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**PIONEER IN SHORT**

**11 DEAD, 22 INJURED IN POWER PLANT BLAST**

At least 11 workers were killed and 22 others injured after a boiler tube exploded at a Vedanta Ltd power plant in Chhattisgarh's Sakti district on Tuesday, police said. Officials said the blast occurred in the afternoon at Singhitari village, though the exact cause is yet to be determined. According to the Sakti Superintendent of Police, four workers died on the spot while seven others succumbed to injuries in hospitals. The injured are being treated in facilities in neighbouring Raigarh district. Soon after the explosion, local administration and police teams launched rescue operations. Authorities said the area around the boiler remains extremely hot, forcing evacuation of workers from nearby sections while efforts continue to ensure no one is trapped. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai described the incident as "extremely tragic" and assured a probe, adding that strict action would be taken against those found responsible. The plant management said the accident occurred at a boiler unit operated by its sub-contractor NGLS (NTPC GE Power Services Ltd) and that its priority is medical care for the injured, in coordination with authorities. A detailed investigation has been initiated.

## Govt eyes constitutional changes to enforce women's quota law

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
 ■ Dehradun

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday reached out to all the political parties to ensure the smooth passage of the amended Women's Reservation Act in Parliament later this week for its implementation in the 2029 elections. Addressing a public rally, the PM recalled that after four decades of waiting, Parliament had passed the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam, guaranteeing 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. He announced that a special discussion has been scheduled in Parliament from April 16 to take this forward. PM Modi urged political parties to support amendment to the Constitution to ensure the law comes into effect from the 2029 General Election without further delay. The proposed

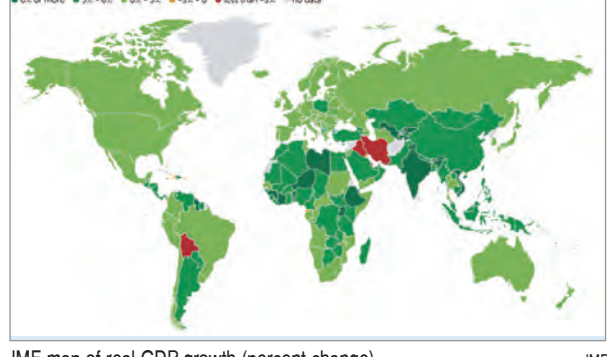


Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a visit to the Maa Daat Kali Temple, Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh PTI

amendments intend to increase the Lok Sabha seats to 850, with 33 per cent reserved for women. The Centre, meanwhile, shared with MPs draft bills outlining the expansion of the Lok Sabha from 543 to 850 seats, a move that would pave the way for implementing the long-pending women's reservation law alongside a fresh delimitation exercise and constitutional amendments. To redraw constituencies, the bill seeks to take into account the 2011 Census data. The bills seek to amend Article 81 of the Constitution.

It states that "The House of the People (Lok Sabha) shall consist of not more than 815 members chosen by direct election from territorial constituencies in the States; and not more than 35 members to represent the Union territories, chosen in such manner as Parliament may by law provide." The expression "population", according to the bill, means the population as ascertained at such Census of which the relevant figures have been published. As of now figures of 2011 Census are available. In the draft bill shared by the Government to MPs also plans to bring a Constitution amendment bill, a bill on delimitation law and an enabling bill for Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir and Puducherry — three Union territories with legislature — on Thursday in Lok Sabha to fast track implementation of the women's reservation Act of 2023.

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IMF map of real GDP growth (percent change) IMF

## India proposed to grow at 6.5%: IMF

**SAGAR KULKARNI**  
 ■ Washington

India's economy is expected to grow a tad faster at 6.5 per cent in 2027 despite escalating tensions in West Asia, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Tuesday. The 6.5 per cent growth projection makes India the fastest-growing major economy in 2026. "For 2026, growth is revised upward moderately by 0.3 percentage point (0.1 percentage point relative to January) to 6.5 per cent, led by positive

contributions from the carry-over of the strong 2025 outturn and the decline in additional US tariffs on Indian goods from 50 to 10 per cent, which outweigh the adverse impact of the Middle East conflict," IMF said in its World Economic Outlook released here. "Growth is projected to stay at 6.5 per cent in 2027," it said. Under the assumption in the reference forecast that the war turns out to be relatively short-lived, global growth is expected to slow down modestly, the IMF said.

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**The Bystander**



## Police probe conspiracy behind Noida unrest

**PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH**  
 ■ Noida

Demands for higher wages by workers in Noida descended into chaos on Monday as protests across the district's industrial belts spiralled into arson, vandalism and stone-pelting, bringing the city to a standstill on Tuesday. Gautam Buddh Nagar Police Commissioner Laxmi Singh and the Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) of Uttar Pradesh Police have now launched parallel investigations pointing to a deeper conspiracy: the hand of "outsiders, organised misinformation campaigns, possible Pakistan-backed destabilisation, and even a bid to revive Naxalism". "During the investigation, it came to light that an organised group was involved in

instigating the protesters in a systematic way," Singh said. He added, the police have identified over 50 new social media accounts and WhatsApp groups using QR codes for mobilisation. Two X (formerly Twitter) handles face cases for spreading rumours, and a Special Task Force is probing funding trails. Gautam Buddh Nagar police have lodged nine FIRs for arson, vandalism, and stone-pelting, and social media handles spreading rumours of deaths and injuries. Over 350 people have been detained. "After the labourers dispersed peacefully, a group from outside arrived and moved around attempting to incite tension and violence," Commissioner of Police, Singh stated.

CONTINUED ON >> P4



Factory workers during a protest demanding a hike in wages, in Noida on Monday PTI

## Protests continue in Noida despite wage revision

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
 ■ Noida

A fresh wave of unrest swept through Noida on Tuesday as factory and domestic workers continued agitating for higher wages, leading to clashes with police in multiple sectors. In Sector 80, the day's most visible flashpoint, workers gathered outside factories like the Ahuja unit initially in a peaceful sit-in. The situation turned volatile when some protesters began pelting

stones. Police responded swiftly to disperse the crowd. Workers voiced deep frustration on the ground. Tularam, a garment factory employee in Noida Phase 2 with five years of experience, told reporters, "Our only demand is to increase the salary by ₹20,000. I get a salary of ₹13,000. It is very hard to survive for a month. My salary gets exhausted by the 10th of every month". Similar scenes unfolded in Sector 70, where fresh regrouping led to repeated



Security personnel conducting a march in Sector 80 in Noida amid ongoing workers' protest to maintain law and order PTI

stone-throwing at police. In Sector 121's Cleo County, a residential hub, unrest spread as domestic workers joined the fray alongside industrial labourers. Stones were hurled at police vehicles and personnel during a sit-in protest. "People who do house work were staging a sit-in protest over their demands. Some miscreants started throwing stones at the police, due to which I also got these injuries, said Sub-Inspector Mata Prasad Gupta.

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**DELIMITATION ROW BREWS IN SOUTH**

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin and Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Tuesday intensified opposition to the proposed delimitation exercise, warning that southern States would face political and social "injustice" if representation is altered without wider consultation. Stalin alleged that the Centre was pursuing the process unilaterally and in secrecy ahead of a special Parliament session, claiming it could disproportionately increase northern States' political power. He warned of "massive agitation" and Statewide protests if Tamil Nadu's interests were harmed, saying the DMK would not allow any move that weakened the State's representation. He also described the exercise as a "direct assault on federalism," urging transparency in the proposed constitutional changes. In

## Trump dials PM Modi on West Asia conflict

**ASHOKE RAJ** ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump held a nearly 40-minute phone conversation on Tuesday, focusing on the evolving situation in West Asia and the need to keep critical energy routes secure. Sharing details, Modi said in a post, "Received a call from my friend President Donald Trump. We reviewed the substantial progress achieved in our bilateral cooperation in various sectors. We are committed to further strengthening our Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership in all areas." "We also discussed the situation in West Asia and stressed the importance of



keeping the Strait of Hormuz open and secure," he added. US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor said the two leaders reviewed India-US ties and discussed several key areas of cooperation, including potential deals. Echoing the positive tone of the engagement, Sergio Gor posted, "A very positive and productive call! Stay tuned..." The call — their first since the US-Iran ceasefire and the collapse of talks in Islamabad — also reviewed progress in bilateral ties and explored ways to deepen cooperation.

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## PM Modi launches Delhi-Dehradun corridor

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
 ■ Dehradun

Expressways, road, rail and air networks decide the future of a nation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said after inaugurating the Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor in Dehradun on Tuesday. The 213-kilometre economic corridor built at a cost of about ₹12,000 crore will cut the travel time between Delhi and Dehradun to about 2.5 hours. This economic corridor which also includes Asia's longest 12-kilometre elevated wildlife corridor, will benefit Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand with



Prime Minister Narendra Modi holding a roadshow, in Dehradun on Tuesday PTI

enhanced connectivity. Addressing the gathering at the Jaswant Ground in Garhi Cantt, the PM said that like the *bhagya rekha* is known to foretell the fate of a person in palmistry, expressways, roads, rail, airway and waterways write the destiny of a nation. Stressing on the importance of infrastructure, he said. "While spending on infrastructure stood at less than ₹2 lakh crore per year before 2014, it has now increased to over ₹12 lakh crore annually. Infrastructure projects worth more than ₹2.25 lakh crore are currently underway in Uttarakhand alone," he said.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

## Choudhary elected BJP leader as Nitish exits CM's office

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
 ■ New Delhi

Ending speculations, which involved leaders and their caste equations in Bihar, Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary was finally elected as the BJP legislative party leader in the State at the NDA meeting in Patna on Tuesday, paving the way for him to take oath as the next chief minister of the State. Choudhary's served in the RJD and the JD(U) for around 12 years before he joined the BJP in 2017. "For me, this is not merely a position, but an opportunity to serve the people of



JD(U) president Nitish Kumar greeting Bihar Deputy CM Samrat Choudhary in Patna PTI

Bihar and to fulfil their trust and aspirations. I resolve to live up to the expectations of every citizen with complete dedication, commitment, and integrity," Choudhary posted on social media.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

## Pakistan presses for fresh US-Iran talks

**ASSOCIATED PRESS** ■ Cairo

Pakistani officials said Tuesday that Islamabad has proposed a second round of talks to the US and Iran, while US Vice President JD Vance earlier said negotiations with Iran "did make some progress" and US President Donald Trump said Monday "we've been called by the other side" and "they want to work a deal." The Pakistani officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to discuss the matter with the press. French President Emmanuel Macron also urged the resumption of negotiations between the



Pakistan's Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir talks to Vice President JD Vance after attending talks with Iran in Islamabad AP

US and Iran as he had phone calls with President Donald Trump and Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian. "It is essential, in particu-

lar, that the ceasefire be strictly respected by all parties and that it include Lebanon," Macron said in a post on X Tuesday. He also called for the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz "without restrictions or tolls." Macron stressed France and the UK will also host a conference in Paris this Friday, bringing together by videoconference non-belligerent countries ready to contribute to a mission aimed at restoring freedom of navigation in the strait when security conditions allow. Lebanon and Israel, meanwhile, opened their first direct diplomatic talks in decades on Tuesday in Washington following more than a month of war between Israel and the Hezbollah militant group.

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## BRIEFLY

### UP Tourism launches two citizen-driven campaigns

**Lucknow:** Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department is marking World Heritage Week, leading up to World Heritage Day on April 18, with two citizen driven initiatives encouraging wider participation aimed at bringing heritage closer to people. The campaigns, 'UP Heritage Through My Lens' and 'Share Your Personal Treasure', invite individuals across age groups to engage with heritage through visual storytelling and personal narratives, making it accessible for students, families, young creators, homemakers and local communities alike. Tourism and Culture Minister Jaiveer Singh said, "Through these initiatives, we want people, especially the younger generation, to engage with heritage in their own way and take pride in their roots."

### Baisakhi celebrated in Yahiyaganj Gurdwara

**Lucknow:** On the occasion of Baisakhi, a grand and spiritually vibrant programme was organised at the historic Gurdwara Shri Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib in Yahiyaganj on Tuesday. The 'sangat' gathered in large numbers from early 5 am as the diwan commenced, immersing themselves in Gurbani. The programme began with Nitnem Paath, followed by a devout recitation of Sukhmani Sahib by Gyani Paramjit Singh. The atmosphere became deeply spiritual when Bhai Karnail Singh rendered the melodious 'Asa Di Vaar' kirtan, leaving the sangat emotionally moved. Gyani Jagjit Singh Jachak delivered an inspiring discourse on the historical significance of Khalsa Sajna Diwas and Baisakhi.

### Accident claims three lives

**Lucknow:** Three friends were killed in a road accident on the Siswa-Nichloul road under Kothibhar police station of Maharajganj. The youths, who were en route to attend a friend's wedding procession, died on the spot after their speeding motorcycle rammed into a state-run Roadways bus. The deceased were identified as Sahil Nishad (18), Kisan Sahani (19) and Amreesh Sahani (23).

### MNREGA issues taken to CM

**Lucknow:** MNREGA Workers' Welfare Organisation state president DP Singh met CM Yogi Adityanath and presented a charter of demands concerning welfare of MNREGA workers. The demands include an increase in honorarium, provision of cashless medical treatment, medical leave benefits and the implementation of a structured HR policy. The CM assured that appropriate steps would be taken.

### Inter-state gang of tricksters busted

**Lucknow:** Once a target boarded an auto-rickshaw or e-rickshaw, gang members would sit on either side of them. They would then create a distraction by pretending to vomit or pricking the victim with safety pins. In the ensuing confusion and conversation, they would remove the victim's jewelry and flee the scene at the earliest opportunity. To evade the law, the gang frequently changed their physical appearance and residence. They also frequently altered their identity documents to prevent police from tracking their criminal history. Those arrested were Sheshkala (35), the gang leader with eight previous criminal cases across Lucknow and HarDOI, Dayalal (42), husband of Sheshkala, Pooja (30) of Nagpur and Gauri Devi alias Namja (25), a native of Bihar. Police recovered a gold chain, a old ring, and a pair of silver anklets from them. The gang has been linked to at least three major theft cases registered at the Krishna Nagar police station under the BNS.

### Woman's body recovered

**Lucknow:** The body of a woman was recovered from Kotwali police station area in Mahoba on Tuesday fuelling apprehension of murder after sexual assault. Police launched an intensive investigation into the case. The body was recovered when some commuters, who were passing through the area, spotted it. On receiving the information, police officials along with a forensic field unit rushed to the spot. The deceased was identified by her father, a local resident. Following the identification, the body was sent for a post-mortem examination to ascertain the exact cause of death. Based on a formal complaint submitted by the victim's family, the police have registered a case under relevant sections of the law. Authorities confirmed that the investigation is moving at a fast pace and several leads are being pursued. Preliminary investigations and gathered evidence have brought certain suspects under the police scanner. "The scene was inspected immediately after the report," an official said.

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For SBFC Finance Limited

# Clash in Banthra on Ambedkar Jayanti, 7 held

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
Lucknow

Two groups clashed over Ambedkar Jayanti celebrations in Banthra police station area on Tuesday, with both parties resorting to stone-pelting, assault with iron rods and one of them firing into the air.

The incident occurred in the Shivpura locality of Banthra Nagar Panchayat, leaving several people injured and multiple vehicles damaged.

According to reports, organisers in the neighbouring Ambedkar Nagar locality had invited Ranjit Rawat, son of Banthra Nagar Panchayat Chairperson Ramawati Rawat, to garland the statue of Dr BR Ambedkar. Witnesses allege that the group led by Rawat found

the gate to the statue site locked and forced it open. Once inside, the organisers requested Ranjit Rawat to wait for the traditional Buddha prarthana (prayer) before garlanding the statue. However, he insisted he was short on time and proceeded to the garland Babasaheb's statue. This sparked a heated argument between the organisers and the visiting group. The verbal spat spiralled into a full-blown brawl between the two groups in which sticks, bricks and iron rods were used to attack each other. The clash intensified as both sides engaged in heavy stone pelting.

During the clash, two rounds were reportedly fired in the air, creating panic in the area. A Fortuner SUV belonging

## VIOLENCE OVER INSTALLATION OF AMBEDKAR'S STATUE

**Lucknow:** A group of villagers staged a protest and resorted to violence on being denied permission to install the statue of Dr BR Ambedkar at a vacant plot in possession of another group of the same community, in Mallani police station area of Lakhimpur Kheri on Tuesday evening.

"The group fought over this when the statue was being installed on the land without permission from the local administration. In this process, the statue was damaged. On information, a police team reached the scene and took the statue in

custody," a police spokesman said. The police asked the villagers installing the statue to seek proper permission before doing so. Villagers claimed they were installing a statue of Babasaheb on land belonging to a Buddhist Vihar that had been vacant for years. According to locals, after the village head Virendra Gautam departed, the community proceeded with the installation and subsequently left for a rally, leaving mostly women at the site. The villagers alleged that a local resident, Chanda Devi, arrived at the spot

accompanied by police personnel to oppose the installation. They claimed that while the police were forcibly removing the statue, it got damaged and when the women present there tried to protect the statue, the police resorted to lathi-charge to disperse them.

The news of the damaged statue spread like wildfire, prompting an angry mob to block the Kukra-Bankeganj road. The protest quickly turned violent as the crowd targeted senior officials and set a government vehicle on fire.

premises. In a desperate bid to protect the victims, police officers locked Karan and Vishal inside the station office. The aggressive mob reportedly attempted to break in, resulting in the shattering of the office's glass door during the scuffle.

The gravity of the situation prompted senior officials, including ADCP (South) Rallapalli Vasanth Kumar and ACP (Krishnanagar) Rajnish Verma, to rush to the scene to restore order. ACP Rajnish Verma said, "We have received reports of firing in the air, though it is yet to be determined which side opened fire. Both parties are currently being questioned." He said seven persons had been arrested and cross FIRs had been registered in the case.

to the nagar panchayat chairperson was vandalised. Among the injured, three have been identified as Karan Gautam (20), Vishal Gautam (17), and

Sarvan (25). All were rushed to the Sarojini Nagar community health centre for treatment.

The violence spilled over to the local police station

when the victims arrived to lodge a complaint.

Allegedly, supporters of the chairperson's representative pursued the villagers into the station

# Four accused of duping man of ₹13 crore

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
Lucknow

Four persons, including a couple, have been accused of duping a man of Rs 13 crore, allegedly luring the victim with the promise of a 50 per cent stake in their company and directorships. The Gomti Nagar police have registered an FIR against the accused.

The action was initiated following a directive from the Deputy Commissioner of Police (East) after the victim, KP Singh, petitioned his case while detailing the web of forgery and intimidation.

According to the com-

plainant, his acquaintance and his wife introduced themselves as directors of a private firm. They allegedly convinced Singh to invest by promising him a 50 per cent partnership, distribution rights, and licence transfers.

Between 2022 and 2024, the accused reportedly extracted over Rs 13 crore from Singh and his family members. To maintain the facade, the accused issued several bank cheques and a partnership agreement.

However, Singh alleges that the agreement falsely claimed a payment of Rs 40 lakh via RTGS to him, a trans-

action that bank statements later proved never occurred.

The fraud extended to the victim's father, a retired administrative officer. The accused allegedly siphoned approximately Rs 2.58 crore from him by promising to appoint him as the company chairman. The family was further coerced into breaking fixed deposits to fund the bogus venture.

Despite a written settlement reached on October 25, 2025 where the accused pledged to return the entire amount by November 30, 2025 no payments were made. The situation turned

aggressive on November 16, 2025, when the suspects allegedly intercepted Singh's vehicle near the Satrikh crossing.

"They threatened that they would only return Rs 10 lakh and told me to forget the rest. When I protested, they threatened to kill me and implicate me in false legal cases," the victim stated in his complaint. On the basis of the victim's testimony, the police have booked the accused under charges of cheating, forgery, and criminal intimidation. A thorough investigation into the money trail is currently underway.

## Criminal apprehended

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
Lucknow

The Krishna Nagar police and the South Zone Surveillance Cell arrested a wanted criminal carrying a Rs 25,000 bounty on Tuesday. The operation led to the recovery of a substantial haul of stolen jewellery, estimated to be worth approximately Rs 8 lakh, along with cash.

The accused, Kuldeep Yadav (37) of Nizampur Malhour, had been evading arrest in connection with multiple house-breaking cases.

A police team looking for

him, intercepted and nabbed him near a shanty located by the Kesari Kheda railway line, on Tuesday.

The arrest follows a string of burglaries in the Krishna Nagar area. On February 14, a case was registered by Gayatri Srivastava of Alinagar Sunhera after a break-in at her residence, in March 6, Dharmendra Kumar, also a resident of Alinagar Sunhera, reported a similar theft and on March 19 Abhay Anand of Bajrang Nagar had filed a complaint regarding a burglary at his home.

## Two factions clash, many injured

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
Lucknow

A dispute between two factions escalated into a violent clash following a verbal altercation, leaving several people from both sides injured in Mohanlalganj. The situation turned tense when the argument led to scuffle and assault. It is alleged the Kanakha outpost police detained the group that first approached them to file complaint.

Locals claim this alleged triggered another round of violence between them.

## Woman injured while mediating dispute

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
Lucknow

A woman sustained a severe head injury while attempting to mediate a domestic altercation between a couple in Kanta Karaundi village in Nigoha. Based on the victim's complaint, the police registered a case on Tuesday and have initiated an investigation.

The incident occurred in Kanta Karaundi village on Monday. According to the victim, Yamunadei, her neighbour Dinesh was physically assaulting his

wife, Saloni. When Yamunadei intervened to rescue Saloni, Dinesh and his brother, Bablu, allegedly attacked her with a brick. The assault left Yamunadei with a head wound, causing her to collapse. The accused fled the scene.

Family members first took the injured woman to the Nigohan police station, from where she was shifted to a CHC. Police officials stated that a first information report (FIR) has been lodged under relevant sections of law and a probe is underway.

# KDA invites tenders for development projects

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
Kanpur

The Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) has started inviting tenders for implementation of 14 development works approved by the government.

There are 20 development works to be done with Rs 750 crore from the infrastructure fund. In the first phase, the government has approved 14 development works and has also released Rs 147 crore for these works.

It may be recalled that along with bringing the New Kanpur City Scheme, Aerocity, Uchi Atal Housing Scheme on the ground, the

KDA will also get the greenery and entry routes of the city beautified.

Presently, the KDA is focusing on more development projects around the Ganga Barrage.

Under this initiative, the New Kanpur City project is being implemented between Mainavati Marg and Singhpur and Kalyanpur where development work worth Rs 75 crore is underway. Under the master plan, a 30-metre-wide road will be constructed there at a cost of Rs 25 crore for which Rs 9.77 crore has already been released.

Four-lane road is to be constructed from Mainavati

Marg to Singhpur for which out of Rs 50 crore, Rs 10.30 crore have been received. The beautification of Botanical Garden at Ganga Barrage is to be done with Rs 35 crore and for this Rs 11.02 crore have been received.

The construction of link road to connect PM Awasi Yojna located at Sakrapur and Bhagirathi jahnvi is to be done with Rs 10 crore, funds for this also have been released.

Chakeri Airport will be beautified with Rs 25 crore. Regarding the action plan, KDA Chief Engineer RRP Singh said that the government has approved 14 projects and released funds.

## DM: Discharge duties while upholding Constitution

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
Sonbhadra

A seminar was organised under the chairmanship of District Magistrate BN Singh on the occasion of Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar Jayanti in the Collectorate auditorium.

The programme commenced with the garlanding of Baba Saheb's portrait and the offering of flowers.

The DM stated that Dr Ambedkar's life stands as a unique example of struggle, education, and equality; he fought tirelessly to secure rights for the deprived and vulnerable sections of society. The

DM appealed to the officials and employees present to discharge their duties while upholding the values of the Constitution.

Among those who spoke on the occasion were Additional District Magistrate (Finance & Revenue) Vagish Kumar Shukla, Additional District Magistrate (Judicial) Ramesh Chandra and others. A cleanliness drive was conducted in the Collectorate premises and the Vikas Bhawan. A separate programme was organised at the Vikas Bhawan under the chairmanship of CDO Jagaiti Awasthi.

# The Pioneer CLASSIFIEDS

## NOTICE

Notice: I Have Changed My Name From Jaiprakash Sahani To Jayprakash Sahani on 14.04.2026. Please Know And Recognize Me As Jayprakash Sahani From Now on. Jayprakash Sahani S/o Sohan Lal, Resident of Village-Raiyan Post-Ramgarh PS. Balua Chandauli 232107

## NOTICE

I have changed my name from Vanshika Shrivastav to Aashita Srivastava. I shall be known and identified as Aashita Srivastava (DOB 05.04.2007) for all future purposes. Vanshika Shrivastav D/o Shri Peeyush Mohan R/o A1/406, Divinuti Homes, Indira Nagar, Kanpur Nagar - 208026 (U.P.)

## NOTICE

My correct name is Raj Kishor S/o Lala R/o- Tirrma pali Bhogipur Kanpur UP which is Voter ID Card, khatuni, Gram Panchayat letter, Upjiladhikari report Records by mistake aadhar card no-882894157396 my name is mentioned as Pappu which is my household name In future I will be known Raj Kishor I have completed all legal formalities regarding the above by me.

## NOTICE

In my NIOS Marksheet, Roll No: 210380202031. Session June 2021. My name and My father name mentioned as Saiyed Abbas Haider Zafrul Husen, Saiyed Zafrul Husen but my correct name is Saiyed Abbas Haider and father name is Zafarul Hussain which should be amendment accordingly for all future purposes. Saiyed Abbas Haider S/o Zafarul Hussain R/o 96/25, Colonelganj Kanpur Nagar-01

## NOTICE

My daughter's correct name is Aswani Singh D/o Awdesh Singh R/o H.No- Nasda Nasara Kanpur UP which is mentioned, birth certificate, school Latter, certificate Records by mistake-Aadhar no. 387357991412 my daughter's name is mentioned as Priyanshi Singh which is she daughter's household name in future she will be know Aswani Singh I have completed all legal formalities regarding the above by me

## सूचना

मेरा नाम पूर्व में MOHAMMAD MEHTAB ALAM उर्फ MOHD MEHTAB ALAM था जो की अब MOHD MEHTAB ALAM पुत्र AZMAT ALI निवासी 116/393 बी, रावतपुर गाँव कानपुर नगर कर लिया है भविष्य में इसी नाम से जाना जाये।

## NOTICE

I have changed my name from Ekta Barrow to Ekta Julius. In future, I should be known and recognised as Ekta Julius D/o W.E. Barrow, R/o. 65/19 Gandhigram, Harjinder Nagar, Kanpur Nagar-208007

## NOTICE

It is hereby informed that I have changed my name Neha Shukla to Neha Mishra in future i shell be known as Neha Mishra W/o Ramit Mishra 117/85 C, Chandel Chauraha Kakadev Kanpur.

## NOTICE

I, Puneet Bajpai, resident of 15/198, Civil Lines, Kanpur Nagar, Uttar Pradesh - 208001, have changed my son's name from Aayan Bajpai to Ashvik Bajpai. Henceforth, he shall be known as Ashvik Bajpai for all future purposes.

## NOTICE

I, Vishnoo Pratap Singh (Army Service No. 15787291 X, Rank-THM(DS), Unit-509 AD MSL Regt (AKASH), C/O 56 APO, PIN-926509), hereby inform that my mother's correct name is Bijula Devi (as per Aadhaar & PAN). Due to clerical error, it is recorded as Vijula Devi in my Army Service Record. Kindly correct it to Bijula Devi.

## NOTICE

I, SHAILENDARA SRIVASTAVA, resident of Village & Post Bandipur, District Ambedkar Nagar, Uttar Pradesh - 224125 (Permanent Address) and presently residing at Gali No. 2, Manas Nagar Colony, Shahjapur, Akbarpur, District Ambedkar Nagar, Uttar Pradesh - 224122, do hereby declare that I have changed the name of my minor daughter from AISHINI SRIVASTAVA to SANAYA SSRIVASTV. Henceforth, my daughter shall be known and identified by the name SANAYA SSRIVASTV for all educational, government and other official purposes.

## सूचना

मेरा नाम पूर्व में JOOBEDHA उर्फ JUVEDA था जो की अब बदलकर ZUVAIDA KHAN पत्नी LATE KASIM KHAN निवासी 131/211, बेगम पुरवा टी०पी० नगर कानपुर नगर कर लिया है भविष्य में इसी नाम से जाना जाये।

## NOTICE

I Ranjna wife of Lallu Singh R/o vill. Injuarampur tah. Derapur, Kanpur dehat declare that my son Atul Singh's service record may name has gone rajana devi which is incorrect. My correct name is Ranjna wife of Lallu Singh.

## NOTICE

Be it known to all that earlier my name was MAHERNDRA KUMAR SINGH which is now changed to MAHENDRA KUMAR SINGH. In future I shall be known as MAHENDRA KUMAR SINGH S/o- Birendra Narayan Singh, 14/1A Beli Road Prayagraj, UP

## NOTICE

I (Given Name) MOHAMMAD JUNAID F/O. SAIKH HAZRA FATIMA R/O BARAI WEST, KUNDA, PRATAPGARH, PIN: 230204-UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA holding passport number V1893306 issued at RIYADH on 03/10/2021 hereby announce to change my minor daughters name as (Given Name) HAJRA FATIMA (surname) SHAIKH for all future purposes.

## NOTICE

## PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby informed to the general public that the original Allotment Letter and Demarcation Report in respect of Plot No. 38 & 39 Block J Scheme-1, situated at Govind Nagar, Kanpur, measuring 551 sq. yards, which was originally allotted by Kanpur Nagar Mahapalika in the name of Mr. Shanker Singh and was subsequently purchased by Smt. Satya Rani Khanna, have been lost. An online FIR in this regard has already been lodged at Police Station Kakadeo, Kanpur Nagar. If any person finds the said documents or has any claim/objection in respect thereof, they are requested to contact the undersigned within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which no claim shall be entertained. Sd/

**SUNIL KUMAR KHANNA**  
Address: 117/H-1/257 MODEL TOWN PANDU NAGAR KANPUR  
Contact: 7784919921

# The Pioneer Classified

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, hitherto known as Prince Pal S/o Rajneesh Pal R/o Raghavapur, Raniganj, Pratapgarh, Uttar Pradesh-230304 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Vaibhav Pal.

PD(674)C  
I, Deepak Singh S/o Dushynt Singh R/o 64/2, Bharkau, Bulandshahr, Bharkau, Uttar Pradesh-245403 have changed the name of my minor son Bhavishya aged 5 years and he shall hereafter be known as Kiyansh Bhati. PD(675)C



## Delhi-Dehradun corridor to boost connectivity, dev: CM

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Saharanpur

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday said the newly made Delhi-Baghat-Saharanpur-Dehradun Economic Corridor would be a gamechanger for the economy of western Uttar Pradesh by boosting connectivity.

Addressing a public gathering in Saharanpur ahead of the corridor's dedication to the nation by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the chief minister congratulated the people of the region and expressed gratitude to the prime minister, Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari and officials of the National Highways Authority

of India for executing the project.

The Delhi-Baghat-Saharanpur-Dehradun Economic Corridor is a major gift for the region. It will accelerate economic development and improve connectivity," he pointed out. Highlighting the economic impact of the corridor, the chief minister said products from Saharanpur, Shamli, Muzaffarnagar and Meerut, including woodwork, handicrafts, agricultural produce, fruits and vegetables, would now have faster access not only to the national capital but also to global markets.

"This corridor will serve as a major medium for farmers and entrepreneurs to get better prices for their

produce and expand their reach," he said, adding that this project will create new opportunities for industrial development, investment and employment in the region and will realise the development vision of the 'double engine' government," he said.

UP Governor Anandiben Patel, Dy CMs Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, Bharatiya Janata Party state chief Pankaj Chaudhary, among others were present at the event in Saharanpur. They were virtually connected with the prime minister's event for the corridor inauguration taking place in Dehradun. The CM said, with the construction of this economic corridor, travel from



Saharanpur to Delhi and Dehradun will be faster, giving a new boost to connectivity and economic development in the region. Emphasising infrastructure-

led growth, the chief minister said Uttar Pradesh had emerged as a hub of security, good governance, infrastructure, employment and investment under the "double-engine" government. "If one wants to see the strength of a double-engine government, it is visible in projects like this corridor, which connect states like Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Delhi seamlessly," he said.

Yogi also highlighted ongoing development projects in the region, including a new university in Saharanpur, a civil terminal at Sarsawa airport, and the upcoming film city and international airport in Jewar, which he said would create

employment opportunities for youth. He said the government was working simultaneously on preserving heritage and accelerating development. Referring to Dr BR Ambedkar's 135th birth anniversary, the chief minister said the occasion holds special significance as the architect of the Constitution laid the foundation for equality and social justice in India.

He also highlighted initiatives taken by the government to honour social reformers, stating that efforts are underway to develop infrastructure at sites associated with leaders like Ambedkar, Sant Ravidas, Maharishi Valmiki and others. "If statues of such great personalities lack boundary

walls or proper shelter, the government will provide funds to complete the work and ensure due respect," he said. The CM also took an apparent swipe at opposition parties, alleging that those who promote division on the basis of caste or family cannot think about development. "Those who believe in division and chaos, who once pushed the state into riots and gave shelter to mafias, cannot be expected to bring development or provide jobs to youth," he said. He reiterated that under PM Modi's leadership, India is progressing with a model of development, governance and service, and projects like the economic corridor are a reflection of that vision.

## Ambedkar founder of inclusive society, a guiding light: Yogi

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday paid his tributes to Dr BR Ambedkar on his birth anniversary, hailing him as the founder of an inclusive society and a guiding light.

In a post on X in Hindi, Yogi said, "Humble tribute on the birth anniversary of 'Bharat Ratna' Baba Saheb Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution, who laid the foundation stone of a harmonious and inclusive society, illuminated by the high ideals of equality, justice and fraternity."

He called Dr Ambedkar an "invaluable gem of Mother India" and his life inspiring. Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya said Ambedkar was a pioneer of social justice.

He said Ambedkar laid the "unbreakable foundation" of equality, justice and human dignity by making education a powerful medium of change. "His life of struggle even today illuminates the path of duty, dedication and service to the

### SP SHEDDING CROCODILE TEARS OVER BABASAHEB

**Lucknow:** Attacking the Samajwadi Party for allegedly "shedding crocodile tears" in the name of Dr BR Ambedkar, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday accused the party of trying to "usurp" the Dalit icon's legacy for selfish political interests.

Addressing a programme marking Ambedkar's birth anniversary, the chief minister said, "Whenever any Dalit, deprived person, poor person, or woman seeks justice, the ray of hope that emerges originates with Baba Saheb Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar."

The chief minister said, "Those who hated Dalits, the deprived, the poor and women, and who insulted the provisions of social justice, are today remembering Babasaheb and shedding crocodile tears to mislead people." Without naming individuals, he took a swipe at Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, claiming that those "born with a silver spoon" had never understood



the pain of the marginalised. "They deprived Dalits and the underprivileged of land rights and benefits," he alleged.

The chief minister questioned past decisions of the previous government, asking why names associated with Ambedkar and other prominent figures were changed. Referring to past incidents, he said, "The behaviour towards women in the state

guest house exposed their real character," in an apparent reference to the 1995 state guest house incident in which SP workers had attacked Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati. The CM also criticised the Congress, alleging it had failed to honour Ambedkar. The chief minister earlier garlanded Dr Ambedkar's statue before the event. (PTI)

nation," Maurya said.

Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak on X paid his tributes to the "pioneer of social harmony".

The Samajwadi Party on X hailed Ambedkar as an architect of the Indian Constitution. "Respectful tributes to the pioneer of social justice and architect of the Indian Constitution, 'Bharat Ratna' Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar on his birth anniversary," the party said.

The UP unit of the Congress in a post on X in Hindi commemorated Dr Ambedkar for his lifelong championing of education as a tool of change.

"Salutation to 'Bharat Ratna' Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution, proclaimer of equality and harmony in the society, on his birth anniversary. Be educated, stay organised and struggle — these thoughts of Baba Saheb will continue to inspire us to create a just society," the party said.

Dt BR Ambedkar was born on April 14, 1891, in Mhow, Madhya Pradesh. He died on December 6, 1956.

## Ambedkar's vision being realised through welfare: UP BJP chief

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
■ Saharanpur

Uttar Pradesh Bharatiya Janata Party unit chief Pankaj Chaudhary on Tuesday said the vision of BR Ambedkar for social harmony and uplift of the poor was being realised through the policies and programmes of the Narendra Modi government.

Addressing a gathering in Saharanpur on Ambedkar's birth anniversary, Chaudhary stated that the Constitution and the path shown by Ambedkar continue to guide governance, and that since 2014, the Centre has worked to fulfil the needs of the poor under the slogan of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas'.

The event was held to mark the dedication of the Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor to the nation by

Prime Minister Modi, a project aimed at strengthening connectivity between Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Chaudhary described the corridor as a major boost for Saharanpur and adjoining regions, saying it would enhance development and connectivity with Uttarakhand and the national capital.

He also targeted opposition parties without naming them, alleging that despite their claims of honouring Ambedkar, he was not conferred the Bharat Ratna for decades after his death.

"The Bharatiya Janata Party ensured that Babasaheb received due recognition and today the government is working for the welfare of the poor in line with his ideals," he said.

Highlighting infrastructure growth, Chaudhary said

Uttar Pradesh already had a significant share of the country's expressway network and the addition of the new corridor would further accelerate development.

He pointed out that the state has undergone a transformation since 2017 under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and the leadership of Prime Minister Modi at the Centre.

"Earlier, Uttar Pradesh was known for lawlessness, but today it has emerged as a growth engine of the country," he said, alleging that some groups were trying to mislead the public.

Pankaj Chaudhary also urged people to recall the situation in the state before 2017 while taking political decisions, asserting that the changes in governance and development are evident to the public.

## Political parties failed to live up to Ambedkar's ideals: Maya

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Lucknow

Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati paid floral tribute to Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar on his 135th birth anniversary in Lucknow on Tuesday, touching upon the Dalit icon's strivings to secure the rights of the poor and the marginalised.

"... ultimately he did the historic work of guaranteeing it in the Constitution and became immortal and for which the country will always be grateful to him," she said.

A large gathering in Lucknow marked Ambedkar Jayanti alongside Mayawati.

In a post on X, the BSP chief highlighted Dr BR Ambedkar's role in uplift of the Bahujan Samaj and praised him for embedding the principles of equality in the Indian Constitution. In her post, Mayawati offered her "profound salutations and floral tributes" to the messiah of Bahujans, Bharat Ratna Bodhisattva, the most revered Baba



Saheb Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar" on his birth anniversary.

"It is well known that the entire life of Babasaheb Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar was spent in extremely arduous struggles for the protection, respect, and uplift of the Bahujan Samaj, including the country's poor, the neglected, the exploited, and women afflicted by casteism and feudalism, and ultimately, he accomplished the historic task of ensuring its guarantee in the Constitution, becoming immortal, and for which the nation will always remain grateful to him," the post continued.

She also accused political parties which wielded power in Independent India of failing to live up to Ambedkar's ideals.

## Fire Services remember their fallen heroes

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Lucknow

The Uttar Pradesh Fire and Emergency Services observed 'National Fire Service Day' on Tuesday, marking the commencement of Fire Safety Week across the state.

To inaugurate the solemn occasion, Director General of Fire Services, Sujeet Kumar Pandey, pinned the ceremonial flag on Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Director General of Police Rajiv Krishna.

As per an official communiqué, the day is observed annually to pay tribute to the 66 brave firefighters who made the ultimate sacrifice during the massive explosion at the Victoria Dock in Mumbai on April 14, 1944.

This year's Fire Safety Week, which runs from April 14 to April 20, is being observed under the theme: 'Safe Schools, Safe Hospitals, and a Fire-Safety Aware Society'. The campaign aims to strengthen safety protocols



in public institutions and foster a culture of prevention among citizens. In Lucknow, DG Sujeet Kumar Pandey laid a wreath at the Martyrs' Memorial at the Hazratganj Fire Station, paying rich tributes to the fallen heroes who laid down their lives in the line of duty.

Following the inaugura-

tion, fire departments across the state's districts launched a series of initiatives. Throughout the week, the department will conduct practical demonstrations at high-risk locations, educational programmes to sensitise the public on emergency response and will keep focused inspections on

schools and healthcare facilities.

A senior official noted that the primary objective of this week is not only to honour the valour of firefighters but also to empower the community with the knowledge necessary to prevent fire-related casualties and property damage.

## STF arrests criminal

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Lucknow

The Special Task Force (STF) of the Uttar Pradesh Police has arrested a wanted criminal, Arif, who carried a cash reward of Rs 50,000, the police said on Tuesday.

The accused was wanted in connection with a case registered under the UP Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act at the Mehnagar police station in Azamgarh.

Acting on consistent intelligence regarding fugitive criminals, the STF units were placed on high alert.

Under the supervision of Deputy Superintendent of Police (STF Field Unit, Prayagraj) Shailesh Pratap Singh and led by Inspector Jai Prakash Rai, a team initiated surveillance. On Monday a team comprising Sub-Inspector Ranendra Kumar Singh and several head constables received a tip-off while patrolling Azamgarh district. The team intercepted and apprehended Arif around 8:05 pm near the Bindra Bazar-Kharihan Road under the Mehnagar police station area. The arrested individual was identified as Arif of Khaura Rasulpur Vyavaha in the Mubarakpur area of Azamgarh. During interrogation, Arif revealed that since 2022, he had been operating a gang under the guise of buying and selling cattle across various villages.

**IDFC FIRST Bank Limited**  
(erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)  
CIN : L65110TN2014PLC097792, Registered Office: - KRM Towers, 8th Floor, Harrington Road, Chetpet, Chennai- 600031. Tel : +91 44 4564 4000 | Fax: +91 44 4564 4022

**APPENDIX IV [Rule 8(1)] POSSESSION NOTICE (For immovable property)**  
Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited) under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice dated 17.01.2026 calling upon the borrower, co-borrowers and guarantors 1. MUDIT SRIVASTAV 2. MUDIT SRIVASTAV to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs. 16,48,506.63/- (Rupees Sixteen Lakh Forty Eight Thousand Five Hundred Six and Sixty Three Paise Only) as on 12.12.2025 within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Demand notice.

The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section (4) of section 13 of Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on this 10 day of APRIL 2026.

The borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of THE IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited) for an amount of Rs. 16,48,506.63/- (Rupees Sixteen Lakh Forty Eight Thousand Five Hundred Six and Sixty Three Paise Only) and interest thereon. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES.**  
ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF THE PROPERTY BEARING FLAT NO. 102, FIRST FLOOR, SITUATED AT PREMISES NO. 18/234, KURSAWAN, PATKARPUR, KANPUR NAGAR, HAVING ADMEASURING AREA 62.26 SQ. METERS, ALONG WITH PROPRIETATE UNDIVIDED PORTION OF LAND 17.56 SQ. METERS, KANPUR, UTTAR PRADESH-208001, AND BOUNDED BY: NORTH: FLAT NO. 103, SOUTH: FLAT NO. 101, EAST: COOMON PASSAGE T/A LIFT, WEST: 3.04 MTR ROAD

Date: 10-04-2026  
Place:UTTAR PRADESH  
Authorized Officer  
IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)  
Loan Account No:41879338

**IDFC FIRST Bank Limited**  
(erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and Presently known as IDFC FIRST Bank Limited)  
CIN: L65110TN2014PLC097792 Registered Office: KRM Towers, 8th Floor, Harrington Road, Chetpet, Chennai-600031 Tel: +91 44 4564 4000 | Fax: +91 44 4564 4022

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
**GOLD AUCTION CUM INVITATION NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given to the below mentioned borrowers and the general public that the said borrowers have availed loan facilities from IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (Bank) by pledging Gold ornaments and despite repeated reminders and notices, the borrowers have failed to repay the outstanding dues within the stipulated time under the facility. Accordingly, the Bank, in exercise of its rights, shall conduct a public auction of the pledged gold ornaments from 19/05/2026 to 21/05/2026 for the recovery of its dues. Borrowers are hereby informed that this is the final opportunity to repay the entire outstanding dues along with the applicable relevant interest, charges and expenses before the Inspection/Bid date, failing which the pledged gold ornaments shall be sold through the auction as per the guidelines given by regulators.

| LOAN ACCOUNT NO. | NAME OF BORROWER  | BRANCH NAME            |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| 175403058        | AMIT KUMAR GUPTA  | ALIGANJ LUCKNOW BRANCH |
| 172219292        | MANOJ KUMAR YADAV | PRAYAGRAJ BRANCH       |

In the event of the auction any surplus amount is realized from this auction, the same shall be refunded to the concerned borrower and if there is any deficit/shortfall post the auction, the balance amount shall be recoverable from the borrower through appropriate legal proceedings. IDFC FIRST Bank has the authority to remove any account from the auction without any prior intimation. Further IDFC FIRST Bank reserves the right to modify or defer the auction schedule to later date at its discretion, without serving any prior notice. Auction will be conducted in physical mode through its empanel auction service providers M/S Shriram Auto Mall India Ltd from 10:00 am to 01:00 pm. If the customer is deceased, all the conditions pertaining to auction will be applicable to their nominee/legal heir.

**Terms & Conditions of Auction sale:**  
1) Sale of concerned gold ornaments shall be on "AS IS WHERE IS", "AS IS WHAT IS" and "WHATSOEVER THERE IS" basis.  
2) Intending bidders shall register with the Bank's authorized auction service provider and comply with the KYC requirements.  
3) It shall be the responsibility of the bidders to inspect and satisfy themselves about the ornaments and specification before submitting the bid. The bidder may inspect the ornaments in consultation with the branch manager.  
4) The highest bid shall be subject to confirmation by the Authorized Representative of the Bank.  
5) Successful bidder shall deposit the full sale amount within the stipulated time, failing which the amount already deposited shall be forfeited.  
6) Gold Pouches once sold cannot be returned to seller under any circumstances and seller shall have no liability of whatsoever nature once the physical hand over of it is taken by the winning bidder/purchaser.  
7) The Authorized Representative of the Bank reserves the right to accept/reject any bid or cancel/postpone the auction without prior notice or assigning any reason whatsoever.  
8) The sale is subject to confirmation by the Bank.

DATE : 15-04-2026  
PLACE: UTTAR PRADESH  
Authorized officer for  
IDFC FIRST Bank Limited

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| LOAN ACCOUNT NO. | NAME OF BORROWER    | BRANCH NAME             |
|------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 174222723        | ASHUTOSH KUMAR OJHA | GHAZIABAD AMBEDKAR ROAD |
| 176038034        | ASHUTOSH KUMAR OJHA | GHAZIABAD AMBEDKAR ROAD |
| 176044343        | NILANSHU OJHA       | GHAZIABAD AMBEDKAR ROAD |

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DATE : 15-04-2026  
PLACE: UTTAR PRADESH  
Authorized officer for  
IDFC FIRST Bank Limited



IN FOCUS

Samrat Choudhary: From ousted minister to CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Patna

It has been a chequered political journey for Samrat Choudhary, who began his political career as a minister in Bihar nearly three decades ago, only to be removed by the then Governor following allegations about his eligibility.



Choudhary remained with the RJD and was appointed as the chief whip of the party five years later.

By 2014, Choudhary seemed to have been disenchanted with the RJD, and he led a split in the party and joined the JD(U) government, then headed by Jitan Ram Manjhi.

Manjhi stepped down months later after Nitish Kumar, his patron, decided to make a comeback as the chief minister. This caused Choudhary to lose his ministerial berth. In 2017, he joined the BJP, and, by virtue of being a Koeeri.

Choudhary then transformed from a staunch critic of Nitish Kumar, while the JD(U) supremo was out of the NDA, to a trusted aide of the alliance partner whose backing was vital for his own rise to the top. More than six feet tall, Choudhary, till a few years ago, was always seen in public with a turban on his head. In private, the BJP leader used to joke that he would take off his headgear only after unseating the JD(U) supremo from power. In 2024, when Nitish Kumar

returned to the NDA "for good", Choudhary, who had by now risen to be the state BJP president, superseding many old party hands, was named as a Deputy CM.

The naming of Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha, another vocal critic of Nitish Kumar, as Deputy CMs was viewed by some political commentators as the BJP's attempt to offer reconciliation, while cynics saw it as an attempt to slight the JD(U) supremo.

Choudhary took to his new role as fish to water and, in a span of less than two years, emerged as a leader whom Nitish Kumar could trust enough to part with the crucial Home portfolio, which he had chosen to keep with himself since 2005. Besides the Home portfolio which was allocated to him in November last year after the NDA won a stunning victory in elections, another episode had helped Choudhary catch public attention in the thick of the assembly polls.

While canvassing in Tarapur, an assembly seat represented by his

father Shakuni Choudhary for a record number of six times, Union Home Minister Amit Shah urged the people to vote for his son, promising that he would be made "a big man". Choudhary, who had returned to direct elections after spending nearly a decade in the legislative council, won Tarapur by a comprehensive margin of 45,000 votes.

The new CM was born in a village in Bihar's Munger district to Parvati Devi and Shakuni Choudhary, an army man-turned-politician who had started as a Congress man and later switched allegiance to Lalu Prasad and Nitish Kumar.

Choudhary now faces the daunting challenge of transforming Bihar into a BJP stronghold like the rest of the Hindi heartland, while accommodating allies like the JD(U), which is likely to feel a tinge of resentment over no longer being "the party of the chief minister", and smaller allies which have been prone to change loyalties over trifles.

FROM PAGE - 1

Women's reservation: No fixed LS seat count; South likely to gain

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Constitution amendment bill proposing 33 per cent reservation for women from 2029 does not specify the exact number of Lok Sabha seats to be enhanced from the current 543, stating that the total membership should be "not more than" 850, with the final figure to be decided by a delimitation commission.

Government sources said the allocation of seats among states and union territories will be based on proportional representation, and southern states are likely to benefit under this formula.

The final number of seats will be determined by a delimitation commission, and the bill therefore does not specify an exact strength, stating only that the Lok Sabha shall comprise "not more than 815 members" chosen via direct elections from states and "not more than 35 members" from Union Territories. "The figure



of 850 represents only the upper limit for the total number of Lok Sabha seats," sources said. The 2011 Census will serve as the reference point, and due to more effective population control in southern states, they could see a relative advantage in seat allocation compared to northern states, where population growth has been higher. Sources said Prime Minister Narendra Modi will speak in the Lok Sabha on the bill and provide details on the "historic" step taken by the government.

Discussion and voting in the Lok Sabha will take place

on April 16 and 17.

A total of 18 hours has been allotted for the debate on the three legislations — the Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty-first Amendment) Bill, 2026; the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026; and the Delimitation Bill, 2026.

Discussions and voting in the Rajya Sabha will take place on April 18.

A duration of 10 hours has been set for the proceedings. Sources also said that the election for the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha will be held on April 16 and 17.

Police probe conspiracy behind Noida unrest

"Some have been taken into custody and the rest are being identified." Anti-social elements, she added, escalated the situation once the core workforce had stepped back.

What began as a peaceful agitation by factory workers demanding a wage hike on par with neighbouring Haryana quickly drew an estimated 40,000-45,000 participants across 80-83 locations, including Sectors 62, Phase-2, 60, 63, 84 and parts of Greater Noida. By 9:30 am, roads were blocked, the Noida Expressway choked, and key arteries like NH-9 turned into parking lots. Police deployed nearly 3,000 personnel. While most workers dispersed after initial counselling, violence erupted in pockets.

As arrests continue and digital trails are followed, police sources say the investigation is shifting from street violence to the command-and-control network that allegedly hijacked a wage protest. Whether it was local anti-social elements, coordinated bots or cross-border handlers, officials are clear: Monday's mayhem was no spontaneous outburst. The genuine anger of Noida's factory workers has been weaponised, they allege and the full extent of that conspiracy is now under the microscope.

The Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (STF) is tracing digital footprints. Investigators have flagged over 50 bot accounts created within 24 hours that amplified inflammatory content and false narratives. Two FIRs target these rumour mills. Police are also probing funding sources and links to earlier labour-related arrests in Manesar.

Uttar Pradesh Labour Minister Anil Rajbhar called the violence a "well-planned conspiracy" to disrupt law and order and industrial growth. Agencies are now examining a possible Pakistan link, citing the recent arrests of four suspected terrorists in Meerut and Noida who were in contact with handlers across the border. "In such a situation, the possibility of a conspiracy to create instability gains strength" Rajbhar said, adding that anti-national forces could be attempting to exploit worker unrest.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath did not mince words and warned of a potential Naxal revival. "Naxalism is at the point of elimination, but attempts to revive it could be part of a larger conspiracy," he said. "Some protests may have involved misleading and disruptive elements" posing as labour representatives. The chief minister said that he has directed intensified intelligence gathering in industrial zones and strongest action possible against infiltrators.

Despite the chaos, the state Government moved swiftly on the workers' core demands. Four of five key demands including wage revision, weekly offs and grievance cells have been accepted. A high-powered committee comprising labour, MSME and industry officials has been formed to resolve remaining issues. Late-night meetings with over 2,500 workers were held even as the probe intensified to identify the real faces behind the planned conspiracy to instigate violence in the neighbourhood of India's national capital.

At market exchange rates, world output is projected to grow by 2.6 per cent in both 2026 and 2027, it said. The relatively modest downward revision to global growth in the reference forecast relative to the January 2026 WEO Update owes to continued tailwinds partially offsetting the negative shocks from the conflict, including lower tariffs, preexisting policy support, and carryover from stronger-than-expected outturns at the end of 2025 and the first quarter of 2026 in some cases. (PTI)

Protests continue in Noida despite wage...

Police officers conducted flag marches and deployed heavy reinforcements, including 15 companies of Rapid Action Force (RAF), Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) and Quick Reaction Teams, alongside drone surveillance. The administration continues engaging workers through committees, dismissing rumours of a flat ₹20,000 minimum wage as inaccurate and attributing some violence to outsiders rather than local labourers. The protests, which erupted on a large scale on Monday, involved over 40,000 workers across nearly 80 locations in the Gautam Buddha Nagar district. Workers have drawn a leaf out from Haryana's 35 percent wage hike, demanding that Uttar Pradesh match or exceed it. Many earn as little as ₹13,000 monthly, with complaints of exploitative practices such as short-term terminations to avoid allowance hikes and inadequate overtime pay.

On Tuesday, even after the Uttar Pradesh Government announced an interim wage revision late Monday night effective retroactively from April 1, 2026, the demonstrations persisted. For Gautam Buddha Nagar and Ghaziabad, unskilled workers' wages rose from ₹11,313 to ₹13,690, semi-skilled from ₹12,445 to ₹15,059, and skilled from ₹13,940 to ₹16,868. Similar hikes were notified for other categories. UP Government officials described the move as a goodwill gesture, with additional worker welfare measures like pre-November bonuses, double pay for overtime and weekly off-days, women-chaired sexual harassment committees, and complaint boxes at workplaces. Yet, many workers dismissed the revisions as insufficient and unverified at the factory level.

By late Tuesday, authorities reported relative calm in key areas like Cleo County, Gari Chaukhandi, Sector 70, and Phase 2, with law and order re-established through sustained policing. Traffic advisories remained in place on routes like the Noida Expressway and NH-9, but major disruptions eased.

The Noida protests highlight deeper issues in India's industrial belts: wage stagnation amid inflation, contract labour vulnerabilities, and the ripple effects of regional policy differences.

Pakistan presses for fresh US-Iran talks

A senior Hezbollah official on Monday said the Lebanese militant group will not abide by any agreements that may result from direct Lebanon-Israel talks set to start Tuesday in Washington.

Lebanese officials hope to broker a ceasefire in the Israel-Hezbollah war that has killed at least 2,089 people in Lebanon. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said he doesn't want a ceasefire, and the goal is Hezbollah's disarmament and a potential peace agreement between Lebanon and Israel. Meanwhile, Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni said Tuesday that her Government has suspended the automatic renewal of a defence agreement with Israel, citing "the current situation."

Meloni and other Italian Government officials have strongly condemned Israel's air and bombing campaign in Lebanon, which has hit civilians as well as an Italian convoy that is part of a UN peace-keeping force. The agreement, ratified in 2005, includes ongoing cooperation between the two countries' defence ministries and armed forces. It is automatically renewed every five years. A US blockade of Iranian ports that began Monday and Iran's threatened retaliation set up an extraordinary showdown posing serious risks for the global economy and raising the spectre of a ceasefire collapse and resumed fighting.

Trump dials PM Modi on West Asia conflict

Gor said the leaders discussed developments in the Middle East and broader India-US engagement. "They just got off the phone a few minutes ago. The President gave an update on what is happening in the Middle East, along with some of the big-ticket items happening in Washington between the United States and India," he said.

He also indicated that economic engagement could deepen further, saying "some big-ticket deals, including on energy, are expected between India and the US in the next few days and weeks."

During the exchange, Modi told Trump, "People of India love you," while Trump responded, "I just want you to know we all love you." The leaders had earlier spoken on February 2 to review progress on a bilateral trade deal, and again on March 24 to discuss the evolving regional situation.

The latest interaction comes amid continued uncertainty over the fragile ceasefire and expectations of further diplomatic engagement between the United States and Iran. End-

PM Modi launches Delhi-Dehradun corridor

Citing recent developments in the Delhi-Western UP-Uttarakhand region, the PM noted the expansion of Delhi Metro, the launch of Metro services in Meerut, the inauguration of the Delhi-Meerut Namoo Bharat Rail, and the start of the Noida International Airport, all within a short span of time. "Imagine the scale at which infrastructure is being built across the entire country, what is happening in this one small region is just a glimpse of that," Modi remarked.

Elaborating on the benefits of the Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor, the PM said that in addition to significant reduction in travel time and costs for commuters and freight, farmers and animal herders will also benefit as their produce will reach larger markets sooner. He observed that the corridor, which passes through Ghaziabad, Baghpat, Baraut, Shamli and Saharanpur, is poised to revitalise these cities in UP as well.

Emphasising the tourism potential of the new expressway, the Prime Minister noted that Dehradun, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Mussoorie and the Char Dham circuit will all be more accessible. He added that Uttarakhand is increasingly becoming a premier destination for winter tourism, winter sports and destination weddings.

Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari spoke about the Government's focus on economic corridors across the nation and gave details of the various infrastructural projects underway in Uttarakhand.

Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami also addressed the event which was virtually attended by the Delhi CM Rekha Gupta and her UP counterpart Yogi Adityanath.

Earlier, Modi offered prayers at the Dat Kali Mandir at the border of UP and Uttarakhand in the presence of UP Governor Anandiben Patel and CM Yogi Adityanath. He took out a roadshow on a stretch about 12 kilometres long to reach the venue of his public address.

Choudhary elected BJP leader as Nitish exits...

Following Choudhary's election legislative party leader of the BJP, the oath ceremony for the next CM of Bihar is likely to be held on Wednesday, with an expected attendance by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, some of his cabinet colleagues and senior BJP leaders. "Samrat Choudhary was unanimously elected as the BJP's legislative party leader," said Union minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, whom the BJP parliamentary board named central observer for the legislative party leader's election. The BJP is the single largest party in the 243-strong Bihar assembly with 89 MLAs. Nitish Kumar submitted his resignation as CM early on Tuesday after dissolving his Cabinet following its last meeting in Patna. "I have done a lot of work for the people of Bihar. Recently, I decided to leave the post of chief minister...and therefore, after today's cabinet meeting, I met the governor and submitted my resignation to him," Nitish posted on social media.

What came as a surprise was the sidelining of Nitish's son. The JD(U) had bargained hard for one deputy CM post for Nishant Kumar.

Now, however, three senior leaders from JD(U) — Vijendra Yadav, Vijay Chaudhary and Shrawan Kumar — have emerged as frontrunners in the race for deputy CM in Bihar. Sources indicate that two of these three leaders are likely to be appointed in the new Government. The 243-member Bihar Assembly allows for a Cabinet of up to 36 ministers. Sources said most current ministers may be retained.

The 202-strong NDA also includes 85 MLAs of the JD(U), besides 19 of the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) and five of the Hindustani Awam Morcha, headed by Union ministers Chirag Paswan and Jitan Ram Manjhi, respectively. In addition, there are five MLAs of Rashtriya Lok Morcha, led by Rajya Sabha MP Upendra Kushwaha.

No scope for large aircraft at Kargil airport: Ladakh LG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kargil

Ladakh Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Tuesday said there is currently no scope for operating large aircraft at Kargil Airport due to runway constraints, though smaller planes could

be introduced after necessary upgrades, subject to commercial viability.

Speaking to reporters before concluding his four-day tour of the district, Saxena said he inspected the airport — located 6 km from the main town and operated by the Indian Air



Force — following repeated public demand for its operationalisation. "After holding a detailed discussion with officials, including IAF representatives, I came to know that the runway, measuring about 6,000 feet, is short, narrow, and in a worn-out condition, making it unsuitable for large aircraft operations. Even with a possible extension of up to 3,000 feet, operational challenges would remain," he said.

He added that the landing approach requires a difficult turn for large aircraft, while a mountain ahead poses a challenge during takeoff.

Govt eyes constitutional changes to enforce...

"The next step and the consequential delimitation exercise thereafter will take considerable time and thus, delay the effective and dedicated participation of women in our democratic polity. Hence, the objective of the proposed bill is to operationalise one-third reservation for women, including women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, in the House of the People and the legislative assemblies of the states, the National Capital Territory of Delhi and the Union territories through delimitation exercise to be undertaken on the basis of the population figures of the latest published census," says the statement of objects and reasons of the draft Constitution amendment bill.

Asserting that it is the "collective sentiment" of the nation, PM Modi who earlier in the day wrote an open letter to women citing about Women's reservation said, "This is the wish of every sister and daughter of this country, and we must fulfil it with unanimity."

The PM asserted that Indian democracy will become stronger and more vibrant if elections to the Lok Sabha and various assemblies in 2029 are held with a women's quota fully in place.

India proposed to grow at 6.5%: IMF

At 3.1 per cent for 2026 and 3.2 per cent for 2027, the forecasts mark a deceleration from the estimated 3.4 per cent achieved in 2025.

Advertisement for National Competitive Bidding Through e-Procurement. Includes details about bid identification, work description, and contact information for the Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Berhampur.

Advertisement for Works Department, Office of the Chief Construction Engineer, Eastern Circle (R&B), Balasore. Includes details about bid identification, work description, and contact information.



## Government circulates bills to increase Lok Sabha seats

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Hardly 48 hours before the Special Session of the Parliament, Government on Tuesday evening circulated three Constitution amendment bills to increase the seats in Lok Sabha up to 850 and change of Delimitation Act to find seats reserved for women.

The Delimitation Bill, 2026 is to replace the 2002 law, which will give power to Government to constitute a Delimitation Commission to distribute the seats in the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies on the basis of the 2011 census. The bill has been circulated among Members of Parliament along with 'The Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty-First Amendment) Bill, 2026' and 'The Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026' in an exercise aimed at operationalising the women's reservation law by the 2029 elections.

Several of the provisions of the new delimitation bill are similar to the 2002 law, which would be repealed. According to the draft Delimitation Bill, 2026, "The Central Government may, from time to time, by notification, constitute a Commission to be called the Delimitation Commission.

"The Commission shall comprise of the following members, namely: one member, who shall be a person who is or has been a Judge of the Supreme Court, to be appointed by the Central Government, as the Chairperson of the Commission; the Chief Election Commissioner or an Election Commissioner nominated by the Chief Election Commissioner, ex



officio' and the State Election Commissioner of the State concerned, ex officio." The Central Government may, by notification, specify the term of the Commission, the bill says.

The Central Government may, on the request of the Commission, extend the term of the Commission by such further period as it may consider necessary, it says. "The Election Commission shall act as Delimitation Commission for the purpose of delimiting constituencies in the Legislative Assembly of the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir falling under the occupation of Pakistan, when the area of the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir under the occupation of Pakistan ceases to be so occupied," the bill says.

"It shall be the duty of the Commission to readjust, on the basis of the latest census figures, the allocation of seats in the House of the People to the States and Union territories, the total number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of each state and the division of each state and Union territories into territorial constituencies for the purpose of elections to the House of the People and to the Legislative Assembly," the draft law says.

The bill to "operationalise" 33 per cent reservation to women in Lok Sabha and State assemblies by increasing the strength of the lower house to up to 850 from the present 543. To redraw constituencies, the bill seeks to take into account the 2011 Census data. The bill seeks to amend Article 81 of the

Constitution. The 33 per cent seats reserved for women in Lok Sabha and legislative assemblies "shall be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a State or Union territory," the bill circulated among Lok Sabha members said.

It states that "The House of the People (Lok Sabha) shall consist of not more than 815 members chosen by direct election from territorial constituencies in the States; and not more than 35 members to represent the Union territories, chosen in such manner as Parliament may by law provide."

The expression "population", according to the bill, means the population as ascertained at such Census of which the relevant figures have been published. As of now, figures of 2011 Census are available.

## Women's reservation bill need of the hour: Shah



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ New Delhi

Termining the Women Reservation Bill the need of the hour, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said everyone should support the historic move, a change "that should certainly take place for the better, without delay."

In a post on X, Shah said, "Women's Reservation Bill is the need of the hour. This is the rightful due of our Nari Shakti to contribute to policymaking and empower the nation. The Modi Government is resolved to bring and implement this legislation."

"This is a change that should certainly take place for the better, without delay. I hope everyone will step forward and support this historic move," he said.

Parliament passed the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, commonly known as the Women's Reservation Act, in September 2023, marking a significant step towards enhancing women's representation in legislative bodies. The Act provides for the reservation of one-third of the seats in the Lok

Sabha and State assemblies for women.

The amendments to the Women's Reservation Act, when passed, will ensure an increase in the number of Lok Sabha seats to 816, of which 273 will be reserved for women.

The provision to provide 33 per cent reservation to women in the Lok Sabha and State assemblies was brought by amending the Constitution in 2023.

Under the current law, the reservation for women would not have become enforceable before 2034, as it was tied to the completion of the delimitation exercise post Census 2027.

To implement it from the 2029 Lok Sabha election, changes were needed in the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam. Hence, the Government is holding a special sitting of Parliament from April 16 to April 18 to pass the amendments to the law.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in an article on Tuesday that Parliament will reconvene in the next two days to discuss and hopefully, pass an important constitutional amendment relating to the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam.

## Nation Focus



### PM GREETES NATION ON BSAIKHI, PUTHANDU, PANA SANKRANTI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday greeted people on the occasion of Baisakhi, Puthandu and Maha Bishuba Pana Sankranti and wished that this special day furthers the spirit of togetherness in society and brings peace, happiness and prosperity to all. In separate messages in English, Gurmukhi, Tamil and Odia, Modi also hoped that the festivals would bring happiness, prosperity and fresh energy in everyone's lives. "Warm greetings on the joyous occasion of Baisakhi," he said. The prime minister said this vibrant festival marks the spirit of gratitude, renewal and hope. It celebrates the hard work of our farmers, whose dedication keeps our nation fed.



### PM MODI, VICE PRESIDENT PAY TRIBUTE TO BR AMBEDKAR

Vice President CP Radhakrishnan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Tuesday led parliamentarians and people in paying floral tributes to BR Ambedkar in Parliament complex on his 135th birth anniversary. Every year, hundreds of people line up to pay tributes to one of the key architects of the Indian Constitution at his statue in the Parliament complex. Vice President Radhakrishnan, who is also the Rajya Sabha Chair, PM Modi, Speaker Birla, and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge offered flowers at the portrait and statue of Ambedkar.

## CBI raids 8 States after 22 new FIRs in builder-bank nexus case



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The CBI on Tuesday conducted searches at 77 locations across eight States after registering 22 new cases in connection with builders-financial institutions nexus case, officials said.

The searches were spread across Delhi, Chennai, Puducherry, Bengaluru among other locations, they said. "The cases relate to an alleged nexus between certain builders and officials of financial institutions, leading to the cheating and defrauding of innocent homebuyers," a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) spokesperson said in a statement.

These coordinated search operations conducted across different States are part of a nationwide crackdown, the statement said, adding that the operation resulted in the seizure of incriminating documents, digital devices and

other materials, which are being examined.

The action is aimed at gathering crucial evidence to unravel the larger conspiracy involving alleged diversion of funds, financial irregularities and fraudulent practices in the housing real estate sector, the statement said.

The case was handed over to the CBI by the Supreme Court, which on April 29, 2025, had directed the agency to register seven preliminary enquiries against builders in NCR, including Supertech Limited. Later in the year, the court directed it to register 22 cases in which homebuyers were duped in the NCR by using the subvention scheme.

In September 23, last year, the top court had allowed the CBI to register six more regular cases into the "unholy nexus" between banks and developers to dupe homebuyers in real estate projects in Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Mohali and Prayagraj.

## Punjab CM launches monthly assistance scheme for women

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Adampur

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Tuesday rolled out his Government's ambitious 'Mukh Mantri Mawan Dheeyan Satkar Yojna', under which women from the general category will receive a monthly financial assistance of ₹1,000 while women from Scheduled Castes will get ₹1,500.

Calling it a true tribute to Babasaheb Ambedkar's vision of social justice and

equality, the CM launched the registration process for women beneficiaries, while ensuring doorstep facilitation through a massive network of camps and support staff.

The rollout begins in nine constituencies and will expand across the remaining 108 from May 15, with financial assistance starting July.

With 26,000 registration centres and dedicated 'Mahila Satkar Sakhis' deployed in every village and ward, the scheme is



Bhagwant Mann

designed for scale, access and certainty, positioning it among the most expansive direct financial support initiatives for women in the country.

Accompanied by senior AAP leader and Punjab 'Prabhari' Manish Sisodia, Mann announced that the scheme has been rolled out as a pilot across nine locations, including Adampur, Malout, Sri Anandpur Sahib, Dirba, Sunam, Moga, Kotkapura, Batala and Patiala Rural.

"Registration for women in remaining 108 constituencies will start from May 15 onwards. Monthly payments of ₹1,000 or ₹1,500 will start from July onwards," he added while addressing a

rally in Adampur in Jalandhar.

"There is no deadline for registration and the ladies need not worry as it doesn't matter when they register whether April 15 or May 15 or August 15," he said clarifying that delayed registration would not affect benefits.

"They will get their full payment payable from July onwards, so even if they register at the end of September, they will get full payment for three months meaning July, August and September," he noted.

## NCPEDP calls for political reservation for persons with disabilities



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Hailing Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a landmark reform to mainstream women's political participation, the National Centre for Promotion of Disabled People (NCPEDP) has called for a parallel national discourse on ensuring political representation for persons with disabilities.

As Parliament convenes from April 16-18 to deliberate on the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, which proposes 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, along with an expansion of seats, NCPEDP has termed this a historic opportunity to address the long-standing underrepresentation of persons with disabilities in legislative bodies.

## Left, trade unions slam brutal repression of NCR workers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) and major central trade unions, including CITU and AITUC, on Tuesday lashed out at the BJP-led Governments in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh for unleashing "brutal repression" on industrial workers agitating across the National Capital Region (NCR).

In a sharp escalation of the industrial unrest that has gripped the region, the Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) condemned the police action in Noida, Greater Noida, and Gurugram. The party alleged that the State machinery is being used to



Security guards stage a protest over fee hike issues outside a residential society at Sector 74 in Noida

defend corporate interests by filing false cases against labour leaders and branding genuine protests as "external conspiracies."

"Police are raiding vil-

lages, indiscriminately beating up workers, and arresting hundreds. The whereabouts of those detained are not being shared with their families,"

a CPI(M) statement said. The party demanded the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all cases. Echoing these sentiments, the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) has called for a nationwide protest on April 16. CITU General Secretary Elamaram Kareem stated that the upsurge, which saw nearly 50,000 workers take to the streets in Noida alone, is a "direct class confrontation."

CITU highlighted that while the cost of living remains identical to Delhi, workers in UP and Haryana are paid "starvation wages" of Rs 10,000- Rs 12,000. The unions are demanding a minimum wage of Rs

26,000 per month, an eight-hour workday, and the abolition of the contract labour system. They also pointed to the "ruthless exploitation" under the new Labour Codes, which they claim legalise 13-hour workdays and weaken trade union rights.

The All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) also condemned the "house arrest" of union leaders in Noida and the disproportionate use of force against women workers. AITUC General Secretary Amarjeet Kaur remarked that the desperation seen in industrial hubs like Manesar, Panipat, and Barauni is a result of the total denial of collective bargaining.

## UGC approves Birkbeck's plan to set up a global campus in Bengaluru

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

In a significant step towards advancing India's global education ambitions, Birkbeck, University of London, has received a Letter of Intent (LoI) from the University Grants Commission (UGC), Government of India, to establish its global campus in Bengaluru.

The development aligns closely with the vision of the Government of India to position India as a global hub for higher education by 2030, as outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020,

and reflects the growing momentum in India-UK academic collaboration championed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The launch event was attended by distinguished leaders from Government, academia, and international organisations, including Vineet Joshi, Chairperson, UGC and Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education; Lindy Cameron, British High Commissioner to India; Sally Wheeler, Vice-Chancellor, Birkbeck, University of London; Alison Barrett, Country Director India, British Council; and KM



Prafulachandra Sharma, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Education, GoI, along with senior officials from the Government, UK Embassy, British Council, and academic leadership from Birkbeck University of London.

With the establishment of its Bengaluru campus, Birkbeck will offer Indian students access to globally recognised University of London degrees at nearly 60 per cent lower cost, while maintaining the same academic standards, research-led teaching, and industry-integrated curriculum as its UK counterpart. This initiative directly sup-

ports India's goal of increasing its Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education to 50 per cent by 2030 and expanding access to high-quality international education domestically.

Highlighting the significance of this initiative, Joshi said the handing over of the Letter of Intent marks a gateway to global learning for Indian students.

Emphasising the policy framework, he added, "At the heart of the NEP 2020 is the internationalisation of education. "Through progressive UGC regulations, we are enabling high-quality global

institutions to establish a meaningful presence in India. The students will now be able to access world-class international education at significantly lower costs, nearly 60 per cent less compared to studying abroad. This is critical to ensuring equity and expanding opportunities," he added.

Professor Sally Wheeler, Vice-Chancellor, Birkbeck, University of London, said, "We are proud to be part of India's education journey. This campus represents our commitment to making high-quality, transformative education more accessible to students in India."



## States Focus



### MARATHI TO BE MANDATORY FOR TAXI DRIVERS IN MAHARASHTRA

Knowing Marathi will be mandatory for all licensed rickshaw and taxi drivers in Maharashtra from May 1, and a statewide campaign will be conducted through the offices of the Motor Transport Department, Cabinet minister Pratap Sarnaik said on Tuesday. In a statement issued by his office, Sarnaik warned that the licenses of drivers who do not possess basic knowledge of Marathi will be cancelled. "From May 1, coinciding with Maharashtra Day, it will be mandatory for all licensed rickshaw and taxi drivers to know Marathi. A state-wide inspection campaign will be conducted through 59 regional and sub-regional offices of the Motor Transport Department to verify if drivers can read and write the language," the minister stated.



### J&K: LG SINHA URGES COLLECTIVE FIGHT AGAINST DRUG ABUSE

Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday underscored the importance of selfless service, calling on people to work collectively for the welfare of society, the city, and the nation. Speaking at a ceremony to mark the upgradation of 'Apna Bhojanalaya' at Government Medical College in Jammu, he urged people to commit to the cause of feeding the needy and building a legacy worthy of pride. The Lt Governor also called upon all sections of society to unite in the fight against drug abuse. "Our aim should be selfless service to our neighbours, our city, and the nation that unites us. A strong J&K means strong families, strong communities...when we uplift every sector, we uplift the Union Territory as a whole," Sinha said. "There is no higher duty than serving those in need."

## BJP to resolve Gorkha issue without dividing West Bengal: Amit Shah

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Gangarampur/Manikchak (WB)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said the BJP, if voted to power in West Bengal, will resolve the Gorkha issue in the Darjeeling hills in a constitutional manner without dividing the State.

Addressing a poll rally in Gangarampur in Dakshin Dinajpur district, Shah referred to the BJP's election manifesto to offer a host of north Bengal-centric development projects. "I want to tell my Gorkha brothers of Darjeeling that, once in power, the BJP will not only develop an eco-adventure hub in the hills, but also resolve the Gorkha issue in a constitutional manner without dividing the State," Shah said.

The century-old demand of the Nepali-speaking Indians in the Darjeeling hills for a separate State of Gorkhaland has



Union Home Minister Amit Shah addressing the gathering during a public meeting in support of BJP candidates ahead of the West Bengal Assembly elections at Gochhar in Dakshin Dinajpur on Tuesday

repeatedly taken violent turns. Despite the formation of the semi-autonomous Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) in 2011 to administer the upper reaches of Darjeeling and parts of the foothills, violent agitations took place till as late as 2017. The region witnessed multiple twists and turns over political partnership between the local Gorkha parties, like the Gorkha Janmukti

Morcha (GJM) and the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), and bigger players like the BJP and TMC, where the demand for a separate Gorkhaland has always acquired political centre stage.

In the upcoming polls, the TMC is in a strategic seat-sharing alliance with the Anit Thapa-led Bharatiya Gorkha Prajatantrik Morcha (BJPM), a

breakaway faction of Bimal Gurung's GJM, and has left the Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong seats to its partner.

The BJP, on the other hand, has yet again secured the support of Gurung, its former alliance partner in the hills, although the saffron party is directly contesting the polls from the region this time.

Laying his thrust on the issue of illegal immigration in West Bengal, the Union home minister said that the BJP will end political violence, syndicate and cut-money raj in the State and evict infiltrators with priority. "Press EVM buttons next to the lotus sign so hard that once they are pressed in regions of north Bengal, infiltrators across India can feel the electric shock," he said.

Shah has been paying regular visits to the State over the last few weeks and has held multiple rallies across the State in the run-up to the April 23 polls.

## SIR rule used selectively in Bengal to help BJP: Mamata



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addressing a public meeting ahead of the Assembly election in Howrah on Tuesday

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Kolkata

TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday alleged that "logical discrepancy" under the SIR exercise is not an officially recognised term under the Election Commission framework and was selectively applied in West Bengal, unlike Bihar, to benefit the BJP.

Addressing a public rally at Pingla in Paschim Medinipur district, Banerjee urged women to "stand firm" against security forces if attempts are made to prevent people from voting, while asserting that she was not asking anyone to indulge in violence.

The chief minister said, "There is no officially recognised term like 'logical discrepancy' under the framework of the Election Commission. It is being selectively applied in West Bengal, unlike in Bihar, to benefit the BJP."

Banerjee added that she has not seen a "dirty party" like the BJP. "The job of the central police is to maintain peace. We have no objection to that. But what if they prevent people from voting? I will request women to keep brooms in their hands and stand firm against those wearing boots and carrying arms. I am not asking you to assault anyone or incite a riot, but you must do everything to

safeguard your rights," Banerjee said.

"I even moved the Supreme Court to protect your rights, and only after that, the names of 32 lakh voters were enlisted," she added. Later, speaking at another rally in Tamuk in Purba Medinipur district, Banerjee questioned why such a large number of central forces were brought to West Bengal.

"They have brought in officers who are close to the BJP and replaced the ICs... If your sole aim was to keep peace here, you could have used the West Bengal Police. Why, instead of doing that, did you take away all their powers and bring in central forces from outside? People don't see central forces during any natural calamity or riot," she alleged.

The CM asked people to lodge complaints against any police officer if they were "tortured". "Lodge complaints whenever police torture you," she said. The TMC supremo, urging people to vote against the BJP, said, "The BJP has snatched everything from you... Voting against it would be your only way to take revenge."

The BJP is holding rallies at places that have direct railway connectivity with Uttar Pradesh and Bihar so that they can bring in people from those States to fill up the venues, she alleged.

## Stalin warns of massive protests over delimitation move

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Chennai

Chief Minister MK Stalin on Tuesday warned of massive agitations bringing Tamil Nadu to a standstill and "protests with full force," if anything was done harming the State or if the political power of northern States was disproportionately increased in delimitation.

Reiterating his allegation that secrecy shrouds the proposed delimitation process, Stalin, in a video message, said that without consulting not just the DMK but any political party or any State, the BJP-led Centre was attempting to proceed unilaterally. "We do not even know how this delimitation exercise is going to be carried out. No explanation has been provided so far regarding the proposed Constitutional amendment."

When such secrecy surrounds this process, it only strengthens the suspicion that a grave danger lies beneath.



Chief Minister MK Stalin addressing a public meeting in support of party candidates ahead of the West Bengal Assembly elections at Samsernanj in Murshidabad on Tuesday

The people of the southern States are gripped with deep concern, he said.

Referring to the special session of Parliament on April 16, Stalin said it had been "forcibly convened" in the midst of elections in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. "In this session, the Union Government intends to bulldoze through a Constitutional amendment on delimitation," he alleged, apparently claiming that the Centre intends to force

its decision on southern States, including Tamil Nadu.

This hurried attempt to push through delimitation is a blatant assault on democracy by the BJP Government. More than that, it is a direct assault on the rights of States.

"At this moment, I wish to say something important to the Union BJP Government and to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In the forthcoming Parliamentary session, our Members of Parliament will participate," he said. However, "if anything is done that harms Tamil Nadu, or that disproportionately enhances the political power of northern States, we in Tamil Nadu will not remain silent."

The Dravidian party chief warned that Tamil Nadu will come to a standstill.

He said, "Tamil Nadu will register its protest with full force. Every family will take to the streets. Under my leadership as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, we will organise a massive agitation."

## BJP destroying Constitution, TMC failed on jobs: Rahul

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Raiganj/Malda (WB)

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday launched a two-pronged attack in poll-bound West Bengal, accusing the BJP and the RSS of destroying the Constitution with their "hate-filled thinking", while claiming the ruling TMC has failed in fulfilling its promise of providing jobs to the State's youth.

Addressing poll rallies in Raiganj and Malda, he claimed that 84 lakh youths in Bengal have applied for the unemployment allowance promised by the Mamata Banerjee Government.

"Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee promised jobs to



LoP in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addressing a public meeting in support of party candidates ahead of the West Bengal Assembly elections at Samsernanj in Murshidabad on Tuesday

five lakh people. But 84 lakh youths have applied for unemployment allowance," he said.

Targeting the BJP and RSS, the leader of the opposition

in the Lok Sabha accused the two outfits of destroying the Constitution by their "hate-filled thinking" and being "involved in vote theft". Rahul Gandhi termed the

Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls "unconstitutional" and alleged that wherever the BJP and RSS get a chance, they make insinuations against the Constitution. He accused the BJP of pitting one community against the other in the name of religion and caste to win elections.

Gandhi claimed that once the Congress forms a Government, the names of those wrongly struck off the electoral rolls under SIR will be reinstated. Claiming the Trinamool Congress cannot take on the BJP across the country, he said the Congress is the only party which can stand up against and defeat the saffron camp.

## BJP States harassing Bangla speakers: Abhishek Banerjee

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Kolkata

Senior Trinamool Congress leader Abhishek Banerjee on Tuesday alleged that Bangla-speaking people were being harassed and intimidated in BJP-ruled States by labelling them as Bangladeshis.

Addressing a gathering after a roadshow in north Bengal's Cooch Behar, he accused the Narendra Modi Government of denying Bengal its rightful dues as "an act of revenge" for electing the TMC to power repeatedly, spurning the BJP.

"They have persecuted and tormented Bangla-speaking people in BJP-ruled States. They have insulted our icons, belittled our culture, tried to dictate our food habits, questioned the legitimacy of our language, and above all, conspired to rob the people of their



Senior Trinamool Congress leader Abhishek Banerjee speaking at a gathering after a roadshow in north Bengal's Cooch Behar

democratic rights," the TMC national general secretary said. The Diamond Harbour MP, who is the de facto number two in the TMC, also said, "While Bangla-speaking people are attacked, intimidated and labelled Bangladeshis in States ruled by the BJP, they are also forbidding the sale and

consumption of fish and meat in many areas."

He exuded confidence that the people of Bengal would humble the "arrogant anti-Bengal zamindars" on May 4, the day of the results for the Assembly polls.

"This one strike will remind these arrogant despots that no matter how much power they wield in Delhi, people can push them off their throne. The ultimate power always rests with the people," Banerjee said.

He said, "The hollowness in the BJP's love for communities like Rajbanshi and Matuas stands exposed as lakhs of names of members from these communities have been arbitrarily deleted through the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral roll." He assured people that the TMC would ensure that no legitimate voter is left out of the electoral rolls.

## Boiler tube explosion at power plant in Chhattisgarh kills 9; 15 injured



Smoke billows after an explosion at a power plant in Chhattisgarh's Sakti district

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
■ Sakti (Chhattisgarh)

Nine workers were killed and 15 sustained injuries after a boiler exploded at a power plant in Chhattisgarh's Sakti district on Tuesday, police said. According to preliminary information, the blast occurred in a boiler tube at the Vedanta Limited power plant in Singhitarai village in the afternoon, Sakti Superintendent of Police Prafull Thakur said.

"Nine workers have died, and 15 have sustained injuries," he said, adding that three victims were killed on the spot while the others succumbed to injuries at hospitals.

The injured were undergoing treatment at hospitals in the neighbouring Raigarh district, he said.

Local administration and police teams rushed to the spot and launched rescue operations, the official said.

He said that as the area around the boiler remains extremely hot, workers and staff have been evacuated from the vicinity.

Rescue operations are still underway to check if more persons are trapped, he added.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai termed the incident "extremely tragic" and said the Government stands with the families of the deceased.

A probe will be conducted, and strict action will be taken against those found responsible, he told reporters in Raipur.

The plant management, in a statement, said, "An unfortunate incident occurred at one of the boiler units at our Singhitarai plant, involving personnel from our sub-contractor, NGS (NTPC GE Power Services Limited), which operates and maintains the unit."

The management said that its immediate priority is to ensure the best possible medical assistance and treatment to those affected, and that it is closely coordinating with medical teams and local authorities.

"We are in the process of ascertaining details, and a thorough investigation has been initiated in coordination with our partner and relevant authorities," it said.

## Nadda unveils BJP manifesto in Tamil Nadu, slams DMK's rule

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Chennai

The people of Tamil Nadu are "fed up" with the DMK and want to get rid of "family rule", former BJP national president and Union Minister JP Nadda said on Tuesday.

He alleged that the State has been treated as a "crime capital" into a "crime capital" under the MK Stalin-led DMK Government.

Unveiling the Bharatiya Janata Party's election manifesto for the April 23 Assembly Elections-Pudhiya Yugam Padaikkum Thamarai Vaakuruthi (Creating a New Era through Lotus Promise) 2026-he claimed that the DMK had "failed Tamil Nadu on all fronts."

The poll manifesto, prepared by a 13-member committee under former Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan, covers 12 subjects, including governance and law and order, social justice, women and child development, healthcare, and farmers' welfare.

The manifesto, released coinciding with Tamil New Year's Day, assures that Thaiposam will be declared a State festival to honour Lord Muruga (Subrahmanya Swamy), and that the tradition of lighting the Karthigai Deepam at the Tirupparankundram hilltop will be resumed and protected. The manifesto also promises a "ganja-free" State, a dedicated helpline for swift action, special fast-track courts, and capital punishment under the NDPS Act for repeat offenders and cartels.

Key promises include providing monthly assistance of ₹2,000 to



Union Minister JP Nadda with Tamil Nadu BJP leaders during the launch of the party manifesto ahead of the State Assembly elections in Chennai on Tuesday

women heads of households, along with a one-time grant of ₹10,000 to every household if the party is voted to power. The party also promised to provide three LPG cylinders free of cost annually, one each during the Pongal harvest festival, Tamil New Year, and Diwali. Nadda said that the DMK was run "like a dynasty".

"It is a family-run party where Stalin is at the top, Udhayanidhi Stalin is the heir, Kanimozhi Karunanidhi is a key figure, and Sabareesan is the manager. This is how the party operates-it is family rule," he claimed.

"We have to understand this. The pulse of the people across the State reflects full resentment against the DMK, dynasty rule, crime, corruption,

and its allies. People will expose this unholy alliance in the election," Nadda said.

"We Indians take immense pride in Tamil Nadu being the cradle of one of the world's oldest civilisations. However, under the current DMK Government, this cultural capital is sadly being turned into a 'crime capital'," he alleged.

The DMK, Nadda said, has "betrayed" the faith of women, youth, and marginalised sections of society. He alleged that the party believes in the "3Cs"-corruption, collection, and commission.

"Their leader, Udhayanidhi Stalin, compared Sanatana Dharma to dengue and coronavirus, which clearly reflects their hatred. They also

approached the Supreme Court against the High Court's order to light the Deepam atop the Tirupparankundram hills," Nadda said. He claimed that Tamil Nadu has become a "drug capital."

"The people are fed up with the DMK. They want to get rid of family rule," he reiterated.

The manifesto said it would tackle crimes against women on a war footing through streamlined zero-FIR reporting, victim-witness protection, special fast-track courts for heinous cases, including sexual offences, installation of blind-spot-free CCTV cameras in buses, schools, and universities, and optimised utilisation of the Nirbhaya Fund.

Other assurances include providing a subsidy of ₹25,000 to eligible women to purchase e-scooters.

The party promised a ₹3,000 top-up to the central PM-Kisan scheme for farmers, taking the total annual assistance to ₹9,000 per farmer under the proposed 'Uzhave Thai' scheme. It proposed the creation of a drug eradication department with a specialised anti-narcotics task force, along with a narcotics intelligence wing to monitor sea smuggling. Other promises include loans of up to ₹50 lakh for women-led cooperatives, SHGs, and MSMEs.

It proposes mandating 20 per cent of Government procurement from women-led cooperatives.

A one-time grant of ₹50,000 will be provided to small and marginal farmers for activities such as animal husbandry, cattle rearing, shrimp farming, beekeeping, and poultry farming.



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**Order Order**

**SC Collegium recommends  
Liz Mathew, Preeta Aravindan  
as Kerala HC judges**



Preeta Aravindan (Left) Liz Mathew (Right)

The Supreme Court Collegium has recommended the appointment of two lawyers as judges of Kerala High Court. The decision was taken at a meeting of the Collegium held on April 14. Liz Mathew is practising in Supreme Court and was Kerala's standing counsel. Preeta Aravindan is practising in Kerala High Court. The Collegium headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant also approved a proposal for appointment of three judicial officers as judges of the Karnataka High Court. The names of these judicial officers are Rajeshwari Narayana Hegde, Kedambadi Ganesh Shanthi, and Mahadevappa Brungesh.

In another decision, the Collegium gave its nod to the appointment of four additional judges as permanent judges of the Telangana High Court. They justices Yara Renuka, Nandikonda Narsing Rao, E Tirumala Devi, and BR Madhusudan Rao. The Collegium further approved a proposal for appointment of Justice Manjusha Ajay Deshpande, additional judge, as permanent judge of the Bombay High Court.

**Sucheta Dalal moves Delhi  
court against ban on media  
reports linked to Sandesara**



Journalist Sucheta Dalal has moved a Delhi court challenging the order banning any news content linking Manoj Kesari Chand Sandesara or his family members to the alleged Sterling Biotech bank fraud case. District Judge Vinod Kumar Meena of the Tis Hazari Courts heard the matter on April 13 and issued notice to Manoj Sandesara, Google and Meta. The case will be heard next on April 29.

Dalal's Moneylife magazine and digital news portal - has challenged the Civil Judge's order of April 4, imposing a ban on Google, Meta and unknown parties (including media houses) from publishing any content linking Sandesaras to Sterling Biotech case. The Civil Judge had passed an ex parte 41 page interim injunction and ordered Google and Meta and John Doe defendants (unknown persons) to "de-index, de-list, and de-reference the URLs and content of articles flagged by Sandesara. This included three articles and a YouTube video published by Moneylife.

It is Dalal's case that the Civil Judge's order was overly broad, failed to identify specific defamatory content, violates free speech, and was issued without giving her publication a chance to be heard. Moneywise has claimed it was not named directly in the original suit despite its content being targeted, and only became aware of the same after takedown notices were sent by YouTube. "The Impugned Order also fails to recognize that the Plaintiff is pursuing the defamation claim not only on behalf of him, but also on behalf of the "his family name concerning the case of Sterling Biotech Limited and bank fraud". This effectively means that the Plaintiff is seeking reliefs on behalf of himself, his family, and Sterling Biotech Limited, even though no other family member or authorised representative of Sterling Biotech Limited is part of the Suit," Moneywise has said. The appeal contends that the Civil Judge's order providing an ex parte injunction effectively chokes any form of reporting, publication or criticism by Moneywise and other publications concerning the Sandesaras and Sterling Biotech bank fraud case.

**Unfavourable order not ground to transfer case: Delhi HC**

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

Unfavourable order by a judge cannot be a ground to seek transfer of a case on account of any bias, the Delhi High Court has held.

Justice Saurabh Banerjee said that in case of an unfavourable order, it is open to the litigant to take recourse to the options available in law.

The order was passed by Justice Banerjee on a petition by a woman who sought

transfer of her matrimonial case from one mahila court to another.

In an order passed on April 7, Justice Banerjee observed that the principal and district judge concerned rejected the petitioner's plea to transfer her case to another judge by passing a well-reasoned order.

The court noted that the principal judge's order held that the mere discharge of her husband and mother-in-law in the criminal case against them over alleged



**NIA court sentences three in  
terror attacks linked to Al-Qaeda**

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

Three men have been sentenced by a National Investigation Agency (NIA) court for involvement in an Al-Qaeda-linked terror conspiracy to carry out attacks in Uttar Pradesh, officials said on Tuesday.

The trio men have been identified as Museeruddin alias Raju and Minhaj Ahmad alias Minhaj of Lucknow, and Tawheed Ahmad Shah alias Sobu Shah, hailing from district Budgam of Jammu and Kashmir, they said.

The Lucknow special court on Monday pronounced varying jail terms, ranging from 5 years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) to life imprisonment, against the three accused, the officials said. The terror convicts have also been fined a sum of up to ₹20,000, they said.

Three other accused, namely Shakeel, Mohd Mustaqeem and Mohammad Moid (all residents of Lucknow), were convicted earlier in this case after they



had pleaded guilty under the Arms Act. NIA had filed charges against all the six convicted accused in the case through two chargesheets in 2022.

The case was originally registered by the Uttar Pradesh police following the arrest of Mushirudeen and Minhaj, both members of the banned Al-Qaeda terrorist organisation, by its Anti Terrorist Squad (ATS) in July 2021.

The duo was found involved in radicalisation and recruitment of vulnerable youth for raising Ansar Gajwatul Hind

(AGH) as a module of AQIS (Al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent) in Lucknow, a statement issued by the probe agency said.

The conspiracy was aimed at carrying out terrorist acts in various cities of UP, including the capital, ahead of the Independence Day celebrations in 2021, it said.

NIA, after taking over the case, found that Minhaj was radicalised by Tawheed and another accused, Adil Nabi Teli alias Musa.

Together, these three men had conspired to recruit

members for the banned AGH for committing terrorist acts, the statement said.

Investigations by the anti-terror agency further revealed that Museeruddin was also roped into the conspiracy by Minhaj, and had even taken 'Baiyat' (oath of allegiance) at the latter's behest, it said.

Subsequently, Museeruddin and Minhaj had procured arms, ammunition and explosive materials with the help of Shakeel, Mustaqeem and Moid as part of the terror conspiracy intended to wage war against the Government of India, the NIA said.

During the course of the investigation, Musa was found to be a declared terrorist affiliated with TRF, an extended outfit of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terror organisation, it said.

Investigations revealed that Musa had received funds from Minhaj through Tawheed.

Musa was killed in an encounter with security forces in March 2022 and NIA had filed an abated chargesheet against him in August 2022, the statement said.

**Tripura minister files defamation  
suit against Tipra Motha MLA**

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Agartala

Tripura Forest Minister Animesh Debbarma has filed a defamation suit against Tipra Motha Party MLA Ranjit Debbarma for allegedly making "false and derogatory" remarks against him, a senior lawyer said on Tuesday.

The petition was moved before the Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) court, West Tripura, the minister's counsel said. Both the minister and the legislator belong to the Tipra Motha Party.

In the petition, the forest minister claimed that Ranjit Debbarma, during the campaigns for the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) elections, had made "derogatory remarks" against him.

The party MLA alleged that Animesh Debbarma had purchased "two flats and a plot"



Tripura Forest Minister Animesh Debbarma

and "talks were going on to buy a flat in Delhi", the lawyer said.

"These claims are false," Animesh Debbarma's counsel Sankar Lodh said.

"The Tipra Motha Party's Ramchandraghat MLA (Ranjit Debbarma) also accused the minister of staying in forest bungalows to attend parties with a few women. This allegation is baseless," he said.

The defamation petition will be taken up for hearing in

the CJM court on April 30, Lodh said.

When contacted, Ranjit Debbarma claimed that he did not name any minister in his speeches during the election campaigns on March 29 and April 9, as mentioned in the petition.

"I have not mentioned any minister's name in my speeches. I will submit a statement clarifying my stand when the defamation notice is served to me," he said.

**SC to hear plea of Assam Government against  
anticipatory bail to Cong leader Pawan Khera today**

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court is scheduled to consider on Wednesday a plea of the Assam Government against the Telangana High Court order granting one-week transit anticipatory bail to Congress leader Pawan Khera in a case registered against him for levelling allegations against Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife.

On April 10, the High Court granted one-week transit anticipatory bail to Khera with certain conditions and gave him a week to file an application before the court concerned.

The State Government's plea was filed on Sunday through advocate Shuvodeep Roy.

A bench of Justices JK Maheshwari and AS Chandurkar will hear the matter on April 15.

The Congress leader had, on April 5, in a press conference alleged that the Assam CM's wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, has multiple passports and foreign property, which were not declared in the chief minister's election affidavit for the April 9 Assembly polls in that state. The Sarma had rejected the allegations as false and fabricated.

The case against Khera was registered at the Guwahati Crime Branch Police Station under several sections of



the BNS sections, including 175 (false statement in connection with an election), 35 (Right of private defence of the body and of property) and 318 (cheating).

"Without expressing any opinion on the merits of the case, this court is of the view that the petitioner has made out a case for the grant of limited transit anticipatory bail, as his apprehension of arrest appears to be reasonable and supported by material on record," the High Court had said in its order.

The conditions were that the petitioner shall be released on bail in the event of arrest on his executing a personal bond for ₹one lakh with two sureties for the like

sum each, cooperate with the investigation and make himself available for interrogation as and when required by the Investigating Officer and that he shall not leave the country without prior permission of the competent Court.

The conditions further include that the petitioner shall, within the stipulated period, approach the competent jurisdictional court in Assam and seek appropriate relief and he, being a public figure, shall exercise restraint in making any further public statements in relation to the subject matter of the present case, which may prejudice the investigation, the order said.

**SC to hear plea on guidelines  
for welfare insurance schemes**

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court has sought responses from the Centre and the Life Insurance Corporation of India on a plea seeking a direction to the LIC to frame and implement disability-sensitive guidelines for welfare insurance schemes.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta agreed to hear the plea which sought a direction to the Centre to exercise policy oversight to ensure that welfare insurance schemes for persons with disabilities are implemented in conformity with the guarantees under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution.

While Article 14 deals with equality before law, Article 21 pertains to protec-



tion of life and personal liberty.

"Issue notice, returnable within four weeks," the bench said in its April 13 order.

The petition has sought a direction to the LIC to frame and implement disability-sensitive guidelines for welfare insurance schemes, including 'Jeevan Aadhar' policy. The LIC's 'Jeevan Aadhar' policy may be offered to an individual

who has a handicapped dependant satisfying conditions as specified in Section 80DDA of the Income Tax Act, 1961. It provides life insurance cover throughout lifetime of the purchaser.

Section 80DDA of the Income Tax Act pertains to deduction in respect of deposit made for maintenance of handicapped dependant.

The plea has sought a direction that claims under such welfare insurance schemes involving beneficiaries with intellectual, mental and congenital disabilities resulting in inability to independently understand, communicate or assert contractual and legal rights, be decided on a case-by-case basis through reasoned, humane and non-mechanical decision-making processes.

**Delhi court convicts  
man for rape on  
pretext of marriage**

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

A Delhi court has convicted a man for repeatedly raping a woman after luring her into a relationship with the false assurance of marriage, saying that the assurance was "false" and driven by "clandestine motives to satisfy his lust".

Additional Sessions Judge Kapil Kumar was hearing a case against Mohit Rajpal, who was accused of having physical relations with a

377 (unnatural offences), 313 (carrying miscarriage without consent) and 506 (criminal intimidation).

The court noted that the promise was dishonest from the outset and was used as a tool to obtain her consent.

"The false promise to marriage extended by the accused was the sole reason for the prosecutrix to consent to repeated physical relations with the accused," the judge said.

The survivor had alleged



woman on the pretext of marriage and said that such consent cannot be considered legally valid.

In an order dated April 9, the court said, "It is proved that the promise of marriage extended by the accused to prosecutrix was a false promise to marriage and made with clandestine motives to satisfy his lust without having any intention to honour the same since inception".

According to the prosecution, the accused established physical relations with the woman from 2016 to 2018 by falsely assuring her of marriage. A case was registered against the accused under IPC Sections 376(2) (aggravated rape),

that the accused also subjected her to forced sexual acts, coerced her into terminating a pregnancy, and threatened her with dire consequences if she took legal action.

"The consent of prosecutrix for physical relations proved not to be free consent, being vitiated for the misconception of fact in her mind consequent to false promise to marriage extended to her by accused," the court said.

The court reiterated the settled legal position that a conviction in sexual offence cases can be based solely on the testimony of the prosecutrix if it is found to be credible and trustworthy.



## Editor's TAKE

### Jaaiye aap kahaan jaayenge...

With Asha Bhosle's passing, an era of Indian music draws to a close. She leaves behind a voice that will echo through generations

Asha Bhosle, the playback singer with a gifted voice, is no more. Yet her voice would always be there to evoke nostalgia of yesteryears when the music was largely instrument-driven and auto-tune wasn't heard of. Though her singing career spans eight decades but she adjusted and adapted to changing times beautifully and sang for several generations. She had a voice that teases, consoles, and soars – sometimes all within a single song. With her demise at 92, Indian music does not merely lose a singing legend; it loses the grainy innocence of early cinema.

She began her career in 1943, as a teenager under the shadow of her sister Lata Mangeshkar, but soon carved a place for herself with patience and sheer hard work and hours of practice. It was the time when compensation for playback singers was a pittance. In those early years of Indian cinema, royalties were a distant dream. To sing was to survive. And yet, Bhosle endured as a restless artist who refused to be boxed in. Bollywood has a bad habit of typecasting – be it an actor or a singer – they don't take chances, and very rarely do they allow themselves to break free of the mould that they define a singer or an actor with. The industry tried to cast her as the voice of mischief and dance numbers. Songs like *Piya Tu Ab To Aaja* became Asha's signature. But she resisted confinement with quiet defiance. She showed the range she had. She sang ghazals like *Dil Cheez Kya Hai*, classical songs, pop, folk, and more. She did not just adapt to change – she became a vehicle for change. Her collaborations with composers across decades ensured she remained relevant.

Her journey is the journey of Indian music itself. Bollywood has changed, from a time when playback singers barely survived to the present times when they are handsomely rewarded through royalties, global tours, streaming revenues and TV shows. Asha lived it all. Her legacy is not just artistic but financial. Reports estimate a net worth of ₹200-250 crore, with properties worth nearly ₹100 crore and an international restaurant chain, Asha's, spanning cities from Dubai to the United Kingdom, all created by a young girl, unpaid for her voice to a global brand built on it. But to reduce her life to commercial success would be doing an injustice to her. For Asha, music was breath. Even at 90, she stood on stage for hours, performing with a vitality that defied age and expectation. She sang across generations. When she performed contemporary tracks late in life, it was not reinvention; it was affirmation that she had always belonged to every era. Her life journey is a lesson for the upcoming artists. Today's playback singers inherit an industry far more equitable, visible, and lucrative. Yet it is built on the uncredited labour, the resilience, and the quiet battles of artistes like Bhosle, who sang through personal hardship, professional typecasting, and systemic neglect. What she leaves behind is not just a catalogue of thousands of songs but a blueprint of artistic courage—the refusal to be defined by others, the instinct to evolve, and prove herself. Asha Bhosle ensured that even in silence, her voice will echo through every era that follows.

## The book that wasn't: Silence, strategy, & security

The controversy surrounding former Army Chief M M Naravane's *Four Stars of Destiny* has reopened troubling questions about transparency, civil-military trust, and the limits of democratic debate



ASHOK K MEHTA

It is necessary to revive the vital issue of national security suppressed, presumably at the behest of the government, by former COAS Gen M M Naravane's declaration on February 10, that his controversial book *Four Stars of Destiny* has not been published. For a full one week, the unpublished book paralysed Parliament and gave it publicity of high order. The book contains an oral operational directive presumably from PM Narendra Modi to Naravane at the height of the India-China crisis on Kailash Ridge on August 31, 2020 — "jo uchit samjho woh karo" (JUSWK). The situation obtaining at the time is well known and does not require recall. In his book Naravane wrote: "I was handed a hot potato" adding something few have recounted earlier, that he was told by the highest authority: "I should not be the first to open fire". This was in accordance with prevailing protocols promulgated in 1993-96 on "no use of firearms". JUSWK was clearly a case of passing the buck.

On December 15, 2023, Naravane issued a tweet, "Hello friends, my book is available...follow this link". The book was to hit the stands in January 2024. On 10 February 2026, he said (or was forced to say): "My book has not been published", which terminated several adjournment motions in the Lok Sabha. The publisher, Penguin Random House, repeated the claim on the same day. Both author and publisher were muzzled. Earlier in October 2025, at a literary festival in Kasauli, Naravane said: "The book is under review. The publisher has to get clearance; now it is between the publisher and the government". In December 2023, the publisher provided extracts from the book to PTL. Two chapters, one on the events of 31 August 2020 - Operation Snow Leopard - and the other on Agnipath scheme, showed up the government in a poor light, reflecting the absence of civil-military coordination at the highest level.

Naravane has praised the government in his book, though he has much to answer for: allowing the Chinese PLA to commit aggression across a 2000km frontage in East Ladakh and occupying 1500 km of Indian Territory, this after claiming that all was normal on the LAC. But that is a separate topic as the government has papered over Chinese aggression and settled for disengagement without de-escalation and de-militarisation. Worse, it has lost 26 of 65 patrolling points, accepted buffer zones (not established earlier at Barahoti or Sumdorongchu), lost grazing grounds, but still normalised relations on 1 April 2025 by cutting



— SMESH

THE GOVERNMENT SUCCEEDED IN PREVENTING ANY DEBATE ABOUT THE GALWAN EPISODE ALSO SAYING ANY DEBATE ON NATIONAL SECURITY WILL UNDERMINE MORALE OF SOLDIERS

The writer, a retired Major General, served as Commander, IPKF (South), Sri Lanka, and was a founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, now the Integrated Defence Staff

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a cake on the 75th anniversary of India-China relations. The bottom line of the Army Chiefs since the aggression has been 'status quo ante April 2020'.

Ashley Tellis of Carnegie Endowment had said: "India has still not received from China any explanation for what it did in East Ladakh; that normalisation had begun before de-escalation". NSA Shiv Shankar Menon had noted: "we know what happened in Fingers Area, but nothing about Kailash Heights". Extracts from Naravane's unpublished book throw some light without explaining the cover-up for the faux pas in agreeing to withdraw from Kailash Heights, which was India's Trump card. The other revelation in the extracts is the 'bombshell' of Agniveer which Naravane disparages in detail. Former IAF and Navy Chiefs have made extremely negative comments about the scheme. It has damaged long-term India-Nepal relations as Nepal has not accepted the revised terms of engagement, and recruitment remains suspended since 2020 following COVID. A strategic bond will soon be lost.

It is these two issues — Chinese aggression of 2020 and Agniveer — which were intended to be blocked from discussion in Parliament. The government succeeded in preventing any debate about the Galwan episode also saying any debate on national security will undermine the morale of soldiers.

This method has been patented to block any discussion on inconvenient topics involving national security. Instead, the government follows a simple procedure of making statements in Parliament on heroic and swift counter-deployment of 50,000 soldiers in response to Chinese aggression. In no other democracy is debate on national security disallowed in Parliament. But enough is out there in the public domain about China's inscrutable behaviour in 2020 and India's reactionary response.

When asked by ANI, Jaishankar said: "How can I fight China? It has a big (five times)

economy". Unfortunately the Iron Curtain has concealed the excellent redeeming manoeuvre during Operations Snow Leopard and Chengiz on the North and South Banks of Pangong Tso Lake, Rajnath Singh, on 10 February 2021 merely informing Parliament that withdrawal from these areas had been done without mentioning the strategic loss of Kailash Heights. But he did add the usual: "not an inch of territory was lost". The Naravane story has been carried faithfully by Caravan magazine and Wire portal

Not only was an Army Chief silenced about his unpublished book, but also the publishers. Both dutifully complied in saying that the book

Four Stars of Destiny had not been published. Former Army Chief, Gen NC Vij's book *Alone In The Ring-Decision Making in Critical Times* was delayed by several months from release,

but was freed later after vetting. The government has systematically persuaded mainline TV and print media not to publish matters that will show government infirmities, but also not to publish the views of the opposition parties. This is evident from watching TV and reading newspapers. Inconvenient journalists have been quietly eased out. As a thoroughly apolitical veteran, I would like to see free debate and discussion flourish in the largest and most populous democracy. The military is not above criticism. The government's new rules on retired public servants writing will inhibit them from recounting their instructive experiences during government service.

On April 3, The Public India Digital Media held a function to recognise journalists who are discovering and inventing ways and means to bypass government fiat on control of news and limit adversarial content. Naravane knew that his book would not fly; so he wrote the novel *The Cantonment Conspiracy* in 2024 when he triumphantly announced, not without sarcasm, "Now I am a published author" The message is out even if the author has been rendered hors de combat.

The Pioneer SINCE 1865

## PICTALK



A man with a child takes a dip in the holy sarovar at Golden Temple on the occasion of Baisakhi, in Amritsar

PHOTO: PTI

## When history returns in the same tone



SANJAY CHANDRA

### 2ND OPINION

Our holiday in Poland was filled with laughter and companionship. Yet, interspersed were moments that were far more sombre.

We walked through the Jewish quarters and the remnants of the ghettos in Warsaw. These were not just places on an itinerary; they were spaces that demanded silence, reflection. At the start of a walking tour in Warsaw, our guide made a statement. The events, she said, could not possibly be condensed into two and a half hours. It was easy to reduce history to simple binaries—to label all Germans as perpetrators, or to question why Polish citizens did not stand up for their Jewish neighbours.

Then she asked us to pause and imagine a world where offering shelter to a persecuted individual could invite death—not only for oneself, but for one's entire family.

Imagine the weight of that choice, and in that moment history moved away from abstraction and became something far more human, and far more complex.

At the end of the walk, she left us with another thought that was even more unsettling. If one were to read the speeches of Hitler and his followers, and then listen to certain global leaders and their supporters today, one might find an uncomfortable familiarity in that language. It is not identical, but it echoes, and that echo is both uncanny and deeply disturbing.

The visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau from Krakow was heavier still, and there are no words that can fully capture what one feels walking through those grounds. The scale of suffering defies comprehension—men, women, children, no distinction, no mercy. The structures remain, but what lingers is not just history; it is the evidence of what human beings are capable of doing to one another.

Our young guide spoke with a voice that often faltered under the weight of what she was recounting. At one point, she said something that cut through all detail and stayed as a simple, stark truth: that much of what happened there was rooted in hatred-of one race against another.

And then came the question, unspoken but unavoidable: if we cannot find it within ourselves to let go of our prejudices, then who are we? It is perhaps this question

that travels with us long after such visits end, especially when one reflects that these events unfolded less than a century ago. Not in some distant, unrecognisable past, but within a timeline that still touches our present. One would have hoped that such history would have firmly anchored us in a commitment to a more humane future, that it would have sharpened our ability to recognise the early signs of division and hatred.

And yet, as one listens more closely to the world around us, there are moments when the language begins to sound familiar again. History does not always repeat itself in the same form, but it often returns in the same tone. And perhaps what matters most is not that we remember what happened, but that we recognise when it begins to happen again. Remembrance is not enough. It must be accompanied by vigilance—an awareness of the words we use, the silences we accept, and the prejudices we allow to persist within us.

History may belong to the past, but its warnings are always addressed to the present. And if there is to be hope for the future, it will lie not in what we have seen, but in what we choose to refuse, resist, and rise above.

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The writer is founder of Kala - Crazy About Literature And Arts, is an author, speaker, coach, arbitrator, and strategy consultant

## DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

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## TCS BOWS TO PRESSURE, ACKNOWLEDGES SEXUAL HARASSMENT CASE ON ITS PREMISES

Thanks to the media pressure, the largest IT company in India, TCS has been forced to acknowledge the sexual and religious harassment case at their Nashik BPO office. It has sent deep shockwaves across the corporate corridors of India. Allegations like outraging modesty, establishing physical relationship, lewd advances, stalking and coercion for religious conversion are not the allegations we associate with a firm like TCS, a known Tata brand. TCS claimed that it took swift action after the complaints but the fact is that it has allegedly been going on for the last four years tells a different story. Such incidents highlight serious gaps in implementation of existing safeguards meant to protect employees, especially women. Although India has a robust legal framework in the form of the

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, its effectiveness depends largely on sincere enforcement by organizations. Companies must ensure that Internal Complaints Committees function independently, transparently, and without bias. In this case what was the HR head doing, what SOPs were in place for HR management, why wasn't there any escalation system for POSH. The investigation must be thorough, transparent and unbiased. To prevent such cases, corporates should conduct regular awareness programs, encourage employees to report misconduct without fear, and establish strict accountability for those who violate ethical standards. Anonymous reporting mechanisms can strengthen trust in the system.

BAL GOVIND | NOIDA

Please send your letter to the info@dailypioneer.com. In not more than 250 words. We appreciate your feedback.

## A new sacrilege law in Punjab

Punjab's proposed sacrilege law seeks to penalise acts that disrespect revered scriptures such as the Guru Granth Sahib, Quran, Bible, and Bhagavad Gita. It covers damage, defacement, or insults expressed through words, gestures, actions, or digital platforms, and extends punishment to attempts or abetment.

With stringent penalties, including life imprisonment, concerns arise over vague definitions that could lead to misuse or unintentionally restrict free expression.

The law aims to treat all major religions equally, ensuring balance and non-discrimination. However, it is not yet in force and will become operative only after gubernatorial assent and official notification.

A balanced approach appears prudent. While past incidents have caused genuine public distress, particularly regarding the Guru Granth Sahib, a hastily framed law may create more challenges. Moreover, this will help maintain the law and order and curb chances of any misunderstanding amongst communities.

Refining definitions, narrowing scope, and adding safeguards against misuse would help uphold both communal harmony and constitutional freedoms.

RS NARULA | PATIALA

## Violent worker's protest in NOIDA

There is criticism against the Centre a day after violent workers' protests in Noida, and unrest as the "final cry" of labourers struggling under rising costs and stagnant wages.

The scenes on the streets reflected deep economic distress. What unfolded on the streets of Noida was the final cry of this nation's workers a voice that went unheard at every turn, a voice weary from ceaseless pleading. The financial strain faced by daily-wage earners, who earn around ₹12,000 a month while paying ₹4,000 – ₹7,000 in rent. Before their wages can catch up, unbridled inflation strangles life, plunging them into debt this is the stark reality.

The rising living costs and have forced them to struggle for survival. The burden of America's tariff wars, global inflation, and fractured supply chains has fallen upon daily-wage labourer. The protests by factory workers demanding higher wages and better conditions turned violent across several industrial hubs in Noida.

Vehicles were torched, public property vandalized and stone-pelting reported, disrupting traffic and leaving thousands stranded on key routes linking Delhi. With this all is not well in Noida.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

## Vehicle laws must be strictly implemented

Despite unambiguous rules and regulations it is highly deplorable that many vehicles, including cars, continue to use tinted glasses beyond the permissible limits and the law enforcers are looking the other way. Tinted sunglasses, to cut off the light entering the interiors of cars, was a fashion until a Supreme Court judgment of 2012 banned the use of "black films" in windshields and window glasses. Rule 100 of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 clearly states that factory fitted glasses should allow 70 percent visibility or visual light transmission (VLT) for front and rear windshields and 50 percent for the side windows. However, all aftermarket black films are banned in compliance with the court order. These tinted glasses, popularly referred to as "sunglasses of the windows", fell into disrepute after a few unscrupulous elements used them for nefarious activities.

Besides, law enforcers could not clearly decipher whether or not drivers followed rules like wearing seat belts due to reduced visibility. Since laws are regularly flouted, a spurt in crimes, especially against women in moving cars, are blamed on tinted glasses. When the intention is evil, can the action be virtuous? Also, the present fine for offenders is too meagre. Repeat offenders' licences should be confiscated.

GANAPATHI BHAT | AKOLA



# BR Ambedkar: His life, legacy and beyond

BR Ambedkar gave India its Constitution and a vision of equality and justice. He rose from deep social discrimination to become one of the greatest thinkers of modern India. His life reminds us that democracy must be built on dignity and equal rights

**FIRST Column**



**K P TENNETI**

India is a nation built on the shoulders of extraordinary individuals, men and women who dared to dream of equality, justice and dignity for all. Among those towering figures, one stands apart - not merely as a statesman, jurist or economist, but at the intersection of law, public morality and social justice. His name: BR Ambedkar. As we commemorate him today, I would like to take a moment not only to delve into the life of an individual who transcended the brutal circumstances of birth to become one of the finest legal and intellectual minds of the twentieth century, the principal architect of the Constitution of the Republic of India, but also to shed light on the post-independence political marginalisation and, ultimately, the slow but deliberate reduction of his legacy.

Our story begins 135 years ago on this day, 14 April. The year was 1891, and in a small town called Mhow (now BR Ambedkar Nagar in modern-day Madhya Pradesh), a baby was born to the family of Ramji Maloji Sakpal and Bhimabai, their 14th child. The family belonged to the Mahar caste, classified as 'untouchable', thereby subjected to one of the most systematic and dehumanising forms of social discrimination the world has ever known.

From a very young age, Ambedkar faced harsh social exclusion. In school, he was made to sit separately. He was not allowed to touch water vessels. If he needed water, someone from a higher caste had to pour it for him, if they agreed at all. Many times, he simply went without water. These experiences were not isolated incidents. They reflected a deeply unjust social system that denied basic dignity to entire communities.

Despite these hardships, BR Ambedkar showed exceptional intelligence and determination. A teacher gave him the surname "Ambedkar", replacing his original surname. While this small gesture became part of a much larger journey, it lit a fire of determination and zeal in a child who was denied basic rights, pushing him to become one of the most educated and influential minds of his time.

In 1907, a young Ambedkar passed his Matriculation examination from Bombay University with outstanding results. He subsequently joined Elphinstone College in Mumbai in 1908, a prestigious institution that



**FOR AMBEDKAR, FREEDOM WITHOUT EQUALITY AND EQUALITY WITHOUT FREEDOM COULD LEAD TO ABSOLUTE DICTATORSHIP. WE SEE HIS EFFORTS TO TACKLE THIS IN ONE OF HIS MOST MONUMENTAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO A NEWLY INDEPENDENT INDIA, THE HEART AND SOUL OF OUR DEMOCRACY, THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION**

The writer is a Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), Panel Speaker, and retired DGP

dailypioneer  
@ennetiKrshnaMP  
The Pioneer

very few Dalits of that era could even aspire to enter. In 1912, he graduated in Political Science and Economics from Bombay University.

In 1913, following his father's death, Ambedkar departed for the United States to study at Columbia University in New York, where he was awarded a PhD for his thesis 'The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India'. His very first published article, 'Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development', announced to the world the arrival of a scholar of the first rank.

He returned to India briefly and then travelled to England, where he studied at the London School of Economics and qualified at Gray's Inn to be called to the Bar. During his time in London from 1920 to 1923, he completed another landmark thesis titled 'The Problem of the Rupee', for which the University of London awarded him the degree of DSc. The multitude of recognition from prestigious institutions worldwide confirmed his standing as one of the most academically accomplished men of the twentieth century. However, for all practical purposes in his own country, he was still seen as an untouchable, with discrimination and prejudice making it very difficult for Ambedkar to find acceptance among the elite of India at that time. Yet, he remained firm in his resolve to use education as a tool for social change.

After returning to India, Ambedkar dedicated himself to the upliftment of the oppressed. In 1920, he started the newspaper Mooknayak (Leader of the Silent) to raise awareness among Dalits. His activism was practical and structured. He believed in creating institutions and movements to bring change. In 1923, he founded the Bahishkrit

Hitkarini Sabha to promote education and improve the economic condition of the downtrodden. In 1927, he led the Mahad Satyagraha at the Chowdar Tank, asserting the right of Dalits to access public water. This was a major moment in the fight against caste discrimination.

In 1930, he launched the Temple Entry Movement at the Kalam Temple in Nashik, demanding equal religious rights.

A major turning point came in 1932 with the debate on separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. The British Communal Award granted this provision, which Ambedkar supported. However, Mahatma Gandhi opposed it and began a fast unto death. Under immense pressure, Ambedkar signed the Poona Pact, replacing separate electorates with reserved seats.

This was the start of many differences between Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi, with the fundamental difference being that while Mahatma Gandhi referred to untouchables as 'Harijans' and sought reform from within Hinduism, Ambedkar, who had experienced untouchability in the flesh, believed that the caste system was fundamentally incompatible with human equality and dignity and needed to be abolished entirely.

His 1936 work, Annihilation of Caste, strongly criticised the caste system. However, the Congress party at that time was not aligned with this and felt that Ambedkar was going against the work of Mahatma Gandhi. This difference is seen aptly in the 1945 writing of Ambedkar titled What Congress and Gandhi Have Done

to the Untouchables, a damning account of how the Congress party had repeatedly failed the Depressed Classes, prioritising the interests of the upper-caste Hindu majority over the rights of those at the bottom of the social order.

Ambedkar's contribution to India's freedom struggle is sometimes misunderstood. It is rather unfortunate that this misunderstanding has been encouraged, deliberately or otherwise, by those who preferred to see him as a sectional leader rather than a national one. The truth is more complex, and considerably more honourable.

Ambedkar's vision of freedom was categorically different from that which dominated the Congress-led national movement. For him, freedom without equality was hollow. He wrote and argued repeatedly that the independence of India from British rule, while necessary, would mean little to millions of Dalits if the new rulers simply replicated the social hierarchies and injustices of the old order. For Ambedkar, freedom without equality and equality without freedom could lead to absolute dictatorship.

We see his efforts to tackle this in one of his most monumental contributions to a newly independent India, the heart and soul of our democracy, the Indian Constitution.

Within weeks of our country gaining independence, on 29 August 1947, the Constituent Assembly established a Drafting Committee to prepare a Constitution for the new republic and elected Ambedkar as its Chairman. The task was of an almost impossible magnitude. The Constituent Assembly 'moved, discussed and disposed of as many as 2,473 amendments' during its deliberations. Rajendra Prasad, Chairman of the Constituent Assembly, acknowledged the zeal and devotion of the members of the Drafting Committee and especially its

Chairman, Ambedkar, in delivering our nation a Constitution despite deteriorating health and in conditions of extraordinary difficulty. Ambedkar ensured that our Constitution included robust protections for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes. He insisted on the separation of powers, an independent judiciary, and the fundamental rights of every citizen regardless of caste, creed, sex or religion. He advocated democracy in every field: social, economic and political. For him, social justice meant maximum happiness for a maximum number of people.

The tragedy of Ambedkar's post-independence years is inseparable from the tragedy of the Congress government's failure to

honour one of its own greatest servants. Having used his towering intellect and prodigious labour to draft the Constitution, Ambedkar was subsequently marginalised, humiliated and politically destroyed by the very party whose government he had served. When differences emerged between him and the ruling government of Jawaharlal Nehru, he chose to resign from the government rather than remain part of what he did not believe was making the necessary efforts to uplift the Dalits, oppressed and marginalised classes.

This apparent slight was not forgiven by the Congress, which made sure to undertake measures in the 1952 elections to effectively torpedo Ambedkar's political career. As the first independent elections in India approached, Ambedkar contested from the Bombay North Central constituency as the candidate of his Scheduled Castes Federation. Not only did the Congress field a former assistant of Ambedkar against him, they decided to work with the other major party in the region to effectively deny one of our greatest minds the opportunity to stand in the Lok Sabha and raise the issues of those he fought his entire lifetime for.

The toll of elections, politics and long health issues eventually took its toll, and Ambedkar died in 1956. Rather than celebrate his legacy, his name remained in practical political isolation. It took until 1990, close to thirty-four years after his death, and forty-three years after independence for the Indian State to formally confer the Bharat Ratna upon BR Ambedkar. It was the cabinet of the seventh Prime Minister, V. P. Singh, that took that step. The Congress governments that preceded him had not seen fit to extend this honour to the man who had given India its Constitution, rather choosing to confer it upon themselves.

BR Ambedkar gave India its Constitution and a vision of equality and justice. He rose from deep social discrimination to become one of the greatest thinkers of modern India. His life reminds us that democracy must be built on dignity and equal rights.

He was not only a leader of the oppressed but a nation-builder of the highest order. His ideas remain central to India's progress. His iconic call to "Educate, Agitate, Organise" continues to guide generations not just in India but across the world at large.

To honour Ambedkar is to uphold constitutional values and fight injustice. His legacy is not just history; it is a collective responsibility that must continue to be passed down to generations so that they are made aware of the man who gave his today for our tomorrow and forever.

## Pakistan's paradox: Peace abroad, repression at home



**NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA**

Who decides which lives are expendable in the name of national interest? Whose blood allegedly writes the records of peace, and whose screams are buried beneath diplomatic statements? Can a state preach mediation and broker ceasefires while reportedly waging covert operations against its own citizens and neighbours? Declaring a commitment to peace may appear noble, yet history repeatedly shows human civilisation advancing through conflict, with moral compromise left in its wake.

Karbala, the city of Shia martyrdom, embodies this collision of principle and brutality. Pilgrims walk barefoot to mourn Imam Hussain, grandson of Prophet Muhammad, betrayed and slain centuries ago. Centuries later, in the 1980s, the massacre of Iranian soldiers during the Iran-Iraq War echoed this horror. Saddam Hussein, reportedly armed by Western powers and regional allies, deployed chemical weapons with devastating efficiency.

Entire units, many unarmed, were allegedly killed in gas attacks, their bodies left to rot in trenches and deserts. One Iranian journalist recounted: "Soldiers were helpless, bleeding from the nose; no bullets fired. Hundreds of thousands died." The slaughter reportedly proceeded with almost no international scrutiny, as geopolitical expediency allegedly outweighed moral responsibility. Saddam, once a darling of the West, became a pariah, yet the deaths of victims were never fully accounted for. Pakistan occupied a shadowed role. While Western powers reportedly provided arms and intelligence to Iraq, Pakistan allegedly supplied weapons to Iran, including systems derived from Chinese and US inventories. Officially, Islamabad maintained diplomatic ties with post-revolution Tehran, yet clandestine coordination allegedly occurred through shared strategic interests, particularly in Afghanistan against the USSR. Pakistani troops were reportedly sent to Saudi Arabia, Iraq's backer, ostensibly for protection. The nation acted both as broker and executor, instrumentalised to serve external powers while domestic development lagged.

This duality is evident domestically. In Balochistan, decades of insurgency have reportedly been met with enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and indiscriminate military campaigns. Entire communities have allegedly been displaced; civilians, often unarmed, are targeted under the guise of counter-terrorism.

Human rights organisations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, report that most victims are ordinary citizens. Yet the state reportedly justifies these actions in the language of national security, cloaking systematic repression in the rhetoric of patriotism.

Afghanistan presents a similar pattern. On the same day Pakistan drafted the peace proposal known as the "Islamabad Accord" to halt hostilities in the Iran conflict, cross-border shelling in Afghanistan's Ghost, Paktia, and Paktika provinces has allegedly forced families into makeshift shelters and caves, displacing tens of thousands of civilians amid ongoing clashes. Children reportedly freeze on stone floors; mothers recount having "nowhere to go" after villages are destroyed. Taliban authorities claim that Pakistani mortar, missile, and drone strikes have killed civilians, including children, under the pretext of targeting militants. This incident followed on 16 March 2026, when Pakistani airstrikes reportedly struck the Omid drug rehabilitation centre in Kabul, Afghanistan, killing hundreds and causing severe casualties. Reports indicate massive casualties, with Afghan officials stating that over 400 people were killed, while the UN reported at least 143 initial deaths, most of them children. Yet internationally, Islamabad presents itself as a stabilising actor, the guardian of peace. Civilians appear sacrificed for strategic depth, while the state accrues legitimacy abroad.

Pakistan's domestic politics reinforce this paradox. Opposition leaders, notably Imran Khan, have faced imprisonment. An interview published in December 2025 in The Times UK claims: "Locked up for over 28 months in solitary confinement in what his sons call a 'death cell' in Adiala jail, Khan was allowed no visitors for the whole of November." The 73-year-old former cricket captain was reportedly "kept in a 6ft by 8ft cell, usually reserved for death row, allowed no reading material apart from the Quran, and given brown water to drink and wash with." Previous leaders, including Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto, suffered exile or judicial disqualification. The military, constitutionally a guardian of the state, reportedly functions as the ultimate arbiter of political survival. Democracy is performative; institutions operate within the military-civilian framework. Media and civil society reportedly face pressure, dissent is criminalised, and political contestation is conditional on compliance with strategic imperatives.

The 2024 Iran-Pakistan incident illustrates this duality internationally. Iranian missile strikes in Balochistan, targeting Jaish ul-Adl militants, were condemned by Islamabad as violations of sovereignty. Pakistan retaliated with strikes inside Iran. By April 2026, reports claimed Pakistan helped broker a ceasefire between Iran and the United States. Here, diplomacy and coercion

coexist; aggression allegedly balances negotiation, violence with dialogue. Pakistan projects indispensability internationally while tolerating or perpetrating violence domestically. Historical parallels reinforce the pattern. In 1971, East Pakistan was violently suppressed under General Yahya Khan, with hundreds of thousands allegedly killed and millions displaced. The United States reportedly tolerated the massacre to protect strategic interests. During the Cold War, Pakistan acted as a conduit for US- and Saudi-backed operations in Afghanistan, training and arming mujahideen while its own civilian infrastructure allegedly languished. Weapons were supplied to Iran while clandestine coordination with Iraq reportedly continued. Human development, accountability, and institutional integrity were reportedly subordinated to strategic utility.

The Shia population along Pakistan's Iran border further demonstrates the stakes. Millions live in a region critical to regional balance yet often neglected in civic protection. They exist simultaneously as citizens and as instruments in a broader geopolitical calculus, exposed to cross-border violence, insurgency, and state neglect. The military's prioritisation of strategic leverage allegedly over civic welfare renders these communities vulnerable, even as Pakistan cultivates an image of mediation abroad.

Decades reveal a perfected dual strategy: domestically, repression; regionally, projection; internationally, negotiation. Civilian deaths, enforced disappearances, and political imprisonments coexist with diplomatic success. The military-civilian complex sustains relevance by appearing indispensable while tolerating internal oppression.

In Afghanistan, civilians recount fleeing shelling and living in caves with little food, water, or medicine-realities absent from narratives of mediation. A similar pattern persists in Balochistan: civilians displaced, insurgencies crushed, the state praised abroad.

Nothing captures this duality more starkly than global tolerance for strategy over human life-from Kissinger's secret diplomacy to the suffering of East Pakistan. Pakistan allegedly operates as facilitator abroad and executor at home, where influence is secured at the cost of its own citizens. Peace is brokered abroad; war executed at home.

Negotiations are public; killings clandestine. Citizens are displaced, silenced, expendable. Pakistan's double-edged strategy is structural and persistent. Advocating peace internationally while masking domestic repression may be nothing more than a mirage.

The writer is a columnist based in Colombo

dailypioneer  
@ilangamuwa1  
nilanthailangamuwa

## Electrifying growth in the capital



**KUSHAN MITRA**

This past Saturday, as one state, Karnataka, announced that it was effectively withdrawing incentives for electric vehicles, particularly four-wheelers, the government of Delhi announced an extremely generous policy offering subsidies and benefits to buyers of electric vehicles. Such demand-side subsidies, particularly for two- and three-wheelers, as well as benefits on road tax and registration for four-wheelers below thirty lakh, if approved, are being seen as a positive step.

Or is it? I would like to raise a couple of points here. Demand-side subsidies for electric vehicles, when the industry was nascent, were important to get sales moving along. Whether through FAME or PM-eDRIVE, these subsidies have had a huge impact.

In the three-wheeler space (non e-rickshaw), data released by the Federation of Automotive Dealer Associations, itself collated from the VAHAN portal of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), shows that over 60 per cent of three-wheelers sold across India last year were electric. Clearly, while subsidies helped, passenger and cargo operators saw the significant operating benefits of electric vehicles.

Running any electric vehicle is much cheaper than running an internal combustion engine, by a factor of five to ten times. When costs matter, particularly for commercial operators, this makes a significant difference to livelihoods.

There is no doubt that the central and state governments want to reduce India's dependency on oil and gas imports. This has become an even more vital issue today with the ongoing crisis in West Asia. Thankfully, major progress has been made in improving India's electricity grid and supply infrastructure, but challenges remain in EV adoption across the board, and instead of simple demand-side subsidies, including the lower rate of GST for EVs, these issues must be addressed more urgently through supply-side interventions.

While the Performance Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme has had some success in encouraging manufacturing, the main problem remains charging. This is particularly acute for passenger vehicles. An urban commuter today in any major city should ideally consider an electric vehicle but faces significant issues with charging - not just due to a lack of commercial charging infrastructure, but mainly at home. As Indians increasingly live in apart-



ments, many such societies have placed unreasonable roadblocks in installing chargers, and many who wish to buy an EV face hurdles in installing either personal or even community chargers. This issue needs to be addressed if electric vehicle adoption is to reach 10-15 per cent of all vehicles sold.

One interesting aspect of the new Delhi EV policy is the 50 per cent reduction in road tax for strong hybrid vehicles. Some have criticised this as an unnecessary incentive, but sales of hybrids are increasing across the world, including in China, where EV subsidies have been reduced. This is particularly interesting this year, as several manufacturers have announced that they will be launching new hybrid models in the market.

The promotion of electric vehicles is admirable by the Delhi government, as there is no doubt that vehicular pollution is a problem in the metropolis. However, several issues still need to be resolved, and these will require hard work rather than simply providing subsidies.

As an automotive evaluator, I believe electric vehicles have come a long way in the past decade. Electric vehicles are now enjoyable and reliable to drive, and range is largely not an issue. Sure, an EV may not fulfil every single niche in the market, which is why hybrids are also important.

While subsidies may continue for a few more years, I believe it is time that electric vehicles - whether scooters, three-wheelers, or passenger vehicles-stand on their own merit. One does not want a situation where EV sales collapse once subsidies are withdrawn. That is why building robust infrastructure and encouraging more charging in residential areas, as well as battery-swapping stations, is crucial and should be the main focus of state governments.

The writer is Director and the Printer & Publisher of The Pioneer

kushanmitra  
@kushanmitra  
kushanmitra



As the global finance-related officials meet this week for the spring meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), the focus will be the war, and its economic consequences. The arguments, debates, and discussions will revolve around global growth, inflation, interest rates, shortages, disruptions, and currencies. Yet, there are forces, both internal and external, which wish the two main agencies to talk about other issues that are as important, and more crucial for the long term. The war will get over within weeks, a month, or months, and the economies will get back to normalcy within months, a year, or a couple of years. Yet, as the World Bank president, Ajay Banga, put it, jobs will possibly be the most critical issue over the next 10-15 years. Activist agencies like Oxfam, which recently released a report on IMF's tax advisories to nations, feel that inequality is what will define the world over the next decade or two, and will make or break it.

Banga estimates that 1.2 billion people will reach the working age in the developing nations in the next 10-15 years, and demand adequate and decent-paying jobs. He feels that based on the current growth trajectories in these nations, they will not be able to generate more than 400 million jobs. Thus, 800 million, or two-thirds of the new workforce will either remain jobless, or be employed in something hateful, painful, and less-paying. It will create public dissent, anger, desperations, frustrations, jealousies, stifled ambitions, even crime. Even more worrisome, the world's attention is on the short term due to the pandemic, Russia-Ukraine war, Iran war, and trade and tariff battles. Hence, he wants the officials to be engaged with the war, but think seriously about the longer horizon, and issues like jobs. Apart from this, he talks about access to basic amenities like clean water, and electricity in the developing and poor nations. "We have to walk, and chew gum at the same time. Short-velocity cycle is what we are going through. Longer velocity is this job's circumstance," he said in an interview.

According to the United Nations, more than 100 million people were displaced worldwide in 2025, and were obviously without jobs. These are in addition to the newcomers, who enter the working age. Add to them the mass layoffs across sectors due to tech disruptions. The looming scenario is one of doom as far as employment is concerned. Yet, Banga is confident about the future, and feels that the agencies like the World Bank and IMF, along with experts, will find solutions. "I do not know if you can ever get to a situation of utopia, and everybody is taken care of in the coming 15 years. I would doubt that is going to happen, but if you do not do it, the implications are quite severe in terms of illegal migration, and instability," he said. One needs to talk urgently to officials and businesses in the emerging markets and poor nations on how they can create local jobs, and those elsewhere.

Oxfam feels that one of the solutions may be for the rich nations, and even middle-income ones to tax the wealthy progressively, i.e., more tax as wealth grows or on higher wealth. In its recent report, it talks about the moves to build a global consensus towards effective and internationally-coordinated taxation of high net-worth individuals. There was a suggestion of a global two per cent minimum tax on billionaires and centimillionaires to raise \$300-390 billion. This money can be used by the nations to create jobs, remove inequalities, and raise the incomes of the poor and low-income groups. At the 2024 Spring Meetings, a senior IMF official said, "Many times, one hears calls for taxation targeting the super-rich; one sees calls for wealth taxation. Our position at the Fund is that taxing the returns from wealth is generally less distorting, and more equitable than a wealth tax." While the IMF has not endorsed net wealth tax, it has displayed a less hostile attitude towards it, and admitted that "there can be a case for using a net wealth tax to complement capital income taxes."

Yet, in practice, Oxfam found troublesome insights. IMF's overall global tax advice is "slightly regressive globally, i.e., when putting aside the income level, and location of countries examined. First, the Fund's policy advice in these years (2022-24) has focused slightly more on direct tax measures, i.e., those that target income (such as personal income taxes, corporate income taxes, and capital gains taxes) and wealth (property taxes and net wealth taxes). In total, 41 per cent of IMF tax advice concerns direct taxes, while advice on indirect taxes (such as consumption taxes and carbon taxes) accounts for around 33 per cent of overall advice. Several factors may play into this, including that (partly due to IMF advice and conditionality) value-added tax is now widespread across the globe. Nevertheless, tax advice is still characterised by a push for regressivity, i.e., shifting the tax burden away from the wealthiest in society at the expense of everyone else."



# Who is the loser in this slick zone?

*Confusion reigns. It is the US, Iran, China, Saudi, or all of them*

Of course, the immediate reactions were that the major loser due to the US blockade in the Strait of Hormuz, despite hints of a second round of Iran-US talks, is Iran. The estimates came out instantly. According to one estimate, Tehran may lose more than \$400 million a day. Yes, per day, or more than \$12 billion a month. This included \$150 million a day loss in the exports of 1.5 million barrels of crude oil at an average price of \$87, and a complete blockade that will impact 90 per cent of exports. Add to this figure, the exports of petrochemicals, and other products.

Some columnists, who are the supporters of Donald Trump, contend that the blockade is a better option than a ground-level military operation. It is the president's strategy at its best, better than bombarding a civilisation forever. The move effectively shuts off the crucial and sensitive Kharg Island, which accounts for 90 per cent of Iran's oil exports, and will "inflict similar damage to the Iranian economy without the risks involved in deploying US ground forces." The US economic-military action from distance will squeeze Teheran's cash flows, apply maximum pressure, and bring it to its knees.

Fair enough, because the US warships can allow friendly tankers from allies like Saudi Arabia to pass through the Strait to non-enemy consumers like India, and other Asian nations. The military can strangle the movements of Iranian vessels, which carry both legal and smuggled black contraband. This will put pressure on China, America's Enemy No. 1 (or is it Cuba,

Greenland, Iran?), which gets almost 50 per cent of its crude, and almost a third of its liquefied natural gas supplies through the Strait. So, China logically and naturally emerges as a critical collateral damage.

Let us not forget a huge caveat. According to various sources, there are already 140-190 million barrels of Iranian oil in the high seas, a part of it "west of Singapore," and a bulk of it "east of it," with most of it "destined for China." This represents anything between 90 to 130 days of exports, or anything up to \$15-16 billion of "floating inventory... in deferred revenues." It implies that if Iran can get the money into its coffers through secret payments in cryptos, or non-dollar currencies through surreptitious and legal banking channels, it can sustain, withstand, and counter the US blockade for 3-4 months.

However, once we have dusted and done away with Iran, and other enemies, the focus shifts to the US. The blockade will, theoretically, lead to huge traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, which will be difficult to monitor. America will need several warships, and military logistics to stop the Iranian flows, and this will cost huge amounts. Keeping a large battleship at sea is not cheap. Hence, it will cost the US. An analyst explains that the success will depend on the seizures of Iranian vessels in the initial days. "But in all likelihood... it will be difficult for the US to enforce," he adds. The costs can go up enormously.

Of course, the US will use the opportunity to use its tankers to come to the Strait, and ship the oil to the friendlies. This implies extra shipping and insurance costs, which may be paid by the buyers, but some costs will be borne by the Americans. Add to these costs, there is a feeling that the pump prices in the US will go up, which will be paid by the Americans. Apart from the economic costs, there are political costs attached with this scenario. Do not forget that the mid-term US elections are seven months ahead, and high pump prices are bad news.

Despite the excitement about the opening of the Strait of Hormuz, which handles 20-30 per cent of oil supplies, the Middle East is doubtful about the other implications. Saudi Arabia, according to reports, has told the US to back off from the blockade because Iran may target the Red Sea choke point. Since the closure of the Strait, Saudi has used this alternate route to ship oil. In the past, Iran-backed rebels have targeted the Red Sea, and there was speculation that the same may happen before the blockade. Now, the certainty value may go up.

According to a media report, "Saudi Arabia, after weeks of disruptions, managed to get its oil exports back up to its pre-war level of around seven million barrels a day by piping its crude across the desert to the Red Sea.... Riyadh is worried those supplies would be at risk if the Red Sea's exit routes were also closed." This stems from further doubts that the Strait may not be completely safe, despite the US efforts, and two routes may be a more effective and smart way to ensure supplies. Iran is desperate enough to do whatever it takes to stop the US.

One of the policy advisors to Iran's supreme leader, said in a social media post that Teheran looks at the Red Sea the way it looks at the Strait. In effect, it can close either or both the choke points. He warned that the flow of global energy and trade can be disrupted with a "single signal." In a statement, the Iranian military stated, "If the security of Iran's port... is threatened, no port in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman will be safe." A part of the overall costs of the blockade will quickly shift to the Middle East producers and suppliers.

Although oil prices dropped from the above-\$100 a barrel to the high-\$90s after the US decision to squeeze Iran's oil, any escalations in the Red Sea, the US' inability to defend the Strait, or attacks on friendly tankers passing through it may push up the oil prices. This will put a part of the burden on the oil buyers, including more friendlies. In essence, several nations, and not just Iran, will pay the price for the blockade. It is a case of extreme damage to both the enemies and friends, including the main protagonist and instigator, the US.

However, Trump seems clear, at least as of now, that he wants the Strait cleared and safe. He can think of the Red Sea when it turns black with damaged oil pipelines and tankers. He wants to push back Iran, as far back economically as he can. He needs to show some victories.

**OUR TAKE**



**A Contrarian Investor**

# Lots of SIPs to mop up stocks

*Small investors throng to markets despite the mayhem in March*

The stock markets were down in March 2026 due to the Iran war. Between the end of February and end of March, the Sensex lost 9,000 points, or more than 11 per cent, before it recovered almost 5,000 points in April. Yet, according to data, equity mutual funds attracted massive net inflows of more than ₹40,000 crore in March, a sharp jump from around ₹26,000 crore in February, which too saw the index down by 1,000 points or so. In retrospect, one can cite several reasons for this seemingly-unreasonable behaviour but it still belies reason.

If this was not enough, look at what happened to SIPs, or systematic investment plans that can entail a regular monthly investment of ₹500 in mutual funds. According to the figures by the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI), the net inflows through it went up to more than ₹32,000 crore in March 2026, up from nearly ₹30,000 crore in the previous month of February. While this seems confounding, the number of outstanding SIPs came down in March, as the monthly cancellations or de-registrations outnumbered new accounts, whose numbers came down dramatically by a fifth within a month.

What is confusing is that in both the cases, equity mutual funds and SIPs, the overall assets under management (AUM) were down. The AUM for SIPs were down by ₹20,000 crore, and that for equity mutual funds declined by more than ₹8,00,000 crore between the two months. Hence, while the monthly inflows were up, the overall figures were down. The trends need an explanation, or an insightful analysis about what the investors are doing, and how they are thinking about stocks. The mindset of retail investors seems to diverge.

Normally, when the markets are down, the scared and frightened retail investors run amok, and get out of stocks, whatever may be the price that they get. They become sellers, as they seek safety in cash or fixed-return instruments that are secure, and carry less risk. This is exactly what happened in 2008 during the Great Recession, and Covid crisis. Even the institutions may follow the same practices, although they are generally faster to come back to the markets. But retail investors increasing their exposures or inflows marks a change in trends.

Let us begin with SIPs, which offer better insights into the minds of the small investors because of the nature of the instrument. Even though the number of SIP accounts declined in March, the net inflows indicate that those who continued with their accounts, and newcomers increased their monthly amounts, or invested additional



lump-sum amounts. Hence, the new account additions in March were just a fifth of the numbers in February, the possibilities of higher amounts or lump-sums seem justified. Some ran away but others were brave. The latter put the fears aside, and took higher risks for several reasons.

Market corrections triggered by geopolitical shocks encouraged the existing investors to increase allocations. Many retail investors are now smart and savvy, and based on past experiences, have realised that the steep declines, which are temporary like wars, are entry opportunities rather than exit signals. During both the financial crisis of 2008, and pandemic, such small investors lost the chances to make huge profits, as they went helter-skelter, away from stocks, only to see their shares, and indices bounce back rapidly and majestically. This time though, many of the war and Covid-scarred ones stayed put.

As far as the AUMs are concerned, the dip is self-explanatory. As the indices tumbled, and stocks took a beating, despite the inflows, the market values of the mutual funds' holdings declined. Since they need to

immediately resort to mark-to-market, and adjust AUMs as per the current prices, the values took a logical dip. One needs to figure out if the managers of the mutual funds decided to stay put, or increase their exposures to stocks, rather than quietly cash out from shares where they had earned handsome returns, and wait to buy at the lows.

Anand Vardarajan, Chief Business Officer, Tata Asset Management, noted, "It was heartening to see nearly ₹40,500 crore in the equity (mutual fund) category, and investors used the market fall in March to increase their equity allocations. As FY26 comes to a close we have seen some major shifts in flows. Flexi-cap saw the highest inflow for the month and for the year. Midcap and small-cap were close next." Thus, the retail investors showed confidence in stocks, even though the prices were down, and indices were hammered through March.

Pankaj Shrestha, Head of Investment Services, PL Wealth Management, said, "The strong net equity inflow of ₹40,450 crore in March, despite it being one of the most volatile months in the near term, reflects robust investor conviction in the long-term

equity story. Rather than being deterred by short-term fluctuations, investors used the opportunity to increase their equity allocations. The record SIP inflow... reflects growing investor discipline, and a clear shift towards systematic investing." In essence, small investors are more disciplined, and habitual when it comes to SIPs, even if some are scared.

The data further underscores the growing importance of domestic investors in stabilising Indian markets, especially when the foreign investors pulled out funds amid global uncertainties. Karthick Jonagadla, founder and CEO, Quantace Research, said, "March 2026 AMFI data strengthens the Indian constructive case: Households treated global stress as a buying opportunity, not a signal to retreat. From an Indian market perspective, domestic savings are no longer just supportive liquidity; they are an active shock absorber. That does not remove macro risk, but it does mean external volatility is increasingly being met by a deeper, steadier domestic bid."

A closer look at the flow trends reveals a strong preference for diversified and growth-oriented categories. Flexi-cap funds emerged as the top category, followed closely by mid- and small-cap funds, indicating that investors are willing to take calibrated risks for higher long-term returns. Normally, the small-caps and midcaps are the stocks that face the worst battering due to downturns and corrections. As Vardarajan highlighted, hybrid categories saw selective flows, with investors gravitating towards multi-asset strategies for diversification, while arbitrage and debt funds faced pressure.

Overall, March's data reinforces a key trend: Indian retail investors are no longer passive participants but active, disciplined allocators of capital, capable of absorbing global shocks and sustaining market momentum through consistent inflows.

## Reserve Bank of India's monetary policy focuses on growth



**ASHWANI MAHAJAN**

In the monetary policy announced by the Reserve Bank during the first week of April, the central bank delivered a strong message by keeping the repo rate and other policy interest rates unchanged, and simultaneously maintaining its stance as 'Neutral' (or status quo). This signals that, despite rising crude oil prices, supply chain disruptions, blockages in international trade routes, and global turmoil, India's policymakers remain confident in the country's economic fundamentals and are committed to sustaining a growth-conducive environment within the nation.

Prior to the monetary policy announcement, however, apprehensions were being voiced that the trajectory of successive repo rate reductions — which had been pursued through 2025 — might face reversal. It was feared that, driven by inflationary expectations, the repo rate could either be hiked or, at the very least, the monetary policy stance might be downgraded from 'Neutral' to 'Accommodative'.

However, dispelling these apprehensions, the economic outlook presented by the Reserve Bank demonstrates that — notwithstanding global turmoil and challenges — the economy remains in a robust position. Consequently,

maintaining the repo rate at 5.25 per cent is deemed an appropriate policy measure to keep the path of economic growth unhindered. It is noteworthy that by keeping the repo rate low through its monetary policy, the Reserve Bank can stimulate domestic investment as well as the demand for durable goods and housing, thereby paving the way for accelerated economic growth. However, the primary prerequisite for lowering the repo rate is that domestic inflation levels must be low. If inflation is high — or if future inflationary expectations are elevated — reducing the repo rate could potentially exacerbate inflation further. Therefore, in a scenario where inflation is running high, the central bank (the RBI) cannot afford to take the risk of lowering the repo rate. However, despite the prevailing geopolitical landscape, fears of rising inflation, and disrupted supply chains, the Reserve Bank has undertaken the crucial task of keeping the engine of growth running by making the difficult decision to maintain the repo rate at a steady level — a move involving a calculated risk.

### Inflation and growth expectations

Inflation forecasts suggest that the rate is likely to range between 4.5 per cent and 4.6 per cent in the year 2026-27. Although this figure is significantly higher than the 2.1 per cent inflation recorded in 2025-26, it is still projected to remain within the target range of 2 per cent to 6 per cent set for the Monetary Policy Committee. As per the monetary policy framework effective April 2026, the formulation of monetary



policy must ensure that inflation remains within the band of 4 per cent (plus or minus 2 per cent). Consequently, should there be any risk of this limit being breached, it becomes imperative to raise the repo rate and adopt other measures to tighten monetary conditions. It is for this reason — given that inflation currently remains within the prescribed limits set for the Monetary Policy Committee — that the Reserve Bank has decided to keep the repo rate unchanged.

### Growth outlook

The Reserve Bank has pegged growth prospects for 2026-27 at 6.2 per cent. Notably, GDP growth is expected to stand at 7.4 per cent in 2025-26. This implies that there is a possibility of a

decline in growth, albeit a marginal one. It is worth noting that the potential impact of global turbulence on growth has not swayed the Reserve Bank from its stance. The underlying reason for this is the robust fundamentals of the Indian economy, which ensure that global volatility will not be able to undermine India's growth prospects.

### Liquidity management

It is essential to understand that maintaining liquidity at an optimal level is just as crucial as keeping the repo rate low, ensuring that short-term interest rates remain anchored around the repo rate. To achieve this, the Reserve Bank manages liquidity using instruments such as Open Market Operations (OMO),

variable repo rates, and variable reverse repo rates. Through these instruments, the Reserve Bank ensures that appropriate liquidity levels (neither too low nor too high) are maintained, thereby ensuring that the call rate — specifically the Weighted Average Call Rate (WACR) — does not exceed the repo rate by more than 0.10 to 0.15 percentage points. The call rate is the interest rate at which a bank borrows funds from other banks for the short term.

Currently, a major challenge confronting Indian banks is that their credit growth continues to significantly outpace their deposit growth. To bridge this gap, banks are compelled to borrow funds at interest rates higher than their lending rates. This situation has arisen because, for some time now, individuals have been channeling their savings into mutual funds rather than depositing them in banks. The Reserve Bank will need to find a solution to this issue as well.

It must be recognised that, through its monetary policy, the Reserve Bank endeavors to achieve a diverse range of objectives and targets. It is gratifying to note that, thanks to appropriate policy measures, Indian banks have largely overcome the problem of 'NPAs' — or Non-Performing Assets. The overall health of the banking sector is improving. Through monetary policy, inflation is being brought under control on one hand, while economic growth is gaining momentum on the other, thanks to lower policy interest rate.

As digitisation helps reduce operational costs for banks, the Reserve Bank is poised to play a pivotal role in guiding the nation toward its goal of becoming

a developed economy. To realise the objective of self-reliance, banks must ensure an adequate flow of credit while simultaneously ensuring the timely repayment of loans; this necessitates rigorously vetting credit proposals against the criterion of repayment capacity. It is reasonable to anticipate that the monetary policy announced in April will prove instrumental in achieving these developmental goals.

Despite global headwinds, the RBI has been able to steer the rupee towards relative stability, even after a sharp depreciation of more than 4 per cent in a short span, through a judicious mix of policy measures and direct interventions in the foreign exchange markets. These include curbs on speculative activities, which have historically been a major cause of significant volatility in the rupee's value.

Now, the challenge before the RBI is to ensure that growth prospects are not adversely affected by the global scenario marked by wars and conflicts, disruptions in global value chains, and blocked international trade routes.

A firm monetary policy, focused on growth with stability, by preventing a rise in interest rates and providing sufficient liquidity to boost growth and at the same time, keeping inflationary tendencies under check would be crucial. The RBI's task will be formidable in ensuring adequate credit flow, managing liquidity, keeping inflation under control, and providing a boost to growth.

The writer is a National Co-convenor, Swadeshi Jagran Manch Former Professor, PGDAV College and University of Delhi

## China's exports grew 2.5 per cent in March in sharp slowdown as Iran war raises uncertainty

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
■ Hong Kong

China's exports grew 2.5 per cent in March from a year ago, significantly slowing from the previous two months as uncertainties rose from the Iran war and its impact on energy prices and global demand.

The March export data released by China's customs agency Tuesday missed analysts' estimates and was sharply down from the 21.8 per cent export growth recorded for January and February.

Imports last month surged 27.8 per cent, up from the 19.8 per cent year-on-year increase in the first two months of this year.

Technology-related exports including a jump in shipments of semiconductors



from China on the global artificial intelligence boom have powered its robust exports in early 2026, but economists say impacts from the prolonged Iran war could affect overall global demand for China's exports this year. "China's exports have decelerated as the Iran war

starts to affect global demand and supply chains," said Gary Ng, a senior economist for Asia Pacific at French bank Natixis.

Despite the significant rebound in China's export growth in January and February, demand is likely to weaken due to the war's

energy shock, Bank of America economists led by Helen Qiao wrote in a recent research note.

The risks will "arise from a persistent global slowdown in overall demand if the conflict lasts longer than currently expected," they wrote.

US President Donald Trump's elevated tariffs on Chinese exports and tensions between Washington and Beijing have also been straining China's shipments to the US over the past months, with China stepping up its exports to other regions including Europe, Southeast Asia and Latin America.

Analysts are also closely watching Trump's planned visit to Beijing in May to meet with Chinese leader Xi Jinping following a delay due to the Iran war.

## Fuel price freeze: ₹18/litre loss on petrol, ₹35 on diesel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ New Delhi

Losses on petrol have widened to ₹18 per litre and to ₹35 on diesel as state-owned fuel retailers continue to keep pump prices frozen despite a sharp rise in input costs, sources said.

Despite prices being deregulated more than a decade back, state-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) have not changed the retail petrol and diesel price since April 2022. Global crude oil prices have seen sharp fluctuations over this period — from above \$100 per barrel following the Russia-Ukraine war, to easing to around \$70 a barrel earlier this year, before surging again to about \$120 last month after



the US-Israel attacks on Iran triggered fresh supply concerns.

The three firms were incurring losses of about ₹2,400 crore per day at the peak last month, which have since narrowed to around ₹1,600 crore daily after the Government cut excise duty on petrol and diesel by ₹10 per litre each — a reduction that was not passed on to consumers but used to partly offset losses, industry

sources said. The losses in March have wiped away all gains they made in January/February, they said, adding the three firms are most likely to post losses in the January-March quarter.

Macquarie Group, in a report on 'India Fuel Retail', said, "At spot petrol-diesel pricing of \$135-165 per barrel, we estimate India's oil marketing companies lose ₹18 and ₹35 per litre on petrol and diesel sales (respective-

ly)." Every \$10 per barrel increase in crude adds roughly ₹6 per litre to marketing losses, the report said.

The brokerage flagged a high likelihood of retail fuel price hikes after elections in key states like West Bengal and Tamil Nadu at the end of this month. "We see risk of higher pump prices post state elections in April."

India, which imported about 88 per cent of its crude oil requirement in 2025, remains highly exposed to global price swings. Around 45 per cent of imports came from the Middle East, 35 per cent from Russia and 6 per cent from the United States. Despite this, the country continued to be a net exporter of key petroleum products, including diesel, petrol and aviation turbine fuel.

## India set to emerge as world's 2nd largest solar market in 2026: NSEFI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ New Delhi

India is poised to become the World's second-largest solar market in 2026 in terms of annual installation, the National Solar Energy Federation of India (NSEFI) said on Wednesday.

India has achieved its fastest-ever addition of 50 GW of solar capacity in just 14 months, reaching the landmark 150 GW milestone, according to an NSEFI statement.

This marks a significant acceleration compared to the 11 years it took to reach the first 50 GW, followed by nearly three years to scale up to 100 GW.

NSEFI CEO Subrahmanyam Pulipaka said that solar energy is projected to reach 280-300 GW to support India's 500 GW non-fossil

capacity target by 2030. With the current pace, India is nearing an annual addition trajectory of 50 GW, firmly aligning with this goal.

In fact, the country is witnessing strong potential for solar capacity to exceed these projections, driven by initiatives such as PM Surya Ghar, the upcoming PM KUSUM 2.0, dedicated floating solar policies, and the growing demand linked to the National Green Hydrogen Mission over the next four years, Pulipaka noted.

Amid shifting geopolitical dynamics, NSEFI projected that India is well on track to become the world's second-largest solar market in 2026 in terms of annual installations.

Global trends point to a potential slowdown in capacity additions across major markets, such as the United



States and the European Union, which are currently competing for the second position in terms of annual installed capacity, it noted.

In contrast, India continues to accelerate its renewable energy deployment and consistently outpaces key milestones and is set to emerge as a nation with the second-

largest annual installations in the coming year, Pulipaka added.

NSEFI highlights that Distributed Renewable Energy (DRE) and Commercial & Industrial (C&I) solar adoption will be the key drivers of growth over the next three years.

"The C&I segment has sur-

passed expectations, crossing double-digit annual installations of nearly 10 GW for the first time, and this is just the beginning.

Policy enablers, such as Green Energy Open Access, Virtual Power Purchase Agreements (VPPAs), and the Renewable Consumption Obligation (RCO) framework, are unlocking substantial demand.

Within the next two years, we expect C&I capacity additions to rival those under utility-led PPAs," Pulipaka noted. Flagship Government programmes, such as PM Surya Ghar and PM KUSUM, have significantly boosted DRE adoption.

While DRE currently accounts for nearly 20 per cent of India's installed solar capacity, NSEFI projects this share to increase to 35 per cent by 2030.

## Govt should cap charges of product testing under quality control order: GTRI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ New Delhi

The Government should cap testing charges for routine industrial products as high costs to comply with the quality control orders (QCOs) may impact the country's manufacturing and small importers, think tank GTRI said on Tuesday.

While the QCO policy aims to improve product quality and consumer safety, the pace of expansion is putting pressure on testing infrastructure and has created significant compliance bottlenecks for MSMEs, the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said.

"India's expanding quality control regime is imposing such high testing and certification costs that many



MSME importers may be pushed out of business, leaving the market increasingly dominated by large importers," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

The charges arise under the Foreign Manufacturers Certification Scheme (FMCS) of the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), under which foreign manufacturers of products covered by India's

Quality Control Orders have to obtain BIS certification before exporting to India.

The process requires foreign suppliers to appoint an authorised Indian representative, submit technical documents, undergo BIS factory inspections, provide samples for testing at BIS-approved labs, and secure a BIS licence before exports can commence, he said.

## India must cut fertiliser import dependence, leverage AI and precision tech: ICAR chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ New Delhi

A comprehensive approach spanning short, medium and long-term strategies is needed to reduce India's dependence on fertiliser imports, ICAR Director General ML Jat said on Tuesday, calling for greater use of artificial intelligence, precision nutrient management and sensor-based systems to optimise fertiliser use.

Addressing mediapersons after a brainstorming session to develop a roadmap for achieving 'Atmanirbharta' (self-reliance) in fertilisers, organised by the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS) here, Jat



said fertilisers were instrumental during the Green Revolution in boosting production, but the current challenge lies in declining fertiliser use efficiency and their indiscriminate application.

He said strengthening initiatives like the Soil Health Card scheme, promoting

balanced and need-based fertiliser application, and enhancing awareness among farmers are important steps in the right direction.

Jat said crop diversification towards pulses and oilseeds, recycling organic waste under the Waste-to-Wealth initiative, and increasing the use of biological sources would further contribute to reducing dependence on chemical fertilisers.

The session was attended by representatives from concerned government departments, academia, the fertiliser industry and farmers, who unanimously stressed the necessity of self-reliance in the critical sector.

## Record sales but West Asia crisis looms over auto industry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) today announced that all sectors of the Indian Automobile industry — passenger vehicles, two-wheelers, three-wheelers and commercial vehicles all recorded the highest ever sales volume in a financial year for the year ended March 31, 2026.

Passenger vehicles sales touched 46.43 lakh units, a growth of 7.6 per cent from the previous year and two-wheeler sales touched 2.17 crore units with a growth of 10.7 per cent.

Three-wheelers registered a sales growth of 12.8 per cent and Commercial Vehicles 12.6 per cent. Exports also significant growth with passenger



vehicle imports touching 9 lakh units and 51.8 lakh two-wheelers were also exported from India.

Speaking to the media in Delhi, Shailesh Chandra, Managing Director, Tata Motors Passenger cars and

President, SIAM attributed the growth to multiple factors starting with income tax reform at the start of the year, reduced interest rates and finally the major GST 2.0 reforms in the second half of the year.

While pointing out that the outlook for the coming year was generally positive with major institutions predicting continued economic growth of between 6.5 - 7.5 per cent, the current West Asia crisis is creating some concerns.

This he said could be seen in the spike of demand for electric vehicles in March, "While March does see increased sales due to buyers wanting to take advantage of depreciation benefits, speaking about Tata Motors I can tell you that almost 30 per cent of our electric vehicle buyers were choosing to buy an EV because of concerns with fuel prices going forward."

He highlighted that SIAM and its members were in constant communication with the Government around

the crisis. "While there are no immediate concerns with fuel supplies or with supply chain management, if the war continues, supplies could get constrained and if fuel prices go up, that will certainly have an inflationary impact", Chandra said. Exports could get impacted because of increased tariffs in Mexico and supply issues to West Asia and North Africa which are major export markets for Indian passenger cars and two-wheelers.

But he said that the industry was still very positive after hitting such sales numbers, and despite SIAM members often lobbying against each other especially around the CAFE-III norms that will be implemented from April, 2027, the industry was looking forward to continued growth.

FROM THE WORLD

PAKISTAN 16 arrested in Punjab province

Pakistan's security agencies have arrested sixteen terrorists belonging to various terror outfits in multiple operations conducted in Punjab province, an official said on Tuesday. Security forces conducted 113 intelligence-based operations (IBOs) over the past week in different districts, which led to the arrest of these terrorists, a spokesperson for the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) said. A major terror plot was foiled by Punjab police by arresting 16 terrorists belonging to various banned organisations, including Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Al-Qaeda and Daesh (ISIS), he said. "A dangerous suicide bomber of Fitna-ul-Khawarij has also been arrested from Jhang, while another terrorist identified as Moin Khan, involved in attacks on security institutions, was arrested from Sargodha," he added.

AUSTRALIA Harry arrives in Melbourne

Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, arrived in Melbourne on Tuesday for their first Australian visit since their official royal tour in 2018. The lower-key four-day Australian visit comes after the couple announced in 2020 they planned to "step back" as senior royals and to become financially independent in their Californian base. The Sussexes describe their visit as privately funded, and they flew to Melbourne business class from Los Angeles on a commercial Qantas Airways flight. But there have been public complaints about the added security costs for police agencies as the couple visits Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney. The cost of security explains why the couple won't be greeted by thousands of people at public events as they were during their 16-day tour as newlyweds in 2018 to Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga.

Won't abide by Lebanon-Israel agreement: Hezbollah

ABBY SEWELL ■ Beirut

The Lebanese militant group Hezbollah will not abide by any agreements that may result from the direct Lebanon-Israel talks in the United States, negotiations it firmly opposes, a senior Hezbollah official said.

Wafiq Safa, a high-ranking member of Hezbollah's political council, spoke on the eve of the talks expected in Washington between Lebanese and Israeli ambassadors to the US.

It will be the first time in decades that envoys from Lebanon and Israel, which do not have diplomatic relations, meet face-to-face in direct talks. "As for the outcomes of this negotiation between Lebanon and the Israeli enemy, we are not interested in or concerned with them at all," Safa told The



Wafiq Safa, senior Hezbollah political council member, speaking during an interview with The Associated Press in Beirut

Associated Press. "We are not bound by what they agree to," he added in a rare interview with international media. He spoke next to a cemetery as an Israeli drone buzzed overhead. Lebanese officials are looking to broker a ceasefire in the Israel-Hezbollah war in the US talks. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu, meanwhile, has said the goal is Hezbollah's disarmament and a potential peace agreement between Lebanon and Israel. Shosh Bedrosian, a spokesperson for Netanyahu said Monday that there will be no ceasefire with Hezbollah.

Separately, in US-Iran peace talks held last weekend in Pakistan, Iran has sought to include Lebanon in any ceasefire deal of its own with the US-Israel and the US have insisted Lebanon would not be a part of it. Hours after Tehran and Washington announced a truce last Wednesday, Israel launched more than 100 strikes across Lebanon, including in densely packed residential and commercial areas of central Beirut.

And though the US-Iran talks broke up without an agreement, Safa said Hezbollah has been

informed that Iran "was able to obtain a cessation of attacks" in the entire administrative region of Beirut, Lebanon's capital, including Beirut's southern suburbs — a Hezbollah-strong area known as Dahiyeh.

Israeli strikes on Beirut and its southern suburbs have halted since Wednesday but intense fighting has continued in southern Lebanon. Hezbollah's entry into the war Israel and Hezbollah have fought multiple wars since the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group was formed in the 1980s as a guerrilla force fighting against Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon at the time.

The latest round began on March 2, two days after Israel and the US launched a war on Iran. Hezbollah entered the fray, firing missiles across the border into Israel. Israel

responded with aerial bombardment and a ground invasion.

Since then, the war has displaced more than 1 million people in Lebanon and killed more than 2,000, including more than 500 women, children and medical workers.

Many Lebanese have blamed Hezbollah for pulling Lebanon into the war, accusing it of acting on behalf of its patron, Iran.

Safa said Hezbollah's actions were preemptive because its leaders believed "Israel was preparing for a second battle with Lebanon" with the aim of destroying Hezbollah.

It was "an appropriate moment for Hezbollah ... to rebuild a new equation" and restore deterrence against Israel, he said, denying any prior deals with Tehran that Hezbollah would enter the war if Iran was attacked. (AP)

Guterres urges continued US-Iran talks

YOSHITA SINGH ■ United Nations

UN chief Antonio Guterres has called for continued constructive discussions between Iran and the US, while stressing the ceasefire "must absolutely be preserved" after the talks between the two nations on the West Asia conflict concluded without a deal.

The 21-hour-long negotiations between the US, led by Vice President JD Vance, and Iran in Pakistan on Saturday concluded without an agreement to end the war. "While no agreement was reached at the talks hosted by Pakistan between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran in



Islamabad, the discussions themselves underscored the seriousness of their engagement and constituted a positive and meaningful step toward renewed dialogue," a statement issued by the spokesperson for the UN Secretary General Guterres

said on Monday. "They have chosen not to accept our terms," Vance had said in a news conference in Islamabad. "We leave here with a very simple proposal: a method of understanding that is our final and best offer," he said, adding that "We'll see if the Iranians accept it."

Guterres said that given the deeply rooted differences, an "agreement cannot be reached overnight" and called on the talks to continue constructively for an agreement to be reached.

"At the same time, the ceasefire must absolutely be preserved. All violations must cease," Guterres said, adding that after weeks of

destruction and distress, it is clear that there is no military solution to the current conflict in the West Asia. Last week, the United States and Iran announced a two-week ceasefire in the fighting. Guterres thanked the continued efforts of the mediators — Pakistan, which hosted talks Saturday, as well as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Türkiye — and called for the international community to support those efforts.

The Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Jean Arnault, also remains actively engaged in the region, consulting closely with key stakeholders and continuing his outreach in support of a comprehensive and durable agreement. (PTI)

Macron, Starmer to co-chair talks on Hormuz mission to protect shipping

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Paris

French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer will co-chair a conference Friday in Paris, bringing together non-belligerent nations willing to participate in a mission in the Strait of Hormuz "when security conditions allow."

Other participants will take part via videoconference, Macron's office said. European and other partners are ready to contribute to a "purely defensive mission aimed at restoring freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz," the statement said. France and



A cargo ship sailing in the Persian Gulf towards Dubai port as seen from Ajman, United Arab Emirates

Britain have been working in recent weeks to set up an operation to escort oil tankers and container ships to help ensure safe passage through the strait.

Misri reaches Berlin for India-Germany Foreign Office consultations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri reached Berlin on Tuesday where he will hold talks with German officials on a wide range of issues, including trade and investment, defence and security, technology, green energy and other key global and regional developments.

"Foreign Secretary @VikramMisri arrives in Berlin for India-Germany Foreign Office consultations," the Indian Embassy in Germany said in a post on X.

"The visit follows Chancellor Friedrich Merz's successful visit to India in January 2026 and reflects continued regular high-level exchanges between



India and Germany, Office Consultations alongside Geza Andreas von Geyr, State Secretary of the German Foreign Office.

The discussions will cover diverse domains of bilateral co-operation, including trade and investments, defence and security, technology, green energy, development co-operation, education and people-to-people ties as well as global and regional matters of mutual interest, the Ministry of External Affairs said ahead of his visit.

His visit provides an opportunity to review the full spectrum of the India-Germany Strategic Partnership, India's Ambassador to Germany Ajit Gupte said in a social media post.

"Advance discussions across key pillars of the bilateral agenda and exchange perspectives on regional and global developments" are

scheduled to take place during the visit, he added. Misri arrived in Germany from France, where he held discussions on a wide range of issues, including civil nuclear energy, defence, space and digital co-operation.

His visit to France and Germany comes amid escalating tensions in West Asia after the US and Iran failed to secure a lasting peace deal to end hostilities following their marathon talks in Pakistan over the weekend.

US President Donald Trump has announced the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz in a bid to cripple Iran's oil supplies to China and other countries amid a deepening global energy crisis.

Government in Ireland facing possible no-confidence vote

BRIAN MELLEY ■ London

Ireland's Government could face a no-confidence vote Tuesday in Parliament over how it has handled a week of fuel protests that blocked access to oil supplies and a major port and caused massive traffic jams.

Prime Minister Micheal Martin announced new tax cuts to try to end the crisis that began after the US-Israel war on Iran led to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital channel for the world's oil. But opposition parties blasted the Government for failing to respond sooner and criticised the aid it offered.

Sinn Fein, the largest opposition party, called for the no-confidence vote scheduled for Tuesday evening. But Martin's coalition Government has scheduled an earlier vote of support that could make the no-confidence motion moot if passed.

The passage of a no-confidence vote would force the ruling Government to resign and lead to either Parliament voting on a new prime minister to form a Government or triggering a new general election. The Social Democrats, Labour, People Before Profit, Aontu, The Green Party and Independent Ireland have said they would back the motion.

Protests began on April 7 with slow-moving convoys clogging roadways. They grew as word spread on social media as truckers, farmers and taxi and bus operators blocked key infrastructure and the main thoroughfare in the capital, Dublin. Demonstrators called



Prime Minister Micheal Martin

for price caps or tax cuts to alleviate soaring fuel costs, which they said would drive people out of business.

Martin said the Government can learn from the protests, but defended the response by police and military to clear roadblocks at the country's sole oil refinery at Whitegate in County Cork and at several depots. They caused more than a third of gas pumps to run dry.

"We had to clear Whitegate and the ports because we export about 90 per cent of everything we make in this country," Martin said. "The ports are the lifeblood of the economy, and if the ports were blockaded for any length of time, people would have lost jobs, part-time production would have ceased, and it would have been very, very serious."

The demonstrations were tolerated until the weekend, when police used pepper spray in clashes with some protesters, and an army truck knocked down a log barricade at the Galway port. Many protesters said they achieved their goal in getting the Government to compromise.

Lawmakers were also scheduled to vote Tuesday on the fuel support package amounting to 505 million euros that Martin said will ease some cost-of-living pressures. (AP)

Pope starts Africa tour in Algeria and calls for peace against Iran war's backdrop

NICOLE WINFIELD/AOMAR OUALI/ PAOLO SANTALUCIA ■ Algiers

Pope Leo XIV called for peace and the end of "neocolonial tendencies" in world affairs on Monday during the first papal visit to Algeria, all while facing an extraordinary broadside by President Donald Trump over his criticism of the US-Israeli war with Iran.

Leo's arrival in Algiers marks the start of an 11-day tour of four African nations - Algeria, Cameroon, Angola and Equatorial Guinea - that will bring the first US-born pope deep into the growing heart of the Catholic Church.

Leo is in Algeria to promote Christian-Muslim coexistence in the majority Muslim nation at a time of global conflict, and to honor the locally born inspiration of his religious spirituality, St Augustine.



The trip began, however, against the backdrop of a growing feud between Leo and Trump over the Iran war.

Trump overnight said he didn't think Leo was doing a good job as pope and suggested he should "stop catering to the Radical Left." Leo responded by saying his appeals for peace and reconciliation are rooted in the Gospel, and that he didn't fear the Trump administration. (AP)



People participating at the Baishakhi Shobhajatra procession to celebrate the first day of the Bangla New Year in Dhaka, Bangladesh

West Asia conflict threatens to push 2.5 million people in India into poverty: UNDP report

YOSHITA SINGH ■ United Nations

The conflict and military escalation in West Asia threatens to push 2.5 million people in India into poverty and the country is projected to experience some loss in its human development progress, according to estimates and projections by the United Nations.

The United Nations Development Programme, in a report titled "Military Escalation In The Middle East: Human Development Impacts Across Asia And The Pacific" noted that the conflict is "widening human development pressures across Asia and the Pacific.

Through higher fuel, freight, and input costs, the shock is diminishing household purchas-



ing power, raising food insecurity, straining public budgets, and weakening livelihoods."

The preliminary assessment, issued on Tuesday, estimates that globally 8.8 million people are at risk of falling into poverty and the West Asia military escalation could cost Asia-Pacific up to \$299 billion. In India, poverty is expect-

ed to rise from around 400,000 to 2.5 million, the report said.

It added that the number of people pushed into poverty in the world as a result of the conflict rises from approximately 1.9 million to nearly 8.8 million across scenarios, with South Asia accounting for the largest share, ranging from about 1.7 million to over 8 million, reflecting both the subregion's population size and its higher exposure to income and price shocks.

China is estimated to experience a more moderate increase in the number of people at risk of falling into poverty, from around 115,000 to over 620,000, reflecting small proportional changes applied to a very large population base. Highlighting the estimated

poverty impact of the military escalation (28-day conflict, most severe scenario with 8-month adjustment), the report said that India's poverty rate is estimated to rise to 24.2 per cent post-crisis from 23.9 per cent, pushing 2,464,698 people into poverty.

An estimated 3,540,336,698 people are projected to live in poverty in the country post-crisis as compared to 351,569,000 pre-crisis. The UNDP simulation estimates the impact of the conflict on the Human Development Index (HDI) for countries across the region.

It indicates that Iran's HDI could decline by an amount equivalent to roughly one to one and a half years of human development progress. "India is projected to experience a loss of approximate-

ly 0.03-0.12 years of HDI progress, followed by Nepal at around 0.02-0.09 years and Viet Nam at 0.02-0.07 years, while for China, the estimated effects on HDI remain limited in magnitude, ranging roughly 0.01-0.05 years," it said.

The report notes that among the region's larger importers, India meets over 90 per cent of its oil needs through imports, sourcing more than 40 per cent of crude imports and 90 per cent of LPG imports from West Asia. Further, West Asian countries supply over 45 per cent of India's fertiliser imports, while

85 per cent of the country's domestic urea production depends on imported regasified liquefied natural gas.

The shock of the conflict is also

influencing energy choices in several countries.

On trade and supply chain disruptions, UNDP country-level analysis indicated significant impacts in 25 out of 36 countries through freight surcharges, war-risk insurance premia, route diversions, and delayed delivery of intermediate and consumer goods.

India's assessment shows that West Asian markets account for 14 per cent of exports and 20.9 per cent of imports, with roughly \$48 billion in non-oil exports, particularly in basmati rice, tea, gems and jewellery, and apparel. Bangladesh also reports significant disruption as Gulf carriers cancelled flights, shipments from Bangladesh and

India were stranded, it said.

Highlighting the impact of the military escalation on food security, the report said that "For several countries, including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and the Philippines, food security pressures could also be compounded by remittance losses, as reduced Gulf economic activity weakens household incomes and purchasing power."

"In India, the timing is especially sensitive: any prolonged disruption would coincide with the preparations for the Kharif (the monsoon cropping season), which begins in June. Urea stocks stood at 6.114 million tons, providing a near-term buffer but not fully insulating the sector if disruptions persist into the planting season," it said. (PTI)

## Zelenskyy meets German Chancellor in Berlin

KIRSTEN GRIESHABER  
Berlin

Ukraine and Germany are starting work on plans for the joint production of advanced drones and other battle-tested defence systems, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Tuesday, as Kyiv looks to scale up its more than four-year fight against Russia's all-out invasion.

"We have proposed to Germany a bilateral drone deal covering various types of drones, missiles, software and modern defence systems. Our teams are starting concrete work," Zelenskyy said at a joint news conference with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz during a visit to Berlin.

Merz said that Germany's commitment to supporting Kyiv's war effort is "a very clear signal" to



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz welcomes Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for German-Ukrainian Government consultations in Berlin Germany

Russia. "We will not waver in our efforts to defend Ukraine," he said. US-led diplomatic efforts to end Russia's war on its neighbour have recently petered out as the Iran war grips the Trump administration's

attention, although Tammy Bruce, the deputy US ambassador to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council on Monday that Washington "will continue to push for a negotiated and durable end"

to the war. Russia has occupied about 20 per cent of Ukraine so far. That includes the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia seized in 2014.

Ukraine has the capacity to produce twice as much military equipment as it's currently deploying, but lacks funding to step up production, according to Zelenskyy. "We simply don't have enough money," he said.

A key to unlocking that potential lies in obtaining a promised 90 billion-euro (\$106 billion) loan from the European Union.

That was being held up by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, but his impending departure from office after a weekend election could free up the money.

Ukraine needs those funds "urgently," Merz said. After Berlin, Zelenskyy was due to visit Norway,

another important financial and military ally, while defence leaders from the 50-plus partner nations who regularly gather to coordinate weapons aid for Kyiv will hold an online meeting on Wednesday, Ukraine's Defence Ministry said.

Kyiv is heavily reliant on US intelligence for targeting inside Russia and needs more sophisticated American-made air defence systems to stop Russian missile attacks on its power grid.

If the Iran war drags on, it could erode vital US support for Kyiv, Zelenskyy fears. Furthermore, the Ukrainian army is short-handed, facing around 200,000 troop desertions and draft-dodging by around 2 million people, Ukrainian Defence Minister Mykhailo said in January. Germany will help Kyiv facilitate the return home of Ukrainian men of military age, Merz said. (AP)

## Harvey Weinstein goes on trial again in New York rape case



JENNIFER PELTZ ■ New York

After years of #MeToo infamy, legal peril and prison, Harvey Weinstein is again going on trial on a rape charge in New York City. Jury selection is set to start as early as Tuesday in the onetime movie mogul's latest retrial, where jurors will weigh — for the third time — whether he raped hairstylist and actor Jessica Mann in a Manhattan hotel in 2013.

But "it's not going to be a mirror image of the last trial," new Weinstein lawyer Marc Agnifilo told Judge Curtis Farber last month. This time, jurors will weigh only one charge based on one accuser, rather than the array of allegations that were aired at Weinstein's previous trials in New York and Los Angeles. The Oscar-winning producer

denies all the accusations and declared in court this winter that he had "acted wrongly, but I never assaulted anyone." The judge has indicated he might revisit some rulings about exactly what evidence gets presented about Weinstein's and Mann's years of interactions. And Weinstein's recent change in attorneys could shift the trial's tenor and tactics. Agnifilo and his partners took on the case only in February, when longtime Weinstein lawyer Arthur Aidala stepped aside from the retrial to focus on the former studio boss's appeals and civil matters. Both Aidala and Agnifilo are well-known New York defense attorneys, but their litigation styles differ. Aidala is folksy, while Agnifilo is more buttoned-up. (AP)

## Türkiye: Gunman opens fire at high school, 16 injured



ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Ankara

A former student opened fire at a high school in southeast Türkiye on Tuesday, wounding at least 16 people before killing himself, an official said.

The 18-year-old attacker, armed with a shotgun, fired randomly at a vocational high school in Siverek, Sanliurfa province, before hiding inside the building. He later killed himself with the same shotgun, Gov Hasan Sildak said.

The attack left 10 students, four teachers, a canteen employee and a police officer wounded, Sildak said. While most of them were being treated in Siverek, five of the wounded teachers and students were transferred to a hospital in the provincial capital because their conditions were more serious, the governor said. The motive for the attack remains unclear. School shootings are rare in Turkey. Earlier, media reports said all students were evacuated and police special operations units were deployed after the assailant refused to surrender.

## Policy to improve relations with India remains unchanged: China

KJM VARMA  
Beijing

China on Tuesday said its policy to improve relations with India has not changed as it defended its move to publish new names for various regions in Arunachal Pradesh.

India on Sunday categorically rejected China's efforts to assign "fictitious names" to Indian territory, asserting that such attempts to create "baseless narratives" cannot alter "undeniable reality" and could derail efforts to normalise bilateral ties.

New Delhi's sharp reaction came against the backdrop of Beijing establishing a third new administrative county in Aksai Chin, a



Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun

region India maintains as its sovereign territory. "India categorically rejects any mischievous attempts by the Chinese side to assign fictitious names to places which form part of the territory of India," External Affairs Ministry spokesper-

son Randhir Jaiswal said. Reacting to Jaiswal's remarks, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun told a media briefing here that Zangnan is China's territory, and China has never recognised the "so-called Arunachal Pradesh".

Zangnan is the Chinese name for Arunachal Pradesh. China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of southern Tibet.

It is entirely within China's sovereignty to standardise the names of some places in the Zangnan region, Guo said, defending Beijing's move to publish six batches of names for Arunachal Pradesh. He said at present, China-India relations are generally stable. China's policy committed to improving and developing China-India relations remains unchanged, Guo said.

"We hope the two sides will work in the same direction and act more in ways conducive to bilateral relations," Guo added. On March

26, China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region announced the creation of Cenling county, a strategic region located near the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Afghanistan.

It is also reportedly close to the western sector of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India. Cenling, located near the Karakoram mountain range, is the third new county established by China in Xinjiang, a predominantly Muslim Uyghur region.

India last year lodged a protest with China over the creation of Hean and Hekang counties, stating that parts of their jurisdiction fall within its Union territory of Ladakh. (PTI)

## Xi, Sanchez say, China and Spain should help safeguard multilateralism

E EDUARDO CASTILLO  
Beijing

The leaders of China and Spain on Tuesday pledged to strengthen their relations and work to safeguard multilateralism at a time when the world is being impacted by various conflicts, including the recent war in Iran, during a meeting in Beijing on Tuesday.

"We should strengthen communication, consolidate mutual trust, cooperate closely, oppose the world's retrogression to the law of the jungle, and jointly safeguard genuine multilateralism," said Chinese President Xi Jinping during a



reception for Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez at the Great Hall of the People.

Sanchez agreed and said both countries "can contribute to finding solutions to the various trade tensions that exist, to the geopolitical difficulties and complexities of today's world, to the wars, to the environmental and social

challenges that afflict the world." Sanchez is in China for his fourth trip in just over three years to the world's second-largest economy.

Spain is looking to strengthen its political and commercial ties with Beijing, and the visit comes as Sanchez faces a strained relationship with the U.S. over his opposition to the war in Iran.

Sanchez sees China as key to end the war. Later, during a press conference, Sanchez said that China was the only global player he could see helping end wars in Iran and other places, such as Ukraine. (AP)

## 5.7 earthquake jolts rural Nevada near Carson city

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
Washington

A magnitude 5.7 earthquake struck a rural part of Nevada east of the state's capital of Carson City on Monday.

The tremor hit just before 6.30 p.m., the US Geological Survey said. It was centred 20.7 kilometres east of the town of Silver Springs at a depth of 5 kilometres.

Video shot in the town of Fallon showed shattered glass and food scattered on the floor in the aisles of a grocery store.

Trina Enloe was sitting with one of her daughters



as she did homework in their dining room when the quake hit.

"You could hear the rumbling just coming before it even got to us," Enloe said.

The shaking continued for about a minute, she said. The jolt knocked over some cast iron candle holders but Enloe didn't see any cracks or damage in her home in Fallon.

## Civil Society honours Jallianwala Bagh martyrs in Pakistan



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lahore

A group of civil society members and lawyers on Monday paid tributes to those killed in the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre at an event held at a court's premises in the capital of Pakistan's Punjab province.

Hundreds of people protesting peacefully against the Rowlatt Act, which granted the colonial administration repressive powers, were gunned down by British forces without any provocation on April 13, 1919, at a garden in Amritsar, Punjab. Participants of the event, held at the Democratic

Lawn of the Lahore High Court, lit candles to pay homage to the victims of the massacre on the 107th anniversary of the carnage. The incident infused a new spirit and momentum into the freedom movement, said Imtiaz Rashid Quresh, the chairman of the Bhagat Singh Memorial Foundation Pakistan, an NGO which organised the event. Quresh termed the incident a "dark chapter" in the history of the subcontinent. He said even after 107 years, the sacrifices of the victims remained alive and continue to serve as a guiding light for future generations.

## Romuald Wadagni secures Benin presidency

VIRGILE AHISSOU  
Cotonou (Benin)

Benin Finance Minister Romuald Wadagni won the country's presidential election held on Sunday with over 94 per cent of votes, according to election officials, fulfilling the expectation he was the anointed successor after President Patrice Talon's decade in power.

The outcome was based on more than 90 per cent of votes counted with voter turnout of 58.75 per cent, Sacca Lafia, head of the West African country's independent electoral commission, announced on national television late Monday. The final results must be confirmed by Benin's constitutional court and are expected in the coming weeks.

Paul Hounkpe, the sole opposition candidate who received 5.95 per cent of votes, conceded defeat ahead of the announcement Monday. Wadagni, 49, was considered the chosen heir to Talon, who is stepping down at the end



Romuald Wadagni

of May after serving in office from 2016 to 2026. Analysts had predicted a sidelined opposition would result in Wadagni's win.

Talon leaves a mixed legacy of economic growth, a growing jihadi insurgency in the north and the suppression of opposition critics. While Benin has historically been among the most stable democracies in Africa, opposition leaders and human rights organisations

have accused Talon of using the justice system as a tool to sideline political opponents.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch denounced a sustained crackdown on dissent under Talon, citing arbitrary detentions, tighter restrictions on public demonstrations and mounting pressure on independent media outlets.

In a parliamentary election in January, the opposition failed to cross the threshold of support from 20 per cent of registered voters in each of the country's voting districts before standing for election, leaving Talon's two allied parties with control of all 109 seats in the National Assembly.

Renaud Agbodjo, leader of The Democrats, the main opposition party, was barred from competing in Sunday's vote after failing to secure enough parliamentary endorsements, which critics say is a threshold engineered to keep out rivals. (AP)

## US forces to join drills in Philippines

JIM GOMEZ ■ MANILA

More than 17,000 American and Filipino military personnel will participate in one of their largest annual combat exercises in the Philippines that underscore the United States' staunch commitment to Asia despite its preoccupation with the Middle East, a US military official said Tuesday.

During the April 20-May 8 manoeuvres, called the Balikatan, Japanese forces will fire a missile in a ship-sinking exercise in north-western Philippine waters facing the disputed South China Sea. Japan's defence chief has been invited to witness the live-fire drill, Philippine military officials said. The large-scale



combat drills between the US and Philippines, which are longtime treaty allies, will expand this year to include other friendly forces, including those from Japan, France and Canada, which have signed visiting forces agreements with Manila, the Philippine military said.

"Our message is our dedication and commitment to our alliance and region-

al security," Col. Robert Bunn, a spokesperson for US forces, said in a news briefing when asked what message the US military wanted to send with its large Balikatan deployment despite the war in the West Asia.

Bunn did not immediately specify the number of US forces joining the combat drills.

Last year, about 9,000 US military personnel joined the Balikatan — Tagalog for shoulder — to shoulder — exercises.

"The defensive aspect of countering drones is very much a part of the exercise," Bunn said in response to a question on the types of mock combat operations to be expected. (AP)

## PAKISTAN GOVT AMENDS HINDU MARRIAGE ACT TO SIMPLIFY REGISTRATION



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Peshawar

Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial Government has amended the Hindu Marriage Act 2017 to simplify and streamline the process of registering Hindu marriages at the local level, an official said.

According to the official, under the newly enacted Hindu Marriage (Amendment) Act 2026, members of the Hindu community will now be allowed to appoint marriage registrars at the district level to facilitate the formal registration of marriages.

The amended law introduces changes in Clause 2 of Section 1, including the revision of the nomenclature of "Marriage Registrar", who will now be appointed under Section 7 of the act.

The amendment also provides that one or more registrars may be appointed in each district. The official said the key objective of the amendment was to empower local Governments to issue licenses for Hindu marriage registration, making the process more efficient, accessible, and organised. (AP)

## Afghan migrants in Poland fear deportations as asylum applications remain suspended

CLAUDIA CIOBANU  
Warsaw

Afghan migrants in Poland face forced deportations and fear for their lives at the hands of the Taliban-run Government back home, concerns that rights groups say have soared after Poland last year moved to partially suspend the right to seek asylum.

Rights groups warn that the measure, introduced in March 2025, is now being overused by authorities.

It's based on an amended Polish law that imposed temporary restrictions on the right to apply for international protection at the border with Belarus for those who

crossed into the NATO and European Union member state illegally.

"I tried more than a billion times to seek safety," an Afghan in his 20s, currently in a detention centre for migrants in eastern Poland, said over the phone. He recounted how the Taliban killed his father and also detained and beat him up.

The rest of his family is still in hiding in Afghanistan, he said, speaking to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because he fears for his safety, should he be deported to Afghanistan.

All this he recounted to Polish authorities, he said, "but they did not care." The Polish Interior Ministry did



not respond to AP requests for comment about the deportations of Afghans and how it applies the new restriction. Like many of his countrymen, the young Afghan crossed into EU-member Poland from

Belarus and managed to reach Germany, where he was arrested and then returned to Poland to have his asylum request assessed under EU laws.

He now says Polish authorities decided to deport him

without properly reviewing his case, simply because he had first entered the country by way of Belarus — a fraught route that Warsaw has sought to crack down on after tens of thousands of migrants tried to enter the EU that way in recent years.

Poland says it's been overwhelmed by the influx and argues that the migrants were sent by Russia and its ally Belarus to destabilise Poland and other Western countries.

The temporary suspension — for a total of 60 days — of the right to seek asylum only applies "on the border with Belarus," the new legislation says. The Government has prolonged this time period multiple times, effectively sus-

pending asylum applications for over a year and more.

Legal experts such as the Polish Ombudsman, which protects civil and human rights in Poland, and the UNHCR have criticised Poland's suspension of the right to asylum.

They say it's incompatible with international law and especially the Geneva Conventions on refugee rights, which obliges receiving countries to examine each individual's claim for protection.

Poland's liberal Prime Minister Donald Tusk has said the security risks at the Belarus border warranted the new measures, an argument the EU did not reject,

though its member states are required to provide at least a minimum of rights to asylum-seekers even in cases of orchestrated migration crises.

Since the new law was introduced, rights groups and migrants say Poland has been stretching the measure to include not just migrants apprehended on the Belarus-Poland border but those found anywhere in the country, as long as they entered across that border.

In practice, this means that Afghan migrants, whose route to Poland almost always involves Belarus, cannot apply for asylum, regardless of their individual circumstances. (AP)



## PROSPECT

### Dr Kartik Sahni selected as Assistant Professor in GI surgery department

Dr Kartik Sahni has been selected for the post of Assistant Professor in the Department of Gastrointestinal (GI) Surgery at the Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital under the Delhi Government. According to the official results released by the institution, he secured the top position in the selection process conducted for this post.



Dr Sahni is a resident of Singh Sabha Road in Shakti Nagar, North Delhi. He completed his initial medical education from Maulana Azad Medical College. He obtained his MBBS degree in 2018 from University of Delhi and later completed his MS in General Surgery from the same university in 2021. He further pursued super-speciality training at All India Institute of Medical Sciences, where he earned his MCh (Surgical Gastroenterology) degree in 2025. Dr Sahni's father, Inder Raj Sahni, expressed that this achievement is a matter of great pride for the family and a result of years of hard work. His mother, Seema Sahni, added that his interest in studies and the medical field was evident since childhood, which he consistently nurtured through dedication and perseverance.

### Assam Rifles seizes codeine cough syrup worth ₹40 lakh in Agartala



In a continued effort to curb illegal narcotics trafficking, Assam Rifles, in coordination with Customs officials, successfully recovered a large consignment of banned cough syrup in Tripura. Based on specific intelligence inputs, a joint operation was launched by Assam Rifles and Customs Department, Agartala in the general area of Taranagar, approximately 20 km North-East of Agartala on 13 April 2026. During the operation, the team recovered 140 cases of Codeine-based cough syrup, suspected to be intended for illegal distribution. The total value of the seized consignment is estimated to be approximately ₹40 lakh. The recovered items have been handed over to the Customs Department, Agartala for further legal proceedings. Assam Rifles remains steadfast in its commitment to combating drug trafficking and ensuring a drug-free society in the region.

# NCLT orders insolvency proceedings against Dhoot

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has directed initiation of insolvency proceedings against Videocon's former chairman and MD Venugopal Dhoot for defaulting on loans of ₹6,157.57 crore, as a personal guarantor of two group companies. Admitting a plea from State Bank of India (SBI), NCLT said Venugopal Dhoot has "committed defaults in repayment of loan amount" granted by the financial creditor.

"Venugopal Nandlal Dhoot, personal guarantor to Videocon Industries Ltd and Videocon Telecommunications Ltd has also committed default in repayment of the loan facility demanded by the financial creditor after invocation of the personal guarantee," said an order passed by NCLT on April 8, uploaded on April 13 evening.

The Mumbai bench of the insolvency tribunal has also appointed Asish Narayan as a resolution professional and directed him to issue a public notice within seven days of passing this order on the website of the NCLT.



Videocon's former chairman and MD Venugopal Dhoot

"The Resolution Professional shall submit the repayment plan along with his report on the plan to this authority within a period of 21 days from the last date of submission of claims, as provided under Section 106," said NCLT.

Under Section 95 of the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC), insolvency proceedings are initiated against a person, after being "satisfied that Corporate Debtor (Videocon) has committed default in repayment of loan amount granted by the financial creditor and personal guarantors have committed default in repayment of the loan facility".

Two other Dhoot brothers

- Rajkumar Nandlal Dhoot and Pradeep Nandlal Dhoot - are already facing insolvency proceedings after they failed to pay a demand notice of ₹5,353.78 crore over defaults by Videocon Industries, the principal borrower, for which they were the personal guarantors.

Both had appealed the NCLT order passed in June last year before the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), which had declined to stay it.

Two group entities - Videocon Telecommunications Ltd (VTL) and Videocon Industries Ltd (VIL) - had entered into Rupee Term Loan Agreement, Rupee Facility Agreement, among



others for which Dhoot had guaranteed due repayment through several deeds of guarantees. Both the group companies defaulted in repayment of the loan facilities, following which SBI moved NCLT, which in June 2018 directed the initiation of insolvency proceedings against VIL and VTL.

Later, NCLT on August 8, 2019 decided to consolidate the corporate insolvency resolution process of VIL with 12 other Videocon group companies VTL, Electroworld, Value, Techno Kart, Applicomp, Sky, Techno, Millennium, Century, Evans Fraser, PE and CE India, which is still pending before it.

Later a demand notice was also issued to the personal

guarantor under the provisions of the IBC. As Dhoot failed to pay the default amount within 14 days of receipt of the IBC Demand Notice, SBI filed a plea for personal insolvency against Venugopal Dhoot.

Dhoot had contended that no reliance should be placed on report of the RP since the Deed of Guarantee was entered between him and SBICAP Trustee Company, whereas the present application has been filed by State Bank of India.

He also contended that debt claimed by them is barred by law of limitation as the present application was filed on September 1, 2020, whereas the first cause of action to invoke the Personal

Guarantee arose on the first date of default by the principal borrower on May 1, 2016 and not from being NPA from non-payment of interest in January 2017.

Rejecting it, NCLT said the period of limitation for initiating proceedings against a Personal Guarantor commences from the date of default in discharge of the guarantee obligation, and not from the date of default by the Principal Borrower.

"Accordingly, the present petition has been filed well within the prescribed period of limitation," it said while allowing the plea moved by SBI.

Over SBICAP, NCLT said it was acting "onshore security trustee" on behalf of the lenders, one of whom is SBI.

"Considering the above facts and circumstances and upon perusal of the documents on record viz. the demand notices, proof of service, guarantee deeds, joint deed of guarantee, etc... filed under Section 95 of the IBC, 2016 is hereby admitted and the Insolvency Resolution Process stands initiated against Venugopal Nandlal Dhoot," said the April 8 NCLT order.

### TCS case: Telangana Police engages with firms to ensure workplace safety

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Hyderabad

In the wake of an alleged sexual harassment and religious conversion case in Tata Consultancy Service (TCS) Nashik unit, Telangana DGP B Shivadhar Reddy has said the state police actively engages with companies to ensure a safe environment at workplaces. Responding to a suggestion from Union Minister Bandi Sanjay Kumar to convene an immediate meeting with heads of major IT companies, especially HR teams, following the Nashik IT firm sexual harassment case, Reddy said through initiatives like the Society for Cyberabad Security Council (SCSC)-a unique Police-Industry partnership the Telangana Police works with organisations, HR teams and communities to strengthen workplace safety and accountability.

Proactive measures such as security and safety audits of working women's hostels and PG accommodations, free 'She Shuttle' (bus) services, and 'SHE Teams', ensure con-



tinuous support, especially for women professionals, he said.

The Telangana DGP in a post on 'X' on Monday said, "The concerns raised by Honourable MoS, Home Shri @bandisanjay\_bjp are noted. However, it is clarified that the Telangana Police remains firmly committed to ensuring a safe, inclusive & harassment-free environment for every citizen. We believe in coexistence with harmony, dignity & mutual respect."

### Ministry notifies amendment to streamline fee for overloaded vehicles

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The Road Transport Ministry has revised the fee structure for the overloading of trucks, under which vehicles found carrying excess load on national highways will be charged based on the percentage of overloading. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MORTH) on Tuesday said it has notified the National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Fourth Amendment Rules, 2026, aimed at strengthening enforcement and ensuring rationalised fee collection for overloaded vehicles on National Highways.

The amended rules will be effective from April 15, 2026. According to the notification, a revised framework has been introduced under Rule 10 for the levy of fees on vehicles carrying



loads beyond the permissible Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW).

The amendment seeks to promote compliance with prescribed load limits and enhance road safety while protecting highway infrastructure. According to the ministry, no overboard fee will be charged for up to 10 per cent of excess load.

"Over 10 per cent and up to 40 per cent excess load, fee charged at 2 times the base rate," it said, adding

that above 40 per cent, the fee is charged at 4 times the base rate.

The ministry said overloading will be determined using certified weight measurement devices installed at the fee plaza. "In cases where weight facilities are not available at fee plazas, no overload fee shall be levied," it added. According to the ministry, overloading fees will be collected through FASTag only.

## DAILY SUDOKU

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   |   | 9 | 4 |   | 6 |   | 2 |   |
| 7 |   |   |   | 8 |   |   |   | 9 |
|   |   | 8 | 3 |   |   |   | 1 | 7 |
| 1 |   |   | 7 |   |   |   |   |   |
|   | 3 |   |   |   |   |   | 9 |   |
|   |   |   | 8 |   |   |   |   | 1 |
| 8 | 1 |   |   | 5 | 2 |   |   |   |
| 2 |   |   | 8 |   |   |   |   | 6 |
| 5 |   | 3 |   | 6 |   | 9 |   |   |

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

### HOW TO SOLVE IT

Sudoku is a logic puzzle where you fill a 9x9 grid so that numbers 1 to 9 appear once in every row, column, and 3x3 box, using elimination and logical deduction - no maths involved.



### SOLUTION (14.04.26)

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 7 |
| 1 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 4 |
| 5 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 8 | 9 | 6 |
| 2 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 3 |
| 4 | 3 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 9 | 4 | 8 |
| 9 | 6 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 1 |
| 3 | 1 | 4 | 9 | 7 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 2 |
| 7 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 8 | 9 |

## DOUBLE CROSSWORD

WEDNESDAY | APRIL 15, 2026

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|

- ACROSS**
- It's seed, but a songbird has an ear for it! (5)
  - Gong that could give you a dizzy head during dinner? (5)
  - Draws the line at Australian football (5)
  - Garment that takes a bit of machining (3)
  - New angle, we gather (5)
  - The overgrown boy continues to be resented (7)
  - Depend on keeping a brave heart in a race (5)
  - Recite, let's suppose (3)
  - Airmen crashed in the sea (6)
  - Best position to make a dramatic observation? (3,4)
  - Having a relationship in the making (4)

- DOWN**
- One of the many macho males (2-3)
  - In general, knives get ahead! (7)
  - The painter possesses about a pound (4)
  - To an artist, simply desert; but actually it's a mountain (6)
  - Sounds fishy, but it's a hi-fi component (5)
  - An American saloon (5)
  - Chap with a black belt (3)
  - They can help get people into hot water (7)
  - Being slack, is said to be one of the "have nots" (3)
  - Survived upsetting the devil (5)
  - Long to get the bit of money you deserve (5)

- What a scorcher will do at a tourist centre by the sea (4)
- Bored by all the square-bashing? (7)
- Not the only one given short change out East (6)
- The mien of an absolutely topping redhead (3)
- Measure used by the tiler? (5)
- The debacle when a couple separate (5-2)
- To be invited, apply to the Editor (5)
- A guy can get attached to her (3)
- It involves kings and queens in a witches' sabbath (5)
- Modestly having a fling at the ultimate Aunt Sally (5)
- Regarding a bit of monkeying (5)

- Flier making a drama out of fifty quid? (7)
- Alias Coral? (5)
- Coastal feature of great height, it would seem! (5)
- 23 Angelic phrases, possibly (7)
- Elegant, like a frock (6)
- 25 Is it among the sillier attempts at deception? (3)
- 27 A taxing part (5)
- 28 Remove those pointed ears, possibly? (3)
- Instrument a bighead stuck together with glue (5)
- 32 A runner can be one (4)
- 33 One of the bunch has a bit of a black eye! (3)

**SOLUTION (14.04.26)**

|              |              |             |               |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1. Stash     | 19. Fined    | 2. Tart-ar  | 15. Bear-d    |
| 6. C-edded   | 20. Haggie   | 3. Spares   | 16. Steam     |
| 9. Pottery   | 22. Irma     | 4. Ho-t     | 18. Be-gin    |
| 10. Croat    | 24. Tis      | 5. Slop-t   | 19. Floo-re-d |
| 11. Ozobed   | 25. King-Dom | 6. Crooked  | 21. Airl-y    |
| 12. SAB-ot   | 26. Do-yen   | 7. Eyot     | 22. Ign-ore   |
| 13. Make out | 27. M-in-or  | 8. Erebus   | 23. Moo-red   |
| 15. Bus      | 28. Board    | 9. Chap     | 25. Keats     |
| 17. Iris     | 29. Neither  | 12. Susie 1 | 26. D-one     |
| 18. B-ehest  | 30. Typed    | 3. Might    | 28. Bet       |
|              | 31. Teddy    | 14. Kings   |               |

### Culinary Delight: The Inspiring Journey of Chef Pradeep Biswal



The culinary journey of Chef Pradeep Biswal, aptly titled "Culinary Delight," is a story defined by passion, perseverance, and an unwavering commitment to excellence.

Chef Biswal's journey began in 2008 when he enrolled at PTU Ghaziabad's Institute of Hospitality and Tourism Management (IHTM), overcoming numerous personal and professional challenges to pursue his dream. During his formative years, he diligently honed his skills, laying a strong foundation in the culinary arts.

He went on to gain invaluable experience working with renowned, old-world hospitality groups, as well as a diverse range of restaurants and hotels. His career saw a significant leap when he worked with prestigious establishments such as Hotel Broadway, Indian Accent, Habitat World, and Epicentre. During this time, he had the opportunity to collaborate with celebrated chefs including Manish Mehrotra and Rajiv Malhotra, further refining his craft.

Chef Biswal's talent was notably recognized during his tenure at Chor Bizarre Restaurant, where he served as a Kitchen Executive. In this role, he not only supervised kitchen operations but also continued to evolve his culinary identity.

His journey then took an international turn as he moved to the United States to join Feringhee - Modern Indian Cuisine in Arizona. Here, Chef Biswal began developing his own distinctive style, creating innovative interpretations of modern Indian cuisine.

Driven by a desire to learn and push boundaries, he collaborated with acclaimed chefs such as Sujan Sarkar and Karan Mittal, experimenting with new techniques and contemporary expressions of Indian flavors. His culinary exploration further expanded across global kitchens, where he continued to innovate and refine his approach.

Today, Chef Pradeep Biswal is based in New York as the Head Chef of Ambassadors Clubhouse Restaurant, where he is actively experimenting with new flavors, ingredients, and techniques. His work reflects a seamless blend of tradition and modernity, showcasing his deep respect for Indian culinary heritage while embracing global influences. Chef Pradeep developed recipes with Michelin starred chef Shantilal Bhushan at Ambassadors Clubhouse London.

Chef Biswal's journey is a testament to resilience and dedication. Despite early challenges, he persevered, continuously learning from some of the finest minds in the industry. His story serves as an inspiration to aspiring chefs around the world.

With his innovative approach to Indian cuisine and a remarkable ability to craft unique, memorable dishes, Chef Pradeep Biswal continues to win admirers globally solidifying his place as a rising force in the culinary world. His cuisine has already made Ambassadors Clubhouse as one of the top-rated restaurants in New York City.

## No broadcaster for FIFA World Cup in India – A bad sign for football?



**SHAKYA MITRA**

With just under two months to go before one of the year's biggest global events, the FIFA World Cup, there is still no confirmed broadcaster in India. For a country that has steadily grown into one of the largest sports consumption markets in the world, India currently stands out as the only major territory yet to secure a television or digital partner for football's biggest global spectacle. The situation is particularly striking when viewed through a historical lens. The World Cup first appeared on Indian television screens in 1982, albeit limited to the semifinals and final, before being broadcast in full from the 1986 edition onwards.

caster has stepped forward. In contrast, just for a single Indian Premier League match, the broadcast rights were sold for \$13 million in the 2023-27 cycle.

A major factor dampening enthusiasm is the timing of matches. With the 2026 tournament set to be hosted across North America, time zone differences pose a significant challenge for Indian audiences. The majority of the early matches are expected to begin between 11.30 pm and 12.30 am IST, while many games will commence deep into the night. Some fixtures will even kick off in the early morning hours, between 6.30 am and 9.30 am. Late-night broadcasts traditionally attract lower advertising rates, and brands may hesitate to invest heavily in slots that do not guarantee mass viewership.

The ripple effects extend beyond just television ratings. Major global tournaments like the FIFA World Cup typically energise a parallel economy; restaurants, bars, fan parks, and community screenings thrive during such events. However, with matches scheduled at inconvenient hours, this ecosystem was, in any case, at a natural disadvantage. Additionally, broadcasters may find it difficult to justify elaborate



studio programming, a key component of sports coverage, given the limited audience engagement expected during odd hours.

Concerns over the timing of matches may not be a phenomenon restricted to international football, a sport with limited global participation by Indians. Even the most popular sport, cricket, had a lukewarm response during the 2007 Cricket World Cup

held in the West Indies, with matches concluding well into the late-night and early-morning hours. India's early exit from the group stage after playing only three games further compounded the problem, leading to a sharp decline in viewership for the rest of the tournament. India has never played the FIFA World Cup, meaning that global stars and traditional footballing nations largely

drive viewership. Over the years, the World Cup has nonetheless built a loyal following in India, cutting across regions and demographics. However, the expanded format of the 2026 edition, with an increase from 32 to 48 teams and 40 extra matches, introduces new complexities. While greater inclusivity is a positive step globally, it may dilute the overall competitiveness of early-stage fixtures, especially those involving less prominent teams. Combined with inconvenient timings, this could make it harder to sustain viewer interest throughout the tournament, even if matches by the round of 16 onwards can get exciting.

Competitions like the English Premier League and the Bundesliga are shown live, while leagues such as La Liga and Serie A currently lack television broadcasters in the country. This trend suggests a cooling of commercial interest in football properties, even as digital consumption continues to grow. Yet, it would be premature to interpret the current situation as a definitive decline of football in India. The World Cup occupies a unique position in the global sporting calendar. It transcends club loyalties and regional preferences, drawing in casual viewers who may not follow the sport regularly. Importantly, the tournament will take place in June (and run into July), a period when schools and colleges across India are typically on vacation. This timing has historically allowed younger audiences to engage deeply with the World Cup, often shaping lifelong sporting interests. For many fans, their earliest memories of football are tied to late-night World Cup screenings during summer holidays.

There may be a glimmer of hope in that the Government of India has recognised the FIFA World Cup as an event of national importance, with the opening game, semifinals, and final to be broadcast on the national broadcaster Doordarshan. Before the 2002 World Cup, the first ever shown on satellite television, the World Cup was broadcast on Doordarshan in India. Despite the current uncertainty, there remains cautious optimism. Historically, high-profile sporting events in India have often found broadcast partners closer to their start dates, once commercial terms become more favourable. The same could happen with the 2026 World Cup. Whether through television, digital streaming, or a combination of both, it is hoped that a solution will emerge before the tournament begins.

Shakya Mitra is a sports management consultant with over a decade of experience in sports promotion and development. His work across both the private and government sectors gives him a well-rounded view of India's sports ecosystem.

### BRIEFLY

#### Ghana seeks Carlos Queiroz as coach weeks from World Cup

World Cup-bound Ghana appointed Carlos Queiroz as the new men's national coach, less than two months out from the tournament. "Coach Queiroz begins work immediately," the Ghana Football Association said in a statement. Ghana opens its World Cup campaign in Group L against Panama on June 17 in Toronto, then faces England outside Boston and Croatia in Philadelphia. The Black Stars also have warmups against Mexico on May 22 and Wales on June 2. "This is not just another job – it is a mission," Queiroz said in a statement on the GFA website. "And I am ready to give everything of my experience and knowledge once again, in service of the game and the happiness of People." Queiroz was chosen from more than 600 local and foreign applications because of his extensive World Cup experience. He qualified South Africa for the 2002 World Cup, guided his native Portugal to the knockout phase in 2010, and coached Iran at the 2014 and 2018 tournaments. Queiroz was most recently in charge of Oman, which failed to qualify for the World Cup. He stepped down three weeks ago. He's replaced Otto Addo, who was fired on March 31 after four straight losses in warmup games.



### Iranian club to play Asian Champions League last-16 match in Saudi Arabia

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Jeddah

Iranian club Tractor has arrived in Saudi Arabia amid the war in the Middle East and confirmed it will play in the AFC Champions League Elite round of 16. The West Asia playoffs were postponed in March after the United States and Israel launched a war against Iran. After the round of 16 was rescheduled and Iran's game against Shabab Al-Ahli of the United Arab Emirates moved to the Saudi city of Jeddah, questions lingered over whether Tractor – the 2025 Iranian league champion – would take part. Iran has fired missiles into Saudi Arabia, a US ally. Tractor arrived in Jeddah on Sunday after a long journey; traveling by land from its home city of Tabriz in northwestern Iran into Turkey and then flying from



Istanbul. "Our situation going into this match is complicated, and the 90 minutes against Shabab Al-Ahli will be difficult for us," Tractor coach Mohammad Rabei said in a press conference on Monday, a day before the match. The team has not played a competitive game since Feb. 28 as the Iranian league has been suspended. "We have high ambitions

to win our upcoming matches and reach the Asian final," Rabei added. "Starting tomorrow everyone will see the high level we possess, despite the major challenges we have faced recently." On Monday, Karim Benzema missed a penalty in a shootout as Saudi Arabia's Al-Hilal lost to Qatar's Al-Sadd 4-2 after their round-of-16 match ended 3-3 after extra

time. Sergej Milinkovic-Savic opened the scoring for Al-Hilal, a four-time champion, in the first half but Brazilian forward Claudinho equalized seven minutes later. Shortly after halftime, Salem Al-Dawsari put Al-Hilal back in front, only for Rafa Mujica to level again. Marcos Leonardo restored the lead in the 67th minute, and three minutes later former Liverpool forward Roberto Firmino made it 3-3 to send the game into extra time and then penalties. Elsewhere, Riyad Mahrez scored after 117 minutes to give defending champion Al-Ahli of Saudi Arabia a 1-0 win over Al-Duhail of Qatar. Earlier in extra time, England striker Ivan Toney missed a penalty for Al-Ahli. Jeddah will stage the rest of the tournament. The quarterfinals begin on Thursday and the final is scheduled for April 25.

### Decisive double from Okafor helps Leeds win

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Manchester

Noah Okafor scored twice in the first half hour as Leeds United beat Manchester United 2-1 at Old Trafford to climb six points clear of the Premier League relegation zone. It was the first time Leeds has won a league match at Old Trafford since 1981 and the Yorkshire club moved up to 16th place in the 20-team table. "I feel tired and relieved but also proud of the boys," Leeds coach Daniel Farke said. "It was a fantastic performance. We are into the crunch time of the season and you have to keep your nerve and stick to your plan." Manchester remained in third but missed a chance to move clear of Aston Villa,

coach Michael Carrick had never lost a game at home since replacing Ruben Amorim in mid-January and his task got even harder 10 minutes into the second period when Lisandro Martinez was sent off for pulling Calvert-Lewin's hair. However, the 10 men kept plugging away in what was a pulsating end-to-end encounter and got a goal back after 68 minutes when Casemiro bulleted a header past Karl Darlow from a Ruben Fernandes cross. Both sides had more chances in a thrilling last 20 minutes. United had two shots knocked off the goal-line and Leeds failed to make the most of its frequent counterattacks but neither could find the net again. "We didn't start the game particularly



### Levante rises off bottom of La Liga points table



Carlos Espi scored his seventh goal in six games as Levante beat Getafe 1-0 and moved off the bottom of La Liga. The 20-year-old Espi had an early let off after eight minutes when the referee downgraded a red card to a yellow and he was decisive with eight minutes left when he stooped to head home the only goal. Levante should have wrapped up the points more easily but Getafe goalkeeper David Soria saved two penalties, one from Adrian Dela after an hour and then again from Ivan Romero in stoppage time. To make matters worse for Getafe, Zaid Romero was sent off in the dying seconds. The result lifted Levante off the bottom of the table and continued a recent revival that has seen Levante take 11 points from a possible last 18. It was two points ahead of Oviedo. Elche was third to last. The bottom three go down.

### LIVERPOOL TARGETS COMEBACK AGAINST PSG



Liverpool is aiming for another famous Champions League comeback against Paris Saint-Germain on Tuesday. The six-time European champion trails 2-0 after the first leg of the quarterfinal in Paris. But it is hoping for the type of Anfield night that saw it rout Barcelona 4-0 in the semifinals in 2019 to overturn a 3-0 first leg loss. "There is a belief that we can do special things... but we need to be very, very special," coach Arne Slot said ahead of the match. "We know we need an exceptional performance to go through to the next round." Defending champion PSG totally dominated the first leg last week and could have ran up a more commanding lead if it had taken its chances. Coach Luis Enrique warned his team about the potential to slip up with the semifinals within touching distance. "You need to be really careful, there could be pitfalls and it could be a trap," he said. "Everyone says, You won (the first leg) easily and you were much better than (the opposition)." (AP)

### Barcelona desperate to return to Champions League semis

TALES AZZONIAP ■ Madrid

Barcelona and Atletico Madrid meet for the fifth time in less than two months on Tuesday, with the Catalan club needing to overcome a two-goal disadvantage to return to the Champions League semifinals. Atletico is at home to defend its 2-0 win from the first leg and try to make it to the last four of the European competition for the first time in nearly a decade.



Before last week's first leg, Barcelona beat Atletico 2-1 in Madrid in a Spanish league game on April 4. The teams had already met twice in the Copa del Rey semifinals, when Atletico

won 4-0 at home and then advanced to the final despite a 3-0 loss in Barcelona in the second leg. Atletico last made it to the semifinals in 2017. Barcelona lost to Inter Milan in last year's last four.

Coach Diego Simeone has not ruled out Jan Oblak's return even though the goalkeeper hasn't played since March 10 because of a muscle injury. He has been practicing with the squad for the last few days and is expected to be fit to play. Barcelona coach Hansi Flick has not ruled out midfielder Frenkie de Jong making his first start after a long absence because of a hamstring injury. Whichever team advances on Tuesday will face Arsenal or Sporting Lisbon in the semifinals. Arsenal won the first leg 1-0 in Lisbon last week. Their second leg in England is on Wednesday. (AP)

### Fiorentina beats Lazio to allay relegation fears



Fiorentina beat Lazio 1-0 and moved eight points clear of the Serie A relegation zone. Fiorentina's season-best five-game unbeaten run lifted Paolo Vanoli's men above Cagliari into 15th place. Robin Gosens got the only goal in the 28th minute when he headed home a cross from Jack Harrison, the winger on loan from Leeds United. Lazio lost for the first time since March 1. Lazio dominated the match, particularly in the first half. It remained in ninth place.

### In Miami, soccer balls are turned into one-of-a-kind art

TIM REYNOLDSAP ■ Miami

Lili Cantero thinks of soccer as family. The artist from Paraguay – someone who has built a devoted following in the soccer world, with her work admired by Argentina captain and Inter Miami star Lionel Messi, among others – still has fond childhood memories of gathering with relatives around a radio to listen to matches almost every weekend. "That's where my love for the game began," Cantero said. "For me, soccer, futbol, is being with family and being with friends. The game is not just a game. It's a culture. It's love. It is family. It is friendship." And now, it is her work. Leading up to the start of the World Cup in June, Cantero will be putting her specialty – painted soccer balls – in 10 different businesses in the Miami neighborhood known as Wynwood, a place known for having turned warehouses into art galleries and where just about anything can be turned into a mural. It is the heartbeat of the Miami art community, and for Cantero, the marriage of her work and soccer seemed a perfect fit. "I think it's the perfect combination in the perfect moment with the perfect people," said Cantero, who has called Miami home for

about 2 1/2 years. "Messi coming in this city was... an interesting way to grow this sport here in this city and in this country. Because many kids, they look at him with so many aspirations and dreams and everything, so

think they can make a decision to play this sport and also to grow in this sport. And I think that's beautiful." Cantero's approach is simple: she believes soccer, like art, can bring people of different races, different



backgrounds, different languages, different everything, together. Her biggest break might have come in 2018, when a pair of soccer cleats she designed – adorned by images of Messi and his family – were sent to the soccer legend. Messi posed with the cleats, the image of that moment went viral and Cantero suddenly had the game's official seal of approval. Diego Maradona and Pele both knew of her work. Same goes for former Brazil forward Ronaldinho, FIFA President Gianni Infantino and Messi's former Barcelona and Inter Miami teammate Jordi Alba, among many others. (AP)

with which it is tied on points. Leeds started on the front foot and almost scored in the second minute but Senne Lammers made an excellent point-blank save from Dominic Calvert-Lewin. However, its pressure paid off two minutes later when Okafor side-footed home with style after everyone missed Jayden Bogle's deep cross from the right. Leeds was all over United during the opening half hour and a second arrived in the 29th. A ball was half cleared to Okafor, whose first-time shot from outside the box took a slight deflection as it flew past Lammers and into the far corner. United interim



## Chennai Super Kings beat Kolkata Knight Riders by 32 runs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Chennai

Chennai Super Kings beat Kolkata Knight Riders by 32 runs to record their second consecutive victory in the Indian Premier League here on Tuesday.

After putting on 192/5 on board, CSK restricted KKR to 160/7, with Nour Ahmad returning excellent figures of 4-0-21-3.

Rovman Powell (31 not out) and Ramandeep Singh (35) fought well with valiant knocks but could not avert a defeat despite a 63-run stand. Sanju Samson (48) and Dewald Brevis (41) made useful contributions as Chennai Super Kings crossed 190. Ayush Mhatre hit six fours

and two sixes to make 38 off 17 balls.

Earlier in the game, Kolkata Knight Riders produced one of their best bowling performances, riding on the spin trio of Sunil Narine, Anukul Roy, and Varun Chakaravathy, to restrict Chennai Super Kings to a manageable 192 for five in an IPL match here on Tuesday.

After Sanju Samson (48 off 32 balls) and Ayush Mhatre (38 off 17 balls) took the score to 72 for 2 at the end of the powerplay, off-spinner Narine (1/21 in 4 overs), slow left-arm Anukul (1/21 in 3 overs) and Varun (0/26 in 3 overs) gave only 68 runs in the 10 overs that they sent down cumulatively, while getting two wickets.

In the 14 overs post power-



play, CSK managed only 120 runs at less than nine runs per over, and it was all down to the KKR spinners.

At the back-end, Kartik Tyagi (2/35 in 4 overs) bowled fast, in the late 140s, and also mixed it with pace off deliveries out of batter's arc to make things difficult.

Dewald Brevis (41 off 29 balls) showed glimpses of his class while Sarfaraz Khan (23 off 18 balls) once again displayed his cheeky cricketing smarts in a half-century plus stand, but CSK were at least 20 runs short of a par score on this track.

At the start, Samson teed off with three boundaries, including a streaky one off Vaibhav Arora's in his opening over. However, it was U-19 World

Cup winning captain Mhatre, who upped the ante straight-away with back-to-back sixes off Cameron Green, apart from hitting a couple of boundaries.

The standout would be a Kapil Dev-style 'Nataraja Shor' behind square. He also hit another open-chested six over mid-wicket. Mhatre's knock really gave the CSK innings the required momentum, even as Samson played the second fiddle during that phase.

While his innings could be termed far from being a smooth effort, he did show his touch with one straight six off Kartik Tyagi, who later came back with a fast 148.1 click-off-cutter to breach Samson's defence.

## I had written this somewhere that I'd take 4-5 wickets on debut: Hinge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Hyderabad

"I wrote it down somewhere that I could take four or five wickets on debut," said Sunrisers Hyderabad's Praful Hinge (4/34) after a historic outing against Rajasthan Royals in the IPL on Monday.

The Vidarbha pacer turned his manifestation into reality with a sensational three-wicket first over burst that effectively dismantled the table-toppers' chase of 217 before it even began.

Hinge ran through RR's in-form top order in a stunning opening spell of 2-0-6-4 which paved the way for SRH's massive win by 57 runs and first defeat in five matches for the visitors.

"I had written this somewhere that I will take 4-5 wickets on my debut. I thought of dominating the powerplay. I believe in it (manifestation)," Hinge told the broadcaster after the match.

"At the age of 13, I started cricket. Did not know what leather ball cricket was. Asked my father to join a club. But he said I was too young. Then he just took me there, and I kept playing after it. Want to dedicate this award to my family."

Hinge claimed he had told his teammates that he would dismiss RR's Vaibhav Sooryavanshi off a bouncer. "I had told people that I would bowl a bouncer to him and get him out. I just



wanted to get him out. Varun bhai (our bowling coach) helped me plan it, so thank you," he said.

Hinge's four-for was

accompanied by a fine spell by another debutant pacer Sakib Hussain, who claimed 4/24.

"Every player hopes for a

debut like this, so it feels really good. I'm very happy. The (SRH) bowling coach informed me a day before the game that I would be playing. From then on, my focus was simply on performing well. Mentally, I prepared myself to give my best," Hussain said.

"Varun (Aaron) bhai has been working with me for the past four years. Whatever improvement you see in my bowling is because of him. I give him full credit. It felt amazing. To have such a performance in my debut match is very special," he added.

SRH skipper Ishan Kishan said it was crucial for his side to gauge the hunger in their uncapped fast bowlers

Hinge and Hussain. "You also have to look how hungry your young bowlers are, how motivated they feel and you know how much they are hungry to play these games and I think they were working out throughout the season," he said.

"They were working with fielding, our bowling coach Varun Aaron and they were just trying to give their best, talking to all the experienced players. They especially did well in the practice matches as well, so I think this was the right move today," Kishan added.

Kishan said he found communicating with the bowlers difficult while keeping wickets.



## COVID vaccines caused legend's death: Warne's son

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Sydney

Four years after Shane Warne's death left the cricketing world in shock, his son Jackson has asserted that the spin legend's demise was probably caused by the "three or four" COVID vaccines that he was "forced to take for work."

Speaking on '2 Worlds Collide' podcast, Jackson, however, also acknowledged that his father's underlying health issues. Warne was 52 when he died in Thailand in 2022 after suffering a heart attack.

"I definitely think that it (COVID vaccine) was involved. I don't even think saying that is controversial anymore. Even if dad had underlying health issues, I think this brought it out right to the surface and that's one thing that I've always struggled with," Jackson said.

"My first impression, as soon as I hung up the phone (after receiving the news of Warne's death), I instantly

blamed the government. I instantly blamed COVID and the vaccine."

Jackson said he barely managed to stop himself from vocalising his exact thoughts at the memorial service.

"It was probably smart I didn't, I would be in a very different position if I did. But that was how I felt," Jackson said.

"Yes, a lot of people were dying of heart attacks before. But dad was okay, I think he might have got three or four (vaccine doses), he didn't want to get them, he was forced to get them for work. He was forced to get them like everybody else," he asserted.

"...I try not to think about it too much because all that does is fester into anger. That anger is not good for anybody," he added.

Giving an insight into the lifestyle of his father, who was known to be indulgent, Jackson said it was relatively healthy despite the smoking and drinking.

## T20 WC star Samson named ICC Men's Player of the Month for March

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Dubai

India opener Sanju Samson was on Tuesday named ICC Men's Player of the Month for March, capping a stellar run that saw him play a defining role in the team's triumphant T20 World Cup campaign.

Samson did not get to play in the early part of the tournament but was the standout performer in the big games towards the end and helped India retain the title.

His latest honour also extends a unique streak, with players from different countries winning the award over the past five months including South Africa's Simon Harmer, Australia's Mitchell Starc, New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell and Pakistan's Sahibzada Farhan.

"Winning the ICC Player of the Month award is an incredible feeling, especially as it comes during what has been the most unforgettable phase of my cricketing journey. Playing a part in India's triumph at the Men's T20 World Cup was truly a dream realised, and it took some time for the magnitude of that moment to fully sink in," Samson said.

"This is an exciting era for Indian cricket, with immense talent across the board. I feel grateful for the opportunities I've received, and for the trust and support from my team-mates and coaching staff that have allowed me to perform at my best."



Not a regular part of the playing XI in the initial stages of the tournament, Samson was eventually called up for India's must-win Super 8 fixtures. After starting off with 24 against Zimbabwe, he picked form and didn't look back.

The opener missed out on a century against the West Indies by just three runs, but his attacking 97 not out set up India's spot in the semifinal.

A blistering 89 against England at the Wankhede helped India to 253 for 7, and the target proved elusive for the English who missed out by seven runs on March 5.

An equally amazing 89 was churned out during India's successful title defence in Ahmedabad, securing a 96-run win.

## Indian cricketers dominate Wisden awards

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ London

Indian cricketers dominated the Wisden Almanack 2026 honours, securing seven of the nine awards, with Deepti Sharma and Abhishek Sharma leading the way after being named Women's Cricketer of the Year and T20 Cricketer of the Year respectively.

Shubman Gill, Mohammed Siraj, Rishabh Pant and Ravindra Jadeja were named among Wisden's Five Cricketers of the Year, following their exploits in last year's Test series in England.

The only non-Indian winners were premier Australian pacer Mitchell Starc, who was named Men's Cricketer in the



World, and England batter Haseeb Hameed, who was also included among the Five Cricketers of the Year.

Deepti earned the honour after emerging as the top-wicket taker in last year's ICC Women's ODI World Cup with 22 wickets.

The all-rounder's effort helped India land their maiden global title, beating South Africa in the final in Mumbai. She also made 215 runs from nine matches with three fifties.

Abhishek had a breakout 2025 season, scoring

859 runs from 21 matches at an awesome strike-rate of 193 with a hundred and five fifties.

India's Test skipper Gill was in prolific form during the English summer, scoring 754 runs, which played a crucial role in India securing a 2-2 draw in the five-match series. Notably, he amassed 430 runs in the Edgbaston Test alone.

Pacer Siraj was the top wicket-taker in the Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy series, taking 23 scalps. While Pant made 479 runs before an injury that he suffered in the fourth Test forced him to sit out of the fifth match. He braved a toe fracture to score a 54 in the second innings at Manchester.

## Suryakumar Yadav's future could be discussed post UK T20Is

KUSHAN SARKAR ■ New Delhi

Suryakumar Yadav may have led India to an impressive T20 World Cup title defence but given his patchy batting form, serious questions remain on whether he will be in the scheme of things for the country's Los Angeles Olympics campaign in 2028.

And in this backdrop, India's tour of England and Ireland in June-July will be crucial for the skipper as more than his captaincy, his batting would be under scrutiny.

The tour could decide whether he will be given another two years till the next phase of big events in 2028 which includes the

Olympics and T20 World Cup in Australia.

Suryakumar still remains the first choice for head coach Gautam Gambhir, who is expecting a contract extension till the 2028 T20 World Cup in Australia.

However, it will be interesting to see whether the Ajit Agarkar-led selection committee agrees with his view as the T20 skipper will be pushing 38 at the time of Olympics.

"Obviously Surya is now leading the team. But he also has to ensure that as a batter, he maintains a level of consistency in his performances. Obviously, he will lead in the UK but after that, discussions going forward till 2028 could



be purely performance-based," a BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity. Suryakumar had a torrid

2025 in which his strike rate dropped to less than 120 and he couldn't manage a single fifty.

## Ben Stokes shuts down talk of a rift with Brendon McCullum

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ London

England captain Ben Stokes says any suggestion he and coach Brendon McCullum are not aligned "is a massive overstatement."

Were there disagreements between them during their Ashes debacle in Australia? Yes.

Was it any different than normal? No.

Stokes and McCullum have been in lock step since 2022 and they crashed and burned when they lost to Australia 4-1 last winter.

Both men supported the other after being humbled but the Ashes review threw up signs of tension.

Stokes wanted to play more conservatively while McCullum wanted to double down on all-out attack.

Since the Ashes, Stokes has kept a low profile. When he and McCullum kept their jobs last month following the Ashes review, he posted on social media that he was happy to continue working with McCullum and the post-Ashes period had been



the hardest period of his captaincy.

The captain has used an in-house interview with the England and Wales Cricket Board to address his relationship with McCullum.

"Saying we weren't aligned, I think, is a massive overstatement," Stokes said. "When you're in a position of leadership along with someone else, if anyone thinks that you're always going to agree on everything then it's just impossible.

"To me, that isn't a healthy

environment for sport, in particular. You need debate. You need discussions. Then you end up getting to the place you both want to end up getting to.

"As similar as me and Brendon are, we're also dissimilar in other areas as well. We agree 95 per cent of the time on things, but those 5 per cent things that we might have different views on, we talk about it between each other and then we end up getting to the place where we want to get to."

## PSL hands Muzarabani 2-year ban for choosing IPL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lahore

Blessing Muzarabani has been handed a two year ban by the Pakistan Super League (PSL) after the Zimbabwe pacer chose to play the Indian Premier League while having a deal with a PSL franchise.

Muzarabani was signed as a replacement player for Islamabad United but he decided to withdraw from PSL after being approached by Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL.

"Professionalism in franchise-based leagues requires participants to act with transparency and consistency. Entering into a conflicting engagement while a prior binding agreement subsists represents a departure from the expected standards of the game.

"Such conduct, if left unaddressed, erodes the reliability of dealings and the confidence that franchises, regulators, and stakeholders place in professional engagements.