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‘Working in my own grave’: How workers are training robots that may replace them



Women wear smart glasses at a textile factory in Tamil Nadu. OBJECTWAYS

Soumyarendra Barik
New Delhi, May 20

EVERY MORNING, before starting his shift at a textile factory in Nagpur, 30-year old Ashish Narayan, a machine technician, straps a small recording device to his forehead. For the next several hours, the camera

tracks and records everything he does: how he adjusts the tension on a loom, how his fingers calibrate moving parts, how he instinctively eases his grip while fixing a jammed machine without damaging the thread running through it. He is asked to wear the device throughout

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

SPECIAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP ANNOUNCED

Trade, corridor, defence: Rome, Delhi upgrade ties

Modi, Meloni discuss ‘complex scenarios’, chart a new roadmap**Shubhajt Roy**
New Delhi, May 20

ELEVATING THEIR bilateral ties to a “special strategic partnership”, India and Italy Wednesday set a trade target of 20 billion euros by 2029, agreed on a defence industrial roadmap, and concluded pacts on critical minerals, countering money laundering and terror financing.

These decisions were taken after Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni

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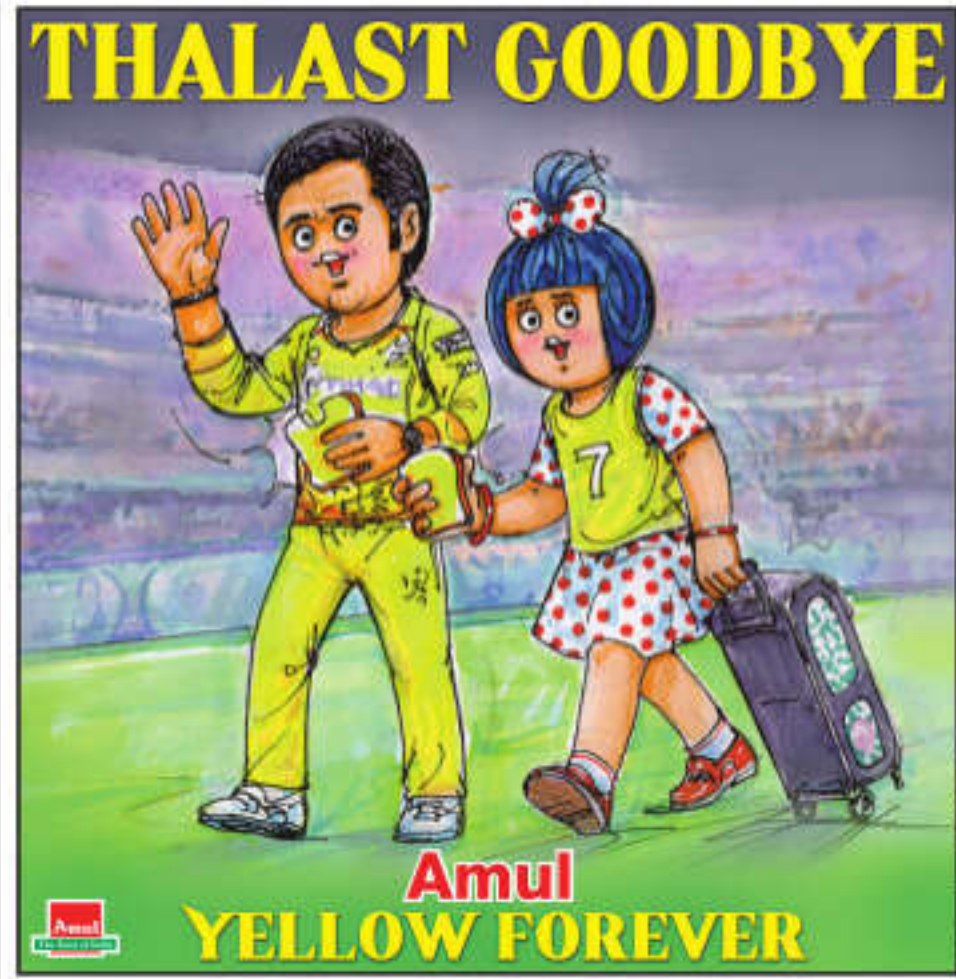
Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni in Rome, Wednesday. ANI; RELATED REPORT, PAGE 5

Opp: Economic storm at home, PM making reels abroad**Indecent remarks, says BJP chief****Asad Rehman & Maulshree Seth**

New Delhi, Lucknow, May 20

SOON AFTER Italy’s Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni posted a video clip of Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifting her a bag of Melody toffees in Rome, Opposition parties Wednesday criticised Modi, saying he was busy “making reels” abroad

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Govt pitch to US nuclear mission: Scale up capacity, small modular reactors key

Anil Sasi
New Delhi, May 20**E. EXPLAINED**

America’s mission

The US nuclear ‘executive mission’ has a twin-pronged brief: take stock of India’s nuclear energy landscape after a landmark legislation opened up this sector; communicate the US industry’s interest, as well as coordinate US government messaging, on emerging opportunities.

objectives following the legal changes: scale up nuclear power to step up base-load capacity, and progressively enter

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

ALONGSIDE A stepped-up role for the private sector in nuclear plant operations, India is doubling down on its domestic civil nuclear programme based on its mainstay, pressurised heavy water reactors (PHWRs), and remains open to collaborating with external players to scale up projects built on this technology.

Less than six months after the landmark legislation opened up India’s nuclear sector, a visiting high-powered American nuclear delegation has been informed, in meetings with top government functionaries, of New Delhi’s two clear

Happening today

● **PM NARENDRA** Modi will chair a meeting of the Council of Ministers over functioning of various ministries, key decisions taken and their outcomes and future plans, among other issues.

● **REPOL IN** West Bengal’s Falta constituency to be held.

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Business as Usual

By EP UNNY

External Affairs Ministry has come a long way. In our days, it had spokesmen not showmen.



Not in favour of clearing new hydel projects in Upper Ganga region: Centre to SC

Nikhil Ghanekar
New Delhi, May 20

CITING THE “incomparable position” of the Alaknanda-Bhagirathi river basins due to hydrological, ecological and cultural significance, the Centre on Wednesday submitted to the Su-

preme Court that it is “not in favour” of permitting any new hydroelectric projects in the upper reaches of the Ganga river.

It said only the seven existing projects — Tehri Stage-II (1,000 MW), Tapovan Vishnugad (520 MW), Vishnugad Pipalkoti

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Revoke passports of 10 criminals based abroad, Delhi Police tells MEA

Alok Singh
New Delhi, May 20

DELHI POLICE has requested the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to revoke the passports of at least 10 criminals and terrorists operating from abroad, including the alleged gangsters

Himanshu Bhau, Kapil Sangwan and Rohit Godara.

The intention, sources said, is to confine these individuals to the countries where they are currently based, prevent them from travelling, and ultimately make it easier to bring them

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Fuel Efficiency

Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu and Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth arrive on a two-wheeler for the inauguration of UDAN Yatri Cafe, Kids Zone and other facilities at Birsamunda Airport in Ranchi on Wednesday. PTI

Taiwan condemns campaign against Indian workers, says committed to hire more

Divyva A
New Delhi, May 20

AMID CONCERNS over a political campaign against migrant workers from India, Taiwan regretted and condemned the prejudiced stance while stressing its commitment to introducing more Indian workers.

Recently, Lee Hung-yi, a candidate running for Kaohsiung City Council, put up a billboard in the city's Siaogang district, which had a picture of a man with a turban and an inverted flag of India, promising to ban Indian immigration into the country. Several local residents of Indian origin found the billboard offensive, saying the candidate was reinforcing stigma against migrant workers.

Only 3,500 to 4,000 Indians work in Taiwan, while there have been plans to hire more owing to labour shortages. However, over 40,000 people in the country signed an online petition demanding the government halt a pilot plan to bring in workers from India.

As reported by *The Indian Express*, the plan was based on the memorandum of understanding signed between Taiwan and India in February 2024, which allowed limited recruitment of Indian workers for manufacturing and construction. The proposal began with a pilot of just 1,000 workers.

As per the agreement, blue-collar workers will be sent to Taiwan to work in specific sectors, including manufacturing, agriculture and construction. In fact, for better assimilation with the local population, Taiwan indicated a preference for workers from India's northeastern state.

In response to the comments on the billboard, the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Center (TECC) in India said on Wednesday, "Taiwan has long

E. EXPLAINED

Taipei's bid to fill labour gaps

Taiwan already hosts around 7,00,000 migrant workers, with most coming traditionally from countries like Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. This is the first time it is looking beyond Southeast Asia to fill skilled labour gaps created by an ageing population and lower birth rates.

been committed to planning the introduction of Indian migrant workers. Regarding the recent discriminatory publications/comments made by certain individuals in Taiwan, we solemnly clarify that such biased remarks do not represent our stance."

"Taiwan cherishes the values of democracy, inclusivity, and diversity, and supports people-to-people exchanges between Taiwan and India. We deeply regret and strongly condemn any form of prejudice, racism and discrimination. TECC sincerely look forward to, and will continue to promote, further exchanges between both sides to enhance mutual understanding," it said.

In February 2024, India and Taiwan signed a migration and mobility agreement to facilitate the employment of Indian workers in diverse sectors on the island, a move seen as reflective of the renewed momentum in cooperation between the two sides.

While India does not have formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan yet as it adheres to the One-China policy, bilateral trade and cultural relations have been on an upward trajectory.

Bihar student dies at Bengaluru academy, father alleges teachers had humiliated him

Kiran Parashar
Bengaluru, May 20

A 23-YEAR-OLD student from Bihar, who was studying in a Bengaluru coaching centre, has died by suicide, allegedly after he was insulted in class over his poor performance. The family members have filed a complaint against the academy staff.

Chunnu Kumar, from Motihari district in Bihar, had been studying at the Manipal Academy of BFSI. Around 5.30 pm on Monday, Chunnu's hostel roommate, Ankit, found him hanging. According to an FIR based on a complaint by Chunnu's father, Munna Kumar (52), a goldsmith, he enrolled for the programme in March. Munna Kumar said that Chunnu's friends told him he was upset after being humiliated in front of the class for failing in some subjects. "He was publicly humiliated, told that he was good for nothing and given more projects to complete," the FIR said.

According to his friends, Chunnu had spoken about the toll this was taking on his mental health. His roommate, Ankit Sharma, has reportedly told the family that Chunnu was upset over the constant pressure and humiliation, and that Ankit had

tried to console him on several occasions. On May 18, Chunnu appeared for an exam with his friend Nikhil Tiwari. Around 12.30 pm, he reportedly left the examination centre midway and returned to his hostel. He was later found dead.

The FIR alleged that the academy's management did not immediately inform police after the body was discovered and instead removed it from the room before authorities arrived — a claim that has prompted investigators to scrutinise the institution's conduct closely.

Kothanur police have registered a case under several sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, including those related to abetment to suicide and criminal intimidation, against the academy's Head of Department Chandrashekhara Kannahia, teacher Sunithaasri Jagatap, and Head of Programme Venkatesh KV. *The Indian Express* reached out to Manipal Academy of BFSI, but they did not respond to calls. Meanwhile, students of the academy staged a protest, demanding justice for Chunnu. Munna Kumar has alleged that other students were also facing threats from the academy's management for speaking up.

[FROM PAGE 1 | FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM]

Rome, Delhi upgrade ties

in Rome. Italy was the final stop on Modi's six-day tour of Europe which took him to Norway for the India-Nordic summit and on bilateral visits to Sweden and the Netherlands. From tech to innovation, defence to green energy, India is deepening ties with Europe amid turbulence in the global order.

The Prime Minister's visit to Italy reaffirms a strategic partnership in motion, coming as it does after intense leader-level engagement, anchored by the Joint Strategic Plan of Action 2025-29, the operational roadmap for the partnership.

Italy increasingly views India not just as a market, but as a major power and an indispensable partner for Europe. Its championing of IMEEC (India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor) as a founding member makes it the western anchor of the corridor. The proposed IMEEC will not just ensure stability of supply chains but will also boost India's energy security.

Discussing the geopolitical situation, Meloni said Italy and India will continue to play their part at every level, often working in tandem, to contribute to peace and help restore stability.

"Italy and India naturally share a common vision regarding many of the major challenges of our time: international stability, the upholding of the rule of law, economic security, the resilience of value chains, the promotion of peace, and inclusive development. We also discussed many of the complex scenarios confronting our era - specifically the situation in Ukraine and our shared commitment to achieving a just and

lasting peace -- as well as the crisis in Iran. We exchanged views with the shared hope that peace negotiations might move forward and reach a positive conclusion, even within a context that we clearly recognise as highly precarious," she said.

Modi said, "We have remained in constant contact regarding the situations in Ukraine, West Asia, and other areas of tension. India's stance is clear: all issues must be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy."

Referring to the near closure of the Strait of Hormuz, Meloni said, "Regarding freedom of navigation -- the restoration of which we are both actively working toward -- we are two nations that need no reminding of just how vital this principle is to our interests. We also addressed the Indo-Pacific region, where we naturally align with the Indian vision of an Indo-Pacific that is free, open and inclusive."

The bilateral piece in the relationship was marked by personal chemistry -- Meloni posted a photograph of the two leaders with a bag of Melody toffees, a pun on the social media hashtag #Melodi.

Modi said, "Over the past nearly three-and-a-half years, I have had the opportunity to meet Prime Minister Meloni several times. This reflects the close cooperation and harmony between India and Italy. Under her leadership, our relations have gained new momentum, new direction, and new self-confidence. I am pleased that we are announcing the Special Strategic Partnership as we upgrade our relations."

Meloni said, "I truly believe

it is a historic day... We are further strengthening our relation all the way up to the special strategic partnership, the highest ever reached in the relations between our two nations... It's safe to say that now Italy and India are closer than they have ever been."

Saying they want to increase trade from 14 billion euros to 20 billion euros, she added: "This is a very ambitious target, which can be achieved also by taking advantage of the potential stemming from the free trade agreement signed between the EU and India."

Modi said Italy is renowned worldwide for design and precision and India's identity is that of a powerhouse of scale, talent and affordable innovation. "We will move forward on the principle of Design and Develop in India and Italy and Deliver for the World," he said, adding that "from fashion to fintech, from leather to logistics, and from mobility to manufacturing -- in every sector -- we will combine our respective strengths to work for the welfare of all humanity."

The two sides agreed on a defence industrial roadmap which had long been an Italian request. In the wake of corruption allegations over the AgustaWestland deal, Italian defence companies had been barred from the Indian defence market. But that is witnessing a change now.

"Close cooperation in the fields of defence and security stands as a symbol of our deep mutual trust. Cooperation is growing not only between our armed forces but also between the defence industries of both countries. Our Defence Industrial Roadmap has paved the way for co-development and co-production," Modi said.

The joint statement ident-

ified the projects -- helicopters, naval platforms, marine armament and electronic warfare.

The two countries also signed a pact on maritime transport and ports to strengthen India's maritime infrastructure.

"Our goal is, naturally, to leverage the complementarities between our respective economic fabrics across many other sectors -- sectors we have discussed at length today, as well as during last night's events. From advanced manufacturing to infrastructure, from energy to the space economy, defence stands out as a key area of cooperation where we are currently investing significant and effective effort. Critical minerals, agri-business, maritime transport, tourism and culture -- for two great civilisations spanning millennia -- also represent opportunities for us to grow together," she said.

The two sides also signed pacts on mobility of Indian nurses to Italy, a roadmap on higher education and research, pacts on agriculture, export of Indian seafood to Italy, Ayurveda and research in climate change among others. They also decided to celebrate 2027 as the "year of culture".

Capping her statement on the broader ties, Meloni said, "There is an Indian word that captures this sentiment perfectly: *Parishram*. It signifies 'hard work', 'constant commitment', and 'diligent effort'. A word that I am told is widely used in India, and which, let's give it a try, often appears in an equally popular proverb: *Parishram safalta kikinunhai*. This means: Hard work is the key to success. Well, that is precisely how we are accustomed to building our relationships -- through hard work that, ultimately, leads to success."

Opp: PM making reels

when the country was reeling under an "economic storm".

Rahul Gandhi, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, in a post on X, said "An economic storm is raging over our heads, and our Prime Minister is busy handing out candies in Italy. Farmers, youth, women, labourers, and small traders are all in tears -- the PM is laughing and making reels, while BJP folks are clapping along. This isn't leadership, it's a farce."

Speaking in Rae Bareilly, Gandhi said the PM asked people to use less petrol, not buy gold, spend less and avoid travelling abroad. "But just a day later, Narendra Modi boarded an aircraft worth Rs 3,000-4,000 crore and went to Italy carrying toffees in his pocket... Look at the kind of mockery being

made of the people of this country."

"Remember this, Narendra Modi will cry and again say it is not his fault, just as he did during demonetisation and Covid," he said, warning about an "economic storm".

At the Bahujan Swabhimani Sammelan in Amethi, Gandhi called the Prime Minister, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and the RSS "traitors".

"When you go home and RSS workers speak about Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, tell them openly that your Prime Minister is a traitor, your Home Minister is a traitor and your organisation is a traitor. You have sold India and attacked our Constitution," he said.

Gandhi's remarks drew a sharp response from BJP presi-

dent Nitin Nabin who said "such indecent language is completely unacceptable".

In a post on X, Nabin said, "Those who put a leash on terrorism. Those who eradicated Naxalism. Are they traitors? Or those who sheltered terrorism? Those who promoted Naxalism? Are they the traitors?"

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, who is also the Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha, attacked Modi over rising prices, unemployment, exam paper leaks, "dampening" investment and the "sinking" rupee. He said "every aspect of economy is suffering" but "Modi ji continues his PR, lecturing citizens to shoulder the burden of this grave economic storm".

"Modi ji wants the public to enjoy the 'melody' of speeches while surviving the 'misery' of his government's loot," Kharge said. The price of domestic

LPG, he said, "skyrocketed by 121%, exploding from Rs 414 in 2014 to Rs 915.5 in 2026." Commercial cylinder prices, he said, were "ruthlessly hiked by nearly 154%, from Rs 1,241 to Rs 3,152."

TMC Deputy Leader in RS Sagariika Ghose said the optics of the gift and the video were "unfortunate". "The head of state indulging in such acts is inappropriate. While the rupee's value is going down, the PM is doing all this. It shows a lack of empathy..." she said.

CPI Rajya Sabha MP P Sandosh Kumar said, "Perhaps this is the new model of diplomacy: Hand over the country to billionaires at home, distribute chocolates overseas while getting unfair deals, and expect cameras to do the rest... While unemployment, inflation and inequality keep rising, government seems more invested in meme diplomacy than people's lives..."

Govt pitch to n-mission

the manufacturing value chain of small modular reactors (SMRs).

Based on heavy water and natural uranium, PHWRs are a technology India's nuclear establishment has mastered -- but one that is increasingly out of sync with the light water reactors (LWRs), or pressurised water reactors, that are now the most dominant type worldwide.

The problem with LWRs, from an Indian perspective, is high project costs, which translate into a high per-unit cost of power. As a result, there is a sense in policy circles PHWRs will remain the main focus. Any foreign collaboration could

largely be limited to SMRs for now, given cost concerns linked to LWRs, an executive who is part of the US delegation told *The Indian Express* after the first leg of visits concluded in Delhi.

The executive said the Indian side communicated a general openness to private participation, alongside the need for funding from foreign sources. India's dominant nuclear technology -- PHWRs spanning 220 MWe (megawatt electric) reactors -- up to newer 700 MWe reactors -- has a largely unblemished operational record but has suffered from scalability issues.

India's external outreach for nuclear collaborations is driven

more by the need for capital than technology, a top government official had indicated at the time of the nuclear Amendments' passage.

The import of LWRs at higher cost raises two concerns: such projects should not end up stunting the growth of indigenous reactor design and production capacities; and higher capital expenditure results in higher tariffs, which must be absorbed under Indian market conditions. The setting up of nuclear reactors at Jaitapur site in Maharashtra, for instance, has been in limbo because of high tariff concerns, alongside liability concerns flagged earlier by French atomic power major Aрева, which also faced its own financial troubles. The liability concerns have been addressed in

new nuclear amendments.

Organised by the Washington DC-based Nuclear Energy Institute -- a lobby group of America's commercial nuclear energy industry -- and the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum, the industry delegation held meetings with Union Power Minister Manohar Lal and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, as well as top representatives from states such as Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

The delegation is in Mumbai for two days, with meetings scheduled with India's private sector energy players, including Reliance Industries, Adani Group, Tata Power Company, JSW Energy, Vedanta, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Consulting Engineers and Hindalco Industries.

Hydel projects

(444 MW), Signoli Bhatwari (99 MW), Phata Byung (76 MW), Madhmaheshwar (15 MW) and Kaliganga-II (4.5 MW) -- may be permitted, subject to strict compliance with applicable safeguards.

"...only the following seven hydro-electric projects, of which four projects are already commissioned and three projects have already achieved substantial physical and financial progress, may be permitted to proceed, subject to strict compliance with all applicable statutory provisions and environmental safeguards, and that no other new hydro-electric projects shall be undertaken in the upper reaches of the Ganga river basin in the State of Uttarakhand," the Centre said in its affidavit.

"Apart from these seven projects, the Indian government is not in favour of permitting any other new hydro-electric project in the Alaknanda and Bhagirathi rivers in the upper reaches of the River Ganga in the State of Uttarakhand," it said. The affidavit on Wednesday, filed by the Ministry of Environment, said it represented the "consensus position" of the ministries of Jal Shakti, Environment and Power. It said the decision was taken after inter-ministerial consultations and the concurrence of the power ministry.

The Centre cited five major reasons -- the importance of the Alaknanda and Bhagirathi basins as Ganga's headstream; policy decisions on constant and unfettered flow of 1,000 cusecs; cultural and spiritual significance; geological fragility and history of disasters; and biodiversity. "Headstreams are criti-

cal for supplying food/nutrients and critical biodiversity to the riverine ecosystem," it said.

The Ministry of Jal Shakti held that the Expert Body-II -- originally formed with the narrow task of determining the fate of six specific hydropower projects -- had ignored the cumulative impact of the projects. "The report fails to capture the cumulative impact of anthropogenic pressures other than hydropower development. The aquatic/terrestrial impacts in the report are measured per megawatt, which fails to capture the full extent of forest/river damage," it said.

While Expert Body-II had recommended 28 projects, the Jal Shakti Ministry contended if all these projects were implemented, the river's free flow would be "greatly impacted".

Underlining the region's geological fragility and recurrent disaster history, the affidavit said: "The Ganga river basin wholly lies within the most vulnerable Seismic Zone IV and V of the young Himalayan mountain system. It is inherently prone to landslides, flash floods, glacial lakes outburst floods, avalanches, cloud bursts. The biodiversity of the upper Ganga basin hosts critical riparian and aquatic biodiversity."

In August 2013, taking cognizance of the Kedarnath disaster that year, the Supreme Court had put a moratorium on granting clearance for any new hydropower projects in Uttarakhand, and asked the environment ministry to set up a committee to first study the impact. Since then, the ministry has set up three committees.

Workers training robots

his shift, and is only allowed to take it off during bathroom breaks, and while having lunch.

Narayan is among hundreds of workers at the factory asked to wear the devices, including machine operators, technicians and stitching workers handling fabric on production lines. The exercise reflects a growing global push by AI and robotics companies to gather what's being called "egocentric data" -- first-person recordings of human activity that can teach machines how people perform physical tasks.

"To me, it feels like working in your own grave, while you make your own casket," Narayan tells *The Indian Express*. He says he realises that the videos he's recording will end up making him redundant in due course.

Such footage is increasingly valuable because robots still struggle with the subtleties that humans perform instinctively -- adjusting pressure on a machine lever, gripping delicate material, coordinating both hands, or reacting to tiny changes in movement and texture. According to a report by investment firm Stellaris Venture Partners, released in April, robotics labs need 100 million to 1 billion hours of egocentric pre-training data over the next two to three years.

The end goal of collecting such data is to build robots that can operate in the real world with human-like adaptability and precision. While industrial robots have long handled repetitive tasks in controlled settings, newer AI-driven systems are being designed to work in dynamic environments -- warehouses, factories, homes or hospitals -- where they must constantly adjust to unpredictable conditions. For that, robotics com-

panies need vast amounts of human behavioural data.

But on factory floors, the technology is also exposing a sharp imbalance of power. Narayan says his factory's management told workers the exercise was meant to "improve operations", but there was little explanation beyond that, and no information was provided about the company for which the videos were being collected.

Workers often don't know what exactly is being recorded, where the footage is going, or how it may eventually be used.

In another textile factory in Tamil Nadu, several women workers are wearing smart glasses made by Meta to record hand movements as they neatly pack items in plastic covers, one after the other. The manufacturing firm the women work for has a contract with Objectways, a US-based AI data solutions company, which collects such data, annotates it, and then sells it to robotics firms. The company has contracted hundreds of workers in India, across factory floors, and is also paying those at home to record tasks such as cutting fruits and vegetables and cleaning utensils to collect human-centric data for robotics labs.

Ravi Shankar, president, Objectways, says that unlike general purpose AI systems where the underlying data was available on the internet to be scraped by bots, there is little data available that can be used to train humanoid robots, which falls under the broader category of physical AI. "We have people in countries like India, USA, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, who are collecting such data for us. Right now, India remains the biggest source," Shankar tells *The Indian Express* over a phone call.

issued against him in 2021.

● **Rohit Godara**, from Bikaner. Suspected to be in the UK.

Godara is alleged to be close to the Goldy Brar and Lawrence Bishnoi networks. Police have linked him to major crimes, including conspiracy to kill Punjabi singer Sidhu Moose Wala, and the killings of gangster Raju Theth and Karmi Sena leader Sukhdev Singh Gogamedi.

Godara has also been named in the firing incident outside actor Salman Khan's residence, and a shooting linked to singer A P Dhillon in Canada.

● **Venkat Garg**, from Ambala. Suspected to be in the US.

Garg is accused of operating an extortion syndicate alongside Sangwan. Police believe he currently lives in Georgia in the US, from where he runs criminal activities across North India.

He is alleged to have recruited young men from Haryana, Rajasthan, and Delhi into organised gang networks ac-

cused of extortion and shootings targeting builders and businessmen. Investigators say Garg has more than 10 cases against him.

● **Randeep Malik**, from Jind. Suspected to be in the US.

Malik, alleged to be a member of Lawrence Bishnoi gang, is wanted by Delhi Police and the NIA in several cases. Police have linked him to gym owner Nadir Shah's murder in Delhi as well as firing incidents targeting clubs associated with singer Badshah in Chandigarh and Gurgaon.

● **Yogesh Kadiyan**, from Jhajjar. Suspected to be in the US. He reportedly fled India at a young age, and has been linked to overseas criminal networks operated by Himanshu Bhau. Interpol issued a Red Corner Notice against him in October 2023.

Investigators claim he worked closely with Bhau to expand organised crime operations, involving extortion and intimidation, across North India.

MAPPING EXERCISE RELIES ON CASE RECORDS, PCR COMPLAINTS, TIP-OFFS

‘Backbone of drug trade’: Cops identify 123 narcotics hotspots

Sakshi Chand
New Delhi, May 20

USING A combination of narcotics case records, emergency complaint data, and citizen tip-offs, the Delhi Police has identified 123 “red zones” across the Capital that it says form the backbone of the city’s drug trade, senior Delhi police officers said.

The mapping exercise — which relies on records of cases filed under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, complaints received by police control rooms, and intelligence gathered through national narcotics helpline MANAS — is part of a broader effort to dismantle the city’s expanding drug distribution network, DCP, Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF), Rahul Alwal said.

According to senior officials, Shahdara district emerged with the highest concentration of such drug hotspots. Among areas which topped the chart are Sultanpuri in northwest Delhi, Nand Nagri and Seemapuri in northeast Delhi, Ambedkar Nagar in south Delhi and the Narela Industrial Area in north Delhi.

“Recognising the scale of the threat, the Delhi Police has shifted decisively from isolated arrests to a supply-chain disruption model — one designed



Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu has vowed to make Delhi drug-free by 2027. FILE

to dismantle the entire ecosystem of suppliers, financiers, transporters, and distributors rather than only apprehending those at the bottom of the chain. The identification of hotspots is one of the key steps taken to dismantle the drug economy,” DCP Alwal said.

After the hotspots were identified, the ANTF intensified coordination with paramilitary units on raids, expanded surveillance operations and increased monitoring of repeat offenders, officers said.

Authorities said such data-driven approach had already led to a rise in enforcement activities: cases registered under

the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act rose from 1,179 in 2022 to 2,154 in 2025, while arrests rose from 1,499 to 2,853 during the same period. “Analysis of cases filed under the NDPS Act, and MANAS or PCR call records helped us in scientific mapping of narcotics hotspots and 123 ‘Red Zones’ were thus identified across the Capital,” said Additional CP (ANTF) Abhishek Dhania.

The mapping of the said hotspots, according to officers, would strengthen the special drives undertaken by the Delhi Police. For instance, an official said, data fetched from these hotspots are used during anti-

narcotics drives like Operation KAVACH. “Under this operation, during 13 major rounds, we have carried out 12,905 raids, 98,469 people were detained for verification and preventive action, over 2,853 arrests were made in 2025 alone, and assets worth Rs 39.5 crore were seized from 90 traffickers,” Additional CP Dhania highlighted.

The current crackdown comes amid growing political pressure to curb narcotics trafficking across the country. Union Home Minister Amit Shah has pledged to dismantle domestic drug cartels by 2029, while Delhi Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu has called for a drug-free Delhi by 2027.

Officers described Delhi as a drug destination market; a transit corridor for interstate trafficking; and a digitally connected narcotics hub exploiting courier systems, encrypted communication networks and e-commerce platforms. “In these circumstances, data on hotspots would enable us to keep a close watch on interstate syndicates, financial networks, and technology-enabled supply chains,” DCP Alwal added.

Officers added that 452 repeat offenders and 40 “high-risk” traffickers are already on “special surveillance”.

AFTER SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS S.O.P ON MANAGING STRAY DOGS

Infra lacking, MCD identifying spaces at animal husbandry facilities for shelters

Drishti Jain
New Delhi, May 20

A DAY after the Supreme Court upheld standard operating procedure (SOP) on managing stray dogs, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) is racing to put together infrastructure it currently does not have — permanent shelters and more sterilisation facilities across the city.

Currently not equipped to handle large-scale relocation and housing of stray dogs, MCD officials said they are now starting to identify land at existing animal husbandry facilities of the Delhi government to build at least one dog shelter in each of the Capital’s 12 zones.

“We are identifying spaces at all animal husbandry hospitals and, according to AWBI (Animal Welfare Board of India) guidelines, shelters will be developed there. Depending on the space, they could house 100, 200 or even 500 dogs,” a senior MCD official said.

This follows Tuesday’s SC directions dismissing pleas challenging the SOP, which included that stray dogs picked up from public places should not be released back into the same area after sterilisation. While the court observed that



The MCD is aiming at building at least one dog shelter in each of Delhi’s 12 zones. FILE

while people have the right to live with dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution without fear of dog attacks, it also said that the situation would not have reached “alarming proportions” had states and Union Territories implemented the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules properly from the outset.

Officials maintained that they had already begun identifying land after the court’s initial directions last August, ordering authorities in Delhi-NCR to relocate all stray dogs from the streets to dedicated shelters.

Among the shelters that had been planned was a 2.5-acre shelter in Dwarka’s Sector 29 for

aggressive dogs. Also, ABC facilities at Bijwasan and Bella Road, with 14 and 40 kennels, respectively, are to be expanded, officials said. However, work on these facilities are still yet to begin in full swing, they added.

Officials said the Dwarka Sector 29 project, which is expected to accommodate around 2,000 dogs, has received budgetary approval and tenders are likely to be floated soon. “Work is likely to be completed in the next 5-6 months... This will be the first permanent dog shelter in the city and will also house aggressive dogs,” an official said.

The official added that work

has also started on enhancing the capacity of ABC centres at Bijwasan and Bella Road. “While the former will be expanded within a month, the latter will take time,” the official claimed, adding that the MCD is looking for CSR initiatives to accelerate the process.

But even existing infrastructure is under strain. Among the 20 ABC centres earlier operated by 13 NGOs, seven have remained shut since October over non-compliance with AWBI norms, officials said. “This has slowed vaccination rates. Earlier, around 11,500 vaccinations were being carried out every month. Now, the number has dropped to about 8,500,” an official said.

Officials said complaints regarding aggressive dogs will be handled by keeping the animal under observation for around 10 days.

Animal caregivers, meanwhile, cautioned against the rushed implementation of the SC directions. “A good thing is that the court has not expanded the order and has upheld the ABC guidelines. But authorities also need to understand why dogs bite and ensure the capture process remains humane,” said Ashima Sharma, an animal caregiver based in Delhi.

HC sentences YouTuber to six months in jail over contempt

Sohini Ghosh
New Delhi, May 20

THE DELHI High Court last week sentenced a YouTuber to six months’ imprisonment under the Contempt of Courts Act — the maximum punishment prescribed under the law — for not showing any remorse or course correction despite the court holding him guilty of contempt earlier in April.

The court, however, suspended the sentence for 60 days after Pahuja said he plans to challenge the HC’s April verdict that held him guilty of contempt as well as the May 16 order which sentenced him for the offence, before the Supreme Court.

A division bench of Justices Navin Chawla and Ravinder Dubeja sentenced YouTuber Gulshan Pahuja, who runs a channel titled ‘Fight 4 Judicial Reforms’, to the maximum punishment under the Act.

The case dates back to 2025, when the HC had taken cognisance of a reference made by a civil judge at Shahdara court, Charu Asiwat, about contentious videos and banners on Pahuja’s YouTube channel. Lawyers interviewed by him had allegedly made “some objectionable and derogatory remarks against judicial officers and the judicial institution as a whole”. HC had also initiated contempt proceedings against the lawyers but subsequently dropped it after they tendered unconditional apologies.

The bench, in its May 16 order, said, “The contemnor, by his acts, has scandalised... and lowered the authority of the Court....he maintains that what he did was with the intent of improving the judicial system... By not imposing adequate punishment on him, we may encourage him to repeat these acts.”

Krishan Chopra, who held senior publishing roles, passes away

Aishwarya Khosla
New Delhi, May 20

KRISHAN CHOPRA, the publishing executive who brought presidents, central bank governors, and some of the most influential voices of contemporary India into print, passed away in New Delhi on Tuesday after a brief illness. He was in his early 70s.

In the course of a career spanning more than 50 years, Chopra became one of the most respected and well-connected figures in Indian publishing. He held senior roles at Penguin Books India and served as Executive Publisher at HarperCollins India, where he launched and established the Harper Business imprint. His list of authors included former President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan, L&T chairman A M Naik, and a host of public intellectuals.

Aman Arora, associate director of marketing at HarperCollins, who worked with Chopra, remembered his pursuit of excellence fondly. “He was a brilliant, brilliant man,” Arora said. “I learned so much from him, from multiple edits of a press release alone...”

In a detailed tribute on LinkedIn, publisher Sachin Sharma, who worked with Chopra to build Harper Business, wrote: “He would spend hours



Krishan Chopra

fine-tuning a cover blurb or editing a manuscript if he wasn’t satisfied.” Chopra, Sharma said, was an “exceptionally well-read man”, and it showed in the editorial interventions that he made.

Chopra described editing as ‘finding bugs’ — “*keedey nikalna*”, Sharma recalled. Returning a proof heavy with corrections, he would remark, “*Kaafi keedey nikley hain isme*.” If he wasn’t happy with the editing, he would print it out, edit

it by hand, and send pictures of the marked pages to his junior editors, sometimes in the middle of the night.

Tall, impeccably dressed, and low-profile, Chopra was a man of few words who took time to trust people, but once he did, he became a fiercely loyal friend and mentor, said those who knew him well.

Rohit Saran, a senior editor and data journalist who has done books with Chopra, recalled that Chopra was messaging him two weeks before he died about their future publishing plans.

“He was following up, sending me reviews, sending me clippings,” Saran said. “He must have been on his bed. That was his excitement level.” At the time, Saran had no idea Chopra was undergoing cancer treatment. Arora too recalled Chopra messaging him media clippings for an ongoing title barely 10-15 days before his passing.

Krishan Chopra is survived by his wife and daughter.

स्वशासी राज्य चिकित्सा महाविद्यालय

पीलीभीत, उत्तर प्रदेश

संख्याएएसएमसी / पीलीभीत / मे.का./2026-27/738 दिनांक-19.05.2026

सेवायोजन विज्ञापित

स्वशासी राज्य चिकित्सा महाविद्यालय पीलीभीत में आचार्य, सह-आचार्य एवं सहायक आचार्य को सीधी भर्ती से भरे जाने हेतु जारी विज्ञापित संख्या- एएसएमसी / पीलीभीत / मे.का. / 60 दिनांक 04.04.2026 को तिथि दिनांक 27.05.2026 तक विस्तारित की जाती है। इस सम्बन्ध में विस्तृत विवरण महाविद्यालय की वेबसाइट <https://asmcpilibhit.com> पर प्रदर्शित है।

प्रधानाचार्य



ICAR-INDIAN VETERINARY RESEARCH INSTITUTE
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Walk-in-interview

Walk-in-interview has been scheduled to be held at Division of Physiology and Climatology, ICAR-IVRI, Izatnagar, Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh on 05/06/2026 at 10:30 AM onwards for engagement of one “Junior Research Assistant” under CSTUP funded project entitled “Assessing the therapeutic potential of mesenchymal stem cell-laden bioactive injectable hydrogel for osteoarthritis”. The engagement is purely temporary on the contractual basis. For details, please visit ICAR-IVRI website www.ivri.nic.in. Interested candidates can send their biodata and testimonials through email at dryasothandri@gmail.com and also produce at the time of interview.

IN THE COURT OF SH. SAURABH PRATAP SINGH LALER, ADDL. SESSIONS JUDGE-05, PATIALA HOUSE COURTS, NEW DELHI

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

(SEE SECTION 82)

Regd. CASE NO. 43/2021

Directorate of Enforcement vs. M/s. Fin Black Rock Pvt. Ltd. & Others)

WHEREAS complaint has been made before me that Sh. Gauri Shankar Dubey R/o Plot No. 76D, Phase IV, Udyog Vihar, Gurugram, Haryana-122001 has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence under Section 3 of Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, punishable under Section 4 of the said Act and it has been returned to a Warrant of Arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Sh. Gauri Shankar Dubey cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Sh. Gauri Shankar Dubey has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Sh. Gauri Shankar Dubey is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on the day of 09.07.2026.

Shri Saurabh Pratap Singh Laler
Additional Sessions Judge-05
Patiala House Court, New Delhi



Name of the trust / institution
FOUNDATION FOR LIBERAL AND MANAGEMENT EDUCATION SOCIETY

Name of the institution and address: FLAME University
Gat No. 1270, Taluka Mulshi, Village Lavale, Vadzai, Dist. Pune - 412115

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1.	Last Date of Application	June 21, 2026
2.	Date of Publication of Merit List	July 13, 2026
3.	Date of Admission	August 10, 2026

Application for admission will be available online after payment of Rs. 2,000/- by Cash / DD / Credit Card / Debit Card.

Website: www.flame.edu.in, Email: admission@flame.edu.in

Tel No.: 1-800-209-4567

Registrar, FLAME University

FLAME University has been established as a state private university vide the FLAME University Act 2014 (Maharashtra Act No. 11 of 2015), now Maharashtra Private Universities (Establishment and Regulation) Act, 2023 (Mah. Act No. VIII of 2024) of the Government of Maharashtra, India. FLAME University is recognized by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India under Section 2(f), and degrees awarded by the FLAME University are recognized under Section 22 of the UGC Act, 1956.



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New Delhi

HEATWAVE CONTINUES

Delhi’s hospitals witness uptick in heat-related illnesses; doctors advise caution



The Capital recorded a maximum temperature of 44.5 °C, 4.1 notches above normal, on Wednesday. GAJENDRA YADAV

Ankita Upadhyay
New Delhi, May 20

WITH TEMPERATURES soaring in the Capital and the IMD issuing an orange alert, hospitals across Delhi have begun reporting sporadic cases of heat-related illnesses. Major hospitals said they have not yet reported any cases of heat stroke, a severe and potentially life-threatening condition. However, some facilities said patients have been reporting symptoms of heat exhaustion.

Heat exhaustion occurs when the body overheats and loses excessive water and salts, usually due to prolonged exposure to high temperatures. If left untreated, it can progress to heat stroke.

At the Centre-run Ram Mahanar Lohia (RML) Hospital, doctors confirmed that a patient with heat exhaustion symptoms visited on Tuesday. Meanwhile, doctors at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital said they have seen a rise in cases linked to heat exposure, with patients complaining of dehydration, headaches, cramps, and rashes.

As heatwave continued for the second consecutive day, Delhi recorded a maximum temperature of 44.5 °C 4.1 notches above normal on Wednesday. Hospitals in Delhi have also stepped up preparedness by ensuring the availability of air-conditioners, coolers, and drinking water facilities for patients and attendants.

According to Dr Prabhat Kumar Jha, Director of Internal Medicine at Medanta Gurugram, older adults are among the most vulnerable to heat-related illnesses, as their body’s ability to regulate temperature declines with age. People with chronic illnesses are particularly susceptible to complications from dehydration and heat stress. Children and infants are equally at risk, since they tend to dehydrate more quickly and may not recognise or communicate symptoms WELL, he said.

“Certain medications can also reduce the body’s ability to cope with high temperatures. Outdoor workers are exposed to prolonged direct heat and therefore face elevated risks,” Dr Jha noted. As per Dr Jha, pregnant women and individuals without access to adequate cooling or hydration may also be more vulnerable.

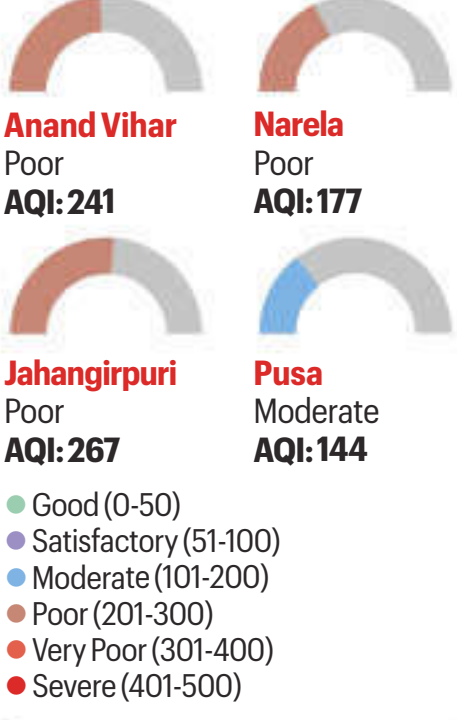
Drawing a distinction between heat exhaustion and heat stroke, Dr Jha clarified that while both are caused by excessive heat exposure, heat stroke

● Skywatch



Forecast: May 21, 2026
Mainly clear sky, heat wave conditions at many places
MAX: 45-47
5.6°C above normal
MIN: 27-29
0.5°C above normal

● AQI Tracker



is the more life-threatening of the two. “A person with heat exhaustion may experience heavy sweating, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea, muscle cramps, and extreme thirst. Their skin may feel cool, pale, or clammy, and they may feel faint or unusually tired,” he explained.

“Heat stroke, on the other hand, is a medical emergency. Warning signs include a very high body temperature, confusion, disorientation, slurred speech, unusual behaviour, seizures, or loss of consciousness. The skin may feel hot and dry, although sweating can still occur in some cases,” he added.

The key difference, he said, is that in heat stroke the body’s temperature regulation system begins to fail, affecting the brain and vital organs. Anyone showing signs of heat stroke including confusion, altered mental status, seizures, difficulty breathing, collapse during extreme heat should receive immediate medical attention, Dr Jha cautioned.

Dr Jha advised avoiding outdoor activity between 12 noon and 4 pm, when temperatures peak. “Outdoor workers should take frequent breaks in shaded areas and carry water or ORS. Wearing loose-fitting, light-coloured cotton clothing, along with a cap, scarf...or sunglasses, can help the body stay cool.”

TWISHA SHARMA DEATH

Court dismisses plea seeking second autopsy, CM recommends CBI probe

Anand Mohan J
Bhopal, May 20

A BHOPAL court on Wednesday dismissed an application filed by the family of Twisha Sharma – who was found hanging at her marital home in Bhopal last week – seeking directions that a second postmortem examination be conducted at AIIMS Delhi, but ordered the authorities to urgently explore facilities across Madhya Pradesh capable of preserving the body at ultra-low temperatures amid fears of decomposition.

The day also saw Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav saying that the state government would write to the CBI seeking an investigation into the death of the 33-year-old model and actor. An official statement issued after the CM met Twisha’s family at the state secretariat in Bhopal said that Yadav assured the relatives that the government would “fully assist” them in the case. “A letter will also be written to the CBI for investigation in this case,” the statement added.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav meets the family of Twisha Sharma, in Bhopal on Wednesday. ANI

Meanwhile, in an order passed by Judicial Magistrate First Class Anudita Gupta, the court dismissed Twisha’s family’s application seeking “directions for conducting a second postmortem examination at AIIMS Delhi and for forensic analysis of the deceased”.

However, the court took note of concerns raised regarding the preservation of Twisha’s body. Referring to a police report placed before it, the magistrate recorded that the body is currently being kept in the mortuary at AIIMS Bhopal at minus

4 degrees Celsius. The authorities at the institute had, however, informed police that preservation at minus 80 degrees Celsius was required to prevent decomposition of the body.

The court noted that based on information gathered, “there is no facility available anywhere in Bhopal for low-temperature preservation”.

In view of this, the magistrate directed the Station House Officer of Katara Hills police station to “immediately obtain written information from medical institutions” on

whether low temperature preservation facilities are available in other higher medical institutions in Madhya Pradesh and to submit a written report to the court “without any delay”.

The order comes amid an escalating dispute over the circumstances surrounding Twisha’s death and the findings of the initial postmortem examination. Her family has alleged that the autopsy conducted at AIIMS Bhopal was compromised under the influence of the family of the accused. While Twisha’s husband Samarth Singh, who is absconding, is a lawyer, her mother-in-law, Giribala Singh, is a retired additional district judge.

The family’s plea had questioned the postmortem report describing the cause of death as “asphyxia due to antemortem hanging by ligature” while also noting “multiple antemortem injuries”. The application also alleged that the “ligature material” – the belt allegedly used in the hanging – was never provided to the doctors conducting the autopsy at AIIMS Bhopal.

Meanwhile, during the proceedings, the office of the Assistant Commissioner of Police, Misrod Division, informed the court that there was a “strong possibility” that Samarth might flee the country and sought issuance of a letter to the Regional Passport Officer for cancellation or suspension of his passport as well as issuance of an alert. The court, however, observed that before deciding on such a request, “it appears appropriate to hear the accused”. It subsequently directed that notice be issued to Samarth Singh, asking him to show cause why such action should not be taken.

Bhopal Police Commissioner Sanjay Kumar, meanwhile, said the investigation so far “points towards suicide and not murder”.

On Twisha’s family alleging lapses in the police investigation, including delays in the arrest of Samarth, Kumar said the investigation was still underway. “It takes time to investigate sometimes. We have made our parties and will soon arrest him,” he added.

Woman dies after falling from building; husband and brother-in-law arrested

Pragynesh
New Delhi, May 20

IN ANOTHER suspected case of dowry death, a 25-year-old woman allegedly fell to death from a building in West Delhi’s Inderpuri on Monday. Her husband and his brother were arrested in connection to the incident on Wednesday.

Police identified the woman as Venna Kumari and the two arrested men as her husband Raju Singh (27) and his brother Rajkumar (22).

“Based on the inquiry, family members’ statements, and findings of the postmortem examination conducted on Tuesday, an FIR has been registered at Inderpuri police station under BNS against the deceased woman’s husband and his two brothers on the charge of dowry death,” said DCP (West) Darade Sharad Bhaskar.

As the marriage had taken place less than seven years ago, legal proceedings under provisions related to dowry death were initiated, and the matter was reported to the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM), Karol Bagh, he said. The SDM recorded the statements of the woman’s family members, while the crime and forensics teams from Rohini inspected the spot and collected evidence scientifically, Bhaskar added.

Venna’s younger brother, Raj, told *The Indian Express* that he got a call from her sister minutes before her death.

“She called me at 9.55 pm on Monday, and said that she was being tortured. I immediately

left my house and was on my way, when her husband called and said that she ‘fell’ off the roof,” he added.

“The woman was taken to the hospital by Raju and Rajku-

Venna’s younger brother Raj said he got a call from her sister minutes before her death saying that she was being ‘tortured’

mar, who lived with the couple. At about 11 pm, the police got a call from the hospital about the death of the woman,” the officer added.

Police said Raju had married Venna in Uttar Pradesh’s Sambhal in 2022. “About six months later, the couple moved to Delhi after Raju got a job and shifted to a second-floor apartment in a three-floor building in Inderpuri,” said an officer.

Based on the statement of Venna’s father, the officer added, “The family used to comment about how the woman’s father should have given a better bike or a better TV.”

An officer said that the couple’s neighbours denied having heard any fight or argument between them.

“The rooftop of the building, from where the woman allegedly fell, also has a room. The occupants of the room denied seeing the husband or the brother on the roof at the time of the incident,” another officer said, adding that so far, it has not surfaced that the woman was physically tortured as well.

Deepika dowry death: Mother-in-law, uncle of husband arrested

Drishti Jain
Greater Noida, May 20

THE POLICE on Wednesday arrested two more accused in the alleged dowry death case of 24-year-old Deepika Nagar, who reportedly jumped to death from the terrace of her in-laws’ home in Greater Noida on Sunday.

Those arrested include her mother-in-law, Poonam, and her husband’s uncle, Vinod. Earlier, Deepika’s husband, Ritik, a real estate businessman studying law, and her father-in-law, Manoj, had been arrested in the case.

Police said Deepika was allegedly subjected to harassment soon after her marriage in December 2024. “The mother-in-law used to harass her for a car, gold and a plot,” an officer said, adding that the uncle too shared a “common intent” in the alleged harassment.

The police said Deepika’s viscera samples have been sent to a



Deepika’s sister Sarika and their uncle on Tuesday. ANI

Ghaziabad laboratory for examination.

Meanwhile, Deepika’s post-mortem report has revealed a blood clot in the brain, a ruptured spleen and bruises across the body. Sources said the report recorded contusions on her face, elbow joints, forearm, right thigh, chest and abdomen. According to an officer, while the injuries were consistent with the fall, some appeared to be ante-mortem, or inflicted before death.

“This possibly implies she was being harassed,” the officer said.

‘Can reach office in 25 mins’: Commuters await Gaur Chowk underpass

Drishti Jain
Noida, May 20

IN A move that will come as a relief to a lakh vehicles that travel everyday through Gaur Chowk in Greater Noida West – one of the busiest intersections in the NCR – an eight-lane underpass, which is under construction, is expected to open by mid-August.

The 700-metre-long underpass will run parallel to the Taj Highway and connect Greater Noida (Surajpur) and Gaur City. Officials said 76% of the construction has been completed, and the project is expected to be completed ahead of schedule.

The Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority (GNIDA) had planned the project in 2024 to alleviate traffic

snarls. Gaur Chowk is a crucial point, leading to Gaur city in the North, Greater Noida (Surajpur) in the South, Delhi in the West and National Highway 24 in the East. “Around 1 lakh vehicles pass through the intersection every day,” said a senior GNIDA official, adding that 30,000 vehicles are expected to use the underpass.

Officials said though the project – estimated to cost Rs 82 crore – started in 2024, it took almost a year to relocate sewer lines, cables, gas pipelines and create diversions for commuters. “The most challenging phase involved deep excavation in the covered section of the underpass, which is now finished. The remaining work primarily consists of building the entry and exit ramps, with



Construction work underway at Gaur Chowk. GAJENDRA YADAV

one side towards Surajpur already completed,” the official said, adding that delay was also caused due to pollution restrictions under the Graded Response Action Plan.

When *The Indian Express* visited the spot last week, dozens of autorickshaws were parked

haphazardly along the road going to Surajpur. Among them was Chandra Shekhar (45). “I try getting as many rides as I can during the afternoon since when the evening sets in, all four roads are packed,” he said.

“If I pick up a ride from Surajpur towards Gaur City, I

have to take a long U-turn after crossing towards Delhi, adding roughly 1 km in each direction. During evening rush hour, this can add up to 30 minutes to the journey,” he said, adding that once the underpass is operational, vehicles will be able to continue traveling straight.

Shekhar said the underpass would provide 90% relief between 7 am and 10 am and again after 6 pm. “The morning rush largely comprises vehicles headed towards Delhi and the evening flow moving in the opposite direction,” he added.

For Manish Sisodia (42), a motorist with an app-based bike taxi service, timely completion of the project is crucial to his daily earnings. Manish complained that the construction has worsened traffic con-

SC to hear bail pleas of two 2020 riots accused tomorrow

Express News Service
New Delhi, May 20

THE SUPREME Court on Wednesday adjourned the hearing on the bail pleas of two of the accused in the 2020 Northeast Delhi communal riots case that challenged a Delhi High Court order denying them bail.

Posting the matter for hearing on Friday, the top court, however, indicated that it was, prima facie, in favour of granting them the relief. “Prima facie, we are with you,” a bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and P B Varale said as it adjourned the hearing on pleas by accused Tasleem Ahmed and Khalid Saifi.

On Tuesday, Additional Solicitor General (ASG) S V Raju, appearing for the Delhi Police, had told the court that he was studying a judgment delivered on Monday by a two-judge SC bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan, granting bail to Kashmir resident Syed Iftikhar Andrabi – booked under UAPA in a case of narco-terror probed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA). He had told the top court that that the matter might need to be referred to a larger bench owing to conflicting views of two other two-judge benches.

The top court on Wednesday deferred the hearing after ASG Raju sought another two days’ time to make submissions.

Meanwhile, senior advocate Rebecca John, appearing for Saifi, and Advocate Mehmoob Pracha, appearing for Ahmed, said they were relying on the judgment in the Gulfisha Fatima vs State case as the principle laid down therein was enough to secure their clients bail.

The bench of Justices Nagarathna and Bhuyan, while granting bail to Andrabi Monday, had referred to a 2021 decision of a three-judge bench in the case *Union of India vs K A Najeeb*.

The court had in the case said that violation of a fundamental right, like the one to speedy trial, can be a ground for grant of bail even under a stringent law like the UAPA.

The bench had then upheld the bail granted to an accused jailed since April 2015 for alleged involvement in chopping the hand of a Kerala professor in 2010.

● ACCUSED WOMAN INVOLVED IN SIX THEFTS SINCE 2008 WAS ARRESTED LAST MONTH

Domestic help built fortune on jewellery heists with multiple identities, 15 dogs

Pragynesh
New Delhi, May 20

SONIA, SONA, Anita. These are names of not three women, but one — a thief posing as a domestic help. She has six cases of house thefts against her, spanning from 2008 to 2026.

For police, these were among Delhi’s most unusual theft cases, carried out under multiple identities, aided by insider tips, and involving an unconventional method of converting stolen gold into loans instead of selling it.

Police said Sonia — the name she went by usually — is 46, a widow, a mother to two,

and 15 dogs. “She arrived from Chennai over 20 years ago and settled in West Delhi. Her husband Kartikeya ran a garment shop,” said an officer.

By 2008, Sonia started working as a domestic help. But the expenses were not cutting it for the family. “She would work at houses for a few days, get an idea about where the families kept jewellery, steal it, and flee,” said an officer.

Police said she would talk security guards into telling her the houses which needed temporary helpers.

In 2008, she allegedly carried out her first theft at a busi-

nessman’s house in Punjabi Bagh. “Since then, she has carried out at least six more robberies. In 2025 alone, she stole jewellery worth Rs 2 crore from a house in Shalimar Bagh and made off with Rs 60 lakh from Maurya Enclave... She took the jewellery and deposited it in a locker for a gold loan,” said an officer. She has opened 15 such lockers, which house over 2 kg of gold, police said.

Sonia’s luck ran out last month. “She got to know from a guard that a family in Shalimar Bagh was looking for a helper. It was businessman Vijay Pal Gupta’s house,” said an officer.



The woman stationed her dogs across her house to guard her money and buy her time in case the police showed up.

Police said Gupta lives with his wife on the first floor of his

three-floor house while his son and daughter-in-law occupy

the second floor. On April 16, Sonia went to their house. “She asked for just half the salary of their previous help ... In three days, she had noticed that Pal’s wife would keep jewellery in the cupboard and other places,” the officer said.

On April 19, Sonia allegedly snuck into the bedroom. “She stole jewellery worth Rs 1.5 crore. Pal’s wife later found the cupboard open, the jewellery gone, and Sonia missing,” said an officer.

Pal filed a complaint. Police initially faced a tough time due to her multiple, fake identities.

“We had information that she lived in Rohini’s Sector 11... and we finally managed to track her,” said a police officer.

On April 29, officers reached Sonia’s three-floor house in Rohini. They expected resistance, but not four-legged guards.

There were 15 dogs: three Pitbulls, four American Bullies and the rest were mixed breeds, police said.

“As we entered, two of them jumped on us. A couple of officers reached the first floor, where they encountered three-four more. She had stationed them across the house to guard her money and buy her time in case the police showed up,” said an officer.

“We managed to shoo the

dogs and reach her bedroom where she was hiding,” said an officer. She was arrested.

During questioning, she said her real name was Malika. But her Aadhaar card showed her name as Sona.

Sonia said she started buying the dogs over five years ago. “She has buildings and flats worth crores. We are in the process of seizing them,” a senior officer said.

“Most of the stolen gold is in the safes of some of India’s biggest loan firms. We have asked the branch manager of one of the firms to join the probe, and will make the firm an accused in the case,” said an officer.

India-Italy joint statement: Focus on terror, tech & unblocking of Hormuz

Shubhajit Roy
New Delhi, May 20

FROM COMMON position on terrorism to creation of INNO-VIT India, an innovation hub; launch of a dialogue on maritime security to 'Italy Calls India: A University-Enterprise Talent Bridge' — these are among the key outcomes in the joint statement of India and Italy after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Italian PM Giorgia Meloni on Wednesday. PM Modi said, “India and Italy share a consensus that terrorism poses a grave challenge to humanity. Our joint initiatives against terror financing have set a significant example for the entire world. India and Italy have sent a clear message: responsible democracies do not merely condemn terrorism; they also take concrete steps to dismantle its financial networks.” According to the joint statement, the two leaders “strongly condemned terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations, including cross border terrorism. The two leaders strongly condemned the April 2025 Pahalgam terror attack and reiterated their commitment to cooperate in the fight against terrorists and

terrorist groups and their affiliates including those listed in the UN Security Council 1267 Sanctions regime.”

On innovation, the joint statement said that they announced the creation of INNOVIT India, an innovation hub located in India aimed at strengthening cooperation between the respective innovation ecosystems, support startup acceleration programs, market access and business matching. It also addresses joint research, university collaboration, and talent mobility in sectors including fintech, healthcare, semiconductors, logistics and supply chains, agritech, energy, quantum computing and artificial intelligence.

Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to a human-centric, secure, trustworthy and robust Artificial Intelligence, and they agreed to collaborate in this domain including in “third countries”, it said.

The prime ministers placed particular emphasis on opportunities for cooperation in the field of “supercomputing.” It said that both leaders agreed to launch a ‘Dialogue on Maritime Security’, with the aim of increasing maritime security cooperation, coordination and



PM Narendra Modi gifts a packet of 'Melody' toffees to Italy's Giorgia Meloni in Rome, Wednesday. ANI

the exchange of information and best practices in the maritime domain.

On higher education and mobility of students, they welcomed the launch of 'ICI-Italy Calls India: A University-Enterprise Talent Bridge' aimed at enhancing the talent of Indian students enrolled in Italian universities by offering concrete pathways for guidance, matching and qualified integration into Italian enterprises.

On cultural cooperation, they underlined culture as a key pillar of bilateral dialogue and welcomed the signing of an MoU on “Italy’s participation in the development of the National Maritime Heritage Complex in Lothal”.

The two leaders also encouraged the organization of an Italy-India Cultural Forum bringing together institutions, experts, and representatives of the creative industries.

On the MoU for cooperation in critical minerals, the statement said both countries agreed to expand bilateral cooperation in the field of critical minerals by establishing a structured framework for collaboration, with particular emphasis on sustainability and resilient supply chains. They underscored the importance of

joint efforts in recovery of “critical minerals from unconventional sources, including electronic waste and mine tailings.”

On cooperation in Africa, the two sides “agreed to work together in trilateral initiatives with African partners in areas such as Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), agriculture, education, healthcare, artificial intelligence, connectivity and infrastructure and renewable energy” in line with India’s development partnership in Africa and Italy’s Mattei Plan.

On the war in West Asia, both leaders expressed “deep concern” over the situation in West Asia and its effects in the region as well as the rest of the world. The leaders welcomed the ceasefire announced on April 8, 2026 and underlined the importance of de-escalation, dialogue and diplomacy for a lasting peace in the region. They also called for freedom of navigation and the resumption of global flows through the Strait of Hormuz.”

On the war in Ukraine, they expressed “concern” and agreed to continue to support efforts towards the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine through dialogue and diplomacy.

Rubio to arrive on May 23 for 4-day visit; trade, energy, defence on agenda

Shubhajit Roy
New Delhi, May 20

INDICATING AN incremental progress in bilateral ties with India, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will visit India from May 23 to 26, in what will be his first visit to the country as the US Secretary of State and NSA.

According to a statement from US State Department spokesperson, Thomas “Tommy” Pigott, “Secretary Rubio will travel to India from May 23-26, where he will visit Kolkata, Agra, Jaipur, and New Delhi”. “The Secretary will discuss energy security, trade, and defense cooperation during meetings with senior Indian officials,” the statement said. Rubio is also likely to take part in a meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Quad countries.

During the visit, Rubio is also likely to attend the 250th year celebrations of American Independence in Delhi. While his Delhi visit was known, addition of Kolkata, Agra and Jaipur are new stops in the itinerary. Preparations are underway to schedule the visits of Australian and Japanese Foreign Ministers around the same time, sources said. If the Quad leaders’ summit takes place later this year, it will work towards eliminating the shadow cast on Indo-US ties as well as the future of the Quad grouping ever since US President Donald Trump imposed 50% tariffs on India and prohibitive costs on new H-1B visa applications. The tariffs were removed after the two sides agreed on a trade deal early February this year. Now, the two sides are also looking at an Indian delegation going to the US to finalise the trade agreement.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has been in touch with US Secretary of State Rubio. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri also met Rubio during his visit to Washington DC last month. Rubio’s visit to India, the first by the US Secretary of State



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will travel to Kolkata, Agra and Jaipur as well

and NSA from the Trump administration, was disclosed by Sergio Gor, the US Ambassador to India last month, who was in the meeting between Misri and Rubio in Washington DC.

After the meeting, Gor, in a post on X, had said, “Welcome to the White House @Vikram-Misri! Productive meeting with @SecRubio that focused on our bilateral relationship, especially trade, critical minerals, defense and the Quad. Secretary Rubio looks forward to visiting India next month!”

Last month, Gor had said the focus now is on Rubio’s trip. “The Secretary (Rubio) is coming here next month, which we’re very excited by... He doesn’t just show up. We actually have some incredible deals that we’re hoping to finalise in time for his visit at the end of May,” he said. He said the US is also looking forward to a Quad ministerial meeting. “We’re very much looking forward to having a ministerial Quad meeting here in India. This is also the Secretary’s first visit to India. So he’s very excited to come, not only to Delhi, but also to visit other places.”

“India is vitally important to us. It’s an incredible partner and the President also has an incredible relationship with your Prime Minister... If you look at Secretary Rubio, he does not travel because he’s full-time at the White House also. So the fact that he is coming over here shows the level of importance that the United States gives to India,” he said.

‘Reflects anarchic mindset’: BJP slams Rahul over ‘traitor’ remark

ENS & PTI
New Delhi, May 20

THE BJP on Wednesday hit out at Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi over his “traitor” remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and the RSS, saying the Congress leader’s words “reflect his anarchic and divisive mindset”.

BJP president Nitin Nabin said Gandhi’s remarks were an insult for the 140 crore people of the country and demanded an apology from him. “Rahul Gandhi’s statement today... is

extremely unfortunate, as it exposes his anarchic and divisive mindset. In Indian politics, where there has been a tradition of integrity and mutual respect, such indecent language is completely unacceptable.”

“Those who put a leash on terrorism. Those who eradicated Naxalism. Are they the traitors? Or those who sheltered terrorism. Those who promoted Naxalism. Are they the traitors?” Nabin said, adding that the people of the country were watching everything and the Congress would receive a befitting reply when the time comes.



BJP president Nitin Nabin demands an apology from Congress MP Rahul Gandhi

Nabin called Gandhi the “Rahu” of Indian politics, alleg-

ing that the Congress leader has been “polluting and contaminating” the country’s political atmosphere with his mindset and behaviour.

“The frustration and despair arising from repeated electoral defeats are now clearly evident in his (Gandhi’s) statements. While Rahul Gandhi’s ancestors had mortgaged the country’s land and conscience, today, under the leadership of the Honorable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, the country’s land has been secured and the confidence of the citizens has also

been strengthened,” Nabin posted on X.

The BJP’s sharp retort came after Gandhi called Modi, Shah and the RSS “traitors” while launching an attack on them on various issues at an event in his Lok Sabha constituency of Rae Bareilly on Wednesday.

The BJP chief also alleged that the Congress has become a “private limited company” of Gandhi and his sister, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

In a video posted on X, BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said Gandhi’s remarks reflect the mindset of “urban Na-

xals” and alleged that the LoP is acting against the country’s interests.

“Rahul Gandhi has called 140 crore Indians traitors. This tells you that his remote control is with anti-India forces,” Bhandari said.

Bhandari further alleged that Gandhi is angry because “India is united” under Modi and accused him of targeting the Indian state itself. He also alleged that Gandhi’s language resembles that used by “terrorists in Pakistan” and accused him of furthering the agenda of “anti-India forces”.

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THE legal education system in India is witnessing a rapid transformation driven by technology, globalisation, regulatory reforms, and evolving industry demands. Once viewed primarily as a pathway to courtroom litigation or judicial services, the field has expanded significantly to include emerging domains such as cyber law, artificial intelligence, technology law, environmental law, intellectual property rights, international arbitration, and sports law.

From traditional law colleges to emerging private universities, institutions are reshaping curriculum, expanding specialisations, and preparing students for a rapidly evolving legal ecosystem. This shift is driven by factors such as the digital economy, globalisation of legal practice, the rise of legal technology, increasing corporate compliance needs, and growing awareness of rights-based governance.

A growing sector under tight regulation

Today, India has one of the world’s largest legal education networks, with more than 1,700 law institutions offering three-year and five-year programmes. The sector is regulated by the Bar Council of India (BCI), which standardized curriculum, faculty, infrastructure, and professional eligibility. Over the decades, the establishment of National Law Universities marked a turning point in legal education.

As India positions itself as a global economic and technological power, the future of legal education has become increasingly central to the country’s democratic and industrial development.

The rise of interdisciplinary legal studies

Modern law is no longer confined to constitutional interpretation or civil disputes. The expansion of India’s digital economy and regulatory framework has led to the emergence of specialised legal fields.

Cyber law, data protection, artificial intelligence law, fintech regulation, environmental governance, sports law, intellectual property rights, and international arbitration are among the fastest-growing domains in legal education. Universities are introducing elective-driven curricula and specialised centres to align legal training with market demand. The rise of AI governance and digital privacy debates has accelerated interest in technology law. With India



moving towards stronger data protection frameworks and AI regulation, law graduates with expertise in digital compliance and emerging technologies are increasingly in demand.

Environmental law has also gained relevance amid climate litigation, sustainability regulations, and corporate ESG obligations. Arbitration and mediation are emerging as preferred areas due to India’s push to become a global dispute resolution hub. This reflects a broader transition where law functions as part of an interdisciplinary system rather than in isolation.

Internships emerging as the new training ground

For many law students, education now extends beyond classrooms. Internships have become a crucial part of legal training, with students gaining exposure across litigation chambers, corporate law firms, NGOs, policy think tanks, legal-tech companies, tribunals, and judicial offices. Employers increasingly prioritise practical exposure over academic scores alone.

Top law firms recruit from leading NLU and private universities for roles in corporate law, dispute resolution, and compliance, while litigation remains a preferred path for students interested in advocacy and constitutional law despite financial uncertainties. Judicial services examinations are also attracting aspirants seeking stable public careers.

At the same time, NGOs, policy organisations, and research institutions are creating opportunities in governance, human rights, and public policy, highlighting the expanding scope of the profession beyond litigation

and corporate practice.

Private universities reshaping legal learning

Private universities and law colleges are playing a key role in reshaping legal education in India. In recent years, many have invested in infrastructure, global collaborations, research centres, and industry-linked learning models.

These institutions offer specialised courses in technology law, business law, forensic studies, and global governance. Flexible curricula allow quicker adaptation to industry needs. Many have also expanded access to legal education in underserved regions through scholarships, exchange programmes, and partnerships with law firms and corporates, helping bridge the gap between academics and practice.

However, concerns regarding rising costs, uneven academic quality, affordability, inclusivity, and the commercialisation of legal education continue to persist.

Artificial intelligence redefining the future law

AI is redefining the legal profession at an unprecedented pace. Legal research platforms, contract review software, predictive analytics, and AI-driven compliance systems are already transforming legal work globally.

This shift has forced law schools to rethink curriculum and pedagogy. Institutions are introducing legal-tech training, coding basics, digital research methods, and AI ethics into their programmes. Analysts believe future lawyers will require hybrid skills that combine legal reasoning, technological literacy, and

business understanding.

While automation may reduce demand for repetitive legal work, the larger challenge for legal education is preparing students for a professional environment where adaptability is essential.

Bridging the gap between theory and practice

Despite the growth of legal education, institutions are increasingly focusing on bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Moot courts, internships, drafting exercises, and courtroom simulations are becoming integral to legal training, giving students greater exposure to real-world practice.

This emphasis on experiential learning is helping students improve advocacy, legal writing, communication, research, and courtroom etiquette skills, particularly in institutions seeking stronger industry interaction.

Redefining legal careers in an evolving world

Globalisation has expanded career opportunities for Indian law graduates. There has been a rise in students pursuing LLM degrees abroad and exploring careers in international arbitration, commercial law, policy advisory, and cross-border legal practice.

Simultaneously, alternative career paths such as legal journalism, academia, policy consulting, legal-tech startups, and entrepreneurship are gaining popularity. Technology and global exposure continue to reshape the profession.

As the legal profession evolves, institutions must produce graduates who are academically strong, technologically aware, globally informed, and professionally skilled. The direction of legal education will significantly influence the future of India’s justice system and governance framework.

With growing global exposure, technological advancements, and diversified career opportunities, law graduates are expected to combine academic knowledge with practical expertise and adaptability. The future of legal education lies in building a generation of lawyers who are socially aware, globally connected, and equipped to contribute meaningfully to India’s justice system and governance framework.

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rigour, professional relevance, and constitutional values.

Career readiness remains central throughout the student journey, supported through internships, advocacy training, interdisciplinary exposure, and experiential learning. Students prepare not only for traditional legal careers, but also for emerging pathways across corporate advisory, public policy, governance, alternate dispute resolution, and legal consulting.

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The global architecture of AI accountability is rapidly reshaping international law as nations confront a critical question: How do we assign legal liability when a non-human AI system causes harm?

Historically, tort law and civil liability relied on human intent, negligence and foreseeability. However, the opaque and adaptive nature of AI makes it difficult to establish direct causation between a developer's design and a specific harm, exposing the limitations of traditional fault-based liability systems.

In response, the European Union's revised Product Liability Directive, to be implemented by December 2026, classifies AI systems as products and strictly shifts toward stricter liability standards. It reduces the burden of proof on consumers, allows courts to compel disclosure of evidence, and presumes a defect in highly complex cases, effectively requiring developers to prove their systems were not responsible for the alleged harm.

At the international level, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD's "Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible AI" operationalises the OECD AI Principles through risk-based auditing and traceability of datasets, processes and decisions throughout an AI system's lifecycle. Embedding Responsible Business Conduct into corporate governance enables auditors and legal professionals to verify algorithmic decisions and identify accountability gaps.

India has also adopted a balanced regulatory approach through NITI Aayog's "Responsible AI for All" strategy and the Reserve Bank of India's FREE-AI framework, which emphasises seven "sutras", including trust, a people-first approach, innovation over restraint, fairness, resilience, understandable by design and accountability. Together, these frameworks reflect a growing global consensus that organisations deploying AI systems must remain legally accountable for the consequences of those systems.

DPG Law College

Dark Patterns And Consumer Protection In E-Commerce



Founded in 2003 by Late Shri Jai Singh Gahlot, the Chaudhary Partap Singh Memorial Charitable Trust stands as a distinguished educational organization dedicated to fostering academic excellence, innovation, and professional integrity. Today, the group offers over 100 programs across a wide range of disciplines through DPG Degree College, DPG Law College, and DPG College of Pharmacy. Spread across a 15-acre campus, the institutions provide excellent sports facilities, modern infrastructure, and highly qualified faculty across various departments. These institutions remain committed to nurturing ethically responsible and industry-ready professionals by continuously aligning their academic framework with the evolving demands of a competitive global environment.

The rapid expansion of e-commerce in India has raised many concerns about "dark patterns," which are deceptive user interface layouts that manipulate consumers into making unintended choices. Practices like false urgency, hidden charges, subscription traps, and pre-ticked consent boxes generally push people toward "yes" without real awareness. Such practices clash with consumer autonomy and fair competition in online markets. The phrase "dark patterns" is recognized under the Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023, issued by the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA). The primary legal framework covering such practices is the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. Under Section 2(47) of the Act, "unfair trade practices" are defined, while Section 18 empowers the CCPA to safeguard consumer rights and prevent deceptive conduct. In addition to this, the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020 came into force, emphasizing transparency and informed consent, especially in online transactions. The 2023 Guidelines prohibit thirteen dark patterns, including drip pricing, bait and switch, confirm shaming, and basket sneaking.

Recent developments in 2025–2026 show a stricter regulatory approach. In June 2025, the CCPA asked e-commerce platforms to conduct mandatory self-audits within three months and submit declarations confirming the absence of dark patterns. By November 2025, more than 26 companies, including Flipkart, Mynt, Amazon, and Swiggy, had submitted compliance declarations. However, reports released in 2026 showed that some platforms allegedly continued using manipulative practices despite claiming compliance. The CCPA also issued notices

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and levied penalties against certain companies, including Zepto, for misleading interface designs.

A notable example is the BookMyShow "basket sneaking" controversy, where optional charity donations were automatically attached to ticket purchases. After CCPA intervention, the platform updated its interface to make explicit consumer consent clearer. Although India has become one of the first countries to issue dedicated dark pattern regulations, enforcement remains challenging due to the rapid increase in digital technologies. Stronger penalties, independent audits, and higher consumer awareness are required to ensure transparency and fairness in the e-commerce ecosystem.

Legal education also plays a major role in this issue, as people are required to understand the meaning of manipulation in digital spaces. Law schools and legal researchers can help by encouraging awareness around digital consumer rights, ethical platform governance, and technology regulation. Greater academic involvement in cyber law and consumer protection can help develop stricter policy responses for emerging digital concerns.

Riya Khurana, Assistant Professor,
DPG Law College, Gurugram

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Inspired by the visionary leadership of **Late Prof. (Dr.) B.S. Goel** and guided by the continued efforts of **Mr. Anupam Goel, Secretary, IPEM Group of Institutions**, and **Prof. (Dr.) Sugandha Goel, Executive Director**, IPEM Law Academy believes that legal education must go beyond classrooms and textbooks. It must develop critical thinking, advocacy skills, constitutional values and a deep sense of social responsibility.

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Prof. (Dr.) Monika Sainger
Director, IPEM Group of Institutions

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21 MINISTERS, INCLUDING TWO FROM CONGRESS, ARE SET TO BE SWORN IN TODAY

TVK invites Cong, VCK, IUML to Cabinet; ADMK rebels left waiting

Arun Janardhanan
Chennai, May 20

TAMIL NADU'S week-old TVK government moved decisively on Wednesday toward shaping itself as a broader secular coalition, with Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay preparing for a Cabinet expansion that is expected to bring in leaders from the Congress, Viduthala Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) and Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), while effectively shutting the door — at least for now — on rebel AIADMK legislators who helped the government survive its crucial floor test.

Twenty-one ministers are set to be sworn in Lok Bhavan at 10 am Thursday, including 19 from TVK and two from Congress. A decision on ministerial berths for VCK and IUML is expected either Thursday morning or later. The shift marks a significant recalibration inside the fledgling administration after days of anxiety among Vijay's allies over speculation that the AIADMK rebel faction led by former ministers S P Velumani and C Ve Shanmugham could be rewarded with Cabinet berths. Instead, the TVK leadership appears to have concluded that accommodating the rebels would cost more than the numerical stability they might provide.

Work in Sync

BUSY WORKING on multiple missions, ISRO chief V Narayanan often sends updates to Union Minister of State for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences Jitendra Singh as late as 3 am. Concerned about his workload, the minister said he asked Narayanan why he was working till so late. The senior scientist, however, flipped the question back at Singh, saying the minister also seemed to take a look and respond to the messages at odd hours, following a similar work schedule.

Sweet Success

WITH 'MELODY' becoming the talk of the town on Wednesday — after Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted a packet of the toffee to Italian PM Giorgia Meloni — Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal was quick to praise India's "toffee tale" as "melody" to the ears of the exchequer. "Sweetness of Made in India toffee wows the world", Goyal said, highlighting how the segment has recorded a 166% growth in the global demand in the last one decade.

'No-car day' in Chandigarh

Chandigarh: Chandigarh Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria and top IAS and IPS officers gave up their official cars and travelled to work by auto, e-bus, or bicycle on Wednesday, as the UT administration asked them to observe a "no-car day", after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's austerity appeal to cut down fuel consumption. ENS



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay during an event at the Secretariat in Chennai on Wednesday. PTI

Tamil Nadu minister Aadhav Arjuna, one of Vijay's key political negotiators, publicly signalled the new direction Wednesday. "The CM wants the Cabinet to function like one family. He wants the parties that extended support to be represented in the Cabinet." Congress general secretary KC Venugopal said that party president Mallikarjun Kharge had approved the induction of Congress legislators S Rajesh Kumar and P Vishwanathan into the ministry. "This is a historic occasion for us, as the Congress joins the Tamil Nadu cabinet after a long gap of 59 years," Venugopal said.

The Left parties, however, are expected to continue supporting the government from outside. Behind the scenes, the Cabinet expansion reflects the growing influence of the CPI(M), CPI and VCK in shaping the ideological boundaries of Vijay's young administration. On Tuesday, CPI(M) state secretary P Shanmugam had openly warned that the party would reconsider its support if the AIADMK rebels were inducted into the Cabinet. The Left argued that their support to TVK was intended to prevent "backdoor BJP rule" and ensure governance by the single largest party elected by the people, not to facilitate the entry of legislators associated with a BJP-aligned opposition formation.

The TVK had built much of its election campaign around

portraying both the DMK and the AIADMK as exhausted, corruption-ridden establishments. Bringing in leaders facing corruption investigations so early in Vijay's tenure risked damaging the government's carefully constructed "clean politics" image, party leaders said. Many within the TVK felt that including Velumani, who is perceived as close to sections of the BJP leadership, would send the wrong signal.

Another concern inside the party was the growing accusation from opposition parties that TVK had begun engaging in horse-trading politics within days of assuming office. The first indication that the rebels' leverage was weakening emerged shortly after the trust vote, when Velumani and Shanmugham reaffirmed that Edappadi K Palaniswami or EPS remained their party's general secretary and that they were not challenging his leadership directly.

Arjuna on Wednesday attempted to frame the rebels less as defectors seeking power and more as AIADMK loyalists upset over what they viewed as Palaniswami's willingness to explore post-poll cooperation with the DMK. "When the rebel AIADMK legislators met us, they said they wanted to fulfil the dreams of MGR and Jayalalitha and save the party," he said. He simulta-

neously revived TVK's criticism of both Dravidian majors, accusing the DMK and AIADMK of abandoning their ideological positions after the election in an attempt to prevent Vijay from assuming power. "People voted for change after nearly 50 years," Arjuna said. "But both parties underestimated TVK."

The strongest sign yet of where the coalition may be headed came from VCK chief Thol Thirumavalavan himself. After days of hesitation earlier this month during the government-formation crisis, the VCK leader acknowledged on Wednesday that TVK had privately assured allies that the AIADMK rebels would not be accommodated in the Cabinet. "I will discuss this with frontline leaders and take a decision," he said after receiving the formal invitation. Within the VCK, senior leaders are increasingly pushing for participation in government, arguing that after decades of protest politics and outside support arrangements, the party now has an opportunity to exercise direct administrative power.

For Vijay, a senior TVK leader said, the calculation is clearer. "A broad secular coalition may be politically safer than a numerically tempting but ideologically volatile alliance with rebels from a collapsing AIADMK," he said.

Pawar praise for PM leaves MVA allies red-faced

Shubhangi Khapre
Mumbai, May 20

NCP(SP) CHIEF Sharad Pawar's recent praise for Prime Minister Narendra Modi has caused unease among his MVA allies Shiv Sena (UBT) and Congress, which are targeting the Centre over its handling of the West Asia crisis and its impact at home.

"I may differ with Modi politically, but one must not forget that as PM, he is working to uphold India's prestige internationally. In the larger national interest, everybody should work collectively to uphold the country's prestige," Pawar said at an event on Tuesday.

While his remarks reflected a key aspect of Pawar's decades-long politics — unpredictability — it put his MVA allies in a spot.

Shiv Sena (UBT) Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Raut said his party "does not agree with Sharad Pawar", while Maharashtra Congress chief Harshwardhan Sapkal reiterated that Modi had "failed" the people of India. "The BJP has to take accountability for its government's failures."

On its part, the BJP has remained cautious in reacting to Pawar's remarks. "The Opposition should learn from Pawar. We must stand united on global issues. Pawar has sent out a strong message," a senior BJP leader said.

Last May, after Operation Sindoor and amid INDIA bloc partners jointly seeking a special session of Parliament to discuss it, Pawar had urged his allies to "rise above party lines" on matters related to defence.



CM V D Satheesan looks on as Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar greets G Sudhakaran after the latter took oath as the pro tem Speaker, in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday. PTI

In Kerala, Cong retains core ministries, IUML gets an expanded role

Shaju Philip
Thiruvananthapuram, May 20

CONGRESS WILL hold home, finance, health and tourism, while junior ally Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) will keep its previously-held key departments of industries, general education, public works and local self-government while adding fisheries and rural development to its kitty, as the V D Satheesan government announced portfolio allocation on Wednesday.

In the 21-strong cabinet, Chief Minister V D Satheesan will hold finance, ports and law after being forced to surrender the high-profile home and vigilance portfolios to senior leader Ramesh Chennithala, who lost the race for the post of CM. Congress got revenue (A P Anil Kumar), health and devaswom (K Muraleedharan), electricity (Sunny Joseph), tourism (P C Vishnunadh) and agriculture (T Siddique). Meanwhile, junior ally IUML retained the portfolios it held during the previous UDF regime, besides adding fisheries and rural development — both previously held by the Congress — to its basket.

Senior IUML minister P K Kunhalikutty, who took oath as second in the cabinet, got industries, IT, mining, AI and startups. Kunhalikutty had held the industries portfolio during the

last two UDF tenures. IUML also retained general education — which the Congress had coveted — as well as public works and local bodies. The Congress also conceded the rural development portfolio to IUML.

Higher education, which the previous LDF regime had hived off from the education portfolio, was allotted to Congress minister Roji M John. RSP nominee Shibu Baby John is forest minister, while Communist Marxist Party's C P John got transport. Kerala Congress (Joseph) nominee Mons Joseph is irrigation minister, while Kerala Congress (Jacob)'s Anoop Jacob got civil supplies. With Satheesan taking the Pollution Control Board, environment went to electricity minister Sunny Joseph.

The Latin Catholic community had earlier protested against handing over the fisheries portfolio to IUML. The minority development portfolio has also gone to IUML. The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church wanted the Congress to take over the department, alleging disparity in distribution of benefits when Muslim ministers had handled the portfolio. When the previous LDF regime assumed office in 2011, Pinarayi Vijayan took over the minority welfare department. In his first regime, the department was handled by KT Jaleel, a Communist Party of India (Marxist)-backed legislator.

Satheesan govt cancels SilverLine project, to erase survey markers

Shaju Philip
Thiruvananthapuram, May 20

THE CONGRESS-LED UDF government Wednesday notified the previous CPI(M) government's Rs 64,000-crore flagship project K-Rail, also known as SilverLine.

After a cabinet meeting, Chief Minister V D Satheesan announced that the SilverLine project had been cancelled. "The cabinet decided to denotify the project. The notifications issued for land acquisition would be cancelled. The yellow poles erected to fix the alignment of the corridor will be removed. The revenue department will be given instructions in this regard. Besides, all criminal cases registered in connection with public protests against the project will be withdrawn," he said.

The CM said the UDF was not against the high-speed rail

project but that the project was "an environmental disaster and financially unviable". "UDF had studied the project and found there was not even a detailed project report. The land acquired by the government was not denotified. This has caused problems for the people living in the project area."

The semi-high-speed rail corridor, connecting Thiruvananthapuram to the northern district headquarters of Kasargod, had faced stiff opposition from the people. The project was envisaged to reduce north-south travel time from 12 hours to less than four hours.

The project was promoted by Kerala Rail Development Corporation Limited, a joint venture of the state government and the Rail Ministry. However, the state government could not go ahead with the project for want of support from the Railways.

Cong Dalit leaders at Maya's door — a meeting that wasn't has UP buzzing

Maulshree Seth
Lucknow, May 20

SETTING OFF a buzz in Uttar Pradesh political circles, two senior Dalit leaders of the Congress landed up at BSP chief Mayawati's residence to meet her Tuesday evening. After the meeting failed to materialise as they reportedly did not have an appointment, the Congress called it a personal visit to enquire after Mayawati's health, and sent notices to the two — its Scheduled Caste (SC) Department national chairman Rajendra Paul Gautam and Congress MP Tanuj Punia.

Incidentally, the episode coincided with senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's visit to his constituency Raebareilly where, on Wednesday, he held two Dalit outreach programmes — addressing a "Bahujan Swabhimana Sabha" and inaugurating the statue of freedom fighter Veera Pasi. While the Congress has an alliance with the Samajwadi Party (SP) in Uttar Pradesh, and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav said Tuesday that their partnership would continue for the 2027 Assembly polls, the ties between the two parties are marked by constant friction. Many Congress leaders who apprehend that the SP won't share too many seats with the party have been pushing that the Congress strive to unite "like-minded" forces — including the BSP — against the BJP and the Yogi Adityanath government



The Congress struggles to explain why its SC Department national head Rajendra Paul Gautam and MP Tanuj Punia had gone to meet BSP chief Mayawati at her Lucknow residence on Tuesday. EXPRESS FILE

over issues related to the Constitution, Dalits and minorities.

The explanation given by Punia, also the Congress's SC Department head for UP, regarding how they came to be at Mayawati's residence has only fanned the speculation. "There was a meeting at the Congress SC Department office in which Gautam ji and office-bearers were present. During the discussion, Mayawati ji's health came up. Her residence is nearby, and Gautam ji said that she is a senior Dalit leader of our society and now around 70 years' old, and so we should go and enquire about her wellbeing. We went without calling beforehand thinking that if she was available, we could meet her... But as we were not given time to meet her, we returned," Punia said, adding that "there was no other motive".

AICC general secretary, in-charge, Uttar Pradesh, Avinash Pande told *The Indian Express*: "Their (Gautam and Punia's) visit had nothing to do with the Congress party or Rahul Gandhi ji. There was no mandate given to them by the party, nor by me as general secretary, in-charge... They have been asked to give an explanation for their conduct."

Apart from looking at options in UP, where the Congress is struggling to rise from rock bottom, a section of the party believes an alliance with Mayawati will boost the party's attempts nationwide to consolidate Dalits behind it, with Gandhi spearheading the effort. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, a Congress and SP campaign around the issue of "protecting" the Constitution, and by extension Dalit rights, against a domi-

nant BJP had led to surprising gains for the INDIA bloc in UP.

While insisting that Gautam and Punia's visit to the BSP chief was a courtesy call, a senior Congress leader also spoke of Mayawati's importance beyond UP. "She is not just a major Dalit leader of the state but of the country... There is a need to bring like-minded forces together against the Yogi Adityanath government over issues concerning Dalits, women and minorities," the leader said, adding that the BSP's own weakened position electorally means she needs friends. The BSP won just 1 seat in the 2022 UP Assembly elections, while in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, it failed to open its account in the state.

Mayawati had put behind bitter acrimony with the SP to align with the party in 2019. However, since then, the BSP chief has said more than once that the party does not gain from such alliances as while her Dalit vote gets transferred to the others, the latter are unable to help the BSP in return.

Having burnt its hands in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP too has been trying to woo Dalits back in UP. It has intensified outreach among Dalit and non-Yadav OBC communities through welfare schemes, representation and social engineering. The recent Cabinet revamp also showed this outreach, with two of the six new names Dalits and four OBCs.



The High Powered Committee, headed by Union MoS for Home Nityanand Rai, has convened a meeting on Friday

and strategic security interests". In a letter to L-G Vinai Kumar Saxena, they have called for scrapping of the proposal.

A former BJP MP from Ladakh, Chhewang has questioned his removal from the ABL, asking how he could be

ousted when he was the founding chairman of the body. He has also questioned the ABL's functioning, saying that the talks between the Centre and the Ladakh representatives have hit a dead end. "Both sides have remained firm in their respective

positions and are unwilling to compromise resulting in complete deadlock in the dialogue process," he told a press conference in Leh a few days ago. "The people are left with two options — either to intensify the agitation for their demands or enter negotiations and accept the proposals the government may eventually be willing to offer."

Chhewang said the ABL should restrict itself to speaking on the issues which were agreed upon. "We had agreed to speak only on the four-point agenda related to Ladakh's constitutional and political demands," he said, adding the issue of privatisation of electricity in Ladakh was not part of the organisation's mandate. "After I expressed my concerns about it through a message, I was removed. I am the founding

member of the Apex Body — how can I be removed without any proper consultation."

Sources said Chhewang is upset about the growing clout of the KDA and the representation given to Muslims in the ABL. Lakruk, however, says the agenda for talks was set by Chhewang. "He set the agenda himself. How can he today say that it is a hard stand," Lakruk asked. "The (joint) platform of ABL and KDA was also formed by him." The infighting within the ABL is likely to cast a shadow on the May 22 meeting.

The civil society groups from Leh and Kargil have jointly demanded full statehood for Ladakh and its inclusion under the Sixth Schedule, arguing that the UT's over 90% Scheduled Tribe (ST) population requires constitutional safeguards over land, re-

sources and cultural identity. In September 2025, four persons were killed and many injured in police firing in Leh as protests over demands for statehood and Sixth Schedule protections turned violent. While Chhewang may be alone in his fight against the ABL leadership, a new outfit, Voice of Buddhist Ladakh (VBL), formed early this year amid allegation of it being a "BJP proxy", could throw its weight behind him. The VBL has claimed to represent Buddhist interests in negotiations with the Centre.

The ABL has alleged that the VBL had been propped up by the administration to undercut the joint movement of the Leh and Kargil organisations. These divisions within the Ladakhi leadership may weaken the bargaining power of its representatives in their dialogue with the Centre.

● CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS OPPOSED TO PROPOSED 'PRIVATISATION' OF POWER SECTOR IN THE UNION TERRITORY

May 22 Ladakh talks: Why cracks in key Leh body give Centre an upper hand

Bashaarat Masood
Srinagar, May 20

DAYS AHEAD of the talks between the Centre and Ladakh's civil society organisations, the rifts in the Apex Body, Leh (ABL) have widened in the wake of its decision to accept the resignation of its founding chairman Thupstan Chhewang, which had been pending for months.

Amid growing differences within the ABL, Chhewang had resigned as its chairman in July 2025, citing health concerns. His resignation was earlier neither accepted nor rejected by the ABL leadership, which finally decided to accept it early this month. The ABL and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) are the umbrella organisations of various civil so-

ciety bodies in the Leh and Kargil regions, respectively. They are also part of the High Powered Committee (HPC), headed by Union MoS for Home Nityanand Rai, which has convened a meeting on May 22. The HPC has been examining demands raised by the Ladakh representatives.

While the ABL leadership has accused Chhewang of toeing the BJP line, the cracks in the organisation is likely to give the BJP-led Centre the upper hand in the talks. While Chhewang and ABL co-chairman Chering Lakruk had long been at loggerheads, the latest flashpoint between them is the civil society bodies' opposition to the proposed "privatisation" of the Ladakh Power Development Department (LPDD).

Chhewang has castigated the ABL's stance on the issue, claiming that it fell outside the latter's mandate. "He (Chhewang) was saying LPDD isn't our issue and we shouldn't raise it, but all others thought it's important to safeguard the interests of Ladakh," Lakruk said. "Since his stand seems pro-government, all the members said that we should accept his resignation."

Both the ABL and KDA have been up in arms against any proposal by the Ladakh administration to "privatise" the power sector in the region. They have held that if the proposal to form a joint venture between the LPDD (49% share) and the Rural Electrification Corporation (51% share), is implemented, it will "worsen" the unemployment problem in the UT, lead to increase in power tariff, and "compromise national

and strategic security interests".

A former BJP MP from Ladakh, Chhewang has questioned his removal from the ABL, asking how he could be

Boost to India-South Korea defence cooperation as Rajnath visits Seoul

Amrita Nayak Dutta
New Delhi, May 20

DEFENCE MINISTER Rajnath Singh on Wednesday met his South Korean counterpart Ahn Gyu Back in Seoul, where both sides reviewed the entire spectrum of defence cooperation and discussed ways to further expand collaboration in areas such as industry, production, maritime security, emerging technologies, military exchanges, logistics and regional security.

Singh also met South Korean Minister for Defense Acquisition Program Administration Lee Yong-chul and both agreed to harness the symbiotic efforts to create avenues for joint development, production and exports.

A roadmap to unlock the po-

tential of the India-Korea Defence Innovation Accelerator Ecosystem (KIND-X) to synergise the innovation ecosystems of the two countries was discussed.

In a statement, the Ministry of Defence said both sides acknowledged the growing convergence between India's Act East Policy and the Republic of Korea's (RoK) regional strategic vision, "reiterating their commitment to strengthening defence ties in line with the shared objectives of maintaining a free, open, inclusive and rule-based Indo-Pacific".

The ministry said MoUs were inked in key areas of defence co-operation, reflecting the expanding scope and depth of the bilateral partnership.

Agreements were exchanged on promoting cooperation in the



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with his South Korean counterpart Ahn Gyu-back in Seoul on Wednesday. ANI

field of defence cyberspace; training between India's National Defence College and Korea National Defence University; and UN Peacekeeping Cooperation, mak-

ing the partnership stronger and multidimensional.

In a post on X, Singh said the meeting was highly productive. Talking about the various agreements exchanged, he said this makes the India-South Korea partnership stronger and multidimensional.

Singh is currently on an official visit to South Korea and Vietnam. Earlier in the day, he laid a wreath at the National Cemetery of Korea and paid homage to the soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice in the service of their nation.

He later chaired the India-RoK Defence Industry Business RoundTable, which brought together senior government officials and leading defence industry representatives from both countries.

"The interaction provided an important platform for exploring new opportunities in defence manufacturing, co-development, co-production and supply chain partnerships," the Ministry statement noted, adding that Singh invited Korean defence companies to strengthen engagement with Indian industry and contribute towards long-term mutually beneficial collaboration.

He also highlighted that defence manufacturing is no longer confined only to conventional platforms and equipment, as modern defence ecosystems are powered by advanced electronics, artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, cyber technologies, sensors, semiconductors, quantum technologies, advanced materials and space-based capabilities.

2 farmhouses, 5 buildings and 97 plots: Odisha engineer held in assets case

Sujit Bisoyi
Bhubaneswar, May 20

WHEN HE was 20, Bhubaneswar Sabar joined the Odisha government as a junior engineer on a modest salary of Rs 6,000. When sleuths of the Odisha Vigilance department came knocking this week, they were astonished at how much it had grown: Sabar now allegedly owned five multi-storeyed buildings, 83 acres of land spread across 97 plots, two farmhouses spanning 17 acres, and a market complex.

This week, the state vigilance department conducted raids at six locations allegedly linked to Sabar, now an executive engineer, in connection with a disproportionate assets (DA) case.

A case against Sabar has been registered under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 2018, with the anti-corruption wing also seizing deposits worth Rs 10.72 lakh, one four-wheeler, cash, and household articles worth around Rs 20 lakh.

In an official statement, the department said its technical wing was carrying out a valuation of his properties. "The official was examined to ascertain the source of the assets. As he couldn't make a satisfactory explanation about amassing such huge properties, he was placed under arrest," a vigilance official told *The Indian Express*.

According to officials, when he first joined in 1999, Sabar was posted to the roads and buildings division at Sunabeda in Odisha's Koraput district. He was promoted to assistant engineer in 2013 and executive engineer in March 2024.

A native of Kalahandi district, Sabar has not been transferred outside his home district since 2007 despite getting two promotions, officials said.

Most of Sabar's properties are either in Kalahandi or Nabarangpur district, where he was previously posted, officials said, adding that the probe is continuing.

This is part of the Odisha government's crackdown on corruption. In 2025, Odisha Vigilance registered 205 cases against 339 persons, including 53 Class-I officers and 39 Class-II officers. The 205 cases included 49 cases of amassing DA and 98 trap cases.

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

Delhi Government

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वरीय पुलिस अधीक्षक का कार्यालय पूर्वी सिंहभूम, जमशेदपुर

लापता: आवश्यक सूचना

गुमशुदा पुरुष दीपक मुखी, उम्र-करीब 40 वर्ष।

सर्व साधारण को सूचित करना है कि आवेदिका सह मौं राजेश्वरी मुखी के द्वारा अपने पुत्र दीपक मुखी, उम्र-करीब 40 वर्ष की गुमशुदगी के संबंध में संबंधित थाना बिरसानगर में लिखित आवेदन दिया गया है। आवेदन में इनके द्वारा बताया गया कि गुमशुदा दीपक मुखी, उम्र-करीब 40 वर्ष, पिता-सीताराम मुखी, पता-बिरसानगर जोन नं०-06, थाना-बिरसानगर, जिला-पूर्वी सिंहभूम, जमशेदपुर जो दिनांक-05.04.2026 को मुम्बई रेलवे स्टेशन से घर के लिए निकला है अभी तक घर नहीं पहुँचा है। आवेदिका एवं इनके परिवारवालों ने अपने स्तर से काफी खोजबीन किया परन्तु कुछ पता नहीं चल सका। गुमशुदा पुरुष का इलिया निम्न प्रकार है :-उम्र-करीब 40 वर्ष, ऊँचाई-करीब 05 फीट 02 इंच, रंग-मोरा, बाल+औख-काला, पहनावा-काला रंग का पैंट, कुल शर्ट, पैर में चप्पल तथा भाषा-हिन्दी एवं बंगला।

अतः आप सभी जन साधारण से अनुरोध है कि उपरोक्त गुमशुदा के संबंध में किसी प्रकार की जानकारी प्राप्त होती है तो इसकी सूचना वरीय पुलिस अधीक्षक, पूर्वी सिंहभूम, जमशेदपुर के कार्यालय में निम्नांकित फोन नम्बर पर सूचित करें।

वरीय पुलिस अधीक्षक, पूर्वी सिंहभूम, जमशेदपुर
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पुलिस उपअधीक्षक, (नगर)
शाना पमारी, बिरसानगर

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Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/G, Northern Railway, Delhi Division invites bids through E-Auction through IREPS ([https:// ireps.gov.in/](https://ireps.gov.in/)) for the allotment of under mention contracts at following Railway stations/locations:-

E-Catalogue No.	Date & Time of bidding	Railway Stations/Locations/Lots
Parking-17-2026	04.06.2026 at 12:00 hrs.	1. Sampla (Cycle-Scooter-Car-Bus-Truck-Tempo), (2nd Entry & Main Entry)
2. Bareta (Cycle-Scooter-Car-Bus-Truck-Tempo), Budhlada (Cycle-Scooter-Car-Bus-Truck-Tempo), 3. Noli (Cycle-Scooter-Car-E-Rickshaw) & Khakra (Cycle-Scooter-Car), 4. Thanesar (Cycle-Scooter), 5. Mansa (Cycle-Scooter-Car-Auto e-Rickshaw) & Narwana (Cycle-Scooter-Car- Auto e-Rickshaw)= Total 4 Combined site and 1 Single Site.		

Website particulars where complete details of E-Auction can be seen

<https://ireps.gov.in/>

All contractors who intend to participate in the e-auctions conducted through E-Auction Leasing module of IREPS should fulfill following mandatory requirements before they can submit their bids:-

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- Updation of Turnover Details
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Railway Authority to contact, in case of any query

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Tel.:011-23743084

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पत्रांक : वरिष्ठ0 / ई-निविदा सेल) / 2026 / 753

दिनांक : 19 / 05 / 2026

ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना

महाप्रबन्धक (अभियन्त्रण) ग्रेटर नौएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण द्वारा मुख्य कार्यपालक अधिकारी, ग्रेटर नौएडा की ओर से ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या-नरिष्ठ00 / ई-निविदा सेल) / 2026 / 752 दिनांक 19 / 05 / 2026 के माध्यम से उल्लेखित क्रम संख्या-01 से 40 तक के कार्य की ई-निविदाये आमन्त्रित की जाती है। समस्त नियम व शर्तें ग्रेटर नौएडा प्राधिकरण की वेबसाइट : www.greaternoidaauthority.in पर ई-निविदा लिंक एवं ई-पोर्टल <https://etender.up.nic.in> पर उपलब्ध है। किसी परिवर्तन, संशोधन व अतिरिक्त सूचनाओं के लिए उक्त वेबसाइट देखते रहें।

क्र.सं.	कार्य का नाम / वर्क सर्किल	अनुमानित लागत
जलापूर्ति औ सौर के कार्य		
1.	ग्रेटर नौएडा क्षेत्रान्तर्गत सैक्टर-33 (पाई-1 और पाई-2) स्थित अपर जलाशय परिसर में 2000 किलोलीटर क्षमता के भूमिगत जलाशय का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-जल)	₹0 209.75 लाख
निर्माण का कार्य		
2	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सैक्टर के0पी0-2 में एक्सपोनार्ट के आसपास ग्रास पेवर ब्लॉक लगाने का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-4)	₹0 223.20 लाख
3	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सैक्टर ईकोटेक-1 (एक्सटेंशन-1) और टैकजोन-2 के बीच ज्यू कट से रामपुर कट तक 60 मीटर और 80 मीटर जंक्शन प्लाइवुड तक (दोनों ओर) 60.0 मीटर चौड़ी मुख्य मार्ग और सर्विस रोड पर फुटपाथ का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-7)	₹0 405.23 लाख
4	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सैक्टर-36, 37 और सैक्टर-पाई-1 एवं पाई-2 के बीच ऐच्छर टी-पाईंट से 60 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क के मुख्य कैरिजवे को 130 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क तक चौड़ीकरण का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-5)	₹0 438.44 लाख
5.	ग्रेटर नौएडा की 24 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क (सैक्टर एक्सटेंशन फट) से कासना एण्ट्री प्लाइवुड तक नई सर्विस रोड एवं ड्रेन का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-7)	₹0 456.07 लाख
6.	ग्रेटर नौएडा की 130 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क का तिलपना रोडरी से मकौडा रोडरी तक रिसर्फिंग का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-7)	₹0 507.50 लाख
7.	ग्रेटर नौएडा में नवादा रोडरी से डेल्टा रोडरी तक वाया ओमेक्स रोडरी से साई मंदिर रोडरी 60 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क का चौड़ीकरण का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-5)	₹0 608.46 लाख
8.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सैक्टर-2 और 3 की रोडरी से तुस्याना कट तक 60 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क का चौड़ीकरण कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-3)	₹0 668.81 लाख
9.	ग्रेटर नौएडा में सूरजपुर पुलिस चौकी से डेन्टो कम्पनी तक डी0एस0सी0 रोड का चौड़ीकरण कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-3)	₹0 712.69 लाख
10.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सैक्टर सिग्मा-1/2 और सैक्टर-36/37 के बीच 60 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क का चौड़ीकरण एवं रिसर्फिंग का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-5)	₹0 766.22 लाख
11.	ग्रेटर नौएडा में अमृतापुरम रोडरी से रामपुर रोडरी सड़क के 60 मी० चौड़ी सड़क के चौड़ीकरण का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-5)	₹0 768.40 लाख
12.	ग्रेटर नौएडा में नटों की मढ़ैया रोडरी से कासना टी पॉइंट /एस.के. रोड तक 80 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क का चौड़ीकरण एवं रिसर्फिंग का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-5)	₹0 776.73 लाख
13.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के तिलपना रोडरी से सिरसा रोडरी तक 130 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क की सेंट्रल वर्ज में आर0सी0सी0 ड्रिवाइडर का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-7)	₹0 785.65 लाख
14.	ग्रेटर नौएडा की 80 मी० चौड़ी सड़क पर (एशियन पेंट कम्पनी से सिरसा रोडरी तक) आर0सी0सी0 सेंट्रल वर्ज और सड़क चौड़ीकरण का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-7)	₹0 817.04 लाख
15.	ग्रेटर नौएडा सैक्टर-के0पी-5 और सैक्टर-3 के बीच 80 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क पर ग्रास गिड का कार्य और 80 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क का अवशेष कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-3)	₹0 1507.41 लाख
16.	ग्रेटर नौएडा सैक्टर-कपा-2 (एम.एम.एल.पी.) से (डी.एम.आई.सी) तक 45 मीटर चौड़ी पेरिफेरल सड़क एवं आर.सी.सी. नाली और आर.ओ.बी. 146 प्लुट रोड तक (ग्राम पाली एवं पल्ला क्षेत्र) का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-6)	₹0 1994.83 लाख
17.	ग्रेटर नौएडा में रामपुर से डेल्टा-2 रोडरी तक 60 मी० चौड़ी सड़क का चौड़ीकरण का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-5)	₹0 711.05 लाख
18.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के ग्राम चिपयाना ड्रुजुर्ग में रेलवे ब्रिज से गोस्वामी रोड और ए0बी0एस0 कॉलेज से प्राथमिक विद्यालय तक सी0सी सड़क और आर0सी0सी0 नाली का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-4)	₹0 1232.91 लाख
19.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सैक्टर-01 में 60 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क के किनारे आर0सी0सी नाली का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-3)	₹0 1706.48 लाख
20.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सैक्टर ईकोटेक-1 एक्सटेंशन-1 की 80 मीटर चौड़ी पेरिफेरियल सड़क, सिरसा रोडरी से ई0पी0ई0 एण्ट्री प्लाइवुड तक (दोनों ओर) चौड़ीकरण का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-7)	₹0 712.06 लाख
21.	ग्रेटर नौएडा में नटों की मढ़ैया से कासना टी-प्लाईट (एस0के0 रोड) तक एक छोर से दूसरे छोर तक फुटपाथ एवं आर0सी0सी0 नाला बनाये जाने का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-5)	₹0 1102.31 लाख
22.	ग्रेटर नौएडा में ए0टी0एस0 रोडरी से 130 मीटर रोडरी तक 60 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क के चौड़ीकरण और मैन कैरिज-वे एवं सर्विस रोड का रिसर्फिंग का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-5)	₹0 1449.37 लाख
23.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सैक्टर बी0जेड0पी0 एरिया के 45 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क एवं 24 मीटर चौड़ी सड़कों का रिसर्फिंग कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-4)	₹0 936.64 लाख
24.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सैक्टर ईकोटेक-10 की 60 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क के मुख्य आर0सी0सी0 नाली (ग्राम घंघोला टी प्लाईट से घंघोला पुलिस चौकी) ऊँचा उठाने एवं कवर रखने का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-7)	₹0 200.47 लाख
25.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के ग्राम तिलपना में स्थित डेन्टो कम्पनी से कंटेनर डिपो तक डीएससी रोड पर आर0सी0सी0 जर्सी बैरियर लगाना व मरम्मत करने का कार्य (वर्क सर्किल-3)	₹0 211.05 लाख
26.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सैक्टर ईकोटेक-2 (एसटी माइक्रो साइड) में विभिन्न स्थानों से आर0सी0सी0 नाली का मरम्मत एवं निर्माण तथा रोड मार्किंग का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-4)	₹0 270.14 लाख
27.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सैक्टर ईकोटेक-11 की 60 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क डी0एम0आई0 सी0 के पास मायवा से घंघोला कट तक रिसर्फिंग का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-7)	₹0 386.31 लाख
28.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सैक्टर ईकोटेक-11 की ग्राम घंघोला कट से वीरसी कट तक 60 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क पर रिसर्फिंग का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-7)	₹0 333.23 लाख
29.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सैक्टर टैकजोन-4 में पुलिस चौकी से अंडरपास तक 60 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क के सर्विस रोड का निर्माण, आर0सी0सी0 नाली, एवं प्री-कार्ट नाली की व्यवस्था एवं फिफिंग का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-3)	₹0 887.77 लाख
30.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सैक्टर-ईकोटेक-11 में 60 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क के मुख्य आर0सी0सी0 ड्रेन का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-7)	₹0 428.50 लाख
31.	ग्रेटर नौएडा में ए0टी0एस0 रोडरी से ओमेक्स रोडरी तक 60 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क के चौड़ीकरण और प्रोटेक्शन वॉल का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-5)	₹0 440.58 लाख
32.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सैक्टर टैकजोन-4 (स्पोर्ट्स सिटी कर्व रोड) में 60 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क पर आर0सी0सी0 ड्रेन, सेंट्रल वर्ज का निर्माण और ग्रास पेवर की टाइलें बिछाने का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-3)	₹0 474.12 लाख
33.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सैक्टर ओमीकान-2 में 09 मीटर एवं 12 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क का रिसर्फिंग का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-6)	₹0 511.32 लाख
34.	ग्रेटर नौएडा में 130 मीटर स्थित मिश्रान रोडरी से ओमेक्स रोडरी तक 60 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क एवं सर्विस रोड का चौड़ीकरण, ग्रास ब्लॉकों और रिसर्फिंग कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-6)	₹0 707.43 लाख
35.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सैक्टर-130 पर सड़क सुरक्षा उपकरण जैसे रेडो रिफ्लेक्टिव स्टड, डिलीनिएटर, रोड मार्किंग स्पीड अरेस्टर आदि लगाना और उनकी स्थाना का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-7)	₹0 709.25 लाख
36.	ग्रेटर नौएडा में दुर्घटना स्थल पर आर0सी0सी0 सुरक्षा दीवार/जर्सी बैरियर और प्रीकास्ट दीवार का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-1)	₹0 222.71 लाख
37.	ग्रेटर नौएडा की 130 मी० चौड़ी सड़क (आर0एच0एस0) के समानांतर सैनी रोडरी से तोशा कट तक बस-वे और पाथ-वे का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-7)	₹0 2519.89 लाख
38.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के ग्राम दादूपुर-दनकोर में इंटरलॉकिंग टाइल्स उपलब्ध कराने व बिछाने तथा ड्रेन (ब्रिक और आर0सी0सी0) का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-8)	₹0 479.97 लाख
39.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सैक्टर-जू-3 में (झाडा रोडरी से हायर रोडरी) तक आर0सी0सी0 नाले पर प्रीकास्ट होलो कोर स्लेब का कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-6)	₹0 300.50 लाख
40.	ग्रेटर नौएडा में हेरिटेज रोडरी से जिम्रो रोडरी तक 105 मीटर सर्विस रोड (दोनों तरफ) बसावे (माहिनी ओर) का पुनर्निर्माण और आर0सी0सी0 नाली का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क सर्किल-4)	₹0 405.38 लाख

(अ) क्रम सं०-01 से 20 तक के कार्यों को दिनांक-22.05.2026 से 04.06.2026 को 5:00 बजे तक अपलौड किया जा सकता है। प्राप्त ई-निविदाओं की प्री-क्वालिफिकेशन दिनांक 08.06.2026 को 11:00 बजे खोली जाएगी।

(ब) क्रम सं०-21 से 40 तक के कार्यों को दिनांक-26.05.2026 से 09.06.2026 को 5:00 बजे तक अपलौड किया जा सकता है। प्राप्त ई-निविदाओं की प्री-क्वालिफिकेशन दिनांक 11.06.2026 को 11:00 बजे खोली जाएगी।

वरिष्ठ प्रबंधक (ई-निविदा सेल)

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TENDER NOTICE

Date: 21-05-2026

E Tender (Commercial & Technical) are invited for following job from all interested bidders

NIT No.	Tender Description	EMD (Rs.)	Start & Due Date & Time of Submission
NPCL/FY26-27/HT JTGK/003 Dated 21.05.2026	ANNUAL RATE CONTRACT OF SUPPLY OF HT JOINTING KITS	5.0 Lakh	21.05.2026 & 11.06.2026 (up to 15:00 hours)

Cost of 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.)

New Delhi

Centre provides Y category security to TMC Lok Sabha MP

Ravik Bhattacharya
Kolkata, May 20

THE CENTRE has provided Y category security to TMC MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar after a review of her threat profile, sources said, adding the MHA has extended the CISF security cover to the Lok Sabha MP from Barasat.

The development comes amid significant changes in the party's parliamentary leadership, with party supremo Mamata Banerjee replacing her with Kalyan Banerjee as the TMC chief whip for the Lok Sabha after the party's defeat in the Assembly elections.

Following the change, Dastidar wrote in Bengali on her Facebook page, "Knew them since '76, rewarded for four decades of loyalty," she wrote in Bengali on her Facebook page. Y category security is a protective cover granted to individuals facing a moderate level of threat.

BJP worker 'denies' Valsad families access to borewell after election loss

Kamal Saiyed
Surat, May 20

WEEKS AFTER a father and son were arrested for cutting off the drinking water supply to a Bharuch village after the son lost an election, a similar case has surfaced in Valsad district. There, a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) worker allegedly refused people access to a gram panchayat borewell, reportedly because the party lost a seat in the recent taluka panchayat elections.

Residents of Tabadmal Faliya (Street) in Valsad's Gadhi village faced drinking water woes for at least two days after BJP worker Amresh Budher denied them access to the borewell, which was sunk by the state government on gram panchayat land, since the Congress won this particular seat in the Kaprada taluka panchayat elections that were held on April 26.

The taluka panchayat in question has a total of 22 seats, out of which 18 were won by the BJP's candidates and the remaining four by Congress's.

Gadhvi village sarpanch Bapu Kharprade, who is from the BJP, said, "Our village falls under the Suliya seat of the Kaprada taluka panchayat. In the recent polls, Congress candidate Manisha Gond won the Suliya seat, beating my daughter-in-law, Yashi Mukesh Kharprade, who was the BJP candidate."

Kharprade added, "On Tuesday, I learnt about Amreshbhai Budher denying villagers water from the borewell, and I warned him. I was the sarpanch in 2012 when this borewell was sunk with state government funds.

'Detect, delete, deport': Suvendu's new policy on ousting 'infiltrators'

Atri Mitra
Kolkata, May 20

WEST BENGAL Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Wednesday announced a new "detect, delete and deport" framework against "infiltrators" in the state. The state government also announced to hand over a 27-km stretch of land to the Border Security Force (BSF) within two weeks, for long-pending fencing work and construction of border outposts along the India-Bangladesh International Border.

Adhikari made the announcements while addressing a press conference alongside senior BSF officials after a land transfer ceremony at the state secretariat Nabanna on Wednesday. Under the new mechanism — as part of what the CM described as a broader "detect, delete and deport" framework — the "infiltrators" detained by the state police would be handed



West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari with BSF Director General Praveen Kumar in Kolkata on Wednesday. ANI

over directly to the BSF for deportation. Adhikari asserted the seven communities protected under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), and found to have entered the country before the 2024 deadline, would remain outside the ambit of the new mechanism. He said such residents would not face "har-

assment" of any kind.

Meanwhile, others identified as "infiltrators" by the police would be detained and deported with immediate effect. "Those who are not covered under the CAA will be treated as infiltrators. State police will detain and hand them over to the BSF." Those found to have "il-

legally" entered the country would be immediately arrested and handed over to the BSF, which, in coordination with the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), will arrange for their deportation "back to their own country", he said, adding that the Centre and the state government would work together to stop infiltration, signalling a sharper policy turn on infiltration and border security — a key issue raised by the BJP for long and now at the centre of the new state government's agenda.

Adhikari also alleged that institutional coordination along the border had weakened over the years. Hitting out at the TMC, Adhikari said: "A letter was sent by the Centre to the state on May 14 last year regarding the direct handover of infiltrators to the BSF, but the previous government failed to implement this important provision. We have now enforced it."

"During the previous government, there was not a single coordination meeting with the districts in the border areas." He said the new government has been regularly holding these meetings, and if necessary, they could be held at the local police station level, as well.

The BJP had promised land allocation for border fencing within 45 days of forming the government in the state. The new Cabinet had also approved the land transfer proposal, and tasked the chief secretary with completing the process within the 45-day deadline.

India shares a 4,096-km border with Bangladesh, of which a 2,216-km stretch falls in West Bengal. The twin announcements by the CM have sent a clear message of renewed Centre-state coordination and a stringent stand on border security and infiltration.

WITH PTI INPUTS

CUTTACK'S GI-TAGGED SILVER FILIGREE INDUSTRY IS STARING AT A CRISIS

Soaring prices, import curbs push Odisha's filigree artisans to the brink

Sujit Bisoyi & George Mathew
Bhubaneswar, Mumbai, May 20

FOR THE better part of the last three decades, Ajay Dey's routine was unvarying. He would complete his morning routine and head for his family's filigree workshop in Cuttack's Shaikh Bazar at 10 am, spending hours crafting silver into intricate items — from the famous Konark wheel and dancing peacocks to delicate necklaces, earrings and bracelets. The hours were long, the work tiring, and for all their labour, this family of artisans would make Rs 30,000-40,000 a month.

But the recent government curbs on silver imports threaten to upend a livelihood already shaken by soaring prices of the precious metal. "I have been working here since I was 15, but I've never seen such a dull market before. Our business has already been affected due to a steep increase in the silver price. Now the import duty hike would further worsen the situation. We have not been receiving orders while those who paid in advance have requested not to proceed with the order," the 44-year-old Dey tells *The Indian Express*.

He isn't alone in this dilemma. Last week, the central government decided to raise the customs duty on imports of gold and silver to 15% from 6% and eventually put silver imports for domestic consumption under the restricted category, meaning prior government approval is required. The development comes at a time when a persist-



For nearly 500 filigree artisans in Cuttack, the latest government measures spell bad news. FILE

ent supply deficit and higher industrial demand, coupled with geopolitical tensions, have sent silver prices soaring.

For the nearly 500 artisans of the Geographical Indication-tagged Tarakasi artwork in Odisha's Cuttack, the latest measure spells bad news, especially as the festival season from September to March approaches. Markets that would normally be bustling with activity now look sparse.

"We used to process 15-20 kg of silver every month, which came down to 6-7 kg in the last few months. These days, we hardly process 1-2 kg of silver for filigree work due to lack of demand," Dey says.

A craft under strain

A 1,000-year-old city, Cuttack is famous for its Rupa Tarakasi (silver filigree) work of intricate design and fine craftsmanship. In Odia, "tara" means wire and "kasi" means to design.

As part of Rupa Tarakasi, silver bricks are transformed into thin fine wires or foils and used to create jewellery and artefacts. The famed handicraft work received a geographical indication (GI) tag in March 2024.

Though the exact origin of the filigree art in Cuttack is unclear, it is known to have existed as far back as the 12th century, with the art form receiving considerable patronage under the Mughals. Typically, Tarakasi is an art form passed down through generations, artisans learning it from family elders and supplying products to jewellery shops across the country and to the state-owned agency — Utkalika. The grand silver filigree tableaux are also popular in puja pandals.

Even before the central government's measures and soaring silver prices, duplicate filigree products had led to significant attrition in the artisan community. With younger generations

from artisan families opting for other career options, official sources put the number of artisans now at 500 — a quarter of the 3,000 that existed in 1996.

Silver prices have shot up by over 200% since January 2025, with demand boosted by sectors such as solar energy, electric vehicles and semiconductors. The austerity measures sound a death knell for an already shaky industry. According to artisans, silver, which cost Rs 1 lakh per kg last May, now stands at Rs 3 lakh.

Soaring silver prices have also led to a sharp rise in the cost of filigree items. "The price of products has almost doubled in the past one year. Why would someone opt to buy a filigree artefact at a high cost," said Tabrez Khan, a Cuttack-based artisan, adding that corporate orders have also declined.

Meanwhile, experts insist the restrictions mean India has made silver imports more controlled. "The silver import restriction doesn't mean India has shut the door, it means the entry is now guarded. Supply isn't stopping, it's being channelled only through nominated agencies like the RBI-approved banks, DGFT-approved entities, jewellers via the bullion exchange," said Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities. "For the domestic market, that almost always translates into higher premiums," he said.

His words, however, offer little solace to Dey, who fears for his livelihood. "We can't do any other work. How would we survive, run our family and repay the loan we have taken?"

• BRIEFLY



People gather near the helicopter in Tehri Garhwal district's Satyo-Sakalana area, Uttarakhand, on Wednesday. PTI

UTTARAKHAND

Chopper from Badrinath lands in Tehri after mid-air scare; no injuries

A HELICOPTER flying from Badrinath to Dehradun was forced to make an emergency landing in Tehri district Wednesday, officials said. The Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority said that around 9 am Wednesday, a Bell 407 helicopter, belonging to Trans Bharat Aviation, made an emergency landing amid severe downdraft conditions in Tehri's Dhanaulti. While landing, it collided with a 33 KV high-tension power line, causing damage to the rear portion of the aircraft. A total of seven passengers, including the pilot, were on board the helicopter, and all are safe. All passengers have been sent to Dehradun by taxi. ENS

DRDO officer found dead in Jharkhand

A DEFENCE Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) officer was found hanging from a tree in Ramgarh, Jharkhand, on Wednesday, a police officer said. Kamal Kishore Mahto (30), a resident of Talatand village, was a Grade-1 officer and posted in Bengaluru, the officer said, adding he had come home on holiday. "Prima facie, it seems he died by suicide. Probe is on," Ramgarh SP Mukesh Kumar Lunayati said, adding they are awaiting the autopsy report to establish the cause of death. PTI

In Odisha, man lynched over 'sorcery'; 25 held

A MOB dragged a man out of his house in Odisha's Cuttack, lynched him on the suspicion of practising black magic, and then burnt his body to erase evidence on May 10, following which 25 people were arrested, police said on Wednesday. The arrests were made on Tuesday — a day after the victim's father lodged a police complaint. "During interrogation, one of the arrested accused confessed to the crime," Cuttack (Rural) SP Vinit Agrawal said, adding that further investigation is underway. PTI

Chhattisgarh: Chargesheet in tribal murder case links SDM to 'illegal bauxite commission'

Jayprakash S Naidu
Raipur, May 20

MONTHS AFTER a Chhattisgarh sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) and three others were arrested for beating a 62-year-old tribal man to death, a chargesheet alleges the killing took place during an attempt to extort a "commission" linked to illegal bauxite transport in the area.

The accused, SDM Karun Dahariya, a State Administrative Service Officer, and his three associates were arrested for the murder of Karan Ram alias Ramnaresh and injuring two men on February 15 this year in a jungle area next to Hanspur village on the Chhattisgarh-Jharkhand border. The victims were allegedly assaulted after they stopped a truck carrying illegal bauxite, leading to the killing.

Balrampur SP Vaibhav Banker said Dahariya had seized

the truck from Jharkhand and brought it to Chhattisgarh without permission. The truck owner allegedly suspected robbery and contacted the three victims, who tried to stop the truck in Hanspur, prompting Dahariya to reach the spot. He had previously demanded a "commission" from the truck owner.

In his defence, Dahariya allegedly told police that he had reached the spot upon receiving reports of illegal mining, although police allege the claim has not been substantiated. While Ramnaresh was killed, two other men, Ajit Ram Urao, 60, and Akash Kumar Aghariya, 20, sustained injuries.

Aghariya had said that all three victims were returning home from their fields at around 8 pm, and were about 500 metres from their village when they were attacked by the officer and his men.

• IN ITS 2025 REPORT, PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION CHOSE PEN-AND-PAPER EXAM FOR NEET WHILE STATING THAT COMPUTER-BASED TEST BE HELD ONLY IN GOVT CENTRES

NEET leak firestorm: How Parliament, TN panels flagged NTA's loopholes, failings

Vikas Pathak
New Delhi, May 20

DAYS AFTER the NEET-UG examination for admission to undergraduate medical courses was scrapped following an alleged paper leak, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan announced last Friday that it will be a computer-based test (CBT) from next year onward. So far, it has been a pen-and-paper exam.

However, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports, in its report to Parliament last year (371st Report, 2025), preferred the pen-and-paper model, saying, "Between the two, the Committee supported a greater focus on pen-and-paper exams given that there are several models of such exams which have been leak-proof for years — including the CBSE and UPSC exams. The Committee recommends that the NTA study these models and implement the same." The NTA, constituted by the Centre

in 2018, conducts the NEET-UG exam among several other centralised admission tests for professional and academic courses.

The House Committee had not rejected the online model entirely, though. "The Committee was informed that with regards to securing the exam process, the tradeoffs are as follows. Pen and paper exams offer more opportunities for paper leaks, while computer-based tests (CBT) can be hacked in a manner that is difficult to detect," it stated, adding that "In the case of CBT, the Committee recommends that these exams be hosted only in government or government-controlled centres and never in private centres."

The Committee, headed by senior Rajya Sabha MP from the Congress, Digvijaya Singh, had flagged problems with the NTA's operation, urging it to improve it. "The Committee reiterates that the NTA's performance in the last year has not inspired much confidence. It has been brought to the Committee's notice that in 2024

alone, of the 14 competitive exams conducted by the NTA, at least five faced major issues and as a result, three exams viz. UGC-NET, CSIR-NET and NEET-PG had to be postponed, one exam viz. NEET-UG saw instances of paper leaks, and one exam i.e. CUET (UG/PG) saw its results postponed," it noted.

"In JEE Main 2025 held in January 2025, at least 12 questions had to be withdrawn due to errors noted in the final answer key of the engineering entrance exam. The Committee observed that such instances don't inspire confidence of the examinees in the system. The Committee, therefore, recommends that NTA needs to quickly get their act together so that such instances... do not occur in future," the panel said.

Blacklisted firms

In its report, the Committee noted that "several firms involved in paper setting, administration, and correction have been blacklisted by one organisation/ state government but



Security personnel detain NSUI members protesting against the NEET paper leak, outside the NTA office in Delhi on Wednesday. ANI

that this, however, is not impeding their securing of contracts from other states or organisations". It stated that "such blacklisted firms must not be engaged for any entrance test by the NTA or the state governments", adding that "The Committee, therefore, recommends that the Department (Department of Higher Education) should compile a nationwide list of blacklisted firms along with the persons or en-

tities that constitute such firms so as to prevent such firms/ persons/entities from securing future contracts and bring further clarity in this regard."

The panel underlined that "the NTA collected an estimated Rs 3,512.98 crore, while it has spent Rs 3,064.77 crore on the conduct of exams, thereby, creating a surplus of Rs 448 crore in the last six years", recommending that this corpus be used to "build the agency's capabilities

to conduct tests, or to strengthen regulatory and monitoring capabilities for its vendors". The NTA, the Committee said, should produce not just an audited statement, but also "an annual report clearly outlining its activities in detail and submit the same to the Parliament annually". Calling upon the NTA to declare CUET results in time given repeated delays, it said, "Such a delay is a cause of major concern as it not only delays the admission process but also delays the start of the academic session by the on-boarded Universities which ultimately puts unnecessary pressure on the students."

Coaching centres

Expressing concern over the mushrooming of private coaching centres for competitive exams, the panel recommended that the Department of Higher Education work with the NTA "to ensure that the papers are set to more closely reinforce the curriculum of school exams, to avoid the introduction of a parallel curriculum and the accom-

panying coaching centre industry". It called for "a high-level panel to address proliferation of coaching centres and suggest methods to regulate the same".

Tamil Nadu panel

A high-level Tamil Nadu panel on the Centre-state relations, set up by the then MK Stalin-led DMK government in April 2025, recommended the NTA be disbanded and exams be conducted once again through diverse agencies. It made suggestions for the education sector, among other things, while flagging federal concerns. The committee, headed by Justice Kurian Joseph, retired apex court judge, comprises former IAS officer K Ashok Vardhan Shetty and former Vice Chairman of State Planning Commission M Naganathan as members. It submitted Part I of its report in February 2026, which the then Stalin government tabled in House.

The report pitched for removing education from the Concurrent List and placing it in the State List. It demanded that

top 100 institutions be freed from the UGC and other regulations, subject to a 10-year review; exams be conducted by diverse agencies yet again; and the practice of the Governor as the Chancellor of state universities should end. The panel also called upon the Centre to "amend Article 343 to constitutionally entrench English as the permanent official language of the Union".

The panel targeted the over-centralisation of the NEET exam leading to states having no say in admissions to colleges established, funded and administered by them, seeing this "as the most aggressive intervention in the federal educational space". "...Even with flawless execution, high-stakes national entrance tests, particularly for UG admissions to State institutions, remain constitutionally undesirable, pedagogically unsound, and harmful to student well-being. With a malfunctioning NTA, these risks are only magnified," the committee said.

FULL REPORT ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

SC issues notice on liquor being sold in juice-like packaging

Express News Service
New Delhi, May 20

THE SUPREME Court on Wednesday issued notice on a plea seeking a ban on the sale of liquor in inconspicuous packaging like portable PET bottles, cartons, and plastic sachets.

A bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justice Joyymalya Bagchi sought the response of the Centre, states, and Union Territories on a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by the NGO Community Against Drunken Driving (CADD). Appearing for the petitioner, advocate Vipin Nair said that “unlike tobacco, there is no warning on these packs” which “are like fruit juices but contain vodka, with pictures of apples, chilli mango vodka etc”.

The CJI remarked that it’s “very deceptive.” The plea said the sale of liquor in inconspicuous packaging has the potential to dramatically increase the public consumption of alcohol and stressed the need for standardisation and harmonisation of excise policies of different states regarding the bottling of liquor.

It said that the sale of liquor in such packages poses various risks, including consumption by juveniles, drinking in a moving vehicle, health risks, increased ease of smuggling, ease of public consumption, and environmental risks. The plea also pointed out that cartons have attractive packaging with vivid colours, but do not have prominent health warnings like in the case of cigarettes, to dissuade people from drunken driving and responsible drinking. The warning, if any, is only in small fine print, which would be hardly visible to a consumer, Nair pointed out.

The names are misleading and use of fruit names alongside colour photographs of apples and mangoes on the packaging reinforces the deception, the petitioner said. It added that this reflects a deliberate marketing strategy to pass off alcoholic beverages as fruit juices, to evade scrutiny by the authorities and further target underage consumers.

CBI books former Navy captain in disproportionate assets case

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, May 20

THE CBI has registered an FIR against a former Indian Navy captain for allegedly amassing disproportionate assets worth over Rs 3 crore, officials said on Wednesday.

The officer, who joined the Navy as a sub-lieutenant on July 1, 1989, rose to the rank of captain on August 6, 2016, before retiring in 2024, they said.

According to the FIR, the officer was allegedly involved in corrupt practices and acquired substantial immovable assets disproportionate to his known sources of income. The agency alleged that the officer acquired several assets between 2010 and 2020 – a period covering much of his tenure as commander and captain in the Navy.

NEET PAPER LEAK ROW

Latur doctor detained; RCC founder’s family under lens

Vallabh Ozarkar & Mahender Singh Manral
Latur, New Delhi, May 20

INVESTIGATING THE alleged leak of NEET-UG 2026 question paper, the CBI on Wednesday detained a paediatrician, Manoj Shirole, from Latur, a day after the agency questioned him over his suspected role in obtaining and circulating leaked question papers.

Sources said the doctor, whose residence and clinic in Latur’s Old Ausa Road area were searched by the CBI on Tuesday, was taken to Pune for further interrogation.

The agency is also probing the role of family members of Shivraj Motegaonkar, the founder of Latur-based RCC Classes, after it found that his son had also appeared in the entrance exam on May 3.

Investigators are examining Shirole’s links with suspected paper buyers, financial transactions and communication records with the alleged leak network.

Sources familiar with the probe said the agency is also examining whether the doctor played any role in circulating leaked NEET papers among candidates or intermediaries linked to Maharashtra’s coaching and admission network.



Security personnel and civic officials at the sealed premises of RCC Coaching Classes in Pune on Wednesday. ANI

ing and admission network.

Officials indicated that the doctor may formally be placed under arrest depending on the outcome of the ongoing questioning. The development comes days after the CBI arrested Shivraj Motegaonkar in the alleged paper leak case.

Sources said the CBI on Wednesday recorded the statement of Motegaonkar’s wife, who is a director of one of the companies registered under RCC, after questioning the couple’s son on Tuesday.

Investigators suspect Motegaonkar was part of a larger net-

work linked to the alleged leak of

NEET chemistry paper questions. The CBI alleged that he had received the leaked question paper and answers as early as April 23 — 10 days before the exam. A CBI team also searched the premises of RCC Classes in Latur and the leaked questions were allegedly found on Motegaonkar’s phone.

Motegaonkar was allegedly a close friend of Prahlad Kulkarni, the retired teacher who was “associated with National Testing Agency (NTA)” and arrested from Pune last week.

A source said the CBI on

Wednesday moved an application before a Delhi Court, requesting to get specimens signature of five persons: Motegaonkar, Mangilal Khatik, Vikas Biwal, Dinesh Biwal, all three arrested from Jaipur and Yash Yadav, who was arrested from Gurgaon.

Multiple teams of the CBI are currently questioning students, who appeared in the NEET exam, and one of the teams is also conducting searches in Nanded, Maharashtra.

The CBI also detailed its charges against some of the other accused before the Delhi court: Dhananjay Lokhande; Manisha Waghmare, a Pune-based beautician; Shubham Khairnar, who ran a counselling business in Nashik.

“Lokhande obtained the NEET-UG 2026 question paper from co-accused Waghmare and transmitted it to Khairnar. On April 29, Yadav allegedly received PDF files of the leaked paper from Khairnar via Telegram. Kulkarni allegedly supplied questions to certain persons through Waghmare. They allegedly conspired with Manisha Mandhare, an NTA question-setting panel expert tagged as a key mastermind who leaked the final question sets to select students for substantial payments,” the CBI told the court.

Investigators suspect access to four chemistry paper sets is behind RCC ‘guess paper’ match

Vallabh Ozarkar
Latur, May 20

SIX DAYS before the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested Latur-based RCC Classes founder Shivraj Motegaonkar in the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak case on May 18, the Latur Police had already begun a preliminary inquiry after parents of a NEET aspirant alleged that 43 of the 45 chemistry questions in the May 3 examination directly matched handwritten questions circulated earlier by RCC as a “guess paper”.

Investigators now suspect the alleged leak may have originated from Latur-based retired chemistry professor P V Kulkarni, who was allegedly associated with the National Testing Agency’s (NTA) confidential chemistry paper-setting process and had access to four separate NEET chemistry paper sets prepared before one final set was randomly selected for the examination.

“Since Kulkarni allegedly had access to all four paper sets, investigators suspect that questions from multiple sets may have been circulated. Since only one of the four chemistry sets was ultimately selected for the May 3 examination, 43 out of the 45 chemistry questions in that final selected set

matched the material circulated by RCC. Had another set been selected, the matching questions would have been different,” a source familiar with the investigation said.

So far the CBI has arrested two persons from Latur – Motegaonkar and Kulkarni – and several teams are stations in Latur and neighbouring town questioning and conducting searches.

Sources familiar with the probe claimed that out of around 180 possible chemistry questions spread across the four chemistry sets prepared for NEET-UG 2026, nearly 133 questions allegedly appeared in RCC’s chemistry “guess paper” circulated before the May 3 examination.

Of the final chemistry set selected for the examination, 43 of the 45 questions allegedly matched the RCC material.

According to the CBI’s grounds of arrest, investigators alleged that Motegaonkar had received leaked NEET-UG 2026 chemistry questions and answers on April 23, nearly 10 days before the examination.

According to sources familiar with the inquiry, the complaint was submitted to Latur Police on May 12 after the student compared RCC’s chemistry “guess paper” with the actual NEET chemistry paper.

The complainants alleged that out of the 45 chemistry questions asked in the examination, 43 were present in RCC’s “guess paper” almost exactly, including the multiple-choice options.

“The questions and even the MCQ options were the same. That created suspicion in the minds of the parents that the paper may have been leaked beforehand,” a source familiar with the inquiry said.

Sources said suspicion around RCC’s “guess paper” grew after a video of Motegaonkar surfaced on social media in which he was seen discussing with students how questions from RCC’s mock tests and guess papers had appeared in the actual NEET examination.

According to sources, the student later compared the chemistry paper with RCC’s material, informed parents about the similarities and, after discussions with others, the family approached the police.

Following the complaint, Latur Police began recording statements of students and initiated a preliminary verification exercise involving Motegaonkar and material circulated by RCC Classes. The inquiry by Latur Police ran parallel to the CBI’s national investigation already underway after the May 12 FIR.

Why Sunetra Pawar-Prashant Kishor meeting fuels tensions in NCP ranks

Alok Deshpande & Zeeshan Shaikh
Mumbai, May 20

THE MEETING of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister and NCP chief Sunetra Pawar and her son Parth Pawar with political strategist-turned-Jan Suraj founder Prashant Kishor, held in Mumbai Monday, may have been described officially by the NCP as a “courtesy interaction”, but within party circles this meeting has sparked a fresh round of speculation over leadership, control and its future direction.

What amplified this buzz was not merely the meeting itself, but the manner in which Parth chose to publicise it. In a social media post, Parth described Kishor as someone with a “deep understanding of politics and society” and said their discussion covered “various issues related to the country, state and organisation”. “He (Kishor) has known us since Dada’s (Ajit Pawar’s) time. Yesterday, he was in town (Mumbai), so we had the pleasure of hosting him at home for lunch and some insightful conversation,” Parth wrote.

Seeking to dismiss speculation about Kishor formally joining hands with the NCP, Parth added: “Regarding some speculation about him working with NCP, let me set the record straight. To the best of my knowledge, it has been a few years since he quit the political advisory space. I don’t see that changing but I can assure all those who are interested that we are and will align



Maharashtra Deputy CM Sunetra Pawar and Jan Suraj founder Prashant Kishor held a meeting in Mumbai on Monday



ways be available for each other wherever needed.”

The post was widely circulated in political circles and triggered chatter within the NCP, particularly because the meeting came at a time when the party continues to grapple with internal uncertainty following its split and subsequent political realignment in Maharashtra.

Kishor also said that he was not working with the NCP. “I have quit that space in 2021 and am happy doing what I have been doing in Bihar since then,” he told *The Indian Express*.

Kishor’s association with the Pawar family is not new. According to sources, he had met leaders of the Opposition NCP (SP) at party chief Sharad Pawar’s Delhi residence ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. However, the NCP patriarch eventually decided against engaging Kishor’s services for the party.

Political strategist Naresh

Arora of DesignBoxed had earlier worked for the NCP during the 2024 Assembly elections. Party sources said it was Parth who had pushed for Arora’s appointment. Arora is credited with suggesting Ajit Pawar’s now widely recognised “pink jacket” campaign linked to the state government’s flagship Majhi Ladki Bahin scheme for women beneficiaries.

Since then, Arora’s association with the NCP has reportedly remained intermittent, with the party eventually deciding to discontinue his services.

Meeting optics

An NCP section interpreted the optics of the Monday meeting as an attempt by the Sunetra-Parth camp to signal that they are building an independent political and organisational strategy for the future. The perception, according to party insiders, has caused discomfort among several senior party leaders

outside the camp.

This unease is rooted in the churn that has been underway in the NCP over the past few years. Since the undivided NCP’s split by Ajit Pawar in 2023, his wife Sunetra and, more recently, Parth have increasingly emerged as central figures in the party’s organisational and political decision-making.

While their supporters project the development as part of a generational transition within the party, several senior leaders privately acknowledge disquiet over the expanding role of the younger leadership.

These tensions had surfaced earlier during disputes over organisational appointments, candidate selection and communication with the Election Commission (EC), with senior leaders such as Praful Patel and Sunil Tatkare being perceived to be getting sidelined.

Against this backdrop, Sunetra-Parth’s meeting with Kishor has assumed greater political significance.

Although Kishor is currently focused on Bihar through his Jan Suraj Party, he continues to wield influence in national political circles. Within the NCP, some leaders now view the Sunetra-Parth outreach as part of a broader attempt to recalibrate the party’s image and strategy ahead of local body elections and future Assembly contests.

Some others within the party, however, insist that too much should not be read into Monday’s “personal meeting”.

Maharashtra: Fuel supply delay hits rural areas, CM says state has enough stock

Alok Deshpande
Mumbai, May 20

FROM TRACTORS idling in Vidharbha’s farms to kilometre-long queues outside pumps across Nashik, Sangli and Buldhana, Maharashtra’s fuel shortage is beginning to hit both rural life and urban mobility, with the estimates that nearly 20-25 per cent petrol pumps especially in rural pockets are facing supply disruptions. The crisis has been most acute in rural pockets, where diesel rationing and refusal to sell fuel in cans have slowed pre-monsoon agricultural work, forcing farmers to leave tractors idle for hours.

Even as reports of fights at pumps and panic buying surfaced from several districts, the state government insisted there was “no shortage” and blamed global supply disruptions linked to the West Asia conflict, while Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis appealed to citizens against hoarding fuel.

“State has adequate stock of petrol, diesel and other petroleum products. People have started panic buying and refilling additional fuel than regular practice. This panic buying has created supply chain problem and affected the supply to pumps. I urge people not to start panic buying,” said Fadnis.

Farmers have sounded an alarm that diesel shortage has already halted tilling of farms that annually takes place before the onset of monsoon. “The tilling work is largely affected in Vidharbha where the land holding is large. The shortage of diesel in



Cans kept in queue at a petrol pump in Buldhana district of Maharashtra. EXPRESS

tractors is a major concern in rural parts,” said Ravikant Tupkar, a farmer leader and founder of Krantikari Shekati Sanghata from west Vidharbha’s Buldhana district.

According to Tupkar, tractor owners usually carry large cans to buy diesel as taking tractors to pumps from farms is not economical. “Pump owners have stopped giving diesel in cans, virtually bringing the pre-monsoon agriculture work to a halt,” said Tupkar. He added that the practice of using bullocks is declining due to the expenses involved in maintaining them.

According to farmer leaders, from May 11, pump operators in rural areas have been rationing only 10 to 15 liters of diesel per day to tractor owners. This

amount of diesel only suffices for 3 to 4 hours, leaving the tractors idle for the remaining hours.

A petrol pump owner from rural Nagpur said, “Some of us are not getting the fuel supply on credit basis. Paying advance amount will not be feasible for us.” Ravi Shinde, advisor to Petrol Dealers’ Association, told *The Indian Express* that companies stopping giving fuel on credit has been a huge factor. “With oil companies facing monetary losses, they have stopped giving fuel on credit. Now they want advance payment. Earlier, they used to give credit of 4/5 days. With less supply the cash flow is disrupted, it further delays future payments and the cycle continues,” he said.

According to Shinde, the high volume of fuel in Mumbai has safeguarded the city areas to some extent. “But if this continues, cities too will have to bear the brunt,” he said.

Explaining further, he said, when one pump runs out of fuel, it increases pressure on another in the vicinity, eventually disturbing their operations.

The problem intensifies on Mondays as banks remain closed on Sundays, delaying payments.

According to the state government’s Food and Civil Supplies department, Maharashtra has around 8,100 fuel pumps from public sector companies. The government estimates that state requires 18 million litres of petrol per day and 34 million litres of diesel per day. Out of these, 10 to 12% is the consumption in Mumbai.

KARIMA BEGUM, HER COUSIN AND PARTNER ABDUL REHMAN ARRESTED IN VIKARABAD; ALLEGEDLY TARGETED AFFLUENT ELDERLY WOMEN LIVING ALONE

2 murders, and more planned? Police probe couple living on ‘borrowed’ lifestyle

Sreenivas Janyala
Hyderabad, May 19

A “BORROWING SPREE” is alleged to be behind the murder of two elderly women belonging to Telangana’s Vikarabad district, with police arresting a couple and claiming they were planning to kill several others who had lent them money.

Along with Karima Begum, 43, and her partner Abdul Rehman, Karima’s cousin Abdul Nayeem has been arrested for the murder of Mahbub Begum, 65, and Abida Begum, 60. Belonging to Kokat and Khasimpur villages in Vikarabad, the two knew each other and had reportedly lent money to Karima and Abdul a year ago.

The murders were discovered after Mahbub and Abida’s relatives approached police, saying the two had been missing since they left for a scheduled meeting with Karima and Abdul to demand their

money back. As per the investigation report, while Mahbub was last seen on March 27, with a complaint being lodged at Yalal Police Station on March 31, Abida disappeared on May 5, and a missing complaint was lodged at Basheerabad Police Station on May 9.

After the second missing FIR was lodged, police started connecting the dots. With the phones of both Abida and Mahbub switched off, the first break came on May 15 when another phone they were tracking pinged briefly. Circle Inspector Pravin Kumar Reddy said that while the phone was active only for about 10 seconds, they were able to pinpoint its location to a bus stop outside Tandur town.

“We realised that another phone we were tracking was also active briefly at the same time at the same location. However, there are no CCTV cameras at the bus stop,” Reddy said.



(From left) Abdul Rehman; Karima; and Nayeem. EXPRESS

The money trail

A relative said Abida, a widow, had put together some savings over a lifetime, including from the Rs 6,000 a month she got as an attendant at an anganwadi in Tandur town. “Karima who lives in the same area used to visit her often and they became friends. She would often ask Abida for money saying it was for some emergency and that she would return it,” says the relative, adding that event-

ually the money owed by Karima, in small sums, amounted to Rs 70,000.

“Every time Karima came asking for money, Abida told her to first return the amount previously borrowed. But Karima would cajole, beg and plead that she would return the entire amount soon and managed to borrow more,” says the relative.

Mahbub, also a widow, lived not far from Abida’s house. Her savings were from the senior

citizen’s pension provided by the state government. According to police, she lent Rs 40,000 to Karima. Investigators believe Karima made friends with the two knowing they were vulnerable and lived alone. Once she had got the money, they say, Karima stopped visiting Abida and Mehboob, dodging their calls. So the two women turned to their relatives for help.

According to police, as the relatives asked around about Karima and Abdul, “they became aware that the duo had borrowed money from several others in the area and were similarly avoiding them”.

Officials estimate that the couple borrowed from at least a dozen others, adding that after the case was cracked, eight people have approached police accusing Karima and Abdul of not returning their money either – up to Rs 50,000 each.

“We have come to know there may be many others... We

are going through missing persons complaints across the district,” an official said.

The plan

According to police, Karima and Abdul started panicking when Abida and Mahbub threatened to file police complaints against them.

Roping in Nayeem, they zeroed in on a deserted stretch in a forested area in Tolkatta. In the days leading up to the alleged abduction of Mahbub, they switched off location services on their mobile phones. Then they travelled from Tandur to Moainabad taking a route with minimal CCTV coverage.

Karima reportedly met Abida and Mahbub separately, and told them both she had arranged for money from a relative at Moainabad, and that the relative would give the amount owed only to them in person.

Karima allegedly first convinced Mahbub to travel by bus

to Moainabad, 85 km away, without telling anyone. The 65-year-old was told that if word regarding the repayment spread, other lenders may turn up, and she may not get her money. Mahbub was allegedly also instructed to board the bus to Moainabad from a small roadside stop that didn’t have any CCTV coverage.

Karima and Abdul

Police say Karima married young, when just 20, around 23 years ago. There were problems in the marriage, allegedly due to her spending habits, and after two children, she and her husband got a divorce 10 years ago.

Karima reportedly started a clothing business, which did not take off and left her in debt. It was then that she met Abdul, another failed cloth trader, and they started living together. Nayeem, who is very close to Karima, spent a lot of time at their house.



Europe's shift to centre of Delhi's frame is welcome

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi's trip to the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Italy underscores how far India's perception of, and engagement with, Europe has evolved. Throughout the Cold War, India's approach to Europe was shaped largely by its close economic and defence ties with the Soviet Union and its rivalry with the West. A prolonged neglect is now giving way to expanding cooperation. Buoyed by the India-EUFTA signed in January this year, following the 2024 India-EFTA agreement, Europe has been increasingly entering India's strategic imagination despite the friction around Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The shift comes at a time when traditional alignments are under growing strain — an unpredictable American president, an ever-deepening partnership between India's ally Russia and competitor China, and a fragile détente between Beijing and Washington, reflected in the Trump-Xi summit.

Europe is now central to India's pursuit of export markets, capital, advanced technology and green-energy partnerships. The PM's tour itinerary reflects the enormous potential that collaboration with some of the continent's smaller but highly capable economies can unlock. The Netherlands, with a population of just 18 million, is a pivotal player in the global chip race because of ASML, the sole manufacturer of the advanced lithography machines needed to produce the most advanced semiconductors. The deal between ASML and Tata Electronics will support scaling up of the latter's fabrication plant in Dholera. In defence, India seeks to diversify procurement away from Russia, and in renewable energy, it requires both technological expertise and capital. Europe also offers opportunities for India's youth as the diaspora across the continent continues to expand, driven by highly skilled workers and students. For Europe, meanwhile, India is a critical partner in its efforts to de-risk from a rising China.

While the EU functions as a bloc of 27 member states, each country retains its own strategic priorities and foreign policy outlook. Europe's sub-regions, too, differ sharply in their perceptions of external powers. India already enjoys strong partnerships with key western European powers such as France, the Netherlands and Germany, and it has moved to deepen engagement with the Nordic countries while strengthening ties with Italy in the Indo-Mediterranean. More must be done to engage with these sub-regions and cultivate cross-linkages for mutual gains. With geopolitical realignments, a fraying rules-based order, and the decreasing relevance of international institutions, India's ties with Europe can no longer be peripheral to its foreign policy.

In Manipur, pull back from edge, build trust

AFTER MONTHS of brittle calm, Manipur could once again be on the edge. The immediate provocation — the ambush and killing of three Kuki church leaders travelling back to the Kuki-Zo majority Kangpokpi district — has degenerated into a broader atmosphere of fear. There have been retaliatory abductions, disappearances and mounting tensions between Kuki and Tangkhul Naga communities across the hill districts. In a state mired in ethnic conflict for the last three years, and burdened by layers of historical grievance, incidents such as these could turn into communal flashpoints.

The present crisis, that began in Ukhrul earlier this year, however, cannot be understood through the lens of the violence between the state's Meiteis and Kukis that has riven Manipur since May 2023. It can be traced back, instead, to the older, more serrated Naga-Kuki fault line, shaped by decades of territorial contestation, insurgent rivalry and competing visions of political belonging. The Nagas remain among the Northeast's most politically influential communities, with powerful tribal bodies, longstanding armed networks, and aspirations tied not merely to demands of autonomy within Manipur, but to a wider Naga political settlement that transcends state boundaries. Instability in the hill districts, therefore, echoes far beyond Manipur, intersecting with unresolved questions of autonomy, territory and ethnic representation. The Kukis, meanwhile, carry their own histories of displacement and grievance. In an already militarised landscape, where weapons continue to circulate freely and trust in state authority has eroded sharply, these unresolved antagonisms threaten to pull Manipur back into another cycle of violence.

The return of an elected government led by Yumnam Khemchand Singh in February had raised cautious hopes of rapprochement in a state exhausted by prolonged conflict. Presented as a conciliatory figure capable of balancing Meitei, Kuki and Naga interests, Singh cannot afford to fall back on the political equivocations of his predecessor. His inclusion of both Kuki and Naga deputy chief ministers offers an opening, but representation alone cannot substitute for trust. His government must move beyond reactive measures towards sustained political mediation: Securing the unconditional release of hostages, guaranteeing safe movement across districts, prosecuting the guilty and establishing credible inter-community dialogue mechanisms. This moment must be decisively defused, too much is at stake.

Beer wins over wine, snobbery is still on top

WHAT HAPPENS when the land where wine snobbery is supposed to have originated suddenly finds itself to be a nation of beer drinkers? According to the International Organisation of Vine and Wine, France is for the first time consuming more beer than wine — 10 million litres more, to be precise. For the land of Burgundy, Merlot and Bordeaux, that is sobering news indeed.

Part of the reason could well be generational. Gen Z's aversion to drinking has been reported from across the US and Europe, where alcohol sales have fallen by about 20 per cent. When they do drink, beer is the tippie of choice, thanks to the rising cost of living and the decline of the "hang-out" culture in favour of digital socialisation (or isolation): Not only is beer cheaper, it is also considered a more "casual" drink. In France, in particular, wine — still associated with the daily ceremony of sit-down meals — is considered too stuffy by a generation that prefers to eat on the go.

Yet, those celebrating the end of what they see as elitist circus around wine should perhaps hold off on ordering another round. The boom in France's craft beer industry, with brewers and consumers bringing their appreciation for "terroir" and other wine-related concepts to "biérologie", indicates that the affections have merely been displaced onto a new subject. In other words, what was once prized in wine, is now sought in beer: *Le snobbery est mort, vive le snobbery*.

BJP is winning the elections but losing the economy

THE BJP's victory in West Bengal represents a moment of peak political performance and a landmark achievement. A resounding endorsement for Narendra Modi in 2029 is the only way the party can exceed the electoral peak it's attained in Bengal. At the same time, the BJP's handling of the economy has hit a low with no guarantee that it cannot go lower. The burning question is: Are the two events coincidental, or simultaneously determined? The latter — details follow.

Four agents are responsible for the economic derailment. The first and most important is the government itself. It recognises the problem but is satisfied with blaming others for the crisis — in this case, the second agent: Major industry. The third agent is the Congress party, which is so comfortable being led by the Gandhis that a BJP one-party democratic rule is all but guaranteed. The fourth agent is the puppeteer controlling the top three: The Deep State. The crisis persists because the economy continues to expand at a pace proudly touted as the fastest among the world's major economies.

The political high is self-evident — the emphatic win in West Bengal and the near one-party democratic rule in India. For some, the "economic low" may be an exaggeration: Isn't India the fastest-growing major economy in the world, with GDP growth around a 35-year historical average of 6 per cent a year? The catch lies in that word "major" and in measuring against a 35-year average. For the period of BJP rule from 2014 onwards, India's rank in terms of GDP

growth is ninth, in terms of per capita GDP growth, the rank is eighth, and it's placed 16th in terms of per capita growth in US dollars. Bangladesh is the first in terms of US dollar growth, with an average per capita growth of 8.3 per cent per annum. Ethiopia is 2nd at 7.2 per cent, India is 16th at just 4.7 per cent. No matter how one slices the data, it is time to dispense with the moniker of the fastest-growing major economy.

India has also moved from being one of the "Fragile Five" economies in 2013 to possibly becoming one of just two (along with Turkey). The Indian rupee has depreciated approximately 12 per cent against the US dollar in the last year, the seventh consecutive year of decline, and was ranked among Asia's worst-performing currencies in 2025. India today presents a macroeconomic paradox: Inflation has been contained, the current account deficit is manageable, growth remains steady, and political stability is unusually strong. In theory, those conditions should support currency confidence, not extreme fragility.

The government response has been to apply band-aids instead of performing the surgery needed to make investment in India — by Indians and foreigners alike — more attractive. One such band-aid is an appeal to Indians to invest more at home. It was established long ago that investors vote with their feet: Individuals and firms respond to economic incentives, not to moral appeals or what rulers perceive as national interest. And the incen-



SURJIT BHALLA

The government response has been to apply band-aids instead of performing the surgery needed to make investment in India — by Indians and foreigners alike — more attractive

Keeping exams clean: From Kerala, a personal example



K J ALPHONSO

AFTER A stint in DDA, I returned to my home cadre, Kerala, in 2000. I was appointed as Transport Commissioner of Kerala. I got out onto the streets with my staff, and we brought down the accident rate by 60 per cent. But I lasted only three months in the job as the Transport Minister wanted to transfer RTOs, which was my job, and I wouldn't let him do that. I was appointed Secretary, Higher Education, and Commissioner for Entrance Examinations — my job was to conduct entrance examinations for all professional colleges in Kerala.

The Education Minister told me, "Entrance examinations have always been a mess. Can you set it right?" I told him: "I will try". Every year, the examination results are declared after a waiting period of three months. Then, some parents would invariably approach the High Court with the plea that some questions were wrong and these should be deleted from the evaluation. The court would set up a committee of experts and take three months to dispose of the case, ordering the deletion of some questions and re-ranking the successful candidates. For six months, candidates and their parents would have sleepless nights; some attempted suicide.

I went to the Entrance Commissioner's office with much apprehension. On the first day, I had a meeting with all the staff I told them, "We have the reputation of being the worst office in the world; let us make this the best office in the world". They said: "Yes". I did not buy new computers or scanners. We did not recruit any new staff.

I decided that only I would know who sets question papers and where they would be printed. Nobody else in my office would know. I resolved to have three sets of question papers.

After I had zeroed in on a question setter, I would go and meet him personally. How did I travel? Of course, under a fake name. If the question setter was in Delhi, I would change flights three times to get to Delhi from Thiruvananthapuram. Once I landed at Delhi airport, I would change taxis three times to reach the question setter's residence.

Why all this drama? I didn't want anybody to tail me. I never stayed at the government guest house, but at a low-end hotel and under a fake name. Once the questions were pre-

pared, I would collect the physical copies personally; no emails or couriers. I would take it to two experts and re-validate the questions and keys. Again, no emails and no couriers. After that, I would take it to a printer. Nobody knew my travel plans, not even my PS. All the flight and hotel bills were kept in a secret, sealed cover. The printed question papers were brought to Kerala only two days before the date of the examinations under a Gujarat police escort. They were sent to the districts and stored in the treasury and sealed under the supervision of the District Collector. They were sent to the examination centres under police protection.

Like NEET, the Kerala entrance was objective-type multiple-choice questions. The OMR answer sheet was just one page. To ensure absolute secrecy, I introduced an innovation. The coded top portion of the OMR sheet was made tearable. Once the students entered their roll numbers, the top portion was torn off (part A). Soon after the entrance test, these were taken to the Commissioner's office, scanned, and the information was stored on a disc, which would be in my possession. All details were deleted from the digital systems.

Then, the OMR sheets (part B) were scanned, and these contained the scores of candidates. Nobody in the office knew who scored what, as only Part A had the candidate information. The matching of Part A and Part B was done by me personally, only an hour before the results were declared. This ensured that nobody in the office was able to manipulate the marks, not even me.

When we declared the results on the seventh day after the examinations, six newspapers in Kerala wrote editorials: "Entrance Commissioner's Office gets first rank". Postgraduate medical entrance examination results were declared on the second day. Super speciality medical entrance examination results were declared on the same day. What a transformation, from being the worst office in the world to the best.

Would the NTA like to learn some lessons? Twenty-two lakh candidates and their parents could have been spared the agony. In this digital age, it is much easier to do what we did.

The writer was from the 1979 batch of the IAS and is a former Union Minister

tive for investors today is to leave India, or not enter it. Why? For starters, there is the much-discussed "business climate": Domestic firms are deeply uncertain about government policy.

A major driver of GDP growth, export performance, and manufacturing competitiveness is the presence and scale of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). FDI brings foreign technology, capital, and linkages with global supply chains. The higher the FDI, the higher the investment and the higher the growth. This is accepted wisdom around the world — and was accepted in India, until 2015. The new mindset believes India can, and should, dictate terms to the foreign investor; that investors are "dying" to enter the "large" Indian market. To put that market in perspective: India's GDP in 2025 was smaller than that of the state of California. It is likely that this same mindset drove the radical revision of the Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) framework in 2015. Soon after, Quality Control Orders (QCOs) surged from just 14 in 2017 to 765 by December 2024 — nothing more than an additional instrument of protection for domestic industry, especially firms with foreign tie-ups.

The revised 2015 BIT required that a foreign investor, before exiting their Indian venture, wait five years before proceeding to arbitration — and that the arbitration take place before an Indian judge. If Indian citizens are wary of going to Indian courts regardless of subject or grievance, why require a foreign investor to do the same?

Our highway policy needs a green reset



VINOD B MATHUR, RAJKUMAR SAPRA AND VINOD KUMAR

INDIA IS expanding its highways at an unprecedented pace. Under Bharatmala and Vision 2047, thousands of kilometres of expressways and highways are reducing logistics costs and accelerating economic growth. This transformation is creating an ecological and public-health burden. Highway corridors are increasingly becoming zones of pollution, landscape fragmentation and agricultural risk. Since many highways pass through densely populated agricultural regions, the impacts extend beyond the carriageway itself.

Highways must no longer be viewed merely as transport infrastructure, but as ecological and socio-economic landscapes. One promising solution is Highway Farm Forestry (HFF) — a market-linked agroforestry approach in which farmers adjoining highways voluntarily cultivate commercially viable tree crops instead of pollution-sensitive food crops. These "Tree Crop Buffer Zones" can reduce pollution exposure, improve ecological connectivity and generate additional income. Unlike earlier social-forestry programmes, HFF is profitability-driven. Species such as poplar, bamboo, teak, Malabar neem and gamhar have strong industrial demand. With assured buyback and extension support, roadside agroforestry can become a viable rural enterprise.

India imports nearly Rs 70,000 crore worth of wood and wood products annually. HFF could reduce import dependence, create rural employment and strengthen timber industries in line with the "Make in India" agenda. However, the proposal is not simply about timber production. It is about integrating ecology planning into infrastructure policy. Conventional roadside green belts are difficult to scale across the highway network, given the high cost of acquiring land. A more practical approach is a differentiated "Tiered Zone Framework". Highways close to pollution-affected belts — roughly within 100 m — should prioritise tree-based systems, while areas beyond can continue mixed agroforestry or conventional agriculture depending on ecological and livelihood conditions. This approach recognises that ecological restoration, food security and farmer livelihoods must go together.

Properly designed roadside tree systems can function as ecological stepping stones in fragmented landscapes, supporting pollinators, birds and local microclimates. Plantation biomass can also support carbon sequestration and help farmers participate in emerging carbon markets. At the same time, ecological safeguards are essential. Monocultural plantations could create new environmental problems if poorly designed. Species selection must be science-based, region-specific and groundwater-sensitive. Invasive species should be excluded and native and mixed-species systems should be encouraged. HFF is not a substitute for cleaner mobility systems or stronger environmental safeguards in infrastructure planning; it must complement them.

Implementation will require institutional coordination and farmer support. Farmers need quality planting material, extension services, predictable markets and simplified regulations. The National Transit Pass System introduced in 2023 has already addressed a major bottleneck by enabling seamless interstate movement of timber through a "One Nation, One Pass" framework. India now needs a national policy vision that treats highway corridors not merely as engines of mobility, but as landscapes for ecological and economic resilience.

Mathur is former chairperson, National Biodiversity Authority of India. Sapra is former managing director, Haryana Forest Development Corporation, Kumar is former principal chief conservator of forests, Haryana

40 YEARS AGO

May 21, 1986



Lankan troops abandon plans

THE SRI LANKAN Air Force, for the second consecutive day, bombed the centre of Jaffna as Tamil militants appeared successful in forcing the government to abandon its plans for marching in a large number of troops to wrest control. Four to six bombs were dropped between 10.35 am and 10.55 am at Jaffna bus stand and First Cross Street, all in the centre of the town.

Bid to subvert accord: Punjab

THE PUNJAB government has submitted before the Venkataramiah Commission that Ha-

ryana has not chosen to file any claim before the Commission with the apparent object of delaying the proceedings and thereby putting off the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab. The Punjab Government, in its reply, pointed out that the attitude adopted by Haryana was tantamount to questioning the terms of reference of the Commission and was indicative of its attitude of non-cooperation with it.

Planned sabotage in India

EXTREMISTS in the US had planned to select and train 100 commandos and send five of them to each Indian state to cause widespread sabotage and create panic. Ac-

cording to a document produced during the trial of Gurpartap Singh Birk on charges of conspiring to kill PM Rajiv Gandhi during his visit to the US last June, the possible targets of these commandos included the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre.

India reproaches UK

India expressed surprise that the British Government had not furnished it with information that one of the four Sikhs facing trial for plotting to kill PM Rajiv Gandhi during his visit to Britain had received classified information about his itinerary from someone working in the High Commission in London.



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US vs Iran shows why it is not about military power, but manipulating risk



THAROORTHINK
BY SHASHI THAROOR

AS THE “phony peace” in Iran drags on, I am reminded of an old lesson: In the annals of strategic thought, few insights have proved as enduring as Thomas Schelling’s in his 1960 book *The Strategy of Conflict*: Coercive bargaining is not about the blunt application of force, but about the manipulation of shared risk. In conflicts where neither side can afford outright defeat, Schelling showed that the real contest lies in shaping the environment of danger — raising the costs of escalation, narrowing the exits, and forcing adversaries to calculate how much risk they can bear before they must compromise.

The Trump administration’s approach to Iran seemed to rest on the assumption that sufficiently severe bombardment by its overwhelmingly superior military force would compel capitulation. Yet history suggested otherwise. Severe punishment, when it fails to break an opponent’s will, does not produce submission; it produces a bargaining environment in which both sides become desperate to find a way out that does not humiliate them fatally. In such an environment, the weaker party has every incentive to make the exit as costly and as visible as possible, ensuring that the stronger adversary pays a reputational and strategic price for its miscalculation.

Iran’s position in this confrontation reflects Schelling’s logic. Strategically weaker than the US in conventional terms, it nonetheless possesses asymmetric leverage. The Strait of Hormuz is not merely a shipping lane; it is, in Schelling’s terms, a hostage whose value rises as American desperation increases. By causing disruption of global energy flows, Iran can manipulate the shared risk that binds both sides, forcing Washington to reckon with the costs of escalation not just in military terms but in

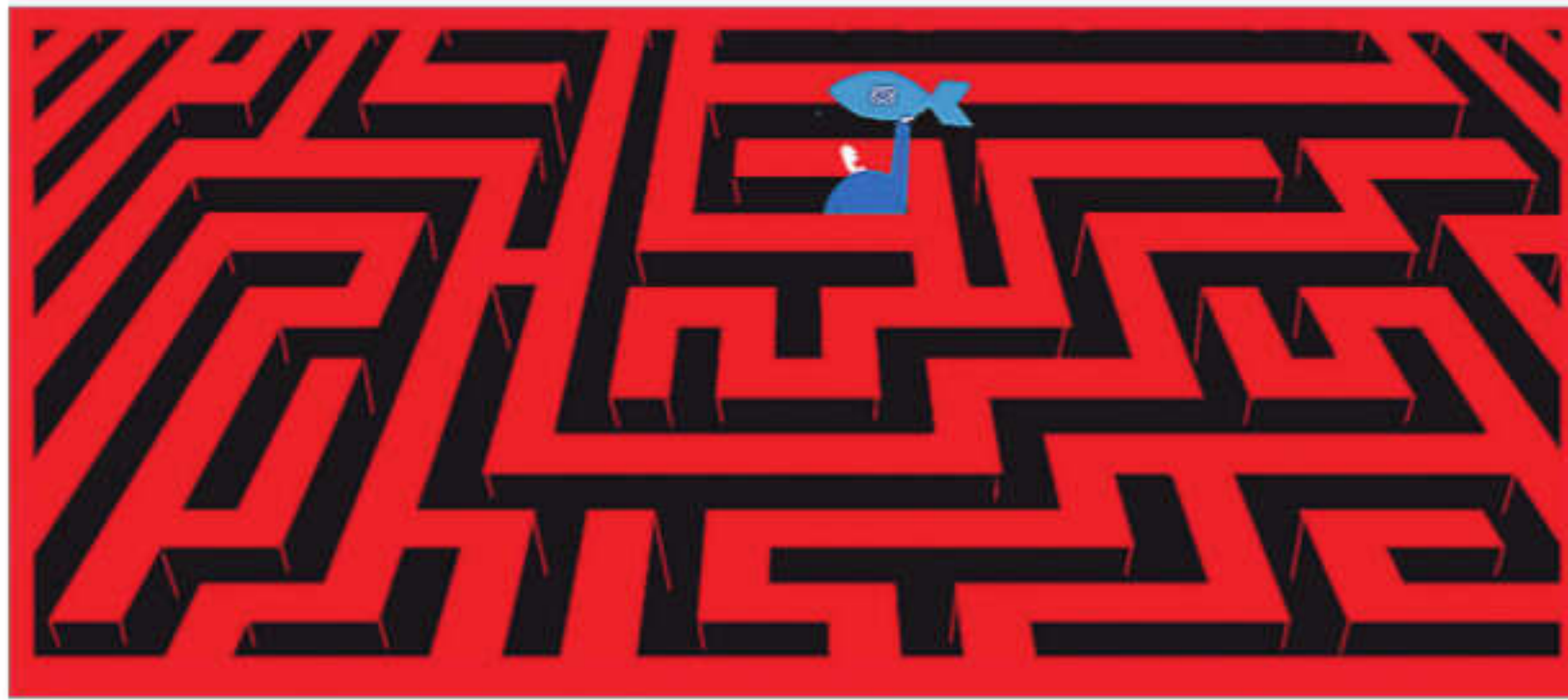


ILLUSTRATION: C.R SASIKUMAR

economic and diplomatic fallout. The more the US insists on punishment without offering a credible off-ramp, the more valuable that hostage becomes.

This dynamic underscores a broader truth about coercive diplomacy. Force alone rarely secures compliance. What matters is the structure of risk, the perception of danger, and the credibility of exit strategies. When punishment is pursued without a parallel effort to manage risk and provide pathways to de-escalation, it hardens resistance rather than softening it. Iran’s tactics — calibrated disruption, visible defiance, and the threatened exploitation of chokepoints — are designed precisely to exploit this gap, turning vulnerability into leverage.

History offers ample illustrations. The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 was not resolved by America’s overwhelming military superiority alone. It was resolved by the manipulation of shared risk: Both Washington and Moscow understood that

the escalation could lead to nuclear war, a catastrophe neither could risk. The crisis ended when both sides found a way out that preserved dignity — removing missiles from Cuba in exchange for a quiet withdrawal of American missiles from Turkey. The lesson was clear: Coercion succeeds not when one side overwhelms the other, but when both sides per-

By causing disruption of global energy flows, Iran can manipulate the shared risk that binds both sides, forcing Washington to reckon with the costs of escalation not just in military terms but in economic and diplomatic fallout

ceive that the risks of continued confrontation outweigh the costs of compromise.

Closer to home, the Kargil conflict of 1999 demonstrated a similar dynamic. Pakistan’s incursion into Indian territory was militarily unsustainable, but Islamabad sought to leverage asymmetric risk by internationalising the conflict and threatening escalation. India’s calibrated response — limited military action combined with diplomatic pressure — was designed to manage risk while preserving credibility. The eventual withdrawal of Pakistani forces was not simply a product of battlefield losses, but of the recognition that the risks of escalation, including the nuclear option, were intolerable. That shaped the outcome: India won.

The Gulf War of 1990-91 also illustrates the paradox of coercion. Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait was met with overwhelming American military power, but the coalition’s success lay in using force to create a bargaining environment where Iraq’s risks mounted daily. The destruction of infrastructure, the isolation of Iraq diplomatically, and the threat of further escalation created a situation in which Saddam’s position became untenable. Yet even then, that war ended with Saddam still in power, a reminder that coercion rarely produces total capitulation. The absence of a credible exit strategy left

the conflict unresolved, sowing the seeds for future confrontation a decade later.

These examples highlight the enduring relevance of Schelling’s insight. Coercion is not a mechanical process of applying force until the adversary breaks. It is a psychological and political process of shaping perceptions of risk, creating incentives for compromise, and managing the pathways to de-escalation. When punishment is pursued without attention to these dynamics, it produces resistance, escalation, and unintended consequences.

The Strait of Hormuz thus stands as a symbol of the paradox of coercion. It is a narrow waterway, but in strategic terms it is vast — a “hostage” whose fate shapes the calculations of nations far beyond the immediate conflict. It is not a mere shipping lane, but the embodiment of shared risk, a reminder that in the strategy of conflict, the manipulation of danger is often more decisive than the application of force.

For policymakers, the lesson is sobering. Military superiority does not guarantee compliance. Punishment without pathways to compromise creates bargaining environments where adversaries exploit risk to their advantage. The challenge is to integrate force into a strategy that recognises the psychology of risk, the importance of dignity, and the necessity of credible exits. Without this, coercion becomes a trap, locking adversaries into cycles of escalation that neither can afford to sustain.

In this case, both Iran and the United States must recognise that the manipulation of risk is the essence of the contest. Severe bombing may demonstrate power and resolve, but without a credible off-ramp, it only increases the value of the other side’s capacity to cripple the world economy. The Strait of Hormuz will remain a lever of asymmetric power, and Iran will continue to exploit it until Washington offers a pathway to compromise that preserves dignity on both sides. Schelling’s insight, six decades old, remains the key to understanding why mere coercion fails, and why shared risk is the true currency of bargaining in international conflict.

The writer is a fourth-term Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) for Thiruvananthapuram and chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs

Kanimozhi, not culture wars, may be star of DMK’s revival script



KARTHICK RAM MANOHARAN

THE DEFEAT of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) by the newcomer Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) took many by shock. Former Chief Minister and DMK leader MK Stalin put out a video on his X account, where he graciously claimed responsibility for the DMK’s defeat and invited the public to offer suggestions for improvement in the future.

There is no doubt that the DMK needs to evolve and reinvent itself, as Stalin himself noted. For that to happen, however, the party must bring in a real leadership transformation — and the name is Kanimozhi Karunanidhi.

Time and again, women voters have not found much inspiration in the DMK. During Jayalalithaa’s time, AIADMK was able to garner women votes in larger numbers than the DMK. Her welfare measures, such as the Amma Mess, greatly empowered women at the local level. In contrast, the DMK leadership is not only seen as male, it is also seen as a space where women cannot aspire to higher positions. Despite welfare measures such as free bus-passes for women, the Kalaigarn Magalir Urimai Thittam, Pudhumai Penn Thittam and others, the DMK has been unable to project its impact onto its image. Worse, law and order problems also contributed to a negative public perception. Vijay, in contrast, appeared as a protective brother figure and won over a substantial portion of women voters.

To what extent women leaders would be able to achieve actual empowerment in the TVK remains to be seen, but a perception is that the DMK does not promote powerful women leaders. That the DMK is seen to be undertaking corrective measures is important for the party’s reinvention. And nothing can make it as visible as a change in the leadership.

Kanimozhi is a seasoned politician, with years of experience behind her, and years of service ahead of her. Born in 1968, a year after the DMK first came to power, she is perfectly placed as a successor to Stalin and as a senior for Udhayanidhi. Her work in the party has won great respect among its leaders and

cadres, young and old.

M Karunanidhi’s daughter is also an intellectual in her own right. She can hold her ground on conversations on language, literature, culture, history, and Dravidian politics. She has displayed her competence not just as a spokesperson of Tamil interests in the Lok Sabha, but also as an articulate defender of national interests when she led the all-party team to Russia following Operation Sindoor. For the latter, she won praise even from the Centre.



On his very first day as Leader of Opposition, Udhayanidhi posed sharp questions to the new Chief Minister Vijay, and reiterated his call for the “eradication” of Sanatan Dharma. But the DMK should note that while these “culture wars” agitate both the right-wing as well as the anti-caste ecosystems, they do not translate to votes. The common person in Tamil Nadu is indifferent to fiery debates on the Sanatan because it is not a term or concept they associate with in their daily lives. Most of the voters, women especially, are believers, but are not political on the basis of religion, an important thing for the spirit of secularism in the state. Women’s safety and welfare, however, are important voter issues. Kanimozhi can potentially be that face, which stands for security, order, as well as social justice.

There is also another important factor. Both Vijay and Udhayanidhi were known as cine stars before they became politicians. It is known that Vijay has the greater influence, following, and star power. In a confrontation, Vijay appears, or is made to effectively appear, bigger. The meme wars that their followers have unleashed on each other are drawn more from cinema than from any deep political thought. And TVK, in content creation, is more effective.

With Kanimozhi, a different dynamic enters. At the moment, she is the most well-known woman leader from Tamil Nadu. An attack on her could be easily seen as an attack on women. The emotive popularity of the Kannagi story and various Amman deities is a social testimony to that.

As it refashions itself, the DMK should learn that the voter is won over not only by rational choice, but also, and sometimes more, by emotive affect. It may want to tone down its pagutharivu (rationalism, as propagated by Periyar) a bit and invest more in winning back popular appeal among women voters, through not just new technologies, but also with a new face for the party.

The writer is Smuts Visiting Research Fellow, University of Cambridge

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The next pandemic

THE WORLD learned the science of vaccines during COVID-19, but failed the morality of distribution (“World isn’t prepared for next pandemic”, *IE*, May 20). While wealthy nations stockpiled doses and opposed the India-South Africa TRIPS waiver at the WTO, poorer countries faced prolonged shortages. The deeper crisis is that global health still bends before geopolitical interest. International health regulations and pandemic treaties mean little when nations retreat into medical nationalism during emergencies. Future pandemics may spread through viruses, but they will worsen through inequality and political selfishness.

Havya Garg, Chandigarh

THE EBOLA outbreak has alarmed the world. Fatality rates have reached as high as 90 per cent in severe outbreaks. The COVID-19 pandemic was one of the most devastating events in modern history. The world had no idea about how to deal with such an epidemic. India, with its huge population and limited healthcare infrastructure, faces enormous challenges both financial and structural (“World isn’t prepared for next pandemic”, *IE*, May 20). Countless people across the world died without proper treatment. Future zoonotic diseases must be handled with far better preparedness and coordination.

SS Paul, Nadia

Abolish NEET

SINCE IT has been proved beyond doubt that NEET is a fraudulent examination and the paper leaks and malpractices have happened with the connivance of the stakeholders of the NTA, NEET should be abolished immediately (“NEET paper leak raises larger questions, calls for honest reckoning”, *IE*, May 19). The selection of candidates for medical education should again be left to the respective states and determined purely on the marks scored by the candidates in their Plus 2 examination, which has all along proved to be foolproof in all respects.

Tharcus S Fernando, Chennai



AMRITA NANDY

IN THE award-winning Lebanese film, *Capernaum*, the 12-year-old protagonist, Zain, is asked by the judge why he wants to sue his parents. “Because I was born,” Zain says. Through his parents, Zain confronts us, adults, for first turning the world into Capernaum (broadly, a site of chaos) and then bringing children into it.

In the recent debate about the right to abortion beyond 24 weeks, Zain could be any one of us, the unborn child of the 15-year-old rape survivor, or its 15-year-old child-mother. In a remarkable departure from the law and the opinion of the medical establishment, the Supreme Court (SC) permitted abortion.

Among the opinions sparked by this permission, a recent article (“Law is not the problem. Abortion in India needs honest engagement and implementation”, *IE*, May 15) mentioned the “spiritual dimension” of the potential birth of the unborn child. Anti-abortion discourse often leans on the religious-spiritual to support its arguments for birth.

However, there are different spiritual dimensions at play as well — for the right of the child not to be born. “Spiritual” here carries its humanistic, existential connotations that centre our shared fibre and invoke our innate oneness. Like Zain, millions are born — many accidentally — in circumstances that are unfit for a child, if not precarious or harmful. It is this unnecessary yet pervasive human suffering that Zain chal-

The grip of pronatalism and motherhood on our psyches can blind us to her sense of being overwhelmed around selfhood, existence, and purpose



lenges in the fictional court. By allowing the termination of the pregnancy of the minor, the SC has prevented many real-life Zains from reaching their overcrowded courtrooms. The point? Birth is not necessarily a welcome event, even via spiritual and philosophical frames.

This is an upstream argument, and therefore even more fundamental to the debate on abortion. Since suffering is an inescapable reality of human life, every newborn will inevitably suffer repeatedly throughout their life. Suffering implies a range of psychological distress caused by dissatisfaction, anxiety, anger, hatred, depression, besides bodily pain and discomfort. Philosophers such as David Benatar (author of *Better Never to Have Been*) see birth as a moral wrong because it places an innocent being in harm’s way without their knowledge and consent. But since the parent knows that the newborn will suffer, they are accountable for their choice to give birth. This act of harm is driven by a spectrum of the parents’ own present and future needs of caregiving and receiving.

This cynical perspective is not just held by a global, growing community of antinatalists, the centrality and certainty of suffering are also affirmed by spiritual traditions such as Buddhism. It calls birth the first step in recurrent cycles of suffering that include sickness, ageing, and death. Birth unleashes a continuum of *trishna* (craving), which creates a continuum of suffering that keeps

The cart brimmeth over — notes from my morning



SATISH PADMANABHAN

IT MAKES for an ill-tempered morning if at least Rs 2,000 is not offered at the altar of Blinkit or Zepto or Instamart before nine. Like how mornings used to be spoiled for my father if he couldn’t listen to the ‘Suprabatham’ before leaving for office or for Hercule Poirot if the half-boiled white oblong was placed askew in his egg cup.

“The Greek yoghurt is over,” the maid announces as I sit down with my muesli. I lunge for the phone and tap the quick delivery app.

“What else?”
“Order some oats and berry mix.”

“OK, anything else? This won’t do for free delivery.” She wants nothing else. I have to add stuff worth Rs 159 more for free delivery, the first level or *padav* to cross as Bachchan would say to a KBC quizzer. I rack my brain to think of products that won’t expire soon.

“Do we need Hit? It’s mosquito season.”

“No, you ordered it two days ago, we already have three cans.”

What else, what else? Pulses? Coffee powder? Batteries for remotes? Trouble is I went through the same quandary yesterday. Let me focus. Razor blades, maybe. I’m always running out of them and they cost as though they are made of rare earth minerals.

It not only makes up the difference but brings my bill tantalisingly close to the

next *padav* of Maxxsaver. To cross that I have to add stuff worth Rs 316 more. I get 20 per cent off on the total bill, plus a chance to win a ticket to go to Iceland to see the Northern Lights. I scroll up and down. The maid eyes me, takes pity and tries to put me out of my misery. “Olive oil is getting finished, you can get that.” Yes, bingo! A big budget item — that should suffice. Well, now I am within kissing dis-

What else, what else? Pulses? Coffee powder? Batteries for remotes? Trouble is I went through the same quandary yesterday

tance of the app’s new “10-4-10” deal: 10 per cent cashback on all purchases for the next 10 months. But I go blank. All the merchandise listed on the screen makes me dizzy.

It’s as if the app has detected my turmoil. Its algorithm kicks in and I get a pop-up; those who bought olive oil also bought mayonnaise. I hate mayonnaise. But I don’t want to be rude to all those who bought it along with olive oil. It’s like how you feel guilty for not meeting with an accident in an accident-prone area. A kind of FOMO in the negative. Besides, it will take me closer to the real biggie: A one-year membership to the airport lounge. An offer no one can refuse.

Enough, says the Yudhishtira part of my mind. The cart already brimmeth over. The first order, the Greek yoghurt, will res-

Nandy is author of Motherhood and Choice: Uncommon Mothers, Childfree Women

onate with Majrooh Sultanpuri’s words: *Main akele hi chala tha jaanib-e-manzil/ magar log saath aate gaye aur karwan banta gaya*. Now all the stuff will come within 10 minutes. As they say, time is money. Or, is it? If you think about it, time is the opposite of money. You either have one or the other. Did I need so many things first thing in the morning? No. Would anything have happened if the stuff was delivered in the evening? Or the next day? Nothing.

The bell rings. This line of thinking is interrupted. I feel smug that the morning ritual is done. I am good to go. Let the day throw anything at me.

“It’s a new dawn, it’s a new day/ it’s a new life for me, ooh/ and I’m feeling good”

Padmanabhan is a journalist and a writer

Early war goal was to install hardline former president as Iran's leader: Report

Mark Mazzetti, Julian E Barnes, Farnaz Fassihi & Ronen Bergman
Washington, May 20

DAYS AFTER Israeli strikes killed Iran's supreme leader and other top officials in the opening salvos of the war, President Donald Trump mused publicly that it would be best if "someone from within" Iran took over the country.

It turns out that the United States and Israel went into the conflict with a particular and very surprising someone in mind: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad,

the former Iranian president known for his hard-line, anti-Israel and anti-American views.

But the audacious plan, developed by the Israelis and which Ahmadinejad had been consulted about, quickly went awry, according to the US officials who were briefed on it.

Ahmadinejad was injured on the war's first day by an Israeli strike at his home in Tehran that had been designed to free him from house arrest, the US officials and an associate of Ahmadinejad said.

He survived the strike, they said, but after the near miss he

became disillusioned with the regime change plan.

He has not been seen publicly since then and his current whereabouts and condition are unknown.

To say that Ahmadinejad was an unusual choice would be a vast understatement. While he had increasingly clashed with the regime's leaders and had been placed under close watch by Iranian authorities, he was known during his term as president, from 2005 to 2013, for his calls to "wipe Israel off the map."

He was a strong supporter of Iran's nuclear program, a fierce



Iran's former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. FILE

critic of the United States and known for violently cracking down on internal dissent. How Ahmadinejad was recruited to take part remains unknown.

The existence of the effort, which has not been previously reported, was part of a multi-stage plan developed by Israel to topple Iran's theocratic government. It underscores how Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel went into the war not only misjudging how quickly they could achieve their objectives but also gambling to some degree on a risky plan for leadership change in Iran that even some of Trump's aides found implausible. Some US officials were skeptical in particular

E.

about the viability of putting Ahmadinejad back into power.

"From the outset, President Trump was clear about his goals for Operation Epic Fury: destroy Iran's ballistic missiles, dismantle their production facilities, sink their navy, and weaken their proxy,"

Anna Kelly, a White House spokesperson, said in response to a request for comment about the regime change plan and Ahmadinejad. "The United States military met or exceeded all of its objectives, and now, our negotiators are working to make

a deal that would end Iran's nuclear capabilities for good."

A spokesperson for Mossad, the Israeli foreign intelligence agency, declined to comment.

US officials spoke during the early days of the war about plans developed with Israel to identify a pragmatist who could take over the country. Officials insisted that there was intelligence that some within the Iranian regime would be willing to work with the United States, even if those people couldn't be described as "moderates."

Trump was enjoying the success of the raid by US forces to

capture Venezuela's leader, Nicolas Maduro, and the willingness of his interim replacement to work with the White House — a model that Trump appeared to think could be replicated.

In recent years, Ahmadinejad has clashed with regime leaders, accusing them of corruption, and rumors have swirled about his loyalties.

That US and Israeli officials saw Ahmadinejad as a potential leader of a new government in Iran is further evidence the war in February was launched with the hopes of installing more pliable leadership in Tehran. NYT

VANCE SAYS PROGRESS MADE; TEHRAN SEEKS END TO SANCTIONS, BLOCKADE, RELEASE OF FUNDS

Trump says talks with Iran in final stages, warns of attacks if deal fails

2 Chinese tankers exit Hormuz with 4 million barrels

Reuters
Dubai, Washington, May 20

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump said on Wednesday that negotiations with Iran were in the final stages, while warning of further attacks unless Iran agrees to a deal.

Six weeks since Trump paused Operation Epic Fury for a ceasefire, talks to end the war have shown little progress so far. Trump has said this week he came close to ordering more attacks, but held off to allow more time for negotiations.

"We're in the final stages of Iran. We'll see what happens. Either have a deal or we're going to do some things that are a little bit nasty, but hopefully that won't happen," he told reporters on Wednesday.

"We're going to give this one shot. I'm in no hurry," Trump said. "Ideally I'd like to see few people killed, as opposed to a lot. We can do it either way."

Tehran, for its part, accused Trump of plotting to restart the war, and threatened to retaliate for any strikes with attacks beyond West Asia. "If aggression against Iran is repeated, the promised regional war will ex-



A member of the Revolutionary Guards' volunteer Basij force demonstrates how to handle a Kalashnikov-style assault rifle during a weapons training class in Tehran on Wednesday. AP

tend beyond the region this time," the Revolutionary Guards said in a statement.

Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Ghalibaf, Iran's top negotiator at peace talks, said in an audio message released on social media that "obvious and hidden moves by the enemy" showed the Americans were preparing new attacks.

Pak Minister in Tehran

In the latest diplomatic push, the Interior Minister of Pakistan was in Tehran on Wednesday. Iran submitted a new offer to the US this week.

Tehran's descriptions of the

proposal suggest it largely repeats terms previously rejected by Trump, including demands for control of the Strait of Hormuz, compensation for war damage, lifting of sanctions, release of frozen assets and the withdrawal of US troops from the area. Trump has said he called off attacks this week at the last minute in response to requests from several of Iran's Gulf neighbours. On Tuesday, he said he had been an hour away from ordering strikes.

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan welcomed what he said was a decision by Trump to allow

more time for diplomacy.

54 ships transited last week, says Lloyd's List

Two giant Chinese tankers laden with a total of around 4 million barrels of oil exited the strait on Wednesday. Iran had announced last week, while Trump was in Beijing for a summit, that it had reached agreement to ease rules for Chinese ships. South Korea's foreign minister said on Wednesday a Korean tanker was crossing the strait in cooperation with Iran.

Shipping monitor Lloyd's List said at least 54 ships had transited the strait last week,

around double the number from the week before. Iran said 26 ships had crossed in the past 24 hours, still only a fraction of the 140 or so each day that typically crossed before the war.

Pressure to end war

Trump is under pressure to end the war, with soaring energy prices hurting his Republican Party ahead of Congressional elections in November. Since the ceasefire, his public comments have veered from threats to restart bombing to declarations that a peace deal was at hand, sometimes in the same breath.

The fluctuating US stances have sent oil prices bouncing from hour to hour and day to day, though on a clear upward trend week by week.

"Investors are keen to gauge whether Washington and Tehran can actually find common ground and reach a peace agreement, with the US stance shifting daily," said Toshitaka Tazawa, an analyst at Fujitomi Securities.

The US-Israeli bombing killed thousands of people in Iran before it was suspended in a ceasefire in early April. Israel has also killed thousands more and driven hundreds of thousands from their homes in Lebanon, which it invaded in pursuit of the Iran-backed Hezbollah militia. Iranian strikes on Israel and neighbouring Gulf states have killed dozens of people.

Jointly condemn Trump's Golden Dome shield plan

Reuters
Beijing, May 20

CHINA AND Russia condemned US President Donald Trump's Golden Dome missile defence shield plans and Washington's "irresponsible" nuclear policy at a summit on Wednesday, a week after President Xi Jinping hosted Trump in Beijing.

A joint statement issued after Xi's summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin served to underline that, while the Chinese leader seeks stable and constructive relations with Trump, he differs fundamentally with him on key issues where China's position is closely aligned with Russia's.

The statement said Trump's plan for a ground- and space-based missile interceptor system threatened global strategic stability and criticised Washington for allowing a treaty restricting the US and Russian nuclear arsenals to expire.

The treaty lapsed in February and Trump did not respond to Moscow's proposal to extend its missile and warhead limits by a year, something that some US politicians argued would have hindered the US from responding to a nuclear build up by China.

Yet while speaking in uni-



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping visit an exhibition by the TASS and Xinhua news agencies at the Great Hall of the People, in Beijing on Wednesday. AP

son on global security issues, the two leaders failed to reach a breakthrough that Moscow has long been seeking - a contract for a new pipeline that would enable it to more than double the amount of natural gas it sells to China. Xi was wrapping up a remarkable week of diplomacy in which he met the leaders of China's most powerful strategic rival and one of its closest partners.

With Trump seeking an exit from a war with Iran and Putin's forces largely bogged down in Ukraine, the summits provided China's leader with a chance to showcase Beijing as a pillar of global stability and an indispensable diplomatic player.

"Xi does appear to hold the stronger position relative to

both Putin and Trump.

Both leaders are grappling with conflicts of their own making that have proven far more difficult to resolve than initially anticipated," said Patricia Kim, a foreign policy fellow at the Washington-based Brookings Institution.

"Xi, meanwhile, has been able to focus more squarely on strengthening China internally while projecting an image of a stable and confident great power on the global stage."

While the summit with Trump was largely about managing tensions, the encounter with Putin posed a different challenge - how to demonstrate progress in a relationship that the two sides have already proclaimed is "without limits".

Trump purges Massie, his Republican critic

Reuters
Kentucky, May 20

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump scored another victory in his campaign to punish disloyal Republicans on Tuesday as Representative Thomas Massie of Kentucky lost his primary race, underscoring the risks for lawmakers who defy Trump.

Massie, who angered Trump by leading a push to release Justice Department files tied to the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein and emerged as an outspoken critic of the war with Iran, was defeated by Ed Gallrein, a former Navy SEAL backed by the president and bolstered by heavy spending by pro-Israel groups. With 99% of the votes counted, Gallrein had won 54.9% of the total to Massie's 45.1%, according to CNN.

The contest - the most ex-



Thomas Massie. FILE

pensive House of Representatives primary in history, with \$32 million in ad spending - offered the latest evidence of Trump's hold over Republicans.

It followed the ouster in a primary on Saturday of another Trump critic, Senator Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, and losses for dissenting state lawmakers in Indiana primaries on May 5.

At a White House event, Trump called Massie a "bad guy" who deserved to lose.

Netanyahu rebukes minister over videos taunting detained activists on flotilla

Jerusalem: Israel's national security minister drew a sharp rebuke from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and triggered a backlash abroad Wednesday, after releasing videos taunting detained flotilla activists who tried to breach Israel's blockade of Gaza, telling them they should be imprisoned for a long time.

Netanyahu said that although Israel has every right to stop "provocative flotillas of Hamas terrorist supporters," the way National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir dealt with the activists was "not in line with Israel's values and norms."

Ben-Gvir released videos showing him walking among some of the 430 detainees "Welcome to Israel, we are the landlords," says Ben-Gvir, waving an Israeli flag. REUTERS

US charges ex-leader of Cuba Raul with murder

Reuters
Washington, May 20

FORMER CUBAN President Raul Castro has been indicted in the United States on murder charges, court records showed on Wednesday, in a major escalation in Washington's pressure campaign against the island's communist government.

Cuba's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Castro, 94, last appeared in public in Cuba earlier this month, and there is no evidence that he has since left the island or that the government would allow him to be extradited.

The indictment against Raul Castro, filed in federal court in Miami, charges him with one count of conspiracy to kill US nationals, four counts of murder, and two counts of destruction of



Raul Castro. FILE

aircraft, court records show. Five other people are also named as defendants in the case.

It comes as US President Donald Trump has pushed for a regime change in Cuba.

A US Justice Department official told Reuters last week that the expected charges against Raul Castro were based on a 1996 incident in which Cuban jets shot down planes operated by a group of Cuban exiles.

2 Japanese citizens injured in Shanghai eatery knife attack, Beijing downplays

Beijing: A knife attack at a restaurant in Shanghai on Tuesday injured three people, including two Japanese citizens and a Chinese national, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said, calling it an isolated case.

The suspect described as a person with a mental disorder was detained and victims were taken to a hospital for treatment, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said Wednesday.

The two Japanese are men, including a senior employee of a Japanese company with an office in the building where the attack occurred, while the Chinese citizen is a woman, and the Japanese consulate in the city said the injuries of both men are not life-threatening, Japan's Kyodo News Agency reported. AP

• BRIEFLY

UNITED STATES

James Murdoch to buy New York Magazine, other Vox divisions



James Murdoch. FILE

JAMES MURDOCH is acquiring three major divisions of Vox Media, including the firm's *New York Magazine* and podcast network that together reach tens of millions of people. The deal is being executed through Murdoch's investment firm, Lupa Systems, giving him control of one of the most recognizable magazine brands and a sizable podcast business. REUTERS

CONGO

'Risk of global Ebola spread low'

THE WORLD Health Organisation said on Wednesday the risk of spread of the Ebola virus in Congo and Uganda is high at national and regional levels, but low at the global level. The risk assessment came as the leader of the WHO team in Congo said the outbreak, which has led to over 130 suspected deaths, could last at least another two months as aid efforts intensified to stem the spread. On Tuesday, it expressed concern over the "scale and speed" of the outbreak. AP

• ANDREI ZVYAGINTSEV'S FILM LACERATES, BUT GENTLY AND PERSUASIVELY, AND IS EASILY ONE OF THE BEST IN THE COMPETITION THIS YEAR

Minotaur is a double-barreled portrait of a marriage and a country – on the brink



SHUBHRA GUPTA

THERE ARE only a handful of filmmakers who consistently hit their mark when they intertwine broad-scale events with intimacy. One of them is Andrei Zvyagintsev, who has been living in Paris after a near-death experience with Covid, and who is back in Cannes competition with yet another terrific film.

You may call it an exile. The

Russian filmmaker himself has gone on record about not being able to live, in all conscience, in his own country after the invasion of Ukraine.

Minotaur, shot in Latvia (not Russia where all his earlier films have been shot), is a double-barreled portrait, of a marriage and a country – on the brink. It is 2022. The war in Ukraine has already stretched for six months, and the Russian authorities are busy drafting citizen to volunteer for service at the border.

The air is full of uncertainty; the only thing that's certain is that big business and fat-cat oligarchs will have to make signifi-

cant sacrifices, both in terms of money and manpower.

Prosperous business owner Galeb (Dmitriy Mazurov), who lives with his wife Galina (Iris Lebideva) in a stunning country villa, all glass and tasteful wood, finds himself cornered from all ends. He doesn't want to betray his workers, but at the same time he can't go against official diktat: he wants to keep his wife happy, but like many marriages, the two don't quite fit with each other the way they used to.

Galeb's discovery of Galina's two-timing – she's having an affair with a photographer – catapults the former into a place of



A still from Minotaur. FESTIVAL DE CANNES

no return. That the smooth Galeb has a rough side to him, is revealed early on when he

gives his young son tips on how to deal with bullies – take the bull by the horns, so to speak.

That Galeb is quite the bull himself, in a clear nod to the title, is foreshadowed in that little exchange, and from then on, we wait, on edge, for him to unleash the beast within.

The film may be based on Claude Chabrol's 1969 *The Unfaithful Wife*, but it gets its contemporary edge with the inclusion of references to the unrest on the borders, and everyone, especially those who have to obey orders, is clueless about what happens next.

One of the most affecting parts of the film has nothing to do with the tawdry affair and its even tawdrier outcome.

It is when the new recruits

are being packed off in buses, not knowing when they will be back again, with their stricken families standing by helplessly, that you feel the weight of a war that is, as always, declared by the powerful and fought by the powerless.

A chunk of time is spent in establishing the rage of the cuckold – it isn't as if he has any clarity of what he will do when he confronts the lover, who brings the wife alive in a way that the husband has forgotten – and by the time he realises what he's done, it's done.

What's striking is the way – no panic, no wringing hands – he gets down to business, and

he goes at it in a systematic, cold-blooded manner that tells you exactly what kind of man he is. Or, perhaps a psychopath hiding in plain sight.

It is brilliantly acted, with the director's trademark scalpel carving cleanly out what he wants to show us, nothing overt, but nothing hidden either: A portrait of Putin hanging in the mayor's office, a poster saying "Stop This", an unhappy woman not being gaslit until she is.

Minotaur lacerates, but gently and persuasively, and is easily one of the best of the Cannes competition films this year.

DESPITE BEING MOST POPULOUS STATE, UP's GOLD LOAN OUTSTANDING WAS JUST RS 42,300 CR

Five southern states account for 75% of outstanding gold loans

Gold loans have emerged as the fastest-growing segment in the lending market, surging 50.4% on-year

George Mathew

Mumbai, May 20

FIVE SOUTHERN states account for nearly 75% of the country's total gold loan outstanding, underscoring the region's dominant role in a market that has witnessed explosive growth over the past two years, says a report.

Out of the total Rs 18.6 lakh crore gold loan outstanding (including banks and non-banking finance companies), five southern states — Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana and Kerala — account for Rs 13.94 lakh crore as of March 2026, according to data prepared by CRIF High Mark, a credit information company.

Tamil Nadu leads with Rs 5.96 lakh crore outstanding, Andhra Pradesh follows with Rs 3.08 lakh crore, Karnataka with Rs 1.81 lakh crore, Telangana at Rs 1.60 lakh crore and Kerala Rs 1.45 lakh crore as of March 2026, it said.

Driven by rising gold prices, increasing credit demand, and the growing preference for secured borrowing, the gold loan segment has expanded rapidly, with southern India continuing to be the industry's stronghold due to its deep cultural affinity with gold ownership and an extensive network of lenders operating in the region.

Incidentally, despite being India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh accounts for gold

loan outstanding of only Rs 42,300 crore. Other large states also report relatively modest figures. West Bengal stands at Rs 35,000 crore, Rajasthan at Rs 41,700 crore and Gujarat at Rs 57,100 crore. These numbers highlight the uneven regional penetration of the gold loan market, with several economically significant and densely populated states still lagging behind southern India in the adoption of gold-backed borrowing.

Growth in March 2026 was led by southern states — Karnataka (10.5%), Telangana (12.8%), followed by UP (11.2%).

"All top 10 states recorded improvement. However, AP and Kerala remained above the pan-India average, especially given AP's higher growth rate of 9.4% — on par with the national average," CRIF High Mark said.

Gold loans sustained robust portfolio expansion, rising 50.4% year-on-year and 15% quarter-on-quarter, supported by higher collateral values and partly driven by the reclassification of agri-gold loans into retail, CRIF High Mark said. The sharp rise in gold prices also prompted people to go for gold loans, helping them to get more finance to meet various expenses.

"It has now emerged as the second-largest product in retail lending after home loans, underscoring its growing relevance in customer credit portfolios. We are also witnessing a

INDIA'S GOLD LOAN MARKET

Tamil Nadu	₹5,96,700 cr
Andhra Pradesh	₹3,08,900 cr
Karnataka	₹1,81,800 cr
Telangana	₹1,60,800 cr
Kerala	₹1,45,800 cr
Maharashtra	₹1,11,200 cr
Gujarat	₹57,100 cr
UP	₹42,300 cr
Rajasthan	₹41,700 cr
West Bengal	₹35,000 cr
Top 10	₹16,81,000 cr
Rest of India	₹1,81,800 cr
Total	₹18,62,800 cr

As of March 2026. Source: CRIF High Mark

shift toward higher ticket sizes, and more income-generating end uses, reflecting evolving borrower needs and increased comfort with loans against gold," said Mohit Jain, Group Head - (Co)Lending, Gold, Micro Loans, Distribution, Financial Inclusion), Axis Bank.

The report said PSU banks continue to dominate originations by value, though their position has softened over time. Their share declined from 51.1% in Q4 FY24 to 44.6% in Q4 FY26, even as they remain the largest category.

Non-banking finance companies have emerged as the clear growth driver, with originations value rising sharply from 20.7% in Q4 FY24 to 31.6% in Q4 FY26.

In volumes, NBFCs lead with 49% share in originations volume as of Q4 FY26, underscoring NBFC-led market expansion driven by faster growth and



Southern India continues to be the industry's stronghold due to its deep cultural affinity with gold ownership. REUTERS

wider distribution reach. PSUs dominate higher ticket size loans while NBFCs are growing stronger in lower ticket size loans (as indicated in their value vs volume shifts), according to the report.

Gold loans emerged as the fastest-growing segment in the lending market, with portfolio outstanding surging 50.4% year-on-year, reflecting strong consumer demand and increased reliance on secured borrowing. Personal loans also recorded healthy growth of 12.9% on year, underscoring sustained demand for unsecured retail credit despite tighter lending norms, the report said.

The gold loan segment also demonstrated improving asset quality, reinforcing its role as a key engine of retail credit growth in FY26.

"Early-stage delinquency declined across all ticket sizes between March 2025 and March

2026, with larger loans improving the most — the Rs 2.5 lakh-5 lakh bucket fell from 1.42% to 0.76% and Rs 5 lakh plus bucket from 1.43% to 0.73%, reflecting stronger collateral coverage in higher-ticket segments," CRIF High Mark said. Among other retail credit categories, consumer durable loans expanded by 20.8%, driven by rising purchases of electronics and household appliances.

Vehicle financing, including auto and two-wheeler loans, continued to witness steady momentum, registering growth between 13.9% and 15.1% year-on-year amid improving consumer sentiment and mobility needs.

Meanwhile, home loans maintained stable and consistent growth at 9.4%, supported by sustained housing demand and relatively resilient property market activity, according to CRIF High Mark.

War is top political violence risk for firms: Allianz report

George Mathew

Mumbai, May 20

WAR HAS become the political violence risk that businesses fear the most, overtaking civil unrest, as conflicts in Europe and West Asia disrupt global trade and increase risks for companies' operations and assets, according to annual Allianz Risk Barometer 2026.

In the "gray zone" between peace and open warfare, threat actors are leveraging technology, criminal networks and disinformation to attack critical infrastructure, high-profile companies and individuals, blurring the lines between state and non-state actors while undermining detection efforts, Munich-based Allianz said in its "Political violence and civil unrest trends 2026" report.

"Deteriorating social cohesion is contributing to rising civil unrest worldwide, with protests triggered by economic, political, and social concerns," it said.

While hardship is a major driver, analysis by Allianz shows unrest is not confined to fragile states, with resilient economies like France and Germany experiencing some of the most frequent protests, it said.

WHAT REPORT SAYS

ONGOING CONFLICTS, such as the US-Iran conflict, war in Ukraine and other tensions in the West Asia, have heightened global security concerns, disrupted trade routes, and strained international alliances

THE REPERCUSSIONS of the US-Iran conflict on the political violence and terrorism risk landscape are significant

HEIGHTENED RISK of strikes, riots, and civil unrest is to be expected, particularly in countries heavily reliant on West Asian oil and gas

Although terrorism fell overall in 2025, it surged in the West, driven by polarisation, antisemitism, Islamophobia and far-right activities.

"The war in Iran has intensified the terror risk, while extremist groups in sub-Saharan Africa continue to exploit security vacuums. Meanwhile, algorithmic amplification on digital platforms accelerates youth radicalisation," Allianz report said.

"The world is experiencing

one of the most volatile geopolitical periods in our history since the end of World War Two. These are unsettling times. Even before the current conflict in the West Asia, the risks posed by political violence and civil unrest had been intensifying, evolving into global challenges that impact companies, communities, and the wider economy," said Thomas Lillilund, CEO, Allianz Commercial.

As we navigate this era of heightened uncertainty, understanding the implications of these risks and mitigating them in our interconnected business ecosystems has never been more critical, Lillilund said.

Ongoing conflicts, such as the US-Iran conflict, war in Ukraine and other tensions in the West Asia, have heightened global security concerns, disrupted trade routes, and strained international alliances, the report said.

The rise in unilateral actions, such as the removal of Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro, could embolden adversarial states, undermining geopolitical and economic stability through 2026 and beyond, it said. FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Apr core sector growth rises to 1.7%

New Delhi: Production growth in eight core infrastructure sectors rose to a two-month high of 1.7% in April, driven by higher output of steel, cement and electricity, according to government data released on Wednesday.

These eight sectors expanded by 1% in the same month last year. The pace of expansion was 1.2% in March. Coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, and fertiliser

output recorded negative growth during the month under review. Steel, cement and electricity production rose by 6.2%, 9.4% and 4.1%, respectively, in April.

Megha Arora, Director - Economics, India Ratings & Research, said April's improved core sector performance is expected to increase the upcoming industrial production growth to around 5%.

Core sectors account for

40.27% of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP). "Ind-Ra expects core sector recovery to continue with a growth forecast of around 3% in May 2026 due to a low base and likely improved fertilizer production," Arora said. Rahul Agrawal, Senior Economist, ICRA Ltd, said that five sectors registered a contraction, suggesting that economic activity in some sectors was impacted by the West Asia crisis. PTI

Banks may get to curb use of phones bought on loan in case of default

Reuters

Mumbai, May 20

India's central bank on Wednesday proposed allowing lenders to remotely restrict or disable functions of a mobile phone or tablet bought on credit in cases of default in loans used to finance the device.

India is one of the largest mobile phone markets in the world with more than 1.16 billion mobile connections, according to the telecom regulator, reflecting deep market penetration.

Over one-third of consumer electronics, including phones, are purchased on small-ticket loans in India, a 2024 study by Home Credit Finance showed.

According to the proposed rules, restrictions on functions of the devices can be imposed only after a loan becomes overdue for 90 days, following a staged notice process.

Borrowers must first receive a notice after 60 days past due, with 21 days to repay, followed by a second notice

allowing at least another week, RBI said.

Lenders can impose these restrictions only if they have sought consent from customers in loan contracts.

Reuters was the first to report last year Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) plans to allow lenders to lock smartphones as a tool to recover loans, and that the move may raise consumer rights and privacy concerns.

Essential services such as internet access, incoming calls, emergency SOS features and government alerts cannot be blocked, the central bank said.

Restrictions must be reversed within one hour of repayment, failing which customers would be liable to an hourly 250 rupees (\$2.58) compensation, the central bank said. Lenders will be prohibited from accessing personal data on locked phones, RBI said.

The latest proposal follows industry feedback on a February draft tightening rules for loan recovery agents and will be open for public comments until May 31.

RBI plans \$5 bn dollar-rupee swap auction

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday announced a \$5 billion dollar-rupee buy/sell swap auction for a tenor of three years to infuse durable liquidity into the banking system amid tightening liquidity conditions and continued pressure on the rupee, which has slipped below the 96-mark against the US dollar.

The auction, scheduled for May 26, comes at a time when the Indian currency has witnessed significant depreciation against the American currency due to persistent global uncertainties, rising geopolitical tensions and sustained demand for the dollar in international markets.

"On a review of current and evolving liquidity conditions, it has been decided to conduct a USD/INR Buy/Sell swap auction of \$5 billion for a tenor of three years," the RBI said in a circular. Under the swap arrangement, banks will sell US dollars to the RBI and simultaneously agree to buy back the same amount of dollars at the end of the three-year. ENS

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman met US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor in New Delhi, on Wednesday. They discussed India-US economic and financial partnership, fintech collaboration and bilateral cooperation. X/@FINMININDIA

UN cuts India's 2026 GDP forecast

United Nations: The United Nations has revised downward India's economic growth forecast for 2026 to 6.4% from its earlier projection of 6.6%, citing global uncertainties and economic shocks arising from the ongoing West Asia crisis. As per the report released by the UN Department of Economic and

Social Affairs (UN DESA) on Tuesday, India, however, remains one of the fastest-growing major economies.

West Asia crisis has delivered yet another shock to the global economy, slowing growth, reigniting inflationary pressures and heightening uncertainty, it said. PTI

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India's daily currency market intervention — estimated at about \$1 billion — per four bankers, is slowing but not halting the rupee's slide, with the currency hitting a string of record lows under pressure from high oil prices and surging US Treasury yields.

The RBI has been selling dollars every day via state-run banks in the past one-and-a-half weeks to stem pressure on the rupee, the bankers said.

India imports around 90% of its crude oil requirements, making higher for longer oil prices a key challenge, alongside subdued capital inflows and muted exporter dollar sales. The absence of a resolution to the US-Israeli war with Iran is leaving the rupee vulnerable to further depreciation against the dollar, even after its near 8% fall so far this year made it Asia's worst performing currency.

Bankers estimate the RBI's daily dollar sales in the spot market to be between \$800 million to \$2 billion in recent days,

based on USD/INR volumes, broker inputs on state-run bank activity and order flow patterns. Central bank intervention has moderated the pace of losses, rather than reverse them, with the rupee on a nine-day slide, nearing the 97 per dollar mark for the first time. The RBI did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment. One banker, whose estimate is at the higher side of around \$2 billion, said the intervention is "in-and-out", rather than continuous through the session. REUTERS

MARKETS

Sensex	NIFTY	Gold ▼	US Dollar ▲
75,318.39	23,659.00	₹1,58,555	₹96.83
117.54	41.00		
0.16%	0.17%	Silver ▼	Oil ▼
		₹2,67,302	\$112.31

NOTE: GOLD, SILVER RATES AS PER INDIA BULLION AND JEWELLERS ASSOCIATION GOLD PER 10G, SILVER PER 1 KG; CRUDE OIL (INDIAN BASKET) AS OF MAY 19, 2026

OF THE 508-KM PROJECT, OVER 90% OF THE LINE WILL RUN ON VIADUCTS

India's high-speed rail dreams taking shape in this nondescript Adivasi village

Dheeraj Mishra

Palghar, May 20

Nearly 118-km from Mumbai, the innocuous silence of Sakhare village in Palghar is broken by the periodic thumping of massive machinery.

The long, white-coloured viaduct running over it stands in sharp contrast. The houses of Adivasis may be old and kutcha, yet the village is now the launchpad for one of India's biggest infrastructure projects — the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail corridor, the country's first bullet train project. Spread across 50 acres in this village, it is one of the nine casting yards in Maharashtra set up along the high-speed rail corridor to manufacture the girders that will form the project's viaducts.

It is also the site where some of the most technically ad-

vanced machines operate round the clock. They are capable of lifting unimaginable weight and are so massive in size that they are visible from every corner of the Sakhare, with the Sahyadri mountains overlooking it.

The blue straddle carrier, visible at a far distance, looks like a machine straight out of the Transformer series. Weighing 380 tonnes and supported by four massive legs mounted on 80 large tyres, it moves slowly across the casting yard while lifting a 1000-tonne and 40 meters large girder of the bullet train project.

In the long shot, the suspended girder from its wires appears weightless, like a bird flying with its wings spread.

A girder is the precast segment that is placed between two pillars to form the viaduct at elevated level on which the



Sakhare village is one of the nine casting yards in Maharashtra, set up along the rail corridor to make girders. SANKHADEEP BANERJEE

bullet train will run, like most of the metro projects. Of the 508-km high speed rail project, 465-km (92%) is the viaduct, making almost the entire project elevated.

The work in Gujarat section (348 km) is almost complete and the work in Mumbai sec-

tion (156-km) — which was delayed due to land acquisition — has now gathered pace.

Ajay Mane, in-charge of the casting yard operated by L&T, said daily at least one girder is launched, meaning that they are lifted and placed on the viaduct pillars.

"This casting yard will manufacture the girder for 22 kilometers of the total project. It will launch a total of 527 girders for this area. We have been able to launch 58 girders so far," said Mane.

A senior official of the National High Speed Rail Corporation Ltd (NHSRCL) said that for the entire project, around 11,500 girders are needed to make the 465-km viaduct out of which, around 8,500 girders have been launched.

"We are launching (girders) 7-8 times faster than the Japanese. The light here does not go off anytime, the work goes on round the clock," said the L&T official, as the work is being expedited for the Mumbai section. The first section of the project, from Surat to Bilimora in Gujarat, is slated for completion by August 15, 2027.

The entire 508-km project is

expected to be ready by December 2029. While progress for the Gujarat section was almost 68%, the progress for the Maharashtra section was only 41% till March 2026.

A smaller straddle carrier moves with the 44 tonnes iron cage to begin the girder casting process, which will go on for the next 14 days.

"The casting of a girder for the bullet train is very complex and technical. Even though it weighs almost a 1,000-tonne, it is relatively less heavy for its size. This is where design comes into play. It gives the girder such a shape — a rectangular opening in the middle — that it is not that heavy, to ensure that piers don't have to bear so much weight that there is a danger of it collapsing. At the same time, the design gives it so much strength — 50 MPa (Megapascal) — that it can

easily hold the movement of a bullet train over it. If you look at it from below, a girder on the pier looks like a bird flying with open wings," said Satish Chaurasia, a Chief project manager of NHSRCL at the site, as the iron cage is placed in the mould to begin the pouring of concrete. The ready-mix concrete (RMC) truck, with boom placer mounted over, is lined up from the batching plant at a corner of the casting yard.

It is not one or two trucks, it will require 65 trucks of concrete mixture — equivalent to 400-cubic meter concrete — for casting just one girder. For comparison, the roof of an ordinary house typically requires just two to three RMC truckloads. "It will take another 8-10 hours to pour the concrete in the iron cage placed in the mould. After that, we will pour water over it for the curing, like

we do in the new houses. This is done so that the girder achieves strength.

There is another unique aspect of these girders. While concrete is what is visible, it is the high-tensile wires placed within, stretched almost to their maximum and then locked at both ends, that hold the entire structure together and prevent it from crumbling. In a way, the entire bullet train runs on these wires," explains Chaurasia.

Nearly 1,000 employees work at the site, carrying out a series of coordinated activities around the clock.

Engineers say such meticulous and complex engineering was last witnessed during the construction of the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link and the Narmada Cable-Stayed Bridge.

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

• INFRASTRUCTURE

Behind Kerala govt’s scrapping of SilverLine

Shaju Philip
Thiruvananthapuram, May 20

THE CONGRESS-led United Democratic Front (UDF) Cabinet on Wednesday decided to denotify the semi-high speed rail project, SilverLine, mooted by the previous Left government. Chief Minister V D Satheesan said the government was not opposed to the high-speed rail project, but that the project was “an environmental disaster and financially unviable”.

“UDF had studied the project and found there was not even a detailed project report. The land acquired by the government was not denotified. This has caused problems for the people living in the project area,” he said.

The Rs 64,000-crore project was envisaged to run between Thiruvananthapuram and the northernmost district of Kasargod to reduce the existing travel time from 12 hours to four hours. A high-speed transport system has long been a crucial need, given Kerala’s geography and population density.

The project

The project was slated to be executed by Kerala Rail Development Corporation Ltd. or K-Rail, a joint venture registered by the Kerala state government and Indian Railways in a 51:49 equity partnership. K-Rail was specifically formed to develop railway infrastructure in Kerala. In 2021, the state Cabinet gave sanction and a token allocation of Rs 2,000 crore from the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board.

The 530 km standard-gauge line was planned to run parallel to the existing railway line and mostly on earthen embankments. The trains were expected to run at a maximum speed of 200 km, and a nine-car rake would carry 675 passengers in two classes. The stretch would have 11 stations en route.

• THE ALTERNATIVE

- In January 2026, the LDF government greenlighted a Regional Rapid Transit System as a practical and suitable alternative to SilverLine.
- The LDF government said an MoU would be signed with the Centre once it gave its in-principle approval.

Opposition to the project

For the project, 1,383 hectares (ha) would have to be acquired for the railway line, including 1,198 ha from private parties. Widespread protests erupted across the state, supported by the Congress and the BJP, with critics raising concerns about the large-scale displacement of families and potential environmental damage resulting from the project.

Activists claimed that the proposed alignment would cut through wetlands, paddy fields, and ecologically sensitive zones, while opposition leaders warned of potential financial losses. The Railways concurred with the latter view, questioning its viability in Kerala, where the six-lane national highway development is under way. It ultimately did not give its sanction for the project, saying the project would affect the expansion plans of the existing railway tracks.

Satheesan justified the denotification, saying the project was abandoned and no transactions could be carried out regarding the lands notified for acquisition. The state had abandoned the project, while the Centre did not give its approval, he added.

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9 Karol Bagh	17 मई शाम 6:00 बजे	27 May 6:00 PM
9 Noida	19 मई दोपहर 3:00 बजे	22 May 6:00 PM
9 Indore	20 मई शाम 5:30 बजे	18 May 8:00 AM
9 Lucknow	29 मई सुबह 8:00 बजे	25 May 8:00 AM
9 Prayagraj	14 मई सुबह 11:15 बजे	1 June 5:30 PM
9 Ranchi	9 जून शाम 5:00 बजे	29 May 2:00 PM
9 Patna	21 मई शाम 5:30 बजे	25 May 8:00 AM
9 Jaipur	26 मई शाम 5:00 बजे	4 June 11:00 AM

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• POWER

How thorium as nuclear fuel can help India meet its long-term energy needs

EXPERT EXPLAINS

ANIL KAKODKAR

FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY

IT IS heartening to see indigenously developed pressurised heavy water reactors (PHWR) getting into the mainstream of India’s energy push towards a net-zero compliant Viksit Bharat. The 100 GWe (gigawatt electric) nuclear energy mission launched by the government is to be realised by 2047.

The high rate of capacity addition necessary for such deployment would need a credible implementation framework and

standardised mature, commercially competitive technologies. PHWRs are a fit case.

The attendant steep increase in uranium imports is, however, a matter of concern. Given the uranium demand-supply mismatch, expected rise in uranium demand and consequent to global nuclear generation growing three to four times, and complexities of nuclear-related geopolitics, nuclear fuel supply security could be at risk in 10-15 years.

A much-needed shift

So, a quicker shift to thorium — that India has in abundance — remains critical to India’s energy independence. Large reactor capacity that can produce uranium-233 (U-233) from thorium at scale while also producing electricity is a prerequisite for this. Thus, the first criticality of the 500 MWe (megawatt electric) prototype fast breeder reactor (PFBR) that would open the path to growing such a capacity through fuel breeding marks a key milestone for India. Thorium can also enable India’s transition to a significant energy exporter from being a major importer.

New developments beyond PFBR would also be necessary for the growth of thorium irradiation platforms. These include reactor and nuclear fuel cycle technologies based on mixed oxide, metallic, and thorium fuels.

The start of thorium utilisation at scale is thus three to four decades away. Pursuing this development is nevertheless critical. Fast reactors breed new fuel. They are necessary to expand energy-generating systems that would run as long as thorium is available.

Nuclear generation capacity through uranium-fuelled reactors is soon expected to cross 10 GWe, the target set for the first stage of the three-stage nuclear power programme. The spent fuel from these plants already constitutes the required inventory waiting to feed the second stage as planned. The experience with PFBR so far suggests that in addition to moving closer

to large-scale thorium utilisation, fast reactors can provide economically competitive electricity without dependence on fuel imports. Nuclear generation capacity of a few hundred GWe can be established in this mode.

Timeline for transition

But what about the timeline for transition from uranium to thorium? The intention behind opening international civil-nuclear co-operation was to remove the hurdles in accessing uranium — priority for thorium was to be speeded up. Access to imported uranium is now expected to make the first stage 10 times bigger, that is 100 GWe. PHWRs could constitute around 60 GWe.

Apart from electricity supply, such a substantive PHWR capacity between now and 2047 would also enable a capacity for production of U-233 at scale through thorium irradiation in PHWRs. This would happen much earlier than build-up of similar capacity with fast reactors. One can see at least a three-dec

ade time difference between the two.

Use of thorium-HALEU (high-assay low-enriched uranium) fuel in place of natural uranium in PHWRs would enable thorium irradiation at scale while leading to several advantages in terms of safety, economy, waste minimisation, proliferation resistance, and some saving in the mined uranium. One can thus start building inventory of spent fuel to produce fuel for third-stage thorium reactors.

In my view, the thorium molten salt reactor (TMSR) operating in the near thermal neutron spectrum offers an ideal choice for the third stage. This would enable significant electricity generation capacity sustainably fuelled by thorium. Rough estimates suggest that PHWRs running on thorium-HALEU fuel could support new TMSR capacity comparable with the mother PHWR annually.

The availability of thorium-HALEU fuel recycle technology for feeding TMSRs and development of TMSRs would need to be ensured in about 10-15 years to start producing

electricity from thorium. These technologies are anyway a part of the technology development agenda for the three-stage nuclear power programme. Advancing their deployment will enable us to get on with thorium utilisation at scale without having to wait for completion of second-stage development and large-scale thorium irradiation therein. With fast reactor capacity scaling up to the required level, one can assure U-233 supply and required energy availability at least till fusion energy arrives on the scene.

The world has restricted the use of uranium only in once-through mode. This is due to the fear of potential for malevolent diversion. Utilisable energy potential in uranium thus remains two orders of magnitude lower for such countries. Proliferation resistance of the thorium-U-233 fuel cycle should enable realisation of fuller energy potential of thorium. Thorium systems are thus destined to play a greater role in coping up with base load energy demand of the world. This is a unique opportunity for India.

• CLIMATE

Rising night-time heat an urgent health hazard

AMITABH SINHA

WHILE MOST conversation about extreme heat during Indian summers centres on peak daytime temperatures and heatwave spells, it is slowly becoming evident that warmer nights could pose a greater health risk to human beings, particularly those living in low- and middle-income housing units.

Both day and nighttime average temperatures are rising in India, but recent data suggest that nighttime temperatures may be increasing at a faster rate. Experts say indoor thermal exposure could be a bigger threat to public health than exposure to daytime heat outdoors.

A cooler evening and night allow the human body to recover from the heat experienced during the daytime. But if nighttime temperatures also remain high, the body is unable to recoup, and exposure to heat becomes prolonged and sustained, without any relief. People are confined in small spaces for several hours at a stretch. The situation gets aggravated inside houses without natural ventilation or access to air-conditioning.

A recent study by Climate Trends, a Delhi-based climate-focused research organisation, in 50 houses in Chennai—all medium- and low-income residential units—showed that occupants were frequently sleeping in temperatures exceeding 32° Celsius. Sometimes, night-time temperatures even exceeded 35° Celsius, very similar to peak day-time temperatures in the city. “This study highlights the need for passive cooling solutions and structural changes in low-cost housing in urban areas. In the next phase, we plan to study the damage that indoor heat exposure is doing to our bodies,” said Palak Balyan of Climate Trends, one of the authors of this study.

Rising night-time temperatures

India’s average temperature has increased by about 0.7° Celsius between 1901 and 2018, according to the 2020 comprehensive climate change assessment over the Indian region. Both day and night-time tem



People standing near a shop selling air coolers in New Delhi. ANI

peratures have increased during this time, but at different rates.

In the 30 years between 1986 and 2015, the temperature of the warmest day of the year increased by about 0.63° Celsius, while that of the coldest night increased by 0.4° Celsius. This suggests that the rise in day-time temperature was more pronounced than the nighttime temperatures, which is true for this period.

But the situation changes in future projections. The same assessment said that the temperature of the warmest day of the year could rise by 4.7° Celsius by the end of this century, while that of the coldest night could jump by as much as 5.5° Celsius. Night-time temperatures are all set to rise at a faster rate. This has already begun to happen, according to more recent data by the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

While the rapid rise in night-time temperatures is happening everywhere, it is more pronounced in urban spaces, mainly because of what is called the urban heat island effect. Concrete, roads, bricks and metal absorb the heat during the day and

Relief measures

The Climate Trends study noted there are measures that can bring immediate relief to people living in cramped households.

- Passive cooling solutions like reflective roof coatings or whitewashed roofs and walls can make a lot of difference.

radiate it at night. The lack of adequate vegetation and green spaces, loss of water bodies and dense clustering of high-rise buildings amplify this effect. Increasingly, the use of air-conditioners, which emit hot air outside, is emerging as a significant contributor. There could be a difference of 4-6° Celsius or more in the nighttime temperatures of a city centre or a dense residential area of a city, and its outskirts. As we build more, this effect is likely to get further aggravated.

Most of urban India goes to sleep in small houses that are poorly designed and lack natural ventilation. If these houses lack air-conditioners, there is little nighttime relief for the human body. Sleep discomfort, restlessness, exhaustion, and lack of energy are direct results of this condition, which affects people’s productivity the next day. But there are major adverse health impacts as well, whose magnitude is still being assessed.

Heatwave intermittent, heat perennial

Dileep Mavalankar, former director of

the Indian Institute of Public Health in Gandhinagar who has done extensive work on heat and its health impacts in India, gave an insightful example. He said the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation maintains a daily record of all-cause mortality in the city.

“Ahmedabad records about 100 deaths every day – deaths due to all causes. We have seen that on days when the maximum day-time temperature exceeds 45 degree Celsius, if the maximum night-time temperature is below 28 degree Celsius, there is not much of a change in the daily all-cause mortality. But if the night-time temperature rises to between 28 and 30 degree Celsius, all-cause mortality increases to about 165. If the night-time temperature is more than 30 degree Celsius, mortality goes up to as high as 265. This is an interesting correlation. Even without doing a full-scale analysis of the cause of death, we can see something very significant is happening here. The thresholds would be different for other cities, but there is a very clear indication that higher night-time temperatures are strongly linked to mortality,” Mavalankar said.

At least 23 states and more than 200 cities now have heat action plans that get implemented every summer. A bulk of that is focused on dealing with heatwave-like situations. But a heatwave is a very specific event and is declared when very specific temperature criteria are satisfied. It happens maybe two or three times a month. Extreme heat, on the other hand, is a constant in Indian summer. And so is the trend of rising night-time temperatures.

One component of most heat action plans is about long-term measures needed to reduce impacts. These include coordinated efforts to improve urban infrastructure, come up with better low-cost housing, and increase green spaces. There is a need for paying greater attention to these aspects of the heat action plan.

The Climate Trends study on Chennai households noted there are measures that can be applied to bring immediate relief to people living in cramped households. Passive cooling solutions like reflective roof coatings or whitewashed roofs and walls can make a lot of difference. Some structural changes, like introducing natural ventilation, can also help.

• POLITICS

Why Rahul Gandhi unveiled statue of ‘forgotten hero’ of 1857 revolt

Asad Rehman
New Delhi, May 20

ON WEDNESDAY, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi unveiled a statue of Veera Pasi, a “forgotten hero” who had fought the British during the Revolt of 1857, in Raebareli. While this was not the first attempt by a political party to woo the Pasi community in Uttar Pradesh through a community icon, Gandhi’s move is significant ahead of the state Assembly elections next year. Gandhi also addressed a “Bahujan Swabhiman Sabha” in Veera Pasi’s memory the same day.

Who was Veera Pasi?

Veera Pasi was a trusted companion and commander of Rana Beni Madhav Baksh Singh, the ruler of the Shankarpur Estate in modern-day Raebareli during the 19th century. A Dalit belonging to the Pasi caste, Pasi was born on November 11, 1835, into an impoverished family in Lodhware village of Raebareli district.

He lost his parents at an early age and went to live at his sister’s house. In the local dialect, a brother living with his sister’s family was called “Veerna”, which later evolved into the name “Veera”.

Singh recruited Pasi for his army, after he was impressed by the latter’s strength. Ac-



Rahul Gandhi during the unveiling of the Veera Pasi statue in Raebareli. ANI

ording to local folklore, when the British captured Singh during the 1857 revolt, Pasi displayed remarkable bravery by rescuing Singh from prison. The British government then had announced a reward of Rs 50,000 for Pasi’s capture or information on his whereabouts.

While Veera Pasi doesn’t feature too prominently in the history books, oral history has kept his legacy alive in Raebareli and adjoining areas where the Pasi community

BSP’s decline

- The Mayawati-led Bahujan Samaj Party’s vote share fell from 22.23% in the 2017 Assembly election to 12.88% in 2022.
- Other parties such as the SP, the Congress, and the Aazad Samaj Party (Kanshi Ram) are trying to fill that space.

resides in sizeable numbers. Local folklore suggests Pasi died while trying to protect Singh from the British forces.

Dalit history and politics in UP

Over the last few years, political parties in UP have worked towards invoking Dalit icons from the past and their contribution to the freedom struggle.

In 2024, after the general election, Awadhesh Prasad, Samajwadi Party (SP) MP from Faizabad (Ayodhya), had invoked “Veerangana” Uda Devi and “Maharaja” Bijli Pasi, two prominent personalities of the Pasi (Dalit) community while taking oath as MP.

Dalit leaders and academics in UP say that icons from the community have largely been “ignored” by historians.

Ajay Kumar, assistant professor at Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University’s sociology department, said that mainstream historical writing has often neglected the contributions and experiences of Dalits, Adivasis, and other marginalised communities.

“This process is not just about rediscovering the past, but also about reviving identity, self-respect, and political consciousness,” said Kumar. “Since these communities traditionally possessed relatively few written records, their histories survived through folk tales, folk songs, memories, and oral traditions. These oral traditions became impor-

tant carriers of their social experiences, struggles, and collective consciousness.”

Pasis and the Dalit vote

The Pasis make up around 7 per cent of the state’s Scheduled Caste population, making them the largest group among Dalits in UP after the Jatavs. While they also have significant presence in other states, their largest population is in UP. In the 2024 Lok Sabha election, the SP won 37 seats of which five were Pasi candidates — from the BJP, three such candidates won.

With the Mayawati-led BSP steadily declining in UP — its vote share fell from 22.23% in the 2017 Assembly election to 12.88% five years later — everyone, from the SP and the Congress to the Aazad Samaj Party (Kanshi Ram) led by Chandrashekhar Azad is trying to fill that space.

The SP and Congress have both been working to reach out to Dalits by regularly invoking BR Ambedkar and Kanshi Ram. This year, both parties held programmes across the state on Ambedkar’s birth anniversary on April 14.

After receiving overwhelming support from the Dalit community in the 2024 Lok Sabha election, the SP and Congress are both working to ensure that Dalits (around 20% of UP’s total population) support them in next year’s Assembly election.

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I,Vandana Gupta W/o Vipul Gupta R/o F-14B, SF, Sudershan-Park, Moti-Nagar, Delhi-110015, have changed my name to Vandana Rai for all purposes. 0040855633-1

'I, SANGEETA RANI C/o Anil Kumar Arora, K-86A and B, GF, Kalkaji, Delhi-19 have changed my name to SANGEETA ARORA. 0071036827-1

I,Shishir Kumar Dabas S/o Sh.S.K.Dabas,R/o C-12,Saket Court Residential Complex, Saket,ND.- 110017, have changed my name to Shishir Dabas, for all future purposes 0040855627-10

I,Shashwat Srivastava,S/o-Brjesh Lal Srivastava, residence of, SRC-32B, Shipra Riviera,Gyan Khand-3,Indrapuram,Shipra Sun-City,Ghaziabad, India, Uttar Pradesh-201014, have changed my name to Joy,for all,future purposes. 0040855629-11

I,Sanjay Kumar Agarwal,S/o-Kishan Dass Address-40 Ground Floor Engineers Enclave Pitampura Delhi-110034, have changed my name to Sanjay Kumar Aggarwal 0040855627-3

I,Sameer Abbas,S/O Iftikhar Husain Zaidi, R/O,38/4256,dargha masjid Railway-colony Naya bazar Chandni-chowk, North Delhi-11006, have changed my name to Sameer Abbas Zaidi, for all purposes 0040855627-6

I,SATISH KUMAR,S/O RAM PRAKASH R/O 56, 1ST FLOOR,LEFT SIDE POCKET-16, SECTOR-20, ROHINI, DELHI-110086 have changed my name to SATISH KOCHAR. 0040855633-3

I,Ravinder Singh Dutt S/o Prithpal Singh D/O 51/17, First-Floor, Old-Rajinder Nagar,Delhi-110060,have changed my name to Ravinder Singh permanently. 0040855629-2

I,Rakhi Puri,D/o Sudershan Kumar,W/o Ajay Grover,R/o-C-3/15 Krishna Nagar,Delhi-110051, have changed my name to Pallavi Grover for all purposes. 0040855633-2

I,Rakesh Thakur,S/o-Amar Singh,R/o-House-No-18,Street No-1,Opp Jaat Bhawan, Nahar Singh Colony,Sec-3,Faridabad-121004 (Haryana) have changed my name to Rakesh Mohan Singh. 0040855627-8

I,RAVINDER KOUR,w/o LAKHVINDER SINGH,R/o-H.NO-63,PLOT NO.-1, KHASRA NO.-80,MAIN MARKET SAMAYPUR, LIBASPUR,DELHI-110042,have changed my name to RAVINDER KAUR. 0040855627-4

I,RAVI SUDAN SHARMA S/o-Madan Mohan R/O-C-1-B,D-S-I-D, Madipur, Paschim-Vihar, Delhi-110063, have changed my name to RAVI KUMAR, RAMMATTI. 0040855627-5

I,RAMVATI DEVI,W/O-SATYA PRAKASH R/O-7/12,TULSI CHABUTRA TAJAGAN,AGRA, UTTAR PRADESH-282001,have changed my name to RAMRATI DEVI. 0040855629-7

I,Pradeep Kumar Shukla S/o Shubhash Chandra Shukla R/o A-256, Sector-43, Noida-201301, have changed my name to Pradeep Shukla for all purposes. 0040855641-1

I,Nitika Singh Bhargava w/o Rohan Bhargava,R/o: 123-C Sainik Farms Central Avenue,Delhi, South Delhi,110062, have Changed my name to Nikita Singh Bhargava permanently. 0040855632-1

I,NEELAM W/O Satish Kumar Saini R/O WZ-14B/4,Village Budheda,Vikas Puri, Delhi-110018,have changed my name to NEELAM SAINI 0040855629-9

I,CHETAN SARUP DABAS, S/O RANDHIR SINGH,R/O-250, VILLAGE BARWALA, DELHI-110039, have changed my name to CHETAN SWAROOP DABAS. 0040855633-4

I,Mitra Binda Parashar,W/o Brajesh Parashar R/o B-2,B-Block,Brijvihar,Chander Nagar,Ghaziabad,U.P.-201011, have changed my name to Madhu Parashar. 0040855629-3

I,Manoj Kumar Singhal S/o Santosh Kumar R/o H.No.466, Vikas Colony, Gulavathi, Bulandshahr(U.P.), have changed my name to Manoj Kumar for all purposes. 0040855541-2

I,MEENAKSHI W/O,ANUJ SHISHODIA,R/O,SALARPUR KALAN,DADRI,GAUTAM BUDH NAGAR,UTTAR PRADESH-201008,have changed my name to MEENAKSHI CHAUHAN. 0040855627-9

I Abhishek Kumar Agarwal S/o Dinesh Aggarwal,R/O-C-24, 2nd Floor,South City-2,Sector-49, Gurgaon-122018 have changed my name to Abhishek Aggarwal for all purposes. 0040855567-1

I,UJJWAL Gupta S/o Ankush Gupta R/o House No.1,Shiva Enclave Pitampura Delhi-110034 have changed my name to UJJWWAL GUPTA 0040855629-8

I,MEENAKSHI GOYAL,W/O-AJAY GOEL,R/o House.No.6, Fourth Floor Model Town Northex Model Town-II,North West Delhi-110009,have changed my name to MEENAKSHI GOEL. 0040855629-5

I,Jaibun Baiwa,W/O Abdur Rehman,R/O-F-1/71-B,Ground-Floor,Block-F,Gali.No.7,Kh No.1457,Sangam Vihar,New Delhi-110080,have changed my name to Jaigon Bewa for all purposes. 0040855632-2

I,Gurmeet Chaudhary S/O Mohinder Singh Adait:1705-F,NRI Residency,Near Pari Chowk, Sector-Omega-2, Greater Noida,Gautam Budh,Nagar,UP-201306, changed my name to Gurmeet Singh 0040855629-10

I,Anita shekhar,w/o,Ramesh Kumar,house No -510,ward no-31,New court-road,Ashok vihar, Sonitap, po Sonitap, dist Sonitap-State Haryana-131001,Have changed my name to Anita 0040855629-1

I,AQLEEMA W/O SHAHID R/O-A-71,MAIN ROAD, SHASTRI PARK DELHI 110053 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO AKLIYA FOR ALL PURPOSE 0040855629-6

I,AJAY KUMAR GOYAL,S/o-Shamsher Singh Goyal,R/o-House No.6,Fourth Floor Northex Model Town-II,North West-Delhi-110009,have changed my name to AJAY GOEL. 0040855629-4

I, Vaibhav Parashar S/o Suresh Parashar R/O-F-194-A, Opp.GTB Hospital G.T.B.Enclave Delhi-110093 have changed the name of my minor son from Ayaan Parashar to Ved Parashar in future for all purposes. 0071036837-1

I, Tashu, D/o Harish Kaushik, R/O H.No. 13 Bank Wali Gali, Prahladpur, Banger Village, Delhi-110042, have changed my name and shall hereafter be Known as Tashu Kaushik for all future purposes. 0040855575-1

I,Shobha Singhal W/o Hansraj, R/O H-16, Upper Ground Floor, Vijay Vihar,Phase-2, Rohini, North West Delhi,Delhi-110085, hereby declare that I have changed my name to "Shobha" for all purposes and for all future records/documents. 0040855509-1

I, SHANAN ANICE GARVIN, D/O Lt. ADRAIN GARVIN, R/O Om Sai Apartment, Rajpur Khurd Extension, 110068, New Delhi. I have changed my name to SHANAN GARVIN. 0050289796-1

I, Rakesh Kumar Gulati,S/o-Darbari Lal Gulati,Address-186,B Block A-1 Keshav Puram north west Delhi-110035,have changed my name to Rakesh Gulati. 0040855627-1

I, Rais Ahmad S/o Badaruddin, R/o Majapotta, Adalpur Taj, Amroha, UP-244221, have changed my name to Mohd Yamin. 0071036811-1

I, Princi Jain D/o Anubhav Jain R/o-11/407, Mahaveer Marg, Baraut, Bagpat, UP have changed my name to Nitya Jain. 0071036743-1

I, PRADEEP KUMAR GAJWAL S/o Puran Chand, B2B-93, Janakpuri, West Delhi, Delhi-58 have changed my name to PARDEEP KUMAR GAJWAL. 0071036819-1

I, Sunita D/o Joginder Singh, R/o Neola (182), Jhajjar, Haryana 124109, have changed my name to Vani 0071036736-1

I, Nishat Parveen D/o Naushad Hasan R/o A-4/49 Nand Nagri, Mandoli Saboli, Delhi-110093 declare that my father's name is wrongly written as Noshad Hasan in my all educational documents, Correct name is Naushad Hasan. 0050289794-1

I, Nikhat Jamal Qaiyum W/o Harish Kumar Tyagi R/O-P321, ATS Greens Village, Sec-93A, Noida have changed my name to Nikhat Tyagi. 0071036742-1

I, Mahesh Awatram Ramnani, S/o Late Awatram Seumal Ramnani R/O 6262, ATS ONE HAMLET, Sector-104, Noida, G. B. Nagar, UP.- 201304, have changed my name to Mahesh Ramnani, S/o Late Awat Ram Ramnani, for all future purposes. 0040855620-1

I, Kshitij Bhardwaj s/o Ramesh Chandra Sharma, R/o S-191, DLF Capital Greens, Shivaji Marg, Moti Nagar, New Delhi-110015, have changed my minor son's name from Ayyukt Bhardwaj to Aaryav Bhardwaj. 0040855506-1

I, Krash Singh S/o Pardeep Singh, R/o V.P.O-Bhatera, Batehra (254), Po: Bhatera, DIST:Jhajjar, Haryana, 124108, have changed my name to Kris Rajawat 0071036735-1

I,Diptanshu Chandel S/o Sh. Dharmendra Kumar Singh, R/o 7/10, Indira Vikas Colony, Dr. Mukherjee Nagar, PO: Dr. Mukherjee Nagar Dist: North West Delhi-110009 have changed my name to Diptanshu Singh Chandel for all purposes. 0040855495-2

I Chitra Mukherjee W/o Abhishek Chatterjee R/o M-102 Saket, New Delhi 110017 changed my name to Chitra Chatterjee vide affidavit number/1064/2026 dated 20/05/2026 before Notary Janmejay Barnik, New Delhi. 0040855525-1

I, Karamveer Singh Dahiya S/o. Sh. Ram Karan R/O. Flat No.271, Pocket-D, Shrikeshav Kunj Aptment, Sector-17, Dwarka, New Delhi-78 have changed my name to Karamveer Singh for all future purposes. 0040855497-1

I, Jaanvi Singh D/o Avtar Singh R/o 71/52, Prem Nagar, Janakpuri B-1, PO:Janakpuri B-1, Dist:West Delhi-110058, have changed my name to Rupali Singh. 0071036778-1

I, JATINDER GURWARA S/O RAMNATH GURWARA, R/o A-92, Inderpuri, New Delhi-110012, declare that name of mine and my father and my mother have been wrongly written as JATINDER KUMAR GURWARA and RAM NATH GURWARA and TARA RANI GURWARAR in my Passport No.P3071781. The actual name of mine and my father and my mother are JATINDER GURWARA and RAMNATH GURWARA and TARA RANI GURWARA, which may be amended accordingly. 0040855506-2

I, Harvinder Kaur W/o Baljit Singh R/o 2202 ATS Dolce Sector ZETA I Greater Noida U.P have changed my name from Harvinder Kaur Bhatia to Harvinder Kaur for all future purposes 0071036810-1

I, CHANDER PRAKASH S/O BHANI RAM born on 05/05/1980 residing at KH-101/2/2,Gali no. 5,F-block,tomor colony ,Burari , Delhi-110084 , have changed my name to CHANDER PRAKASH BERI vide affidavit dated 18/06/2026 at Delhi 0050289795-1

I, Somya Garg D/o Sunil Kumar Garg W/o Ishank Aggarwal R/o A-702, DDA Multi Storey Flats, Pitampura, North West Delhi, Delhi-110034 have changed my name to Somya Aggarwal for all purposes. 0040855495-1

I,Ravindra Singh S/o Chandrabhan Singh Thakur R/o MIG- 1/92, Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukl Nagar, Korba (Mcorp), Korba, Chhattisgarh-495677, have changed my name to Ravindra Singh Thakur 0071036809-1

I Kamlesh Kumari W/o Subhash Chand Sharma R/o House No.-C-85/25, Gali No-8, Mohanpuri, Garhi Mendu, North East Delhi. Have Changed My Name To KAMLESH For All The Future Purposes. 0071036812-1

I Kajal Sharma W/o Subhash Chand Sharma R/o House No.-C-85/25, Gali No-8, Mohanpuri, Garhi Mendu, North East Delhi. Have Changed My Name To KAMLESH For All The Future Purposes. 0071036805-1

I, PAYAL D/o Ajbi Singh, 76B, Everest Apartment, Pocket-A3, Kalkaji Extn., Kalkaji, Delhi-19 have changed my name to PAYAL KUSHWAHA. 0071036821-1

I HARMET KAUR W/O HARBJAN SINGH R/O- 1411-B, 3RD FLOOR GALI NO-13 GOVINDPURI DELHI-110019 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO MEENU ATHWAL 0040855267-2

I HARISH KUMAR S/O KISHAN LAL,R/o-J-12,GROUND FLOOR, FRONT SIDE,SRINIWASPURI,DELHI-110065 have changed my name to HARSH KUMAR 0040855627-7

I Achin S/o-Sanjay Kumar Aggarwal Address-40 Engineers Enclave Pitampura Delhi-110034, have changed my name to Achin Agarwal 0040855627-2

LOST & FOUND

Lost Original Diploma Certificate of Depanshu Uppal, Roll No. 18A202100, University - IGTI Ghaziabad. Contact: 9999091331. 0050289798-1

I, Rohan, have lost both original and duplicate copies of my CBSE Class XII Improvement Examination Marksheet bearing Roll No. 26721447, Year 2022 0050289805-1

Lost General Power of Attorney,Documents No.12565,Book No.4, Volume No.4135 On Page-73 To 74 Dated-24-04-1997, and General-Power of Attorney, Document.No.33156,Book No.4,Volume No.4363,Page No.120 To 122, Dated-20-08-1997 of property No.10/139, G.F.Geeta-Colony,Delhi-110031. Founder may Inform Dilvijay Singh,S/o-Moti Singh,R/o 10/144 Geeta Colony, Delhi-110031 0040855633-5

PUBLIC NOTICE

General Public is hereby inform by this notice that my client Smt. Asha Sehgal W/o.Sh. Satish Sehgal R/O-D-3/109 Sector-16, Rohini, New Delhi-110089, have severed their all relations from her son and his family members namely Punit Sehgal and also debarred them from her all moveable and immovable properties situated at Delhi or anywhere else and partnership firm namely M/s. Ashoka Publishing House, which is dissolve now as one of the partner Sh. Satish Sehgal has been pass away. due to their quarrelsome and discordance behaviour nature towards my client as he is not having good moral conduct and not bearing maintenance expenses as agreed by him at the time of registration of Gift Deed. My above son has misguide us for publication of same type notice against our son namely Naveen Sehgal and Nikhil Sehgal vide Publication in Hindi Newspaper namely Vey Arjun dated 20/04/2019, now by this notice same be cancel from right now. 0040855525-1

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the General Public that, Sapna Gupta W/o Rajesh Gupta, R/o Enclave, Panchsara, Saranswati, Vihar, North West Delhi-110034, have declared that she is the owner and in possession of the land measuring 25 Kanal 2 Marla, comprised in Khawat No. 274 min, Khata No. 314min, Mustil & Killa No. 109/(29-2), 111/19/21(1-12), 22/8(0) and Khawat No. 276min, Khata No. 316min, Mustil & Killa No. 111/19/(6-8), at Village Farnama, Tehsil Kharkhoda, District Sonapat, Haryana, hereinafter referred to as "the said property". That following documents in respect of the said Property have been lost / misplaced.

- Original Sale Deed dated 10/06/2020 executed by Parvinder Singh in respect of Khasra no. 109/(9-2), 111/19/21(1-12), 22/8(0) in favour of Saroj Devi, duly registered as document no. 146/1
- Original Sale Deed dated 10/06/2020 executed by Narmada, Neha & Chirag in respect of Khasra no. 111/19/(6-8) in favour of Saroj Devi, duly registered as document no. 147/1

In case the same is found, it may be returned immediately to the following address:

Vinod Kumar (Advocate)
Chamber No. 853,
Dwarka Courts, Sector-10,
Delhi-110075, 9911100715

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the general public that my client intends to purchase the Property/House bearing No. B-185, measuring 100sq. yds., out of Khasra No. 131, situated at B-Block, Sangam Vihar, New Delhi-110080, bounded as East-Gali 15 ft. West-Owner's Property, North-Other's Property, South-Other's Property.

My client is purchasing the said property from its absolute owner Mr. Vijay Singh Jadhav S/o Shri Narotam Singh, represented through his authorized General Power of Attorney (GPA) holder Mr. Pradeep Singh S/o Shri Rohas Singh (vide GPA executed on 08-Dec-2024 and notarized on 10-Dec-2024).

Any person(s), bank, financial institution or authority having any right, title, interest, claim, objection, dispute, mortgage, charge, or prior agreement regarding the said property, is hereby required to notify the undersigned in writing, along with valid documentary proof, within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice.

If no valid objections are received within the stipulated period, it will be presumed that the said property is free from all encumbrances, and my client will proceed to complete the purchase/transaction. Any claims made thereafter shall not be binding on my client and will be considered null and void.

Sd/-
Ch. No. 660, Saket Court New Delhi-17
Mob.: 9971054842, 7678407150

IN THE COURT OF DR. PANKAJ SHARMA, JUDGE, NEW DELHI DISTRICT PATIALA HOUSE COURT, NEW DELHI

Case No. PC/72026

VS.

S. MAMTA PANKAJ D/O LATE PRAN NATH PANKAJ, 6/3, CHARI CHANDRA PLACE EAST, LAKH GUPTA COLONY, WEST BENGAL-70003, ALSO AT- FLAT NO. 2213, SECTOR-C, POCKET 2, VASANT KUNJ, NEW DELHI-110070. Petitioner's

1. GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI THROUGH CHIEF SECRETARY, NEW SAHAYWALA ROAD, IG INDOOR STADIUM, ITO, VIKRAM NAGAR, NEW DELHI-110042.

2. CANARA BANK THROUGH THE BRANCH MANAGER, S.O. NO. 30, COMMUNITY CENTRE, BASANT LOK, VASANT VIHAR, DELHI-110057. Respondents

Whereas a petition under section 276 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925 for the grant of Probate Letters of Administration to the petitioner in respect of the movable and immovable properties of the estate of LATE MRS. NEELAM SAWHNEY.

Notice is hereby given to the general public that any person having objection to the Grant of Letter of Administration/Probate in his favour in respect of the estate of the deceased petitioner,

- Flat No. 2215, Sector-B, Pocket 2, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070.
- Savings Bank Account No. 274610100363 in Canara Bank, Vasant Vihar Branch, New Delhi.
- Term Deposit Account No. 27460400410 in Canara Bank.
- Fixed Deposit A/c No. 13004742657/1 in Canara Bank.
- Safe Deposit Locker (SDB) A/c No. 1200541128 in Canara Bank.
- Bank Safe Deposit Locker: Jewellery, Valuables, documents in Canara Bank Locker, may file the same in the court personally or through counsel on or before the last date of hearing 07/07/2026.

Given under my hand and the seal of the court on the 29th day of April 2026.

Sd/-
Judge

IN THE COURT OF DR. PANKAJ SHARMA, JUDGE, NEW DELHI DISTRICT PATIALA HOUSE COURT, NEW DELHI

Case No. PC/72026

VS.

S. MAMTA PANKAJ D/O LATE PRAN NATH PANKAJ, 6/3, CHARI CHANDRA PLACE EAST, LAKH GUPTA COLONY, WEST BENGAL-70003, ALSO AT- FLAT NO. 2213, SECTOR-C, POCKET 2, VASANT KUNJ, NEW DELHI-110070. Petitioner's

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Given under my hand and the seal of the court on the 29th day of April 2026.

Sd/-
Judge

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is publicly informed that my client intends to purchase Upper Ground Floor of Property No.C-308C, Canal Bank, Vasant Vihar Branch, New Delhi, Delhi-110042.

1. Govt. of NCT of Delhi through Chief Secretary, New Sahaywala Road, IG Indoor Stadium, ITO, Vikram Nagar, New Delhi-110042.

2. Canara Bank through the Branch Manager, S.O. No. 30, Community Centre, Basant Lok, Vasant Vihar, Delhi-110057.

3. Term Deposit Account No. 27460400410 in Canara Bank.

4. Fixed Deposit A/c No. 13004742657/1 in Canara Bank.

5. Safe Deposit Locker (SDB) A/c No. 1200541128 in Canara Bank.

6. Bank Safe Deposit Locker: Jewellery, Valuables, documents in Canara Bank Locker, may file the same in the court personally or through counsel on or before the last date of hearing 07/07/2026.

Given under my hand and the seal of the court on the 29th day of April 2026.

Sd/-
Judge

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that our Clients M/s Advance Computer Pvt. Ltd. is in process of recording the name of Mr. Deepak Parashar & Ms. Ruchi Sharma, in respect of Unit No. IT Tower-2/105 (Office), Floor-2, Sector-19, G.F. Geeta-Colony, Delhi-110031. Founder may Inform Dilvijay Singh,S/o-Moti Singh,R/o 10/144 Geeta Colony, Delhi-110031 0040855633-5

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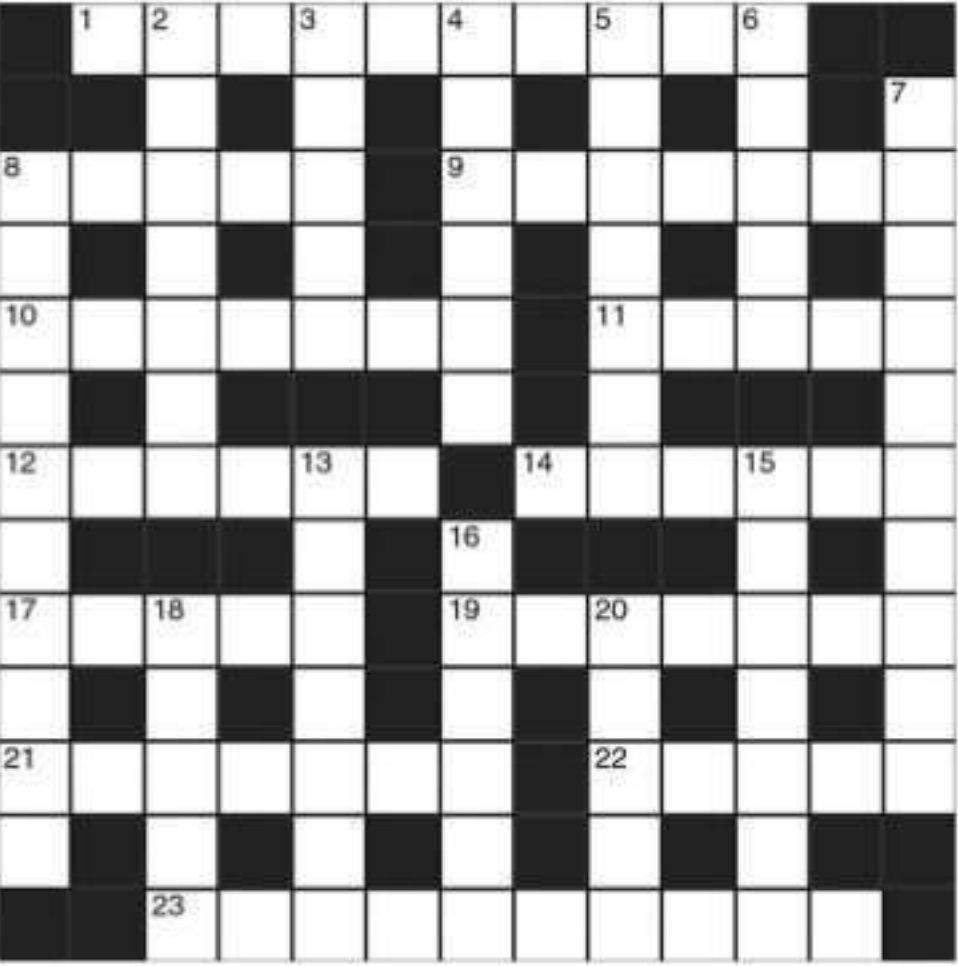
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SALUTE THE SOLDIER

		LIUTENANT KANAD BHATTACHARYA, SM 06 AUG 1974 - 21 MAY 1999 SS-37818M Lieutenant Kanad Bhattacharya, Sena Medal (Posthumous) laid down his life while fighting against intruders in North Eastern Ridge near Tiger Hill during " OPERATION VIJAY (KARGIL) ". In the true traditions of the Indian Army, Lieutenant Kanad Bhattacharya displayed exemplary bravery, courage and leadership of highest order in the face of the enemy and made the supreme sacrifice. Lieutenant Kanad Bhattacharya will always be remembered and missed by all of us in the Army Ordnance Corps for his supreme sacrifice and gallant act. Director General of Ordnance Service & Colonel Commandant and all ranks of the Army Ordnance Corps			
		INDO-TIBETAN BORDER POLICE (ITBP) 21 MAY, 2026 Asst. Sub Inspector Raj Kumar House No.- 2B/22831 Shivaji Nagar Colony Distt.- Saharanpur (Uttar Pradesh) ITBP salutes its braveheart Asst. Sub-Inspector Raj Kumar of 21th Battalion, who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty on this day in Jammu & Kashmir in 2023.			
BORDER SECURITY FORCE					
					
SH R C PANT, AC 09.12.1945- 21.05.1997	HC RANBIR SINGH 22.02.1955- 21.05.1997	HC KRISHAN CHAND 04.03.1961- 21.05.1997	NAIK KEDAR SINGH 23.12.1948 - 21.05.1997		
					
CT RATTAN SINGH 12.07.1968- 21.05.1997	CT SHOBNATH PRASAD, PMG 27.02.1965 - 21.05.1997	CT RAJIV KUMAR 01.01.1972- 21.05.1997	CT DULAL CHANDRA ROY 26.11.1969- 21.05.1997		
					
CT/DVR JUGRAJ SINGH 08.11.1968- 21.05.1997	HC RAGHUBIR SINGH, PMG 01.06.1958 - 21.05.1997	CT MOOL CHAND 20.04.1968- 21.05.1997			
Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Officer Sh. R C Pant, AC and Jawans Head Constables Raghubir Singh, Ranbir Singh, Krishan Chand, Naik Kedar Singh and Constables Shobnath Prasad, Rattan Singh, Rajiv Kumar, Dulal Chandra, Mool Chand and Constable/ Driver Jugraj Singh on their Balidan Diwas. On this day, they sustained fatal bullet injuries while fighting militants in Khongjom area, Thoubal, Manipur and made ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.					
	CONSTABLE RAJPAL 23.02.1965 - 21.05.2005 Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Constable Rajpal on his Balidan Diwas. On this day, he made supreme sacrifice while on operational duty in Jowai area, Meghalaya.				
	CONSTABLE MAHENDER PAL SINGH YADAV 10.10.1968-21.05.1996 Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Constable Mahender Pal Singh Yadav on his Balidan Diwas. On this day, he sustained fatal injuries in a grenade attack, triggered by militants in Shopian area, J&K and made ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.				
CENTRAL RESERVE POLICE FORCE					
	Veer Balidani Constable Vishwanath Singh Yadav 38 Bn 17-01-1946 To 21-05-1975	DG and all Ranks of #CRPF pay solemn tribute to Constable Vishwanath Singh Yadav of 38 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice while bravely combating Naxalites in West Bengal on 21 May 1975. #CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.			
	Veer Balidani Head Constable Karina Rao 1 Bn	DG and all Ranks of #CRPF pay solemn tribute to Head Constable Karina Rao of 1 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice while performing anti-riot duty in present-day Himachal Pradesh on 21 May 1948, during the turbulent post-Partition period. #CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.			

CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
1 Emergency flight (4,6)
8 A picking-up point (5)
9 One hears about a murder (7)
10 A part that can't be matched (7)
11 Shrink from hunting initially with wild boar about (5)
12 There's copy in the southeast for a writer (6)
14 Hibernating snake wrapped around shelter (6)
17 Intriguing little party (5)
19 Removed the soap from a small restaurant (7)
21 What any thug might be? (7)
22 Happen to come to mind (5)
23 Please try a new one at a time (10)
- DOWN**
2 Tidy — as a monk will be (2,5)
3 Unusual glee about a good golf score (5)
4 Slim elves play around the square (6)
5 High lines to take (7)
6 Terminal heart trouble (5)
7 Piece of rough material that could be smoother (5,5)
8 Not having a good time he was easily beaten (4,6)
13 He may call for you at an American hotel (7)
15 Latch that is made right (7)
16 Not a dropout of course (6)
18 Music of the Depression? (5)
20 Around or a series of rounds? (5)

SOLUTIONS CROSSWORD 5993 ACROSS: 1 Repast, 4 Sitter, 9 Open-air, 10 April, 11 Eaten, 12 Eyesore, 13 Nothing left, 18 Notable, 20 Baker, 22 China, 23 Shrinks, 24 Skewer, 25 Player **DOWN:** 1 Rhodes, 2 Pleat, 3 Staunch, 5 Irate, 6 Turn off, 7 Roller, 8 Free-and-easy, 14 Outside, 15 Liberal, 16 Snacks, 17 Eraser, 19 Brace, 21 Kinky.

JUMBLE WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

To be wholly devoted to some intellectual exercise is to have ____ in _ . - Robert Louis Stevenson (9,..,4)

PVEEE

KEILS

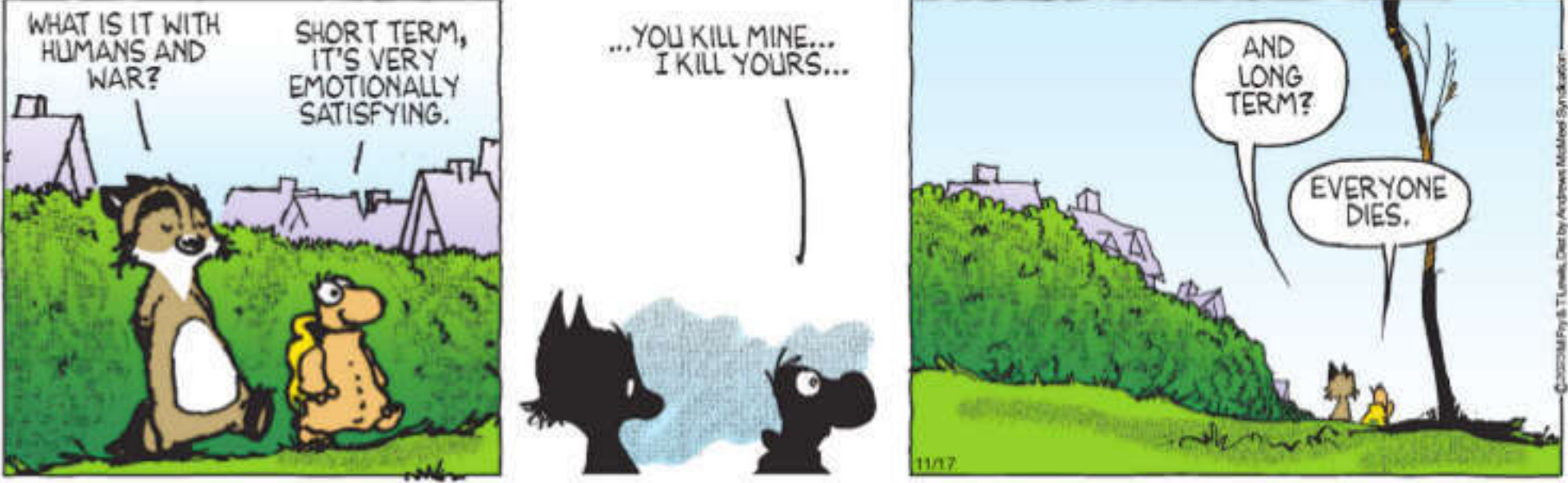
HIPCCU

ELUDDF

ANSWER: To be wholly devoted to some intellectual exercise is to have succeeded in life. - Robert Louis Stevenson

ANSWERS: PVEEE, KEILS, HIPCCU, ELUDDF

OVER THE HEDGE



CALVIN & HOBBS



MARVIN



DIFFICULTY LEVEL 2s 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 6325

SOLUTION SUDOKU 6324

ROYAL STARS

♈

ARIES (MAR 21 - APR 20): This is a playful day with lots of energy for sports. However, be careful about anger and getting caught up in a power struggle with a friend, group or a team. It's your choice. Instead, you can strategise and be sympathetic with someone. Tonight: Be playful.

♉

TAURUS (APR 21 - MAY 21): A clash of egos with parents and authority figures are classic. In fact, family disputes will be tough to avoid. Nevertheless, there are other lovely influences at play for you today that encourage warm socialising. What's it going to be? Tonight: Relax.

♊

GEMINI (MAY 22 - JUNE 21): Avoid getting caught up in squabbles with relatives, which frankly are just power struggles. Instead, your assistance to an older friend will give be more rewarding. Tonight: A gentle conversation.

♋

CANCER (JUNE 22 - JULY 23): Money squabbles are hard to avoid, especially if you're dealing with a friend. Don't take the bait if someone challenges you. Fortunately, you're pretty mellow right now. Demonstrate grace under pressure. Tonight: Check your money.

♌

LEO (JULY 24 - AUG 23): You might find yourself at odds with authority figures. Even partners will challenge you. Go with what works. Seek sympathy and companionship with a friend. Tonight: You're strong.

♍

VIRGO (AUG 24 - SEP 23): You make a fabulous impression on others. Why blow it by getting caught up in controversial arguments, power struggles at work, or something to do with your health or pet? Whatever the case, don't get involved. Take the high road. Tonight: Peace and quiet.

♎

LIBRA (SEP 24 - OCT 23): Parents will have to be patient with their kids. Likewise, romantic partners have to be patient with each other to avoid arguments about expenses, friends and social occasions. Fortunately, relations with authority figures are strong. Tonight: Be friendly.

♏

SCORPIO (OCT 24 - NOV 23): Avoid arguments with parents, bosses and spouses today because this will ruin your day. Instead, change your plans. Do something different. Get outside and explore something new. This is a temporary dark cloud on your horizon. Tonight: Be modest.

♐

SAGITTARIUS (NOV 24 - DEC 22): You might encounter arguments with siblings, relatives and neighbours. You might even feel challenged at work because of disputes or angry energy. Avoid this. Go with what works. Spouses and close friends are supportive. Tonight: Explore.

♑

CAPRICORN (DEC 23 - JAN 20): This is a tough day for romance. Even social outings will be challenged because in some aspects of your life, arguments are waiting for you. The trick is to go with the areas of your life where things are flowing nicely. Tonight: Check your finances.

♒

AQUARIUS (JAN 21 - FEB 19): Read carefully today. Those who are closest to you, including family members, might be looking for a fight. Step aside. You don't have to get involved. Social occasions and fun times with kids will be a wonderful escape. Tonight: Listen.

♓

PISCES (FEB 20 - MAR 20): Focus on home, family, fun outings, sports and good times with your kids today. Meanwhile, beware that interactions with siblings, relatives and daily contacts might lead to power struggles and nasty disputes. Yikes. 'Run away!' Tonight: Work.

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE				
Sr. No.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./ AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE	AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES
1	HARYANA	REPAIR OF TILE TERRACING AND PROVIDING FENCING SHED IN THE OFFICE CAMPUS OF SERVICES, WORKS DIVISION HARYANA SOCIETY	19.05.2026 02.06.2026	Rs. 4,10,124/-
2	HARYANA	REPAIR AND PAINTING OF CENTRAL ROOF BUILDING AFFECTED DUE TO SEVERE DRAINAGE ISSUE AT 132 KV SETHI, HARYANA, HESDC, PANDEY	19.05.2026 30.06.2026	Rs. 20,21,664/-



DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER RENGALI HEAD
WORKS CIRCLE, SAMAL, AT/P.O. SAMAL BARRAGE
Dist: ANGUL, Odisha, PIN-759037 | Email ID - seiscsamal19@gmail.com

e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE No. ACE-RHWC-01/2026-27(On-line)

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

1	Name of work	"Construction of River Embankment and Sluice Works".	
2	Total No. of Package	01 (One) No of work.	
3	Tender Cost of Packages	Approximately Rs. 486.56 Lakhs	
4	Cost of Bid Document	Rs 10,000.00 (On-line Payments)	
5	Bid Security	Rs. 4,86,600/-	
6	Class of Contractor	A Class (Work list attached in the Bid documents)	
7	Period of Completion	11(eleven) calendar Months	
8. Other details are as follows			
Procurement Officer		Availability of tender on-line for bidding	Date of opening of Technical Bid
Additional Chief Engineer, Rengali Head Works Circle, Samal		From	To
		22.05.2026 at 10.00 A.M	06.06.2026 upto 5.30 P.M
			06.06.2026 at 11.30A.M

9. email id:- seiscsamal19@gmail.com

10. Further details conditions can be seen from the Government website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

11. Any corrigendum/addendum/cancellation of tender to the above notice if any can be seen from the above website.

OIPR-25001/251821/26-270022

Sd/- Additional Chief Engineer Rengali Head Works Circle, Samal

दक्षिणांचल विद्युत वितरण निगम अधीक्षण अभियन्ता (साओ-प्रथम), ऊर्जा भवन, सिकन्दरा, आगरा

जेम-निविदा सूचना दिनांक : 18.05.2026

1. GEM/2026/B/7542456, सामग्री LT AB Cable 1x16+1x25, मात्रा: 909.50 कि०मी० क्रय किये जाने हेतु, प्रपत्र शुल्क नि-शुल्क घोरेहर राशि रु० 5,17,600/- बिड अपलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि 09.06.2026 समय 12:00 बजे तक।

2. GEM/2026/B/7542622, सामग्री LT AB Cable 3x120+1x95+1x16 SQ MM, मात्रा 3,021.00 कि०मी० क्रय किये जाने हेतु, प्रपत्र शुल्क नि-शुल्क घोरेहर राशि रु० 1,48,65,100/- बिड अपलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि 09.06.2026 समय 12:00 बजे तक।

3. GEM/2026/B/7545954, सामग्री 0.81 mm- D.P.C. Alu. Winding Wire, मात्रा 1,02,000 कि०मी० एवं 1.32 mm. Super Enamalled Alu.Winding Wire, मात्रा 36,120 कि०मी० क्रय किये जाने हेतु, प्रपत्र शुल्क नि-शुल्क घोरेहर राशि रु० 4,72,000/- बिड अपलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि 02.06.2026 समय 19:00 बजे तक।

4. GEM/2026/B/7544363, सामग्री 7.1x3.0 D.P.C. Alu. LT Strip, मात्रा 53,000 कि०मी० एवं 7.6x3.5 D.P.C. Alu. LT Strip, मात्रा 48,000 कि०मी० क्रय किये जाने हेतु प्रपत्र शुल्क नि-शुल्क घोरेहर राशि रु० 2,93,000/- बिड अपलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि 02.06.2026 समय 20:00 बजे तक।

5. GEM/2026/B/7510937, सामग्री 11 KV, 5 Kn Composite Polymer Pin Insulator मात्रा : 3,35,000 नग क्रय किये जाने हेतु/प्रपत्र शुल्क नि-शुल्क घोरेहर राशि रु० 4,93,000/- बिड अपलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि 08.06.2026 समय 20:00 बजे तक।

6. GEM/2026/B/7510950, सामग्री 11 KV, 45 Kn Polymer Disc Insulator (T&C Type) मात्रा 1,18,000 नग क्रय किये जाने हेतु, प्रपत्र शुल्क नि-शुल्क घोरेहर राशि रु० 1,44,000/- बिड अपलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि 08.06.2026 समय 20:00 बजे तक।

7. GEM/2026/B/7510859, सामग्री 33 KV, 10 kn Composite Polymer Pin Insulator मात्रा 76,000 नग क्रय किये जाने हेतु प्रपत्र शुल्क नि-शुल्क घोरेहर राशि रु० 3,08,000/- बिड अपलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि 08.06.2026 समय 20:00 बजे तक।

8. GEM/2026/B/7510968, सामग्री 33 KV, 10 kn Polymer Disc Insulator (B&S) मात्रा 30,000 नग क्रय किये जाने हेतु प्रपत्र शुल्क नि-शुल्क घोरेहर राशि : रु० 70,000/-, बिड अपलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि 08.06.2026 समय 20:00 बजे तक।

9. GEM/2026/B/7548565, सामग्री 11 KV Air Break Switches (TPMO)Gang Operated Switches मात्रा 16,500 नग क्रय किये जाने हेतु प्रपत्र शुल्क नि-शुल्क घोरेहर राशि रु० 13,62,500/- बिड अपलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि 08.06.2026 समय 20:00 बजे तक।

विस्तृत जानकारी एवं प्रपत्र वेबसाइट <http://gem.gov.in> पर उपलब्ध है। अग्रेय समस्त सूचनाएं वेबसाइट पर ही प्रदर्शित की जाएगी।

पत्रांक:1040/अधीअभि(साओ-1)/आगरा/विज्ञापन/ दिनांक : 19/05/2026

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE				
Sr. No.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./ AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE	AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES
1	MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, ROHTAK	CONSTRUCTION OF ASPIRATIONAL TOILET NEAR NAYA POND JOND ROAD, M.C. ROHTAK (RE-CL.)	19.05.2026 20.05.2026	Rs. 19.79 LACS

TELANGANA GIRIJAN COOPERATIVE CORPORATION LTD HYDERABAD DIVISIONAL OFFICE TGGCC LTD., ETURNAGARAM, MULUGU DISTRICT, TELANGANA, PIN-506 165

NOTIFICATION FOR SALE OF MOHWA FLOWER (1783.33) Qdts

Rs.No.176/2026/C Dt:18.05.2026

TGGCC Ltd., Eturnagaram Division invites sealed tenders for the sale of 1783.33 Qdts Mohwa Flower (MFP) stocks lying at various Godowns through Tender-cum-open Auction till 23.06.2026 up to 5.00 PM. Opening of Sealed Tenders will be on 24.06.2026 at 11.00 AM at Office of Project Officer ITDA, Eturnagaram. Interested buyers may visit Divisional Office, TGGCC Ltd., Eturnagaram, Mulugu District, Telangana for Tender forms, Godown- wise stock details, EMD amount, terms @ conditions and sale procedure etc. Contact: 8500039966 & Email: dmgeceti@gmail.com.,

Sd/- (Shri Leni Vatsal Potto, I.A.S) Project Officer, ITDA/ Executive Director, TGGCC Ltd, Eturnagaram

No. 2715-PP/CL/ADVT/2026-27

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-Procurement Tender Notice No. 26/21 Dated : 19.05.2026

E-Procurement Tender Notice

On behalf of the President of India, The Principal Chief Materials Manager, North Central Railway, Prayagraj, (An ISO 9001:2015 certified unit) invites the following E-Procurement Tenders.

Tender No.	Short Description	Qty.	Tender Opening Date
20263494	CYL. ROLLER AXLE BOX BEARING	319 Set	08.06.2026
38261463	Air Brake Hose Coupling for Brake Pipe	29036 Nos.	15.06.2026
64265062	Vibration Shaft 4 Guide Column Bush.	181.00 Nos.	01-Jun-26

Note : The complete information of above tenders can be seen and downloaded from IREPS website i.e. <https://www.ireps.gov.in>. For any change/corrigendum in tender, please visit this website regularly. No separate corrigendum/change will be published in news paper

North central railways www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in cp@ncrncr

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE				
Sr. No.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./ AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE	AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES
1	HS&M, ROHTAK	SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, TESTING AND COMMISSIONING OF ROOF TOP SOLAR POWER PLANTS FOR VARIOUS ELECTRIC CONNECTIONS OF MARKET COMMITTEES AT INFRASTRUCTURE (BUILDING AND PEB SHEEDS) OF HS&M IN JURISDICTION OF ELECTRICAL DIVISION, HS&M BOARD, ROHTAK	19.05.2026 05.06.2026	EMD Rs. 11,02,600/-

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA CORRIGENDUM

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in

Sr. No.

NAME OF BOARD CORP./ AUTH

OLD REFERENCE/ NET NO.

NATURE OF CORRIGENDUM

WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH

NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL

1

HARYANA

NIET No. 19/TS/PWL/2025-26 DATE: 24.03.2026 (REFERENCE NO. 2026AAA15357 7095 4528 9776 ASD&AG&AG&AD77HVP) FOR THE WORK OF AUGMENTATION OF EXISTING 66KV SINGLE BUS BAR WITH 0.4 SQ INCH AC&R CONDUCTOR TO 66KV SINGLE BUS BAR WITH TWIN 0.4 SQ INCH AC&R CONDUCTOR AT 66KV S/STN., PALWAL (TENDER ID- 2026_HRC_510612_1) (DIET No. 0324020613-43-48/156728)

THE DATE OF ONLINE BID SUBMISSION IS EXTENDED UPTO 28.05.2026 (PALWAL)

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2

HARYANA

NIET No. 17/TS/PWL/2025-26 DATE: 24.03.2026 (REFERENCE NO. 2026JEE73F07 149C 4C11 A068 39A08F0136C0377HVP) FOR THE WORK OF AUGMENTATION OF EXISTING 220KV DOUBLE BUS BAR WITH 0.4 SQ INCH AC&R CONDUCTOR TO 220KV DOUBLE BUS BAR WITH TWIN TARANTULA CONDUCTOR AT 220KV S/STN., PALWAL (TENDER ID- 2026_HRC_510607_1) (DIET No. 0324020613-34-27/156704)

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3

HARYANA

NIET No. 18/TS/PWL/2025-26 DATE: 24.03.2026 (REFERENCE NO. 2026A05A08D 37P1 4937 8502 776W9232A1E3977HVP) FOR THE WORK OF AUGMENTATION OF EXISTING 66KV DOUBLE BUS BAR WITH TWIN TARANTULA CONDUCTOR AT 220KV S/STN., PALWAL (TENDER ID- 2026_HRC_510610_1) (DIET No. 0324020613-49-59/156707)

THE DATE OF ONLINE BID SUBMISSION IS EXTENDED UPTO 28.05.2026 (PALWAL)

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छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल पर्यावास भवन, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.)

// सर्व संबंधितों को सूचना //

भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण नए एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, नई दिल्ली की अधिसूचना दिनांक 14.09.2006 (यथा संशोधित) के तहत सर्व संबंधितों को सूचित किया जाता है कि Expansion of Lara Super Thermal Power Project from 3200 MW [Stage-I (2X800 MW) & Stage-II (2X800 MW)] to 4800 MW by adding two units of 800 MW under Lara Super Thermal Power Project, Stage - III (2X800 MW) by M/s NTPC Limited located at Villages Armuda, Chhapora, Bodajhariya, Maholi, Riyapalli, Kandagarh, Devalpura, Ghutkupati, Thengapali, Lara in Tehsil Pursore, District Raigarh, Chhattisgarh के लिए पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति हेतु लोक सुनुवाई दिनांक 02/06/2026, दिन मंगलवार को प्रातः 11:00 बजे से स्थल - शासकीय उच्चतर माध्यमिक विद्यालय के समीप का मैदान, ग्राम-महोली, तहसील-पुसोरी, जिला- रायगढ़ (छ.ग.) में नियत है। कलेक्टर, कार्यालय कलेक्टर एवं जिला दण्डाधिकारी, जिला - रायगढ़ (छ.ग.) के पत्र क्रमांक 393/ज.सु.पर्यावरण/अप. कले./2026, दिनांक 18/05/2026 के अनुरोध अनुसार उपरोक्त नियत लोक सुनुवाई आगामी आदेश पर्यन्त तक स्थगित की जाती है।

सदस्य सचिव छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, रायपुर (छ.ग.)

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY ई-निविदा आमन्त्रण सूचना

मंडल रेल प्रवक्ता, इंजीनियरिंग, उत्तर पश्चिम रेलवे, जोधपुर द्वारा भारत के राष्ट्रपति के लिये एवं उनकी ओर से ई-निविदा के माध्यम से प्रचलित नियमों के अन्तर्गत निम्नित प्रश्नों में निविदा निम्न कार्यों के लिए क्रमानुसार आमन्त्रित की जाती है- ई-निविदा सूचना सं. 2026-27: 52of2026-27, कार्य का नाम व स्थान: Zone contract: Zone: -1 (Masonry, painting & Road work) Residential building from BISH (Excl.) to KOF (Incl.) in the section of ADEN/Samdari for the year 2026-27 (from 01-07-2026 to 30-06-2027) & 2027-28 (From 01-07-2027 to 30-06-2028); अनुमानित लागत रुपये: 3,39,99,999.84; बयाने की राशि रुपये: 6,80,000.00; ई-निविदा सूचना सं.2026-27: 53of2026-27, कार्य का नाम व स्थान: Zone contract: Zone: -2 (Masonry, painting & Road work) Service building from BISH (Ex) to BLDI (ex) in the section of SSE/W/SMR under ADEN/Samdari for the year 2026-27 (from 01-07-2026 to 30-06-2028) & 2027-28 (From 01-07-2027 to 30-06-2028); अनुमानित लागत रुपये: 1,49,99,997.96; बयाने की राशि रुपये: 3,00,000.00; ई-निविदा सूचना सं.2026-27: 54of2026-27, कार्य का नाम व स्थान: Zone contract: Zone: -3 (Masonry, painting & Road work) Residential building from KOF (Excl.) to BLDI (Excl.) in the section of ADEN/Samdari for the year 2026-27 (from 01-07-2026 to 30-06-2027) & 2027-28 (From 01-07-2027 to 30-06-2028); अनुमानित लागत रुपये: 3,39,99,999.06; बयाने की राशि रुपये: 6,80,000.00; ई-निविदा सूचना सं.2026-27: 55of2026-27, कार्य का नाम व स्थान: Zone Contract (Water supply) Zone-4 Supply of potable sweet drinking water to P way gangs, staff quarters, Stations, L-Xing's etc. From BISH (ex) to BLDI (ex) under ADEN/SMR (2026-28). From 01-07-2026 to 30-06-2027 & 01.07.2027 to 30.06.2028; अनुमानित लागत रुपये: 73,99,979.70; बयाने की राशि रुपये: 1,48,000.00; ई-निविदा सूचना सं. 2026-27: 64of2026-27; कार्य का नाम व स्थान: Zone contract: Zone: -1 (Masonry, painting & Road work) Residential building from HWT (Excl.) to MJ (excl.) & LN-SMR-BISH (Incl.) in the section of ADEN/Luni for the year 2026-27 (from 01-07-2026 to 30-06-2027) & 2027-28 (From 01-07-2027 to 30-06-2028); अनुमानित लागत रुपये: 7,29,99,998.08; बयाने की राशि रुपये: 14,60,000.00; ई-निविदा सूचना सं.2026-27: 65of2026-27; कार्य का नाम व स्थान: Zone contract: Zone: -2 (Masonry, painting & Road work) Service building from HWT(Excl.) to MJ (excl.) & LN-SMR-BISH (Incl.) in the section of ADEN/Luni for the year 2026-27 (from 01-07-2026 to 30-06-2027) & 2027-28 (From 01-07-2027 to 30-06-2028); अनुमानित लागत रुपये: 99,99,999.00; बयाने की राशि रुपये: 2,00,000.00; ई-निविदा सूचना सं.2026-27: 66of2026-27; कार्य का नाम व स्थान: Zone Contract (Water supply) Zone-3: Supply of potable sweet drinking water to P. Way Gangs staff quarters stations and L-Xing's in the section of SSE/PW/SMR, SSE/W/SMR & SSE/PW/LUNI under ADEN/LUNI/JU for the year 2026-27 & Year 2027-28; अनुमानित लागत रुपये: 67,99,975.02; बयाने की राशि रुपये: 1,36,000.00; निविदा सूचना संख्या 52.53.54 & 55of2026-27 & 64.65 & 66of2026-27 निविदा प्रस्तुत करने की तिथि 09.06.2026 & 15.06.2026 को 15:00 बजे तक है। वेबसाइट का विवरण जहाँ पर ई-निविदा देखी व भरी जा सकती है www.ireps.gov.in

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epaper.indianexpress.com

New Delhi

Bangladesh beats Pakistan to complete Test sweep



Mohammad Rizwan was the top scorer for Pakistan. REUTERS

Associated Press
Sylhet, May 20

TAIJUL ISLAM finished with six wickets as Bangladesh dismissed Pakistan for 358 on Wednesday for a 78-run win in the second Test and a 2-0 sweep of the series. The left-arm spinner took two of the three wickets to fall on Day 5 and returned 6-120 from 34.2 overs, clinching the series after helping reduce the tourists to 316-7 on Day 4.

Pakistan added 42 runs on the fifth morning before losing three wickets without addition to the total in 13 deliveries as Bangladesh rushed to victory.

"Our bowlers did a great job in hot conditions, on a flat wicket," Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shantosa said. "In the batting sometimes (in the past) we lost too many wickets, but nowadays we have brilliant partnerships. Our tailenders also contribute a lot. Those are the things we wanted to improve and I hope we continue." Bangladesh won the first Test by 104 runs.

The victory marked Bangladesh's second successive series sweep against Pakistan, having previously completed a 2-0 victory in 2024. The end of Mohammad Rizwan's defiant, 166-ball innings signaled the end of Pakistan's hopes of chasing down an improbable victory target of 437.

Rizwan (94) struck Nahid Rana (2-71) for consecutive boundaries in the third over of the day to make Pakistan's intention clear. Sajid Khan also scored freely to maintain pressure on the bowlers from the home team. But Taijul's breakthrough, dismissing Sajid for 28, ended a 54-run partnership, marked his 18th five-wicket haul in test matches and hastened the result.

In the next over, Rizwan cut a Shoriful Islam delivery straight to gully. Taijul wrapped up the Pakistan innings in the subsequent over by removing Khuram Shahzad for a duck.

"When you make 360 runs in the fourth innings of the game you kind of expect to be on the right side of it, but I think in the three innings we had quite a lot to reflect on," Pakistan captain Shan Masood said. "There were things we didn't do well enough in the first three innings and that's why the effort on the fourth and fifth days didn't really materialize into a win."

Masood on Wednesday said the country's cricket board will take a call on his leadership role in the red ball format.

BRIEF SCORES: Bangladesh 278 & 390 beat Pakistan 232 & 358 (Rizwan 94, Salman Agha 71, Shan Masood 71; Taijul Islam 6/120) by 78 runs

LOOKING TO FILL RAVINDRA JADEJA'S BIG SHOES

Suthar: Built in the classical mode, thinks like a Test bowler

Left-arm spin allrounder's coach says he is not a finished product but if groomed well can play for many years

Venkata Krishna B
Chennai, May 20

AS THE news of his son Manav being called up to India's Test squad against Afghanistan reached him, tears welled up in Jagdish Suthar's eyes. Overcome with emotion, he sobs uncontrollably as his wife takes over the phone.

"He is very strong usually, but this moment is very emotional," she says. When Jagdish takes back the phone, he conveys the enormity of the occasion. "This was a life-long dream. A lot of hard work has gone into it. Very happy."

The story of the Suthars is similar to most father-son tales in Indian cricket. During his younger days, cricket meant everything to Jagdish, who couldn't get beyond the school-level. When Manav showed interest in the game, it was a no-brainer.

"I didn't push him... he had interest in cricket, so at 11, I put him in an academy," Jagdish, who works as a physical education teacher at a school at Sriganganagar, a small town five km from Pakistan border in Rajasthan, says.

Bowling left-arm spin, though, wasn't in Jagdish's mind. "I wanted him to become a batsman. But his coach (Dheeraj Sharma) told me on the first day of training that my son is made for bowling."

Manav has been on the selectors' radar ever since he was summoned to India's preparatory camp for the 2023 World

Cup. Even before he joined the camp in Bengaluru, there was plenty of hype around him. At the camp, as he troubled the likes of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, it was evident that the hype was understandable.

The common acknowledgment among the senior players during that camp was that if he could manage to get drift with the white ball, he could do wonders with the red ball.

In the lead-up to Tuesday's team selection, the Suthar household had been anxious. At a time when players active in the Indian Premier League hog the limelight, there were some who opined that Manav wasn't made for the top level, as he had spent the entire 2025 season on the Gujarat Titans bench and had played only four fixtures this season.

Even when he toured the UK as part of the India A squad in 2025, opportunities eluded him. In last year's Duleep Trophy too, he carried the drinks for Central Zone, which preferred Saransh Jain and Harsh Dubey. The story was no different last September, as Dubey and Tanush Kotian were the chosen ones against Australia A.

The breakthrough

It was in this backdrop that Manav got drafted into India A XI for the second Test against Australia A last year, when he picked up five wickets to prove his credentials.

"He was actually very nervous," his coach Dheeraj Sharma



Manav has been on selectors' radar since being part of India's preparatory camp for the 2023 WC. FILE

“He has an action and a release perfect for a left-arm spinner. Be it bowling speeds, variations or efficiency in terms of constantly asking questions, he has it in him.”

DHEERAJ SHARMA
MANAV SUTHAR'S COACH

says. "He was not getting opportunities anywhere. At Gujarat Titans, he had Sai Kishore ahead of him. When there was talk about not getting an IPL game, I kept telling him that 'If

you play for India, it will be with the red ball. They will hand over the red ball to you one day and when that happens, never let it go'. He is made for Test cricket."

That observation is largely down to his skillset.

"He is built in a classical mould. He is not someone who will bowl with a flat trajectory. He has an action and a release perfect for a left-arm spinner. Be it bowling speeds, variations or efficiency in terms of constantly asking questions, he has it in him. Even though he hasn't got any game time in the IPL, I tell him to use the two months to learn how to prepare and read the game," Dheeraj says.

At a time when India's spin bowling resources are thin, the

selectors haven't just gone by numbers.

Playing for Rajasthan, which hasn't got beyond the group stages in recent years, means opportunities have been few. In 29 first-class outings, Manav has picked up 129 wickets at 25.76 — not eye-popping numbers by any means — but what has got many excited about the 23-year-old are the traits that Dheeraj listed out.

"He thinks like a Test match bowler. From a young age, he understood the value of bowling dot balls. He is a firm believer that a set of dot balls will lead to the batter making a mistake. To bowl dot balls, one needs to be consistent with the line. He is not a finished product, but if groomed, will serve you for long."

A wrong turn that put Dubey on path to cricket

Express News Service
Mumbai, May 20

"WE TOOK a wrong turn one day when my father and I were going to buy my fourth-standard school books," Harsh Dubey had told *The Indian Express*. "I came across cricket practice at Ruby Club and asked my father what it was. He explained that's where cricketers were made, and I got hooked."

That wrong turn was in Nagpur, 2010. Dubey was nine. On Monday, he was named in India's Test and ODI squads for the series against Afghanistan.

The path there was built on sacrifice that was not always his own. His father worked with the CISF, a transferable job that kept uprooting the family. When Harsh was deep into his age-group cricket, the transfers grew distant.

"He decided to quit the force for my career," Dubey says. His mother, a teacher, was up at five every morning, packed his lunch, left for school before he returned from training. "I have seen how much my parents sacrificed their personal lives for me," he says. "When I do well, the happiness I see in them — that is the biggest thing for me."

When Sunrisers Hyderabad called him up as a replacement in IPL 2025, he got Mitchell Marsh on debut. Before the next game against RCB, he rang his father. "Papa, I am going to take Virat's wicket," he said.

His mother told *CricketNext* what happens before every big match. "He thinks about who he wants to get out. He prepares himself for it mentally."

His father told *CricketNext* the rest. "He had been watching Virat for so long. And the biggest thing about him is he doesn't think — Virat Kohli is batting in front of me, or Russell is batting. Honestly, that is the biggest key to success."

Kohli was caught at cover for 43. Seventh over. Dubey pumping his fist. Afterward he got Kohli's autograph on his cap. "I've watched him since my childhood," he wrote on *Instagram*. "Getting his wicket is truly a dream come true."

His father told *CricketNext* about the boy they first brought to Ruby Club. The senior left-arm spinner at the club fell ill one day and Harsh got a game by accident. He took eight wickets and made sixty-plus runs as an opener. He also recalled the boy coming off the field once, run out without



Harsh Dubey has been named in the Test and ODI squads for the home series against Afghanistan that starts next month. FILE

facing a ball as a non-striker, his face red, crying so hard neither parent could hold back. "That thing I remember even today," his father said. He also remembered the bats — broken every ten days from sheer use. "He was that mad about batting."

That batting madness showed itself most vividly in the Hyderabad group game this Ranji season. Vidarbha were 70 for 7 when Dubey walked in. He took them to 180.

Both innings he made fifties, picked up eight wickets. "That match was my best of the season," he says. More than that, though, was the Ranji final, where — with Vidarbha's first-innings lead at stake — he bowled the last ten overs with a

cut finger bleeding through his glove. "I have the video," he says. He bowled anyway. Vidarbha won.

The 69 wickets in 10 matches placed him alongside Bishan Singh Bedi, Jaydev Unadkat and Dadda Ganesh in an elite list of single-season Ranji hauls. Across 27 first-class games, he has 133 wickets at an average of 23 and 1026 runs at 25.

Getting drift

Anil Kumble, watching him bowl for SRH, told *ESPNcricinfo's Time Out* what he saw. "He gives it a proper tweak — that is the start. When you do that, you get drift, and more importantly it goes off the surface

that much quicker." Tom Moody, alongside Kumble on the same show, added: "When he changes his pace, he doesn't lose the integrity of the shape of the ball. A lot of spinners under pressure just produce a quicker ball that disappears. His arrival always has a really nice shape and dip with the change of pace." Moody concluded: "I see him as a Test bowler as much as a T20 bowler. Imagine facing this guy on a turning track."

R Ashwin had been watching earlier. He called Dubey to play the TNCA league in Chennai during the off-season. When Dubey first arrived, Ashwin kept it simple. "He told me — your ball is coming out well, don't change anything. If there's a problem we'll look at it then. Just let it run," Dubey says.

Last season he had been desperate — anxious to hold his place, over-trying, bowling into the batsman's arc. "I realised I was too desperate to take wickets," he says.

This season, with Aditya Sarwate moving to Kerala and his own place in the side secure, the desperation left. "I just did what I have always done — bowl in the right areas, contribute with the bat lower down. I didn't complicate it."

KKR refuse to fade into rainy night, keep hopes alive

SYNOPSIS: Kolkata Knight Riders leave it late to beat MI by 4 wickets and keep play-off hopes flickering.

Sayak Dutta
Kolkata, May 20

KOLKATA KNIGHT Riders kept their chances of reaching the playoffs alive and they had their bowlers to thank for it. After they restricted Mumbai Indians to 147/8, a fourth-wicket partnership between Rovman Powell and Manish Pandey steadied the innings as they got home with more than an over to spare.

Vintage choke

On a sultry evening with rain expected, KKR skipper Ajinkya Rahane opted to chase on a ground where dew was likely to be a significant factor as the match progressed. Mumbai openers Rohit Sharma and Ryan Rickelton started slowly, managing only a single boundary in the first couple of overs.

With pressure building, Rickelton swung at Cameron Green in the third over, but the ball ballooned up and landed in Manish Pandey's grasp. Naman Dhir lasted two balls, nicking behind to Angkrish Raghuvanshi, giving Green his second wicket. Rohit, meanwhile, slog-swept Saurabh Dubey for a six only to fall to the Vidarbha pacer for 15, leaving Mumbai reeling at 24/3 after four overs.

Suryakumar Yadav seemed to be the crisis man when he hit a straight drive for a four, followed by another to fine leg. He started the sixth over with a flicked six over fine leg but was cleaned up by Dubey as he under-edged a delivery onto his stumps. Mumbai ended the Powerplay at 46/4 as the pressure applied by the KKR bowlers paid off.

A spell of rain interrupted proceedings, providing the visitors much-needed respite and a chance to reset. But KKR's spin twins had other ideas.

With Varun Chakaravathy, looking in visible discomfort due to his injury, and Sunil Narine, KKR employed the middle-overs choke they have become synonymous with this season, yielding just 14 off overs 8-10 as MI trudged to 64/4 after 10 overs.

The pressure almost accounted for another Mumbai wicket but Tilak Varma, batting at 12, got a reprieve when wicket-keeper Raghuvanshi curiously ran towards the bowler's end and collided with Varun, leading to a dropped chance. Tilak, however, couldn't make KKR pay as he holed out to Anukul Roy in the deep off Kartik Tyagi for 20. Captain Hardik Pandya



Manish Pandey top-scored for KKR with 45 from 33 deliveries. PTI

● IPL table

Teams	M	W	L	P	NRR
RCB (Q)	13	9	4	18	1.065
GT (Q)	13	8	5	16	0.400
SRH (Q)	13	8	5	16	0.350
RR	13	7	6	14	0.083
PBKS	13	6	6	13	0.227
KKR	13	6	6	13	0.011
CSK	13	6	7	12	-0.016
DC	13	6	7	12	-0.871
MI (E)	13	4	9	8	-0.510
LSG (E)	13	4	9	8	-0.702

was then bamboozled by an off-break from Narine that spun in sharply and rattled his stumps. But a late surge by Corbin Bosch, who scored 32 off 18 balls, helped Mumbai post 147/8.

Leaving it late

Finn Allen threatened to repeat his heroics from the last match when he opened his account with two cracking boundaries, both through the cover-point area, off the first over by Deepak Chahar. But the MI pacer had the last laugh when he cleaned up the Kiwi power-hitter in the same over.

Rahane and Pandey started the rebuilding process with occasional boundaries, before Bosch accounted for the KKR captain when he nicked behind for 21 with the home team ending the Powerplay at 51/2. Green was the next man to depart as he tried to accelerate and was caught in the deep by Allah Ghazanfar off Bosch.

Rovman Powell came in at No. 4 and steadied the ship somewhat with a flicked six and a boundary even as Pandey continued to play the anchor role. The West Indies batter was almost sent back by Hardik Pandya for 14 but confusion between Chahar and Robin Minz in the deep gave him a second chance.

Thereafter, Pandey broke the shackles with back-to-back boundaries off Pandya, the first a drive past the bowler and the second a cut through the point region. He followed that with a deft touch to the backward point boundary to bring up Kolkata's 100 runs in the 13th over.

With the three figures up, it gave Powell freedom to play a few strokes that fetched him a couple of boundaries and brought up the 50-run fourth-wicket partnership. Pandey's stay was ended by Jasprit Bumrah for 45 before Powell also fell for 40. However, Rinku Singh stayed to drag KKR over the line.

BRIEF SCORES: MI 147/8 in 20 overs (Corbin Bosch 32; Cameron Green 2/23, Saurabh Dubey 2/34) lost to KKR 148/6 in 18.5 overs (Manish Pandey 45, Rovman Powell 40; Corbin Bosch 3/30) by four wickets

● UNDER THE PUMP

Pant's F-word moment sums up his and SuperGiants' miserable IPL season

Nihal Koshie
New Delhi, May 20

ON TUESDAY, after LSG's loss to Rajasthan Royals, skipper Rishabh Pant sounded like a Formula One driver.

The speed demons are notorious for using cuss words over the team radio when their cars don't respond the way they want them to during those tense race moments.

Rishabh Pant too had gone unparliamentary, and ungentlemanly, when talking to commentator Ian Bishop in the post-match chat.

"...it hasn't gone our way and everyone knows that, but that doesn't take away the fact that we are a f***ing good

team," the (LSG) captain said. Bishop would try to mop away the awkwardness of IPL's first F-word moment. "Apologies for that. Thank You very much for your time."

Pant's frustration towards the end of LSG's forgettable season was understandable but not his choice of words. Two lean seasons — both in terms of results and runs — had got to Pant.

It's fair to say that Pant was having a rotten day at the office. Hours before he walked out for the toss for the IPL match against RR, the LSG captain had been dropped from the One-Day International squad and also lost the Test vice-captaincy for the series against



Rishabh Pant's (R) LSG are at the bottom of the points table. PTI

Afghanistan.

Any proud international player would have felt hurt but the current group of selectors are known to take tough calls

based on merit and not reputation.

On the field in Jaipur, Pant's day went from bad to worse. He was run out, RR beat LSG by

Pant's frustration towards the end of LSG's forgettable season was understandable but not his choice of words.

seven wickets with five balls to spare chasing 221.

There were a couple of horrendous run out misses by bowlers who were positioned just a few yards from the non-striker's stumps. But Pant has bigger problems than the poor aim of his teammates. The litany of cricketing woes is long.

Even before the match, LSG

were out of the Playoff race. Last on the current points table after nine losses and just four wins, a seventh-place finish a year ago.

His poor batting returns; 286 runs at a strike rate of 140.19 this season after an equally poor 2025 with his only century in a dead rubber since being acquired by LSG for Rs 27 crore, the most expensive player in IPL history.

Pant as captain has not been able to nail down a batting position for himself.

He has opened the innings, batted at one-down and on Tuesday batting at No.4 to produce a snail-pace knock — 35 runs in 23 balls — which stalled the momentum towards the

end of the LSG innings.

At the toss too, Pant seemed confused when answering basic questions about the Playing XI.

But that could be attributed to a momentary lapse of concentration or perhaps he didn't hear Bishop's question because of the fan noise.

Coach Justin Langer didn't mince words when talking about the captain.

"Rishabh has been around for a long time. I think he has been playing in the Indian side since he was 18 years old. He understands it and numbers don't lie. So he will be the first to admit, it has been two very disappointing seasons with the bat, he has had some great innings but he

will be disappointed with those numbers. You expect a lot from your senior players and he will be feeling it as much as anyone," Langer said following the loss.

Pant spoke about 'too many minds' and 'too many suggestions' impacting his decision-making but IPL teams are packed with former greats in the support-staff corner. It's the nature of the beast.

For now, Pant will be better off finding his ideal batting position and making his bat do the talking.

He should leave the use of the F-word to F1 drivers who compete in a high-risk sport.

LSG may be a 'f***ing good team' on paper but wins are what a captain is judged on.

THE NUMBERS BEHIND ARSENAL'S PL VICTORY

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

The long way home — Arsenal's 22-year wait comes to an end

Arsenal knew how to build a team. They just had to find a way to win with one

Sandip G New Delhi, May 20

WHEN THE final whistle blew at the Vitality Stadium in Bournemouth, the hosts pegging Manchester City to a 1-1 draw, North London erupted. Arsenal were champions — after a wait of 22 years. Long not only in its length, but in its pain. The endless cycles of near misses burned like an open wound. Happy tidings of a dynasty loomed when they raised the trophy in 2004, the season they went without dropping a game.

But fate wrote the script differently. The construction of a new stadium — a necessity, not greed — bore its brunt on wages and transfer policy. The talismans left. Around them rose clubs muscled with petrodollars; their visionary vice-president and co-owner David Dein sold his shares and departed; football itself forsook the romantic ideals of the peak Wenger years.

In the years that followed, they watched Alex Ferguson — once Wenger's equal — scale luminous heights. They endured the insults Jose Mourinho spat at their manager. They glanced covetously at Pep Guardiola raising an empire, Jurgen Klopp a kingdom, Leicester City spinning an unlikely fairytale. And they watched the silverware slip



Arsenal fans gather at the Emirates Stadium after the Gunners were confirmed as Premier League champions. REUTERS

through their own nervous palms, even under Mikel Arteta. No club in the Premier League can have suffered quite as much in their quest to squeeze another title onto the shelf.

This, then, was not only a triumph of quality but of will and persistence. Such callous fate could have broken most teams and managers. But not Arteta. He painstakingly refined his squad to such a level of efficiency that they always found a way through. April was cruel — injuries wreaked their customary havoc, anxiety crept in. But in May, they rose above every setback, those of the mind and on the ground. Since City drew level on points, Arsenal tigishly clung to every point they could muster. It was not always beautiful football — rugged and physical at times, a departure from the free-flowing Arteta-ball of his early years and the ideals

of Wenger's Invincibles.

The reliance on set-up pieces was not accidental, but a shrewd exploitation of the diminishing aerial ability of opposition defenders. They utilised the dead-ball to such devastating effect that EPL woke up to its lost value.

Unfair parallels

Unfair parallels will be drawn, because this is their first title since that epochal season. Arteta's men are no Invincibles — they are flawed and human, and it makes the narrative richer. But look beyond the beauty of Wenger's side and there are threads that bind both teams. Both were built on trust — forged by men bound by professional allegiance, intimacy and friendship. Patrick Vieira spoke of that culture in Amy Lawrence's book *Invincibles*: "The objective of going to eat outside is to get to know each other

better. You talk about something you don't normally talk about, you realise how much you shared about your life when you were young. It brings you closer and then when you are out there on the pitch you know that he will watch your back."

Arteta's men bond over a game called Werewolf. A moderator divides the team into villagers and werewolves. Arteta made it mandatory that every player report first to Colney, Arsenal's training base, before travelling together to fixtures. "They're very close, they spend a lot of time together off the field as well and that's something really important," Arteta said. "You can tell in the way they communicate and the way they look at each other that there is something special."

The camaraderie overflows on the pitch. Everyone fights for everyone — as did Wenger's bat-

alion. In the silk and satin of Thierry Henry and company, the defensive solidity of Sol Campbell and Kolo Toure is often forgotten, Vieira screening in front of them.

"We were fighters and gentlemen," Vieira would say. Arteta's attackers may not be of Henry's calibre, but Saliba and Gabriel rank among the greatest centre-back pairings of the Premier League era. They are not only the meanest defence in the division — they went the entire season without conceding a penalty or receiving a red card. If Wenger built his team around his forwards, Arteta built his around his midfield, spearheaded by Declan Rice — whom he calls the lighthouse.

Every signing was made carefully, to the team's precise specifications. Rice arrived in 2023, and in subsequent seasons Arteta added Mikel Merino, Martin Zubimendi and Eberechi Eze to make the core more dynamic.

This season, Arteta introduced verticality and greater variation in attack — shifting shape depending on the opponent, the situation and the personnel. Often it is a 4-3-3, with Odegaard and Rice triangulating with Zubimendi; at other times a 3-2-4-1 when Riccardo Calafiori moves infield. They pressed transitions hard too, looking to strike before opponents could settle into a low block.

Evolution has been the watchword. "We need to make sure that when we are evolving, we are maintaining the great things that we do and just tweaking and making things that can give us big value," Arteta said. And so they have — ending a long and painful wait to become champions again.

How Gunners became dead-ball specialists in order to win league

Sandip G New Delhi, May 20

FOR EVERY goal Arsenal scores from a dead-ball situation, set-piece coach Nicolas Jover gets a hefty bonus. The Germany-born, France-raised, Canada-educated sport science graduate has a mural outside the Emirates Stadium, drives a Lamborghini and is often spotted smoking expensive cigars.

An intense presence on the touchline, he is the mastermind behind Arsenal's set-piece ruthlessness, which has been central to their first league triumph in 22 years. Rivals fans might berate the Gunners' set-piece fetish, but they create ample chances (they lie fourth in this metric) from the open play as well.

28 goals, 17 from corner

No side in the EPL has scored more goals from set pieces or corner kicks ever than Arsenal this season. One every two and a half goals they have come from a free kick or a corner. But numbers themselves are largely irrelevant, but what matters more has been the way in which they were deployed, as a plot device, a number in service to the wider narrative.

Rather than a triumph of physical supremacy, it's how they have weaponised an under-rated art, at times derided as an inferior team's refuge. Set-piece goals never went totally obsolete in English football, but Arsenal have elevated it into a bewitching art, requiring as much muscle as wits. In the last four years, Arsenal have topped the goals from such situations. It originated from Arteta's plan to counter the low-block, wherein teams dug trenches and defended, thus limiting spaces and blocking channels. Set pieces have always been a method to

slice open a game when things were tight.

Three glorious takers

Often in corners, the attention falls on the executional, the barking bull of a centre-back out-leaping and out-muscling the wanton limbs and heads inside the box. No doubt the assigned header is an influential figure, but he needs an inch-perfect, well-weighted delivery. Arsenal have three exceptional dead-ball specialists to slot the perfect delivery into the box. Often, Bukayo Saka and Odegaard, both left-footed, would ping the ball from the right side. Declan Rice would ferry those from the left-side. All three take turns to take free kicks from non-corner instances. Unless they are defending a goal in the dying minutes of the game, wherein they play it short, they whip in devastating in-swingers, with bend, power and precision. The accuracy is staggering, and it's rare to see them mishitting one.

The deadly head

Everyone rival knows the intended receiver of the corner, the 6'3", strapping centre-back, Gabriel. Since his arrival in the 2021-22 season, no centre back has netted as many goals as him (20). But it is not about him but also a combination of movements, practised to perfection, inside the box. Gabriel lurks on the edge of the six-yard box, on the left. Three of them usually hover behind him, inside the 18-yard box. They are the dummy runners, trying to clear out the far post area.

When the ball swings in, they often move towards the ball, dragging markers to the near post. One or two might linger just outside the box and the rest stand behind them, to thwart any counter-attack. Gabriel rushes, unshackling from the

men pulling his shirt, or blocking his view. Not all headers are met in the same way — he glances, he cushions and barrels them. He is not the only quality header Arsenal possess either. Midfielder Mikel Merino has a thunderbolt of a header; his backline colleagues, Jurrien Timber and Riccardo Calafiori, too chime in with goals. The addition of striker Viktor Gyokeres has further strengthened this facet.

Variety is king

The underlying principles are often the same; but they mix the routines and patterns, lest they become predictable. Depending on the team and situations, they target the far post or the near pole. Teams have a habit of stacking the central areas with their tallest men. To foil this, they sometimes target the near post. Some corners are whipped in, some floated. Some swing; some don't. Sometimes, they drift into the box like a swarm of bees. Sometimes, they scatter like a regiment after a drill. It's synchronised chaos, so second-guessing their patterns becomes difficult.

Jover's influence

The season before Jover's arrival, Arsenal had scored only six goals from set pieces. Jover was then with Manchester City, feeling wasted as Pep Guardiola's teams rely more on goals from open play. He emphasised on specific runs to sharpen their movements. Players are given just two seconds to run into a particular point to receive the ball, with Jover insisting on repeating and re-repeating the action until it becomes muscle memory. The impact was instant, and five years since joining Arsenal, he won the metaphorical cigar too this time. Probably, a hefty bonus package too.

Kirti's upward curve: Skinny girl who upstaged Deepika at Asiad trials

Nitin Sharma Chandigarh, May 20

WHEN KIRTI Sharma topped the trials for the Indian women's recurve team for Asian Games with Ankita Bhakat and Kumkum Mohod, her father Vijay Kumar remembered the day in 2022 when he visited a commission agent and took a loan for Rs 60,000 to get her a new recurve bow. A small-time farmer with three acres in Jind district's Ritoli village in Haryana, he convinced the agent that he would repay the money with future yield.

All that mattered to him was her daughter's joy. "*Chhori aise sambal ke rakh rah thi jaise sona ho* (She was taking care of it like it was gold)," he tells *The Indian Express*. Now he says he wants to see a gold medal around her neck in the Asian Games, and slips down the memory lane.

A decade ago, Kirti had never heard of archery. She saw a bow for the first time when reputed coach Udham Singh visited the FS Convent school at nearby Pilibukhera to spot talented archers and start an academy.

Kirti would not go past the trials because the coaches thought she was too skinny for archery. "When I first saw Kirti, she was too thin and I told her that we will think about her enrolling after 3-4 years," says Singh. Kumar knew why she looked thin. "*Ek glass doodh se hipura din nikalti thi* (She would



Ankita Bhakat, Kirti Sharma (C) and Kumkum Mohod. AAI

have only one glass of milk in the whole day). Since her childhood, she has never eaten a full meal or more than one chapati. We took her to various doctors but they all do not suffer from deficiency. *Bus khana hi nahi khati thi* (She would not have a full meal)," he recounts.

But by 2019, she had managed to convince the academy to select her. For three years, she trained with the wooden bow. In 2022, her father bought her a recurve bow. The same year she was selected for the SAI centre at Hazaribagh in Jharkhand, where Singh had joined as a coach. "Once coaches selected me for the academy at the village, I knew I had to do it. Whether the bow is heavy or the conditions tough, I have to master them. But then Udham went to SAI, which meant he only visited once in months and I could

not have much practice sessions," shares Kirti

Swelling challenges

When she was selected for the SAI academy, about 1350 Kms from her village, the archer faced another challenge. "I had not gone out of my district, or even the state, Haryana. Relatives and villagers asked my father why he is sending me so far," she explains.

Kirti, though, had made up her mind. But at the academy, she had to begin from the basics. "We had to work a lot on her strength and to make her body in alignment with the bow motion. We also worked on her bow arm strength as well as stability." At the academy, they worked on her muscle gain. "With the help of nutritionists, we helped her gain shoulder mass and more muscles. Earlier, she was

scared of competing at the international level but we have spent a lot of time on her visualisation process," says Singh.

The breaks

The bronze medal at the National Games last year was a turning point. She then made her debut for the country in Asia Cup followed by two more editions of the tournament. In the second event, she won the team bronze.

Last year, she won the team gold in the junior nationals. In the first stage trials in Kolkata this year, she finished fifth. In the second stage and final trials, from May 15 to May 18, she stood fourth in the qualification rounds with a total of 1971 followed by eight wins out of 11 matches, including a win over veteran Deepika Kumari, in the round-robin stage. Beating her idol was a dream come true. "We have all grown up seeing Deepika *didi* and we all dream to shoot like her. To compete against her was surreal."

In the last phase of the trials, she scored wins over Ankita Bhakat, Yukta Sri and Ridhi to end with 13.5 points and topped the trial. She looks forward to the Asian Games. "I see Asian Games as a challenge as well as one of the biggest platforms to show my talent. I believe I have the capability to win a medal," she avers. Now, her own dream has a golden hue.

Parul's Shanghai run holds promise for CWG

Prithish Raj New Delhi, May 20

INDIA'S ACE middle-distance runner Parul Chaudhary kicked off her season in the 3000m steeplechase event with the second-best ever Indian timing at the Shanghai Diamond League last week. The 31-year-old from Uttar Pradesh clocked 9 minutes 12.84 seconds, slightly slower than her personal best and national record of 9:12.46.

"The idea was to record a personal best in the season opener. I missed it by a whisker, but over-

all I am happy with the race and how my season has started," Parul told *The Indian Express* in an interview. "The performance has set my course for the season with many international competitions lined up."

Parul finished seventh in a distinguished field that had Tokyo Olympic champion Peruth Chemutai of Uganda and reigning World champion Faith Cherotich of Kenya. The African duo produced a dramatic photo finish with Chemutai prevailing.

When asked how much the competition helped, Parul said

that it is always advantageous to run in a world-class field. "The advantage of competing with the world-class athletes is the constant push we get as an athlete. I have competed at World Championships and multiple Diamond Leagues, and it has helped me improve," she said.

Parul is the best Indian athlete in steeplechase. To put in context, Parul has clocked seven out of the top ten timings by an Indian in the event, and the top four belong to her. "I need to keep competing at the international level, as that is where I get

a lot of push. I had planned to compete at other international competitions, but it couldn't materialise for now," said Parul.

Focus on CWG debut

Athletics in the Commonwealth Games is a world-class field with athletes from Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda and the Caribbean participating. "I have never competed in any CWG. So, this is going to be my debut at the Games, and I am very excited for it. CWG is a very competitive field with the presence of African athletes," said Parul.



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