instance, saw him travel to the India-Bangladesh border, where he photographed the plight of the refugees. The same instinct took him to Bhopal after the gas tragedy in 1984 and to Amritsar at the time of Operation Blue Star. Acquainted with then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who he photographed on several occasions, he not just vehemently opposed the Emergency but also found ways to record it as a photojournalist. In each of these instances, his focus was not merely on the event but its larger repercussions and how it impacted the human condition.

His portraits, too, reflect his sustained engagement with his subjects, from Mother Teresa to the Dalai Lama, from Satyajit Ray to Bhimsen Joshi, from Himmat Shah to Arundhati Roy. The attentiveness with which he photographed the well-recognised also extended to the more anonymous inhabitants of the nation. "Eventually, it's the ordinary daily life that sums up the essence of the everyday. It is where the magic lies. My faith lies in the eyes of the people I photograph," he said in an interview to this paper. His several exhibitions and publications took his images to a global audience and inspired generations of photographers, his gaze continued to remain deeply rooted in India and was driven by his conviction that the image reveals itself only to those who are willing to look long enough.

FREEZE FRAME

BY EP UNNY



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
ASHOK GULATI, AYUSHI GUPTA AND BIDISHA CHANDA

THE NARI Shakti Vandan Adhinyam 2026 could not get through Parliament primarily because it was clubbed with the delimitation exercise. This is despite the earlier passage of the Women's Reservation Act of 2023, which reserves 33 per cent of seats in the Lok Sabha for women. The current reality is that in Parliament and most state assemblies, the proportion of women is not even half of the 33 per cent reservation being talked about. This raises a question: Is reservation the only way to empower women? While it may be desirable, we don't think that it can result in true empowerment.

To truly empower women, give them quality education, develop their skills for suitable jobs, and incentivise women's employment in the formal sector. Only then will their participation in the workforce increase in a meaningful way.

Unfortunately, India's female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) in 2025 stood at just 40 per cent, as per PLFS data from MOSPI, although ILO (2025) puts this figure at 32.4 per cent, against 68.6 per cent in Vietnam, 59.1 per cent in China, and 80.7 per cent in Nigeria. At the state level, Bihar

records an FLFPR of just 24.7 per cent, while Uttar Pradesh (UP) stands at 32.4 per cent, Jharkhand at 43.7 per cent, and Odisha at 47.3 per cent. Bihar also reports the highest fertility rate at 2.8, compared to the all-India figure of 1.9 (Sample Registration System, 2023), consistent with its high annual population growth rate of 1.43 per cent against the national average of 0.9 per cent. More concerning, it is girls in Bihar who exhibit the highest dropout rates in schools across states: 8.7 per cent at the primary level, 25.9 per cent at the secondary level, and 25.1 per cent at the higher secondary level (Unified District Information System for Education Plus, Ministry of Education 2023-24).

Under such socio-economic conditions, how can one empower women?

Skilling and training form a crucial pillar of financial independence. The government deserves credit for establishing the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in 2014, now spanning 38 sectors, with a 2026-27 allocation of Rs 9,886 crore, with Rs 3,400 crore for the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY). PMKVY provides free skills training with certification to youth aged 18-45. Even with skill training, which sector can better absorb this trained population?

Look to East and Southeast Asia. Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, China, and Vietnam used the garment sector to transition women into the formal wage economy. India's apparel sector generates 153 jobs per Rs 1 crore of capital invested, compared to 27 in automobile manufacturing and just 14 in steel (Annual Survey of Industries, 2023-24). But the number that deserves attention is this: The apparel sector creates 55

The PM MITRA scheme, designed to create large-scale, plug-and-play textile parks with shared infrastructure, represents exactly the kind of instrument needed

female jobs per Rs 1 crore investment, while automobiles and steel generate fewer than one. If nari shakti is not to be reduced to a slogan, then the garment sector is the most powerful instrument.

Garment clusters like Tiruppur employ thousands of women, and a large majority of them come from Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and UP. They need hostel facilities and stay far away from their families. It leads to high attrition rates and loss of talent. But what if garment clusters are developed in states that supply surplus labour all over India?

In Muzaffarpur, Bihar, Pearl Global Industries has taken this initiative and set up a manufacturing unit that offers a glimpse of what this transition may look like. As of early 2026, the factory employed 650 workers on 500 machines, with plans to scale to 3,000 workers by March-April 2027. Almost 90 per cent of the workforce is female – residents of the district itself. All are first-generation factory workers; women with no prior industrial experience, trained from scratch by the firm. This is a private firm making a commercially rational bet: That a woman worker in a labour-surplus state, if trained, will be productive, reliable, and loyal. In the course of this transition, she retains her social ties, her family, her community. The Centre and states can incentivise such firms in the apparel sector.

The PM MITRA scheme, designed to create large-scale, plug-and-play textile parks with shared infrastructure, represents exactly the kind of instrument needed. Yet, Bihar does not have a single PM MITRA park, nor Jharkhand or Odisha. UP, the most populous state in India, has just one such park.

His images made us aware of bonds that held world together



INA PURI

ONE SHOULD not develop a taste for mourning, and yet mourn we must." The Taste of Tears, Jacques Derrida. In the midst of classic black-and-white portraits paying homage to the legendary Raghu Rai, my own pictures of the man, taken down the years, are in colour and capture a side of his that is very different, in moments that are unguarded and informal.

I have had the privilege of working with the veteran lensman on some landmark exhibitions and books. This morning, as I go through my personal archives, I see Raghu with his friends Himmat Shah, with Shahidul Alam at the opening of Chobi Mela, Dhaka, when we had travelled together to attend the programme after Shahidul's release from prison (Rai had been one of the strongest voices from international media to protest against Alam's illegal incarceration).

There are other photographs too with artist friends, musicians and family. He was a great raconteur. Within moments of meeting to discuss the project we happened to be working on, he would share stories of his years at the desk, getting access to the top echelons of power, including Indira Gandhi, when she was spending time with her grandchildren. As he would remark, "Whether it was a human-interest story or one of human devastation like the Bhopal gas tragedy, I was there with my camera, ready to document history as I saw it unfold around me."

There was, in this remark, something that spoke of the breadth of his practice. He had an acute understanding of the fact that the camera was as much a way of inhabiting the world as it was a tool. Rai's archive is a constellation, ordered by category maybe, but shaped certainly by encounter. To be alongside him while he worked was to see urgency and patience, direction and receptivity, joy and depth moulded into one.

He allowed situations to take shape before him, without urgency or insistence. At times, he stepped back, allowing the image to settle into its own form. His photographs carry this quality of arrival,

shaped by proximity to history, held steady by an unwavering regard for the human presence within it.

While working with him on his books *Calcutta/Kolkata* (2008) and *Being with Dadu: Satyajit Ray* (2021), Rai would speak eloquently of his deep love for the city. I witnessed the affection with which people of Kolkata loved him back when we were putting together an exhibition at Harrington Street Art Centre in the early 2000s. Even before the works were displayed, his admirers came streaming in, to see his photographs and meet the legend who had, for so long, championed the city and its people. These frames held the ordinary multitudes going about their lives as well as the men and women who stood out for their passion, talent and dedication, people such as Mother Teresa or Satyajit Ray, with both of whom he shared a special bond.

Rai rarely tried to stage frames, capturing vignettes as they were. His images made the viewer aware about the fragile bonds that held the world together. He gave dignity to the individuals he caught on camera, inviting viewers to discover for themselves their emotional truth.

A few years ago, I had the rare privilege of accompanying Raghu with a few other friends to Varanasi, where he was to shoot the Dussehra festivities. My plan had been to decide on an atmospheric haveli to exhibit his works in the ancient city. We had even arrived at a tentative name for the exhibition. Sadly, the pandemic scuttled our plans. My disappointment perhaps had been palpable.

A couple of months later, I received a handsome publication from Rai's office. It was titled *Banaras* and in its pages, along with the many frames we had deliberated on for the exhibition, was a photograph of mine, in front of the haveli we were to use for our venue. That was Raghu, always attentive to those around him, quintessentially a man who never stopped pulling out a Queen from his pack.

The writer is a curator, documentarian and collector

Leaves that remember, roots that teach



NEHA BHATT

EARTH DAY just went by, a time when many schools turn their attention to environmental awareness. It reminded me of a conversation I had last month with an enterprising biology teacher at a government school near Kota. A few months ago, Divyendra Sen got his students involved in an ongoing project, *Tree Talk: Every Tree Has Something to Say*.

More than a hundred trees across 85 species have been tagged with QR codes hanging from their branches. Each code opens to an audio recording in Hindi and the local Malvi dialect, recorded by the students, offering an introduction to the environmental and cultural value of the tree. A *Casuarina equisetifolia* tree, commonly known as Australian pine, for example, greets you with: "Namaste, I am a Casuarina tree. My leaves look like needles, but these are actually tiny green branches. I grow very fast and can thrive in tropical as well as arid regions..."

I was intrigued. What triggered this idea? Though the school is surrounded by expansive gardens, few knew the significance of the trees that provided this diverse green cover. Sen told me. Using their teachers' or parents' phones to scan the codes, students could learn in an immersive way.

With every year I find myself more drawn to the grounded stillness of trees. I often linger over the symmetry of branches or the way skylight filters through leaves. Tree-staring offers lightness. A conversation with my grandmother from decades ago, when she told me about being a part of the Chipko forest conservation movement, floats into my head. I think of the lemon trees that lined her garden, where she would send us to pluck a few *gondhorajlebu* to squeeze over fish curry. A lemon tree we planted recently now grows with fervour on my terrace – a tiny one compared to what she had, but one that connects me to her.

After a time, I find you begin to identify with one tree or another, depending on the season. It reminds me of writer Sumana Roy's meditation in *How I Became a Tree*, where she wonders whether trees are freelancers or salaried employees and concludes that they perhaps are daily wage labourers, their work bound to the rhythm of the sun.

On our way back home from the bus stop, my son and I catch up as we walk under the canopy of aged, deeply-shaded trees. It feels like our "tree time". Time hangs loose. Empty of people at that hour, the gardens feel full: Of swaying branches, squeaking squirrels, birdsong. We listen. I offer my son little tidbits about the trees we cross. We talk about why the giant Indian almond tree just outside our condominium turned flaming red for a few weeks at the start of spring. We talk about the banyan tree, whose new, tender leaves emerge copper-coloured, protected from pests and harsh sunlight before deepening into green as they mature.

It is simply nature taking its course. But it holds lessons in resilience: To stand tall no matter the season, to adapt without breaking, to protect and nurture through change. It is the quiet wisdom of trees we can reclaim, pass on, and keep alive.

Bhatt is an author and writer

40 YEARS AGO

April 27, 1986



Journalists' arrests in Orissa

ATTACKS ON press freedom in Orissa have once again come into focus with the arrest of two journalists in Phulbam, allegedly because they have been writing about the deterioration in the law and order situation in the district. The police, however, claim that the two journalists, Bidyaadhar Pal and Patitpaban Sahu of Samaj and Matrabhumi dailies, and two lawyers were arrested as they were involved in instigating people and gheraoing the police.

Committee reconstituted

THE POLICY Planning Committee, headed by G Parthasarthy, has been reconstituted

as the Policy Advisory Committee with wider functions covering national security and international economic aspects. Parthasarthy will continue to head the 10-member committee, which has now been attached to the Cabinet Secretariat. Of particular importance is the inclusion of Minister of Internal Security Arun Nehru, Minister of State of Defence Research and Development, and Chairman of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council Sukhomoy Chakraborty, in the committee.

Attack in Punjab

THREE PERSONS, including a terrorist, were killed, and another terrorist was captured as suspected terrorists robbed a

bank of Rs 2.35 lakh during the past 24 hours in Punjab. A scooter was snatched by three unidentified youths in Harchowal village near Batala.

Bomb explosion in France

A BOMB explosion rocked Lyon, France, igniting a fire and slightly injuring one person with shattered glass, officials said. The early morning explosion on American Express's fourth-floor offices came one day after the killing in this city of the head of the French division of the American firm Black and Decker. An obscure Arab group claimed responsibility for the killing and threatening of "British and American imperialists" targets around the world.





Trump's rhetoric, Rajiv Gandhi's restraint and lessons on leadership



MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

DONALD TRUMP'S menacing threat to Iran that "A whole civilisation will die tonight, never to be brought back again" has unintentionally brought to light Rajiv Gandhi's genius in anticipating that India and Pakistan might do just this to each other unless protected from such an eventuality in times of tension and war.

After the unspeakable horrors of World War II, the international community decided to newly codify humanitarian law through four conventions adopted in August 1949 in Geneva, including the fourth relating to the "protection of civilian persons in time of war," because casualties were no longer confined to combatants on battlefields. It was hugely destructive and damaging to civilians caught up in war.

However, as the realisation grew that it was more proxy wars, civil wars and terrorism than openly declared inter-state wars that were causing asymmetric death and injury to civilian life and property, it became apparent that the Fourth Geneva Convention was not adequate to meet the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of these new kinds of inhuman war — labelled "indiscriminate" wars.

Accordingly, additional protocols relating to "civilian persons and objects" in all types of armed conflict were adopted in 1977, but not before the nuclear weapons powers, particularly the United States, had leached these "protections" of practical significance by inserting codas into the text and interpretations to legitimise their right to attack civil nuclear facilities, whatever might be the damage caused. Thus, for example, Ronald Reagan denounced the humanitarian provisions of the additional protocols as "unacceptable and thoroughly distasteful". Meanwhile, India under Indira Gandhi refused to accede to these dodgy additional protocols.

It was at this time of crisis in the prospects of the survival of the planet and humanity



ILLUSTRATION: C.R. SASIKUMAR

itself that Rajiv Gandhi became India's prime minister in 1984-85. As his speechwriter, I was deeply involved in the exposition of his views on the nuclear threat. As we were working on his magnum opus — his address to the UN General Assembly at its Third Special Session on Disarmament, June 1988 — he looked at me quizzically and said, "You know, Mani, Pakistan and we already have the bomb." I was stunned — and puzzled. How, I asked? Rajiv replied, "Because the Canadians have gifted both of us nuclear reactors. A single Pakistani kamikaze pilot can blow up the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre outside Bombay, as easily as an Indian kamikaze pilot can blow up the CANDU reactor outside Karachi, causing as deadly damage to both cities as a nuclear bomb."

This conversation, however idle, signalled the process by which India, distancing itself from the ambiguous additional protocols, insulated its civil nuclear facilities from Pakistani attacks by reciprocally promising similar protection to Pakistani civil nuclear facilities (remember, we were then not openly declared NWP). Contemplating the prospect of becoming the first Indian PM to visit Pakistan in 28 years, Rajiv decided that to make the historic breakthrough meaningful, he needed to bring back from the Islamabad SAARC meeting in December 1988 a signed bilateral agreement that would protect each

It was at this time of crisis in the prospects of the survival of the planet and humanity itself that Rajiv Gandhi became India's prime minister in 1984-85

country's nuclear facilities even if war were to break out between them. The key point was that there should be no ambiguity about the purpose of the agreement as had overtaken the Additional Protocols of 1977.

So, behind-the-scenes moves were initiated which led to the "Agreement between India and Pakistan on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities" signed in Islamabad by the two foreign secretaries in the presence of both prime ministers on the last day of the 1988 calendar year. The agreement binds both countries to "refrain from undertaking" any action causing "destruction" or "damage" to "any nuclear installation or facility". Moreover, such installations or facilities are explicitly deemed to include nuclear reactors, fuel fabrication, uranium enrichment, separation of isotopes, reprocessing and "storage" of "radioactive materials".

Further, the contracting parties are obligated to inform each other on the first day of January every year of the "longitude and latitude" of their respective "nuclear installations and facilities". Straightforward, with all ambiguity excised, this bilateral agreement freed the India-Pakistan nuclear relationship from the ambiguities of the Geneva Additional Protocols that are currently being exploited by President Donald Trump in his wholly illegal participation in Israel's wholly illegal war

against its perceived existential enemy, Iran.

The threat against the Bushehr VVER light water 915 MW reactor, and the multiple high voltage lines connecting it to the off-site grid, which are critical to the plant's safety, and the grave threats to the facilities at Minzadehei and the Shahid Khondab heavy water reactor at Arak, besides the Ardakan yellowcake production facility in Iran, strip Additional Protocols' civilian protection from these installations and facilities, notwithstanding Trump's facile claim that his 2025 attack on Iran's nuclear facilities at Natanz, Fordow, Isfahan and Parchin Taleghan 2, had "obliterated" Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions.

Massively escalating the danger of uninhibited nuclear destruction in the region, with all its long-term, and perhaps perpetual consequences, Iran reacted to Israel's attack on Bushehr's surroundings by attacking the surroundings of Israel's nuclear war installations at Dimona. Further, given the US military involvement in the Gulf States threatening Iran's security, Iran has warned that, in retaliation, it might take out the four units of the Barakah nuclear plants in the United Arab Emirates, underlining that while this will not affect Tehran, it will render "life impossible" in the capitals of the Gulf's Arab states. This frightful prospect has been legitimised by the Additional Protocols detracting from absolute immunity to civil nuclear installations and facilities by allowing such dehumanising acts if the "civil facility" supports "the enemy's war efforts" and provided there is no "massive radiation leak", little realising that these supplementary "protections" will become operational only after immense and indefinite human suffering has been inflicted and irreparable environmental damage caused.

So, what inspired Rajiv to recuse himself from the conundrums of international law to insulate Indo-Pak nuclear relations from such ambiguities? Perhaps (Trump to please note) it was Mahatma Gandhi's reply to a question, "What do you think of Western civilisation?" Gandhiji paused for a moment and gently replied, "I think that might be a good idea!"

The writer is former cabinet minister with four portfolios, including petroleum and natural gas, 2004-09

India's first women-led FTA is win for exports, shield for farmers



PIYUSH GOYAL

THE INDIA-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA), being signed on Monday, marks a defining milestone in India's engagement with the developed world. It reflects a decisive advancement in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of transforming global economic partnerships into tangible gains for farmers, women, youth, and job-creating industries.

The FTA follows a series of landmark trade pacts with major developed economies, including the United Kingdom and EU. These agreements strengthen India's position in global markets and provide exporters with a competitive edge in some of the world's most lucrative economies, even amid ongoing global uncertainty and volatility. At the core of the win-win agreement is New Zealand's commitment to immediately eliminate tariffs on all Indian products, removing a significant barrier in a market where our key exports currently face duties of 10 per cent.

This is a major boost for labour-intensive sectors such as garments, carpets, yarn, fabrics, footwear, bags, belts, automobile components, machinery, tools, gems and jewellery, and handicrafts. These job-creating industries form the backbone of India's MSME ecosystem and will benefit from price competitiveness and market access. This will boost exports and trigger large-scale employment generation across manufacturing clusters, artisan communities, and small enterprises. This reflects the broader philosophy guiding India's trade policy since the Modi government was formed in 2014. It is rooted in inclusivity, empowerment, and shared prosperity.

A defining feature of this agreement is that it is India's first women-led FTA. Nearly the entire negotiating team comprised women. This milestone reflects the growing importance of women in the Modi government. It aligns with broader efforts to enhance women's participation in governance, leadership, and decision-making across sectors, reinforcing the idea of *nari shakti* as a driver of national development.

The FTA has been carefully structured to enhance agricultural productivity. New Zealand will support agriculture productivity action plans for kiwi, apples, and honey. These initiatives include improved planting material, research collaboration, capacity building for growers, post-harvest improvements, food safety systems, and the establishment of centres of excellence. Projects for apple cultivators and sustainable beekeeping practices will enhance production and quality standards, which will increase farm prosperity.

At the same time, India has firmly protected its core agricultural interests. Sensitive products such as dairy (including milk, cream, whey, yoghurt, and cheese), vegetables like onions, *chana*, peas, corn, almonds, sugar, and certain oils and fats have been excluded from tariff concessions. This ensures that domestic farmers remain insulated from disruptive import competition. Protecting the interests of farmers and fishermen has been central to India's approach in all trade negotiations.

A major pillar of the agreement is enhanced mobility for students and skilled professionals. For the first time in any bilateral trade agreement, New Zealand has introduced a structured framework for Indian student mobility and post-study work opportunities. There are no numerical caps on Indian students. Students will be allowed to work at least 20 hours per week during studies, while post-study work rights extend up to three years for STEM graduates and up to four years for doctoral scholars.

The agreement introduces a Temporary Employment Entry Visa pathway for up to 5,000 Indian professionals at any given time, allowing stays of up to three years in sectors such as IT, engineering, healthcare, education, construction, and select traditional fields like yoga, Ayurveda, Indian cuisine, and music. In addition, a Working Holiday Visa scheme will allow 1,000 young Indians annually to live and work in New Zealand for up to 12 months, strengthening cultural exchange and global exposure.

New Zealand has committed to facilitating \$20 billion of investment into India. This is expected to support manufacturing, infrastructure, renewable energy, digital services, innovation ecosystems, and employment generation. A rebalancing clause has been incorporated to ensure accountability. The agreement also encourages collaboration in research, technology transfer, skill development, and innovation-driven sectors, ensuring that trade is complemented by long-term developmental partnerships.

The India-New Zealand FTA reflects a clear and confident trade strategy of partnering with developed economies that open meaningful market access for India's labour-intensive sectors while respecting domestic sensitivities. India today negotiates from a position of strength and credibility. Unlike earlier decades, when trade agreements often exposed vulnerable sectors without adequate safeguards, current negotiations ensure that agriculture, dairy, and other sensitive areas remain fully protected.

As India deepens its engagement with advanced economies, trade agreements with the developed world stand as a powerful example of how trade policy can be aligned with national development goals, ensuring inclusive growth and long-term economic resilience on the path to Viksit Bharat 2047.

The writer is Union Minister of Commerce and Industry



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Facts, not conjecture

THE DISCHARGE of the last accused in the 2006 blasts case is not a triumph of fairness but a stark indictment of investigative collapse ('Malegaon terror justice: System that keeps failing', IE, April 24). When agencies like the ATS, CBI, and NIA falter because of poor evidence, political influence, or sheer negligence, justice itself becomes the casualty. Malegaon joins a long list of cases where victims are denied closure and the rule of law is weakened. Terror trials demand precision and credibility, yet repeated lapses erode trust and embolden impunity. What is urgently needed is institutional accountability, independent oversight, and reforms that ensure prosecutions are built on fact, not conjecture.

Babu Crishna, Bengaluru

Ban firecrackers

UNFORTUNATELY, EXPLOSIONS at fireworks units are becoming frequent ('A fireworks tragedy, questions about safety', IE, April 24). These incidents are relatively frequent in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. There must be a pragmatic and scientific approach to mitigate such mishaps. It's time these high-decibel pyrotechnics were banned for good, and the employees in this sector be rehabilitated via appropriate government interventions.

Jiji Panicker K, Alappuzha

Beyond bureaucracy

THE ARTICLE rightly lays stress on the missing architecture of performance-linked pay in the public sector, but its merit lies as much in what it omits ('Missing piece in pay reform: System to gauge performance', IE, April 24). By focusing narrowly on government cadres, it risks ignoring private blue-collar workers whose productivity is equally moored to fair, transparent evaluation. A genuine reform roadmap must bridge both spheres, ensuring that wage justice is a universal principle of labour dignity and developmental efficiency.

Abhinav Shah, Lucknow



SUBIMAL BHATTACHARJEE

FOR THE almost three decades that I have worked in the domain, cybersecurity operated on a reassuring asymmetry: Attackers needed extraordinary skill, time, and patience to find and exploit software vulnerabilities, while defenders, though perpetually behind, could at least count on that human bottleneck to slow the threat. Claude Mythos Preview, Anthropic's frontier AI model announced on April 7, has shattered that assumption.

In controlled evaluations, Mythos Preview could execute multi-stage attacks on susceptible networks and discover and exploit vulnerabilities autonomously, tasks that would take human professionals days of work. Mythos has a fundamentally different architecture from its predecessors, enabling it to chain multiple small vulnerabilities into a single devastating attack, reconstruct source code from deployed software to find exploitable weaknesses, and, once inside a network, automatically map systems, move laterally, and build custom tools to extract data — all within hours.

Engineers with no formal security training can ask Mythos to find remote code execution vulnerabilities overnight and wake the following morning to a complete, working exploit. The democratisation of offensive capability, once exclusive to nation-state actors and elite hacker collectives, is now a prompt away.

Anthropic's response is Project Glasswing, a controlled, invitation-only consortium of roughly 50 organisations, including AWS,

Mythos shows that in age of AI, no system is safe

Microsoft, Google, Apple, and CrowdStrike, given access to Mythos Preview for defensive security work. Over the past few weeks, Anthropic used Claude Mythos Preview to identify thousands of zero-day vulnerabilities in every major operating system and web browser, along with other important pieces of software. The intent is to get defenders ahead of the curve before Mythos-class capabilities reach less scrupulous hands.

The logic is sound in principle. But the execution reveals a structural tension at the heart of modern technology governance: Cybersecurity is no longer centred solely on defending systems against enemies but is increasingly about managing AI systems, collapsing the long-standing gap between those who can discover and those who can exploit vulnerabilities. Glasswing addresses the top of this threat pyramid, widely-used software maintained by well-funded companies, but leaves the vast underbelly of custom, legacy, and underfunded systems essentially untouched. Project Glasswing, in its current structure, is a form of digital partnership, but a deeply unequal one. This new digital divide is not about access to technology but access to the tools that secure it.

Critics have questioned how much of Mythos's projected danger is clever marketing. Anthropic is simultaneously the creator of the threat and the curator of its solution — a conflict of interest that deserves scrutiny, even if independent evaluations confirm the threat is largely genuine.

What Mythos and Glasswing together announce is a new epoch. Cybersecurity, AI governance, and crisis management no longer exist as separate disciplines

For India, the implications are urgent and underappreciated. The Fintech Association for Consumer Empowerment (FACE) has urged members to reinforce cyber defences and adopt continuous vulnerability solutions and zero-day vulnerability intelligence in response to Mythos's capabilities. This is a start, but it barely scratches the surface. India runs enormous volumes of financial, governmental, and civic transactions on software that are old. When Mythos-level tools start finding zero-days in old codebases, Indian institutions will be exposed to vulnerabilities they cannot quickly patch, while the average time-to-exploit now sits under 20 hours. Critically, Project Glasswing does not cover the thousands of custom applications built by Indian banks, government departments, state utilities, and telecom companies. CERT-In and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology need to urgently pursue AI-assisted security audits of domestic critical infrastructure as a first step.

What Mythos and Glasswing together announce is a new epoch. Cybersecurity, AI governance, and crisis management no longer exist as separate disciplines. They must be integrated into one framework of digital risk governance capable of addressing autonomous, probabilistic, and high-impact systems. Glasswing is a possible, necessary first step, but clearly not a sufficient one.

The writer is a defence and tech policy adviser and author of The Digital Decades: On 30 years of the internet in India



SUMIT KUMAR

GIVEN THE traditional interactions between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China, the meeting earlier this month between Cheng Li-wun of Taiwan's main opposition party and Chinese President Xi Jinping could have been treated as a routine affair. But it assumed significance for several reasons.

First, there is a growing realisation in China that its aggressive policies have emboldened the Taiwanese to assert self-rule,

On Taiwan Strait, Beijing's gambit, Taipei's gamble

enabling the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) to remain in power for the last decade. By inviting the KMT's chairwoman, President Xi aimed to reaffirm historical, social, cultural, and ancestral linkages that connect people across the Taiwan Strait. Second, Cheng Li-wun's visit was intended to depict that a peaceful solution to tensions regarding reunification could be possible if the KMT came to power in the 2028 presidential election. Third, it sent a message of peace and reconciliation to the rest of the world.

The meeting also signalled that a large section of the Taiwanese people are still in favour of unification. The timing of this is im-

portant, when the US's reputation as a champion of world peace is at its weakest point. Fourth, as the KMT-led opposition parties continue to be critical of the Lai government's US\$40 billion defence budget to purchase US arms, the visit was intended to challenge the DPP government's claim that such

Cheng Li-wun's visit was intended to depict that a peaceful solution to tensions regarding reunification could be possible if the KMT came to power

a large allocation is necessary. Fifth, the US has remained the most important country for Taiwan's security. With Cheng Li-wun's trip just before President Trump's expected summit in China, Beijing aimed to underscore the limits of the US's influence over Taiwan and secure a favourable trade deal between China and the US.

Nonetheless, any effort to address the Taiwan Strait conflict through peaceful means is a welcome development. Yet, China's refusal to hold talks with Taiwan's ruling party casts a big question mark on Beijing's commitment. Experts have also dubbed Cheng Li-wun's visit as another ef-

fort to create confusion about Taiwan's status. A section of the KMT has also expressed concern that it could be used by other parties to portray her as playing into China's hands. The US, too, is upset, because her statements have portrayed Washington as a source of risk rather than a deterrent against China. With the lack of consensus between the DPP and the KMT on vital national issues, Cheng Li-wun's meeting with Xi Jinping could also be seen as elevating Taiwan's vulnerabilities, not mitigating them.

The writer is Ministry of Foreign Affairs Visiting Fellow, National Chengchi University, Taipei

How the shooting at Hilton unfolded

Suspect charged Secret Service security checkpoint

AROUND 8:35 PM ET (0035 GMT on Sunday), guests at the Washington Hilton White House Correspondents' dinner took cover when shots were heard. Soon after, Secret Service agents

rushed towards President Trump, escorting him out of the ballroom.

A SOLE GUNMAN had rushed a Secret Service checkpoint in the lobby of the Hilton hotel.

THE SUSPECT WAS armed with a shotgun, a handgun and knives. Video surveillance showed he barely got past the perimeter, but got off a couple of shots, said US Acting A-G Todd Blanche.

AS THE SUSPECT ran through that checkpoint, Secret Service members intercepted him and tried to pin him to the ground.

A SECRET SERVICE agent was

injured and transported to a local hospital, police sources said.

THE SUSPECT WAS also transferred to a local hospital where he was evaluated.

AROUND 9:17 PM ET (0117 GMT), Trump made his first comments after the shooting, saying law enforcement "acted quickly and bravely." He posted on Truth Social "shooter has been apprehended."

ABOUT 20 MINUTES later, Trump posted again saying law enforcement asked him and others to leave the premises of the venue and that he was complying with that request. REUTERS

2026 WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENTS' ASSOCIATION DINNER AT THE WASHINGTON HILTON TAKES A DREADFUL TURN



President Donald Trump, First Lady Melania Trump and CBS News senior White House correspondent Weijia Jiang at the annual White House Correspondents' Association dinner in Washington, Saturday. AP



Secret Service agents surround President Trump before he was taken from the stage after the shooting incident outside the ballroom during the gala dinner on Saturday. AP



Agents respond to the security incident with drawn firearms during the White House Correspondents' Dinner, even as nervous guests remained inside the venue. AP



President Donald Trump gestures as he speaks in the James Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House after the shooting incident at the Correspondents' dinner in Washington on Saturday. AP

NO ANNOUNCEMENTS OR CRIES OF 'GET DOWN'. INSTEAD, A SENSE OF DANGER SPREAD ACROSS THE ROOM LIKE A WAVE. TRUMP & VANCE WERE RUSHED OUT

Ballroom terror: Thuds... eerie silence and fear

Editors, anchors and network executives witness violence in real time, report 'live'

Michael M Grynbaum
 Washington, April 26

"The people that make the biggest impact, they're the ones that they go after. They don't go after the ones that don't do much"

DONALD TRUMP,
 U.S. PRESIDENT

THE SPRING pea and burrata appetizer course had been distributed and the schmoozing hour of Saturday's White House Correspondents' Association dinner had begun when a small commotion occurred toward the back of the Washington Hilton ballroom shortly past 8:30 pm

It might have been an upturned catering cart, or perhaps a scuffle with protesters. Then security officers began sprinting down the aisles toward the elevated dais, where President Trump, along with Vice President JD Vance and the first lady, Melania Trump, had taken their seats just a few minutes earlier.

There were no announcements or cries of "get down." Instead, a sense of danger spread across the room like a wave. Hundreds of the country's top media executives, editors in chief and prominent television anchors, clad in tuxedos and evening gowns, instinctively dropped to the floor, crouching besides chairs and ducking under tables.

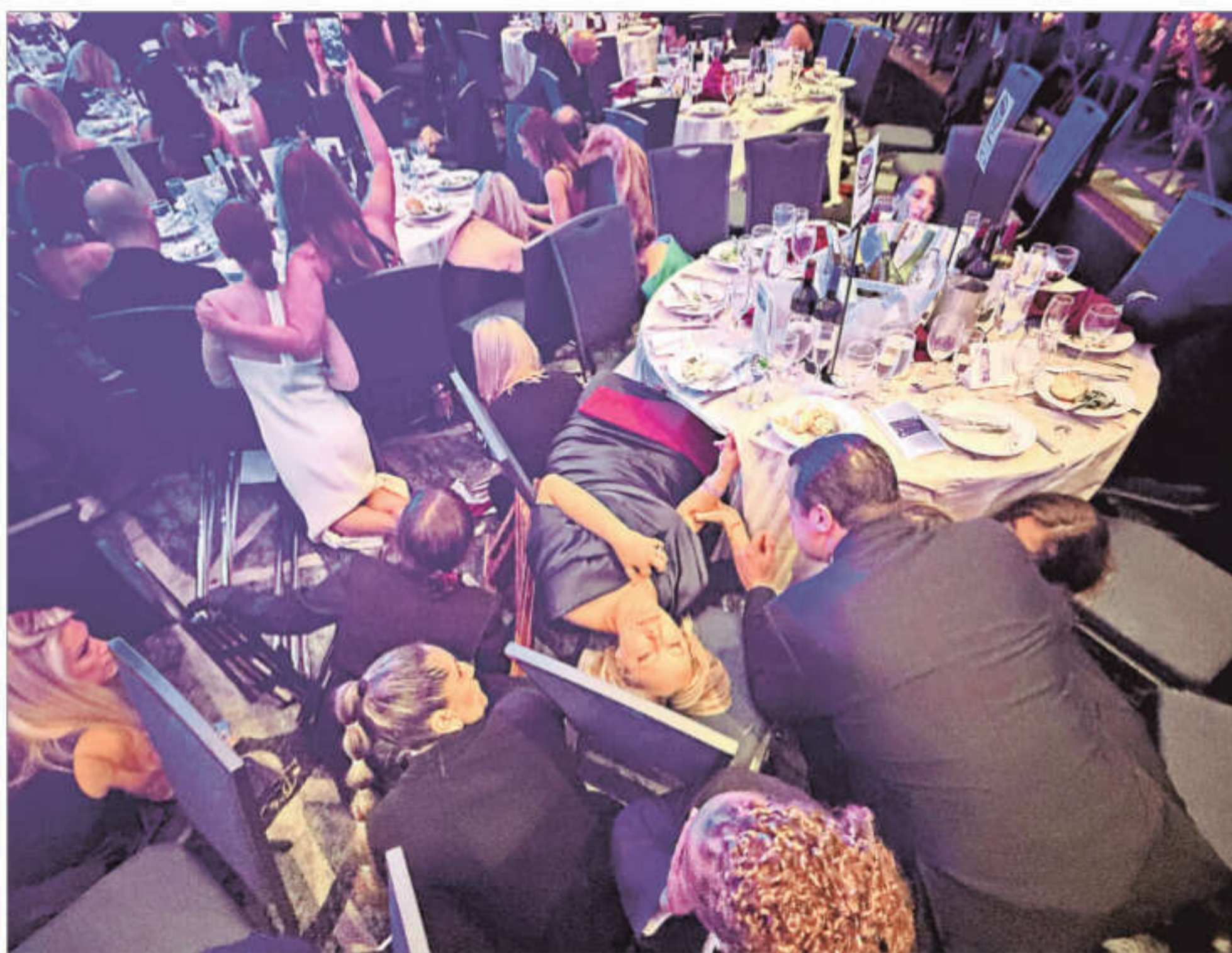
A nauseous silence descended, punctuated by small gasps and whimpers. The loudest sounds were those of the security officers racing — and in some cases leaping over chairs and guests — to evacuate senior administration officials from the tightly packed ballroom.

No one had a hint as to what was going on — except that Trump had been rushed from the stage, which was now occu-

ried by a pair of security officials brandishing large guns. (Later in the evening, officials said that an armed man had charged a security checkpoint and that a Secret Service officer had been shot.)

Erika Kirk, the widow of the conservative activist Charlie Kirk and a guest of Fox News, crawled beneath her table, where she was comforted by the anchor Harris Faulkner and Trey Yingst, the network's chief foreign correspondent. From beside his chair, Brian Stelter, CNN's media correspondent, held his iPhone aloft, recording video of whatever scenes were unfolding above. After less than five minutes, the crowd sensed that any immediate threat had passed. Guests shakily returned to their feet, some wiping away tears.

Journalists are accustomed to chronicling moments of unexpected violence, but few witness them in real time. Even as some in the room rushed toward the exits, dozens of reporters dialled law enforcement sources to figure out what had happened. NYT



Guests take cover after US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump were rushed out of the White House Correspondents' Association dinner by Secret Service agents after a gunfire incident in Washington on Saturday. REUTERS

"I am shocked by the scenes at the White House Correspondents' Dinner overnight. Any attack on democratic institutions or on the freedom of the press must be condemned in the strongest possible terms"

KEIR STARMER,
 BRITISH PRIME MINISTER

"The armed attack targeting the President of the United States last night is unacceptable. Violence has no place in a democracy. I extend my full support to Donald Trump"

EMMANUEL MACRON,
 FRENCH PRESIDENT

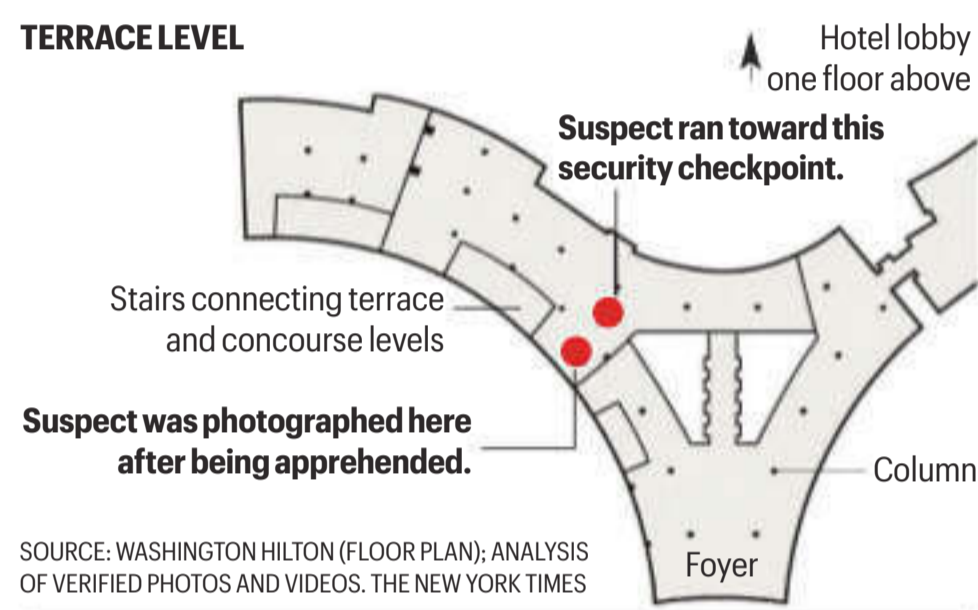
"(In) full solidarity and most sincere closeness to President Trump, to First Lady Melania, to V-P Vance... No political hatred can find space in our democracies. We will not allow fanaticism to poison places of free debate"

GIORGIA MELONI,
 ITALIAN PRIME MINISTER

"Sara and I were shocked by the attempted assassination of President Trump last night... We are relieved that the President and the First Lady are safe... We send our wishes for a speedy recovery to the police officer"

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU,
 ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER

Gunman moves inside Washington Hilton



A gunman got perilously close to Trump — again

President pushes case for \$400 mn 'secured' ballroom

Luke Broadwater
 Washington, April 26

ONCE AGAIN, a gunman got perilously close to President Trump. The storming of a security checkpoint on Saturday evening by an armed man at the hotel hosting the White House Correspondents' Association dinner was the third time in three years that Trump had faced danger. During the 2024 campaign, he survived two assassination attempts, including a bullet grazing his ear in Butler, Pennsylvania.

In this case, the gunman rushed toward the ballroom where the president was dining with hundreds of journalists, and drew fire from security forces before being taken into custody.

It is not yet known what the man's motive was, but the outburst of violence is sure to revive

questions about the scourge of political violence afflicting the United States, and about whether there is enough security around Trump, one of the most targeted presidents in history. "It's a dangerous profession," Trump said afterward at the White House, referring to being a political leader. He compared his line of work to being a race car driver or a bull rider, and said presidents were more likely to be shot at or killed. "Nobody told me this was such a dangerous profession," he said.

There were no metal detectors set up at the hotel's entrances, and a secure perimeter was only established closer to the ballroom deeper inside the Washington Hilton. A security video posted by Trump showed the gunman sprinting past the security checkpoint before being captured short of the ballroom.

Trump said the incident underscored why he wanted to build a \$400 million ballroom on White House grounds that he said would be equipped with the latest security features. That project is currently subject to litigation. NYT

Araghchi back in Pak; Iran can call us if it wants to talk: Trump

Reuters
 Islamabad, April 26

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump said on Sunday that Iran could call if it wanted to negotiate an end to the war launched by the US and Israel, as Iran's foreign minister returned to Pakistan for talks despite the absence of US counterparts.

Hopes of reviving peace efforts had earlier receded after Trump scrapped a visit to Islamabad by his envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, even as Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi continued to shuttle between mediating countries.

"If they want to talk, they can come to us, or they can call us. You know, there is a telephone. We have nice, secure lines," Trump said in an interview on Fox News. "They know what has to be in the agreement. It's very simple: they cannot have a nuclear weapon, otherwise there's no reason to meet," he said.

Iran has long demanded Washington acknowledge its right to enrich uranium, which



Iran Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi with Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq Al Said at Al Baraka Palace in Muscat, Oman, on Saturday. AP

Tehran says it only seeks for peaceful purposes but which Western powers and Israel say is aimed at building nuclear weapons.

Although a ceasefire has paused full-scale fighting in the conflict, which began with U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28, no agreement has been reached on terms to end a war that has killed thousands, driven up oil prices, fuelled inflation and darkened the outlook for global growth. Tehran has largely closed

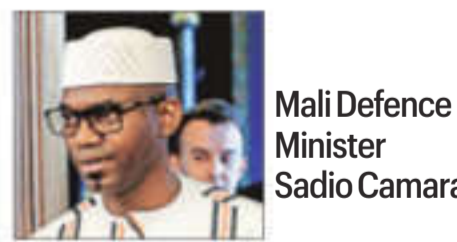
the Strait of Hormuz, which normally carries a fifth of global oil shipments, while Washington has imposed a blockade of Iran's ports.

After holding talks in Pakistan, Araghchi flew to Oman — another mediator in the war — where he met the country's leader, Haitham bin Tariq al-Said, on Sunday. They discussed security in the strait and Araghchi called for a regional security framework free of outside interference, according to Iran's foreign ministry.

Mali Defence Minister killed in attack

Dakar: Malian Minister of Defence Gen. Sadio Camara was killed in an attack on Saturday that saw jihadist and rebel forces seize towns and military bases across the country, according to a military officer and two other sources on Sunday.

"Unfortunately, the Ministry of Defence, Gen. Sadio Camara, has been killed during the attack which targeted his house yesterday," said a mili-



Mali Defence Minister Sadio Camara

tary official who spoke on condition of anonymity. Two other people, a civil society leader and a security member, confirmed the information.

The Malian government has

not commented yet. Separatist fighters on Saturday joined Islamic militants in launching one of the biggest coordinated attacks on the Malian army in the capital and several other cities that left at least 16 wounded.

The separatists have been fighting for years to create an independent state in northern Mali, while Al-Qaeda militants have fought the government for over a decade. AP

Israel orders 7 Lebanon towns to evacuate beyond buffer zone

Beirut: Israel issued new evacuation orders for southern Lebanon on Sunday after one of its soldiers was killed, warning residents to leave seven towns beyond the "buffer zone" it occupied before a ceasefire that has failed to fully halt hostilities.

A spokesperson for the Israeli military said in a statement on X that Lebanese

armed group Hezbollah was violating the ceasefire and that Israel would act against it, telling people to head north and west away from the towns.

The towns are north of the Litani River and the zone in southern Lebanon occupied by Israeli troops, who have continued military operations despite the ceasefire. REUTERS

Amid war, Ukrainian city holds midnight Chernobyl vigil

Hanna Arhirova
 Slavutych, April 26

PEOPLE STREAMED into the central square of Slavutych in the early hours of Sunday, placing candles on a large radiation hazard symbol laid out on the ground as a midnight commemoration began for those killed in the Chernobyl disaster 40 years ago and the thousands who risked deadly radiation exposure to contain its aftermath.

Residents show up for the vigil each year despite wartime curfews and official warnings

against large gatherings during Russia's war on Ukraine.

The April 26, 1986 disaster shone a spotlight on lax safety standards and government secrecy in what was then the Soviet Union. The explosion was not reported by Soviet authorities for two days, only after winds had carried the fallout across Europe and Swedish experts had gone public with their concerns.

About 600,000 people, often referred to as Chernobyl's "liquidators," were sent in to fight the fire at the nuclear

plant and clean up the worst of its contamination.

Thirty workers died within months from either the explosion or acute radiation sickness. The accident exposed millions in the region to dangerous levels of radiation and forced a wide-scale, permanent evacuation of hundreds of towns and villages in Ukraine and Belarus. The city of Slavutych, around 50 kilometers (32 miles) from the former plant, dates to this period.

While most evacuees were resettled across nearby districts

in Kyiv region, in late 1986 Soviet authorities began building what would become the city to house workers from the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant and their families.

The first residents moved in around 1988. Since then, the city has endured a brief Russian occupation during Moscow's failed push to seize the Ukrainian capital in early days of the war, as well as harsh winters — especially the last one, when blackouts forced some residents to cook meals over open fires in the streets.

People of all ages gathered in the square, some arriving as families carrying spring tulips and daffodils. They lined up in a broad plaza framed by Soviet-era apartment blocks, where a memorial stands near a row of posters honoring local residents killed in the war. Liudmyla Liubyva, 71, came to the ceremony with a friend.

She used to attend with her husband, who worked at Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant but later developed a disability due to radiation exposure, and lost the ability to walk, she said. AP

THE JUNE 12, 2025 DREAMLINER CRASH RESULTED IN CLAIMS OF ABOUT \$475 MILLION

Air India insurance premium rises just 10% despite worst crash

The carrier will pay about \$33 million in premiums this cycle, compared to approximately \$30 million previously

George Mathew
Mumbai, April 26

AIR INDIA has renewed its aviation insurance at only a modest increase in cost, despite one of the most severe incidents in its recent history in Ahmedabad. The Tata group-owned carrier has secured coverage for the year with a premium that is about 10% higher than last year, reflecting resilience in negotiations aided by soft global market conditions.

Industry sources indicate that the airline will pay roughly \$33 million in premiums this cycle, compared to approximately \$30 million previously. Air India did not respond to a mail from *The Indian Express*.

This renewal comes at a time when Air India was dealing with claims estimated at \$475 million, stemming from the tragic Ahmedabad-London Dreamliner crash on June 12,

2025. The accident occurred shortly after take-off and resulted in the loss of 241 passengers, along with 29 fatalities on the ground, making it one of the most devastating aviation disasters involving the airline.

Despite the scale of these claims, insurers did not significantly harden their pricing.

Market participants in London, a major hub for aviation insurance and reinsurance, attribute this to continued softness in the global reinsurance market. Ample capacity and competitive underwriting conditions have helped absorb the shock of large losses without sharply pushing up premiums for major carriers like Air India.

The relatively small increase underscores how global insurance dynamics, particularly in aviation, can sometimes buffer even large, high-profile losses, allowing airlines to maintain financial stability while continuing to manage long-tail claims from major incidents.

"They had to pay one time penalty during the renewal because of massive claims and effectively there are no hikes in premium charged by the same set of re/insurers who had insured the airline last year," said sources in the London market.

The primary insurers for the Air India's insurance policy are — Tata AIG General Insurance (lead insurer with 45% share), ICICI Lombard General Insurance (7%), New India Assurance (32%), Oriental Insurance Company (14%) and other PSU general insurers.

Almost 95% of the Air India policy has been reinsured with a clutch of reinsurers led by AIG, Axa and Allianz. GIC Re also has a share in the policy including 4% obligatory.

During the renewals last year, while the sum insured had increased, after Vistara merger — from \$12 billion to \$20 billion — the premium outgo had remained unchanged at around \$30 million. Currently, Air India Group



Almost 95% of the Air India policy has been reinsured with a clutch of reinsurers led by AIG, Axa and Allianz. REUTERS FILE

has nearly 300 aircraft — Air India has a fleet of around 187 planes, and Air India Express has over 110 planes.

While globally aviation insurance premiums were expected to inch up following a spate of accidents in 2025, Air India has managed to secure good rates, insurance officials said. This is because of the overall softness in aviation insurance market and deft negotiations by the company, they said.

According to Willis, one of the leading global aviation brokers, though 2025 has proved difficult for airline insurers when claims have been frequent and costly, it's worth noting that claims activity doesn't directly reduce underwriting capacity because not all insurers are involved in every

claim, either as lead or following market and abundant capacity has restrained the increased rates. "The reality is that between 2021 and 2024, the airline book appears to have been broadly profitable for airline insurers, so there may be an opportunity to treat 2025 as a one-off, an 'annus horribilis,' where previous results and current competition combined to suppress rate increases. If capacity remains buoyant, then this might be insurers' only hope," said Willis.

According to figures released by the General Insurance Council, overall gross premium underwritten by Indian insurers declined by 0.8% to Rs 1,089.27 crore during FY26.

Of this New India Assurance accounted for Rs 436 crore in FY26.

● LIMITED IMPACT

SOFTNESS IN aviation insurance market and deft negotiations led Air India to secure good rates, say officials, even though insurance premiums were expected to go up due to a spate of accidents in 2025

AMPLE CAPACITY and competitive underwriting conditions helped absorb the shock of large losses without sharply pushing up premiums for major carriers such as Air India

AI gap to energy, rupee: Why India trails global markets despite recovery

Akash Mandal
Mumbai, April 26

THE WEST Asia crisis is far from resolved, but stock markets around the world have in recent weeks reversed their war-induced losses and are currently near their all-time highs. In the US, indices are 1-8% higher than pre-war levels, with the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite touching a record high earlier this week.

South Korea's Kospi and Japan's Nikkei 225, both of which had slumped 13-19% in the early weeks of the war, are now up 2-4% despite both the countries being heavy net importers of crude oil.

India, though, is lagging again, with the Nifty and Sensex still down 5-6% from February 27. Admittedly, they had both fallen as much as 11% and thus have recovered some ground.

But why are Indian stocks not faring as well as others?

No AI play

The Indian market's underperformance in comparison to others is not a recent phenomenon. Over the past year, the Nasdaq has surged 42%, the Nikkei 70%, and the Kospi 2.5 times. Meanwhile, key Indian indices are edged 1% lower.

The key differentiator for India and the others has been AI. The same explosion in AI-related stocks that saw South Korean, American, and Japanese stocks ride the wave before the war began has returned. While some investors saw India as a 'reverse AI play' due to its low exposure to the biggest investment boom, this strategy does not seem to be bearing fruit at the moment.

Foreign investors selling in India...

India Inc's lack of investment in AI is seen as a big rea-

● AI PULLS THE STRINGS

THE INDIAN financial market's underperformance is driven by a lack of AI-led gains, a key differentiator from global peers

NASDAQ SURGED 42%, Nikkei 70%, and the Kospi 2.5 times over the past year, while key Indian indices slipped 1% lower

IN INDIA, we still don't have significant AI play, and are vulnerable to energy shocks which is reflected in our market, says Nilesh Shah, MD, Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company



A LACK of investment in AI by Indian Inc is seen as a key reason behind foreign investor's steering clear of the Indian markets

son for foreign investors to stay away from Indian markets.

This, along with India's energy import dependence, has left India in a tough spot, with HSBC on Thursday downgrading Indian equities to 'underweight' from 'neutral' on account of the impact it expects elevated energy prices to have on company earnings.

It is no surprise, then, to see foreign investors continuing to leave India in droves: after selling \$12.7 billion worth of Indian shares in March, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have taken out \$4.7 billion so far in April.

This has hurt the rupee, which closed at 94.26-per-dollar on Friday and is down 4.6% in 2026, despite the Reserve Bank of India taking steps to curb speculative bets against the currency. A weaker rupee reduces the return foreign investors get in their own currency. This is the exchange rate risk investors face when buying assets overseas.

...and buying elsewhere

Meanwhile, foreign investors have picked up around \$58 billion of Japanese shares

on a net basis since March 29 after having sold around \$52 billion of them in the first four weeks of March, data from Japan's finance ministry showed.

The US and South Korean markets, too, have seen significant foreign investments.

"The US isn't very energy dependent like India and they also benefit due to their status as a safe harbour. In South Korea's case, it is benefiting from the AI trade, which is pushing the market up. In India, we still don't have significant AI play, and we are vulnerable to energy shocks. So that is reflected in our market," said Nilesh Shah, Managing Director of Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company.

"There is an underlying theme of tech investment that is playing a dominant role (in some of these other economies). While there will be some impact on their cost of manufacturing because of high energy prices, the underlying demand for those industries remains fairly robust," said the investment and research head of another fund house.

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

POST RBI ACTION

When will Paytm Payments Bank customers get their money back?

George Mathew
Mumbai, April 26

AFTER THE Reserve Bank of India (RBI) scrapped its banking licence on Friday, customers of Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PPBL) are seeking clarity on the safety of their deposits and the likelihood of refunds.

The payments bank — once claiming a customer base of over 100 million — has been progressively moving toward closure after its banking licence was effectively scrapped by the regulator. The bank, promoted by One97 Communications and its founder Vijay Shekhar Sharma, had already been under restrictions since March 2022.

In January 2024, the central bank barred the institution from accepting fresh deposits, citing persistent compliance concerns.

The directive triggered unease among customers, many of whom began withdrawing their balances in anticipation of further action.

As the wind-down process progresses, the bank has stated that it will return all remaining customer funds.

What Paytm Payments Bank says

After the RBI scrapped the licence, the bank told customers, "Your money is safe. PPBL has sufficient liquidity to repay its entire deposit of all its customers. All balances held in your Savings Account, Current Account, prepaid instruments, Wallet, FASTags, NCMC cards and other deposit instruments with PPBL are fully secure. We will communicate further steps in time." The RBI also said Paytm Payments Bank has "enough liquidity to repay its entire deposit liability upon winding up of the bank".

In the coming weeks, greater clarity is expected on the exact mechanism and timeline for refunds, but for now, both the regulator and the bank maintain that depositor money will not be lost. The bank has not disclosed the current deposit base and the number of cus-

tomers as of April 24, 2026.

100 million customers

Before the RBI action began in 2022, the bank had over 300 million wallets and 30 million bank accounts, and claimed that it was driving financial inclusion in India. It then said the bank had over 100 million KYC customers, with 0.4 million users added every passing month. "We are also the largest issuer of FASTag with over 8 million FASTag units issued," the bank's website says. That's history, and before the RBI actions.

For a dwindling number of customers, the key takeaway now is that existing balances are expected to be refunded or made accessible through withdrawals and transfers, subject to the timelines and processes laid out during the closure.

While the RBI's intervention has effectively ended the bank's operations, it has also emphasized safeguarding customer funds during the transition.

Customers pull out

The customer withdrawal started after March 11, 2022 when the RBI directed Paytm Payments Bank to stop, with immediate effect, onboarding of new customers.

On January 31, 2024, the RBI said no further deposits or credit transactions or top ups shall be allowed in any customer accounts, prepaid instruments, wallets, FASTags and NCMC cards after February 29, 2024, other than any interest, cashbacks, or refunds which may be credited anytime.

Customers started exiting after the RBI said withdrawal or utilisation of balances by its customers from their accounts including savings bank accounts, current accounts, prepaid instruments, FASTags and National Common Mobility Cards would be permitted without any restrictions, up to their available balance.

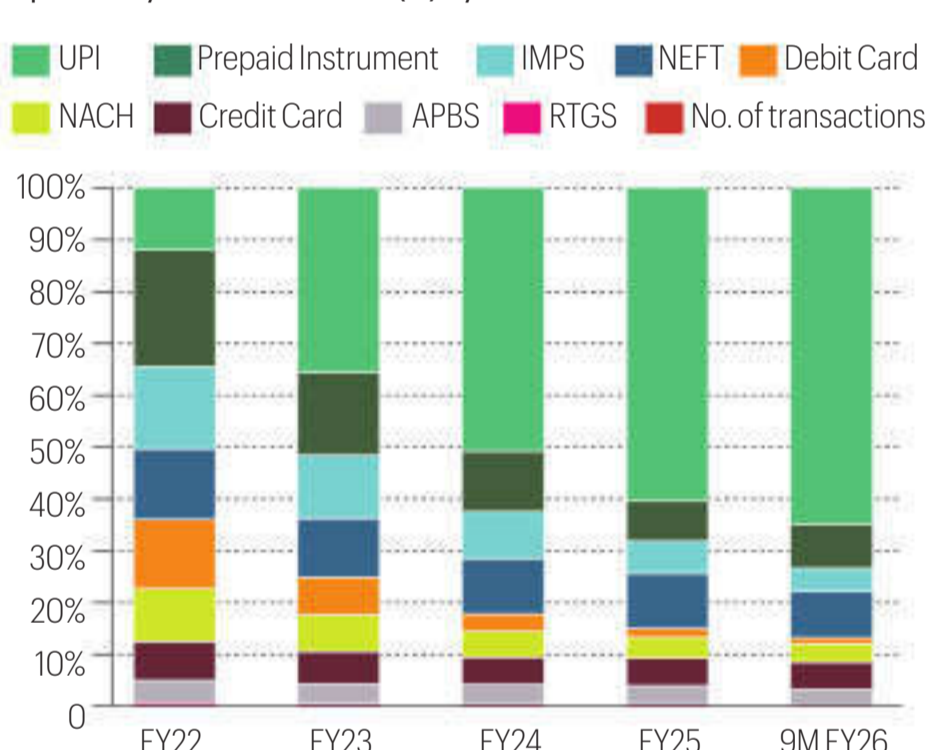
No other banking services like fund transfers (irrespective of name and nature of services like AEPS, IMPS), BBPOU and UPI facility should be provided by the bank after February 29, 2024, it said.

● Rising sway of UPI

Unified Payments Interface has changed the way money is spent. Wallets have turned thinner, mostly containing cards — which too stay put there, venturing out occasionally. UPI has made transactions easier and quicker. No wonder it processed over 645 mn daily transactions in 2025.

UPI expands further; prepaid instruments & credit cards see strong gains

Split of Payment transaction (%) by volume

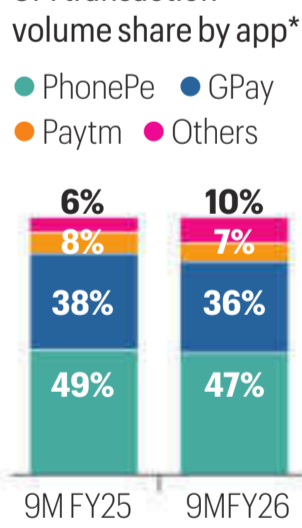


Note: Only domestic financial transactions are considered.

1. RTGS transactions excludes interbank transactions; Volumes of RTGS is less than 0.5%

Share of top 3 UPI apps declines

UPI transaction volume share by app*



Share of other banks & PSPs

| Bank/Service | 9M FY25 | 9M FY26 |
|--------------|---------|---------|
| Navi | 11% | 25% |
| Super Money | 3% | 12% |
| CRED | 16% | 8% |
| Fampay | 7% | 7% |
| Open | 12% | 7% |
| BHIM | 3% | 5% |
| Amazon pay | 8% | 5% |
| Others | 41% | 32% |

Top five banks across digital payment categories

| Share of Remitter Bank | 9M FY25 | 9M FY26 |
|------------------------|---------|---------|
| State Bank of India | 26% | 26% |
| HDFC Bank | 8% | 8% |
| Bank of Baroda | 6% | 7% |
| Union Bank of India | 6% | 6% |
| Punjab National Bank | 5% | 5% |

*Total may not sum to 100 because of differences due to rounding off
Source: RBI data, National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) statistics, BCG analysis

● 'MANY CORPORATES APPOINT A FEMALE DIRECTOR FOR THE SAKE OF COMPLIANCE, WHILE SOME PLACE FAMILY MEMBERS AS A FORM OF TOKEN'

Women underrepresented on boards despite compliance by firms

Akash Mandal
Mumbai, April 26

THE WOMEN'S Reservation Act, or the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam, was passed by Parliament in 2023 with the aim that a third of the seats in the Lok Sabha, state legislative assemblies, and in Delhi will be held by women.

While the Centre's efforts to bring the law's implementation failed, corporate India has had its own version of the same for over a decade.

And its results have been mixed. As per The Companies Act of 2013, every listed company with a paid-up share capital of more than Rs 100 crore or a turnover greater than Rs 300 crore must appoint at least one female director to its board.

While companies are largely meeting this requirement — among Nifty 50 companies, ONGC is the only one without

any women on its board of directors after Alka Mittal's six-month term as the interim Chairperson and Managing Director ended in August 2022 — the overall numbers don't make for encouraging reading.

According to data compiled by *The Indian Express*, 17 of the Nifty 50 entities — which include some of India's biggest companies — have only one female director on their boards.

"Under current regulations, many corporates appoint a female director for the sake of compliance, while some place family members as a form of token," a corporate governance expert at a domestic law firm said, requesting anonymity.

"There have been some discussions (on increasing female representation), but it's not currently at the forefront. The focus has been on other reforms in the corporate world, such as improving ease of doing business and simplifying



17 of the Nifty 50 entities, which include some of India's biggest companies, have only one female director on their boards. REUTERS

regulations. But the government has to take a look at this (female representation) also sooner rather than later," the expert added.

On the whole, there are 517 people on the boards of Nifty 50 companies. Of these, only 107, or around 21%, are women.

While this is broadly in line with how women are represented in positions of power in

AI to push India's tech industry, not a threat, says NASSCOM Chair

New Delhi: Artificial intelligence (AI) will not be a threat to the Indian technology industry, instead it will accelerate the growth and continue hiring people, according to apex IT industry body NASSCOM Chairman Srikanth Velamakanni.

Velamakanni has taken over the top leadership charge of NASSCOM (National Association of Software and Service Companies) at a time when the Indian IT industry is facing twin challenges: geopolitical turmoil and disruption by AI.

"AI is going to accelerate India's tech industry. It's not going to be a threat to our tech industry. That is the most important thing. If one understands that, I think we're in a very good place because firstly, there is a significant performance improvement," the chairman said. PTI

● BRIEFLY

Finmin gives PSBs 12 mths for wage revision

New Delhi: The Centre has asked public sector banks to initiate the process of negotiations for the 13th Bi-partite settlement in a time-bound manner and finalise it in the next 12 months. The wage revision for employees and officers of public sector banks would be due from November 1, 2027. Public sector banks (PSBs) and financial institutions, including insurance companies revise wages of their employees every five years. As the timely conclusion of the settlements is essential for maintaining industrial harmony, the Department of Financial Services advised PSBs in a communication to their heads to initiate necessary measures to commence negotiations for the wage revision. PTI

US Senator clears path for Warsh as Fed chair

New York: Republican Senator Thom Tillis on Sunday said he would allow Senate confirmation of Federal Reserve chair nominee Kevin Warsh to go forward after the Department of Justice on Friday dropped an investigation into Fed Chair Jerome Powell that Tillis saw as a threat to the central bank's political independence. He had vowed to block any Fed nominee from confirmation as long as the probe remained open. "I am prepared to move on with the confirmation of Warsh," Tillis said on NBC's "Meet the Press." The decision ends months of limbo for Warsh and clears a path for his Senate confirmation by May 15, when Powell's leadership term ends. REUTERS

● GENDER MIX

● As per MSCI's Women on Boards and Beyond report, women occupied 28.3% of board seats at publicly listed large- and mid-cap firms globally, up from 27.3% in 2024

● Further, nearly 49% of firms had at least 30% female directors. Among India's Nifty 50 firms, boards of Eternal (3 of 6) and Apollo Hospitals (5 of 10) have 50% representation by women

49% of companies had at least 30% female directors.

Among India's Nifty 50 companies, the boards of Eternal (3 of 6) and Apollo Hospitals (5 of 10) have 50% representation by women.

Nine other companies have over 33% female representation — TCS, Hindustan Unilever, Ultratech Cement, Nestle India, Hindalco, Mahindra & Mahin-

dra, Wipro, HCL Technologies, and Tech Mahindra.

At the other end of the spectrum are five companies who only just meet the minimum requirement.

These include L&T (1 of 17), NTPC (1 of 13), Bajaj Finance, Bharat Electronics, and State Bank of India.

According to McKinsey's latest *Women in the Workplace* report, while a majority of companies see diversity as a high priority and more than 80% remain committed to inclusion, commitment to women's advancement is "much lower".

"Only about half of companies say women's career advancement is a high priority, and fewer are prioritising women of colour's advancement. This matters: companies that place a high priority on gender diversity and women's advancement see larger gains in women's representation," the report said.

WEEKLY CAPSULE

Bacteria spread resistance genes

Scientists at John Innes Centre have uncovered a surprising twist in how bacteria share genes, including those that spread antibiotic resistance. Tiny virus-like particles called gene transfer agents (GTAs), once ancient viral invaders, have been repurposed by bacteria into delivery systems that shuttle DNA between neighbouring cells. The study reveals a key control hub of three genes, dubbed LypABC, that triggers bacterial cells to burst open and release these DNA-packed couriers. By revealing how flexible bacterial systems can be, the study provides deeper insight into how genes move between cells.



Gut virus linked to colon cancer

A newly-discovered virus hiding inside a common gut bacterium could help explain why a microbe found in both healthy people and cancer patients is linked to colorectal cancer. The research suggests that the interaction between bacteria and the viruses they carry may be key to understanding disease risk. It may lead to future screening tests that detect cancer risk earlier. The study was conducted by the University of Southern Denmark Faculty of Health Sciences and analysed stool samples from 877 people across Europe, the US and Asia. People with colorectal cancer were about twice as likely to carry these viruses in their gut.



Fatty liver drugs now possible

A recent study from the University of Barcelona suggests a potential breakthrough for fatty liver, using medications that are already available. Researchers found that two drugs, pemafibrate and telmisartan, were able to significantly reduce liver fat in animal models of this disease. Even more encouraging, using the two together appeared to not only improve liver health but also reduce related cardiovascular risks. Using lower doses of both drugs together worked just as well as higher doses alone. While promising, the findings still need to be tested in humans.



Biotin link to cancer cells

Cancer cells are known for their "glutamine addiction," but many can escape this weakness by switching to alternative fuels. Researchers at the University of Lausanne found that vitamin B7 acts like a metabolic "licence," enabling this escape route through a key enzyme. Without biotin, cancer cells lose that flexibility and stop growing. Mutations in a cancer-linked gene can make this vulnerability even stronger, offering a new target for therapy. The findings also help explain why therapies aimed at blocking glutamine do not always succeed. Cancer cells can switch to alternative metabolic pathways to survive.



Olive oil protects your brain

Extra virgin olive oil might help protect your brain by working through your gut. A two-year study found that people who consumed it had better cognitive performance and more diverse gut bacteria than those using refined olive oil. Spanish researchers at the Human Nutrition Unit of the Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV), the Pere Virgili Health Research Institute (IISPV) and CIBERobn identified specific microbes linked to these benefits. The findings suggest that choosing high-quality extra virgin olive oil could be a simple way to support brain health as you age.



SUGAR-FREE LIFE

DR. MOHAN

CHAIRMAN, DR MOHAN'S DIABETES SPECIALITIES CENTRE, CHENNAI



GETTYIMAGES

Early screening at the first visit is important

Why gestational diabetes is showing up earlier

Manage the condition with diet, activity and medical guidance

A YOUNG WOMAN was flustered as she developed diabetes in the first trimester of her pregnancy. "Doctor, they told me I have gestational diabetes... something that is usually seen after three months. Why has mine showed up so early? And I never even had diabetes. Will my baby be safe?"

As I assured her that this condition can be managed, fact is gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM), when a woman's blood sugar levels become high during pregnancy, is being increasingly diagnosed in the first trimester. Traditionally, it would show up after the third month, in the second trimester.

So what is gestational diabetes? During pregnancy, an organ called the placenta supplies nutrients and oxygen to the developing foetus. The placenta also makes hormones. In late pregnancy, the hormones estrogen, cortisol and human placental lactogen can block insulin and trigger insulin resistance.

Lifestyle changes, weight gain, undiagnosed prediabetes, PCOS (polycystic ovary syndrome) and late age conception are making it appear earlier than before. Some women are more prone due to risk factors like obesity, having a family history of diabetes, or having had GDM in a previous pregnancy. But sometimes, it can happen even without any risk factors. That's why early screening at the first visit is important.

Will your baby be safe?

Yes, if kept under control and supported by diet and lifestyle correction. If not controlled, it can cause complications like increasing the risk of high blood pressure or difficult delivery. For the baby, it can lead to higher birth weight, early delivery or low sugar levels after birth. Also, uncontrolled sugars even in early pregnancy can affect the baby's development. But the good news is that if we detect it early and control it well, we can prevent most of these problems.

We focus on three main things — diet, physical activity and regular monitoring. Don't worry. You don't need a special or expensive diet — just a balanced one. First rule: Don't skip meals. Have three small meals and two to three healthy snacks to keep your sugar levels stable.

Eat normal home food with some smart changes. Choose whole grains like brown rice, millets or whole wheat instead of white rice or maida. Always combine carbohydrates with protein, like dal, egg, paneer or chicken. This slows down sugar absorption. Half your plate should be vegetables — especially fibre-rich ones like greens, beans, cucumber and carrot. Fruits are allowed but in small portions. Go for apple, guava or orange. Avoid fruit juices.

Imagine your plate divided into three parts, half with vegetables, one-quarter with protein and one-quarter with carbohydrates (this bit should include fruits too). This balance helps control sugar levels effectively.

Unless there are specific medical restrictions, I advise my patients to walk for about 20–30 minutes daily, especially after meals. It helps your body use sugar better. In many cases, your sugar levels return to normal after delivery. But gestational diabetes is a warning sign. Women who have had it have a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes in the future.

So, continue the same healthy lifestyle after motherhood. Get your blood sugar tested 6–12 weeks after delivery, and then once a year. Maintain a healthy weight, stay active and eat balanced meals. And remember breastfeeding helps improve your metabolism and lowers your future diabetes risk.

With early screening, the right diet, regular activity and awareness, gestational diabetes is very much manageable. You can have a healthy pregnancy and protect your future health too.

Rinku Ghosh

A 62-YEAR-OLD man collapsed after a routine morning walk between 8 am and 9 am. Being hypertensive, diabetic and having a stent in his heart, he was always cautious about stepping out in mid-day heat. Still, he felt dizzy, weak and sweated profusely when he entered the OPD of Dr Rommel Tickoo, Director, Internal Medicine, Max Healthcare, Delhi. "Then his sweating reduced, a dangerous transition indicating his body's cooling mechanism had failed. Nausea followed, he couldn't eat or drink anything. He complained of mild breathlessness, became disoriented and drowsy, required assistance to walk and eventually collapsed in a heap. His heart was under stress," says Dr Tickoo.

By the time he was evaluated, he had high fever, his blood pressure had dropped and his pulse was high. His blood sugar had risen sharply to 250 mg/dL, a stress response compounded by dehydration. Laboratory findings revealed creatinine at 1.8 (normal up to 1.3 mg/dL) pointing to acute kidney injury, sodium at 150 mmol/L (normal being up to 145 mmol/L), reflecting significant dehydration. An ECG confirmed a very high heart rate that could trigger a heart attack and stroke. "His stressors were heat exhaustion, dehydration, electrolyte imbalance and evolving organ dysfunction. We sponged him to cool down his body, gave intravenous fluids, monitored his urine output, gave insulin for blood sugar. Within two days, he improved and returned to baseline. What he didn't know was that even half-hour of easy walking outdoors was enough for him to develop heat stress, when the body's thermal regulation is overwhelmed, and put his heart at risk," he says.

Heat stress can build up rapidly, even with little exposure, because the body cannot dissipate absorbed heat easily. "Not many know that extreme heat forces the heart to work much harder, increasing heart rate to boost blood flow to the skin for cooling. This strain is driven by dehydration, reduced blood volume and widened blood vessels, which can exacerbate cardiovascular disease, including hypertension, heart failure, arrhythmias and heart attacks," says Dr Tickoo.

Long-term effects of heat stress

The WHO identifies heat stress as the leading cause of weather-related deaths, which can worsen underlying conditions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes and mental health. Extreme heat now poses a risk to 57 per cent of Indian districts — home to 76 per cent of the population — according to a new independent study by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW). It finds that the top ten most heat-risk-prone states and UTs are Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Kerala, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh. In dry north India, humidity over the past decade has increased by 50 per cent. This significantly raises the 'felt' temperature, sometimes by 3–5°C more, compared to the recorded air temperature, making even moderate heat more dangerous. "When body temperature exceeds 37°C, sweating is the primary cooling mechanism, but high humidity hinders evaporation. That's why those living in urban heat islands across our cities are exposed to adverse consequences of heat stress. But this is mostly unrecognised," says Dr Dileep Mavalankar, former director of the Indian Institute of Public Health, Gandhinagar and the creator of Asia's first city-wide Heat Action Plan (HAP) for Ahmedabad in 2010.

"Medically, only about one-tenth of heat-related illness presents as direct conditions such as heat stroke, where proteins change

Heat stress isn't just about heatstroke

It's much more silent & severe

About 90% of cases are about silent damage to the heart, kidneys and brain, say experts

GETTYIMAGES

structure and cannot function properly, or heat syncope, when blood pressure drops suddenly or when blood pools in the legs. The remaining 90 per cent involve indirect impacts, which target key organs," says Dr Mavalankar.

For example, the heart pumps faster, often increasing by 10 beats per minute for every degree the body's internal temperature rises. "Rapid blood vessel expansion can lead to lowered blood pressure, causing dizziness, weakness and fainting. Excessive sweating reduces blood volume, which means the heart has to work harder to circulate the remaining blood, which can trigger irregular heartbeats or worsen pre-existing heart conditions," he says.

If the kidneys are already vulnerable, then intense heat leads to rapid fluid loss through sweat, reducing blood flow to the kidneys and increasing uric acid concentrations. "Repeated episodes of heat strain, dehydration and subclinical injury can cause permanent renal damage, known as kidney failure," says Dr Mavalankar. Those



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with lung disease, diabetes, and other chronic conditions similarly worsen under heat stress. "Heat increases the rate of insulin absorption. People with diabetes are more vulnerable to heat exhaustion and heat stroke because diabetic nerve damage can inhibit sweating and prevent the body from cooling down. In patients with comorbidities, even 15 to 30 minutes of exposure can significantly stress the heart," he adds.

Pregnant women are more sensitive to heat stress due to increased blood volume: nearly seven litres by the end of pregnancy, and a lower ratio of body surface area to mass, making it harder to shed heat. "Prolonged heat stress affects pregnant women silently. Intense heat can reduce blood flow to the placenta and increase foetal heart rate. It can impact the function of placenta, which may lead to lower birth weights. Intense heat exposure in the first trimester may contribute to birth defects. Heat waves increase risks of fainting and high blood pressure," says Dr Tickoo. He even warns of heat interfering with medication. "Diuretics

increase urine production. So if you sweat more, there's a compound effect, which depletes body fluids and causes dangerous drops in potassium," he warns.

How to track heat illnesses

Dr Mavalankar has long argued that the real burden of heat is grossly underestimated because of how it is measured. During the Ahmedabad heat wave of 2010, there were more than 800 additional deaths. Yet very few were officially classified as heat-related. "Most were recorded under routine causes such as cardiac or renal failure. The correct approach is to track all-cause mortality. If a city like Delhi typically records 300 deaths a day and that number rises to 500 during a heatwave, those excess deaths must be counted — even in the absence of a formally declared epidemic. Emergency room visits rise sharply during heat events, hospital admissions increase and ambulance calls surge. Government clinic registrations and footfall go up. These are all measurable signals, yet very few cities systematically count or analyse them," he says.

According to Dr Mavalankar, this data should be automatically captured through computerised systems and shared with institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and local universities for rigorous analysis. He also points out the need for structured governance. Cities should have designated leadership for heat response, much like vaccination programmes. "Places like Nagpur have discussed the idea of a Chief Heat Officer to coordinate action. Nationally, efforts by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) to create pooled data systems are steps in the right direction but without mandatory reporting and integration, their impact remains limited. A national dashboard combining mortality, hospital data, ambulance calls and clinic visits would provide a clearer picture of the crisis and create a unified heat prevention protocol," says Dr Mavalankar.

Beyond Illness

The effects of heat extend well beyond immediate illness. Worker productivity declines, increasing economic strain. The risk of accidents rises. Mental health conditions deteriorate, often manifesting as irritability and even road rage. Vulnerable groups — newborns, the elderly and pregnant women — are particularly at risk, with research showing higher rates of complications during extreme phases.

After 2010, Ahmedabad implemented a Heat Action Plan, supported by the National Disaster Management Authority, which later expanded similar frameworks to over 400 cities. "However, these plans lack a legal mandate and dedicated budgets. Ahmedabad remains the only city in South Asia to demonstrate a substantial impact of a heat action, with mortality falling by about 40 per cent after implementation," says Dr Mavalankar. The Ahmedabad model initiated "cool roofs" with reflective white paint in low-income neighbourhoods, reducing indoor temperatures significantly. Many cities, including Delhi, have since adopted a multi-layered approach: early warning systems, public awareness, capacity building for health professionals and emergency response. "A combined data-driven approach is needed, incorporating climate projections and hyperlocal vulnerability assessment. Then heat alerts can protect those at risk and help people plan workarounds during bad days," says Dr Mavalankar.

Last year, data obtained by PTI under the Right to Information (RTI) Act had revealed that the (NCDC) had reported 7,192 suspected cases of heatstroke. "Given India's growing NCD burden, heat stress should be emphasised as an independent risk factor," says Dr Mavalankar.

How world cities are tackling heat

GREEN CORRIDORS

MEDELLIN, COLOMBIA
Medellin developed 30 "green corridors" (shade-providing routes) along waterways and roads, reducing surrounding temperatures by up to 3°C to 4°C.

MASSIVE TREE PLANTING

FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE
The city committed to planting one million trees to increase vegetation cover by 50% to combat deforestation and heat.

REFLECTIVE PAVEMENT PAINT

LOS ANGELES, USA
LA is piloting painting asphalt with specialised coatings that reflect sun rays, lowering street-level surface temperatures by up to 5.5°C. Like many cities, it's replacing traditional concrete with porous materials that allow moisture to evaporate, providing passive cooling.

ROOFTOP FORESTS AND LIVING WALLS

ROTTERDAM, PARIS
Rotterdam is transforming its roofs into green spaces to reduce building temperatures and manage water, while Paris is planting 1,70,000 trees to create "cool islands."

GREEN LIVING ROOMS

FRANKFURT, GERMANY
The city placed portable, plant-covered structures to provide instant shade and natural cooling in busy, hot spots.

COOL ISLAND NETWORKS

PARIS, FRANCE
The city authorities mapped over 800 shady, cool spots — parks, fountains, and air-conditioned museums — accessible via an app.

NATURAL AIR VENTILATION ZONES

TOKYO, JAPAN
Urban planners have mandated the orientation of buildings to allow sea breeze to flow into the city, preventing heat trapping.

HEATWAVE PREPAREDNESS SIMULATIONS

BARCELONA, SPAIN
Barcelona is simulating a 50° cheatwave to test the city's preparedness, ensuring that emergency services and public infrastructure can handle severe, fast-approaching extreme heat.

EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

Cities like Miami and Phoenix have appointed Chief Heat Officers to coordinate heat response, warn citizens and implement rapid, targeted support for vulnerable neighbourhoods.

Idea Exchange

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

WHY SARBANANDA SONOWAL

Sarbananda Sonowal is the Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways. Amid the ongoing West Asia conflict, his ministry assumes increased significance, as it navigates the consequences of the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. He has also been the chief minister of Assam that went to polls earlier this month. One of his most significant contributions to Assam politics was getting the Illegal Migrants (Detection by Tribunals) Act, 1983 (IMDT Act), struck down in 2005. It subsequently led to the formation of the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) that split the Congress's vote bank in the state's Bengali-speaking Muslims

Vikas Pathak: In the past, it was the splitting of the Bengali-speaking Muslim votes that brought the BJP into an important position but in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the Bengali-speaking Muslims significantly shifted towards the Congress. As far as the Muslim population in Assam is concerned, it was around 34 per cent in the 2011 Census. It might well be around 40 per cent in the present Census and a large chunk of that is Bengali-speaking Muslims. If the consolidation stays on in favour of the Congress, do you think the Congress's prospects will improve in these elections?

The people of Assam are concerned about illegal Bangladeshi Muslims settled by previous Congress regimes to create a vote bank. While the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) emerged to protect these interests after the IMDT Act repeal, the public now trusts only the BJP to protect their land and identity. Our electoral victories across all levels stem from this trust, reinforced by actions like evicting suspected illegal migrants from Kaziranga National Park and redistributing that land to indigenous people.

The people of Assam are particularly concerned about the presence of large numbers of illegal Bangladeshi Muslims because they have been brought and had been given the settlement by Congress. Their intention was to create a sustainable vote bank, so that in the future they could always be there in case something happens. Ultimately, the AIUDF came as a saviour for the Muslims but the Congress always plays the dual role, isn't it?

The AIUDF was formed specifically to protect illegal migrants' interests after legal protections were removed in 2005. However, diverse Indian communities in Assam, including Marwaris, Biharis and Nepalis, have found credibility in the BJP. Prime Ministerial support for institutions like AIIMS and IIT, alongside infrastructure growth, has created immense optimism among the youth for a bright future.

Vikas Pathak: Recently, over 3.5 lakh tea garden households in Assam began receiving land pattas (titles) under Mission Basundhara, granting legal ownership of residential land to workers in nearly 707 tea gardens. But the Tea Association of India flagged some concerns: that the land is collateral when they take bank loans and that they have been responsible till now for the habitation of the workers. So if the workers get the land pattas, will it change the relation between the tea garden owners and the workers?

This won't harm relations; it is the due share for labourers who served for 200 years to make Assam tea a global brand. Giving them rights over their small company quarters provides minimum security and allows them to access government benefits like Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. We are correcting the betrayal by the Congress, which used them for votes but never granted them land rights.

Vikas Pathak: In Assam, the two most prominent politicians of the BJP are you and chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. There's a perception that while you have been measured in your tone, the CM has courted controversy quite often. He had used the word 'miya' Muslim for the Bengali-speaking Muslims. There was also an AI-generated video put up by the Assam state BJP, which was later deleted, where he was shown pointing a gun towards people wearing skull caps. He also said that if a 'miya' Muslim rickshaw puller deserves Rs 5, give him four. What is your take on such controversies?

Our clear policy is to fight against illegal Bangladeshi Muslims until Assam is foreigner-free. We campaigned for *Amar mati, amar adhikar* (Our land, our rights) to ensure foreign infiltrators have no place. The Chief Minister's remarks reflect this unified party agenda, which is openly stated in our manifesto.

Vikas Pathak: Because of the blockade on the Strait of Hormuz, there is danger to Indian seafarers on commercial vehicles. Is there a standard operating procedure that has been put into place regarding their safety? What is to be done the moment a vessel comes under attack?

The Directorate General of Shipping maintains a control room and helplines to support seafarers and their families. We view these seafarers as national soldiers risking their lives for energy security. We have repatriated nearly 2,700 people through coordinated help from the Ministry of External Affairs and an empowered group of secretaries to handle emergencies. They are soldiers of our country and we always consider them to be an integral part of our family. We will never let them feel lonely under any circumstances.

Liz Mathew: Why did the



ON IDENTITY AND POLITICAL TRUST

The people of Assam are concerned about illegal Bangladeshi Muslims settled by previous Congress regimes to create a vote bank. They now trust only the BJP to protect their land and identity



ON WOMEN'S RESERVATION BILL

Our intention was to grant women their bonafide rights. The Opposition chose to link this vital issue to politics. The timing relates to our ambitions for women's empowerment, not the election cycle

'We view our seafarers as national soldiers. We will never let them feel lonely under any circumstances'

Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal on identity politics in Assam, the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 and ensuring repatriation of Indian seafarers in conflict zones. He was in conversation with Vikas Pathak, Deputy Associate Editor, *The Indian Express*



Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal (right) in conversation with Vikas Pathak, Deputy Associate Editor, *The Indian Express*

government bring the Women's Reservation Bill when you knew that there were not enough numbers, and why during elections?

Our intention was to grant women their bonafide rights in a growing population. It is an injustice that women hold only a 16 per cent legislative share. While the BJP supported the UPA on this in 2010, the current Opposition unfortunately chose to link this vital issue to politics.

This has no connection with the elections. We are fighting elections but we have big ambitions with the Bill. The timing relates to our ambitions for women's empowerment, not the election cycle. We believe this recognition should not be delayed any further.

Vikas Pathak: There was one technical confusion in this particular Bill that failed. The government was saying that each state will gain 50 per cent seats. But the bill said that it would be on the basis of the latest census figures when the Delimitation Commission is constituted. That would mean 2011 figures. As per Article 81 (2) (a) of the Constitution, the proportion of the seats allocated to states has to be the same as the ratio of the population of those states. That means, as per the Constitution, the relative share of states would have changed unless Article 81 — the 'one person, one vote, one value' principle — was amended. You did not try to amend that particular Article but verbally it was said there would be a 50 per cent increase across states, which basically means the 1971 figures as per Article 81. How do you explain this contradiction?

The Home Minister explained this

transparently in the House and offered to provide these assurances in writing. There should be no doubt about our commitment to this cause.

Liz Mathew: In these 10 years under the BJP, the Assam State GDP has grown, law and order has been relatively fine and there has been infrastructural development. You also spoke about an 'ecosystem.' What is this ecosystem? What do you feel will be the impact of this 'ecosystem' on the minorities in yours as well as other states?

We are committed to the security of all Indian citizens, including Indian Muslims. However, we remain firm against illegal Bangladeshi Muslims as their pres-

ence threatens the nation's existence.

Jatin Anand: There have been a lot of new entries into your party recently, including Pradyut Bordoloi. Do you not think that the overstepping of this ideological line for leaders from other parties to come into the BJP has an effect on the state cadre and their ideological moorings? Given that the BJP views every worker as having the same value and everybody can rise through the ranks, do you not think this is a setback for those who have been with the party for long?

New members are welcome but they must follow the BJP's rules and principles from the day they join. Regardless of their

ON MARITIME STRATEGY AMID GLOBAL CRISES

'Our ships will keep securing energy and fertilisers. We are actively discovering new routes for future operations. Our transshipment volume has increased as ships use Indian ports instead of West Asia'

past, they must function according to our standards.

Vikas Pathak: There's also a joke doing the rounds that BJP has now become 'CongJP'.

While people may talk, the reality is that the party maintains its integrity by ensuring everyone works based on the BJP policies.

Sukalp Sharma: Considering we have been fairly successful in moving our ships from the Persian Gulf, two ships came under Iranian fire last Saturday. Could you provide some clarity on what happened based on talks with the Iranians or within the government?

Two ships were attacked, resulting in minor external damage but there was no harm to the seafarers. We expressed strong concerns to the Iranian authorities through the Indian Ambassador, demanding restraint and prioritising seafarer safety.

Sukalp Sharma: Did they provide any explanation regarding why this happened? Since that incident, no Indian-flagged vessels have moved. In fact, the vessels that were trying to leave on Saturday have now gone deeper back into the Persian Gulf. Is there any update on when they might move?

Our agencies work as 'Team India' to address these concerns through diplomatic channels. One vessel — the *Desh Garima* — has returned, and we are working to ensure the safety of the rest.

Sukalp Sharma: About two-and-a-half years ago, there were talks about the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). Because

of this war, there are now two views: One, that the IMEC and similar corridors should be expedited and a contrary view, saying that any overland infrastructure in West Asia is now a target.

India will not stop. Our ships will keep moving to secure essentials like energy and fertilisers. We are actively discovering new routes for future operations.

We remain highly committed and are in frequent dialogue with partner nations to translate the IMEC vision into action. Paradoxically, our transshipment volume has increased as ships use Indian ports instead of West Asia, turning an economic challenge into an advantage.

Sukalp Sharma: Do you have an update regarding the timeline for the Great Nicobar Galathea Bay transshipment port, which will be the next major port for India?

Work on Galathea Bay is moving forward significantly after the environmental issues were settled. That and VadHAVAN Port are the most critical projects for India's maritime future.

Ravi Dutta Mishra: There are certain legacy issues that get accentuated whenever there is a crisis. One is the shortage of containers and the other is our reliance on foreign shipping lines. Exporters are worried that they are being 'strong-armed' into accepting higher freight rates. What could be the solution to these two problems?

We allocated Rs 10,000 crore to manufacture 77 million containers over a decade for self-sufficiency. For shipping lines, we are focusing on shipbuilding clusters in five states and aim to be among the top five ship-building nations by 2047, saving the Rs 6 lakh crore currently paid to foreign lines. We are also adding 40 vessels to the Shipping Corporation of India to enhance capacity and national power.

Anil Sasi: To what extent is the Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC) now being used for handling Russian crude and what percentage was earlier going through the Mumbai route?

The Chennai-Vladivostok corridor is highly successful, reducing transit to 24 days compared to 40 days through the Mumbai route, making it economically superior.

Harikishan Sharma: The Chabahar Port in Iran was an important pillar of the IMEC project. Right now, reports are coming in that in view of the West Asia crisis and the US sanctions, India might divest its stake in Chabahar Port to some Iranian local company.

Chabahar is ours. The partnership remains intact. Our vision is to build ports globally, becoming a leading maritimation with self-sufficient transshipment hubs to end dependence on Sri Lanka and Singapore.

Harikishan Sharma: Recently, you highlighted the significance of inland waterways and the role of the Brahmaputra river in taking Assam's products to the whole world. When this ministry was with (Nitin) Gadkari ji, he used to talk about how a Delhi to Agra cruise would run and the developments that would happen in waterways. Later, the Delhi government signed an MoU to run a cruise on the Yamuna. Will this ever be a reality?

The Yamuna project will be inaugurated this May, running 4 km from Sonia Vihar. We have also brought waterways to the mountains, introducing electric vessels on the Jhelum in Kashmir.

Pratyush Deep: During your first tenure as Chief Minister, the major crisis that happened was the NRC-CAA protest in December 2019. Looking back, how do you see those protests being handled by your Home Minister?

The people's mandates in subsequent elections showed that they accepted our approach despite the anti-CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) movement.

Pratyush Deep: Looking back at 1990, when you were the President of the Student Union, Himanta Biswa Sarma was also in the All Assam Students' Union (AASU). What was it like to work with him?

Himanta was a hardworking leader at Cotton College (Guwahati). We shared a productive working relationship during our years in AASU.

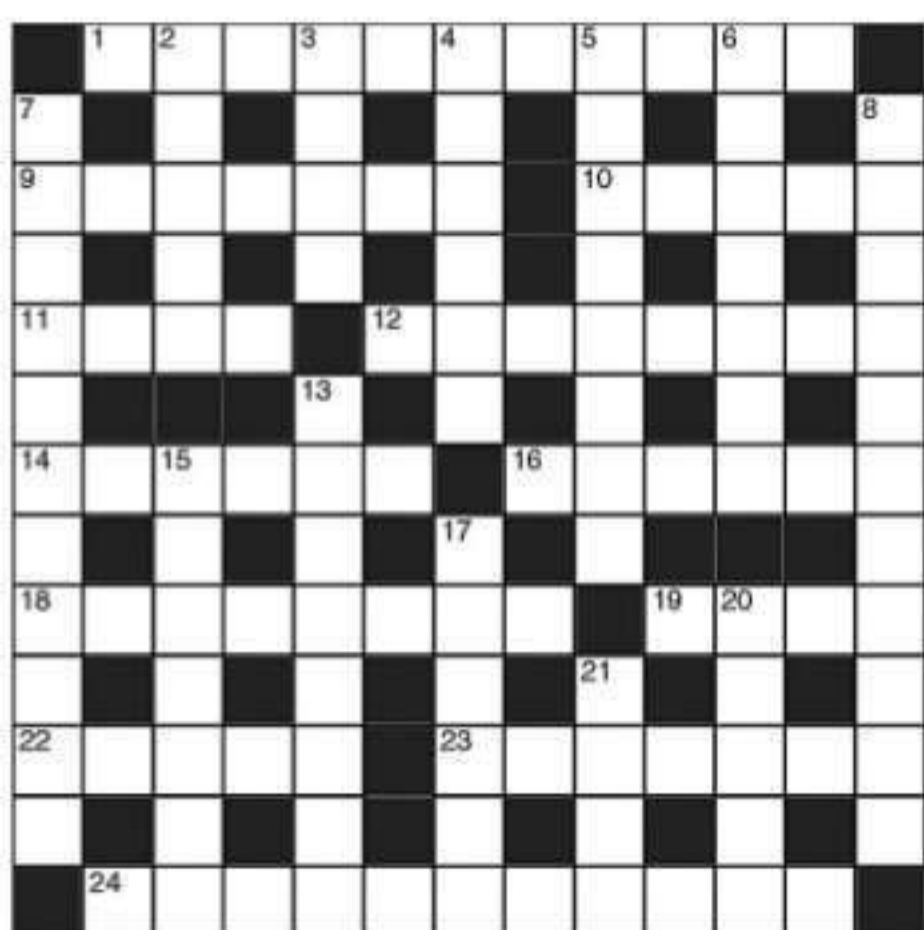
Shyam Lal Yadav: In the Hindi heartland, the BJP has traditionally always made its original members Chief Ministers. What is the reason behind choosing an outsider in Bihar this time?

Whoever has become Bihar's Chief Minister (Samrat Choudhary), they are very capable, successful and competent, and they will contribute in a big way to move Bihar forward.



CROSSWORD

5973



- ACROSS**
- 1 His work has an inflationary effect on the product (5,6)
 - 9 Squeeze out just one more cent (7)
 - 10 Proper illustration reveals the inherent risk (5)
 - 11 Its driver has a duty to take one (4)
 - 12 Working has to beat not working (2,6)
 - 14 For each expert a pastry dish is brought in (6)
 - 16 The Astor's new cooks (6)
 - 18 The sort of alibi which has not been forged (4-4)
 - 19 Islamic ruler confined in Moslem Iraq (4)
 - 22 Invite approval during the day before Christmas (5)
 - 23 Firm purpose to settle (7)
 - 24 Be confident; sleep is guaranteed (4,7)
- DOWN**
- 2 Rubber solution obtained dead on ten (5)
 - 3 Impressive way to complete a business document (4)
 - 4 Bay - and yet not bay perhaps (6)
 - 5 Going the rounds? (2,6)
 - 6 Wager is about insects (7)
 - 7 Trial marriages work for cricketers (4,7)
 - 8 Quick course for British journalists (5,6)
 - 13 Mishap caused by stress - I'd go into it (8)
 - 15 Available to customers, or about to arrive (2,5)
 - 17 Where rackets may be exposed (6)
 - 20 Shelter with me in an affair (5)
 - 21 Use a different name for Jacob's twin brother (4)

SOLUTIONS CROSSWORD 5972 ACROSS: 1 Handle, 4 Layout, 9 Leaden, 10 Observed, 12 Tote, 13 Linen, 14 Peru, 17 Wedding rings, 20 Comes to light, 23 Deaf, 24 Bigot, 25 John, 28 Proceeds, 29 Marina, 30 Sunshade, 31 Stayed

DOWN: 1 Hill town, 2 Neap tide, 3 Leek, 5 Abbreviation, 6 Abed, 7 On view, 8 Tedium, 11 Single-minded, 15 Pivot, 16 Agile, 18 Ignominy, 19 Standard, 21 Adapts, 22 Lagoon, 26 Mesh, 27 Last

JUMBLER WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective circles below. Select the letters in the shaded circles and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

If everyone is moving forward together, then _____ takes care of itself. - Henry Ford (7)

CERES ○○○○○○●

ACDSS ○○○○○○●

CYMULE ○○○○○○●

IMOPYC ○○○○○○●

ANSWER: If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself. - Henry Ford

SOLUTIONS: Ceres, Scads, Lyeum, Mypoc

OVER THE HEDGE

BY MICHAEL FRY & T LEWIS



CALVIN & HOBBS

BY BILL WATTERSON



MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG



DIFFICULTY LEVEL 5s INSTRUCTIONS

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL

1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius

SUDOKU 6301

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| | | | 4 | 6 | | 2 | 8 | |
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| 8 | | | | | | | 9 | 1 |

SOLUTION SUDOKU 6300

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| 8 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| 2 | 3 | 9 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 5 |
| 6 | 8 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 9 | 3 | 2 |
| 7 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| 5 | 9 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 7 |

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Tender Notice Dated 25.04.2026
Office of Executive Engineer (M) Ramganga Power Station, UJVN Limited, Kalagarh, Dist. Pauri Garhwal invites sealed tender from interested parties. Details of tenders is given below.
T.No: 01, 02, 03, 04 & 05/EE(M)/RPS/2026-27
Name of work : 1. AMC for routine maintenance, 2. AMC for electrical works in residential and non-residential buildings. 3. Hiring of one no. 32 seater non AC Bus for a period of 12 months. 4. AMC for repairing and overhauling of drainage/dewatering pumps system and other motors. 5. Rebabbling of TGB & GGB bearing pads.
Estimated cost : Rs.6,36,870.00, Rs.9,79,250.00, Rs.12,96,211.00, Rs.4,42,103.00 & RS. 24,78,100.00 Only respectively (GST extra)
Date of Availability of bid document on website : 25.04.2026 10:00 Hrs.
Last date for submission of tender : 15.05.2026 16:00 Hrs
For fuller & further details, kindly visit our website. The tender documents can be downloaded from the Nigam's website "www.ujvn.com"
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Door No. 294/ID, 100 feet Road (Tadigadapa to Enikepadu Road), Kamuru, Vijayawada-521137, Andhra Pradesh, India
Tel: +91-866-2429999 Fax: +91-866-2429977 Email: contracts-ho@apmdc.in

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
RFQ No: APMDCC&CCAMC IT Hardware/SCM/2026-27 Dt:27.04.2026
APMDC invites Quotations from reputed Agencies for "Provision of Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract (CAMC) for the Existing IT Hardware Infrastructure & Devices at APMDC, Sulliyari Coal Project Madhya Pradesh". For more information on the eligibility criteria, tender fees, timelines and other details, please visit APMDC website (www.apmdc.ap.gov.in). The Tender document is available for downloading from APMDC website from 27.04.2026 and last date for submission of quotation is 18.05.2026.
Sd/-
Place: Vijayawada Managing Director
Date: 27.04.2026 The A. P. Mineral Development Corporation Limited
R.O. No. 5047PP/CL/ADVT/1/1/2021-22 Dt: 24/04/2026

"IMPORTANT"
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NPCL Noida Power Company Limited
Electric Sub Station, Knowledge Park-IV, Greater Noida-201310
(CIN: U31200UP1992PLC014506)

TENDER NOTICE Date: 27-04-2026

E Tender (Commercial & Technical) are invited for following job from all interested bidders

| NIT No. | Tender Description | EMD (Rs.) | Start and Due Date & Time of Submission |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------|
| NPCL/FY26 27/RMUJ001 Dated 27.04.2026 | 2 Years Rate contract for SUPPLY INSTALLATION TESTING AND COMMISSIONING OF RMU | 30.0 Lac | 27.04.2026 & 18.05.2026 (up to 15:00 hours) |

Cost of Individual Tender Document (incl. GST) Rs 1180/-
For other tender details and further amendment/corrigendum, please visit our website www.noidapower.com -> Procurement -> Tenders

DGM (CMM)

Chola CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED
Corporate Office: "CHOLA CREST", C54 & 55, Super B-4, Thiru.Vi.Ka Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032.

E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES
E-Auction Sale Notice for the Sale of Immovable Assets under Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, r/w rule 8(6) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. (Rule 8 & 9)

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower / Co-Borrower / Mortgagee (s) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged to the Secured Creditor, the Physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited the same shall be referred herein after as Cholamandalam investment and Finance Company Limited. The Secured Assets will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" basis through E-Auction. It is hereby informed to General public that we are going to conduct public E-Auction through website https://bankauctions.in/

| Account No. and Name of Borrower, Co-Borrower, Mortgagees | Amount Outstanding | Description of the Immovable Property [Secured Asset] | Reserve Price / EMD / Bid Increment Amount |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Loan Account No. TL01NDL000062239 1. M/s. I.M.S (Institute of Mathematical Science), (Borrower) 1st Floor, No.25/8, Old Rajender Nagar, Central Delhi-110060. 2. Mr. Kore Venkataiah, (Co Borrower) 3. Mrs. Ara Sridevi, (Co Borrower) No.2 & 3 residing at: No. 453-454, Ground Floor, Double Storey, New Rajender Nagar, Central Delhi-110060. 4. M/s. K. Venkanna Education Services, (Co Borrower), Ground Floor, House No. 12-13-354, Tarnaka, Secunderabad, Hyderabad, Telangana - 500 017. Also at: No. 1-10-237, 2nd Floor, Room No. 202, R K S Kanchams Blue Sapphire, Ashok Nagar, Hyderabad, Telangana - 500 020. | Rs. 4,34,18,419/- as on 13.11.2025 | Item No. 1: All that piece and parcels of the Entire Ground Floor without roof/terrace rights, build up Property Bearing No. 453-454, area measuring 123.66 Sq. Yards, Situated at New Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi - 110060. Item No. 2: All that piece and parcels of the Entire Ground Floor without roof/terrace rights, build up Property Bearing No. 455-456, area measuring 123.66 Sq. Yards, Situated at New Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi - 110060. | Rs. 4,73,40,000/- Rs. 47,34,000/- Rs. 1,00,000/- |

E-auction Date and Time : 20.05.2026 - 11 AM to 12 Noon (with unlimited extension of 3 min each)
Last Date of Submission of EMD : 19.05.2026, Date of Inspection of Property : As per the appointment

Encumbrance : SA No. 120/26 is pending before the Hon'ble DRT-I, Delhi as part of the disclosure

- All Interested participants / bidders are requested to visit the website https://bankauctions.in & www.foreclosureindia.com. For details: help, procedure and online training on e-auction, prospective bidders may contact Ms.4 Closure, (Contact Person: Mr. Shailendra, Ph. No. 9515160061, Email: shailendra@bankauctions.in).
- For further details on terms and conditions please visit: https://bankauctions.in/ & https://cholamandalam.com/news/auction-notice to take part in e-auction or contact Mr. Ved Prakash Mishra - 9910144252 / Mr. Naveen Kapoor - Ph: 77550 01547 / Mr. Kapil Sharma - Ph: 9205308879.

THIS IS ALSO A STATUTORY 30 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6) RULE 8 & 9 AND OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002
Date: 27.04.2026
Place: Chennai
Authorized Officer
Cholamandalam investment and Finance Company Limited.

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I, Km. Kavita W/o Govind Singh Rawat R/o. 257, 3rd Floor, Angel Aptt.-2, Flat no. N, Near Ramelela Chowk, Chhattarpur, New Delhi-110074 have changed my name to Kavita Rawat and shall be used for all future purposes.

0040851130-1

I, Jyoti Chopra alias Pooja Wason alias Jyoti Wason, D/O Suresh Chopra and W/O Iqbal Singh, R/O-313/20, Durga Mandir Wali gali, Inder lok, Onkar Nagar, Delhi-110035, have changed my name Jyoti Wason.

0040851337-6

I, Amresh Prajapati, S/O SH. Hiranam Prajapati R/O-15 A J-BLK Chanakya Place, Part-1, Uttam Nagar, ND-59, hereby declare that Amresh Prajapati and Amresh Prajapati are both names of the same person. My correct name is Amaresh Prajapati

0040851337-7

I, RUBIK RAVI PRAKASH SADH, S/O-RAVI PRAKASH Hem Prakash Sadh, R/O-D-110, 2ND FLOOR, LAJPAT NAGAR-I, DELHI-110024, have changed my name to RUBIK PRAKASH SADH, for all future purposes.

0040851348-1

I, Poonam Devi D/o Radha Krishan Gupta W/o Indrajeet Gupta R/o Sarwome Shree Homes, E-302 Sector-45, VTC: Nhpc Colony Faridabad, Haryana-121010, have changed my name to Poonam Gupta.

0071031832-1

I Chand Wanzare D/O, Satinder Singh Grover R/O 90/67 Malviya Nagar New Delhi 110017 have changed my name to Chand Tandon.

0040851086-1

I, Govind Singh S/o Late Sh. Autar Singh Rawat R/o. 257, 3rd Floor, Angel Aptt.-2, Flat no. N, Chhattarpur, New Delhi-110074 have changed my name to Govind Singh Rawat and shall be used for all future purposes.

0040851133-1

ROYAL STARS

BY GEORGIA NICOLS

ARIES (MAR 21 - APR 20): You have lots of energy. Plus, you're chatty. However, today in particular, you might have to lend your efforts to help someone else. Tonight: Get organised.

TAURUS (APR 21 - MAY 21): You love good wine, good food, good sex and a nice place to live, and today you might come close to fulfilling your dreams. This is a strong day. Enjoy socialising with others. Sports and fun activities with kids will please you. Tonight: Play.

GEMINI (MAY 22 - JUNE 21): Today is the perfect day to relax at home and play things low-key. You might be involved with a female family member more than usual. Your ability to be charming and diplomatic will be timely. This is a good week to buy wardrobe items. Tonight: Cocoon.

CANCER (JUNE 22 - JULY 23): Enjoy time with a friend as well as interacting with groups and organisations today. What you do now might make a difference because your ambition is strong and you're prepared to speak up for what you want. Tonight: Conversations.

LEO (JULY 24 - AUG 23): You look wonderful to others. In fact, they see you as super competent and capable. Meanwhile, today you're thinking about your values and what really matters. The Dalai Lama said, "The purpose of life is to be happy." Tonight: Check your belongings.

VIRGO (AUG 24 - SEP 23): You are a tad more emotional than usual. However, it will also slightly increase your good luck over all the other signs. Oh yes. You might even test this by asking the universe for a favour. Why not? Tonight: You're in charge.

LIBRA (SEP 24 - OCT 23): Be patient with others. You may be irritated. Fortunately, you are the epitome of diplomacy, which is getting what you want while everyone keeps smiling. Tonight: Privacy.

SCORPIO (OCT 24 - NOV 23): Remember that you need more sleep this week. Don't be down on yourself if you sleep late. You can accomplish what you want. Today is a good day to share your hopes and dreams for the future with someone. Try it. Tonight: Be friendly.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV 24 - DEC 22): Once again people notice you more than usual, and yes, some will know personal details about your private life. Fortunately, relations with those who are close to you are cosy and supportive. Look for ways to feel happy. Tonight: You're admired.

CAPRICORN (DEC 23 - JAN 20): Do something different today. As this week begins, you're eager for a bit of adventure and stimulation. Travel or a chance to see new places will please you. You might do this in your own neighbourhood, city or from afar. Tonight: Explore and learn.

AQUARIUS (JAN 21 - FEB 19): Home and family are your focus right now. You're keen to socialise and romance is encouraging. Short trips and chances to learn new things and talk to new people will inspire you. Tonight: Check your finances.

PISCES (FEB 20 - MAR 20): Today you have to go more than halfway when dealing with others. You'll find this easy to do, especially with family members, because relationships are warm and supportive. Respect your moneymaking ideas. Tonight: Listen.

AXIS FINANCE LIMITED
(CIN U35211MH1995PLC212675)
Axis House, C-2 Wadia International Centre, Pandurang Budhkar Marg, Worli, Mumbai - 400025, through the authorized officer do hereby give this Notice under Section 13(2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, (hereinafter referred to as the "SARFAESI Act") in its capacity as secured creditor:

Ref. No. AFL/CO/2026-27/Legal/Apr/636 15.04.2026

BY SPEED POST REGISTERED A.D./EMAIL WITHOUT PREJUDICE

To,

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Vinod Prem (Borrower) Address: Shop No 119, New Grain Market, Kharkhoda, Dist. Sonapat, Haryana - 131402 Email id: vk3018872@gmail.com Phone No. - 9729144540 | 2. Prem Kumar and Sons (Co-Borrower 1) Address: Shop No 119, New Grain Market, Kharkhoda, Dist. Sonapat, Haryana - 131402 Email id: vk3018872@gmail.com Phone No. - 9729144540 |
| 3. Pooja Gupta (Co-Borrower 2) Address: Shop No 119, New Grain Market, Kharkhoda, Dist. Sonapat, Haryana - 131402 Email id: vk3018872@gmail.com Phone No. - 9729144540 | |

(Collectively referred to as "Borrowers" hereinafter)
Dear Sir/Madam,
SUB: NOTICE UNDER SECTION 13(2) OF THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 (AS AMENDED FROM TIME TO TIME) AND THE RULES MADE THEREUNDER

We, Axis Finance Limited ("AFL"), a company incorporated under the provisions of Companies Act, 1956 and a Non-Banking Finance Company registered under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 having its registered office at Axis House, C-2 Wadia International Centre, Pandurang Budhkar Marg, Worli, Mumbai - 400025, through the authorized officer do hereby give this Notice under Section 13(2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, (hereinafter referred to as the "SARFAESI Act") in its capacity as secured creditor:

- AFL, in the ordinary course of its business, at the request of Borrowers sanctioned Term Loan more particularly described in Schedule A hereto, for a total sum of INR 74,00,000/- (Rupees Seventy Four Lakhs Only) ("Credit Facility") on the terms and conditions as mentioned therein. The aforesaid security as detailed in Schedule A is a "Secured Asset" within the meaning of section 2(1) (zc) of the SARFAESI Act and thereby created secured interest in favour of AFL.
- Since you the Borrowers have committed continuous defaults for repayment of your Equated Monthly Instalments (EMIs), the accounts of the Borrowers were classified as non-performing asset ("NPA") w.e.f. 05.04.2026 in compliance with the directives/guidelines relating to asset classification issued by the Reserve Bank of India from time to time and was duly communicated to the Borrower.
- It is imperative to state herein that the above information of classification of accounts as NPA was communicated by AFL to you the Addressee vide NPA intimation letter dated 07.04.2026 bearing Ref. No AFL/NPA/CO/APR-26/0330 for the Credit Facility.
- In view of the aforesaid, the Secured Creditor has become entitled to issue this statutory notice to the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/Mortgagor, in terms of Section 13(2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and hereby call upon you all Addressee(s), jointly and severally to discharge in full the dues towards the Secured Creditor amounting/ aggregating INR. 75,60,674/- (Rupees Seventy Five Lakhs Sixty Thousand Six Hundred and Seventy Four Only) due as on 05.04.2026 as more particularly detailed in SCHEDULE B hereto, together with applicable interest, further interest, default interest, penalty, costs, charges etc. at contractual rates in respect of the Credit Facility from this date till date of repayment, within 60 days (Sixty days) from the date of this Notice issued under Section 13(2) of the SARFAESI Act, failing which the Secured Creditor shall be constrained to exercise its rights of enforcement of security interest available to it under Section 13 (4) and 15 of SARFAESI Act in respect of the Secured Assets mentioned herein above which include inter alia, the measures mentioned below:
 - Take over possession of the Secured Asset as mentioned in Schedule A hereto including the right to transfer by way of lease, assignment or sale for realizing the same;
 - Take over management of business of you the Addressee(s) including the right to transfer by way of lease, assignment or sale for realizing the Secured Asset, subject to the conditions as stipulated in the proviso to Section 13(4)(b) and Section 15 of the SARFAESI Act;
 - appoint any person to manage the Secured Asset, the possession of which will be taken over by AFL;
 - appoint any time by notice in writing, any person who has acquired any of the Secured Asset from you the Addressee(s) and from whom any money is due or may become due to you the Addressee(s), to pay AFL, so much of the money as is sufficient to pay the secured debt;
- All of you are notified and cautioned that as per the provisions of Section 13 (13) of the SARFAESI Act, no transfer of the Secured Asset (set out in the SCHEDULE A hereunder) by way of sale, lease or otherwise, shall be made without prior written consent of Secured Creditor.
- Your attention is invited to provisions of section 13 (8) of SARFAESI Act in respect of time available to redeem the Secured Assets.
- Kindly note that all costs, charges, expenses that shall be incurred by AFL in the process of its actions under Section 13 (4) and incidental thereto shall be recoverable from you in the manner prescribed under the Act.
- Please further note that this statutory notice is issued without prejudice to the rights of the Secured Creditor including initiation of any other legal proceedings/legal action as deemed fit and necessary under the provisions of any law for the time being in force and/ or as per contract or both.

Yours Faithfully,
Authorized Officer
Axis Finance Limited

SCHEDULE A
DETAILS OF SECURED ASSETS
SHOP BEARING NO. 119, SITUATED AT PRINCIPLE YARD GRAIN MARKET, SONIPAT, HARYANA - 131402
ADMEASURING 562.50 SQ. FT. PROPERTY IS BOUNDED AS: NORTH: SHOP NO. 120; SOUTH: SHOP NO. 118; EAST: STREET 20 FT; WEST: ROAD

SCHEDULE B
DETAILS OF OUTSTANDING AMOUNTS AS ON 5th APRIL, 2026

| Sr. no | Loan No. | Principal Outstanding | Interest Overdue | Penal and Other Charges | Total Outstanding |
|--------|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | 0456MMA00018451 | 72,79,870 | 2,70,558 | 10,246 | 75,60,674 |
| Total | | | | | 75,60,674 |

Interest at the applicable interest rate as defined in the facility Agreement.

Shreyas' advice to Prabh, Arya: Don't try to mimic anyone



Priyansh Arya (L) and Prabhsimran Singh were instrumental in Punjab's record chase on Saturday. CREIMAS

Express News Service New Delhi, April 26

SHREYAS IYER completed a historic chase with the base set by Prabhsimran and Priyansh Arya against Delhi Capitals on Saturday. But the captain of Punjab Kings has been building the bond with his Top Two tornadoes for a while now.

Speaking to *JioHotstar* after their win over Rajasthan Royals last week, where the trio overshadowed Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's 100, the captain had said, "We have a team room, which is probably there for every team. We try to spend a lot of time together in that team room before and after games, and whenever we have off days. We come together and build that bond."

The skipper has been keen on letting them know that they don't need to fit in any prior mould but create their own niche. "Whenever I speak to them, my only message is, just be yourself. Don't try to emulate, mimic, or be someone else. When you are playing at this level and you are fearless and flamboyant in your own way, you don't have to resemble or copy anyone. When you tell these guys that they are match-winners, both Prabhsimran and Priyansh Arya, it instils confidence in them. They can just go out there and play freely. They have been delivering for us and hopefully, they continue to do so," he said.

While 100s are raining on IPL and PBKS topped KL Rahul's sensational highest score, Shreyas also said that no matter what the result he had put it out there in the universe that he wanted to lift the trophy this year. On manifesting the IPL trophy this year, with an eye on winning the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2027, he told *JioHotstar*, "Whenever I play in any tournament, I play to win. For me, winning is everything; there is no substitute. Even if it doesn't happen, that is fine, I can accept it and move on. But whatever I do, whatever my efforts are for, it is for the trophy. I play to win. Whatever tournaments and opportunities come up next, I will definitely want to win them. For this year, the manifestation is to win the IPL. I just want to put it out there in the universe that I want to lift the trophy. There are going to be small steps to reach that stage."

THRILLER AT EKANA

Rinku heroics allow Knights to cut Giants to size in Super Over

28-year-old announces he is back to his best with 83 runs and five catches that put to waste Mohsin's five-for

SYNOPSIS: Rinku Singh's 83 trumps Mohsin Khan's five-for as KKR pip LSG in Super Over thriller.

Lalith Kalidas New Delhi, April 26

THE CALAMITIES that ensued from a poor Powerplay were poised to dictate terms when Kolkata Knight Riders and Lucknow Super Giants were set to meet again after a forgettable first half of the season. Poor starts from the openers have marred their run. So when two teams of weakened batting repositories clashed at the non-partisan Ekana, dullness and drama matched in equal measure across phases before the dust settled in a Super Over climax at midnight.

On a black soil strip on Sunday, where LSG opted to bowl first, the ability to vary speeds was premium. But when Mohsin Khan skinned the KKR order with five wickets of unrelenting attack on both edges of the bat, the relative weakness of his team's top order returned to bite them during an unoffending 156-run pursuit.

See-sawing comeback

Agenerous smattering of two free hits and a boundary from an erring Kartik Tyagi's final over offered Lucknow a late second chance. Defending seven off the final ball in an over that started with 17 in his bank, Tyagi's floating white delivery was biffed by an unlikely Mohammad Shami for six over wide long-off to level the scores. Watching all along from the sidelines since he was subbed out following his dream

spell, Mohsin's performances were overshadowed by the perils of the LSG's batters for the second time in two hours.

The veteran Sunil Narine's calmness soon consigned Nicholas Pooran and Rishabh Pant to the pavilion within three deliveries. The visitors surpassed the two-run target with Rinku, whose unerring hands, mind and feet sealed the night with a shot that crashed into the point fence for four.

Deadly burst

By the time Mohsin had his feet up in the dugout in the 12th over—subbed out after his superlative 5/23—it had seemed that he had choked KKR out on a partly slower pitch.

With his long-time mentor Mohammad Shami constricting Ajinkya Rahane, Mohsin continued to feed on the sustained pressure of a string of dots generated in the frenetic Powerplays. Backing up his wicket-keeper opening over against the sensational Vaibhav Sooryavanshi from the previous match, a pacy delivery shaped across the pitch to Tim Seifert on the back of five dots in the second over. With the skiddy pace on the full, Mohsin clipped Seifert for a second successive duck. The subtleties hit the pitch in the subsequent over, when he tucked Rahane into a tame chip, the speed slashed by over 17 kph from his previous wicket.

Mohsin's double strike had set in ample delirium. Even the glaring confusion that succeeded Angkrish Raghuvanshi's departure—dismissed obstructing the field after being sent back by non-striker Cameron Green—was short-lived amid the theatre of Mohin's wizardry. Returning soon after the



With five catches and an unbeaten knock of 83, Rinku Singh starred in KKR's tight win on Sunday. PTI

IPL table

| Teams | M | W | L | T | N/R | PTS | NRR |
|-------|---|---|---|---|-----|-----|--------|
| PK | 7 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 13 | 1.333 |
| RCB | 7 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 1.101 |
| SRH | 8 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 0.815 |
| RR | 8 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 0.602 |
| GT | 8 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 8 | -0.475 |
| CSK | 8 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 6 | -0.121 |
| DC | 7 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 6 | -0.184 |
| KKR | 8 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 4 | -0.751 |
| MI | 7 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 4 | -0.736 |
| LSG | 8 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 4 | -1.106 |

M: MATCH; W: WIN; L: LOSS; T: TIE; N/R: NO RESULT; PTS: POINTS; NRR: NET RUN RATE

Powerplay, Mohsin struck with his first delivery, a nifty bumper warping Rovman Powell caught behind. The enticing variety exploded when a leg-cutter splashed across the full undid Green in the 11th over. Mohsin immediately backed it up with a crankier, slanting delivery to Anukul Roy, hurried by the angle and pace that bobbed the ball to the mid-wicket fielder.

Rinku rearguard

Reduced to 73 for six at the close of Mohsin's spell, the dip-

ping oxygen levels were shored up by Rinku's enduring act. Walking in at six, Rinku rode the uneven bounce and slow turn patiently until the penultimate over before plundering 43 runs off his last 11 deliveries. Pant's unusual ploy to cut on pace to Rinku, who relishes it at the death, backfired when he called on Digvesh Rathi for the final over. Waiting on the wafted arm from the Delhi spinner, Rinku covered the arc from wide long-on to long-off with four consecutive sixes, seizing momentum

for KKR with a career-high 83 not out off 51 balls.

Not only were Langer's batters struggling with the extra bounce at home, but even a slow turner could not offer any respite to the top order that mustered only 37 in the first six overs after Mitchell Marsh's early dismissal. A slow-poke 55-ball 57 stand between Aiden Markram and Pant for the second wicket magnified pressure on a large outfield where Sunil Narine's discipline and Green's tightened lines were causing trouble. The lack of pace off the strip undid Markram, before a well-set Pant and a struggling Nicholas Pooran fell before the 14th over.

Boundaries were frequented by the unheralded lower-order quartet that frantically pillaged 51 in the last four overs of the chase. That wasn't enough in the end as their top order failed to switch on twice in one night during another Ekana siege.

BRIEF SCORES: Kolkata Knight Riders 155/7 (Rinku 83, Green 34; Mohsin 5/23) lost to KKR 155/8 (Pant 42; Vaibhav 2/24, Varun 2/33) in Super Over (LSG 2 in 0.3 balls and KKR 4 in 1 one ball).

Row erupts as Raghuvanshi given out for obstructing field

Express News Service New Delhi, April 26

CONTROVERSY ERUPTED during the match between the Kolkata Knight Riders and Lucknow Super Giants on Sunday as KKR batter Angkrish Raghuvanshi was adjudged to be obstructing the field and given out by the third umpire.

Kolkata, already in a bit of trouble after losing 2 early wickets, fell to three down after just five overs.

The incident happened during the fifth over when Raghuvanshi, trying to get a run, was sent back by Cameron Green. As Raghuvanshi was running back to his crease, a throw hit him with LSG players appeal-

ing for him having obstructed the field dismissal.

The decision was sent upstairs with the third umpire adjudging that the batter changed his direction, trying to get back to his crease and gave it an out. It wasn't a popular decision in the KKR camp as Raghuvanshi had a chat with the umpire before walking off.

He hit his bat on the floor of the ground, even throwing away his helmet as he made his way back into the locker room.

Even the commentators looked to have been taken aback by the decision while KKR head coach Abhishek Nayyar was shown having a discussion with the fourth umpire.



Angkrish Raghuvanshi (R) was given his marching orders in unusual fashion. AP

What do the ICC rules say?

According to ICC's rule 37.1 under Out Obstructing the field:

● **37.1.1.** Either batsman is out Obstructing the field if, except in the circumstances of clause 37.2, and while the ball is in play, he willfully attempts to obstruct or distract the fielding side by word or action. See also clause 34 (Hit the ball twice).

● **37.1.2.** The striker is out Obstructing the field if, except in the circumstances of clause 37.2, in the act of receiving a ball delivered by the bowler, he wilfully strikes the ball with a hand not holding the bat.

This will apply whether it is the first strike or a second or subsequent strike.

The act of receiving the ball shall extend both to playing at the ball and to striking the ball

more than once in defence of his wicket.

● **37.1.3.** This clause will apply whether or not No ball is called.

● **37.1.4.** For the avoidance of doubt, if an umpire feels that a batsman, in running between the wickets, has significantly changed his direction without probable cause and thereby obstructed a fielder's attempt to effect a run out, the batsman should, on appeal, be given out, obstructing the field.

It shall not be relevant whether a run out would have occurred or not. If the change of direction involves the batsman crossing the pitch, clause 41.14 shall also apply.

Chelsea steady ship to reach FA Cup final

Reuters London, April 26

CHELSEA'S 1-0 FA Cup semi-final win against Leeds United on Sunday suggests the Londoners have stemmed the crisis that engulfed them this month but the chances of salvaging something from their season still look slim.

In the Premier League, Chelsea are 10 points off the last of the five Champions League qualifying spots with only four games left to play and they will slip to ninth place on Monday if Brentford avoid defeat at Manchester United.

In the FA Cup final on May 16, the Blues will face a resurgent Manchester City who thumped the Blues 3-0 at Stamford Bridge in the league earlier this month.

But against Leeds on Sunday, Chelsea at least looked a bit more like a team packed with expensive talent after the drama of Liam Rosenior's sacking as coach on Wednesday and five league defeats in which they failed to score a single goal – their worst run in

114 years.

The recovery from injury of Brazil striker Joao Pedro gave them more bite up front, England playmaker Cole Palmer also returned from the sidelines as a substitute and the side overall showed some of the focus sorely lacking in their recent slump.

"I think it was important to break the momentum and the form that we were in," interim coach Calum McFarlane told reporters.

"I thought we were confident that we would do that today and I think that completely changes the feel within the group."

His decision to start Tosin Adarabioyo in central defence provided them with more aerial presence at the back as well as a bit more experience in a team that represents a big bet on youth by the club's U.S. private equity-led owners.

McFarlane said Adarabioyo was "exceptional" on Sunday after he picked him to nullify the heading threat of Leeds striker Dominic Calvert-Lewin.

NEED FOR QUALITY LIKE-FOR-LIKE REPLACEMENTS

During title run-in, depth of squad key for Man City & Arsenal

Sandip G New Delhi, April 26

LAST MAY, Pep Guardiola threatened he would quit if Manchester City's squad size was not trimmed. The quit-threat was filed jokingly, but he genuinely believed that a bloated squad makes for an uneasy locker room. "I don't want to leave five or six players in the freezer. I will quit. Make a shorter squad, I will stay," he said. A smaller, close-knit group, he argued, would compose a stronger team.

But rather than trimming, City fattened the squad. Seven new players were added in both a structural as well as a strategic overhaul; six regulars or squad members left permanently or on loan. In the January transfer, their fortunes ebbing and flowing, City spent nearly 85 million pounds to acquire the services of winger Antoine Semenyo and centre-back Marc Guehi. Both signings have starred in City's recalibration and the resurgent title sprint.

Rather than a reflection of City's dizzying buying powers it was a validation of the depth

required to turbocharge silverware quests, doubles and trebles. The days of managers fielding fledglings in domestic tournaments, or trivialising trophies of less glitter, are long gone, as every trophy won eases financial burden. Every pound counts in the ledger, amid the scything scrutiny of the Profitability and Sustainability Rules. Besides, football has transformed into an athletic pursuit. Increased speed and intensity have doubled the frequency of injuries and workload. No amount of stocking, thus, is overstocking. Arsene Wenger, after finishing second in 2013-14, spending 128 nights on top, called it the "stamina league". The captain, coincidentally, was Mike Arteta.

More numbers (albeit quality ones), equates to more options, tactics, ideas, rest, less workload, burnout and stress-related injuries. Thus, deeper the squad brighter the prospects of winning the league, or landing multiple trophies. Arsenal too muscled the bench and ensured the team had the legs and gas to sustain a title-winning intensity till the last game. The Gunners have suf-



Rayan Cherki has proven to be Manchester City's trump card as some of their other attacking options have lost form. AP

fered a cruel tryst with injuries. A raft of starters have found themselves on the injury table in different phases of the season. Yet, they did not wither because the reinforcements were sufficient. Defender Cristian Mosquera put on stoic shifts for both William Saliba and Gabriel, whenever they were injured or suspended. Piero Hincapie has donned all roles in the backline. Midfielder Mikel Merino convinced with his false nine duties. Eberechi Eze's creativity reduced the pain of miss-

ing Martin Odegaard; Noni Madueke might not have the inventiveness of Bukayo Saka in the final third, but his speed and work rate have rattled defences. But for their bench-building, Arsenal's title dreams would have been long extinguished. The depth of the title-rivals is so marvellous they could field an eleven from the bench and still defeat their opponents.

City did not fret over Rodri's fitness for the FA Cup semi-final against Southampton because they could pair the blossoming

CSK's Impact Player ploy misfires as GT cruise to routine win



Home boy B Sai Sudharsan remained unbeaten on 87. CREIMAS FOR BCCI

SYNOPSIS: On a tacky surface where batsmen struggled for momentum, B Sai Sudharsan's 46-ball 87 gives Gujarat Titans win at Chepauk.

Venkata Krishna B Chennai, April 26

A DAY after two placid surfaces produced high-scoring contests in Delhi and Jaipur, Chennai offered a tacky pitch. In a format where pitches generally don't create an overbearing impact, there are exceptions. With the mercury rising, the groundstaff had the natural elements to work around for there was the risk of the pitch breaking up under the heat. On the eve of the game, until the shadows lengthened, it was under covers – a clear tell tale of the groundstaff preparing for the worst. The heat factor meant, there was considerable watering too. So what they threw up was a tacky pitch with enough moisture, which the Gujarat Titans pacers used to good effect reducing Chennai Super Kings to 26/3 inside the first five overs.

With that sort of a start, and only 43/4 in the first 10 overs, they did well to manage 158/7 with Ruturaj Gaikwad remaining unbeaten on 74 off 60. The chase needed a bit of grinding than flamboyance, which Gujarat managed successfully.

Bad selection choices

Having posted a thumping win at the Wankhede, a win against a struggling Gujarat would have given them further impetus to have a good shot at finishing in the top four. Instead, they once again chose to disturb the combination. They brought in Urvil Patel instead of Sarfaraz Khan, a batsman who has provided the right intent so far. On Sunday, coming in at No 3 after Sanju Samson departed, Urvil was done in by a nasty bounce from Kagiso Rabada. Having jumped down the track and smash-driven the previous delivery, which infuriated the South African, Urvil chose to repeat it again. And Rabada went for the kill. That move meant, CSK had to bring in Sarfaraz as an Impact Player, which left them a bowler short.

It is again, not the first time

they have been forced to bring an Impact Player inside the powerplay overs. It happened in Guwahati in their opening game and now at a critical juncture. And Sarfaraz's innings lasted just one delivery. The silence at Chepauk spoke a thousand words. With that sort of a start on a pitch where the pacers enjoyed the bounce, Chennai struggled to inject any sort of momentum into their innings. Dewald Brevis and Gaikwad saw through a phase where they went without a boundary for 31 deliveries as Gujarat choked them. There were 38 dot deliveries in the first 10 overs alone and 66 overall.

More than half the innings ending up in dot deliveries meaning the room for a comeback was limited. Under the circumstances, Gaikwad did well, anchoring the innings for a large part before finishing on a high.

Home boy in spotlight

This was a chase that was tailor-made for Gujarat. Sans no need to flex their muscles consistently, they paced their innings well. B Sai Sudharsan and Shubman Gill are known to play risk-free cricket at the top and it is what Gujarat needed here as they once again set the base, putting on 58 for the first wicket. With the pitch now behaving better than the first innings, all that was required from them was to take calculated risks and keep the required run-rate in check. On surfaces where incoming batsmen might need a bit of time to get going, Sai Sudharsan took the onus of finishing the job.

Coming into the match on the back of a century in Bengaluru on Friday, his innings here was totally characteristic to his batsmanship. When he went for the big shots, he went with full intent and not hesitating one bit. And when Jos Buttler came in, he ensured the strike was rotated effortlessly with some exceptional running between the wickets in humid conditions. He hit seven sixes on the evening, with three coming off against Akeal Hoseni, a match-up he aced comfortably. Those sixes meant Gujarat were never really under any pressure.

BRIEF SCORES: Gujarat Titans 162 for 2 (Sudharsan 87, Buttler 3 not out, Noor 1/29) beat **Chennai Super Kings 158 for 7** (Gaikwad 74 not out, Rabada 3/25, Arshad 2/43) by eight wickets.

more assists.

Arsenal's bench pales to City's riches. But most would start for most other sides in the league. It's not merely numerical depth, but with emphasis on quality and multidimensionality. Two of Arteta's fullbacks are midfielders by trade. Merino, before getting injured, was his Swiss Army Knife, capable of leading the line as a false nine, or operating as a box-to-box midfielder or a deep-lying defensive screen. In the previous season, Arsenal's central midfield depth has been suboptimal. The acquisition of Martin Zubimendi has offered tactical malleability for Arteta. He has used him as an anchor, just as he had employed him as a double pivot alongside Declan Rice against free-scoring teams. Should they run into PSG in the Champions League final, Arteta could couple them again.

The more cohesive unit, though, is City's, achieved through rigorous drilling and frustrating failures. Guardiola might still quit when the season ends, but he might never brood on trimming the squad. Not even as a joke.

Deepti ends her lean patch with self-belief and bowling changes



Deepti Sharma took a fifer on Saturday against SA. FILE

Express News Service
Mumbai, April 26

THE PLAYER of the Match in the 50-over World Cup final is finally finding her groove in T20s as Deepti Sharma gave India their first win in the five match series against South Africa. India's 14 run win after defending a score of 185 finally arrived after three losses, as the off spinner worked her magic claiming 5-19 to restrict Saffers to 171 for 9. Deepti had earlier combined with Richa Ghosh for a 65-run partnership as the other totem of India's success. Jemimah Rodrigues top scored with 43, sharing a 55 run stand with Harmanpreet Kaur.

Deepti later told BCCI website that she was eventually rediscovering her form focusing on classical flighty offspin rather than faster ones. "First I kept belief in myself. And then there is line and length. Which line I have to bowl. And basically today more of my focus was on my offspin ball than the little faster one. That gave me confidence to bowl better and better," she said.

India had scored 185-5 hingeing on two partnerships as Deepti contributed 36 off 26, batting with Richa Ghosh, who remained unbeaten on 34. Struggling to crack the code, the team had begun setting targets over by over breaking down the batting inning, instead of looking at an eventual high target.

NEW MARATHON WORLD RECORD

2-hour barrier broken: Grit, 97 gram shoes, prolific dope testing

The 31-year-old with the moniker 'silent assassin' bettered Kelvin Kiptum's world record by 65 seconds

Nihal Koshie
New Delhi, April 26

E. EXPLAINED

KENYA'S SABASTIAN Sawe (pronounced: saw-way) became the fastest marathon runner in history, the first human to break the two-hour barrier in the 42.195 kilometer race at the London Marathon on Sunday. His feat clicked at 1:59:30 will rank alongside man on the moon, conquering Mount Everest and the Bannister Mile. His name will be on the shortlist of greatest athletes ever. He may also be in the running to be the cleanest athlete in the world.

Kenya, a power house of distance running, has earned a bad reputation because of the number of dope cheats. The Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU), an independent anti-doping watchdog sanctioned nearly 150 Kenyan athletes since its inception nearly a decade ago. Or in other words one-third of the total athletes caught for doping violations by the AIU.

Sawe wanted to remove doubts if and when he broke the world record. So his team approached the AIU, asking to be tested as many times as possible.

By all accounts, he was tested 25 times before last year's Berlin Marathon, known to have the fastest course in the world, and continues to be tested. Sawe had the late Kelvin Kiptum Cheruiyot's world record of 2 hours and 35 seconds on his mind when he was running in Berlin last year, but unusual heat in September had

Why the record may be broken soon

Roger Bannister clocked three minutes and 59.4 seconds at the Iffley road track in Oxford in 1954 to become the first man to break the four-minute mile. Bannister had broken a mental as well as a physical barrier. Less than two months later, Australia's John Landy rewrote the mile record when he ran 3:57.9. Sabastian Sawe becoming the first to run a sub-two hour marathon could have the same effect. With nutrition, diet, training methods and running shoes at another level than what they used to be in the 1950s, lowering of the marathon record more frequently should not be ruled out.

scuppered those plans.

But the 31-year-old with the moniker 'silent assassin' for his understated demeanour, yet possessing the talent to outrun the best, bettered Kiptum's world record by 65 seconds when he crossed the finish line in 1 hour, fifty nine minutes and 30 seconds.

What was truly remarkable was that Sawe's time was faster than Eliud Kipchoge's 1:59:40 in Vienna seven years ago, which isn't in the record books for not being a competitive race but one programmed for him to break the two-hour barrier with 42



Sebastian Sawe became the first-ever athlete to dip below the 2-hour mark. REUTERS

pace-makers assisting him in turns. "I am feeling good. I am so happy. It is a day to remember," Sawe said. A red-letter day for the marathon, no doubt.

The London Marathon will go down in history as the fastest race ever. Second-place finisher and debutant Yomif Kejelcha of Ethiopia became the second man to run a sub-two hour marathon with a time of 1:59:41, and Jacob Kiplimo of Uganda clocked 2:00:28 to complete a podium of runners who finished the course faster than the previous world record. Sawe improved his personal best in the marathon by two minutes and thirty five seconds.

London was pleasant on Sunday, with the temperature staying below 20 degrees Centigrade during the day and around 12 degrees at the start of the race.

But Berlin, where eight of the nine previous men's marathon world records were set since 2003, was expected to be the city where history could be

made owing to its flat course.

A sub-two hour marathon has been a fixation for some of the best runners since the turn of the century and big corporates and shoe companies have invested in trying to push the limits of human endurance. The first time Kipchoge tried to complete a marathon in less than two hours, the curated run, with dedicated pace makers was called Nike Breaking 2 project. He had fallen short by 26 seconds.

Kipchoge's second attempt which was successful was called the Ineos 1:59 Challenge, sponsored by the petro-chemical company.

Kipchoge wore Nike shoes, dubbed as super shoes, and some of the other top athletes over the years, wore shoes with cutting edge running tech. Adidas said that both Sawe and Kejelcha wore the Adizero Adios Pro Evo 3, a shoe weighing just 97 grams which is 30 percent lighter and 'improves running

economy by 1.6 percent' compared to the previous version of the Adizero range.

The shoes, which costs \$500, had a limited release in the market on April 23, three days before the London marathon. Sawe acknowledged the role of 'innovation' in his record breaking run.

Hours after the London Marathon he was quoted on the Adidas website as saying: "To break the world record is something I have dreamed about for a long time, and to achieve it means so much to me and to the sport of running. It reflects the hard work behind the scenes, the support of my team, and the role of innovation in helping me push beyond limits. I'm honoured to be part of a new chapter for the sport."

But even the advantage provided by one of the best running shoes in the world, should take nothing away from Sawe's feat. He, like Bannister, many decades ago, has taken distance running to new heights.

• BRIEFLY



Coco Gauff defeated Sorana Cirstea in the round of 32. REUTERS

Gauff battles illness, vomiting to enter last 16 of Madrid Open

World number three Coco Gauff fought off more than just her opponent at the Madrid Open, overcoming illness and vomiting to beat Sorana Cirstea 4-6 7-5 6-1 and advance to the last 16. Gauff rallied from a set down despite battling what appears to be a bug affecting several players at the tournament, with the American admitting she was "trying not to throw up on the court" during the match. Gauff did end up throwing up on court in the second set which she described as 'embarrassing'. REUTERS

India finish Jr WC on top of medal tally

HEMANT BURMAN won silver in the men's 50m rifle 3 positions and the pair of Zuhair Khan and Addya Katyayon won bronze in the trap mixed team event as India completed the ISSF Junior Shooting World Cup on top of table with total of 16 medals, including 5 gold, 6 silver, and 5 bronze. PTI

SC Delhi play 2-2 draw against Mohammedan

MOHAMMEDAN SPORTING Club came from behind twice to secure a 2-2 draw against Sporting Club Delhi in their Indian Super League match at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. Mohammedan pick up their third consecutive point. PTI

Abhay breaks U20 men's 200m national record

ABHAY SINGH of Reliance won gold in the men's 200m race as national junior records continued to tumble on the final day of the 24th National U20 Athletics Federation Competition. Majority of the medal winners also achieved the Asian junior qualification mark in their respective events. PTI

Dev continues his winning run in Pro circuit

INDIAN BOXER Nishant Dev continued his winning streak in the professional circuit and registered his sixth straight victory in Las Vegas on Sunday. Nishant knocked out Juan Carlos Guerra with a second round stoppage. PTI

Success takes time: Unnati, Tanvi can learn from Prannoy, Srikanth

Shivani Naik

HS PRANNOY was one of India's earliest men's medallists at the World Junior Championships, winning bronze alongside B Sai Praneeth. They won it in 2010, the year Viktor Axelsen became champion. Both went on to win Senior World Championship bronze medals - Sai in 2019, and Prannoy later in 2023. Prannoy's biggest Tour title at Malaysia too came in 2022, a dozen years after he was dubbed a prodigy.

Sometimes, success takes time.

Even the greatest Lin Dan and Lee Chong Wei won only bronze at the World Juniors, incidentally in the same edition in 2000. For both Prannoy (an identified prodigy who won it all in juniors) and Srikanth (a reluctant genius who won nothing in juniors and suddenly started winning in singles after being dragged out of doubles), resilience has been a large part of their career journeys.

Indian women's singles has two success stories of women who started winning early at 17-18. But the likes of Unnati Hooda and Tanvi Sharma, Devika Sihag and Rakshitha Ramraj, Anmol Kharb and Isharani Baruah - are clearly not Saina or Sindhu. So India needs to scale down the timelines of its expectations from them. The criticism after the loss to Denmark in the Uber Cup is both harsh and nasty.

But it's also why Prannoy and Srikanth, the experienced men's singles shuttlers, are a more relatable example to follow for the girls. It starts with knowing - no matter where you peg your talent from good-to-great - sustained success can take awfully long to arrive.

Countless, quiet, dignified heartbreaks after losses at the Olympics, Worlds and other events for Indian men would go unnoticed because India loved flaunting its winners, and those were Saina and Sindhu. The silence after defeats, while hearing drumbeats of another's win, might have been triggering. But India's men's singles of Parupalli Kashyap, Ajay Jayram, Srikanth, Prannoy, Sai and Sameer Verma, operating in the era of Lin Dan and Chong Wei, besides a considerably tougher Top 10, stayed persistent, fought for years to get the big breaks. One thing they



HS Prannoy became a Worlds medallist late in his career. FILE

never stopped doing - polishing their skills, plunging into badminton's strokes and tactics and learning from each other.

There are a few similarities between India's current women's singles and India's men's singles of before. They do not have the power of Saina or Sindhu to immediately start delivering world-class results in their teens. The bunch of 8-10 of them, as well as someone like Malvika Bansod (23), will need to grow as a team, share knowledge on opponents with fellow Indians - like Kashyap, Prannoy, Srikanth once did, fully aware that the Indian pack needs to attack tournament draws collectively, to get results.

The easiest thing to do would be to not get stuck in manufactured domestic rivalries: Unnati vs Tanvi or Devika vs Isharani, Rakshitha or Anmol. A whole generation will be lost to silly, catty, pointless comparisons.

It was not that India's men's singles of 2014-2024 were all thick buddies; they nursed rivalries too. But on the Tour, when they travelled and lost early, they happily helped each other against foreign opponents. Some failures can build stern bonds. They competed fiercely and looked out for themselves, too, but the Thomas Cup team of 2022 was built on Prannoy's premise that only a collective unit can get the job done. They traded notes with Satwik-Chirag and other doubles, analysed losses and sharpened each other's games as they built their badminton universe.

There's a stark reason for India's young women to build that bond too. Their games are too raw and too unidimensional at the moment. They might each figure out their own ways to prop up the fitness. But there are gaps

in the games, and the tactical acumen isn't up to scratch.

Unnati has the fierce fight and fitness in her, but is very limited in strokes. Devika has an attack and strokes that can scythe through the defensive runners populating Top 10s, but not quite the speed and strength - yet. Anmol has court awareness, but not a steady plan to take the next step from Top 50-60. Tanvi needs a massive third-set endurance upgrade, but strength and stamina will take time to build. She can't hit her way out of trouble, like Saina, Sindhu, or now Ayush Shetty can. The errors that she is getting plastered for with nasty trolling will disappear once the fitness improves and she stops going for the lines to end rallies. But currently, she's not exactly great at rallies exceeding 10-12 shots.

Malvika and Ashmita Chaliha flatlined when Plan A was taken apart, and injuries mounted. The general court awareness, around the bunch, is not particularly great, and they need to play more, gain experience and train with the correct coaches on court-craft. Each has one or two special strokes, but at the top level, those can get read and dissected in a week, if they don't have weapons outside of those tricks. Or teammates dropping those tiny observations. Learning to take initiative comes with plunging into badminton skills and everything around it headlong, learning from peers - or stagnancy awaits.

The likes of Prannoy, Srikanth and Sai Praneeth immersed themselves in the tricks of badminton and deep skills, learning from each other, as they found success. They turned the slight hint of envy into enterprise, slowly getting past the insecurities and jealousies to see the bigger picture: that there is a whole World out there to beat, so don't waste energy comparing with fellow Indians.

India's men's singles didn't have one phenomenal player like Lin Dan or Chong Wei - or Saina and Sindhu. But they had a pack, and the pack won the Thomas Cup in 2022.

It's something for the girls to learn, for India has never won the Uber Cup, despite the two generational talents. There's an opportunity to build their own constellation. Stardom will follow.

Turkey is turning heads at Uber Cup 2026 with high-profile wins

Express News Service
Mumbai, April 26

IT WAS bound to have been a miscalculation or underestimating at any rate, by Japan. But resting Akane Yamaguchi, Japan fielded their teen prodigy and Top 10 Tomoka Miyazaki as first singles in the Uber Cup against Turkey. Miyazaki was humbled 21-16, 18-21, 19-21 by Neslihan Arin in 82 long minutes. The dangerous Arin had broken away at 9-9 in the second set to claim the second. But it was from 16-18 down in the third that the Turkish shuttler went on to pound with power and snatch the opening rubber from Japan.

Though Japan are far too strong albeit young in doubles, and should seal the tie, this Uber Cup has thrown up Turkey as a surprise. Arin is 32 years old, and ranked 30 in the world as against Miyazaki, ranked 9. Arin has once won badminton gold at Islamic Solidarity Games, and thrice at Mediterranean Games. She also has bronze at European Games, often facing Carolina Marin at the medal stage.

On Saturday, Turkey sent shock waves through Malaysia, when they lost by slender margins 2-3. Then it was Ozge Bayrak, Arin's juniors doubles partner, who beat Wong Ling Ching, 21-17, 15-21, 21-18 in second singles. Then their doubles of Bengisu Ercecin and Nazlican Inci defeated scratch pair of Top 5 regular Thinaah Muralitharan pairing with Ong Xin Yee, 22-20, 19-21, 19-21. Other upsets at Uber have involved Ratchanok Intanon who lost 23-21, 14-21, 20-22 to Kaloyana Nalbantova of Bulgaria, 20, who was thrilled she had beaten the Thai, her hero since age 6.

Only five teams have ever won the Uber Cup. This includes the most successful China, with 16 titles, followed by Japan who have 6. USA won Uber Cup in 50s and 60s while Korea have been twice champs in 2010 and 2022. Japan last won in 2018, but made Last 4 in 2014, 2020, 2022 and 2024, and are considered one of the strongest challengers to China.

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