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 Lionel Messi is in Argentina's World Cup squad as coach Scaloni calms injury fears



## PM supervising NEET: Govt to SC

The SC observed that institutional credibility matters more than individual assurances

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
 New Delhi

Observing displeasure on the NEET administration, the Supreme Court on Friday said that "we should not disappoint our youngsters" and stressed for the accountability. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the court that the Government is seriously concerned about the youth.

"Some new mechanisms are also put in place for the June 21 examination. It may not be appropriate to divulge what is there, otherwise the very purpose will be frustrated. It is being monitored at the highest possible executive level," the SG said. "The prime minister personally is supervising this so that there is no lacuna," he added.

The top court was hearing pleas, including the one seeking a direction to replace or restructure the National Testing Agency (NTA), which is responsible for conducting the NEET-UG, with a robust and autonomous body to conduct the medical entrance examination.

"The real problem won't



Representative image

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stop till actual accountability arises," the bench observed. The NTA told the SC that it is all set to conduct NEET-UG in the Computer-Based Test (CBT) mode from next year instead of the pen and paper mode after consulting the Union Government.

"Accountability will be effective only when you

know on whose shoulders, which individual shoulders, the responsibility lies," the SC said.

The bench cited the example of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and said there was never a situation like paper leak in the examinations conducted by the commission and the NTA needs to learn from

other institutions.

"It is actually very traumatic if something like this happens, not just for the students, but also their families and everybody," the bench said, adding, "They invest so much of emotion". The bench also highlighted the problem that most of the institutions were ad-hoc.

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**MPs briefed on NEET-UG leak**



NTA Director General Abhishek Singh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICES  
 New Delhi

On Friday, CBI chief Praveen Sood briefed a parliamentary panel on the investigation into the NEET-UG paper leak, sharing details on arrests and efforts to identify other suspects. He was joined by top officials from the education ministry, including Higher Education Secretary Vineet Joshi, NTA Director General Abhishek Singh, and National Medical Commission Chairman Abhijit Chandrakant Shet.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

## Amit Shah unveils quad grid for borders

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH  
 New Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has launched a sweeping plan to overhaul India's border security, unveiling a new "quadrangular security grid" to achieve zero infiltration. Shah said the Government may expand BSF's role, assigning new sectors and emphasising 'territorial security' with border protection. The BSF now guards the borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The new framework will be launched during the BSF's 60th anniversary as part of the Smart Border Security Project with major investments. In the quadrangular model, four stakeholders share border protection responsibilities within a coordinated grid: the BSF will focus on frontline border guarding; the Army will provide military backup in sensitive areas; the civil administration will manage governance and infrastructure development; and the police will enforce law and order, investigate crimes, and settle land disputes.

The Indian Army and the armed forces serve as the primary military backup, intervening in high-threat



Union Home Minister Amit Shah during an event, in Bhuj, Gujarat

scenarios and engaging with heavily armed adversaries. Residents and border communities are responsible for being vigilant and promptly reporting suspicious movement, acting as early warning providers for the security forces.

The civil administration is responsible for local governance, including overseeing infrastructure projects and implementing development initiatives in border districts. State police manage law enforcement by preventing and investigating crime, and by resolving land disputes, working collaboratively with the BSF, the Army, and the civil administration.

Shah emphasised that

these four pillars must operate seamlessly, sharing responsibility beyond the fence into a 15-50 km "territorial" zone.

This broader approach covers infiltration, smuggling, trafficking, terror financing, and demographic threats. Drones, radars, AI surveillance, and smart watchtowers will be used. Shah outlined the grid during recent border visits.

He told BSF troops that geography can no longer justify the existence of security gaps. Once implemented, the grid will make borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh "impenetrable." These borders span over 15,000 km.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

## The ByStander



PIONEER IN SHORT

### SC TELLS HCs TO FAST-TRACK JUDGMENTS

The Supreme Court on Friday directed High Courts to deliver judgments within three months of reserving orders, citing that delays cause irreparable loss to litigants, particularly in matters involving personal liberty. A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joydip Ghosh issued the guidelines while hearing a plea on delayed uploading of a High Court judgment. It said bail orders must be pronounced the same day, and if reserved, must be delivered and uploaded by the next day. The court further directed that orders granting bail or suspension of sentence should be communicated immediately to jail authorities, enabling release of the undertrial or convict preferably the same day or by the next day.

### DIESEL BIOFUEL MANDATE LIKELY SOON

India may mandate blending isobutanol with diesel later this year to boost energy security and cut emissions in the transport sector, Road Transport Secretary V Umashankar said on Friday. Speaking at the CII Multimodal Transportation and Logistics Summit, he said Bharat Petroleum's trials on isobutanol blending have shown encouraging results. The ministry is also expanding ethanol-based fuel initiatives, having issued draft norms for E85 and E100 vehicle manufacturing to support flex-fuel and biofuel vehicles. India has already achieved 20 per cent ethanol blending with petrol.

## Twisha death probe deepens with digital reconstruction

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
 Bhopal

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Friday produced actress and model Twisha Sharma's husband, Samarth Singh, and mother-in-law, retired judge Giribala Singh, before a special court in connection with the actress's death. The agency sought five days of police remand for each accused, a request that was approved by the court. Notably, the defence did not oppose the remand plea.

In its submission, the CBI informed the court that both accused had failed to cooperate fully with the investigation and that significant contradictions had emerged in their statements. Investigators argued that custodial interro-

gation was necessary to confront the two with each other's versions and gather crucial evidence related to the case.

Samarth Singh had already been under seven days of CBI custody. Following the expiry of his remand on Friday, he was produced before the court again, where proceedings lasted for nearly 90 minutes before both accused were taken back by the investigating team.

According to sources, the CBI plans to conduct face-to-face questioning of Samarth and Giribala Singh. Investigators are also expected to question Samarth about his whereabouts during the period he was absconding and the individuals he remained in contact with.

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Twisha Sharma's mother-in-law Giribala Singh being produced by the CBI officials at a district court in Bhopal

PTI

## IMD warns of weakest monsoon in three years

RAJESH KUMAR New Delhi

For the first time in three years, India is headed for a below-normal monsoon season, with seasonal rain during June to September projected at 90 per cent of the Long Period Average, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) warned on Friday. It also forecasts that the country will see above-normal heat wave days.

Taking note of the forecast, Union agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has asked State Governments to brace for possible low rainfall or other challenging weather conditions in view of El Nino threat. Chouhan said the agriculture ministry is chalking out contin-

**BELOW-NORMAL RAINFALL MAY STRAIN WATER SUPPLY, POWER GENERATION AND AGRICULTURE, WHILE RISKING DROUGHT**

gency plans to deal with any eventuality and asserted that there is adequate availability of seeds and fertilisers to meet demand during the upcoming kharif season that will begin from June with the onset of southwest monsoon.

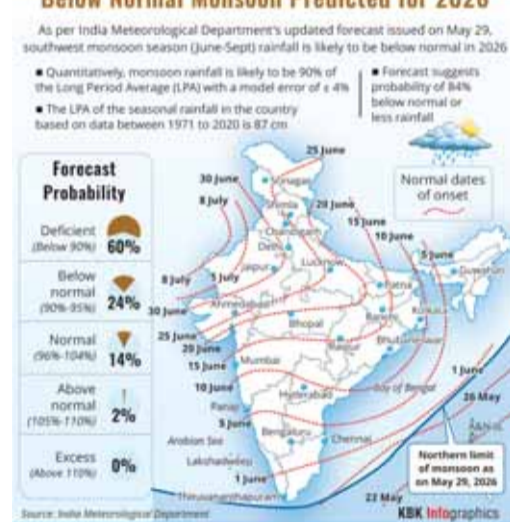
The weather office also cautioned that below-normal rainfall may lead to challenges for agriculture, water availability,

hydropower generation, and ecosystem sustainability, along with increased risks of drought, heat stress, and pressure on drinking water resources. Lower-than-normal rains may also force farmers to rely more heavily on diesel-powered irrigation pumps, lifting fuel demand at a time when the Iran war has already affected energy supplies.

"The southwest monsoon seasonal rainfall over the monsoon core zone consisting of most of the rainfed agriculture areas in the country is most likely to be below normal (less than 94 pc of LPA)," said Director General of Meteorology at the IMG, Mrutyunjay Mohapatra.

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### Below Normal Monsoon Predicted for 2026



## NIA probes Pakistan-linked drone-based terror module

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH  
 New Delhi

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday conducted raids at 12 locations across four States. They targeted a Pakistan-linked group accused of smuggling arms and explosives into the country. The group allegedly planned to use drones for terrorist attacks.

According to NIA officials, they searched five places in



Representative image

FILE PHOTO

Uttar Pradesh, three in Maharashtra, and two each in Bihar and Rajasthan on Friday. The people targeted are suspected of helping the group by receiving arms, ammunition, and IEDs dropped by Pakistani drones across the border. The investigation began on February 10. On that day, the Punjab Police's State Special Operations Cell in Amritsar arrested Shubham Kumar from Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh.

He was found with an IED in a metal case with a remote-control trigger, a foreign-made pistol, and ammunition. All of these were reportedly delivered by drone on Chaudhary's orders.

Intelligence reports suggest the February 10 delivery was part of a larger plan. The aim was to carry out coordinated blasts in Punjab, Delhi, and other areas, seeking to cause mass casualties and panic.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

## MHA clears record CAPF deployment for 57-day Amarnath pilgrimage

MOHIT KANDHARI Jammu

To smoothly conduct the 57-day-long annual Amarnath pilgrimage beginning July 3, over one lakh security personnel will be deployed on the ground to strengthen the security grid across the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Union Home Ministry has already given its nod to deploy at least 670 companies of Central Paramilitary forces on the yatra duty.

This is the highest number of companies that are being deployed for the pilgrimage as the yatra this year is lasting nearly two months. During 2025, around 580 companies were deployed for the yatra duty. The MHA approved the

deployment plan after holding a series of security review meetings with the top brass of the Jammu and Kashmir police and other heads of the security agencies.

As the threat looms large on the annual Amarnath pilgrimage, the Central Government doesn't want to take any chances with security arrangements.

With the launch of the Vande Bharat Express Train services between the twin capital cities of Jammu and Srinagar, Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board authorities are also anticipating a surge in the number of pilgrims.

Till last week, over 3.5 lakh yatrins have been registered for this year's annual Shri Amarnathji pilgrimage. According to official



Paramilitary soldiers stand guard during annual Amarnath yatra in Pahagam

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sources, the 670 companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) will be deployed from Lakanpur up to the cave shrine in South Kashmir Himalayas, including base camps of Nunwan (Pahalgam) and Baital, Yatri Niwas Jammu, from where the convoy originates daily in the morning; Pathankot-Jammu and Jammu-Srinagar National Highways and all important twin yatra tracks besides other places and locations covered by the pilgrims.

According to official sources, the paramilitary forces will start arriving in June, and their field deployments will be over by the third week of June 2026.

In addition to this, the troops of the Indian Army

and policemen from Jammu and Kashmir will remain deployed along the entire yatra route to achieve specific objectives.

The Indian Army troops mostly remain deployed in the outer cordon and secure heights along the yatra track, including the Shri Amarnath Ji cave shrine located in South Kashmir Himalayas, besides some parts of the National Highway. Different wings of the Jammu and Kashmir Police also dedicate their manpower during the yatra period to ensure the smooth conduct of the yatra.

Besides setting up security checkpoints, the local policemen play an active role in maintaining law and order.

CONTINUED ON >> P4



## New highway corridor to transform Jabalpur region

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Bhopal

The ambitious Jabalpur Outer Ring Road project, being developed by the National Highways Authority of India (NHA), is poised to redefine connectivity and accelerate economic growth across the Mahakaul region. With an estimated investment of Rs 3,540 crore, the 114-kilometre four-lane greenfield corridor is expected to ease traffic congestion, strengthen logistics networks and boost tourism and industrial development.

The project is being implemented in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of expanding modern infrastructure and multimodal connectivity across the country. State authorities have described the Outer Ring Road as one of the most significant road infrastructure projects currently underway in Madhya Pradesh.

Officials said the corridor has been designed to divert heavy and long-distance traffic away from the city, significantly reducing pressure on Jabalpur's urban road network. Once completed, vehicles travelling towards Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra will no longer need to enter the city, resulting in smoother traffic flow, shorter travel times and lower fuel consumption.

The project has been divided into five construction packages covering stretches from Barela to Manegaon, Manegaon to NH-45, NH-45 to Kushner, Kushner to Amjhar and Amjhar to Barela. Different sections of the ring road are



expected to be opened to traffic in phases over this year and next year.

The Outer Ring Road is also expected to provide a major boost to the rural economy. Farmers from Barela, Shahpura, Patan, Sihora and surrounding areas will benefit from faster transportation of agricultural produce to markets, reducing delays and transportation costs while improving access to better market opportunities.

Jabalpur's position as a key commercial centre in central India is likely to be strengthened through improved freight movement and logistics efficiency. Experts believe the corridor could play a crucial role in establishing the city as a major logistics hub in the region. Better connectivity is also expected to encourage new investments in warehousing, cold storage facilities and industrial infrastructure.

Tourism is another sector expected to benefit significantly. The improved road network will provide easier access to major attractions such as Bhedaghat, Dhuandhar Falls, Gwarighat, the Narmada riverfront, Kanha National Park and Amarkantak, enhancing the visitor experience and gen-

erating additional employment opportunities in the tourism sector.

One of the project's most notable features is a nearly 750-metre-long extradosed bridge being constructed across the Narmada River. Designed using modern engineering techniques, the bridge is expected to emerge as a landmark structure symbolising the blend of development and heritage in the region.

The project also includes extensive supporting infrastructure, comprising 14 major bridges, 37 minor bridges, four railway overbridges, three flyovers, multiple underpasses, elevated structures and more than 300 culverts. Environmental sustainability has been incorporated into the project through the use of nearly 40 lakh metric tonnes of fly ash, along with plantation drives, green belt development and modern drainage systems.

Officials believe the Jabalpur Outer Ring Road will emerge as a catalyst for growth, creating new opportunities in trade, tourism, industry and employment while laying the foundation for long-term regional development across Mahakaul.

Officials said the project is also expected to improve road safety by reducing the movement of heavy vehicles through densely populated urban areas. The dedicated bypass corridor will help minimise traffic bottlenecks, lower accident risks within city limits and provide a safer, more efficient transportation network for both commercial and passenger vehicles.

## Pench eyes global recognition under UNESCO programme

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Bhopal

Pench Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh's Seoni district may soon receive international recognition as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve under the organisation's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme. The proposal is among three major tiger reserves in the state—Pench, Kanha and Bandhavgarh—that have been selected by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change for nomination to the prestigious global network.

The state government is preparing a detailed proposal, which will be forwarded to UNESCO through the Central Government. Spread across nearly 1,179 square kilometres, including core and buffer zones, Pench is known for its rich biodiversity, rare plant

species and thriving wildlife population.

Officials said the Biosphere Reserve designation would provide Pench with global recognition while opening new opportunities for scientific research, environmental studies and international funding support for conservation initiatives.

Under the Biosphere Reserve framework, the area will be managed through clearly defined core and buffer zones. Human activities will remain strictly restricted in the core area, while sustainable development and conservation-oriented activities will be permitted in designated buffer zones. Deputy Director Puneet Goyal said the status would strengthen protection measures for rare and endangered species while promoting responsible ecotourism in the region.

## Cong raises water quality concerns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Bhopal

In a major crackdown on the illegal production and distribution of narcotic cough syrup, the Madhya Pradesh Special Task Force (STF) raided a premises in the Gandhi Nagar area of Bhopal and seized a large quantity of illicit cough syrup along with manufacturing equipment worth nearly Rs 1.5 crore.

The operation was carried out late on Thursday night at Dobra Patel City Colony, where STF teams uncovered an alleged illegal manufacturing unit producing cough syrup under the brand name "Off Cuff." The raid began around midnight and continued until nearly 3 am on Friday.

## STF busts illegal cough syrup manufacturing unit in Gandhi Nagar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Bhopal

During the search, STF officials recovered more than 700



Madhya Pradesh Special Task Force Deputy Inspector General of Police Rahul Kumar Lodha briefs media persons after bust a factory manufacturing toxic cough syrup "Onerec" (seen inset) at Patel City Airport road in Bhopal on Friday. Police recovered around 49000 bottles of cough syrup worth Rupees more than one crore.

cartons of cough syrup, thousands of bottles and several machines used in the manufacturing and packaging process. Large quantities of the syrup were found stored in separate rooms inside the house.

Police detained 10 persons from the premises for questioning. Samples of the seized cough syrup have been sent for laboratory analysis to determine the composition of the product and verify whether it contains prohibited or harmful substances.

According to STF officials, intelligence inputs had been received for a considerable period regarding the illegal supply of narcotic cough syrup from the Gandhi Nagar area. Acting on these inputs, a special operation was planned and executed. Sources said the local Gandhi Nagar police station

was not informed in advance about the raid.

Investigators are now examining the supply chain and distribution network linked to the operation. Efforts are also underway to identify the individuals behind the manufacturing unit and determine the regions where the illegal cough syrup was being supplied.

Officials said the house where the operation was being run is reportedly owned by a person identified as Malviya. However, STF teams had not been able to establish contact with the property owner till the filing of the report.

The seizure comes amid growing concerns over the safety of cough syrups after recent reports linked contaminated formulations to serious health complications. In a separate development, laboratory

reports of two cough syrups—Re-Life and Respiresh TR, manufactured in Gujarat—reportedly found excessive levels of the toxic chemical diethylene glycol, which has been associated with severe kidney damage and fatalities.

The STF said further investigation is underway and additional arrests and searches may follow based on leads obtained during the operation.

Officials said forensic and pharmaceutical experts would examine the seized samples to determine whether the syrup contained banned narcotic substances or harmful chemicals. Authorities are also probing possible interstate links and whether the illegal products were being supplied to other districts and neighbouring states through an organised network.



A scene from the play 'Laghushanka Nagar' staged during a cultural event 'Sadanira' at Bharat Bhawan in Bhopal on Friday.

Pioneer photo

## Bhopal sports complex to mirror Salt Lake Stadium model

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Bhopal

Taking inspiration from Kolkata's iconic Salt Lake Stadium, which houses one of the world's largest football stadiums alongside a premium boutique hotel, Bhopal is now planning a similar model at its upcoming international sports complex in Barkheda Nathu.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has directed that the sports complex be developed on a Public Private Partnership basis, with a premium boutique hotel to be built within the premises to attract investors and ensure long-term financial sustainability of the facility.

The idea took shape after Chief Minister Yadav recently visited Kolkata's Salt Lake Stadium, also known as Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krangan, and was impressed by how the integration of a luxury hotel within a world-class sports facility had transformed both the commercial viability and the visitor experience of the complex. Drawing on that model, he directed officials to explore a similar arrangement for Bhopal, with the hotel serving as a revenue-generating

anchor that would subsidise the broader sports infrastructure.

Salt Lake Stadium is considered one of the largest football stadiums in India and among the biggest in the world, with a capacity of approximately 85,000 spectators. The presence of a well-appointed hotel within the stadium premises has made it a popular venue for both sporting events and corporate gatherings. Officials believe replicating this integrated model in Bhopal would help the city attract national and international tournaments in cricket, football, hockey and other sports, while also providing premium accommodation for visiting teams, officials and spectators.

The Bhopal sports complex is being planned in three phases. The first phase will include the construction of a football stadium with a capacity of 10,000 spectators, an athletics track, two synthetic turfs capable of accommodating 4,000 to 4,000 spectators each, and a sports science centre.

The second phase envisions the development of courts and arenas for a wide range of disciplines including

court sports from one to two star level, indoor facilities for artistic gymnastics, swimming, basketball, volleyball, boxing, wrestling, taekwondo, table tennis, cycling and cross-country running, along with a three-level sports complex. The third phase will add a cricket stadium, a shooting range, cross-country tracks, three D courts, a velodrome, an athletics indoor arena and various other facilities.

The entire complex is being targeted for completion by 2027, with officials keeping a close watch on costs and timelines. Approximately 140 acres of land has been earmarked for the project in Barkheda Nathu, and the administration has been tasked with ensuring that the construction remains on schedule.

Officials believe that once complete, the integrated sports complex and boutique hotel will not only serve athletes and sports enthusiasts from across Madhya Pradesh but will also position Bhopal as a serious destination for hosting marquee sporting events at the national and international level.

## Temple Bonds to drive major temple development in Ujjain

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Ujjain

The administration has accelerated plans to launch Temple Bonds for the development, restoration and infrastructure enhancement of major religious sites in Ujjain and Agar-Malwa districts, with the proposed bond issue expected to be rolled out by the end of July.

The initiative was reviewed at a high-level meeting chaired by Divisional Commissioner Ashish Singh, attended by senior officials from both districts. Authorities discussed the proposed Temple Bond framework aimed at mobilising resources for the systematic development of some of the region's most prominent pilgrimage centres.

The project will cover key religious sites, including Shri Kal Bhairav Temple, Shri Mangalnath Temple, Shri Sandipani Ashram, Navgrah Temple, the 84 Mahadev temples, Shri Angareshwar Mahadev Temple, Maa Bhookhi Mata Temple, Maa Gadkalika Temple, Shri Siddhvat Temple and Maa Baglamukhi Mata Temple, along with select temples in Agar-Malwa district.

Officials said nearly Rs 1,100

crore is proposed to be invested in upgrading infrastructure, improving pilgrim amenities, strengthening management systems and undertaking restoration works at 11 major temples. Of the total amount, Rs 200 crore is proposed to be raised through Temple Bonds, while Rs 275 crore will come from the Urban Challenge Fund and Rs 625 crore through institutional bank financing.

The Divisional Commissioner directed officials to complete all formalities related to the bond issuance by July 15, enabling the formal launch of the Temple Bonds by July 31. He emphasised timely coordination among departments to ensure smooth implementation of the project.

Officials informed that the Temple Bonds are proposed to have a tenure of 10 years and are expected to create a sustainable funding mechanism for preserving religious heritage while enhancing facilities for millions of devotees visiting the temples every year.

Senior officials from the municipal administration, temple management bodies and development authorities also attended the meeting and reviewed the roadmap for execution of the ambitious initiative.

## Yadav to represent India in Rome

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Bhopal

Senior IAS officer Sandeep Yadav of the Madhya Pradesh cadre has been selected to represent India at the prestigious ITF World Tennis Masters Tour World Team Championships 2026, one of the most renowned international tournaments for senior tennis players.

Yadav, a 2020-batch IAS officer currently serving as Principal Secretary in the Forest and Non-Resident Indian (NRI) Department of the Madhya Pradesh Government, will compete in the Men's 50+ category at the championship scheduled to be held in Rome, Italy, from July 5 to 10.

According to the team announced by the All India Tennis Association (AITA), Yadav is among only four players selected from across the country in the Men's 50+ category. The other members of the Indian team are Jagdish Tanwar, Sunil Shyam Lulla and Kamruddin Khan.

With this selection, Yadav is set to become the first IAS officer from India to participate in the prestigious global team tennis championship.

## Power camps resolve over 40,000 consumer complaints

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Bhopal

The "Sampark Abhiyan 2026" launched by Madhya Kshetra Vidyut Vitran Company (MKVCL) to address electricity consumers' problems at their doorstep has achieved significant success.

Since the campaign began on May 14, a total of 1,422 special camps have been organised across 16 districts of the Bhopal and Gwalior regions, providing on-the-spot resolution to 40,460 consumer grievances.

In the Bhopal region, 855 camps were conducted across nine circles. The highest number of camps, 131, were held in Betul Circle, where 4,080 consumer complaints were resolved. Bhopal City Circle organised 112 camps and addressed 2,647 grievances. Narmadapuram Circle resolved 4,982 complaints through 99 camps, while Harda Circle recorded the highest number of grievance resolutions, addressing 6,372 complaints in 40 camps. Other circles, including Sehore, Rajgarh, Raisen, Bhopal Rural and Vidisha, also witnessed substantial consumer partici-

pation and prompt grievance redressal.

Similarly, in the Gwalior region, 567 camps were organised across nine circles. Morena Circle resolved 1,203 grievances through 118 camps, while Gwalior City Circle addressed 1,838 complaints in 88 camps. Guna Circle resolved 2,224 grievances, Datia Circle 2,098, Shivpuri Circle 1,986 and Ashoknagar Circle 1,787. Consumers in Bhind, Gwalior Rural and Sheopur circles also benefited from the campaign.

The objective of the campaign was to ensure immediate resolution of consumer issues at the local level. During the camps, complaints related to faulty electricity bills, were resolved on the spot.

Consumers were also provided services such as new rural domestic and agricultural pump connections for just Rs 5, load enhancement, name and category changes, e-KYC, NOC issuance, smart meter complaint resolution, meter replacement, transformer-related issue redressal, voltage correction, service cable repairs, bill payment facilities, advance payment rebates and benefits under various consumer welfare schemes.

## Ashapura gaushala work reviewed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Indore

Indore Collector Shivam Verma on Friday inspected the ongoing construction of a large-scale gaushala being developed at Ashapura village under a special initiative of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav. Senior district officials, representatives of the saint community and local administration were present during the inspection.

Reviewing the progress of construction work, the collector directed officials to expedite the project so that facilities for cattle protection and care can be made available at the earliest. He said the modern gaushala is being developed to accommodate and care for nearly 10,000 cattle upon completion.

Verma said the project is not limited to cattle welfare but has also been linked with environmental conservation and water management. Under the Jal Ganga Sanvardhan Abhiyan, a pond is being developed within the campus, while nearby drains are being cleaned and water conservation works such as check dams and temporary barriers are being constructed to maximise rainwater harvesting.

<p>FORM NO. IV (See sub-rule (2A) of rule 5) Summons under sub-section (4) of section 19 of the Act, read with sub rule (2A) of rule 5 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure) Rules 1993 <b>BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, JABALPUR</b> 2ND &amp; 3RD FLOOR SANCHAR VIKAS BHAVAN (BSNL BUILDING) NEAR HEAD POST OFFICE, RESIDENCY ROAD, JABALPUR-482001 MADHYA PRADESH <b>Case No. O.A. No.1141/2025</b></p>	
Date: _____	..... Applicant
<b>Bank of Maharashtra</b> VERSUS	..... Defendants
<p><b>M/s Om Enterprises and others</b> Through its Proprietor - Chandra Kant Goyal R/o Ramachary Bhawan, Jiwajigani, Gwalior- 474001 <b>2. Chandra Kant Goyal S/o Shri Om Prakash Goyal</b> R/o Goyal Bhayan, Opposite Janakpuri Palace, Jiwajigani, Lashkar, Gwalior (M.P.)-474001 <b>Also at: Ground Floor Office Plotnis Ka Bada, Jiwajigani Road, Lashkar, Pargana, Corporation Building No. 1021, Ward No. 35, Lashkar Gwalior-474001</b> <b>3. Smt. Laxmi Bai W/o Shri Omprakash Goyal</b> R/o Goyal Bhayan, Opposite Janakpuri Palace, Jiwajigani, Lashkar, Gwalior (M.P.) - 474001 <b>Also R/o: 1. Ramachary Bhawan, Jiwajigani, Gwalior-474001</b> <b>Also at: Ground Floor Office Plotnis Ka Bada, Jiwajigani Road, Lashkar, Pargana, Corporation Building No. 1021, Ward No. 35, Lashkar Gwalior-474001</b> Whereas, <b>OA No 1141/25</b> was listed before Hon'ble Presiding Officer on <b>02/09/2025</b> Whereas, this Hon'ble Tribunal is pleased to issue summons/notice on the said Application under section 19(4) of the Act, (OA) filed against you for recovery of debts of <b>Rs. 21,96,720.52/-</b> with expenses &amp; further interest. In accordance with sub section (4) of section 19 of the Act, you, the defendants are directed as under: (i) To show cause within thirty days of the service of the summons as to why relief prayed for should not be granted. (ii) To disclose particulars of properties or assets other than properties and assets specified by the applicant under serial number 3A of the Original Application. (iii) You are restrained from dealing with or disposing of secured assets or such other assets and properties disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application, pending hearing and disposal of the application for attachment of properties. (iv) You shall not transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise, except in the ordinary course of his business any of the assets over which security interest is created and/or other assets and properties specified or disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application without the prior approval of the Tribunal. (v) You shall be liable to account for the sale proceeds realized by sale of secured assets or other assets and properties in the ordinary course of business and deposit such sale proceeds in the account maintained with the bank or financial institution holding security interest over such assets. You are also directed to file the written statement with a copy thereof furnished to the applicant and to appear before Registrar on <b>17/09/2026</b> at 10:30 AM failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence. Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal on this <b>6th day of May 2026</b>. By Order of the Tribunal Registrar Debts Recovery Tribunal, Jabalpur</p>	



## MP plans world-class amenities at religious destinations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Bhopal

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has said that the Madhya Pradesh Government is fully committed to strengthening crowd management, public amenities and essential civic services at major religious destinations across the state. To achieve this objective, the government is conducting detailed studies of prominent pilgrimage centres across the country to understand their management systems, security arrangements and facilities provided to devotees. Speaking to media representatives in Jammu on Friday before proceeding to the Shri Mata Vaishno

Devi Shrine, the Chief Minister said the state aims to develop Madhya Pradesh into a model destination for religious tourism and pilgrimage. He said a delegation from the state government is currently visiting the Vaishno Devi Shrine to study various aspects of pilgrim management, including crowd control, security systems, accommodation facilities and service delivery mechanisms. Yadav said Madhya Pradesh is home to several important religious and cultural centres, including the Mahakaleswar Temple and Mahakal Temple Trust in Ujjain, Omkareshwar Dham and Bhojshala. He noted that these sites attract lakhs of devotees every year,

making it essential to continuously improve infrastructure and management systems to ensure a smooth and convenient pilgrimage experience. The Chief Minister said he was visiting the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine to seek blessings for the welfare, prosperity and progress of the people of Madhya Pradesh. He highlighted that the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board has developed an efficient institutional framework that extends beyond religious services. The board operates a university, a medical college and several welfare institutions, which contribute significantly to the overall development of the region while ensuring high-quality services for pilgrims.

According to Yadav, the Madhya Pradesh delegation will undertake a comprehensive study of these arrangements and identify best practices that can be replicated at religious destinations across the state. He said the government is determined to provide world-class facilities to devotees while preserving the spiritual and cultural significance of these sites. The Chief Minister said the state has already launched several ambitious projects to strengthen religious tourism infrastructure. Following the successful development of the grand Mahakal Lok corridor in Ujjain, work is progressing on the Ekatma Dham project at Omkareshwar, which is being developed at an estimated cost of nearly Rs 3,000 crore.

He also informed that development and infrastructure projects worth approximately Rs 30,000 crore are currently underway in preparation for Simhashta 2028 in Ujjain. In addition, construction of the Raja Ram Lok project in Orchha is advancing rapidly and is expected to emerge as a major spiritual and tourism destination. Yadav described the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine as an exemplary pilgrimage centre where devotees can avail round-the-clock darshan facilities. He noted that the Shrine Board maintains a comprehensive online record of pilgrims, enabling efficient crowd management and better service delivery.



Retired judge Giribala Singh being produced in the district court by the CBI officials in connection with Twisha Sharma death case, in Bhopal on Friday. Pioneer photo

## Minister pulls up officials over pipeline damage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Bhopal

Amid soaring temperatures of around 43 degrees Celsius and growing concerns over power and water shortages, nearly one lakh residents in Bhopal faced water supply disruption on Friday after a major Kolar feeder pipeline was damaged during ongoing construction work. According to officials, the 400-mm diameter DI pipeline was damaged near Karond during excavation related to the Bhopal Metro project, affecting water supply across several parts of the city. Areas impacted include Arif Nagar, JP Nagar, Chowksey Nagar, Narial Kheda, Pinjomal, DIG Square, Resham Kendra, Tilajamalpara and surrounding localities.

State minister Vishvas Sarang visited the affected site in Karond and expressed displeasure over repeated incidents of pipeline damage. Officials from the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), district administration, Bhopal Municipal Corporation and Metro Corporation were present during the inspection. Sarang said negligence by construction agencies involved in the 10-lane Ayodhya Bypass project and Metro works was causing repeated disruptions to essential services. He directed officials to ensure proper planning and coordination so that residents do not face inconvenience due to infrastructure projects. Water tankers have been deployed to supply water in affected areas until repairs are completed.

Municipal Corporation officials said this was the 14th instance in the past 15 days in which water pipelines were damaged during Metro and highway-related excavation work. NHAI alone has reportedly damaged pipelines 12 times during road construction activities along the Ayodhya Bypass in the same period. The corporation has announced that notices will be issued to the Metro management and penalties imposed for repeated damage to civic infrastructure. Officials said construction agencies had been instructed to complete water and sewer line shifting before excavation, but several agencies allegedly began digging without following the prescribed procedure, causing repeated water crises and financial losses to the civic body.

## Madhya Pradesh creates new wheat procurement record

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Bhopal

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Friday said that Madhya Pradesh has achieved all its wheat procurement targets for the current season and created a new record by procuring 104 lakh metric tonnes of wheat from farmers. Sharing the information through a video message from Ujjain, the Chief Minister said the State Government ensured remunerative prices for farmers by providing the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of Rs 2,585 per quintal along with a bonus of Rs 40 per quintal, taking the total procurement price to Rs 2,625 per quintal. He informed that nearly Rs

24,000 crore has already been transferred to farmers against wheat procurement, providing significant financial support to the agricultural community. Highlighting the state's achievements, Yadav said Madhya Pradesh has emerged as the leading state in the country in terms of farmer participation in wheat procurement. He noted that wheat production in the state has increased this year and that Madhya Pradesh now ranks second only to Punjab among the country's top wheat-producing states. He also pointed out that Madhya Pradesh has one of the longest-running and most extensive wheat procurement systems in the country. The Chief Minister said

the government adopted a farmer-centric approach during this year's procurement drive by prioritising small and medium-category farmers. This arrangement was implemented for the first time in the state to ensure that smaller farmers could sell their produce without facing delays. Under this initiative, approximately 32.72 lakh metric tonnes of wheat was procured from small farmers before extending procurement opportunities to larger farmers. According to Yadav, procurement at the support price has been completed from nearly 13.75 lakh farmers across the state. He added that wheat procured from all registered farmers has now reached government warehouses, ensuring

a smooth and transparent procurement process. The Chief Minister credited the achievement to the farmer-focused policies being implemented under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He said that despite challenging global circumstances, including war-like conditions in West Asia and economic uncertainties in several parts of the world, both the Central and State Governments remained committed to protecting farmers' interests and ensuring record procurement. Yadav reiterated that the State Government has dedicated the year to farmer welfare and is continuously taking decisions aimed at improving the economic condition of farmers.

## Pump sealed over fake biodiesel sale

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Indore

The Food Department has sealed a biodiesel pump in Deapalpur's Methwada area of Indore after it was allegedly found selling fake biodiesel. During an inspection, officials found that the fuel did not meet prescribed BS100 standards and was allegedly sourced from an unauthorised supplier instead of approved companies. Around 6,000 litres of suspected fake biodiesel, valued at over Rs 4.2 lakh, was seized from the premises. Samples have been collected and sent to an authorised laboratory for testing. The pump, dispensing unit and underground storage tank have been sealed, and further legal action will be taken after the test reports are received.

## BJP's two-day training camp concludes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Ujjain

The Bharatiya Janata Party's two-day Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Training Mega Campaign concluded in Ujjain with Chief Minister Mohan Yadav participating in a special yoga session and rendering devotional hymns dedicated to Lord Shiva during the closing ceremony. The district-level training camp was organised at Rajaram Resort, where party workers from across the region attended a series of sessions aimed at strengthening organisational capabilities and enhancing public outreach. On the final day, Yadav arrived at the venue in traditional attire and highlighted the importance of yoga in maintaining a healthy and

disciplined lifestyle. During the programme, the Chief Minister led party workers in a yoga session, demonstrating various practices including pranayama, Surya Namaskar and Bhujangasana. The session, which lasted around ten minutes, witnessed enthusiastic participation from workers and leaders present at the event. Adding a spiritual touch to the concluding ceremony, Yadav also sang bhajans dedicated to Lord Shiva, creating a devotional atmosphere at the venue. Party workers responded with applause and appreciation, making the event both interactive and inspiring. According to BJP leaders, three training sessions were conducted on the final day of the camp. Senior party functionaries, including State In-charge

Mahendra Singh, Indore District In-charge Rajesh Solanki and Mandsaur MP Sudhir Gupta, addressed the gathering and shared guidance on organisational strengthening and public engagement. The speakers urged party workers to ensure that the benefits of government welfare schemes reach every section of society. They also stressed the importance of effectively communicating the party's ideology, remaining connected with grassroots workers and keeping citizens informed about development initiatives and public welfare programmes. The training camp concluded with a renewed commitment from party workers to strengthen organisational activities and expand outreach efforts across the region.



A man takes a bath during the sunset in hot summer at the banks of upper lake in Bhopal on Friday. Pioneer photo

## Weak monsoon likely in Madhya Pradesh; 47 districts may receive below-normal rainfall

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh may witness a weaker-than-normal monsoon this year, with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasting below-average rainfall in 47 districts, including Bhopal, Indore and Jabalpur. According to the forecast, the state is expected to receive around 30 to 32 inches of rainfall against its normal seasonal average of 37.3 inches. The monsoon is also likely to arrive later than usual, with its onset expected after June 20, approximately five to eight days behind schedule. Meteorological officials said only eight districts, mainly in the Indore, Ujjain, Sagar and Chambal divisions, are likely to receive normal rainfall, while most parts of the state may record below-normal precipitation. Rainfall during June is expected to remain particularly weak, although monsoon activity

could improve somewhat in July. Experts have attributed the likely weak monsoon to the influence of El Niño, a climatic phenomenon associated with warmer-than-normal sea surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean. El Niño often disrupts global weather patterns and weakens monsoon winds reaching the Indian subcontinent, leading to reduced rainfall. Districts such as Gwalior, Bhopal, Neemuch, Damoh, Anuppur, Ujjain, Alirajpur and Barwani are expected to receive normal or above-normal rainfall. Meanwhile, Ashoknagar, Sagar, Narmadapuram, Raisen, Mandla, Dindori, Khargone, Burhanpur and Narsinghpur may record rainfall that is 10 to 15 per cent below normal. Most other districts are expected to receive around 90 per cent of their average seasonal rainfall. A weak monsoon could have significant implications

for agriculture and water resources. The state recorded above-normal rainfall in 2024 and 2025, which boosted crop yields, particularly soybean, wheat and gram. Higher wheat production helped the government procure a record quantity of wheat at the minimum support price this year. However, reduced rainfall could impact crop productivity and intensify drinking water and irrigation challenges. Several districts, including Indore and Gwalior, have already experienced water shortages despite good rainfall last year. Experts warn that if rainfall remains deficient this season, concerns over water availability and agricultural output could deepen in the months ahead. The IMD has indicated that El Niño conditions may persist at weak to moderate levels through June, July and August, potentially continuing to influence rainfall patterns across the state.

## Principal trapped taking Rs 10K bribe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Indore

The Lokayukta Police on Friday trapped a government school principal while allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 10,000 in Indore. According to officials, the accused had allegedly demanded the money from a private school operator in exchange for resolving a complaint lodged against the school. Following a complaint and subsequent verification, a trap was laid by the Lokayukta team. The accused was caught red-handed while accepting the bribe amount at a government school premises in the city. A

case has been registered under relevant provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act, and further investigation is underway. Lokayukta officials said anti-corruption drives are being carried out continuously and urged citizens to report any demand for bribes by public servants. Officials said the complainant had approached the anti-corruption agency after repeated demands for illegal gratification, following which the trap operation was successfully executed. The Lokayukta team recovered the tainted currency notes from the accused and completed the trap proceedings in the presence of independent witnesses.

## Dhar Collector reviews health programmes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Dhar

Collector Rajeev Ranjan Meena chaired a review meeting of the District Health Committee, District Surveillance Committee, Medical College, Nutrition Committee, Women and Child Development Department, and District AYUSH Mission Society, directing officials to ensure 100 per cent achievement across key health indicators. During the review of maternal health programmes, the collector stressed early registration of all pregnant women, effective anaemia management, institutional deliveries, and timely reporting and auditing

of maternal and infant deaths. Expressing dissatisfaction over the progress in Bagh and Gandhwani blocks, he instructed the concerned Block Medical Officers to improve performance. Officials were also directed to ensure proper treatment and blood transfusion facilities for pregnant women suffering from severe anaemia. Reviewing child health and immunisation programmes, Meena called for micro-planning to improve coverage under routine vaccination, Home-Based Newborn Care (HBNC), HPV vaccination, and key immunisation indicators including Penta-1, MR-2 and Full Immunisation Coverage (FIC).

The collector also reviewed screening and treatment under the Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) programme and instructed officials to ensure regular follow-up, medicine availability, and improved control rates for hypertension and diabetes patients. He further directed health institutions to maintain adequate stocks of rabies vaccines and anti-snake venom and ensure prompt treatment in emergency cases. The meeting also reviewed the Prime Minister Relief Scheme, NQAS certification, sickle cell screening and TB control programmes.

## Metro Lite proposed for Gwalior, BRTS for Ujjain

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government is preparing a major overhaul of urban transportation infrastructure in five of its largest cities, with proposals for a Metro Lite system in Gwalior and elevated Bus Rapid Transit Systems (BRTS) in Jabalpur and Ujjain as part of comprehensive mobility plans being developed for the state. According to officials, comprehensive mobility plans have been prepared for Gwalior, Indore, Jabalpur, Bhopal and Ujjain. Alongside these plans, Alternative Analysis Reports (AARs) have also been completed to assess the most suitable mass transit systems for each city based on future traffic demand, population growth and urban expansion. The proposals are currently

under review, and detailed project reports and implementation plans will be prepared after approval from Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav. Under the proposed framework, Gwalior is likely to receive a Metro Lite network designed to provide efficient and cost-effective urban transport. For Jabalpur and Ujjain, authorities have recommended elevated BRTS corridors aimed at improving public transport while avoiding the high costs associated with conventional metro rail systems. Officials said the plans have been prepared with a long-term vision to address rising traffic congestion and growing transportation requirements in rapidly expanding urban centres. The projects are expected to improve connectivity, reduce travel time and encourage greater use of public

transport. The report also notes that after the completion of Metro projects in Indore and Bhopal, the state government intends to expand modern urban transport systems to other major cities. The success of the ongoing metro projects has strengthened the case for introducing similar mobility solutions elsewhere in Madhya Pradesh. A key recommendation in the report concerns Indore Metro's Super Priority Corridor. The alignment has undergone several modifications over the years. Initially approved in November 2018, the corridor was planned as a 31.55-kilometre route. Subsequent revisions shortened the length to around 26.30 kilometres and altered portions of the alignment. The latest proposal suggests

a major redesign of the section between the railway station and Rajwada. Instead of a conventional elevated corridor, authorities are considering an underground stretch through the city's historic core. The revised plan includes approximately 3.2 kilometres of underground construction between the railway station and Rajwada, while the remaining sections would continue as elevated infrastructure. Officials believe the underground option would help preserve the heritage character of central Indore while improving traffic flow and reducing visual impact in densely populated areas. Urban development experts have described the proposed mobility plans as a significant step towards creating sustainable and future-ready trans-

port networks across Madhya Pradesh. If approved, the projects could transform public transportation in major cities, support economic growth and provide residents with faster, safer and more reliable commuting options. The state government is expected to take a final decision on the proposals after reviewing technical recommendations and financial feasibility assessments submitted under the comprehensive mobility plans. Officials said the proposed projects are expected to support planned urban expansion over the next two decades, ensuring that growing cities have modern, efficient and sustainable public transport systems capable of meeting future mobility demands while reducing congestion and pollution.

Name & Address of Borrower/Co-Borrower/Guarantor & Loan A/C No.		Description of Property	Date of Notice Outstanding Amount
<b>1. Deepsree Multispeciality Hospital Through It's Prop. (Applicant), Add :- Kolu Kalan, Govindpura 71 1, Govindpura, Bhopal, M.P. -462001.</b> <b>2. Omprakash Pandey (Co-Applicant) Add :- H. No.73 Uma Vihar Kolu Kalan, Chandbadr Huzur, Bhopal, M.P. -462001</b> <b>3. Lila Pandey W/O Ram Narayan Pandey (Co-Applicant), Add :- H. No.73 Uma Vihar Kolu Kalan, Govindpura, Bhopal, M.P. -462001</b> <b>Loan A/C No. 50200095664009 &amp; 50200051169703</b>		One freehold residential "Plot No. 73 comprising of plot area 800 sq.ft. Situated at UMA VIHAR Phase-II being part of land revenue survey No. 57,58,59-60, 217/58, 281/58 comprising of land area 4.64 acre out of total aforesaid land 4.90 acre Village Koluakala P.H. No. 21 Vikas Khand Phanda, Tehsil Huzur, District- Bhopal. Boundaries : East by : Plot No. 92, West by : Colony Road, North : Plot No. 72, South : Plot No. 74	<b>10.12.2025</b> <b>Rs. 24,61,000.00</b> (Rs. Twenty Four Lakh Sixty One Thousand Only) as on 12-12-2025
<b>1. Shree New Agarwal Steel Agencies (Borrower) Shree New Agarwal Steel Agencies, Railway Station, Itarsi, Madhya Pradesh - 461446</b> <b>2. Geetanjali Agarwal (Proprietor) Ward No.32, Near Post Office, Subhash Ganj, Itarsi, Hoshangabad, M.P. - 461111</b> <b>3. Samidha Pathak (Guarantor) 4. Krishna Pathak (Guarantor) Sr No. 3 &amp; 4 Both At : House No 18 Behind Bank Colony, Itarsi, Hoshangabad, M.P. - 461111</b> <b>Loan A/C No. 50200025698147</b>		1. Mouja-Meharagaon, Town - Itarsi, Ward No. 15, Vishwakarma Nagar, Maharshi nagar, Itarsi, District Hoshangabad. Out of diverted Kharsa No. 87/1, 92, 93, 94, 96/1, 97/1, (As per mutation record), Rev. Entry Plot No. 1/59, Layout Plot No. MIG-29, Total Area 25x40 = 1000Sq. ft. Constructed House. The property is owned by Krishna Pathak W/O Udit Narayan Pathak. Boundaries : East - Munnalal Soni, North - Rasta, West - Rasta, South - Nali 2. Plot No 8/2 Kharsa No1/3 M Sheet No.44 Diverted Land Ward No.14 Anya Nagar, Surajganj, Tehsil- Itarsi District- Hoshangabad Mehraon 461111 Madhya Pradesh. Area 7440 Sq. ft. The property is owned by Samidha Pathak W/O Sunil Pathak. Boundaries : East - Munnalal Soni, North - Rasta, West - Rasta, South - Nali	<b>30.04.2026</b> <b>Rs. 1,23,39,014.57</b> (Rupees One Crore Twenty Three Lakh Thirty Nine Thousand Fourteen and Fifty seven Paise Only) as on 30-04-2026

Place : Bhopal  
Date : 30.05.2026

Sd/- (Authorised Officer)  
H.D.F.C. Bank Ltd.



## IN FOCUS



A peacock displays its plumage, in Gurugram, Haryana PTI

## Anti-terror operations intensify across Rajouri, Poonch districts

MOHIT KANDHARI in Jammu

A relentless chase to hunt down a group of Pakistani terrorists, spotted in the forest belt of Dorimal-Gambhir Moghla of Rajouri district, continued for the seventh consecutive day on Friday.

At the same time, another anti-terrorist search operation was also launched in neighbouring Poonch district after the suspected movement of three terrorists came on the radar of the security forces in the area.

The ongoing search operations in the Rajouri district were expanded to nearby forest areas to hunt down the foreign terrorists after a fresh round of massive fire assault was launched on their suspected hideouts inside the thickly vegetated forested



Security personnel maintain a tight vigil amid an ongoing encounter between security forces and terrorists following an anti-terror operation in the dense forest area of Dori Maal, in Rajouri district, Jammu and Kashmir

area on Thursday. A fresh round of firing was also reported in the area early Friday morning, even as additional reinforcements were rushed in to launch the massive crackdown.

Security forces have been diligently tracking the movement of the suspects, follow-

ing blood stains believed to have been left by the fleeing terrorists on Monday.

Operation Sheruwall began last Saturday after an encounter broke out between terrorists and security forces in the Dorimal-Gambhir Moghla belt following intelligence inputs about the pres-

ence of terrorists in the area. Meanwhile, Army Commander Northern Command, Lt-Gen Pratik Sharma, visited units deployed along the Line of Control in Kupwara Sector on Friday to assess the robustness of the anti-infiltration grid and review operational preparedness.

The Northern Command posted on X, "The Army Commander Lt-Gen Pratik Sharma witnessed a demonstration of innovations successfully implemented in field conditions to integrate Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) and Counter Unmanned Aerial System (CUAS) with Techniques Training and Procedures (TTPs) for enhanced combat capabilities along the Line of Control".

## Spurious liquor kills 14 men in Pune, 8 held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA in Pune

At least 14 men died after consuming suspected spurious liquor in Pimpri Chinchwad area and Pune city, with the police arresting eight persons, including a key bootlegger, in this connection, officials said on Friday.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis termed the incident as very serious, and said further action was being taken as the "entire ecosystem" involved in the supply of spurious liquor has been identified.

The probe into the entire tragedy was transferred to the Crime Investigation Department (CID), a senior official said. Ten persons died in the Phugewadi area of Pimpri Chinchwad, while four others from the



Pandhare Mala area in Pune's Hadapsar succumbed after consuming suspected spurious liquor.

Five men suspected of consuming toxic liquor are undergoing treatment at a hospital in Pimpri Chinchwad, police said.

During the probe, police arrested Karnalsingh, Gurmangat, Karnalsingh, Yogesh, Radhesham Hariram Prajapati, Indarjit Kaur Karnalsingh Virka and Kalpesh Agrawal in connection with the case.

## Alleged carjacker shot at after attempting to overpower PCR officer

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE in New Delhi

Police said a 26-year-old man accused of carjacking was shot in the leg by a PCR officer late Wednesday in Najafgarh after he allegedly tried to snatch the officer's pistol while fleeing.

Police said that on May 27, they received a PCR call about two men allegedly robbing and assaulting a person before fleeing with his car in Najafgarh. Upon arrival, police found the caller missing. Shortly after, a second PCR call reported that one of the suspected car-

jackers had been shot in the leg.

The police identified the injured man as Aakash, 26, of Gopal Nagar, who was hospitalised. Complainant Arun Kumar Arya, 26, of Najafgarh, and PCR in-charge ASI Narendra Singh were also at the hospital. The complainant alleged that Aakash and an accomplice robbed him of his Hyundai Aura, after which he notified the police.

The complainant accompanied the PCR team to search for the stolen vehicle. After spotting the car, the team chased it. The suspects abandoned the vehicle in a narrow lane and tried to escape on foot.

## 6 dead as under-construction bridge collapses in UP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA in Hamirpur

Six labourers were killed and three others injured, after part of a bridge under construction collapsed following a storm over the Betwa river in Uttar Pradesh's Hamirpur district early Friday, officials said.

One Assistant Engineer has been suspended in this connection on charges of negligence (in discharge of duty), an official of the Uttar Pradesh State Bridge Corporation Ltd said. The incident occurred around 3 am between Parsani and Kandaar villages under the Lalpura police station area, around 25 km from the district headquarters.

Several labourers engaged in the bridge construction work were sleeping on the upper portion of a slab when it suddenly gave way, they said. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed grief over the incident and directed officials to ensure proper



Locals gathering at the site after part of an under-construction bridge collapsed following a storm over the Betwa river in Hamirpur PTI

treatment of the injured.

Hamirpur District Magistrate Abhishek Goyal and Superintendent of Police Mrigank Shekhar Pathak reached the spot and inspected the rescue operation being carried out by SDRF teams. Goyal told reporters that the

work was being carried out by a private company and the project had been underway for the last two years. He said all safety arrangements for labourers had been made at the site. Goyal said the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and the district administra-

tion had issued warnings on Thursday evening regarding strong winds, storms and rainfall.

Announcements were made in villages to alert residents and workers about the adverse weather conditions, he said. The deceased were identified as Lokendra (22), Kuldeep Nishad (19), Sawant Yadav (28) and Sabhajeet (30), Pushpendra Chauhan (34), and Rajesh Pal (42), police said.

Three labourers were trapped under a pillar and later rescued. The injured were admitted to the district hospital in Hamirpur. "Construction work was being carried out at night due to the excessive heat during the day, even though an alert for severe storms had already been issued. Assistant Engineer Gajendra Chaudhary has been suspended on charges of negligence," Dilip Kumar, Deputy Project Manager of Uttar Pradesh State Bridge Corporation Ltd, Hamirpur, said.

## Defence minister, CM Yogi to inaugurate Nausena Shaurya Vatika in Lucknow



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA in Lucknow

Defence minister Rajnath Singh and UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath will inaugurate the 'Nausena Shaurya Vatika'—dedicated to the bravery, valour, and excellence of the Indian Navy—in Lucknow on Saturday. Uttar Pradesh Tourism and Culture Minister Jaiveer Singh said the 'Nausena Shaurya Vatika' is a tribute to the brave warriors of the Indian Navy.

He said the museum developed in CG City is a special gift from the Yogi Adityanath government to the people of the state. It will inspire future generations and strengthen the spirit of patriotism and military pride among youth and children, he said.

## Over 2,680 cases referred to Bangladeshi side for nationality verification, says MEA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA in New Delhi

All illegal nationals staying in India will be dealt as per law, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Friday and added that New Delhi has shared with Bangladesh names of over 2,680 people to verify their nationality.

"Once this nationality verification is done, then we'll be in a position to deport these people," External Affairs Ministry's



spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in response to a query during his weekly media briefing here. He was asked about illegal immigrants from Bangladesh in India, and how are they being identified, and the process to send them back to the neighbouring country.

"All illegal nationals who are staying in India, they will be dealt as per law. Now, in the case of Bangladesh, as I had informed you earlier, we have referred

2,680 cases... or more than 2,680 cases to the Bangladeshi side, for them to verify the nationality of those people whose names we have handed over.

"Once this nationality verification is done, then we'll be in a position to deport these people, these nationals of Bangladesh. In many cases, I had told you earlier that this verification is pending for more than five years or so. And it is our expectation that we will receive an early response from

Bangladesh on this particular issue," Jaiswal said. Based on the bilateral arrangement between the two countries, the people who are staying here "can be sent back to or deported back to Bangladesh", he added.

He was also asked to comment on a purported video shared on social media in which a man (not seen in the video), can be heard allegedly hurling racist remarks at a presumably Indian couple. "I have not seen the social media

post. But, you know, racism of any kind is unacceptable," the MEA spokesperson said. In response to other questions, he reiterated India's stand on cross-border terrorism.

"I need not repeat. Cross-border terrorism is a threat which the whole world must combat together, and we must call out countries who are supportive of terrorism and who are promoting cross-border terrorism from their territories," Jaiswal asserted.

## FROM PAGE - 1

monthly maximum temperatures are likely over most parts of the country.

## Amit Shah unveils quad grid for borders

Alongside this overhaul, infrastructure work accelerates in Gujarat's Sir Creek and Harami Nala sectors. Watchtowers, roads, water, medical facilities, and fencing are progressing rapidly, with Shah promising the region will be "leak-proof" in two years.

"Within two years, this region will be permanently secured," said Shah, adding that troop living conditions are also being improved with large investments and new technology. All outpost areas in Bhuj are now raised above previous levels.

The announcement coincides with rapid infrastructure improvements in Gujarat's sensitive sectors, including new watchtowers, roads, water supply systems, medical facilities, and fencing.

Shah emphasised investments and technology to improve troop welfare and upgrade the borders in the Bhuj sector.

Technological fencing in West Bengal's riverine stretches is advancing with greater state cooperation. Experts say the grid addresses hybrid threats, demonstrating that community and civil involvement are vital for defence. "Once this grid is in place, no one will breach our borders," he said. The BSF's duties will grow. Fencing along West Bengal's border is progressing faster due to Government action.

Security experts say the initiative will be closely watched as India moves to modernise its border architecture in an era of advanced surveillance, drone warfare and cross-border hybrid challenges. Implementation is expected to begin immediately in priority sectors along both western and eastern frontiers.

## NIA probes Pakistan-linked drone-based...

The NIA took over the case in early April at the direction of the Union Home Ministry. They registered the case under several acts. Investigators are still trying to confirm Chaudhary's real identity and find other group members. Friday's raids mark a major step. The raids aimed to collect evidence, seize illegal items, and identify the wider support network. Officials emphasise the need to focus on dismantling local logis-

tics for cross-border operations. Drone smuggling poses a serious new threat.

Security agencies have detected numerous drones crossing the Punjab-Jammu border. These drones carry weapons, drugs, and cash for terror activities. Intelligence points to Chaudhary directing drone drops to sleeper cells and exploiting border weaknesses. The NIA recently filed similar charge sheets. Experts note such operations disrupt smaller, harder-to-detect terror plots.

Sources from the Home Ministry said Friday's searches yielded some early leads, but details remain secret. "The agency is working in close coordination with state police forces. Further arrests and seizures are expected as analysis of digital devices and documents proceeds," one official said. In the areas searched, NIA teams kept a low profile and focused on places linked to suspects. No one was detained right away. Officials said several people are being questioned.

Analysts note that this case shows cross-border handlers are using new tactics, including technology, drones, encrypted apps, and social media. These help them evade traditional security checks. The case also reveals weaknesses in smaller towns and cities. Local helpers, often young people or petty criminals, play a key role. With tensions high along the borders, the NIA's quick action is a clear message of zero tolerance. "We will not allow any foreign element to disturb peace and security," a senior security official said.

Authorities have urged the public to report suspicious drone activity or possible smuggling. The agency is also investigating possible links to foreign funding. The case is ongoing, and multiple agencies are involved. More raids and arrests are expected soon, helping uncover the network behind the plot.

## Twisha death probe deepens with digital...

The agency is reportedly employing a "tunnel view investigation" approach to reconstruct Twisha Sharma's final hours. Using CCTV footage, mobile phone data, Wi-Fi logs, call detail records, and forensic mapping of the three-storey residence, investigators are creating a virtual timeline of her movements and interactions before her death.

Sources said the CBI is also developing a digital avatar of Twisha to simulate her last known movements within the house. The reconstruction is expected to help identify inconsistencies in witness statements, suspicious activity, and

possible gaps in the sequence of events.

Investigators are simultaneously examining call records, tower location data, and digital evidence to determine who was contacted on the night of the incident and whether the crime scene was altered after her death.

Twisha's family immersed her ashes in the Ganga at Triveni Ghat in Rishikesh on Friday, performing the last rites according to traditional rituals.

The CBI formally registered an FIR in the case on May 25 and arrested Giribala Singh on May 28 after more than seven hours of questioning at her residence. During the investigation, officials reportedly found indications suggesting possible tampering with evidence.

The probe has also uncovered financial and domestic abuse allegations. Investigators learned that Twisha had investments worth around Rs 20 lakh in shares of several companies. According to her family's legal counsel, Samarth Singh and Giribala Singh allegedly pressured her to transfer those shares in their names.

The investigation further revealed that Twisha had informed her mother about alleged dowry-related harassment and physical abuse. She reportedly claimed that both accused subjected her to mental harassment, including pressure related to having a child.

## MHA clears record CAPF deployment for 57-day...

The policemen also remain vigilant during the yatra period to gather human intelligence to ensure an incident-free pilgrimage.

The jawans of the Railway Protection Force (RPF) and the Government Railway Police, Jammu and Kashmir, are also geared up to provide foolproof security cover to the pilgrims travelling on board Vande Bharat to perform the annual pilgrimage. Adequate security measures have been taken in advance to ensure the safety of the track and the railway property.

Recently, Director General of J&K Police, Nalin Prabhat, while chairing a security review meeting, was informed that the paramilitary companies will start reaching the UT by early June and the entire deployment will be in place on or before June 25 i.e. around a week ahead of the start of the annual pilgrimage. The officers also briefed the DGP regarding the administrative and logistical arrangements made for the incoming Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) companies.

## PM supervising NEET: Govt to SC

"It is not the individual who has the capability, it is the institution which has the capability. That is what you need to prepare," the bench said.

The bench asked the Union Government to file an affidavit indicating how and in which manner the process of conduct and conclusion of the examination, year after year, will be done.

"The endeavour is to ensure that NTA would have the wherewithal, physical as well as intellectual, to ensure that no incidents such as the 2024 or 2026 examinations occur," the bench said.

It said the affidavit be filed by the Union Government within six weeks and posted the matter for hearing in the second week of July.

On May 12, the NTA cancelled the NEET-UG, held on May 3, amid allegations of paper leak. A re-examination has been scheduled for June 21. The paper leak allegations are under investigation by the CBI.

Earlier the SC had observed that it is sad that the NTA has not learnt lessons from the earlier NEET paper leak.

## MPs briefed on NEET-UG leak

The panel called officials from the ministry, NTA, NMC, and CBI to answer questions about the Government's promises to Parliament regarding how the testing agency conducts exams.

They informed the Parliament's Committee on Government assurance about the steps being taken to ensure the June 21 NEET-UG retest is transparent and to prevent cheating.

The panel instructed officials to keep the seat matrix for medical admissions up to date and ensure student counselling is conducted on time. The seat matrix lists how medical and super-specialty seats are divided by quota and category. The CBI chief provided updates on arrests and ongoing efforts to apprehend the remaining suspects in the paper leak case.

Ministry officials outlined measures to ensure the NEET-UG on June 21 is fair. The committee called officials after the Government gave an assurance to the Rajya Sabha on November 27, 2024, about the "Conduct of Examination by NTA" in response to an unstarred question.

In its November 2024 reply, the Education Ministry stated that, according to the NTA, exam contracts are issued in accordance with current Government rules and guidelines.

## IMD warns of weakest monsoon in three years

During June 2026, below normal monthly rainfall is very likely over most parts of the country, except over some parts of Northwest India, Northeast India and south Peninsula and isolated pockets of central India where normal to above normal rainfall is likely.

According to IMD, the estimate carries a model error margin of plus or minus 4 per cent and points to a higher likelihood of deficient rainfall across the country during the season. The revision marks a significant worsening of the outlook.

While the Northeast is likely to witness normal rainfall this monsoon season, the remaining parts of the country may see below normal rainfall, he said.

Mohapatra said El Nino is confirmed to hit India during the monsoon season, bringing the rainfall levels to the lowest the country has seen in the last 3 years. El Nino conditions are likely to be weak in June, and moderate to strong in September. Mohapatra also laid out how the incoming El Nino will strengthen in the coming months. The concerns are being amplified by a growing consensus among international weather agencies.

Currently, neutral El Nino-Southern Oscillation conditions are transitioning towards El Nino conditions over the equatorial Pacific region. For India, the developments are particularly significant because El Nino has historically been associated with weaker monsoon rainfall, more frequent heatwaves and increased stress on agriculture and water resources.

The long-period average (LPA) of seasonal rainfall over the country as a whole, based on data from 1971 to 2020, is 87 cm. LPA refers to the rainfall recorded over a particular region for a given interval, such as a month or season, averaged over a long period of time, typically 30 to 50 years.

The average rainfall for the country as a whole in June is most likely to be below normal—less than 92 pc of the LPA, he said. If the monsoon season sees less than 90 pc of LPA rainfall, the IMD classifies it as 'deficient'.

Speaking about the monsoon's onset over Kerala, Mohapatra said it is expected to happen in the next seven days.

Typically, Kerala witnesses the onset of southwest monsoon around June 1, which marks the beginning of the southwest monsoon season in the country. The weather department also highlighted that in June, above normal

## Commemorative book on Op Sindoor released

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday here released a commemorative volume on Operation Sindoor, documenting the personal testimonies of 100 officers, sailors, airmen and other soldiers who participated in the operation.

In a post on social media, Rajnath Singh termed the publication as a tribute to those who executed this operation, providing a connection with the devotion and resilience of soldiers. "The citizens need to draw inspiration from this book and be citizens worthy of the tremendous cost the nation pays to ensure security and maintain sovereignty," he said.

The defence minister described Operation Sindoor as an unprecedented success wherein India compelled Pakistan to seek a ceasefire within four days. It was different from all other wars



that India has fought so far, he wrote, adding that this commemorative publication goes beyond historical account and captures the personal experiences of brave soldiers.

It also offers insight into the human dimension of modern warfare where leadership, courage, judgement

under pressure and commitment translate strategy into success, he stated.

The volume departs liberally from the conventions of official military historiography. Most accounts of war privilege the view from the headquarters and the operations room, as the decisions of commanders

are recorded, analysed and debated.

Yet the texture of the war as it was actually lived — by the soldier on the Line of Control targeting adversary bunkers, the air defence operator tracking and neutralising inbound drones, the pilot in the cockpit at the moment of weapons release

and the sailor at action stations as the fleet moves to a heightened posture — is almost always lost.

This book is an attempt to recover that texture. The accounts span across the three services as well as headquarters and integrated defence staff and include combat aviators, naval

watchkeepers, surface-to-air missile crews, special forces operators, signallers, logisticians, medical officers and the personnel of the joint and integrated organisations that knit the operation together.

The publication was released during a ceremonial function attended by Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi, and Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal A P Singh.

The volume has been compiled under the guidance of the CDS. Personal accounts from the services are contributed by the Additional Directorate General of Strategic Communication, Media and Public Information Cell and the Directorate of Media and Public Relations, while publication support has been provided by the United Service Institution of India.

## States Focus



### NO OTP WILL BE ASKED IN CENSUS 2027 IN HIMACHAL: OFFICIALS

No One Time (OTP) password will be asked for in the upcoming Census 2027, which will be conducted in two phases in Himachal Pradesh, officials said on Friday. The first phase, scheduled from June 16 to July 15, will involve house listing and the housing census, during which detailed information about every housing unit and household in the state will be collected. A total of 33 questions have been outlined for this phase. Addressing the media here, Director Census Operations cum Citizen Registration, Himachal Pradesh, Deep Shikha Sharma said that a new facility of self-enumeration has also been introduced, which could be availed through the self-enumeration portal [se.census.gov.in](http://se.census.gov.in) from June 1 to 15. (PTI)



### GOVT COMMITTED TO TAKING YOGA TO EVERY HOUSEHOLD: CM SAINI

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Friday chaired a high-level meeting to review preparations for the International Yoga Day and directed officers to ensure grand scale and extensive public participation. The theme for this year's International Yoga Day is 'Yoga for Healthy Ageing'. The chief minister said the state-level main event will be organised in Panchkula, while special yoga programmes will also be conducted at the district, sub-division and gram panchayat levels to ensure yoga reaches every section of society. (PTI)

## PM only cares about survival of his Govt, not kids' future: Rahul



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said on Friday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's silence on the CBSE debacle and inaction against the education minister showed he cared only about the survival of his government and not the future of lakhs of students.

In a post on X, Gandhi said he had been demanding an independent judicial probe from day one into the CBSE's on-screen marking and the award of the contract to COEMPT as the youth of the country deserved to know the truth. Gandhi shared media reports and called upon people to read them carefully.

"CBSE called for OSM tenders thrice. Zero bids the first time. No qualified bidder the second time. And finally, the technical bar was lowered until COEMPT could clear it. Scanning resolution cut. Robotic scanner requirement dropped. CMMI certification lowered from Level 5 to Level 3. Penalties for errors in answer sheets removed.

"TCS, India's biggest IT services company, qualified in the third round too. TCS lost COEMPT - a company with a spectacular track record of failure - won. And what are CBSE students complaining about today? Badly scanned answer sheets. Missing pages. A broken evaluation portal," he said.

Gandhi said teachers had warned the CBSE that the

OSM system needed at least a year or two for further preparation before nationwide implementation, yet it was rushed through.

"So I ask again - who wanted COEMPT to win? Who lowered the bar, step by step, until this company could clear it? Pradhan ji and CBSE say "due process was followed." That is not an answer, that is not accountability. The question is whether the contract was honestly awarded to the best company which could do the job correctly," the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha said.

He said the futures of 18.5 lakh children were handed to a company that could only qualify after the rules were "bent" for it.

"To the BJP ministers attacking me for asking questions - I have, from day one, demanded an independent judicial probe. Expand it from CBSE to every contract awarded to COEMPT. Our youth deserve the truth.

"And Modi ji, your silence on the CBSE debacle and inaction against the Education Minister tells the country what you actually care about - not the futures of lakhs of students, only the survival of your own government," Gandhi said.

The Congress leader also shared a video of his earlier interaction with students who had taken the NEET exam and expressed their concerns over the exam system in the wake of the paper leak.

## India, Singapore review bilateral defence ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

India and Singapore reviewed the entire gamut of their bilateral defence ties and reaffirmed their commitment to an open and rule-based Indo-Pacific during the 16th India-Singapore Defence Policy Dialogue in Singapore on Thursday, the defence ministry said here on Friday.

Giving details, officials said Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh and Permanent Secretary (Defence) Joseph Leong co-chaired the Dialogue.

Both Secretaries reviewed the progress of ongoing defence engagements and held wide-ranging discussions on key areas of defence cooperation, mili-



tary engagements, defence industry collaboration, capacity building and regional security issues.

They also explored new avenues for further strengthening the strategic relationship and expanding cooperation in areas of mutual interest, including collaboration

between the industries. The two countries also discussed enhancing cooperation in niche and emerging domains such as cyber security, artificial intelligence, maritime security, unmanned systems, and advanced defence technologies. The discussions underscored the importance of

innovation-driven partnerships and deeper collaboration in emerging areas to address evolving regional and global security challenges. The two sides appreciated the continued cooperation between India and Singapore in regional and multilateral forums, including Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-led mechanisms and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) framework.

Both countries reiterated their commitment to supporting an open, inclusive, and rule-based regional security architecture while promoting practical and constructive defence cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

## Vice Admiral Ajay Kochhar takes over as Vice Chief of Navy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Vice Admiral Ajay Kochhar, who drove high-level naval combat readiness during Operation Sindoor, assumed charge as the 48th Vice Chief of the Indian Navy on Friday, bringing a wealth of frontline experience to the naval headquarters.

Before taking the helm as the Navy's second-in-command, the officer served as the Commander-in-Chief of the Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC), India's first and only integrated tri-services theatre command guarding strategic waters. Earlier, as the Chief of Staff

of the Western Naval Command, he was instrumental in executing the Navy's aggressive forward deployment of critical assets as part of Operation Sindoor.

Vice Admiral Kochhar succeeds Vice Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan, who has been appointed as the next chief of the Western Naval Command.

An alumnus of the prestigious National Defence Academy, Pune, Vice Admiral Kochhar was commissioned into the Indian Navy on July 1, 1988.

A specialist in gunnery and missile systems, he has held a wide range of command, operational, and staff assignments over his



Newly-appointed Vice Chief of the Naval Staff (VCNS) Vice Admiral Ajay Kochhar, left, with outgoing VCNS Vice Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan during the Guard of Honour, at South Block Lawn in New Delhi (PTI)

distinguished career spanning more than 37 years.

He has commanded warships Nashak, Vibhuti, and

Kirpan and was the commissioning commanding officer of the frigate Trikanth. The Flag Officer has also commanded

the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya.

During his tenure, the aircraft carrier successfully completed the integration and operationalisation of its air wing. A graduate of the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, the Naval War College, Goa, and the Royal College of Defence Studies, UK Vice Admiral excelled in key strategic and policy-oriented staff roles at the Naval headquarters, according to the Indian Navy.

On promotion to flag rank in 2018, he served as the assistant controller of carrier projects and the assistant controller of warship production and acquisition.

He subsequently commanded the Western Fleet in 2021 and thereafter served as Commandant, National Defence Academy, where he focused on enhancing training standards and infrastructure. The Flag Officer assumed charge as Chief of Staff, Western Naval Command, on May 25, 2024, amidst a challenging security situation in the Western maritime theatre.

He spearheaded the command's response to conventional and non-traditional threats along the Western Seaboard, including high-tempo naval operations during Operation Sindoor, the Navy said.

## Govt notifies two Special Economic Zones in Puducherry

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

The Government has notified two special economic zones (SEZs) to be developed in Puducherry, including the one for the IT sector, an official statement said on Friday.

The proposals were already approved by the Board of Approval for SEZs under the Department of Commerce during its 137th meeting held on February 27. Out of these two SEZs,



one IT/ITES SEZ will be developed by Oulgaret Municipality at Thattanchavady village in Oulgaret Taluk.

"This will be the first SEZ in India to be developed by an urban local body," the commerce minister said.

The other, a multi-sector SEZ, will be developed by the Pondicherry Industrial Promotion Development and Investment Corporation (PIPDIC) at Karasur village in Villianur Taluk.

## BJP alleges Kerala Govt insulted Vande Mataram

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The BJP on Friday criticised the Congress-led Kerala government for allegedly insulting Vande Mataram and the governor by playing only the opening stanzas of the national song during a function at the state assembly.

The remarks came after Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar expressed displeasure over Vande Mataram not being sung in full in the assembly when he was present for the United Democratic Front (UDF) government's policy address.

Before and after the governor's policy address in the Kerala Assembly, a band team performed the opening stanzas of Vande Mataram.

In a video message posted on social media, BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla alleged that the Congress-led government violated constitutional protocol by not ensuring that the full version of Vande Mataram was sung.

"During the governor's address in the Kerala Assembly, the full version of Vande Mataram was not sung. The official protocol is that the original version



should be sung in full and not shortened to two stanzas. But the Congress government violated this protocol," he said.

Poonawalla alleged that it was done under pressure from the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), an ally of the ruling UDF in Kerala.

"To appease the Muslim League, the Congress has done this because it is in alliance with the party and cannot go against it. The Muslim League hates Vande Mataram. Under its pressure, they have cut short Vande Mataram and insulted the governor," he claimed.

He also accused the Left of supporting the move.

"Only two stanzas were played, and former chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan also justified it. Both the Congress and the Left have no respect for the country and the Constitution," Poonawalla further alleged.

## Chandrashekar remembered as ideological warrior at PMML discussion

KHUSHI MEHROTRA  
New Delhi

A panel discussion on the legacy and leadership of former Prime Minister Chandrashekar, held at the Prime Ministers Museum and Library (PMML) on Friday, revisited the political turbulence between the 1970s and late 1990s. Speakers described him as a bold, ideological leader who never had political stability or his due place in history.

The discussion, moderated by Dr Ravi Mishra, Joint Director of PMML, featured Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh and veteran journalist and political commentator Neerja

Chowdhary. Chowdhary described Chandrashekar as "a prime minister that India would have liked to see with a majority," recalling that he often expressed frustration over the limitations of heading a minority government. "He used to say, 'How much can I do with such an unstable arrangement?'" she said.

Calling him "dhakad", a Hindi term she said went beyond merely being "bold", Chowdhary recounted several anecdotes from his tenure as prime minister.

Both speakers dwelt on Chandrashekar's ideological convictions and his strained ties with former prime minister VP Singh. Harivansh said



From left to right: Dr Ravi Mishra, Joint Director of PMML, Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh and veteran journalist Neerja Chowdhary

the two leaders were "poles apart," with Chandrashekar emerging from a poor socialist background and building his politics around opposition and ideological struggles.

He said Chandrashekar

never accepted VP Singh's leadership and believed he had been sidelined within the Janata Dal despite being a taller political figure.

A major focus of the discussion was Chandrashekar's

attempts to resolve the Ayodhya dispute through dialogue. Chowdhary said he initiated talks involving the Vishva Hindu Parishad, the Babri Masjid Action Committee and other stakeholders soon after taking office and that the discussions had come close to a resolution.

According to her, leaders feared that if he succeeded, Chandrashekar would emerge as a "national hero." The discussion pondered Rajiv Gandhi's withdrawal of support to his government.

Harivansh also highlighted Chandrashekar's conduct during the Emergency, alleging that he refused inducements offered in exchange

for withdrawing support from Jayaprakash Narayan and opposition leaders.

"He chose imprisonment over compromise," Harivansh said, describing him as one of the last leaders to consistently raise ideological questions in Indian politics.

The speakers also touched upon Chandrashekar's handling of the economic crisis during his short tenure, including the controversial mortgaging of gold reserves.

Harivansh said Chandrashekar did not want to be remembered as the leader who "mortgaged gold to save the nation", adding that the gold involved was confiscated gold that never left the country.



## States Focus

# Previous Govt delayed census for political reasons: Suvendu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
n Kolkata

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Friday alleged the previous Trinamool Congress government failed to act on a communication from the Centre about the Census exercise, causing the state to lag behind others in preparations for the nationwide enumeration process.

Addressing a press conference after chairing a meeting on the first phase of the census at the state secretariat, he claimed the Centre had written to the then state government in February last year to initiate preparatory work for the census, but no action was taken.

"The previous government did not start the census process for political reasons. The then chief secretary was also waiting for a political concurrence.



"Because the previous government did not undertake any census-related work, other states have moved much further ahead while we have fallen behind," Adhikari said.

Describing the situation as "unfortunate", the chief minister said his government moved quickly to bridge the gap. "After taking charge, I took several decisions at the first cabinet meeting on May 11 in the presence of the

chief secretary. One of them was to begin the census process," he said.

The chief minister announced that census operations in West Bengal would commence on August 1 and continue till the end of February next year.

Adhikari said Census Director Rashmi Komal would oversee the entire exercise in the state. He said data collection will be carried out between August

1 and August 15 during the initial phase.

The Bengal CM also unveiled two toll-free helpline numbers for people to lodge complaints or seek assistance related to the exercise.

He said the upcoming census would be conducted digitally for the first time.

Government employees engaged in the enumeration process will collect data using a dedicated mobile app and upload the information directly to a central server. Sources said that the development of the application was nearing completion.

Stressing the importance of the exercise, Adhikari said, "The census has no connection with politics. It is a constitutional obligation." He appealed to people to cooperate with officials to ensure the smooth conduct of the enumeration process.



## AIADMK warns TVK of CBI investigation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
n Tiruvannamalai (Tamil Nadu)

AIADMK whip Agri S S Krishnamurthy on Friday said that the party will demand a CBI investigation if the alleged poaching of lawmakers via "multi-crore cash" transfers by the ruling TVK continues.

Four AIADMK legislators—K Maragatham Kumaravel (Madurantakam Assembly constituency), S Jayakumar (Perundurai), P Sathyabama (Dharapuram) and Esakki Subaya (Ambasamudram) —resigned as MLAs and joined the TVK, triggering an intense debate among political parties in the state. They were among the rebel AIADMK MLAs who voted in favour of the TVK government in the Assembly during the floor test on May 13.

Accusing that the TVK had forced four AIADMK MLAs to resign through horse-trading involving "crores of rupees", Krishnamurthy said, "If they continue to commit such wrongdoings, I am duty-bound to firmly state at this moment that we will not hesitate to place a demand for a CBI enquiry into this, with the approval of the party's general secretary Edapaddi K Palaniswami."

Targeting TVK leader and Minister Aadhav Arjuna, Krishnamurthy claimed that he was focusing entirely on poaching AIADMK functionaries rather than serving the public. He further alleged that Arjuna was utilising his ministerial chamber in the

Secretariat to induct members from other political parties.

"Is that a government secretariat or TVK office? The public and neutral observers are asking this question," Krishnamurthy said.

The AIADMK whip claimed that Arjuna had previously approached Palaniswami, seeking to join the party and secure a deputy general secretary post.

"Palaniswami flatly refused to admit him into the AIADMK, citing his track record of being expelled or suspended from previous parties, including the DMK and the VCK, for wrongdoings," Krishnamurthy said, adding that Arjuna joined TVK only after being rejected by the AIADMK.

Brushing aside the impact of recent defections, Krishnamurthy cited the late Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa's 1996 remarks, characterising those who betray the party as "shed hair" that does not affect the core strength of the organisation.

He emphasised that while top-level leaders can be replaced by creating hundreds of new ones, the real strength lies in the party's 2.16 crore grassroots workers who remain fiercely loyal to Palaniswami's leadership.

He also categorically rejected rumours of a covert understanding or coalition talks between the AIADMK and the DMK, asserting that the AIADMK was founded by M G Ramachandran specifically to oppose the DMK.



## NABIN PAYS TRIBUTE TO EX-CM BC KHANDURI IN DEHRADUN

BJP president Nitin Nabin on Friday paid tributes to senior party leader and former Uttarakhand chief minister Bhuwan Chandra Khanduri, who passed away on May 19, at his residence in Dehradun.

On the second day of his three-day tour of Uttarakhand, Nabin went to the departed leader's residence in Basant Vihar here to meet the family members and offer condolences. He was accompanied by BJP national general secretary (organisation) BL Santhosh, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama, and state party president Mahendra Bhatt. Khanduri, popularly known as 'General Sahab', died on May 19 at the age of 91 following a prolonged illness. (PTI)



## WET SPELL FORECAST IN HIMACHAL TILL JUNE 4

The weather office here on Friday forecast a wet spell in Himachal Pradesh till June 4, issuing an alert for thunderstorm, lightning and gusts at 40-50 kmph across the district. The inclement weather warning was issued for 10 districts, barring Kinnaur and Lahaul and Spiti, for Saturday (May 30). Light to moderate rain and snow is likely at few places on May 30, while light rain and snow is likely at isolated places between May 31 and June 4, the Met said. Light rains were witnessed in isolated places in Sirmour and Lahaul and Spiti districts in the 24 hours since Thursday evening. Nahan in Sirmour received 14.2 mm of rain, followed by Poanta Sahib at 6.4 mm, Dhaulakuan at 3.5 mm, Kalpa at 2.5 mm, Kukumseri at 2.1 mm, Keylong at 2 mm, while Renuka and Jatun Barrage saw 1 mm rainfall each. (PTI)

## Andhra Pradesh to finalise population management policy in 3-4 months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n Amaravati

The population management policy being promoted by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is expected to be finalised within three to four months after consultations with stakeholders across sectors, official sources said.

Alarmed over a declining fertility rate, which has fallen below the replacement level of 2.1, the Andhra government is poised to introduce the population management policy soon.

"We are not bringing a law. It is a discussion framework that will evolve into a policy in three to four months after consultations," Principal Secretary, Health, Medical and Family Welfare Department, Saurabh Gaur told PTI.

The proposed policy, under discussion as a framework, aims to manage demographic changes and build population resilience while sustaining long-



term economic growth in the state.

The policy may include financial incentives of ₹30,000 for the third child and ₹40,000 for the fourth child, as recently announced by Naidu.

The state has a demographic window only until 2040 to make corrections before the dependency ratio

skews heavily towards the elderly population, he said.

Considering this reality, Gaur said the third guiding principle among the 10 Swarna (golden) Andhra@2047 vision principles focuses on a transformative approach to population management and human resource development.

## Technology must serve humanity: VP Radhakrishnan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
n Davanagere (Karnataka)

Vice President C P Radhakrishnan on Friday said engineers, scientists, researchers, and entrepreneurs would play a crucial role in India's aspiration to become a developed nation by 2047.

He stressed the need for ethical development and said technology should ultimately benefit humanity.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the 75th platinum jubilee celebrations of

University BDT College of Engineering here, he said that India is witnessing a new era of transformation driven by technology, innovation, and the strength of its talented youth.

The vice president said the country, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has strongly focused on initiatives such as Digital India, Make in India, Startup India, and Skill India.

"We are also advancing in semiconductor manufacturing and green energy, and this Atmanirbhar Bharat is



going to set the tone for the world in the future," he said.

Clarifying that India's leadership would be constructive

and inclusive, he said, "We want India's development to benefit humanity most positively."

Emphasising that these national missions are creating vast opportunities for young engineers, researchers, innovators, and entrepreneurs, he said the 21st century will belong to nations that invest in knowledge, innovation, research, and human capital.

According to him, engineering institutions have a crucial responsibility to nurture problem-solvers, innovators, ethical leaders, and nation-builders in line with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

## Gujarat: Eight lion cubs die of suspected Babesia infection, says Arjun Modhwadia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
n Gandhinagar

Eight lion cubs have died due to a suspected 'Babesia' infection in Gujarat's Gir Somnath and Amreli districts, state Forest Minister Arjun Modhwadia said on Friday.

To prevent potential spread, authorities have isolated lions living within a 10-km radius of the areas where the infection has been reported, he said.

"In the suspected Babesia-related cases, eight cub deaths have come to light," the minister said.

Babesia, a parasitic disease, spreads through ticks and can cause weakness, coughing and nasal discharge in affected animals.

The deaths of the big cat cubs due to suspected Babesia infection have been reported in the revenue areas outside the Gir sanctuary, particularly in Gir Gadhada of Gir Somnath and Babra Kot of Amreli districts, he said.

A team of veterinary doctors collected samples, which have been sent to the state-run Gujarat



Biotechnology Research Centre for testing, Modhwadia said.

The report is expected within the next three to four days, which will confirm if the deaths are due to Babesia infection, he said.

No such "incidents (deaths)" have been reported in the last two days, he said.

"Forest officials, along with a team of veterinary doctors from Junagadh, visited the site and isolated the lions living within a 10-km radius," Modhwadia said.

Earlier this week, the minister had said that two lion cubs from the Gir Forest region had died due to suspected Babesia infection,

while three other big cats succumbed to natural causes and infighting in separate incidents.

On Wednesday, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel held a high-level meeting in Gandhinagar, where he was informed that four lion cubs had died from suspected infection, and 17 had been isolated in the wake of the possible spread of disease.

Considering that Babesia is transmitted by ticks, the authorities have launched tick-removal operations both within Gir Sanctuary and in surrounding areas, alongside the implementation of other necessary precautionary measures, the minister said.

## BIHAR BJP ANNOUNCES NEW OFFICE-BEARERS FOR PARTY'S STATE UNIT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n Patna

The Bihar BJP on Friday announced a new team of state office-bearers, along with heads of its various organisational fronts (morchas).

According to a statement, state BJP president Sanjay Saraogi announced the new team following instructions from the party's national chief Nitin Nabin.



The list includes 14 state vice-presidents, five state general secretaries, 14 Pradesh mantris, one state treasurer, two co-treasurers, one state headquarters in-charge and one office minister. Haribhushan Thakur Bachaul, Rakesh Kumar, Santosh Pathak, Manoj Kumar Singh, Annamika Paswan, Rama Singh, Pawan Jaiswal, Pranav Kumar Yadav, Santosh Ranjan Rai, Nand Prasad Chauhan, Anil Thakur, Mukesh Sharma, Sheela Kushwaha and Balram Mandal have been appointed state vice-presidents.

## NCP has no future, no leader: Sanjay Raut

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n Mumbai

The NCP has no future, and leaders like Chhagan Bhujbal, Praful Patel and Sunil Tatkare must be regretting separating Ajit Pawar from Sharad Pawar and aligning with the BJP, Shiv Sena (UBT) Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Raut said on Friday.

The National Congress Party split in July 2023 after Ajit Pawar joined the then-Eknath Shinde government along with several MLAs. While Ajit Pawar got the party name and 'clock' symbol, Sharad Pawar's faction was christened NCP (SP).

The party "created by others" after



splitting from its founder Sharad Pawar has no future, Raut said.

"Now leaders like Chhagan Bhujbal, Praful Patel, Sunil Tatkare, Hasan Mushrif and Dhananjay Munde must be regretting separating Ajit Pawar from Sharad Pawar and aligning with the BJP. Looking

at the current developments, they must definitely be repenting now," Raut claimed.

Speaking to reporters about the local body polls, Raut also said the opposition alliance in the state was reviewing its prospects in constituencies where it has limited voting strength.

"In many local self-government body constituencies, we have very little voting strength, much less than what is required. So discussions were held on how much attention should be given to those seats. Discussions are underway on four to five constituencies regarding who should contest and the strategy to be adopted," he said.

## Chennai Customs seizes over 10 kg hydroponic ganja

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
n Chennai

The Air Intelligence Unit of Chennai Customs has seized over 10 kg of suspected high-grade hydroponic ganja from a passenger who arrived at Anna International Airport from Bangkok, officials said on Friday.

The contraband, weighing 10,114 grams, was recovered from an Indian passenger who arrived from Thailand's capital on an AirAsia flight on May 25.

According to a statement issued by Joint Commissioner of Customs Sadeesh Kumar K, the interception was carried out based on specific intelli-



gence inputs. "Upon examination of his checked-in baggage, customs officers recovered 10 airtight packets concealed inside food packets. The packets contained green flowering and fruiting tops suspected to be hydroponic ganja, carefully hidden among his personal belongings," the statement said.

## DG CISF chairs operational review meeting at Chandigarh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
n Chandigarh

Director General, Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) Praveer Ranjan on Friday chaired an Operational Review Meeting at Chandigarh on Friday to assess operational preparedness and security arrangements across the North Sector and Airport Sector of CISF.

Addressing the commanders, DG CISF Praveer Ranjan commended the professionalism and unwavering commitment of the force's personnel. He emphasised that the combination of continuous physical training, inter-agency coordination, and

rapid technology adoption is vital to address modern threat vectors. He also lauded the soft skills training programmes conducted in partnership with airline operators to improve passenger interface and service standards.

Senior officers and unit commanders of various units participated in the meeting, where detailed discussions were held on strengthening security preparedness, enhancing response capabilities through better inter-agency co-ordination, and adoption of advanced technologies for protection of critical infrastructure and civil aviation installations. The review assumes sig-



nificance in view of evolving security challenges in border and strategically sensitive regions, particularly in Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Gujarat.

During the meeting, emphasis was laid on strengthening preparedness against emerging threats, including drone-related challenges, anti-sabotage measures,

and disaster response capabilities.

To counter low-altitude aerial threats effectively, the CISF has rolled out a phased Counter-Drone Training Programme for its personnel in close collaboration with the Indian Army. Conducted at multiple specialised locations, this programme equips personnel with advanced capabilities to detect, track, and neutralise hostile Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAVs).

The meeting also reviewed joint training initiatives being undertaken with the Indian Army and other agencies in the areas of counter-terrorism, quick reaction response, and disaster management.

## Assam, Meghalaya CMs discuss inter-state border dispute

TONY DAS n Guwahati

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and his Meghalaya counterpart Conrad K Sangma on Friday decided to expedite resolving the inter-state border dispute. A delegation led by Sangma met his Assam counterpart in Guwahati and held discussions on several issues concerning the two States.

In a post on X, Sarma said, "It was an honour to welcome the enterprising chief minister of Meghalaya and my dear brother Conrad Sangma to Lok Sewa Bhawan today. We had an excellent discussion and have made some good progress on long-standing issues." On the boundary demarcation process, the two sides agreed to expedite the ongoing process and bring a lasting solution to the matter, he added. "In the spirit of Ek



CM Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma meets Meghalaya delegation led by CM Conrad Sangma and Deputy CM Sniawbha Dhar in Guwahati. PIONEER PHOTO

Bharat, Shreshth Bharat, Assam and Meghalaya are collaborating in various fields and exploring synergies that will boost the growth trajectory of the Ashtalakshmi region," Sarma said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has termed the eight northeast-

ern states India's 'Ashtalakshmi'— representing the multifaceted nature of prosperity, wealth, and auspiciousness. The Chief Minister's Office said the discussions focused on key inter-state matters, including the Assam-Meghalaya boundary, with

both sides reaffirming their commitment to mutual respect, friendship and continued dialogue.

Assam and Meghalaya have a longstanding dispute in 12 areas along the 884.9-km-long inter-state border.

The two states had signed an agreement in March 2022 in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi to end disputes in six areas. Under the first-phase settlement at six places covering 36.79 sq km of disputed land, Assam received 18.46 sq km, and Meghalaya got 18.33 sq km. The remaining six areas, where the differences are more complex, are now being addressed in the second phase. Meghalaya was carved out of Assam in 1972 and has since then challenged the Assam Reorganisation Act, 1971, which is recognised by Assam as its border.

## Attack on ED officials serious offence: Kerala CM Satheesan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n Thiruvananthapuram

Kerala Chief Minister VD Satheesan on Friday said that the attack on ED officials after a search at Marxist veteran Pinarayi Vijayan's rented residence was a serious offence.

Breaking his silence on the issue, Satheesan told reporters here that what happened was a serious crime and that those involved could be classified as criminals, as they attacked an ED team that also included women officials.

"Attacking investigators and damaging their vehicles is a serious offence, and it should not be repeated. That is our position," he said, terming the violence as "cruel" and urging the CPI(M) not to encourage it. He praised state Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala for deploying police force to the places where searches were being carried out on seeing the increase in the crowd gathering at those places, even though neither the police nor the Home Department had received any information from the Enforcement Directorate (ED) about the search. The CM said that the state Government and police intervened when



there was a law-and-order issue, and "we have taken strong action in the matter" and there was no lapse on the part of the law and order agency.

Justifying the search by the ED, Satheesan said it was carried out in connection with a case already registered by a central agency and it was an ongoing investigation. He said that the Congress-led UDF too had raised allegations against Vijayan's daughter of having financial deals with a mining firm, CMRL, and that forms part of the ED probe.

He further said that the UDF had complaints about the central agency investigation itself as it was a four-year-old case, and nothing was done till the LDF Government stepped down from power.

## 7 killed in lightning strikes across Bihar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n Patna

At least seven people died due to lightning strikes across Bihar on Friday, Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary said.

Choudhary has directed officials of the Disaster Management Department to provide ex gratia of ₹4 lakh each to the next of kin of the deceased.

Several Bihar districts were lashed by heavy rain accompanied by gusty winds and thunderstorms during the day. "Incidents of lightning strikes resulted in the untimely death of three persons in Gaya Ji district, two in Aurangabad, and one each in Saran and Khagaria.

My deepest condolences for the bereaved families. May God grant peace to the departed souls and provide strength to the families during this difficult time," Choudhary said in a post on X.

The CM urged people to exercise caution during inclement weather, and follow guidelines issued by the department for protection against lightning strikes.

Earlier in the day, Choudhary directed departments concerned to conduct a survey to assess crop damage caused by heavy rain and hailstorms in several districts.



## As mercury recedes, States brace for rainy weather amid IMD's weak monsoon forecast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n New Delhi

With the monsoon's arrival just around the corner, several states on Friday saw maximum temperatures dip below the 40-degree Celsius mark and braced for a wet spell, even as the IMD indicated a below-normal southwest monsoon rainfall over India in the upcoming season.

The national capital wore a cover of clouds as it recorded a sharp fall in temperatures, with the lowest maximum registered over the past 21 days. The weather forecast for several northern



Women walk along a road during rain in Kolkata, West Bengal. PTI

states, including Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, pointed to likelihood of rain and thunderstorms. Intense heat refused to ebb in Rajasthan, with mercury settling in the mid-forties.

However, the weather department said thunderstorm and rain activity is expected to increase from Friday in the state. Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said monsoon's onset over Kerala is expected to happen in the next seven days.

It further said the June-September southwest monsoon seasonal rainfall over India is

expected to be 90 per cent of the long-period average with a model error of 4 per cent. The long-period average (LPA) of seasonal rainfall over the country as a whole, based on data from 1971 to 2020, is 87 cm.

While the northeast is likely to witness normal rainfall this monsoon season, the remaining parts of the country may see below normal rainfall, the weather office said.

Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, Director General of Meteorology at the IMD, said in a statement, "The southwest monsoon seasonal rainfall over the monsoon core

zone consisting of most of the rainfed agriculture areas in the country is most likely to be below normal (less than 94 pc of LPA)."

In Delhi, the maximum temperature settled at 36.8 degrees Celsius on Friday, the lowest since May 8 when it stood at 36.4 degrees Celsius. During the intervening period, the mercury has steadily climbed, crossing the 45-degree Celsius mark amid prolonged heatwave conditions.

According to the IMD data, temperatures across the national capital dropped sharply over the past 48 hours—by over 9 degrees at some stations.

## Himachal Govt offering student loans at 1% interest for education: CM



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n Shimla

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu announced on Friday that the Himachal Pradesh Government is offering loans of up to ₹20 lakh at an interest rate of just one per cent to students pursuing higher education and professional courses under the Dr Y S Parmar Vidyarthi Rin Yojna.

During a meeting with 21 students from the scheduled tribal areas of the state who are beneficiaries of the post-matric scholarship scheme, the Chief Minister encouraged them to take advantage of this opportunity to achieve their goals in life, a statement issued here said.

He emphasised that the state Government has implemented various reforms in the education sector to provide quality education closer to students' homes.

Sukhu mentioned that the Government has brought over 156 schools in the State under the CBSE curriculum, where students can study Arts, Science, and Commerce streams.

## People defeated politics of hatred: Punjab CM Mann

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n Chandigarh

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday expressed happiness at AAP winning a "sizable number of wards" and leading in many others in the civic body elections, saying people have defeated the "opposition's politics of hatred" and supported the ruling party's developmental politics.

The ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has won over 860 of the 1,977 wards and is leading in many others even as counting of votes for the civic body elections in Punjab is underway. Addressing mediapersons



here on Friday evening, Mann commented on the results and trends available, and said, "People of Punjab have defeated politics of hatred and supported developmental politics. They have rejected parties which

indulge in divisive politics." He said the people have supported developmental works carried out by AAP dispensation.

"Standing in queues in hot weather, people came out to cast their vote," he said.

Mann said these were not the first elections since AAP rode to power in 2022 securing a massive win in the assembly polls.

He said AAP secured victories, be it the panchayat polls, assembly bypolls or the Lok Sabha by-election.

Every time, he said, "friends in the media" used to dub those elections as semi-finals ahead of the 2027 assembly polls.

Elections to 102 municipal bodies comprising 1,897 wards across eight municipal corporations of Mohali, Bathinda, Abohar, Barnala, Kapurthala, Moga, Batala and Pathankot along with 75 municipal councils and 19 nagar panchayats were held using ballot papers on May 26, recording a turnout of 63.94 per cent.

Seen as crucial for AAP, BJP, Congress and SAD in the run-up to the next year's assembly polls, 7,554 candidates were in the fray for the local body elections. Out of 1,977 wards, candidates in 80 wards were elected unopposed. Mann said he has been maintaining all

throughout that the pulse of the people is in AAP's favour and the party will win in next year's assembly polls as well. Calling the BJP "ED party", Mann claimed that according to the results and trends available for the civic polls, it is ending up at the fifth spot and 1,100 candidates of the opposition party have forfeited their security deposits. "The Congress, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and the BJP put together cannot cross the number of wards we have won," Mann said. AAP will win over 1,000 wards, he claimed.

"I congratulate AAP workers and volunteers who campaigned extensively and took our works to people," he said.

## Manipur Govt decides to cut size of VIP convoys

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n Imphal

The Manipur Government on Friday decided to reduce the size of VIP convoys following a security review, introduce 'work from home' arrangements, freeze Government-funded foreign travel and take steps to curb non-essential expenditure, an official statement said.

The decisions were taken during a cabinet meeting held at the chief minister's secretariat at Mantripukhri in Imphal East, it said. Various issues related to different departments were



also discussed in the meeting. The cabinet said the measures were taken in line with an appeal by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in view of prevailing global challenges.

## Congress claims 98% of Indore drinking water samples found contaminated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE n Indore

The opposition Congress on Friday claimed that nearly 98 per cent of 240 drinking water samples collected in Indore, which has been ranked as the country's cleanest city multiple times, were found contaminated.

The city Mayor, however, termed the claim as "misleading" and a conspiracy to tarnish Indore's image.

Madhya Pradesh Congress chief Jitu Patwari told reporters that the party collected 240 samples from



29 wards following the deaths caused by drinking water contamination in Bhagirathpura area of the city in December 2025.

Tests conducted at a laboratory in Noida found that 98 per cent of these

samples were contaminated, he said. The water contained bacteria such as E. Coli and coliforms along with chemicals belonging to the calcium carbonate, chloride and sulfate groups in concentrations several times higher than the prescribed limits, claimed the Congress leader.

According to experts, the presence of coliform bacteria indicates that the water may be contaminated, while the presence of E. coli is considered more serious as it usually indicates contamination from human or animal feces.

## Congress in hectic talks over Karnataka Government

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE n New Delhi

Top Congress leaders were engaged in hectic deliberations on Friday over the new government formation in Karnataka on a day Governor Thawarchand Gehlot formally accepted the resignation of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and dissolved the cabinet.

The Congress Legislature Party (CLP) in Karnataka will meet on Saturday at 4 pm in the conference hall in Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru, to elect their new leader in the state. The meeting will be chaired by Siddaramaiah and D K Shivakumar is set to be elected as the new leader.

A day after resigning from the top post, Siddaramaiah, accompanied by his son



Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge being greeted by Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar during a meeting, in New Delhi. PTI

Yathindra, met the Congress brass including Rahul Gandhi and party president Mallikarjun Kharge in the national Capital.

The meeting with Rahul Gandhi at Sonia Gandhi's 10, Janpath residence at 9 am was significant as Siddaramaiah is learnt to have told the former party

chief that he has fulfilled his promise of resigning from the chief minister's post, paving the way for a smooth transition in Karnataka.

He is also learnt to have discussed his future plans and the new Government formation in the southern state with Rahul Gandhi. Siddaramaiah has already

declined a Rajya Sabha nomination, offered by the party leadership. He also said that he wants to remain in Karnataka and is not keen on a central role, which the party high command had suggested to him.

Sources said Siddaramaiah only met Rahul Gandhi, as Sonia Gandhi was not present during the meeting.

The outgoing chief minister is seeking berth for his son and loyalists in the new Karnataka Cabinet, including the post of deputy chief minister, the sources said.

Congress general secretary Randeep Surjewala, who was present during Siddaramaiah's hour-long meeting with Rahul Gandhi, said, "It was a very pleasant meeting. They discussed multiple political issues."

## Ebola outbreak: India has sent first tranche of medical supplies to Africa CDC, says MEA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n New Delhi

India has sent its first tranche of medical supplies to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) amid the outbreak of Ebola in parts of the continent, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Friday.

On May 17, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

At his weekly media briefing, external affairs ministry's spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal was asked if India had sent any medical aid to Africa in the wake of the outbreak. "On your question, about the help that we have sent, we have sent medical supplies to CDC Africa. This was handed over by our High Commissioner in Uganda to CDC



office there. We look forward to further helping, in whatever manner we can, with the countries and with the CDC," he said.

Africa CDC is a specialised technical institution of the African Union established in 2016 to support public health initiatives of member states and strengthen the capacity of their public

health institutions to detect, prevent, control and respond quickly to disease threats. Africa CDC supports African Union member states in providing coordinated and integrated solutions to the inadequacies in their public health infrastructure, human resource capacity, and disease surveillance. Jaiswal told reporters, "We will keep you updated as and when we have more developments on that account."

He was also asked if, following the postponement of the fourth India Africa Forum Summit, which was scheduled to be held late May in Delhi, any tentative timeline had been discussed to hold the summit at a later date. According to international media reports, the Congolese Government has confirmed over 1,000 suspected cases, with at least 220 deaths, since it declared an outbreak on May 15.



## Editor's TAKE

### TFR Drop: When progress becomes a peril

India's fertility decline is a sign of progress. Managing its consequences wisely will be the real test of governance

It is irony at its finest. India has long been obsessed with its population – too many people chasing too few resources. Decades of family planning campaigns, incentives and occasional coercion were aimed at one goal: fewer births.

As the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) drops below sustainable levels, the real concern is no longer population explosion, but the consequences of falling fertility. The data now confirm that we have largely succeeded. But the big question that stares us in the face is: what happens next?

The latest estimates reveal that India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has slipped well below comfortable levels. Urban India now records a TFR of just 1.5 – a number closer to ageing Japan than to a young, growing nation. Rural India holds steady at 2.1, precisely the replacement level, but that fragile equilibrium will not last long as urbanisation accelerates. The country that once feared a population explosion is quietly moving towards a population implosion, a trend seen in many developed nations.

The causes are neither mysterious nor uniquely Indian. Rapid urbanisation has compressed living spaces and inflated costs, making large families economically unviable. Women's rising educational attainment and workforce participation – unambiguously good things – have delayed marriage and childbearing. Access to contraception has improved dramatically. And perhaps most powerfully, aspirations have changed: urban couples increasingly invest heavily in one or two children rather than raising several. The shift from quantity to quality of offspring is a universal feature of development. India has simply reached that inflection point faster in its cities than anticipated.

A falling TFR is not, by itself, a crisis. The danger lies in the transition and in what it does to the age structure of society. Within a generation, India's celebrated demographic dividend – its vast working-age population – will begin to invert. A shrinking workforce will be asked to support a growing elderly population, placing pressure on pension systems, healthcare infrastructure and social security frameworks, which are already under strain.

The political consequences could be equally disruptive. India's federal system allocates parliamentary seats and central funds partly on the basis of population. States in the south and urban centres – which have controlled fertility the longest – stand to lose representation relative to states where TFRs remain higher. This threatens to deepen regional grievances.

India needs a smarter, three-pronged response. First, make parenthood less economically punishing through affordable childcare, housing subsidies for young families and flexible work policies. Second, build the social infrastructure for an ageing population now, not after the crisis arrives.

Third, revisit the political compact around delimitation, finding formulae that reward states for human development rather than penalising them for it.

## India cannot afford ambiguity in West Asia

West Asia's instability now directly threatens India's energy security, maritime trade routes, economic interests, and the safety of millions of Indians living across the Gulf



SHISHIR PRIYADARSHI

West Asia has ceased to be a distant crisis zone that India can manage with cautious rhetoric and calibrated ambiguity. The Iran-Israel-US war has made the region's instability immediate, structural, and deeply relevant to India's energy security, maritime access, trade routes, and the safety of millions of Indians across the Gulf. That reality leaves New Delhi with a choice: adapt strategically or keep reacting to shocks it should have anticipated.

For too long, India's West Asia policy has relied on a familiar formula: engage everyone, offend no one, and let the region's storms pass around us. That formula worked when the region was volatile but still relatively containable. It is far less convincing now, because the conflict has exposed a more dangerous landscape: weakened states, competing external powers, new forms of warfare, and a regional order moving beyond old assumptions. India can no longer afford to think of West Asia as a background problem.

### The old playbook is breaking

The first lesson of the war is that maximum pressure did not produce maximum results. The assumption that coercion, regime-change logic, and "shock and awe" could force Iran into political submission has not held up. Instead, the conflict has deepened instability and made the region less predictable. India should draw a hard conclusion from that failure: imported strategic theories do not guarantee regional order, and wishful thinking is not policy. That matters because India's own interests are tied to the region's stability in the most direct way possible. Energy corridors, shipping lanes, and trade routes are all exposed when West Asia convulses. So is the security of India's 10-million-strong diaspora. In a country that depends on imported energy and uninterrupted maritime access, these are not side issues. They sit at the core of national interest. The traditional "Look West" and "Link West" frameworks now face a genuine stress test. They were built for an era in which India could pursue steady ties across the region without being forced into sharper strategic choices. That era is over.

The region is more multipolar, more militarised, and more vulnerable to spillover than it was before. A serious power cannot keep using a lower-intensity foreign policy vocabulary in a higher-intensity environment.

This is where India must move beyond the comfort of balancing. Balance is useful; drift is



WEST ASIA IS NOW A TEST OF WHETHER INDIA WANTS TO ACT LIKE A CONSEQUENTIAL POWER OR MERELY A CAUTIOUS ONE. THE REGION TOUCHES INDIA'S ECONOMY, ITS DIASPORA, ITS SEA LANES, AND ITS DIPLOMATIC STANDING. THAT MAKES IT CENTRAL, NOT SECONDARY

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not. India should certainly continue engaging all major regional actors, but it also needs to speak and act more clearly when its interests are at stake. A rising power cannot be content to look neutral while others shape the regional order around it. That means thinking harder about diplomacy, maritime security, and energy resilience at the same time. The war has become a laboratory for asymmetrical tactics and new military technologies, and those developments are redefining maritime and security risks in the wider region. India's free access to international waters cannot be treated as an abstract principle; it is a practical requirement that needs investment, planning, and deterrence.

India also needs to see itself, and be seen, as a stabilising force. As its economic and military weight grows, its diplomatic posture must grow with it. That does not mean seeking confrontation. It means being prepared to make principled, proactive interventions on issues that affect global supply chains, regional security, and the safety of Indian citizens. If India wants strategic respect, it must demonstrate strategic seriousness.

China, Pakistan and the real contest

The emerging landscape also requires a clearer reading of external actors. China has

not been a passive observer; its background support to Iran and the benefits it draws from instability should be taken seriously. That does not mean India should overstate every move as part of a grand confrontation, but it does mean that Beijing's role should be understood as part of the wider contest over influence in West Asia.

Pakistan, by contrast, should not be allowed to distort the larger picture. Its role as a facilitator matters far less than whether diplomacy produces a workable peace. That is the right standard for India too. Diplomacy is not a zero-sum game. If a settlement reduces pressure and lowers the risk of escalation, India has an interest in that outcome regardless of who claims credit.

It is also important not to reduce West Asia to sectarian shorthand. The Shia-Sunni divide is often overplayed by Western commentators. The more important dynamic is competition for leadership, legitimacy, and strategic influence across the region. India's policy will be stronger if it is built on that reality rather than on simplistic labels that obscure more than they explain.

### A better Indian line

There are signs that New Delhi has already begun to adjust. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visits to Israel and the UAE suggested a subtle recalibration in India's regional posture. Recent visits by India's National Security Adviser and External Affairs Minister to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar point in the same direction. So does India's support at the BRICS foreign ministers' meeting in Delhi for a two-state solution on Palestine, including a reference to East Jerusalem. These are not trivial gestures. They indicate that India is trying to regain strategic credibility after a period in which its position looked less settled than before.

That effort is welcome, but it must not stop at symbolism. India has done well, so far, to secure its energy position better than many others. But short-term insulation is different from long-term strategy. New Delhi needs a more durable framework for crisis response, maritime protection, energy diversification, and regional engagement. It should plan for instability instead of assuming that instability will always remain manageable.

West Asia is now a test of whether India wants to act like a consequential power or merely a cautious one. The region touches India's economy, its diaspora, its sea lanes, and its diplomatic standing. That makes it central, not secondary. If India wants to shape the world around it, it must first show that it can read this region with clarity and respond with confidence. In West Asia, hesitation is also a choice, but it is becoming a costly one.



## PICTALK



A peacock displays its plumage in Gurugram, Haryana. PHOTO: PTI

## Why good people are quietly disappearing?



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJJI

### 2ND OPINION

We often hear of animal and bird species being declared endangered by governments and international organisations, leading to campaigns for their protection and conservation. Yet, very little attention is paid to another endangered species emerging in our times: the morally upright human being. In today's disturbed moral ecology, marked by corruption, crime, mental pollution and growing insensitivity, the ethically sound elite and morally strong middle class are slowly becoming a vanishing tribe. The drought in human compassion and the steady erosion of values have created a crisis far more dangerous than the extinction of wildlife.

This decline has not happened overnight. It has entered society quietly under attractive labels such as modernity, competition, success and personal freedom. In the

relentless pursuit of wealth, comfort and social visibility, people have compromised the principles that once gave strength to families, institutions and national character. Honesty is now often viewed as a weakness, while manipulation and opportunism are celebrated as intelligence. As a result, moral values that once shaped society have steadily lost their relevance in public life.

A major role in this transformation has been played by electronic and social media. Television, digital platforms and endless streams of entertainment dominate everyday life. The print media, too, is increasingly driven by sensationalism, conflict, celebrity gossip and "breaking news". Stories of integrity, sacrifice and moral courage rarely find space. One seldom reads about a businessman refusing a bribe, a teacher serving selflessly, or a doctor placing humanity above profit.

Educational and value-based content has become scarce, leaving readers vulnerable to shallow popular culture, propaganda and manipulative advertising.

Even in the world of books and magazines, commercial success often matters more than intellectual or moral enrichment. Publishers aggressively market material that entertains, shocks or excites because the market follows a simple rule: "What entertains well, sells well." A visit to any railway station bookstall reveals the trend clearly: sensational headlines, lurid covers and gossip packaged as journalism. Such material gradually

weakens society's appetite for ethical reflection and meaningful education.

This situation calls for urgent corrective measures. Society must consciously cultivate an interest in moral and spiritual values. The media, both print and electronic, should collaborate with educational and cultural institutions to promote ethical interpretations of events and issues. What is needed is not censorship, but conscience. People, especially the young and intellectually vulnerable, must be protected from becoming passive consumers of harmful content disguised as entertainment.

India once enjoyed immense respect among nations because of its moral and spiritual stature. Today, however, ethics appears increasingly absent from classrooms, clinics, courtrooms and boardrooms. Many believe that honesty and success cannot coexist. Those who firmly uphold moral principles despite heavy odds have become rare. Therefore, there is a pressing need to establish moral and spiritual centres across the country to preserve and promote ethical values. Just as wildlife sanctuaries protect endangered species, such centres can nurture people committed to integrity and inspire society at large. If action is not taken now, the extinction of moral character may become irreversible.

The writer is spiritual teacher and a popular columnist



## DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

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## TRANSPARENCY NEEDED IN CGHS PATIENTS' RIGHTS

The Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) serves as a vital lifeline for millions of pensioners and government employees. However, there remains a persistent disconnect between the official policy guidelines formulated by the Ministry and the ground-level implementation within empanelled private hospitals. Far too often, hospitals conveniently "evade" or outright deny essential services—such as the issuance of mandatory medicines upon discharge, and the waiving of follow-up consultation fees for the initial visits. However, these are not mere suggestions. They are stipulated rights within the CGHS framework.

The current system relies on the patient having prior knowledge of these circulars, which creates an unfair power imbalance, where the patient or the caregiver who is

unaware of a specific provision is left vulnerable to being exploited by the hospital. One way to bridge this transparency gap is to issue a formal directive mandating all empanelled hospitals to display a standardised document that lists the rights of CGHS beneficiaries. This document should highlight key entitlements such as mandatory supply of medicines at the time of discharge, and beneficiaries, above 75 years of age, and free of cost follow-up consultations for initial visits post-discharge. By displaying this information within the hospital premises, the CGHS prioritises the ease and dignity of its beneficiaries by ensuring that their rights are visible, accessible, and non-negotiable, and can empower them to advocate for their rights in real-time.

MEERA JHANGIANI | GURUGRAM

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### The rise of a prodigy

The more you watch his batting style on the pitch, the more in awe you are left of Vaibhav Suryavanshi. It was surreal to watch players of the caliber of Pat Cummins and Heinrich Klaasen huddle together after each ball to this 15 year old kid, trying to fathom what to do next.

The teenage sensation produced his latest extraordinary innings by hitting 96 from just 29 balls to set up Rajasthan Royals' win over Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League eliminator.

The 15 year old struck twelve sixes, including three in a row off Australia captain Pat Cummins, before he was dismissed in the eighth over. It was an innings of brute power, exquisite timing, a good combination of brute-eye contact and scintillating stroke play of a power packed game.

The Rajasthan Royals opener also shattered a fourteen year old record, previously held by Chris Gayle of being the batter with the most sixes ever recorded in a single IPL season.

His prowess on the field matches that of legends like Sachin Tendulkar and his success augurs well for the future of Indian cricket. He has immense talent but how he nurtures it remains to be seen.

KRISHNAN SUBRAMANI | CHENNAI

### Karnataka's political transition

The long power struggle within the Congress over Karnataka's leadership has resulted in Siddaramaiah relinquishing the Chief Minister's chair, with Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar replacing him.

The task upon the Congress high command, now, is to avoid friction between the two factions and present a unified front to avoid the deeply entrenched trend in Karnataka's politics, which has not reelected the incumbent government since the 1980s.

A delicate balance must be struck between the two, as Siddaramaiah enjoys deep-rooted support among the minorities, backward classes, and the Dalits, while Shivakumar has organisational prowess that is second to none in Congress.

That's why Congress can neither afford to mishandle Siddaramaiah nor give too much indulgence to DK Shivakumar.

A key challenge for DK Shivakumar will be to maintain political stability within the state, ensure effective governance, while addressing public concerns, and balance party unity while meeting the expectations of different groups within the government. For Congress, DK Shivakumar is a gamble, for which they hope to see a return to power in the state in 2028.

BAL GOVIND | NOIDA

### NEET needs an honest intent

Every year, lakhs of students set out to appear for one of India's most prestigious and highly competitive exams, NEET, with a dream to serve the nation as doctors.

Every year, repeatedly, their aspirations are shaken up by paper leaks, delays, and recently with the news of the Government considering militarising the way the exam is going to be conducted, with the defence forces managing the logistics and transportation for the NEET-UG 2026 re-exam scheduled for June 21, 2026. NEET is an annually scheduled civilian examination, not a border operation, and if the Education Ministry cannot conduct it without the army's help, then it is an admission of its institutional failure.

If an examination hall requires the same security as a sensitive zone, then the message communicated is that we do not trust our own systems. The National Testing Agency was constituted to be a body of professionals and yet today, its credibility is being protected by olive-green uniforms, not by reforms.

What NEET needs is not the military, but rather an honest intent - to digitize securely, plug the leaks and fix accountability from top to bottom.

BALARAM PARMAR | MADHYA PRADESH

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## The social erasure of domestic violence victims

Domestic violence is often sustained not only by abuse but by disbelief. Victims are frequently labelled, dismissed, and silenced, while their repeated cries for help go unheard, shifting attention away from accountability and towards questioning their credibility



**HIMANJALI GAUTAM**

In India, domestic violence is often not experienced as a single visible act of harm but as a prolonged process of emotional erosion followed by narrative control. What begins as private distress is frequently transformed into a public story about the victim's personality rather than the behaviour she is responding to.

A woman who repeatedly raises concerns about emotional neglect, humiliation, or control is often met not with inquiry or support, but with minimisation. She may be told she is "overthinking", "too sensitive", or "mentally unstable". In more extreme cases, informal psychiatric labels such as "bipolar", "schizophrenic", or "crazy" are casually introduced into family conversations, not as clinical observations but as tools to weaken her credibility. In the context of ongoing public discussions around emotional abuse and psychological manipulation-reflected in cases like Twisha Sharma's—the pattern that emerges is not isolated to one case but indicative of a broader social system where disbelief often arrives before understanding, and where labels are used more quickly than listening.

A critical issue in such situations is that mental health terminology is frequently removed from its clinical foundation and used as a social weapon. In reality, psychiatric diagnoses can only be made by qualified mental health professionals after structured assessment, observation, and the application of recognised diagnostic criteria. However, in domestic disputes, these terms are often used informally to end uncomfortable conversations rather than to describe actual medical conditions. Statements like "she is schizophrenic" or "she is imagining things" are rarely grounded in clinical evaluation; instead, they function as rhetorical devices that shift attention away from the conduct being questioned and towards the supposed instability of the person raising the concern. Once this shift occurs, the conversation is no longer about harm or accountability, but about credibility. The victim's experience becomes secondary to the question of whether she can be trusted at all. This is where labelling becomes powerful—it does not need to prove anything; it only needs to create doubt.

Another recurring pattern is the consistent minimisation of abuse through the framing of it as a "family dispute" or a "difference of opinion". Such language appears neutral, even reasonable, but it often serves to depoliticise and privatise harm. When something is classified as a family matter, it is removed from scrutiny and external intervention. Victims are then encouraged to adjust, compromise, or remain silent in the interest of preserving family harmony. Phrases like "ghar ki baat bahar nahi jani chahiye" are frequently invoked, reinforcing the idea that maintaining the family's image is more important than addressing internal harm. While cultural emphasis on privacy is often framed as tradition, in practice it can operate as a mechanism of containment that discourages disclosure and protects existing power structures. In such environments, the cost of silence is borne disproportionately by the person experiencing distress, while the cost of acknowledgement is avoided by those responsible for the environment in which that distress arises.

Within this dynamic, repeated cries for help often go unacknowledged. Victims rarely remain silent from the beginning; instead, there are often multiple attempts to communicate discomfort, ask for support, or seek resolution. However, these attempts are frequently met with dismissal. The response is often to "adjust", "ignore it", or avoid escalation for the sake of family peace. Over time, this creates a pattern in which communication is met not with engagement but with deflection. The message becomes implicit: speaking will not change anything. In such circumstances, silence is not a choice but an outcome shaped by repeated invalidation. Yet, when the situation later becomes visible or reaches a breaking point, the same social environment often asks why the victim did not speak earlier. This contradiction overlooks the fact that speaking may have occurred repeatedly, but it did not lead to recognition or support. The failure lies not in communication alone, but in the absence of a response to that communication.

A particularly misunderstood consequence of prolonged emotional invalidation is reactive abuse. This refers to situations in which a person subjected to sustained



psychological pressure, control, or humiliation eventually reacts with distress, anger, or an emotional breakdown. This reaction is then isolated from its context and used as evidence that the person is unstable, irrational, or abusive. What is often missing in public interpretation is the sequence of events: sustained emotional strain, repeated dismissal, lack of support, and eventual visible breakdown. The reaction becomes the focal point because it is observable, while the slow accumulation of distress remains invisible. In this way, the most visible moment of emotional collapse is often misinterpreted as the origin of the problem rather than its consequence.



**IN INDIA, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS OFTEN NOT EXPERIENCED AS A SINGLE VISIBLE ACT OF HARM BUT AS A PROLONGED PROCESS OF EMOTIONAL EROSION FOLLOWED BY NARRATIVE CONTROL. WHAT BEGINS AS PRIVATE DISTRESS IS FREQUENTLY TRANSFORMED INTO A PUBLIC STORY ABOUT THE VICTIM'S PERSONALITY RATHER THAN THE BEHAVIOUR SHE IS RESPONDING TO**

The writer is a litigation attorney practising in New York. She is also a legal writer and has participated in media discussions and television debates

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## Climate crisis: When comfort masquerades as immunity



**ACHARYA PRASHANT**

Almost every historical crisis has produced its version of the same thought: that what is happening is happening to someone else. In times of plague, those with better houses and cleaner air believed the arrangement of their lives protected them, until the plague climbed the stairs. In times of famine, those with granaries assumed the hunger would stay at the gate, until the gate became the problem. The ego, that false sense of "I" which has built itself from a body, a position, and the externalities accumulated around both, manufactures this thought not out of malice but as the expression of its most fundamental operation: the construction of a self that stands apart from its predicament.

The climate crisis has produced a version of this thought particularly well suited to the Indian urban professional class. It runs approximately as follows: climate change is real, regrettable, perhaps urgent, but its primary victims are the farmer without irrigation, the construction worker without shade, or the landless labourer whose livelihood is written entirely on the weather. These are people exposed in ways the urban professional is not. She has the air-conditioning, the subscription delivery service, the cab that comes to the door; in short, a cushion of affluence between herself and the conditions that devastate those who cannot purchase that cushion. The crisis is real; it is simply not hers.

The flaw in this reasoning is physiological, infrastructural, economic, and biological, and the evidence for it is not projected but already distributed through the middle class's own daily life. India has entered a heat season that scientists are describing in terms that would have seemed excessive a decade ago. Delhi's drainage infrastructure dates from 1976, when the city held six million people and the system was designed to handle 25 millimetres of rainfall per hour; the city now regularly receives more than double that in a single hour. The crisis the middle class has assigned to someone else is visible in the city's own property markets, its own seasonal calendar, its own streets after an hour of rain, and the exemption the middle class believes it holds has already been declined, though its holders have not yet checked the correspondence.

The air conditioner is one of the middle class's primary counter-arguments to the climate crisis: that affluence can purchase a private atmosphere, a set point of 23 degrees at which whatever happens outside becomes irrelevant. This is the ego's preferred relationship to shared consequence, the belief that what one has assembled around oneself constitutes a genuine separation from what one has produced.



The human body has exactly one mechanism for shedding internally generated heat: sweating, and the evaporation of sweat. Metabolism produces heat continuously; the body is, in thermal terms, an inefficient machine that generates more heat than work from everything it consumes. When humidity is high, sweat cannot evaporate, the skin cannot cool, and the body's core temperature rises until the organs most sensitive to heat, the brain foremost among them, begin to fail, and the failure is sudden rather than gradual. A healthy person sitting in the shade with unlimited water will lose consciousness and die when the wet-bulb temperature reaches 35 degrees, solely because the body's only heat-removal mechanism has been rendered inoperative by the moisture content of the surrounding air.

The air conditioner addresses this, as long as several simultaneous conditions hold: there is electricity, the unit is functioning within its operating range, the person is indoors, and the grid can carry the aggregate load of every unit in the city running at once during a heat emergency. When heat is severe enough to require cooling, every unit runs simultaneously, and the grid carries a load it was not designed to sustain.

Before the grid fails, the apartment must be exited anyway, because the apartment runs on labour from outside it. The domestic worker arrives each morning from a neighbourhood where power cuts run twelve to fifteen hours a day and the roof is tin, which turns a small room into an oven before noon. The delivery worker completing forty rides before noon, whose dark T-shirt shows a white outline of salt from what his body has spent in the heat, cannot be replaced by a platform algorithm that also operates in the same heat. The middle class's comfort is downstream of all of these labour chains, and when those chains degrade, the comfort degrades with them.

Through the winter months, air quality sits at AQI levels above 400, producing the metallic taste and sustained coughing that anyone who has spent a winter in Delhi recognises without being told. Come July, waterlogging closes parks, courts and outdoor spaces, while the standing water breeds dengue and chikungunya, diseases that the middle class contract alongside everyone else, with the same fevers, the same falling platelet counts, and the same hospital queues. A farmer in Uttar Pradesh reported this season that wheat grains are thinner and the harvest lighter than in previous years. The body receiving this food is itself not exempt from the atmospheric pressure it has been arranged to ignore. The human organism, in the most precise biological sense, is not a single entity: more than half the cells within a human body are microbial, belonging to communities of bacteria and fungi that govern digestion, immune response, and aspects of neurological function. When ambient conditions shift systematically across years and decades, those communities shift with them. The body that walks out of the air-conditioned apartment a decade from now carries a different internal biological arrangement from the one that walked out today, regardless of what the thermostat reads.

The exemption the middle class has arranged covers the ambient temperature of one room. It does not cover the food arriving in that room, the labour sustaining the supply chain, the grid powering the cooling, the social fabric outside the entrance, the rivers that will not always run, the soil producing the staples, or the body inhabiting the room and the microbiome the body is. The ego that wrote this exemption wrote it in a language the climate system has never learned.

Acharya Prashant is a philosopher and author whose work centres on self-inquiry and its application to contemporary life

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## Hindi journalism@200: Power, polarisation and the loss of editorial integrity



**NEERAJ K SINGH**

Two centuries after *Udant Martand*, the first Hindi newspaper, appeared, Hindi journalism stands at a crucial turning point that demands deep reflection rather than mere celebration. It began as an insecure yet courageous journalism in vernacular language. Over the past two hundred years, it has transformed into one of the most powerful media landscape across the world. Today, Hindi journalism has penetrated deeper into the social and political psyche of India than almost any other media tradition. It shapes the consciousness of the electorate, helps to define public morality, influences nationalism, and serves as a vital mediator between citizens and the state across northern Indian territories daily.

However, the immense growth of the Hindi media has not always been matched by a similar degree of boldness, autonomy, or democratic oversight. Indeed, the reverse often seems to be the case now. This is certainly not a problem concerning the language itself. Hindi remains a medium of public communication that continues to be incredibly dynamic and influential in India currently. Instead, this represents a crisis of technology, ethics, and structure. Digital transformations, troubled business models, and platform monopolies are immense challenges facing all journalistic traditions worldwide. Yet, there is a much

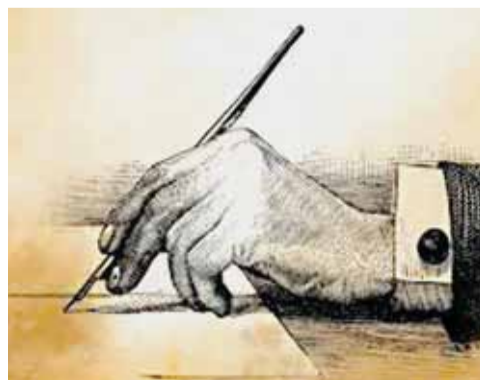
deeper crisis prevalent in certain sectors of the Hindi journalism that requires our immediate attention.

This internal crisis is fundamentally moral and structural. We are witnessing the shifting of public interest journalism into the realm of pure spectacle journalism. Accountability is frequently sacrificed in favour of remaining close to political power, as citizens are increasingly reduced into an emotionally manageable digital audience.

In its early days, Hindi journalism was never merely a business affair; it functioned as a vibrant, deeply committed intellectual and political movement across the nation. The early Hindi press viewed journalism as a profound democratic responsibility that could never be ignored under any circumstances by the writers and editors. Pioneers like Bharatendu Harishchandra utilised it for linguistic nationalism, whilst Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi championed fearless reporting against communal violence and state repression. Vidyarthi firmly established the stance that journalism must actively fight against oppression and injustice. Sadly, this moral clarity has slowly vanished over vast areas of the modern daily news landscape.

Economic liberalisation brought about a massive paradigm shift in the fundamental economics of the Indian media industry. The competition for audience attention, advertising revenue, and market share increased dramatically during the late twentieth century and beyond. Private television networks rapidly accelerated this massive transformation very significantly then.

The underlying logic of news had already



begun shifting in the year two thousand. Over time, journalism transitioned from a public institution into a commercial venture. In this metamorphosis, the Hindi media was uniquely susceptible due to the sheer size of its audience and the fierce competition within its regional markets. Today, editorial priorities can no longer be ignored, as commercial factors heavily influence it.

A vast majority of people now consume news via social platforms rather than through traditional institutional news outlets that were once highly respected universally. In this context, algorithms are exerting a powerful, indirect impact on editorial decisions by constantly promoting emotion, absolute certainty, extreme nationalism, and continuous confrontation. Newsrooms have ceased to function simply as mediums for delivering factual news. Instead, they actively fight for visibility in a digital age entirely predicated upon

engagement metrics.

This impact is exceptionally apparent within specific parts of the mainstream Hindi press industry, where debates are increasingly polarised. Often, television debates resemble an ideological theatre than a genuine journalistic inquiry. Emotionally charged binaries completely redraw complicated structural issues. The industry has discovered a highly efficient method for creating, spreading, and commercialising public outrage.

Over the last few years, the traditional vocabulary of democratic scrutiny has been steadily replaced by the loud vocabulary of permanent mobilisation. Media analysts have consistently highlighted the growing sensationalism, the tragic loss of public trust, and the normalisation of polarising content in Indian television news. This is not ideological diversity; it is the destruction of basic editorial integrity and genuine seriousness. This failure is most noticeable in what remains absent. The true problem with contemporary Hindi journalism is not merely what it magnifies, but also what it consciously ignores. Unless presented in a highly theatrical fashion, severe issues such as agrarian distress are seldom investigated.

Furthermore, issues including soaring unemployment, local governance failures, environmental degradation, and failing infrastructure are frequently neglected. Ground reporting has severely suffered, losing its foundational strength as the essential backbone of authentic regional journalism. Meanwhile, the relationship between various media houses and political power has undergone a complete metamorphosis. Historically, Hindi journalism derived its legitimacy from maintaining a

questioning attitude towards authority. Nowadays, cultivating proximity to power has increasingly become the standard business model. The space for adversarial journalism has shrunk considerably due to concentrated media ownership, massive reliance on government advertising, corporate consolidation, and heightened regulatory vulnerability overall. Internal censorship has thus become completely internalised within these traditional news institutions.

These vulnerabilities are further amplified by modern digital complexities. Whilst social media broadens engagement, it disperses authority. Organisations compete against propagandists, anonymous networks, and automated misinformation systems. Consequently, being viral surpasses being verified. Prolonged exposure to emotionally charged environments diminishes civic tolerance for deliberation. However, excellent journalism continues within smaller, less metropolitan networks, surviving against formidable systemic odds.

The future credibility of Hindi journalism relies entirely upon regaining institutional trust, especially confronting deepfakes and tailored propaganda. As we reflect upon two centuries since *Udant Martand*, the press must challenge power, enlighten citizens, and assert public good. The best tribute to Hindi journalism is reflecting fearlessly on what it has become.

The writer is Head, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, LPCPS, Lucknow

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**Abdullah Azam jail term set aside in passport case**

In a major relief for former MLA Abdullah Azam Khan, son of Samajwadi Party leader Mohammad Azam Khan, a court on Friday set aside the seven-year imprisonment he was sentenced to in the dual passport case. The MP-MLA Sessions Court accepted Khan's appeal nearly six months after he was sentenced by a magistrate court. In its order dated December 5, 2025, the magistrate court sentenced Khan to seven years in jail and imposed a fine of ₹ 50,000 on him. The case was registered in 2019 at the Civil Lines police station on a complaint filed by BJP leader Akash Saxena. The complaint alleged that Khan had obtained two passports using different dates of birth. Khan's counsel, Nasir Sultan, said Special Judge (MP-MLA Court) Dr Vijay Kumar allowed the former MLA's appeal and quashed the lower court order. (PTI)



**Zubeen case: Gauhati HC denies bail to key accused**

The Gauhati High Court on Friday rejected bail to Shyamkanu Mahanta, the prime accused in the Zubeen Garg death case, noting that there is a "risk of fleeing and tampering evidence". After hearing arguments from both sides, a single-judge bench of Justice Mitali Thakuria denied bail to the accused. On April 30, a special fast-track court had rejected bail to Mahanta considering him as 'flight risk'. "The accused had challenged the trial court order of bail denial. The high court today rejected bail to Shyamkanu Mahanta after considering some crucial points," Assam Advocate General Devajit Saikia said at a press conference here. The high court noted that Mahanta is a 'flight risk' and there is a possibility of him absconding from the ongoing trial, he said. "He had earlier erased all his mobile data. (PTI)



**SC increases tenure of SCBA to two years, effective from 2027**

In wide-ranging electoral reforms, the Supreme Court on Friday increased the tenure of the executive committee of the Supreme Court Bar Association to two years while directing that the move would be effective from 2027.



A bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice KV Viswanathan said there would be a one-year cooling-off period after completion of a term. The top court gave one additional month for conducting the SCBA elec-

tions to ensure implementation of the reforms, except for the increase in the executive committee's tenure. The apex court also held that advocates who have made at least 50 appearances before it would be eli-



**SC clears Vinesh for Asian Games 2026 trials**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday permitted wrestler Vinesh Phogat to participate in the selection trials to be held on May 30 and 31 for the Asian Games 2026.

A bench of Justices PS Narasimha and Alok Aradhe passed the order while hearing a plea filed by the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) challenging the Delhi High Court order allowing Phogat to participate in the selection trials.

"Today at this stage, the high court having passed the order, the hope and expectations have risen. To tell her to

go back home and we can't do anything, will not be proper. We are very bold in telling you this," the bench told the counsel appearing for the WFI. The top court said, "The respondent (Phogat) shall be permitted to participate in the selection trials for the Asian Games 2026 which are scheduled on May 30, 2026 and May 31, 2026."

The bench also expressed concern over the manner in which the high court dealt with the matter.

"We are not stopping. You (Phogat) go ahead and participate," it observed, adding that she has been an excellent wrestler and has made the country proud. During the



hearing, the bench asked senior advocate Madhavi Divan, who was appearing for Phogat, about the missed doping test and also about

the whereabouts part of it. The top court said in December 2024, Phogat took a sabbatical saying that in August 2025, she would start

participating. It said that in June last year, she informed that the sabbatical ended.

The bench referred to a communication which said that on January 5, Phogat had missed the doping test and the whereabouts were not known. It observed there was an order of the International Testing Agency (ITA) in May this year which considered Phogat's explanation.

The bench noted that Phogat, also an MLA from Haryana, had said that she had to participate in the Assembly session. Divan said Phogat was not seeking any concession or exemption. "I (Phogat) just want to participate," she said, adding

that the wrestler may or may not succeed. The bench observed that Phogat is definitely not an ordinary athlete. It said Indian sports are integrally connected to the world sports.

"So therefore, if some kind of a disqualification occurs at the world level, it will be a reflection on the country," the bench observed.

The top court said it was rather surprising that without referring to any of the schemes or any of the rules, suddenly the high court had said that the policy was "exclusionary". "This policy was made way back in February 2026, applied across the board," it said.

**POCSO case: No SC relief against Swami's Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati bail**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to interfere with the Allahabad High Court order granting anticipatory bail to Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati in a case registered against him under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

A bench of Justices MM Sundresh and N Kotiswar Singh dismissed the plea of complainant Ashutosh Brahmachari. Complainant Brahmachari argued that the high court failed to adequately consider the severity of the allegations against Avimukteshwaranand.

Advocate Saurabh Ajay Gupta, appearing for the complainant, submitted that Avimukteshwaranand had "sexually exploited" minors on the pretext of imparting education "It's a very heinous offence under the POCSO Act. The high court has dealt with the issue in a mechanical fashion," he submitted.

The bench, which questioned the petitioner over the delay in going to the police despite claiming to



have information about the alleged abuse of minors, said, "Sorry, we are not going to interfere". On March 25, the Allahabad High Court granted anticipatory bail to Avimukteshwaranand and his disciple Mukundanand Brahmachari in a case registered against them under the POCSO Act.

However, the high court restrained both the first informant and the applicants (Avimukteshwaranand and the disciple) from making any statements before the media in this regard.

The court had directed both of them to cooperate with the investigation. The case pertains to an FIR lodged at the Jhansi police

station in Prayagraj following directions from a POCSO court, alleging sexual exploitation of several 'batusks' (young disciples) by the accused.

Avimukteshwaranand had maintained that the allegations were fabricated and his lawyers had contended before the high court that the complainant has a criminal history. They submitted that the seer has been falsely implicated in the case and claimed that the alleged victims never stayed at his ashram. The State had opposed the plea on technical grounds, saying it was filed directly in the high court without first approaching a sessions court.

**Delhi Police seeks bail cancellation of teacher in Janakpuri rape case**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

The Delhi Police on Friday urged the Delhi High Court to cancel the bail granted to a female teacher in a case concerning the alleged rape of a three-year-old girl by a staffer inside a private school in west Delhi's Janakpuri area. Justice Saurabh Banerjee issued notice to the teacher on the police's plea challenging the trial court order, which granted bail to her on May 20 in the case under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

The judge also granted time to the main accused, Lalit Kumar, to respond to the police's plea against the trial court order granting him bail and listed both cases for hearing on June 17 before a vacation bench.

The teacher was arrested for allegedly concealing the incident from the authorities and was remanded to one day's police custody by the trial court on May 14. The incident came to light on May 1 when the victim's mother filed a complaint at the Janakpuri police station,



alleging that her daughter was sexually assaulted during school hours by the main accused, Kumar.

According to the complaint, the child had gone to the school on April 30, the second day after her admission. After returning home, she complained of pain. When questioned by her mother, the girl said that she was taken to an isolated area in the school, where the man allegedly assaulted her.

Based on the complaint by the child's mother, police registered a case under Section 64(1) (punishment for rape) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Section 6 (Punishment for aggravated penetrative sexual assault) of the POCSO Act. Section 6 mandates a minimum of 20 years of rig-

orous imprisonment, which can be extended to life imprisonment, or the death penalty for the offence.

Police said the child identified the accused, following which the 57-year-old school caretaker was arrested on May 1. He was later produced before a court and sent to judicial custody. However, he was granted bail by a court in Dwarka on May 7 despite strong opposition from the prosecution. Earlier, the police filed a plea against the trial court order granting bail to the main accused, the caretaker. They argued that it was a "gross case" and the trial court granted him relief within a few days of his arrest, despite the survivor identifying him as the perpetrator.

**Baba Siddique murder: MCOCA court denies bail to accused**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Mumbai

A special court on Friday refused bail to an accused in the Baba Siddique murder case, saying his role of harbouring the shooters is clearly supported by the material on record.

Nationalist Congress Party leader Siddique (66) was shot dead by three assailants outside his son Zeeshan's office in Mumbai's Bandra (East) area on the night of October 12, 2024.

Special MCOCA judge Satyanarayan R. Navander, in his ruling, noted that accused Amol Gaikwad was involved



in the activities of the organised crime syndicate, and his subsequent participation in harbouring the shooters connects him with the conspiracy hatched for com-

mitting the heinous offence. His role cannot be said to be "less significant than that of the other accused persons in the syndicate", the court observed. Gaikwad had

sought bail on the ground that he was innocent and had been falsely implicated in the case.

Advocate Siddharth Agrawal, representing Gaikwad, argued that the investigating officer failed to comply with mandatory provisions of sections 47 and 48 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), making the arrest defective.

Additionally, the defence alleged Gaikwad's confessional statement was invalid as it was extracted under threats and pressure.

Special public prosecutor Mahesh Mule, as well as advocates Pradip Gharat and

Trivankumar Karnani, appearing for the victim's side, opposed Gaikwad's plea, contending that the applicant played a specific role in the conspiracy hatched for the murder of Baba Siddique. According to the prosecution, the specific role assigned to Gaikwad was to provide shelter to the shooters after the execution of the offence. The court, after considering the nature of the allegations, was of "the prima facie view that there is sufficient material indicating Gaikwad's involvement in the conspiracy and in facilitating the organised crime syndicate".

**UP court defers hearing in case against AAP's Sanjay Singh**



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE Sultanpur (UP)

A Model Code of Conduct violation case hearing with AAP MP as one of the accused could not be held on Friday, as the investigating officer failed to appear in court.

Noting his absence, the MP-MLA court posted the matter for hearing on June 15. Sanjay Singh's counsel, Madan Pratap Singh, said that the investigating officer was required to appear today to record his statement, but he did not show up. Before this, the investigating officer also failed to appear in court on May 21.

The case pertains to an election meeting allegedly held without permission in Hasanpur village under the Bandhua Kala Police Station jurisdiction during Uttar Pradesh panchayat polls on April 13, 2021.

**SC extends TET deadline for teachers to August 31, 2028**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday reiterated that clearing the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) is mandatory for in-service teachers and extended the time till August 31, 2028, for passing the exam to remain in service.

A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Manmohan dismissed a batch of more than 65 review petitions filed by several state governments, teachers' associations and individual teachers challenging the

court's earlier ruling in the Anjuman Ishaat-e-Taleem Trust case.

The petitioners had sought reconsideration of the court's 2025 judgment, which held that in-service teachers appointed before the enactment of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, and having more than five years left before retirement, must clear the TET within two years from September 1, 2025.

In an order, the court said, "TET examination must be conducted by the relevant



authorities expeditiously, as well as the time and resources required for the same are limited, we alter and extend the timeline from 2 to 3 years, the qualification has to be obtained by 31st August, 2028, instead of 31st August, 2027, as

originally directed". The court, however, made it clear that no further extension of time would be granted. Rejecting the argument that the TET requirement amounted to retrospective application of the law, the

bench said the statutory framework of the RTE Act clearly envisaged that even in-service teachers were required to acquire minimum qualifications within a prescribed time-frame. The judgment noted that the RTE Act specifically dealt with teachers already in service at the commencement of the law and granted them time to obtain the prescribed qualifications.

"The legislature intended the in-service teachers to also meet the prescribed minimum threshold," the court said.

**State cannot curtail individual's liberty: Supreme Court**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

Underlining that the liberty of an individual cannot be curtailed by the State on account of slow bureaucratic processes, the Supreme Court on Friday awarded ₹ 11 lakh compensation to a man who was kept in illegal custody for 24 days despite the court issuing his release order.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and Augustine George Masih was hearing a plea filed by the man who was



sentenced to rigorous imprisonment of four years for rioting and house-tres-

pass by a court in Alwar, Rajasthan. He applied for perma-

nent parole on December 3, 2023, but his plea was rejected on January 18, 2024. He later challenged the order before the Rajasthan High Court.

A single judge allowed his petition on November 5, 2024, and directed his release on furnishing a personal bond of ₹ 1 lakh and two sureties of ₹ 50,000 each.

By this time, he had already served 3 years, two months and 20 days of his four-year sentence. By November 25, 2024, he had still not been released

despite complying with the conditions stipulated in the HC order. He then approached the Division Bench, which ordered his immediate release on December 6, 2024.

The man then moved the Supreme Court seeking compensation for illegal custody. During the hearing on Friday, the top court quoted George Washington, the first US president, and said, "Arbitrary power is most easily established on the ruins of liberty abused to licentiousness."

**Calcutta HC grants interim protection to actor Parambrata**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

The Calcutta High Court on Friday granted interim protection to actor Parambrata Chatterjee from any coercive step by the police over an alleged social media post by him following the 2021 West Bengal Assembly polls.

A written complaint was made on May 21 at Gariahat police station here, claiming that a social media post by Chatterjee on the day of declaration of the 2021 elections amounted to instigation and encouragement of post-poll violence, allegedly committed by unknown persons in different parts of the State.

Praying that the proceedings against Chatterjee be quashed, his lawyer stated before the court that the FIR does not attribute any overt act, criminal intention, or unlawful conduct to the petitioner. He said the FIR was lodged five years after the alleged social media post by the actor, maintaining that criminal liability cannot be fastened



based on speculative inferences drawn from a subjective or imaginative interpretation of words used in a communication.

Admitting the application for hearing, Justice Ajoy Kumar Mukherjee granted the actor interim protection from any coercive action by the police for two weeks.

Passing the ex-parte order, the court directed him to cooperate with the investigating agency. Justice Mukherjee clarified that the interim protection order will not prevent the investigating agency from submitting a final report, after completing the probe.

# India, Canada launch trade forum to strengthen ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

India and Canada have launched a trade and investment forum to bring together businesses from both countries to promote commercial engagement, according to a joint statement issued on Friday.

The two countries have also agreed to enhance connectivity between India and Canada, including people to people ties, business mobility, and direct commercial linkages, as essential enablers of expanded trade and investment, it said.

The statement was issued after the conclusion of a three-day (May 25-27)



official visit of Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal.

He has held a series of meetings with business leaders besides holding a bilateral meeting with

Canada's Minister of International Trade, Maninder Sidhu.

"The Ministers launched the Canada-India Trade and Investment Forum as a key platform that brings together

Canadian and Indian business leaders and fosters new commercial partnerships and increased business engagement," it said.

They reiterated their commitment to advancing an ambitious and mutually beneficial Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and affirmed their shared objective of concluding negotiations by the end of this year.

The pact will be important for expanding market access, supporting resilient supply chains, and enabling two-way economic growth.

Minister Sidhu confirmed that Canada will lead a Team Canada Trade Mission to India later this year.

# Govt mulls social security schemes for gig workers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The number of gig workers in India could reach 2.5 crore by the end of the decade, and the Government is in consultation with fund managers to bring social security schemes for them, a labour ministry official said on Friday.

At present, the country has around 1 crore gig workers, including those engaged with app-based food delivery and ride-hailing platforms.

The Government is collecting the workforce data, and

'Stakeholders Consultation on Opportunities and Challenges of Gig and Platform Workers in India'.

The event was organised by FICCI-AIOE (All India Organisation of Employers), jointly with the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Pednekar, while highlighting steps taken by the Government, said that the Code on Social Security under the new labour code has already been notified on May 8.

"We are in the process of operationalising the Code,



all these platforms have to update their workers' details on the labour ministry's e-Shram portal by June 22, said Ashutosh AT Pednekar, Joint Secretary and Director General (Labour Welfare).

"A huge part of our workforce is now getting absorbed in the gig and platform economy, and the potential is immense. Today, around 1 crore workers are employed in this sector, and the potential is to reach around 2.5 crore workers by the end of the decade. The Government is focusing more towards this sector," he said, speaking at the

based on the rules through various mechanisms like the National Social Security Board for gig and platform workers, which is being operationalised. The board will look at unorganised workers," he added.

He further said that the Government is in the process of operationalising various social security schemes related to accident and maternity for platform workers.

"We are in the process of creating various schemes and engaging with a number of fund managers to ensure the schemes are operationalised," he added.

# India should target to build \$120-\$150 billion semiconductor value chain by 2035: NITI Aayog

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

India should target building a \$120-150 billion semiconductor value chain by choosing leadership and purpose over participation by 2035, a NITI Aayog report said on Friday.

The Centre should commit at least one-third of the required investment to de-risk projects and anchor long-term investor confidence, the report, 'Future of India's Semiconductor Industry', suggested.

Instead of chasing the global wafer race from behind, India should define its own pathway-one that is not only distinct but shaped by strategic self-sufficiency, ecosystem strength and global indispensability, the report said.

"By 2035, India should target build-



ing a \$120-150 billion semiconductor value chain by choosing leadership and purpose over participation," the report said.

According to the report, building a globally competitive semiconductor ecosystem in India will require nearly \$135-180 billion in cumulative semicon-

ductor investments over the next decade, directed toward growth capital across design, fabrication, advanced packaging, materials and supporting infrastructure.

"The Government of India should commit at least one-third of the required investment to de-risk projects and anchor long-term investor confidence," it said.

This, the report said in turn, can crowd in private capital at scale. Fabs, advanced packaging, compound semiconductors and critical design infrastructure should be prioritised for public funding. "Alongside funding support, the focus should also be on stability, predictable incentives and coordinated execution across the value chain," it said.

# Stock markets decline for 3rd day; Sensex tumbles 1,092 pts

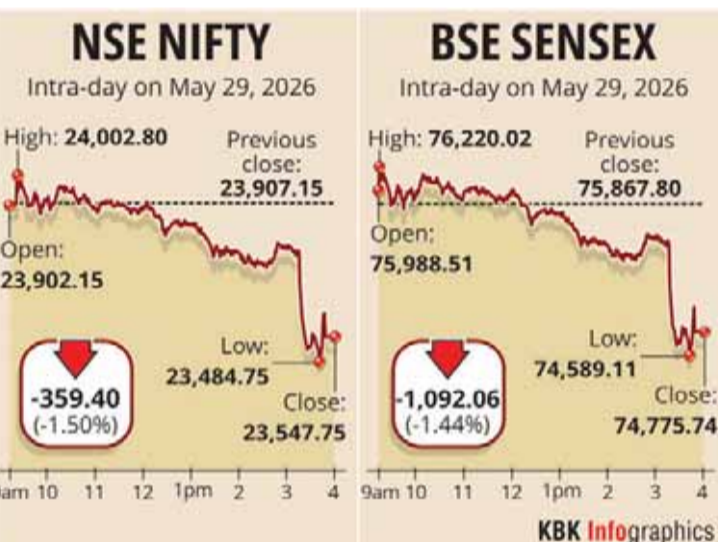
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Mumbai

Benchmark Sensex tumbled 1,092 points and Nifty closed below 24,550 on Friday due to last-minute profit booking in financials and oil & gas shares amid reports of a below-normal monsoon season rainfall.

Dragged by late selling, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 1,092.06 points, or 1.44 per cent, to settle at 74,775.74. The index opened higher and moved in a tight range for most of the session. However, heavy profit booking in Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, M&M and Bajaj Finance dragged the benchmark down by 1,278.69 points, or 1.68 per cent, to 74,589.11 in the pre-close session.

Falling for the third consecutive session, the 50-share NSE Nifty dived 359.40 points, or 1.50 per cent, to end at 23,547.75. Among 30 Sensex firms, Power Grid, InterGlobe Aviation, NTPC, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Steel and Bajaj Finance were the major laggards.

Tech Mahindra, HCL Tech, Larsen & Toubro and Infosys were the gainers.



"Markets witnessed a sharp bout of volatility in the final hour of trade on Friday, with benchmark indices erasing most of their intraday gains amid heavy institutional selling," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

"The sudden spike in volatility

was largely attributed to the MSCI May 2026 index rebalancing, which triggered heavy passive institutional flows during the closing session. Additionally, weakness in heavy-weight stocks such as Reliance and ITC, along with sustained pressure in banking majors including HDFC Bank

and ICICI Bank, further intensified the decline," Mishra added.

The June-September southwest monsoon rainfall over India is expected to be 90 per cent of the long-period average with a model error of 4 per cent, the India Meteorological Department said on Friday. While the Northeast is likely to witness normal rainfall this monsoon season, the remaining parts of the country may see below normal rainfall, the weather office said.

LPA refers to the rainfall recorded over a particular region for a given interval, such as a month or season, averaged over a long period of time, typically 30 to 50 years.

"The market witnessed broad-based selling pressure following the IMD's monsoon forecasts to 90 per cent of the long-period average, raising concerns among investors. The prospect of deficient rainfall, coupled with the increasing likelihood of an El Nino weather pattern, has heightened fears of elevated food inflation in the coming month," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

# SEBI levies ₹28.95 crore penalty on Suzlon Energy, MD, others



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Capital markets regulator Sebi on Friday imposed penalties totalling ₹28.95 crore on Suzlon Energy Ltd, its Chairperson-MD Vinod R Tanti, and three others for allegedly misleading investors about the company's financial performance over several years.

In a 96-page order, Sebi said Suzlon Energy Ltd's financial statements failed to present a "true and fair view" of the profitability, net worth, leverage, financial exposure and risk profile.

Accordingly, the regulator imposed a fine of ₹15.95 crore on Suzlon Energy Ltd (SEL), ₹5.75 crore on Vinod R Tanti, ₹5.45 crore on Girish R Tanti, ₹1.5 crore on former Chief Financial Officers Kirti J Vagadia and ₹30 lakh on Amit Agarwal.

Both Vinod R Tanti and Girish R Tanti are promoters of the company.

The order came after Sebi set aside an earlier adjudicating officer's ruling that had disposed of the matter without levying any penalty.

The matter originated from an anonymous complaint received by Sebi in December 2019, alleging irregularities in Suzlon Energy's dealings with its subsidiaries and associates.

# Energy prices, current account deficit, balance of payments big priorities right now: CEA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Mumbai

Chief economic advisor V Anantha Nageswaran on Friday said managing Macroeconomic fundamentals like the balance of payments and current account deficit has assumed a larger priority for the Government right now as the West Asia conflict has triggered a massive global energy shock.

Speaking at an event on securitisation, Nageswaran said the West Asia conflict has led to a "energy shock" where the prices have moved north after the supply impact due to issues in the Strait of Hormuz.

"In the current context of having to deal with the energy price, energy shock, current account deficit (CAD) and the balance of payments (BoP), etc. These, therefore, have assumed a much larger priority, urgency at this point," Nageswaran said. Refraining from giving any

# Rising prices may hit festive smartphone demand, dent annual sales by up to 30 pc, says report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

More than half of intended smartphone buyers in India may defer their purchases or shift to the second-hand market during the festive half of the year (July to December) if prices continue to rise, potentially dragging down annual sales by up to 30 per cent, according to a study.

A joint report by Trakin Tech and Techarc, released on Friday, revealed that 54 per cent of intended smartphone demand for the second half of the year is at risk.

The study, which surveyed 5,958 active buyers



across the country planning purchases between July and December, found that 48 per cent of these consumers would postpone their purchase until prices settle, while 6 per cent would opt for refurbished or pre-owned devices.

If current price trends continue, the demand erosion could translate to a drop in annual sales volumes to 115-120 million units for the period, down from the 136-138 million units recorded last year.

India's smartphone

market went through a major repricing cycle between January 2025 and May 2026, driven by rising global costs for NAND flash and DRAM memory chips-the critical semiconductor chips responsible for a smartphone's permanent storage and active working memory, respectively. This cost inflation pushed up prices across the market.

Entry and budget segment handsets have borne the steepest increases - with prices rising 8-12 per cent on average since launch for the sub-20,000 segment, where memory costs form a disproportionately large share of the bill of materials, as high as 40 per cent.

# India ranks 4th globally on AI performance; 5th in digital economy rankings: Report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

India has emerged as the world's fifth most digitalised economy and is placed fourth on the CHIPS-AI index, according to the State of India's Digital Economy (SIDE) 2026 report.

"The report documents a fundamental shift in the global digital landscape: 72 per cent of AI users are now in developing countries, with India and China together accounting for nearly two-fifths of worldwide AI adoption," it said.

India generated \$328 billion in digitally delivered trade and is



home to the world's second-largest AI talent pool.

It observed that Generative AI diffused faster than any previous technology in history, becoming a developing-country phenomenon almost immediately after launch. The report's findings reveal a "structural shift" in global digital leadership.

"Among the world's top five digital economies, three - China, Singapore and India - are now from the Indo-Pacific region, signalling the emergence of a tripartite digital

order alongside the traditional North Atlantic pole," it further said.

India climbed to fifth in global rankings (eighth in 2025), as digital momentum accelerated in an increasingly competitive environment. "The country's standalone AI index ranking of 4th - behind only the United States, China and Singapore - validates its emergence as a global AI powerhouse," as per the report. ICRIER Chairperson, Pramod Bhasin said India has built strong founda-

tions through connectivity, entrepreneurship and digital public infrastructure.

The next phase of growth depends on effectively leveraging AI, deepening innovation capabilities and strengthening digital trust, he said.

"India is no longer just a large digital market - it is emerging as one of the world's most influential AI economies," Sehraj Singh, Vice President, Group Corporate Affairs and Public Policy, Prosus said.



FROM THE WORLD

US  
Indian-American journo honoured

Indian-American journalist T Vishnudatta Jayaraman, founder of South Asian Herald, was felicitated at the New York State Assembly. Jayaraman was presented with a proclamation by New York Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar on Wednesday at the State Capitol in Albany. Rajkumar highlighted the work of South Asian Herald, calling it a "distinguished" news platform dedicated to covering the South Asian diaspora in the United States and an "important voice" for a "dynamic and influential community." Speaker Pro Tempore Pamela Hunter, who presided over the session, wished Jayaraman and South Asian Herald "continued success." On May 19, US Congressmen Jonathan Jackson, Danny Davis, Shri Thanedar, and Suhay Subramanyam presented Jayaraman with a Congressional Record and commemorative medal during an AAPI Heritage Month event hosted by Global Eye magazine on Capitol Hill.

PAKISTAN  
FM meets Marco Rubio

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar met US Secretary of State Marco Rubio here on Friday amid reports of the US and Iran closing in on an agreement to end the three-month war. Dar's meeting with Rubio comes days after US President Donald Trump urged countries mediating the US-Iran talks to end the three-month war to join the Abraham Accords, which establish diplomatic, economic and security ties between Israel and Arab nations. Pakistan, which has emerged as a key mediator in the West Asia conflict, does not recognise the State of Israel and has no diplomatic relations with it. Dar, also the Deputy Prime Minister, was in New York at the invitation of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to attend the UN Security Council debate on "Maintenance of International Peace and Security."

## India, US hold talks on Indo-Pacific security challenges

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
n Singapore

Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh met Commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command Admiral Samuel J Paparo in Singapore on Friday and held wide-ranging talks on security challenges in the region.

Singh's talks with Paparo — on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue 2026 — focused on "strengthening military-to-military cooperation and addressing emerging security challenges" in the Indo-Pacific region, the Directorate of Public Relations under India's Ministry of Defence said in a social media post.

The meeting reaffirmed

the "shared commitment" to deepening India-US defence ties at a time when the Indo-Pacific has emerged as the central theatre of global strategic competition, it said.

Earlier this week, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio noted that 60 per cent of global maritime trade passes through the Indo-Pacific, underscoring the region's critical importance for Washington.

For India, the Indo-Pacific forms the core of its security calculus. The Indian Ocean flanks it on three sides — the Arabian Sea to the west, the Indian Ocean proper to the south, and the Bay of Bengal to the east. And it has growing strategic interests stretching from the Strait of



Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh with US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) Commander Admiral Samuel J Paparo during a meeting on the sidelines of Shangri-La Dialogue 2026 in Singapore

Malacca to the Persian Gulf.

The development comes days after India hosted the Quad foreign ministers' meeting in New Delhi, where External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, along with his counterparts from the US, Australia and Japan, announced the grouping's first-ever joint infrastructure project — a port in Fiji.

The Quad also launched an Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Cooperation Initiative, aimed at establishing a Common Operating Picture and sharing near-real-time data across strategic shipping lanes.

On the sidelines of the Singapore summit, Singh also held separate meetings with Admiral Giuseppe Cavo

Dragone, who heads the NATO Military Committee, Canada's Senior Associate Deputy Minister of National Defence Kelvin Brosseau, and Seychelles' Chief of Defence Forces Major General Micheal Rosette. Defence collaborations and security challenges were some of the common themes of these meetings, according to the Ministry of Defence. Singh also addressed a gathering of leading think tanks and academia, where he shared India's vision for regional security and strategic engagement.

The flurry of engagements comes in the context of a broader visit to Singapore that has seen Singh undertake a packed schedule of defence diplomacy.

## Good governance, development national need: Nepal President

SHIRISH B PRADHAN  
n Kathmandu

Nepal President Ramchandra Paudel on Friday urged political parties, civil society and other stakeholders to contribute to developing a well-cultured and prosperous society as envisaged by the Constitution.

The Constituent Assembly declared Nepal as a federal democratic republic on 15 Jeshtha 2065 Bikram Samvat (May 28, 2008), formally abolishing the 240-year-old monarchy in the country.

Addressing a special ceremony at Tundikhel in Kathmandu on the occasion of Nepal's 19th



Republic Day, President Paudel emphasised that realising the objectives of good governance, development and prosperity is today's national need.

This can be accomplished by strengthening an accountable and people-oriented service delivery, he said. President Paudel was speaking on the occasion as Prime Minister Balendra Shah declined to address the ceremony at Tundikhel, ending a long-standing tradition of the elected prime minister delivering the keynote speech.

In his message, Paudel called for cooperation among all layers of government, the private sector and civil society to achieve social justice, economic prosperity and inclusive development as envisaged by the Constitution. (PTI)

## Rail car fire near New York's Penn Station injures 5

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
n New York

A fire in a rail yard train car near New York's Penn Station injured five people and disrupted service for many commuters early on Friday, authorities said.

The fire resulted in train delays in New Jersey Transit and Amtrak rail service into New York and briefly suspended Long Island Rail Road service, more than a week after a strike had shut down that system.

New Jersey Transit posted on X that it was an Amtrak train car that was on fire "in one of the Hudson River tunnels." It said the fire resulted in "overhead wire damage." "Impacts are



expected to last through the morning rush hour," it said.

Amtrak posted on X that it suspended its service until at

least noon Friday due to maintenance resulting "from a now extinguished fire in the New York area." It said lengthy delays were expected for trains travelling north of New York.

It did not post any information about the fire itself. An email seeking comment was sent to Amtrak. Fire officials said 100 firefighters responded to the fire early Friday and that five people were hurt. Two of them were taken to a hospital. Their conditions were not immediately known. Penn Station, underneath Madison Square Garden, can serve roughly 600,000 passengers daily via Amtrak, the New York subway system, New Jersey Transit and the LIRR.

## School fire: Kenyan police arrest 8 students

EVELYNE MUSAMBI  
n Nairobi

Kenyan police arrested eight female students on suspicion of arson, authorities said Friday, after a fire destroyed a dormitory at a boarding school, killing 16 children and injuring dozens of others. The motive remains under investigation.

The girls were arrested for planning and carrying out a suspected arson attack at Utumishi Girls School in central Kenya, according to the Directorate of Criminal Investigations, or DCI, a department of the national police. In addition to the deaths, the blaze on Thursday morning left 79 others injured. Police spent the whole day Thursday



questioning 30 students at the school and asked their parents to head home without the girls and come back on Friday morning.

"Investigators have conducted extensive interviews with students, teaching staff and other witnesses, while

forensic teams carry out a detailed review of available CCTV footage," DCI spokesperson John Marete said in a statement.

Education Minister Julius Ogamba said Friday the school's board of management had been dissolved

and the principal would face disciplinary action for failing to comply with the safety manual. "In particular, there was congestion in the dormitory and one exit door was locked, contrary to the prescribed safety requirements," he said. Two teachers who were aware of planned unrest that may have led to the suspected arson will also face disciplinary action.

On Friday morning, parents remained in limbo at the school with no clear information on when the rest of the students would be released. "We have not even been told about the eight that police have arrested," a parent, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of fear that her daughter could be victimised, told The Associated Press. "We are just here and no one is giving us any information." At the Naivasha hospital morgue, 28 kilometres from the school, anxious parents waited for DNA tests to identify their children.

A distraught father, John Muiruri, said they were being given conflicting information about the location of the bodies. "They have just been doing some sideshows, trying to prevent us from knowing the truth but the reality we have come to know is that we have lost our children. We have come to terms with reality. What we want to know is where the remains of our daughters are," he said. The motive of the arson attack wasn't yet known. (AP)

## Philippine court orders senator's arrest for large-scale corruption



JIM GOMEZ n Manila

A Philippine anti-graft court ordered the arrest of a prominent senator on Friday over allegations he pocketed a kickback of millions of dollars in a flood-control project, in the latest crisis to entangle the Senate.

Sen Jinggoy Estrada surrendered and posted bail before the Sandiganbayan court, allowing him to remain free while the case proceeds.

The court barred Estrada from leaving the country while facing the first of two corruption-related charges in relation to the flood control project anomalies.

Another warrant for his arrest for the second charge, which is non-bailable, is expected to be issued by the court soon, top anti-graft prosecutor Jesus Crispin Remulla told The Associated Press. Estrada, 63, has strongly denied allegations mainly by a former Government public works engineer that he received more than 570 million pesos (\$9.3 million) in kickbacks.

"I intend to avail myself of every lawful means to defend myself and clear my name," Estrada said. The senator was

an actor like his father, former President Joseph Estrada. Both have been previously detained on other corruption-related charges.

Several other senators and members of the House of Representatives have been implicated in the flood control anomalies in a poverty-stricken Asian archipelago that is among the most vulnerable to deadly floods and typhoons.

Another senator, Ronald dela Rosa, has gone into hiding after the International Criminal Court issued a warrant for his arrest for an alleged crime against humanity. Dela Rosa was a former national police chief who enforced a brutal anti-drugs crackdown under then-President Rodrigo Duterte that left thousands of mostly petty suspects dead. The unprecedentedly large numbers of killings alarmed Western governments.

Duterte, who stepped down in 2022 after his stormy six-year term, was arrested last year on orders of the ICC and flown to the Netherlands, where he was detained and will face trial for alleged crimes against humanity starting in November over some of the killings. (AP)

## Hormuz exposes China's Indian Ocean vulnerability



GURDIP SINGH n Singapore

The study examines strategic competition around major maritime choke points linking the Middle East and Asia, with particular focus on the Strait of Hormuz and the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS), also known as the Malacca Strait, which carries a substantial share of global energy shipments. According to the report, recent developments around Hormuz have highlighted the growing strategic importance of these sea lanes. It cited Iran's participation in the Maritime Security Belt 2026 exercise with China and Russia, including naval drills conducted in the Strait of Hormuz earlier this year.

The drills took place shortly before the outbreak of conflict involving Iran, the US, and Israel, which disrupted shipping and energy flows through the Strait of Hormuz.

The report challenges the widely discussed notion of China's "Malacca Dilemma", which focuses on the vulnerability of Chinese trade and energy flows through the Malacca Strait. (PTI)

## ASEAN leaders to meet Putin at June summit

JIM GOMEZ n Manila

Leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations will hold a commemorative summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Russia in June, the Philippines' top diplomat said on Friday.

Philippine Foreign Secretary Theresa Lazaro said in a post on X that she and her Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, spoke on the phone about ASEAN's to be held in the Russian city of Kazan.

The Russian Embassy in Manila said that ahead of the June 17 to 18 summit, Lavrov and Lazaro discussed "the prospects of expanding

Russia's strategic partnership" with ASEAN.

Aside from the Philippines, ASEAN members include Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Russia in June, the Philippines, Thailand, East Timor and Vietnam.

Most ASEAN state members voted to support a United Nations General Assembly resolution condemning Russia for its Feb. 24, 2022, invasion of Ukraine, but the regional bloc has maintained relations with Moscow as a "dialogue partner" and engaged Russian officials in annual top-level meetings. Some of ASEAN's diverse states have been



perceived to be aligned with the United States, like Washington's treaty ally, the Philippines, which currently holds the association's yearly rotating presidency. Other members have heavy trade and security engagements with China and Russia. Vietnam and

Laos abstained from the UN General Assembly resolution concerning the attack on Ukraine.

Several ASEAN members, including the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam, have either imported or expressed interest in purchasing Russian crude oil after global fuel prices soared after the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran in February.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. will attend the summit with Putin, a Philippine Government official told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity for lack of authority to discuss the matter publicly. (AP)

## Trump losing support among White working class voters: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
n Washington

US President Donald Trump's approval ratings among White working-class voters — the group that voted to reelect him in 2024 by a huge margin — have dipped sharply, particularly on the issue of handling the economy, The Washington Post reported.

According to The Post, a CBS News poll conducted this month shows that disapproval of Trump's job performance among White voters without a college degree has climbed to 54 per cent, up sharply from 32 per cent in February 2025 and 45 per cent in February this year.

This trend could be a



warning sign for the Republicans ahead of the mid-term elections in November. Trump had won two-thirds of support from among the White voters

without college degrees group in 2016 when his election campaign focused on bringing back jobs lost due to offshoring, rejection of globalisation, and a crack-

down on immigration. Trump had retained similar winning margins of more than 30 points with the demographic in 2020 and 2024 and started his second

term with their broad approval. White Americans without college degrees still approved of Trump's handling of immigration in the CBS News-YouGov poll this May, but the margin had shrunk. They disapproved of Trump's handling of the economy by 22 percentage points — and they were negative overall. In other major national surveys released in mid-May, the President's approval ratings had fallen to new lows.

A new Economist/YouGov poll put Trump's approval at 34 per cent — the lowest in the tracking series across his two presidential terms.

A national survey from American Research Group found Trump's approval at

31 per cent, with 64 per cent disapproving, his lowest recorded approval across either of his terms. Quinnipiac University's national poll put Trump's approval at 34 per cent with 58 per cent disapproving, the lowest level recorded in the pollster's tracking of his presidency.

Polling conducted by The New York Times and Siena College found Trump's approval at 37 per cent, with 59 per cent disapproving, which pollsters described as a new low point for the current term. The White House maintains that the ultimate poll was on November 5, 2024, in which voters elected Trump to office.

India-EAEU trade liberalisation talks intensified, says Putin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n Astana

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that negotiations on trade liberalisation between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and India have intensified, signalling fresh momentum in efforts to forge a free trade agreement between the two sides, according to a media report.

"Last year trade agreements were concluded with Mongolia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as with Indonesia, intensifying negotiations on trade liberalisation with India," Putin was quoted as saying at the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in Kazakhstan's capital Astana on Friday, by Russian state-owned TASS news agency.



Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, speaking to Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov at the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council summit at the Independence Palace in Astana, Kazakhstan on Friday

The EAEU is a five-member economic bloc comprising Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia. It was founded in 2015 to promote economic integration through a common

market, the elimination of trade barriers and the coordination of economic policies among its member states. "We support the draft decisions on launching talks on free trade agree-

ments with new promising partners," said Putin, adding that all aspects of such forward movement would be carefully analysed.

The India-EAEU free trade agreement (FTA) process has been gaining ground steadily. In August 2025, India and the EAEU signed the Terms of Reference to formally launch FTA negotiations, with both sides noting that bilateral trade turnover had reached \$69 billion the previous year, registering a seven per cent increase over 2023.

The first round of negotiations was held from November 26 to 28 last year. The talks gained further momentum this year with New Delhi identifying deeper trade integration with the EAEU as one of its priorities under its BRICS chairmanship.

Guatemala President denies US anti-drug strike deal

ASSOCIATED PRESS n Guatemala City

Guatemalan President Bernardo Arevalo denied the existence of an agreement with the United States to conduct anti-drug trafficking operations on Guatemalan soil.

The comments come after The New York Times reported that the Central American nation agreed to carry out joint strikes. The case is the latest in ongoing tensions between the Trump administration and Latin American Governments that seek to strike a balance between bilateral cooperation to fight drug trafficking and maintaining sovereignty.

"There is no agreement. There is a request that falls within the framework of existing agreements in several countries," Arevalo said at a news conference.

"What we are signing are types of collaboration that have been taking place in the past. We conduct maritime interdictions where the United States has been collaborating with training, capacity building and equipment," Arevalo said.

He said the Government's actions are in accordance with Guatemalan law and the Constitution.

"The only body that can authorise operations involving soldiers on Guatemalan soil is the Congress of the Republic. The Guatemalan government is not requesting this cooperation and has no plans to do so," the president said.

When asked about the supposed agreement, acting Pentagon press secretary Joel Valdez said he cannot "speculate on future operations or discuss matters of operational security" but emphasised that the Department of War works with partners in the region to fight drug trafficking and other transnational threats.

The Guatemalan government also published a



press release and two letters in which its defence minister discusses combined military operations under pre-existing agreements with US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth.

The April deaths of two CIA agents in northern Mexico after an operation to destroy a drug lab highlighted the presence of US agents in Latin America and raised questions about heightened US involvement throughout the region. In the days following, Mexican officials offered contradictory accounts on how much information the country had regarding the CIA agents' involvement.

The Mexican Government acknowledges the presence of US agencies on Mexican territory but says that they cannot participate in on-the-ground operations.

HUNGARY'S MAGYAR MEETS WITH EU LEADERSHIP IN BRUSSELS



JUSTIN SPIKE/SAM MCNEIL n Brussels

Hungarian Prime Minister Peter Magyar will meet Friday for the first time since taking office with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in Brussels in a bid to unlock billions of euros frozen over the democratic backsliding of his predecessor.

Partly by campaigning on forging stronger ties with the European Union, Magyar's earthquake success in the April election ended the 16-year rule of Viktor Orban, who had vilified von der Leyen and other powerbrokers in the 27-nation bloc as he hollowed out institutional checks and balances in Hungary.

Those actions, and concerns over corruption and the erosion of judicial independence under Orban, prompted the bloc to freeze the billions in funding to Budapest in 2022.

A year later, the commission found that the government had carried out sufficient reforms to have around 10.2 billion euros (\$12.1 billion) released. After Magyar's party Tisza won a super-majority in parliament, which will enable deep and quick reforms, leaders in both Brussels and Budapest prioritised releasing the funds as soon as possible to help Hungary's slumped economy.

The funds are split between 10 billion euros of COVID recovery funds and 6.3 billion euros in the cohesion funds designed to lift up struggling economies within the EU.

The teams from Brussels and Budapest are working to first unlock the COVID funds because they are set to expire in August.

Carney calls for new partnership with US

ROB GILLIES n Toronto

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney called for a new partnership with the United States on Thursday, just weeks before President Donald Trump decides on whether to renew the free trade agreement between the countries.

Carney said in a speech at the Economic Club of New York that there should be a "true partnership" that reimagines cooperation in specific sectors challenged by global competition.

He made the remarks ahead of the mandatory review of United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA, in July. Carney said Canada is diversifying away from the US and signing trade deals with dozens of countries around the world.

"Our core objective across these partnerships is to increase our strategic autonomy. Because we live



in a world where integration has been weaponised. Because a country that cannot feed, fuel or defend itself is not truly sovereign," Carney said. Trump's actions -- including launching a trade war and suggesting Canada become the 51st US state -- have infuriated Canadians and created the political environment for Carney to win the job of prime minister after confronting Trump.

The Canadian prime minister has emerged as a spokesman for a move-

ment for countries to find ways to link up and counter the US under Trump. Carney has set a goal for Canada to double its non-US exports in the next decade, saying American tariffs are causing a chill in investment.

"Canada Strong will help make America great again. The examples are legion where we should work together and compete with the world together. And to those ends, we have made specific, practical proposals to the US administration," Carney said.

Netanyahu cites India's crazy love for Israel



HARINDER MISHRA n Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has described India as a "huge power" where there is "an absolutely crazy love for Israel" despite what he called efforts to delegitimise the Jewish state elsewhere.

Speaking at a leadership programme in the Jordan Valley on Thursday, Netanyahu further cited India as a key example of Israel's expanding international partnerships, as he discussed Israel's international relationships and efforts to broaden its diplomatic partnerships.

The remarks came amid a fragile geopolitical situation in West Asia, with Israel facing security challenges on multiple fronts and seeking to strengthen ties with partners beyond its traditional allies.

"We are expanding our alliances and what you are talking about is expanding these alliances to a large space. And the larger space is really our unique relationship with a huge power called India," Netanyahu said in a video released by the Government Press Office.

Referring to international criticism of Israel, he said: "I will say this: we face delegitimation in much of the world -- but not in India. In India, there is an absolutely crazy love for Israel, truly crazy."

I think I have more followers from India than from anywhere else.

Colombians to vote on Sunday in high-stakes test for President Petro

MANUEL RUEDA n Bogota

Colombia will elect a new president and vice president in a vote on Sunday that has been cast as a referendum on outgoing President Gustavo Petro's policies. A former member of Colombia's M-19 guerrilla group, which fought for social justice in

the 1970s and '80s, Petro has undertaken controversial peace negotiations with the country's remaining rebel groups, while pushing for social and economic reforms that include an overhaul of the nation's labour laws.



PHOTOGRAPH BY AP/WIDEWORLD

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I, Lavendra Singh S/o Narayan Pratap Singh R/o Ward No. 07, Teh. - Chandia, Gram - Harwah, PO : Harwah, Dist : Umaria, Madhya Pradesh - 484660 declare that the name of mine has been wrongly written as Lokendra Singh Baghel in my minor son namely Shreyansh Singh Baghel aged 10 years in his School Record. The actual name of mine is Lavendra Singh Which may be amended accordingly.

Aarsh Fincon Limited (formerly known as AKME Fincon Limited) registered office at 4-5, Subcity Centre, Udaipur, 313001. Demand Notice under Section 13(2) of Securitization Act of 2002. As Per Loan Account Become Npa Therefore The Authorized Officer Under Section 13(2) 'The Securitization And Reconstruction Of Financial Assets And Enforcement Of Security Interest Act, 2002' Had Issued 60 Days Demand Notice To The Borrower/Co-Borrower/ Mortgagee/ Guarantor (collectively Referred As 'Borrower') In The Table. According To The Notice If The Borrower's Do Not Deposit The Entire Amount Within 60 Days, The Amount Will Be Recovered From Auction Of The Mortgage Properties/Secured Assets As Given Below. Therefore You The Borrowers Are Informed To Deposit The Entire Loan Amount With The Future Interest And Expenses Within 60 Days From The Date Of The Demand Notice, Otherwise Under The Provision Of The 13(4) And 14 Of The Said Act, The Authorized Officer Is Free To Take Possession For Sale Of The Mortgage Properties, Secured Assets As Given Below. Borrowers To Note That After Receipt Of This Notice, In Terms Of Section 13(13) Of The Act, 2002, You Are Prohibited And Restrained From Transferring Any Of The Secured Assets By Way Of Sale, Lease Or Otherwise, Without Prior Written Consent Of The Secured Creditor. Borrowers Attention Are Attracted Towards Section 13(8) R/W Rule 3(5) Of The Security Interest (enforcement) Rules, 2002 Act That The Borrowers Shall Be Entitled To Redeem Their Secured Assets Upon The Payment Of The Complete Outstanding Dues As Mentioned Below Before The Publication Of Auction Notice Which Thereafter Shall Cease To Exist.

SHRIRA Finance SHIRAM FINANCE LIMITED Head Office: 101 - 105, Shiv Chamber, 1st Floor, B-Wing, Sector-11, B.D. Belapur, Navi Mumbai, India - 400614. Regional Office Jabalpur: 36/1, 3rd Floor, Digamber Tower, Above SBI Bank, Wright Town, Jabalpur (M.P.) - 482 002. Branch Office: Sai Manglam Colony, Above of Allahabad Bank, Khitaula Road, Sihora, Dist-Jabalpur (M.P.). POSSESSION NOTICE [Appendix IV] ( For Immovable Property ) Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the Shriram Finance limited [previous name Shriram transport finance Company], under the Securitisation 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 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued a demand notice calling upon the borrower's detail given below to repay the amount mentioned in the notice detail given below within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower having failed to repay the said amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and to the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules, on this 29/08/2025. The borrower in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Shriram Finance Limited for an amount of sale below and interest thereon. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of the time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Bank of Maharashtra (A Govt. of India Enterprise) www.bankofmaharashtra.in ZONAL OFFICE, 1/14, ADMINISTRATIVE ZONE, ARERA HILLS, BHOPAL, 462011. POSSESSION NOTICE [Rule - 8 (1)] WHEREAS, The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the Bank of Maharashtra under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, and in exercise of the powers conferred under Sub-Section (12) of Section 13 read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002, issued a Demand Notice dated mentioned below calling upon the borrower and guarantor to repay outstanding Amount (mentioned below) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The notice was sent by Regd Ad Post and hand delivery. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, the undersigned has taken Possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on dates mentioned below. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of Bank of Maharashtra, Concerned Branch for an amount herein above mentioned. The borrower's attention is invited to the provisions of sub-section 8 of Sec 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Table with 3 columns: Name & Address of Borrowers & Guarantor (s), Details of Property, Outstanding Amount ₹. Rows include Timarni Branch, Shivpuri Branch, and Morena Branch.

Indian-owned companies in UK surge in record investment year: Report

ADITI KHANNA n London

The number of Indian-owned companies in the UK surged by nearly 60 per cent year-on-year to rise to 1,912 with a combined turnover of 105.77 billion pounds, according to the 'India Meets Britain Tracker 2026'.

The latest edition of the annual Grant Thornton-led analysis of Indian investment and economic impact in the UK was launched by Indian High Commissioner to the UK P Kumaran in London on

Thursday. The 2026 Tracker reflects a significant increase from the 1,197 Indian-owned firms generating around 72.14 billion pounds in 2025, as well as a jump in employee numbers from 126,720 last year to 203,549. "The India-UK relationship today is no longer defined by nostalgia; it is defined by opportunity," said Kumaran, in one of his first addresses as the new High Commissioner. "India brings scale, growth, talent, and ambition, and the United Kingdom brings innovation,

expertise, finance, and global leadership across advanced sectors, and together we have the chance to build one of the defining economic partnerships of the coming decades," he said.

The 2026 Tracker notes that bilateral trade between India and the UK rose to 47.4 billion pounds in 2025, an 11.7 per cent year-on-year increase during the year which marked the signing of the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).





## BRIEFLY

### Volpato to switch nationality ahead of World Cup



Italy Under-21 forward Cristian Volpato is changing national eligibility to Australia ahead of the World Cup, four years after he declined an invitation ahead of the 2022 tournament. Football Australia said Friday the Sydney-born Volpato has been added to the Socceroos' training camp in Los Angeles, before its squad is finalised by Monday. The 22-year-old Sassuolo player is eligible to make the switch under FIFA rules because he never played a competitive game for the senior Italy team. The Australian soccer body said it "received a release letter from the Italian Football Federation" - a key step for FIFA to approve switching national eligibility. Australia opens its World Cup campaign against Turkey on June 13 in Vancouver, plays the United States six days later in Seattle, and finishes Group D against Paraguay on June 25 at the San Francisco 49ers' stadium. The top two in the standings go to the round of 32 and the third-place team also can advance. Volpato turned down Australia ahead of the 2022 World Cup when he played his club soccer for Roma under coach Jose Mourinho. Italy failed to qualify for the World Cup for the third straight edition. (AP)

### US Open adds qualifying round for mixed doubles



The US Open is adding a qualifying round to its mixed doubles tournament, a boost for traditional doubles specialists who were largely shut out of last year's event in favour of singles stars. The US Tennis Association said on Thursday that there would be an eight-team qualifying competition on August 24, where the teams will be playing for the last two spots in the 16-team main draw. Sara Errani and Andrea Pavonetti won their second straight title in New York last year, but they were the only true doubles team in the event and even as defending champions needed a wild card just to get back. Eight teams got in by the players' combined singles rankings, with the remaining teams given wild cards. The USA revamped the event last year and moved it to the beginning of the tournament. Doubles players criticized the format as more of an exhibition for excluding them, especially with a \$1 million prize to the winners that was far more than usually could earn. The first round and quarterfinals of the mixed doubles will be played August 25, with the semifinals and final on August 26. (AP)

### US trains for World Cup at new \$250 million

RONALD BLUM  
Fayetteville (US)

Jozy Altidore arrived at the new US Soccer National Training Center, a \$250 million, 200-acre, 19-field complex south of Atlanta, far different from where his 2014 American team recovered from practice in a plastic cold tub on a paved path outside Stanford's Cagan Stadium in California. "This is the culmination, right?" the retired striker said on Thursday. "This is what I'm sure past players strived to want to be a part of." As the Americans prepare to host the World Cup next month, the national team programs have progressed light years. Sunil Gulati, who would later become US Soccer Federation president, recalled buying balls from a Kmart on the morning of an intrasquad game at Colorado Springs, Colorado, filled with players trying to earn spots for the US roster going to the 1985 FIFA Under-16 World Championship.

## Rodrigues, Yastika and Nandani power India to win over England

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Chelmsford (UK)

Jemimah Rodrigues and Yastika Bhatia struck fluent half-centuries before debutant pacer Nandani Sharma started with the ball as experimental India defeated England by 38 runs to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match women's T20I series. Playing without regular captain Harmanpreet Kaur, India recovered from a disastrous start to post 188 for seven and then restricted England to 150 for eight at the County Ground on Thursday. This is India's final series before next month's T20 World Cup that begins on June 12. Stand-in skipper Smriti Mandhana got out for a golden duck, while her



opening partner Shafali Verma capped a forgettable three-ball two with Lauren Bell (3/34) giving a fiery start to England after they opted to bowl. But Rodrigues made 69 off 40 balls

(1x6, 10x4s) and Yastika marked her return to the format after two years with a brisk 54 off 40 deliveries, her maiden T20I fifty. She smashed nine fours and one six.

### Lionel Messi is in Argentina's World Cup squad as coach Scaloni calms injury fears

DEBORA REY  
Buenos Aires

Amid a worrying rash of injuries, Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni sought to dispel doubts by confirming that most of the reigning world champions, including captain Lionel Messi, will be part of the squad that will seek a second consecutive title at the 2026 World Cup. Messi, about to turn 39, headlines the 26-man World Cup roster announced by the Argentine Football Association on Thursday. Of those called up, 17 players were part of the team that triumphed four years ago in the final against France. Several of those players were in doubt due to injuries of varying severity, close to the June 1 deadline set by FIFA for finalising World Cup squads. Among them was Messi himself, who is suffering from muscle fatigue and strain in his left hamstring, which prevented him from finishing the match with Inter Miami last Sunday. The club has officially stated that his recovery time will depend on "his clinical and functional progress." Messi will be playing in his sixth World Cup, having previously participated in Germany 2006, South Africa 2010, Brazil 2014, Russia 2018 and Qatar 2022. Goalkeeper Martinez named: Goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez, who fractured the ring finger of his right hand during last week's Europa League final in which Aston Villa defeated Freiburg, has also been confirmed. Scaloni also included defender Cristian Romero, who is recovering from a sprained collateral ligament in his right knee suf-

fered in mid-April while playing for Tottenham, and fullbacks Nahuel Molina and Gonzalo Montiel, who scored the decisive penalty kicks in the 2002 World Cup shootout against France, both of whom are recovering from muscle injuries. Argentina, also world champions in 1978 and 1986, will debut on June 16 against Algeria in Group J, which also includes Austria and Jordan. The squad will travel on Saturday to their World Cup base in Kansas City and will play friendlies against Honduras and Iceland before the start of the tournament. ARGENTINA SQUAD: Goalkeepers: Emiliano Martinez (Aston Villa), Geronimo Rulli (Olympique de Marseille), Juan Musso (Atletico de Madrid). Defenders: Gonzalo Montiel (River Plate), Nahuel Molina (Atletico de Madrid), Lisandro Martinez (Manchester United), Nicolas Otamendi (Benfica), Leonardo Balerdi (Olympique de Marseille), Cristian Romero (Tottenham), Nicolas Tagliafico (Olympique de Lyon), Facundo Medina (Olympique de Marseille). Midfielders: Giovanni Lo Celso (Betis), Leandro Paredes (Boca Jrs), Rodrigo De Paul (Inter Miami), Exequiel Palacios (Bayer Leverkusen), Enzo Fernandez (Chelsea), Alexis Mac Allister (Liverpool), Valentin Barco (RC Strasbourg Alsace). Forwards: Lionel Messi (Inter Miami), Nicolas Gonzalez (Atletico de Madrid), Giuliano Simeone (Atletico de Madrid), Lautaro Martinez (Inter Milan), Jose Manuel Lopez (Palmeiras), Julian Alvarez (Atletico de Madrid), Thiago Almada (Lyon), Nico Paz (Como). (AP)

### Built myself from scratch after injury, says Yastika

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Chelmsford (UK)

India batter Yastika Bhatia said she had to build herself from scratch after a career-threatening ACL injury, enduring months of painful rehabilitation before returning with a match-winning half-century against England in the first women's T20I. Yastika, who injured her left knee during India's preparatory camp for last year's ODI World Cup in Visakhapatnam, marked her comeback with a fluent 54 off 40 balls in India's 38-run win in the opening women's T20I ahead of World Cup beginning on June 12. "I think those who undergo ACL surgery know how difficult it is because a

whole muscle of that leg goes away. You literally have to build everything from scratch," Yastika said after the match. The left-hander admitted there were phases during rehabilitation when progress seemed invisible. "After the surgery, the rehab process was pretty tough. There were days when nothing was happening and no progress was visibly seen. But I just kept showing up every day," she said. "After months, I could finally see improvement. The support system around me was beautiful... the Centre of Excellence staff, family, friends, teammates like Jemmy (Jemimah Rodrigues), everyone kept checking on me."

## Bank of Maharashtra PUBLIC NOTICE FOR SALE

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower/s and Guarantor/s that the below described immovable properties mortgaged/charged to the Bank of Maharashtra, the possession of which have been taken by the Authorised Officer of Bank of Maharashtra, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" & "WITHOUT RECOURSE BASIS" on 16.06.2026, for recovery of the balance due to the Bank of Maharashtra from the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) as mentioned in the table. Details of the Borrower/s and Guarantor/s, amount due, Short description of the immovable property and encumbrances known thereon, possession type, reserve price and the earnest money deposit are also given as under-

Name & Address of Borrower / Guarantor	Outstanding Dues for Recovery of which Property are being sold	Description of properties	Type of Possession	Reserve Price EMD Amount Bid Increase Amount
1) Branch - Satna Borrower : Mr. Mohammad Shahid Khan, S/o Mr. Suleman Khan Mrs. Saishita Khan, W/o Mr. Mohammad Shahid Khan S/o: Mr. Suleman Khan Ward no. 29, Gali no.1, Pateri road, Jawahar Nagar, Satna-485001	Rs.7189614/- (LB Rs.6958726/-+unapplied interest Rs.230888 and other charges and expenses w.e.f 02.05.2024	Residential Property, area admeasuring 1200 sq.ft. with construction thereon situated at Mouza Umrhahi Mathuriyan, Circle AMarpatan, Land bearing Khasara no. 129/9, Ward no.1, Krishna Nagar Colony, Tehsil- Amarpatan, Dist:Satna	Symbolic	Rs.3215000/- EMD: Rs.3215000/- Rs. 10000/-
2) Branch - Sanjeevni Nagar Borrower : Sundaril Mehra, Mrs. Indra Mehra, H.No.-28/3, Bhulan Basti, Kachhpura, Malgodam Ke aage, Kamla Nehru ward, Garha Purwa, Jabalpur-482003	Rs.24,68,079.00 + plus interest thereon @13.05 thereon @ contractual rate + w.e.f. 14.01.2025 Rs.300232/- plus interest thereon @13.30 thereon @ contractual rate + w.e.f. 14.01.2025 Rs.19,04,856/- plus interest thereon @10.95 thereon @ contractual rate + w.e.f. 14.01.2025	All those piece and parcel of property and construction on at Mouza Kachhpura, NB no.501, PH no. 25/31, Khasra no. 127/2, Situated at Bhulan Basti Area, Near JDA Scheme no.41, Kamla Nehru Nagar, Ward no. 19, Teh & Dist Jabalpur.	Physical	Rs.3800000/- EMD:Rs.3800000/- Rs. 10000/-
3) Branch - Sanjeevni Nagar Borrower : M/s Rudraksh Restaurant Prop. Shri Sunderlal Mehra, Mouza Sagda, Near Garha Railway Station, NH-30, Tripuri Ward, Gorakhpur, 482001	Rs.24,68,079.00 + plus interest thereon @13.05 thereon @ contractual rate + w.e.f. 14.01.2025 Rs.300232/- plus interest thereon @13.30 thereon @ contractual rate + w.e.f. 14.01.2025 Rs.19,04,856/- plus interest thereon @10.95 thereon @ contractual rate + w.e.f. 14.01.2025	Commercial property at Mouza Sagda, NB253, PH No- 33/07, RNM Purva Jabalpur-1, Diverted khasra No-43/4, Tripuri Ward, Near Garha railway Station, Tehsil- Gorakhpur, Dist- Jabalpur, Area Admeasuring 1680 Sq.Ft.	Physical	Rs.7150000/- EMD: 7150000/- Rs. 10000/-
4) Branch - Sanjeevni Nagar Borrower : Mohd. Javed, Mrs. Kaushar Jahan Ansari R/o 111, Amkhera Main road, Near Pani ki Tanki, Motilal Nehru Ward, Jabalpur	Rs. 2525976.00 + plus interest Theron @9.00 thereon @ contractual rate + w.e.f. 08.02.2025	Under construction house at Plot No. / S. No. / CTS No. / Gat No. / Milkat No. Khasra no 86 (old) New 86/1/20/1/1/2, Part of Plot No. 140, Mouja Baita NB 52, PH No 22/25 Ram Nagar Colony, Motilal Nehru Ward No 38, Ram Nagar Colony in the Area / Village - Gohalpur, Taluka / Tehsil / Sub Dist. - Adhartal, City - Jabalpur, District - Jabalpur, State - Madhya Pradesh, 482002 Plot Area: 1200 Sq Ft.	Symbolic	Rs.3780000/- EMD: Rs.3780000/- Rs. 10000/-
5) Branch - Katni Borrower : M/s Rajesh Trading Company, Prop- Mr. Rajesh Mishra S/o Vishnu Prashad Mishra, H No. 300, Indira Gandhi Ward, Shiv Nagar Katni-483501	Rs.2079086/- (Rupees Twenty Lakh Seven Nine Thousand Eighty Six Only) (Ledger Bal: Rs.1998909/- + Unapplied interest Rs.75410/- @11.05% p.a at monthly rest + penal interest thereon and other charges and expenses w.e.f 10.02.2025)	All those pieces and parcels of land situated being and lying at village Chaka in the Registration dist. Katni Sub-dist. Katni, admeasuring 3000 sq.ft and bearing CTS/Survey Nos. 180/106, 182/106, 190/106, 194/106, Ph No 40, NB 234 plot no. 8 & 9	Symbolic	Rs.2430000/- EMD:Rs.2430000/- Rs. 10000/-
6) Branch - Lamti Borrower : Mr.Vinod Sahu S/O Ramgopal Sahu, Mrs. Sagna Sahu W/O Vinod Sahu, House No 2741, Tripuri Chowk, Garha ward, Purwa Jabalpur - 482003	Rs. 2865850/- (Rupees Twenty Eight Lakh Sixty Five Thousand Eight Hundred Fifty only) plus applicable unapplied interest + penal interest thereon and other charges and expenses w.e.f 01.10.2024	Single Story Residential house situated at Mouza Soortalai, N.B 419, PH no. 75, Kh.No. 41, Sanskar City, Plot no. 276, RNM Baroda, Tah: Panagar Dist. Jabalpur	Physical	Rs.2612000/- EMD:Rs.2612000/- Rs. 10000/-
7) Branch - Shahdol Borrower : Mr. Shekh Alim, S/o Shekh Ahmed, Ward no.28, Panchgaon Road, Purani Basti, Sohagpur, Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh	Rs.1698488/- (Rupees Sixteen Lakh Ninety Eight Thousand Four Hundred Eighty eight only)(Ledger balance Rs.1629533/- plus unapplied interest Rs.68729/- @ 11.30% p.a at monthly rest and penal interest thereon + Others Charge w.e.f. 13.11.2024	all the piece and parcel of land and construction thereon at Kh no. 78/3/2 admeasuring area 2520 sq.ft.(0.23 hectare) Situated at village: Bhuibandh, Municipal area ward no. 25(1) shahdol, Teh- Sohagpur, Dist: Shahdol	Symbolic	Rs.4456000/- EMD:Rs.4456000/- Rs.10000/-
8) Branch - Sakra Borrower : Mr Ankur Gupta s/o Rajendra Kumar Gupta Residence : 293 1st floor 7th A Main, 1st Stage Hebbal Mysore, Musuru, Karnataka 570016, 2. Mr.Rajendra kumar Gupta s/o Shri Krishna Gupta 3. Mr Anshul Gupta s/o Rajendra Kumar Gupta 634/1 RAM NAGAR, Chaitranjan Ward Adhartal near Nawamby School Jabalpur 482004	Rs. 4865907/- (Rupees Forty Eight Lakh Sixty Five thousand Nine Hundred Seven Only) plus applicable unapplied interest + penal interest thereon and other charges and expenses w.e.f 21.10.2024	All the piece and parcel of land and Constructed house at 634/1 RAM NAGAR Chitranjan Ward, Adhartal on Plot No 88/A Kh No 42, 43, 44, 48, 85/2 Mouza: Betla NB No 52/4 P H No 22 at Mahakausah Grah Nirman Sahkari Samiti Chitranjan Ward (old) New ward 38 Motilal Nehru Ward, Adhartal Jabalpur	Physical	Rs.6656000/- EMD:Rs.6656000/- Rs. 10000/-
9) Branch - Shahdol Borrower : M/s Jahnvi Buildcon, Prop- Mr. Shiva Pandey MIG 607, New Housing Board Colony, By Pass Road, Shahdol, MP 484001, Guarantor: Shri Prakash Narayan Pandey. MIG 608, New Housing Board Colony, By Pass Road, Shahdol, MP 484001	Rs.3599505/- (Ledger balance Rs.3492769/- + plus unapplied interest Rs.106306/-@11.00 % p.a at monthly rest and penal interest thereon + Others Charge w.e.f. 03.10.2024	All those pieces and parcel of land & property with construction & Fixtures there being and lying at-MIG 607, New Housing Board Colony, By Pass Road, Taluka Sohagpur, Dist Shahdol, Area admeasuring 38.50 Sq. Mtr., All those pieces and parcel of land & property with construction & Fixtures there being and lying at- MIG 608, New Housing Board Colony, By Pass Road, Taluka Sohagpur, Dist Shahdol, Area admeasuring 38.50 Sq. Mtr.,	Symbolic	Rs.2460000/- EMD:Rs.2460000/- Rs. 10000/- Rs.2460000/- EMD:Rs.2460000/- Rs. 10000/-
10) Branch - JHRC Borrower: M/S Mahi Earth Movers Prop. Mr. Arshad Khan, Address: Jawahar Ward, Saray Mohalla, Sihora, Jabalpur 483225 Madhya Pradesh Guarantor: Mr.Arshad Khan Address: Ward No 5, Saray Mohalla, Sihora, Jabalpur, M.P.483225	Rs.2064064/- (Ledger balance Rs.1984805/- plus unapplied interest Rs.66524/- and penal interest + Others Charge w.e.f. 13.06.2024	All those pieces and parcel of land situate being and lying at village Mouza Mansakra, (1)Ph no- 06 admeasuring 2360 sq.ft and bearing CTS/Survey no. Khasra No. 408/2/1/2, (2) Ph no- 73/06, admeasuring 1800 sq.ft bearing CTS/survey no. Khasra no.408/2/2, (3) Ph. no.06, admeasuring 2812.5 sq.ft bearing CTS/survey no. Khasra no.408/2/2, Combined all khasra 6972 sq.ft. in the Registration Dist: Jabalpur, Sub dist: Sihora,	Physical	Rs.2667090/- EMD:Rs.2667090/- Rs.10000/-

Inspection of Properties by bidder: 11.06.2026 to 12.06.2026 between 11:00 am. and 4:00 pm  
Last Date & Time for Submission of Bid application/KYC documents/EMD etc. 16.06.2026 up to 11.00 a.m.  
Date & time of E-auction with auto extension for 10 minutes- 16.06.2026 between 12.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m.

The auction sale will be On-line E-Auction/ Bidding through website <https://banknet.com>, email: [support.banknet@psballiance.com](mailto:support.banknet@psballiance.com). Mob. - 8291220220 The intending Bidders / Purchasers are requested to register on portal using their mobile number and email id. Please take note that the registration and KYC approval etc take 2-3 working days. For detail terms and conditions of sale please refer to the link provided in <https://bankofmaharashtra.bank.in/asset-for-sale-search-and-https://banknet.com>. Also prospective bidders may contact the authorized officials Contact details: Incharge Recovery Jabalpur Shri Onkar Kumar (Zonal Manager) - 9823296164, Shri Nikhil S Patil (DZM) - 7387211200, Shri Bhushan Mohite (CM Recovery - Z.O.) - 9923257090,  
Note - The sales are subject to the order/outcome of any case pending/ filed if any before Court/Tribunal  
Date: 30/05/2026  
The above shall be treated as Notice of 15days w/ (91) of security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002  
Authorised Officer, Bank of Maharashtra

**केनरा बैंक Canara Bank** Canara Bank, Specialised ARM Branch, Plot no. 4, PSP Area, Near AIIMS, Saket Nagar Bhopal Tel.: 8989014648

**E-AUCTION (SALE NOTICE)**

Appendix-IV-A [See proviso to rule 8(6) & 6(2)]  
**SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF MOVABLE & IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES**  
E-auction Sale Notice For Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to Rules 8(6) & 6(2) of The Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.  
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) & Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged / charged to the secured creditor, the Possession of which has been taken by the authorised officer the Canara Bank (secured creditor) will be sold on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS, AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" & WHAT EVER THERE IS" on 20/06/2026 for recovery of bank dues to the Canara Bank (secured creditor)

Name and address of the Borrower & Guarantors	Description of Property	Demand Notice Dt. Possession Dt. Outstanding Amt.	Reserve Price EMD Amt. Bid Increment Amt.
Borrower : M/s Meena Bakri Palan Kendra Proprietor: Suraj Singh Deshwali S/o Shri Gappu Lal Deshwali Gram Panchayat, Kham Kheda, Teh Huzur, Bhopal, 462038	EMT of Commercial Diverted Land of Khasra No. 659/2/1/1/2 (S) Admeasuring -2020 sq.mtr. situated at Village-Khamkheda, Patwari Halka No 15, Tehsil-Huzur, District- Bhopal. Boundaries: East: Land of Suraj Singh, West: Rasta, North: Land of Karan Singh, South: Land of Suraj Singh	03.03.2025 08.05.2025 as on 29/05/2026	₹ ₹ ₹
Borrower: M/s Maa Bhawani Bakri Farm, Proprietor/Mortgagor: Smt. Santosh Kanwar W/o Shri Bharat Singh Address of All: 190 Gram Kulhor Tehsil Berasia, Bhopal 463111	EMT of diverted land situated at khasra no. 170/172/2(s) village Kulhor Tehsil Berasia Dist Bhopal near Vidisha road area 4490.00 Sqmt. Boundaries As Per Deed : East : Land of Chotar Singh, West : Land of Pooran Singh, North: Land of Tharan Singh, South: Road	07.10.2025 12.01.2026 as on 29/05/2026	₹ ₹ ₹

Last date for submission of online bids is on or before 19/06/2026 upto 5.00 p.m.  
Date and Time of e-auction : 20/06/2026, 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM (With unlimited extension of 5 minutes duration each)

1) The intending bidders shall deposit above mentioned Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) being 10% of the Reserve Price in E-Wallet of M/s PSB Alliance Private Limited (banknet.com) portal directly or by generating the Challan therein to deposit the EMD through RTGS/NEFT in the account details as mentioned in the said challan, on above mentioned date of bid submission.  
2) The successful bidder shall deposit 25% of the sale price (inclusive of EMD already paid), immediately on the sale being knocked down in his/her favour and the balance within 15 days from the date of confirmation of sale. If the successful bidder fails to pay the sale price as stated above, the deposit made by him shall be forfeited.  
3) All charges for conveyance, stamp duty/GST registration charges etc, as applicable and any taxes, revenue/dues to any local authority etc shall be borne by the successful bidder only  
For detailed terms and conditions of the sale please refer web portal : <http://BAANKNET.com> or may contact - Chief Manager, SPLSD ARM Bhopal, Canara Bank, Plot no. 4, PSP Area, Near AIIMS, Saket Nagar Bhopal. Contact no. 8989014648, 8057766078, 9691096410, 9123403299 (BHOHAL), 7905027805 (JABALPUR AND BILASPUR), 7683068902 (RAIPUR), 9140476074 (GWALIOR), 9830130770 (INDORE), 8073562754 (BHOHAL) during office hours on any working day.  
Date: 29.05.2026, Place: Bhopal  
AUTHORISED OFFICER, CANARA BANK



## 'Mentally stressed' Hardik is 'done with Mumbai Indians'

KUSHAN SARKAR in New Delhi

"Mentally stressed and completely exhausted" after what has been a disastrous IPL, Mumbai Indians' under-fire captain Hardik Pandya is set to quit the franchise and had conveyed this to the team management mid-season, a top tournament source said on Friday.

The 32-year-old Pandya, who took over the leadership in 2024 replacing Rohit Sharma, informed the Mumbai Indians management about leaving the franchise weeks before the team's disastrous IPL campaign ended.

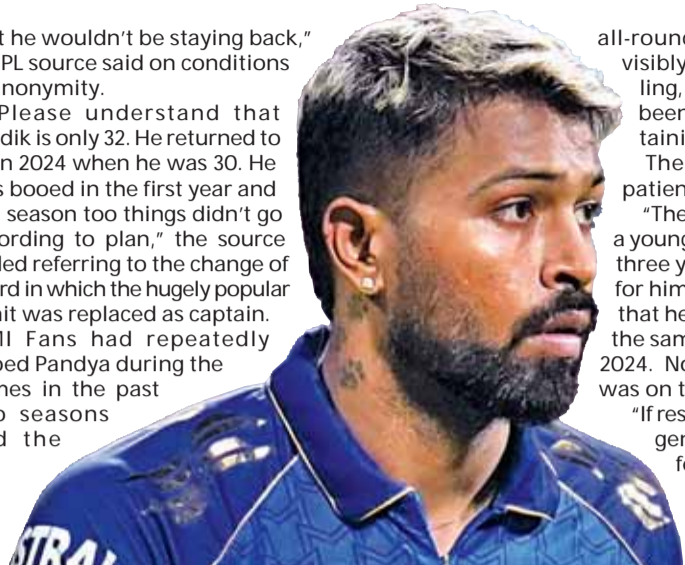
Once the play-off hopes were dashed with quite a few games still left, it is learnt that both Pandya and MI reached an understanding on mutually parting ways.

"Hardik was mentally stressed and completely exhausted. He had also sustained a back injury. In fact, once the play-off hopes were dashed, Hardik informed the decision-makers

that he wouldn't be staying back," an IPL source said on conditions of anonymity.

"Please understand that Hardik is only 32. He returned to MI in 2024 when he was 30. He was booed in the first year and this season too things didn't go according to plan," the source added referring to the change of guard in which the hugely popular Rohit was replaced as captain.

MI Fans had repeatedly booed Pandya during the games in the past two seasons and the



all-rounder, despite seeming visibly affected by the heckling, maintained that "it has been a difficult but entertaining journey".

The IPL source said, his patience has finally run out. "There is only so much that a young man can take. The last three years haven't been easy for him. The MI dressing room that he had left in 2021 wasn't the same when he returned in 2024. Not every senior player was on the same page.

"If results come despite divergent views, you still won't feel frustrated. But when everyone pulls in different directions, after a point you don't have

the mental bandwidth to carry on. So, Hardik had decided mid-season that he wouldn't be part of MI next season," the source further said.

According to people privy to the developments, what hurt Pandya immensely was the fact that senior players, who demanded 100 per cent commitment when he played T20s for India, were not exactly returning the favour when he was in-charge of the franchise.

It is, however, not clear whether Pandya is looking at a trade deal with another team or would prefer to enter the auction pool.

"One thing is for sure. He is done with MI. Closer to August, one might get some indication about what his next move will be."

For someone who feels mentally drained, Chennai Super Kings wouldn't be a bad option in case of a trade.

**MI's next captain:** Mumbai Indians will need to start with a clean slate ahead of the 2027 mega auction, but before that there is still another IPL

edition to navigate.

It will be interesting to see whether MI opts for a short-term solution or focuses on the bigger picture.

For the short term, there is no better skipper than Rohit Sharma, their five-time IPL-winning captain and still the biggest name in that dressing room.

For transition, his protegee Tilak Varma, who is also on the radar of the national selectors, could be appointed his deputy.

It is an open secret that the 2027 World Cup is Rohit's final frontier and, therefore, the IPL could also be his final season in the franchise ecosystem.

But whether MI would be willing to take a step back remains the big question. Otherwise, the best solution would be to make Tilak the new skipper and persist with him for at least three seasons while building a fresh squad around him. (PTI)

## Rishabh Pant steps down from LSG captaincy



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA in New Delhi

Dashing keeper-batter Rishabh Pant has been relieved from Lucknow Super Giants' captaincy after a disastrous 2026 IPL season where they finished last among 10 teams.

As a batter, it turned out to be a woeful season where he got only 312 runs in 14 innings. On May 14, the PTI had reported that Pant was set to lose captaincy, something which was reiterated by LSG's Director of Cricket Tom Moody.

"Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) wish to formally announce that Rishabh Pant has request-

ed to be relieved of his captaincy duties with the franchise, and the franchisee has accepted his request with immediate effect," the franchise said in an official statement.

"Rishabh approached the franchisee with this request and we have respectfully accepted it," Moody was quoted as saying in the media release.

"These decisions are never easy. We are grateful for everything Rishabh has brought to this dressing room as captain. Our focus now is on the collective rebuilding and restructuring to reach the best standards," the former Australian all-rounder added.

## Spin legend Anil Kumble lauds Sooryavanshi's consistency



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA in Mullanpur

In awe of Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's power-hitting, Indian spin legend Anil Kumble said he is also very impressed with the consistency that the fearless youngster has exhibited in the ongoing IPL.

Sooryavanshi made history by smashing 65 sixes in a single IPL season. This extraordinary feat shattered the previous all-time IPL record of 59 sixes, which was held by West Indian marauder Chris Gayle since 2012.

The 15-year-old is the highest run-scorer and Orange Cap holder of the

ongoing IPL, amassing 680 runs in just 15 innings for Rajasthan Royals. He also recently broke the world record for scoring the most runs in a single T20 series by a teenager.

"Vaibhav Sooryavanshi is the Orange Cap holder, and that doesn't come from doing it just once or against a couple of teams. He's done it consistently over the last two months, and that says a lot about the youngster.

"It's not just about going out there and bashing a few sixes, even though he is the highest six-hitter now," Kumble told JioHotstar's 'Game Plan'.

## I worked hard on fitness when I was not in IPL: Sarfaraz Khan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA in Mumbai

India and Chennai Super Kings batter Sarfaraz Khan on Friday said he worked on his fitness and strike rate in white ball cricket during the two years he missed playing in the Indian Premier League.

The right-handed Mumbai batter was not picked by any side in the IPL editions of 2024 and 2025, before he made a comeback with Chennai Super Kings this year.

"The biggest challenge for me in IPL was to make a comeback and to play with a good strike rate," Sarfaraz told reporters during jersey launch of Mumbai Western Suburbs Akash Tigers here ahead of the fourth edition of the T20 Mumbai League.

"There was some issue with the strike rate in between, and also due to fitness, I was not there in the IPL for two years. The biggest challenge for me was making a comeback," he said. "I needed to improve



my strike rate and fitness. That's one reason I was out of the IPL for two years. I worked hard on fitness, fielding, and batting, and I got good results. I'll continue to improve," he added.

Talking about his performance this year, he said, "You can never be fully satisfied in cricket. You have to wake up each day, work hard and learn something new everyday. I spent 2 months there (at CSK) and learnt a lot. Everyone knows that Dhoni's (room) doors are never closed, so whenever needed, we used to discuss cricket."

## Bhuvneshwar combines virtues, variations

G UNNIKRISHNAN in Ahmedabad

Shubman Gill pressed forward to swat Bhuvneshwar Kumar across the line, but the ball came wee bit in from good length to rattle the stumps of Gujarat Titans' captain. It was an unremarkable a dismissal as one would see across this season of the IPL.

But that 10-second moment in the Qualifier 1 at Dharamsala carried the essence of Bhuvneshwar's bowling - old-school, minimal but highly effective.

The 36-year-old pacer is now a frontrunner for this year's Purple Cap, having taken 26 wickets at an impressive economy rate of 8, and only Jason Holder (7.63) has been thrifter among the top 20 bowlers than Bhuvneshwar.

In that, 12 wickets have come inside the Power Play segment at an astounding economy of around 7, fuelling Royal Challengers Bengaluru's



march to a second successive IPL final. It has been a remarkable transition by Bhuvneshwar - once deemed unsuitable for T20 format because of his lack of pace to the second highest wicket-taker in the league with 222 wickets.

So, how does he manage to keep himself relevant in the age of range-hitting and flat tracks? After all, some of the more revered names have withered in this unforgiving league.

Omkar Salvi, the RCB bowling

coach, offered some insight.

"Everyone knows what a world-class bowler he is and the skills he possesses. Every bowler has their own strengths and teams plan according to that. Bhui is bowling with the new ball, so naturally he wants to explore the swing.

"At the death as well, he has been using his variations effectively. It depends on which phase he is operating in," said Salvi. (PTI)

## Sindhu falls to nemesis An Se Young; Satwik-Chirag in semis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA in Singapore

India's PV Sindhu lacked the consistency required to trouble world number 1 An Se Young for sustained periods, going down in the quarterfinals but ace men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty moved into the semifinals with a hard-fought win at the Singapore Open Super 750 badminton tournament here on Friday.

The two-time Olympic medallist showed flashes of her attacking best and managed to put the Korean under pressure in phases, but An's superior control, movement and ability to win the crucial points ensured another comfortable 21-17 21-14 victory in their lopsided rivalry.

The loss extended Sindhu's winless run against the reigning Olympic champion to nine matches. Across those meetings, the Indian has



managed to take a game off An only once, at the 2023 Badminton Asia Championships.

Satwik and Chirag, the Asian Games champion and fourth seeds here, came from a game down to get the better of Malaysia's Khai Xing Kang and Aaron Tai 19-21 21-17 21-13 in a gruelling contest that lasted one hour and five minutes.

The Indian pair will now be up against top seeds Kim Won Ho and Seo Seung Jae of Korea, who defeated seventh seeded Japanese combination of Takuro Hoki and Yugo Kobayashi 21-19 21-18.

**Sindhu vs An Se Young:** The challenge was always formidable for Sindhu against an opponent who has lost just one match this year after suffering only four defeats in the whole of 2025, underlining the Korean's remarkable dominance on the world circuit.

## BCCI bans smart sunglasses in IPL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA in New Delhi

The BCCI's Anti-Corruption Unit has barred the usage of smart sunglasses by players and match officials in the ongoing IPL, citing its advanced communication features which allow live streaming and video calling through mobile data or Wi-Fi networks.

In an advisory to the league's franchisees, the BCCI ACSU has stated that it has been noticed that some companies are marketing and selling smart sunglasses to players and support staff.

"Kindly note that these devices are equipped with advanced communication



features, including live streaming, sending and receiving text messages, as well as audio and video calling capabilities through mobile data or Wi-Fi networks," the Board said.

## Odisha gymnastics' curious case: `1.96cr invoice in dead president's name

TAPAN MOHANTA in Bhubaneswar

In a country where sports administration is often under the scanner for varied reasons, the Odisha Gymnastics Association may have produced one of its more curious cases with the body continuing to use the name of a president who died over a year ago for communication seeking funds from the State Government.

A complaint submitted to the commissioner-cum-secretary of Odisha's Sports & Youth Services Department has questioned how the OGA managed to secure nearly



`98 lakh from the State Government for the 2026 National Gymnastics Championships even as invoices of more than `1.96-crore and official documents continued to carry the name of late

Samir Dey as president.

The event was held from April 25 to May 3 at Kalinga Stadium. Dey, a former minister in the previous Patnaik-led BJD Government, died in November 2024.

"It is quite intriguing to note that the Association is running with a president who has passed one and half years ago," complainant Balunkeswar Sahoo wrote in his letter which was received by the sports department on May 27 and a copy of which is in possession of PTI.

The issue becomes even more striking because the invoice of more than `1.96 crore raised for the National Championships had Dey's name as president with the signature of OGA general secretary Ashok Sahoo dated April 23, 2026.

Responding to the "ghost president" allegation, Sahoo said the association had continued using old stationery despite a change

of guard.

"Dhiren Panda is currently functioning as the in-charge of the association. We have not printed fresh letterheads yet," OGA general secretary Sahoo said.

"The present committee will be dissolved by August and fresh elections will be conducted in compliance with the National Sports Code," said Sahoo, who has already completed three consecutive terms and would be ineligible to contest again.

When contacted, the offices of the commissioner-cum-secretary of Odisha Sports and Youth Services Department declined to comment on the matter. (PTI)

## Back from ligament injury, Pranati Nayak targets higher D-score ahead of Asian meet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA in Kolkata

Back after a successful return, experienced top Indian gymnast Pranati Nayak says she will now focus on increasing her difficulty level ahead of the Asian Championships after making a successful return from injury with a silver medal at the FIG World Challenge Cup in Tashkent.

The 31-year-old Tokyo Olympian, who is also a three-time Asian Championships bronze medallist in vault, returned to international competition after a gap of nearly seven months winning a silver at

the FIG World Challenge Cup in Uzbekistan.

With a packed calendar ahead of her in Asian Championships, Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games, Pranati, who is training in the national camp under Ashok Mishra at the High Performance Centre in Bhubaneswar, will gradually refine her execution, landings and the D-score (difficulty level).

The June 18-21 meet in China will be a crucial for the Asian Games qualification. The Government has also approved `36.59 lakh for the Indian contingent's partici-



"WITH ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIPS JUST 3 WEEKS AWAY, FOCUS IS NOW ON IMPROVING EXECUTION AND LANDING."  
—Pranati Nayak

tion at the Zuni meet.

"With the Asian Championships just three weeks away, the focus is now on improving execution and landing. Asian

Games qualification will happen from there, so I have to increase my difficulty level," Pranati said during a virtual media interaction facilitated by SAI.

Pranati clinched silver in the women's vault final with an average score of 13.025 after scoring 12.950 and 13.100 across her two vaults.

The road to Tashkent had

been anything but smooth.

She missed the Senior National Championships in April after viral fever and tonsillitis and admitted that just two weeks before the competition she had almost lost hope of competing.

"To tell the truth, before the competition I had viral fever and my training had almost stopped. I was disappointed and felt it might not happen. But sir kept telling me not to give up," she said.

"We focused more on quality training rather than too many repetitions because I needed to save energy and protect the body." **Renewed confidence ahead**

**of Big Three:** Pranati said the medal has now given her renewed confidence heading into a crucial season featuring the Big Three: Asian Championships, Commonwealth Games and Asian Games.

"I had not competed internationally for five to six months, so this exposure was very important. My biggest focus was on getting clean landings. Sir told me not to overthink and just trust my landing. After this competition, the fear has reduced and that will help me going forward," she said.

The experienced gymnast said balancing difficulty with

execution would be key in the coming months.

"Both execution and difficulty will be equally important. We cannot compromise on either," she said.

Pranati added that she is currently most comfortable with her handspring front 360 and Tsukahara back 360 vaults, while gradually preparing to reintroduce the more difficult Tsukahara 720.

"I have started training the 720 again. Right now the focus is on safe landings because there is still pressure on the ankle while landing. Slowly, over the next few weeks, we will increase it," she said.