

PAGE 05 : LAW & JUSTICE SC seeks response on women lawyers Govt panels	PAGE 06 : OPINION Beijing's Thucydides gambit	PAGE 07 : ANALYSIS Great Nicobar project: Balancing strategy, ecology and national interest	PAGE 08 : NATION Police ensured secure environment for progress in J&K: LG Manoj Sinha	PAGE 09 : USP Multilateral military exercise Pragati 2026 begins in Meghalaya
--	---	---	--	---

India, Italy elevate ties to strategic partnership

The two countries have set a target of achieving bilateral trade worth 20 billion Euros by 2029

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

India and Italy on Tuesday agreed to elevate their bilateral relationship to a Special Strategic Partnership, with a renewed focus on trade, investment, innovation and emerging technologies. The decision was announced following high-level talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in Rome.

"We deliberated extensively on enhancing India-Italy ties," PM Modi said during a joint press statement after the meeting. PM Modi, who arrived in Rome on Tuesday night as part of the final leg of his five-nation tour, was accorded a ceremonial military welcome before the bilateral discussions.

Before meeting Meloni, the Indian Prime Minister also held talks with Italian President Sergio Mattarella. The leaders discussed key aspects of India-Italy relations, including trade, investment, cultural exchanges, and cooperation in sectors such as artificial intelligence, critical minerals, space, and nuclear energy.

Earlier, PM Modi said the visit would focus on strengthening cooperation between the two countries, with special emphasis on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), a major connectivity initiative aimed at boosting economic integration and trade.

In social media post, PM Modi said both sides would also review the Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-



Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni welcoming PM Narendra Modi upon his arrival at Villa Doria Pamphili in Rome for talks PTI

2029, a comprehensive roadmap designed to expand cooperation across multiple sectors.

India and Italy have witnessed significant growth in economic engagement over the past few years. Bilateral

FAO HONOURS PM MODI

New Delhi: Director General (DG) of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Dr QU Dongyu presented Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the Agricola Medal for 2026, the organisation's highest award, in a ceremony held in the historic FAO Plenary Hall in Rome.

DG, FAO warmly congratulated the PM, and said, "The medal is in recognition of his contribution and commitment to the welfare of all people; the introduction of landmark schemes during his tenure to enhance agricultural

productivity; bolstering food security, and improving farmer's welfare; his support to FAO's fundamental goals of fighting hunger and poverty, and attaining universal food security; the pursuit of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals; and his efforts to prioritise agriculture on the international agenda, including during India's G20 Presidency." The DG praised India's food and agriculture initiatives rolled out under the leadership of PM Modi for their scale and reach. (PNS)



FILE PHOTO

PM calls review meet amid buzz of reshuffle

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ New Delhi

The much-awaited reshuffle of the Union Cabinet is expected anytime, as a full review of the first meeting of the Council of Ministers has been convened on Thursday.

Sources said that after returning from his five-nation tour, Prime Minister Narendra Modi convened a meeting of his Council of Ministers.

This meeting, scheduled for Thursday, will be attended by all Cabinet ministers, ministers of State with independent charge, and other ministers of State. It includes members from the BJP, JDU, TDP, and other NDA partners.

Speculations are rife about the reshuffle ever since the five Assembly elections were concluded, with West Bengal being the big catch for the party, where Home Minister Amit Shah was leading from the front. Sources said the BJP's long-awaited organisational reshuffle is also on the cards, with party leaders indicating that it could happen soon, followed by the changes in the Government.

According to BJP and Government sources, this time, the primary focus will be on generational shifts and young faces, given the eleva-

tion of Nitin Nabin as boss of the party. Senior Ministers will be able to retain their positions based on their performance, while many will be replaced by new faces based on the cadre's performance and worthiness.

While seven Rajya Sabha MPs from AAP merged itself to BJP-led by Raghav Chadda, there was a change of guard in Bihar as well where Nitish Kumar who got in Rajya Sabha paved way for a BJP CM for the first time. Following the installation of BJP Governments in Bengal and Assam, and the return of the NDA regime in Puducherry, Amit Shah — considered the party's chief strategist — held separate meetings with several BJP State chief ministers, including Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath, Uttarakhand CM Dhahi, and the chief ministers of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, as well as relevant State functionaries.

Simultaneously, BJP President Nitin Nabin too held marathon meetings at the party headquarters in the last two days, while sources said the party high command also got in touch with its major stakeholders, JDU and Andhra Pradesh CM N Chandrababu Naidu.

Govt acts on NEET rumours

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Wednesday chaired a high-level meeting with central security and intelligence agencies on Wednesday to review preparations for the upcoming National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate) (NEET-UG) re-examination. At a parallel meeting with representatives of major social media platforms — Meta, Google and Telegram — serious concerns were raised over the growing spread of misinformation related to competitive examinations, particularly through Telegram channels and anonymous online groups, the officials said.

They said several such



Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan

channels become highly active in the run-up to major examinations, circulating fake paper-leak claims, click-bait content and unverified information that create panic and confusion among students and parents.

Rahul's remark against PM triggers BJP outrage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi/Lucknow

Tempers flared between the BJP and the Congress after Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi branded Prime Minister Narendra Modi a traitor at an event in Rae Bareilly. The BJP denouncing Gandhi's words casting doubt on his character.

On Wednesday, the Congress leader accused PM Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and the RSS of undermining the Constitution and prioritising the interests of select industrialists over the nation. "You must stand up and protest. When RSS workers come to your homes and mention Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, tell them that their



Rahul Gandhi during the statue unveiling of Veera Passi in Rae Bareilly on Wednesday PTI

organisation, Modi, and Shah are responsible for actions that have harmed the country and the Constitution, as well as the ideals of Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi," Gandhi had said,

Invoking astrology, BJP president Nitin Nabin dubbed Gandhi the *Rahu* (Saturn) of Indian politics, accusing him of casting a shadow over the nation's political climate.

He went on to claim that Gandhi is visibly losing his composure, adding that Gandhi's remarks were an affront to all 140 crore Indians and insisted on a public apology.

"The man who has curbed terror incidents, ended Naxalism, and enhanced the tricolour's respect-will you use such words for him?" Nabin asked. He warned that past insults to Modi have sparked electoral backlash, urging Gandhi to apologise or face the same fate.

The Bystander



TWISHA DEATH PROBE DEEPENS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bhopal

A Bhopal court on Wednesday declined permission for a second post-mortem in the mysterious death case of actress and former Miss Pune contestant Twisha Sharma, the daughter-in-law of a



retired judge, though it directed police to preserve her body as the investigation continues to intensify.

MHA monitors probe into Delhi's anti-drug unit

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH ■ New Delhi

Delhi Police Anti-Narcotics Cells have long been seen as risky but rewarding jobs. The power to seize drugs worth crores, carry out raids with little immediate supervision, and use the strict Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act creates many chances for misuse. This is not the first time corruption in drug enforcement has been questioned, but the size of this case and its reach into senior officers has shaken the system. The case is being closely monitored by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), which directly oversees the Delhi Police. It has already led to internal changes, with reports of



Representative image ANTF.DELHIPOLICE.GOV.IN

increased investigations. The CBI now describes a sophisticated ₹100-crore extortion syndicate operating through the Dwarka Anti-Narcotics Cell, headed by Inspector Subhash Yadav. Targeting easy victims, innocent people or small-time drug dealers, planting drugs during raids, threatening victims, and forcing them to pay 'protection money' or make 'settlements' to drop fake cases. Yadav's team reportedly ran this as a

harmful extortion operation for years. He stayed in powerful roles in Dwarka for an unusually long time, and those at the Police Headquarters did not bother to check what he was doing.

But the problem goes deeper: Yadav didn't just make up cases. He reportedly protected real drug dealers. Investigators believe foreign-born operators in Dwarka, Uttam Nagar, Dabri, and Nawada were allowed to sell drugs freely in return for large bribes. The man who was supposed to break drug networks was actually their protector. While real traffickers worked under his watch, innocent people were framed and robbed. It was a two-way system: fear for the weak, safe passage for criminals who paid.

Heatwave triggers spike in vehicle fire incidents across the Capital

ABHINAV KUMAR JHA ■ New Delhi

On Tuesday afternoon, a car burst into flames on a busy arterial corridor in south Delhi as the city sweltered under temperatures exceeding 44 degrees Celsius. The fire appeared to start at the front of the vehicle and rapidly spread across the entire car within minutes. Eyewitnesses reported massive flames and dense smoke rising from the middle of the road, forcing nearby vehicles to slow down. Authorities reached the spot to control the situation and clear the road.

No injuries were reported. The cause is under investigation.



Tuesday's incident was a visible moment in a pattern that has been building through the summer. More than 7,800 fire-related emergencies have been reported across the Capital in the first four months of 2026, over 2,300 of them in April alone, marking a nearly 20 per cent increase from the same period last year. In April, a sharp rise in vehicles going up in flames was recorded, with two-wheelers and e-rickshaws involved in multiple incidents. A Delhi Fire Services official explained the underlying mechanics, "Heat is not the only factor, but it is certainly a major one. As temperatures rise, the load on the electrical infrastructure increases significantly. Air conditioners run continuously, wiring heats up, and transformers operate under stress, which raises the chances of short circuits and fire incidents."

Regular water supply and continuous quality testing of drinking water essential: Chief Secretary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Raipur

Chief Secretary Vikas Sheel directed departmental officials to ensure regular water supply and continuous monitoring of drinking water quality across the state under the Jal Jeevan Mission. An important meeting of the Apex Committee of the State Water and Sanitation Mission was held on Wednesday at Mahanadi Bhawan under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary.

The meeting discussed in detail the implementation roadmap for Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0, drinking

water arrangements in PVTG habitations under the PM Janman Programme, required resources, training, public participation, water conservation and the "Sujalam Bharat" digital platform. Deliberations were also held on the new "Jal Arpan" initiative aimed at the judicious use of groundwater and protection of water sources.

Chief Secretary said that after completion of water tanks and tap installations in villages and habitations, directed to ensure regular water supply and maintain water quality.

Vikas Sheel said Gram Panchayats will oversee operation and maintenance of tap water schemes with mandatory partici-



ation of women in committees, while District Collectors will ensure regular monitoring and coordination for effective implementation.

Chief Secretary directed officials to maintain complete financial transparency in accordance with the guidelines under Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0.

He clarified that funds received from the Central Government should be utilised only for approved purposes.

To ensure immediate rectification of any disruption in the water supply chain, he instructed officials to undertake real-time tracking through the Sujalam Bharat digital platform and the PM Gati Shakti

app. Reviewing the progress of approved schemes in LWE (Naxal)-affected and remote tribal areas, the Chief Secretary instructed officials to expedite implementation works. He further directed preparation of a comprehensive action plan to ensure supply of safe drinking water to 100 per cent rural households in Chhattisgarh before the 2028 deadline.

Officials informed in the meeting about the progress of the reform plan under Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0. Under the Single Village Scheme, locally available water sources in villages are utilised to provide tap water connections to every household through pipelines. A

total of 29,090 such schemes have been developed in villages across the state.

Additionally, 70 bulk water supply schemes are operational to supply large quantities of safe drinking water to remote areas, towns and clusters of villages. Under these schemes, water is sourced from distant locations and purified through water treatment plants. Under the PM Janman Programme, work is underway on a special action plan for drinking water supply in around 920 habitations with less than 20 families, falling under 1,531 villages in PVTG areas, as well as left-out families in LWE regions.

Administrative delay deprives people of rights, says President

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Asserting that refraining from making a decision does not constitute morality, President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday said a delay in administrative decision-making is tantamount to depriving people of their legitimate interests.

Addressing Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers of the 2024 batch, who had called on the President at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, Murmu said that ethics and governance are the two sides of the same coin.

"You have to be honest and ethical. At the same time, you have to deliver results. IAS officers are expected to exercise the powers delegated to them," she said.

The President said that refraining from making a decision does not constitute morality.

"Rather, making the right decisions in alignment with



the public interest and established order represents the true essence of morality. Just as a delay in the delivery of justice is deemed a denial of justice, so too is a delay in administrative decision-making tantamount to depriving people of their legitimate interests," Murmu said.

Quoting former Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, she said some remnants of pre-independence practices and

behaviour patterns still survive in certain areas of governance. "Such practices must be eradicated. You have to contribute to this national objective," the President said.

Addressing IAS probationers in 1947, Patel had said: "It will be your bounden duty to treat the common men in India as your own, or to put it correctly, to feel yourself to be one of them and amongst them." "This statement becomes

especially relevant in the context of our ongoing national efforts for mental decolonisation," Murmu said.

The President told officers that accepting the status quo may often be the most convenient option, but not necessarily the best option. "Recognising when things need to change and having the conviction, ability and courage to see it through is the marker of an effective civil servant," she stated.

The President stated that no effort is required to simply drift along with the flowing current.

To achieve the goal of a 'Viksit Bharat' and to elevate our society to the pinnacle of progress, officers will often have to move forward by striving against the tide, Murmu said, and advised them to keep the people of India, particularly the marginalised sections of society, at the very centre of their thoughts and actions, whether they are out in the field or working in the office.

Congress to join TN Cabinet after 59 years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

The Congress will be part of the Tamil Nadu Cabinet after a gap of 59 years as two of its MLAs, Rajesh Kumar and P Vishwanathan, will take oath as ministers on Thursday, the party said

into the Tamil Nadu cabinet led by CM Thiru Vijay, and they will be taking oath as Ministers tomorrow."

"This is a historic occasion for us, as the Congress joins the Tamil Nadu Cabinet after a long gap of 59 years!" he said in a post on X.

"I convey my best wishes



Rajesh Kumar, P Vishwanathan

on Wednesday.

Announcing the decision, AICC general secretary, organisation, KC Venugopal said, "INC President Mallikarjun Kharge ji has approved the induction of INC MLAs Adv. Rajesh Kumar and Thiru P Vishwanathan

to them. We are confident that they will deliver on the hopes and aspirations of the people of Tamil Nadu, and will work to realise the bold vision of welfare and pro-people governance laid down by LOP Sh Rahul Gandhi ji," Venugopal said.

States Focus



CYPRUS PRESIDENT BEGINS 3-DAY VISIT TO INDIA

Cyprus President Nicos Christodoulides kickstarted a three-day visit to India on Wednesday to boost bilateral cooperation in areas of trade, investment, defence and technology. Christodoulides, accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising senior ministers, officials and business leaders, began his trip from Mumbai and will arrive in New Delhi on Thursday. PM Modi visited Cyprus last June. It was the first visit by an Indian prime minister to Cyprus in over two decades. The two leaders are scheduled to hold wide-ranging talks on Friday. PM Modi and President Christodoulides will hold discussions on further strengthening bilateral cooperation.



BJP MP MEDHA KULKARNI TO HEAD PAR PANEL ON SCIENCE

Rajya Sabha Chairman CP Radhakrishnan has nominated BJP member Medha Vishram Kulkarni as chairperson of the department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment, Forests and Climate Change. Kulkarni's appointment took place on May 18, a notification from the Rajya Sabha Secretariat said. The committee scrutinises Government policies, reviews budgetary allocations and evaluates legislation for key scientific and environmental departments. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has also appointed BJP member Sudheer Gupta as Chairperson of the Joint Committee on Corporate Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

J&K: 3.39 lakh new voters added in Panchayat electoral rolls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jammu

The State Election Commission, Jammu & Kashmir, has added a total of 3,39,384 new voters to the Panchayat electoral rolls, while 1,13,344 names were deleted due to death, shifting, duplication, and other admissible reasons during the current revision.

The final roll now stands at 72,24,131 electors, which includes 36,62,502 male, 35,61,488 female, and 141 Third gender voters.

This marks a net increase of 2,26,040 voters compared to the previous revision concluded in January 2025, when the rolls listed 69,98,091 voters with January 1, 2025, as the qualifying date.

The comprehensive exercise, which began with the release of the Draft Electoral Roll on March 27, 2026, has now formally culminated following a structured schedule of claims, objections and verification.

The Commission had opened a 40-day window for filing claims and objections from March 27 to May 5, 2026. All submissions received during this period were examined and disposed of by Electoral Registration Officers by May



14, 2026. With the completion of this process, the Final Electoral Rolls were published today, May 21, 2026, setting the groundwork for the upcoming panchayat elections across the Union Territory.

The revision drive recorded significant voter activity. A total of 3,39,384 new voters were added to the rolls while 1,13,344 names were deleted due to death, shifting, duplication, and other admissible reasons. In addition, corrections were carried out in the particulars of 17,664 voters, and 31,590 voters were transposed. The Commission said the exercise witnessed substantial participation from the eligible citizens, with 5,10,285 forms received during the revision period. These forms were processed by Panchayat Election Booth Officials, Assistant Electoral

Registration Officers, and Electoral Registration Officers in accordance with the procedure and timelines prescribed by the Commission.

To maximise outreach, the SEC undertook extensive SVEEP campaigns through print and electronic media, including radio jingles, voter appeals by the State Election Commissioner and regular newspaper advertisements.

State Election Commissioner Shantmanu commended the coordinated efforts of District Panchayat Election Officers, EROs, AEROs, PEBOs, the staff of the State Election Commission and the Rural Development & Panchayati Raj Department, as well as representatives of political parties. He also thanked the public for their active participation and cooperation in the successful completion of the revision exercise.

India, South Korea review defence ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India and South Korea on Wednesday reviewed the entire spectrum of their bilateral defence ties during talks between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his counterpart Ahn Gyu-back in Seoul.

Agreements were also exchanged on promoting cooperation in the field of Defence Cyber; training between India's National Defence College and Korea National Defence University; and UN Peacekeeping Cooperation, making the partnership stronger and multidimensional, the defence ministry said.

The two Ministers discussed ways to



further expand collaboration in areas such as industry, production, maritime security, emerging technologies, military exchanges, logistics and regional security.

CBI arrests Army Colonel in ₹50 lakh bribery case

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi/Kolkata

Colonel Himanshu Bali of the Indian Army's Army Ordnance Corps (AOC), Eastern Command, Fort William, Kolkata, has been arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in connection with an alleged ₹50 lakh bribery scandal involving the manipulation of procurement tenders, approval of substandard samples, and clearance of inflated bills for a Kanpur-based private defence supplier.

The case highlights alleged deep-rooted irregularities in defence procurement under the Eastern Command. This command supplies weapons, ammunition, and ordnance



to the eastern sector forces. Colonel Bali was taken into custody in Kolkata on Tuesday (May 19/20, 2026). He was brought to Delhi for further interrogation. A Delhi court remanded him to CBI custody till May 25.

The CBI's FIR, registered on or around May 18, 2026, references the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (Sections

7, 8, 9, and 10, as amended in 2018) and sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for criminal conspiracy.

The FIR alleges that Colonel Bali colluded with private contractors. He allegedly manipulated the competitive bidding process to award tenders to a specific firm. He also approved substandard material and cleared pending

and inflated bills. These actions could result in financial losses to the exchequer. The beneficiary is M/S Eastern Global Limited (Eastern Global Ltd.), a Kanpur-based defence supplier. The company and its proprietors are accused of bribing to win tenders from the Eastern Command. The FIR states that the firm has supplied various defence establishments across India for a long time.

The CBI investigation began after receiving information from a source. Investigators traced events from March to April 2026. In March, regular communications took place between Colonel Bali and contractors. In April, after these interactions, a major tender was

allegedly awarded to Eastern Global Limited in return for bribes.

According to the probe, Colonel Bali and Akshat Agrawal (the firm's operator) met after hours at Park Street in Kolkata in April. This meeting happened before the tender was awarded. They allegedly finalised illicit terms for the tender at this meeting.

On April 24, 2026, just two days after the Park Street meeting, the tender was awarded to Eastern Global Limited, allegedly due to the "undue favours" extended by Colonel Bali.

Colonel Bali contacted Akshat Agrawal to demand the promised ₹50 lakh and directed that delivery be made to the Delhi-NCR.

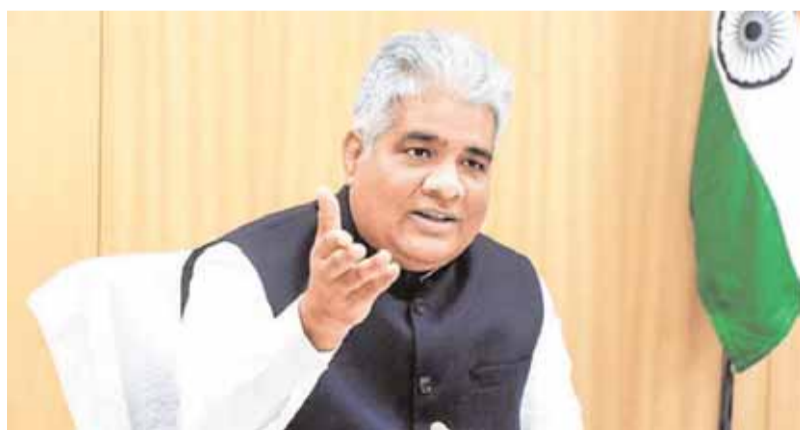
Sustainability must remain at core of growth: Bhupender

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

As India moves steadily towards the vision of a Viksit Bharat, environmental sustainability must remain at the core of its development pathway, Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav said on Wednesday. He made the comments during his address to the participants of the mid-career training programme of the Indian Forest Service.

The minister said a forest officer's responsibility never ends, even after superannuation, as they continue to be the voice of the voiceless flora and fauna.

During the event, Yadav highlighted India's progress in climate-change mitigation, achieving NDC (Nationally Determined Contributions) targets ahead of schedule, improvements in forest and wildlife governance systems, and the use of advanced technologies for environmental management.



He also spoke about cheetah conservation, great Indian bustard conservation through artificial incubation, the role of tiger reserves in sustaining river systems and the importance of balancing conservation with development.

The event was also attended by Minister of State Kirtivardhan Singh, who noted India's leadership in global conservation diplomacy and stressed the importance of balancing development with conservation.

BWSSB ranks among top 5 global water utilities

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Bengaluru

The BWSSB has emerged as one of the top five global utilities at the Global Water Summit 2026 held in Madrid, Spain, officials said on Wednesday.

The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board has "made history by becoming the only Indian water utility to secure a place" among the global top 5 in three major award categories, earning widespread recognition for Bengaluru's innovative and sustainable water management practices, they said.

The Global Water Summit 2026 took place from May 18 to May 20 in Madrid.



According to a statement, BWSSB's integrated approach to water conservation, wastewater recycling, reuse, and sustainable urban water governance-popularly referred to as its "five pillars" strategy-received significant international attention at the summit.

The board was recognised for its contribution towards

achieving United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG-6), which focuses on ensuring clean water and sanitation for all.

In this category, BWSSB featured alongside globally reputed utilities including Aguas Nuevas (Chile), Indah Water Konsortium (Malaysia), SANASA (Brazil), and Sanepar of Parana (Brazil). BWSSB

was also listed among the top five globally in the prestigious "utility of the year" category, one of the highest recognitions in the international water sector. The recognition was based on the board's performance over the past three years in areas including urban water supply, sanitation management, technology adoption, infrastructure expansion, and sustainable utility governance, it said.

BWSSB's flagship Cauvery Stage V Drinking Water Project, implemented to address Bengaluru's growing water demand, also secured a place among the top five global projects in the "water project of the year" category, the board said.

India ready to provide technical guidance, support in maternal, child healthcare: Nadda

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

India has been "the bed of innovation" in delivering large-scale healthcare interventions with equity and has much to offer the global community through evidence-based best practices, Union Health Minister JP Nadda said on Wednesday.

He stressed that the country has kept women, children and adolescents at the centre of its service delivery and sustainable development goals. Nadda made the remarks during a bilateral

meeting with Helen Clark, Board Chair of the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH), on the sidelines of the 79th World Health Assembly in Geneva.

The minister expressed readiness to provide technical guidance and support to other countries and invited PMNCH to showcase India's successful models and innovations through physical and virtual platforms.

Reaffirming India's commitment to advancing the global agenda for women's, children's and adolescents' health, the minister highlight-

ed India's long association with PMNCH since its inception in 2005 and said the country remains proud to continue contributing meaningfully to the organisation's objectives.

"India has been the bed of innovation and delivering interventions at scale with equity and accessibility. We have kept the health of women, children and adolescents at the heart of our service delivery and sustainable development," Nadda said during the meeting.

Nadda underlined India's active leadership role in



PMNCH as vice chair of its board and chair of its standing committee. He also informed that India's annual

grant contribution of \$2 million in perpetuity is currently under process and would be shared soon.

Highlighting India's public health achievements, Nadda said the country was among the first to launch a dedicated national programme for adolescents in 2014, reaching young people through facility-based, school-based and community-based interventions across the country.

Referring to progress in maternal and child health indicators, Nadda said India has recorded significant reductions in Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) at a pace surpassing global trends.

The minister said India has much to offer the global community through evidence-based best practices and successful large-scale public health interventions.

Reiterating India's commitment as PMNCH vice chair, Nadda conveyed the country's willingness to support the organisation across a range of priorities, including women's, children's and adolescents' health and the growing burden of non-communicable diseases.

He also noted that India has developed substantial technical resources and digital

public health goods that could be shared globally for wider benefit.

Invoking the ancient Indian philosophy of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or "the world is one family", the minister emphasised India's belief in unity, compassion and shared humanity in addressing global health challenges.

Clark appreciated India's continued leadership and contributions to global public health and acknowledged the country's important role within PMNCH and the broader global health architecture.



ADMISSION OPEN



SHRI BALAJI VIDIYA MANDIR

(Manage By Andhra Association)
Raipur (C.G.)



Add :- Devendra Nagar, Raipur Contact :- 94064-00007

Suvendu hands over land to BSF for border fencing in West Bengal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Kolkata

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Wednesday handed over land to the BSF for international boundary fencing and security infrastructure, beginning with a 27 km stretch, and said more land would be provided wherever required to strengthen border management in the State.

Addressing a BSF land transfer meeting, Adhikari said the process marked the beginning of a larger initiative to improve border security in the State.

"The land will be handed over to the Border Security Force (BSF) within two weeks. Initially, land covering a 27 km stretch along the India-Bangladesh international boundary is being handed over," he said.

Calling it the first step in a broader exercise, Adhikari said, "As a beginning, the land required to secure the 27 km stretch is being provided to the BSF." Highlighting the need to expedite border infrastructure, the chief minister said a sizeable portion of West Bengal's international boundary still remained unfenced. "In West Bengal, around 1,600 km of the total 2,200 km border with Bangladesh has already been fenced, while nearly 600 km still remains unfenced," he said.

"Wherever land is needed for fencing and border security, we will hand it over to the BSF," he added.

Targeting the previous Trinamool Congress Government, Adhikari alleged that it had failed to cooperate on border infrastructure because of "vote bank poli-



tics and appeasement policies". "The previous Government, due to its vote bank politics and appeasement policies, did not give land to the BSF," he claimed.

Adhikari also alleged that coordination among the BSF, state police and district administration in bordering areas had weakened over the years. "For the last several years, coordination meetings between the BSF, state police and administration in bordering areas had not happened," he said. He said the district-level coordination mechanism had now been revived. "The district coordination meetings have now started, and these will happen regularly now," the chief minister said. Announcing a stricter

policy on illegal immigration, Adhikari said the State has implemented a provision for the handover of the infiltrators nabbed by the police to the BSF.

"A letter was sent by the Centre to the state last year regarding the direct handover of infiltrators to the BSF, but the previous Government failed to implement this important provision. We have now enforced it," he said.

Adhikari said those not covered under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act would be treated as infiltrators and action would be taken accordingly.

"Those who are not covered under the CAA will be treated as infiltrators. The state police will arrest them and hand them over to the BSF," he said.

Kerala CM Satheesan to handle Finance and Law portfolios

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Thiruvananthapuram

Chief Minister VD Satheesan will handle the key Finance and Law portfolios, along with 36 other departments, after Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar on Wednesday allocated portfolios among the UDF Cabinet ministers in Kerala who were sworn in on May 18.

Following the Chief Minister's recommendations, which the Governor approved, senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala was designated Minister for Home, Vigilance and three other departments.

The portfolios were later circulated via a gazette notification, as per which the CM will also handle all important policy matters and subjects not mentioned elsewhere.

Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) leader PK Kunhalikutty will take care of Industries and Commerce, Information Technology, Artificial Intelligence, Startups, Mining and Geology and Handlooms and Textiles, it said.

Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) MLA Shibu Baby John got Forests and Wildlife Protection and Skill Development, while Kerala Congress (Joseph) legislator



Kerala Chief Minister VD Satheesan addresses a press conference after a cabinet meeting in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday

Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) chief Sunny Joseph was given charge of Electricity, Environment and Parliamentary Affairs, while senior party leader K Muraleedharan will head 8 departments, including Health, Devaswoms, Food Safety, Drugs Control and Medical Education, the Lok Bhavan said.

Besides them, Roji M John will handle Higher Education, AP Anil Kumar will head Land and Revenue, and N Shamsudheen will be the General Education Minister, it said.

Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) MLA Shibu Baby John got Forests and Wildlife Protection and Skill Development, while Kerala Congress (Joseph) legislator

Mon Joseph will head the Irrigation, Ground Water, Water Supply and Sanitation and Housing Departments, the Lok Bhavan added.

The Road and Water Transport Departments will be headed by Communist Marxist Party (CMPKSC) MLA CP John, Food and Civil Supplies will be taken care of by Kerala Congress (Jacob) MLA Anoop Jacob, and IUML MLA VE Abdul Gafoor will take charge of the Fisheries Department, it said.

Of the remaining IUML MLAs in the Cabinet, PK Basheer will head the Public Works Department, and KM Shaji will take charge of the Local Self Government authorities, as per the Lok Bhavan.

MEDICAL STORES SHUT ACROSS GUJARAT; STRIKE AGAINST E-PHARMACIES

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Gandhinagar

Medical stores across Gujarat remained closed on Tuesday as chemists and druggists joined a nationwide protest against online medicine sales and the growing presence of e-pharmacy platforms. The strike, led by the All India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists (AIOCD), affected pharmacy operations in major cities including



Ahmedabad, Surat, Rajkot and Vadodara.

In Surat alone, nearly 7,000 medical stores remained shut as local chemist associations extended support to the agitation. The closure caused inconvenience to patients and residents, particularly those dependent on daily medication for chronic illnesses such as diabetes, blood pressure and other long-term health conditions.

EMBASSY Equinox India Infraestate Limited (formerly Indiabulls Infraestate Limited) (CIN: U70102DL2007PLC157384)

Extract of Statement of Audited Consolidated Financial Results for the year ended 31 March 2026

Sl. No.	Particulars	Current year ended		Previous year ended	
		31 March 2026	31 March 2025	31 March 2025	31 March 2025
		(Audited)	(Unaudited)	(Audited)	(Audited)
1	Total Income from Operations	584.97	629.20		
2	Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/ or Extraordinary items)	(642.78)	(1,261.41)		
3	Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period before Tax (after Exceptional and/ or Extraordinary items)	(889.84)	(2,168.26)		
4	Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period after Tax, (after Exceptional and/ or Extraordinary items)	(889.40)	(2,172.89)		
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit/ (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	(909.80)	(2,173.47)		
6	Earnings per Share (EPS) (Face value Per Share ₹ 10 each) (for continuing and discontinued operations) -				
	- Basic (Amount in ₹)	(3,910.48)	(9,553.68)		
	- Diluted (Amount in ₹)	(3,910.48)	(9,553.68)		
7	Paid up Equity Share Capital	2.27	2.27		
8	Net Worth	4,913.75	5,735.30		
9	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)	4,911.48	5,733.03		

Notes to the consolidated financial results:

- The above consolidated results have been reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors ('the Board') at its meeting held on 20 May 2026.
- The Figures for the previous year ended 31 March 2025 are management certified figures which are neither subjected to audit nor reviewed by the statutory auditors of the company.
- The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly / Annual Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 52(8), read with 52(4) of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly/ Annual Financial Results are available on the Company's website (<https://www.embassyindia.com/EIIL>) and on the website of BSE (<https://www.bseindia.com>) and NSE (<https://www.nseindia.com>).

EMBASSY Equinox India Infraestate Limited (formerly Indiabulls Infraestate Limited) (CIN: U70102DL2007PLC157384)

Extract of Standalone Audited Financial Results for the quarter ended 31 March 2026

Sl. No.	Particulars	Quarter ended		Current year ended		Previous year ended	
		31 March 2026	31 March 2026	31 March 2026	31 March 2025	31 March 2025	31 March 2025
		(Unaudited)	(Audited)	(Unaudited)	(Unaudited)	(Unaudited)	(Unaudited)
1	Total Income from Operations	139.30	584.97	629.20			
2	Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/ or Extraordinary items)	(313.68)	(560.93)	(1,084.50)			
3	Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period before Tax (after Exceptional and/ or Extraordinary items)	(556.77)	(807.99)	(1,991.35)			
4	Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period after Tax, (after Exceptional and/ or Extraordinary items)	(556.33)	(807.55)	(1,997.94)			
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit/ (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	(552.04)	(827.95)	(1,998.52)			
6	Paid up Equity Share Capital	2.27	2.27	2.27			
7	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)	8,890.24	8,890.24	9,578.72			
8	Securities Premium Account	16,123.92	16,123.92	16,123.92			
9	Net Worth	8,892.51	8,892.51	9,580.99			
10	Paid up Debt Capital / Outstanding Debt	10,955.48	10,955.48	13,973.87			
11	Outstanding Redeemable Preference Share	-	-	-			
12	Debt Equity Ratio*	1.26	1.26	1.46			
13	Earnings per Share (EPS) (Face value Per Share ₹ 10 each) (for continuing and discontinued operations) -						
	- Basic (Amount in ₹)	(2,746.05)	(3,550.61)	(8,784.37)			
	- Diluted (Amount in ₹)	(2,746.05)	(3,550.61)	(8,784.37)			
14	Capital Redemption Reserve	-	-	-			
15	Debt Service Coverage Ratio**	-	-	-			
16	Interest Service Coverage Ratio**	-	-	-			
17	Current ratio (In times)	2.15	2.15	1.23			
18	Total debts to total assets (In times)	0.50	0.50	0.55			
19	Long term debt to working capital (In times)#	0.68	0.68	-			
20	Bad debt to account receivable ratio (In %)	-	-	-			
21	Current liability ratio (In times)	0.56	0.56	1.00			
22	Debtor turnover ratio (In times)	3.06	7.15	3.94			
23	Inventory turnover ratio (In times)	0.02	0.06	0.13			
24	Operating margin (In %)	(51.06)	(28.46)	(105.30)			
25	Net profit margin (In %)	(339.72)	(123.19)	(201.17)			

* Ratio can not be calculated due to negative earning available for debt service.
Ratio can not be calculated due to negative earning available for interest service coverage

Notes to the standalone financial results:

- The above results have been reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors ('the Board') at its meeting held on 20 May 2026.
- The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly / Annual Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 52(8), read with 52(4) of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly/ Annual Financial Results are available on the Company's website (<https://www.embassyindia.com/EIIL>) and on the website of BSE (<https://www.bseindia.com>) and NSE (<https://www.nseindia.com>).

Registered Office: Office No 202, 2nd Floor, A-18 Rama House, Middle Circle, Connaught Place, New Delhi- 110001.



For and on behalf of the Board of Directors

Rupesh Gupta
Whole-time director

Place : Gurugram
Date : 20 May 2026

EMBASSY

Lucina Land Development Limited (CIN: U70109DL2006PLC151260)

Extract of Statement of Audited Consolidated Financial Results for the year ended 31 March 2026

Sl. No.	Particulars	Current year ended		Previous year ended	
		31 March 2026	31 March 2025	31 March 2025	31 March 2025
		(Audited)	(Audited)	(Audited)	(Audited)
1	Total Income from Operations	135.17	102.89		
2	Net Profit/ (Loss) for the year (before Tax, Exceptional and/ or Extraordinary items)	(477.68)	(226.17)		
3	Net Profit/ (Loss) for the year before Tax (after Exceptional and/ or Extraordinary items)	(479.97)	(1,144.90)		
4	Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period after Tax, (after Exceptional and/ or Extraordinary items)	(503.30)	(1,644.27)		
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit/ (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	(509.04)	(1,637.69)		
6	Earnings per Share (EPS) (Face value Per Share ₹ 10 each) (for continuing and discontinued operations) -				
	- Basic (Amount in ₹)	(10,067.76)	(32,884.98)		
	- Diluted (Amount in ₹)	(10,067.76)	(32,884.98)		
7	Paid up Equity Share Capital	0.50	0.50		
8	Net Worth	(11,220.95)	(10,771.44)		
9	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)	(11,221.45)	(10,771.94)		

Notes to the consolidated financial results:

- The above consolidated results have been reviewed and approved by the Audit Committee and Board of Directors ('the Board') at its meeting held on 20 May 2026.
- The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly / Annual Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 52(8), read with 52(4) of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly/ Annual Financial Results are available on the Company's website (<https://www.embassyindia.com/EIIL>) and on the website of BSE (<https://www.bseindia.com>) and NSE (<https://www.nseindia.com>).

EMBASSY Lucina Land Development Limited (CIN: U70109DL2006PLC151260)

Extract of Audited Standalone Financial Results for the quarter and year ended 31 March 2026

Sl. No.	Particulars	Quarter ended		Corresponding quarter ended		Current year ended		Previous year ended	
		31 March 2026	31 March 2025	31 March 2025	31 March 2026	31 March 2026	31 March 2025	31 March 2025	
		(Refer note 3)	(Refer note 3)	(Refer note 3)	(Audited)	(Audited)	(Audited)	(Audited)	
1	Total Income from Operations	4.37	(41.77)	27.67	99.56				
2	Net (Loss) / Profit for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/ or Extraordinary items)	(322.54)	(141.04)	(557.73)	(252.76)				
3	Net (Loss) / Profit for the period before Tax (after Exceptional and/ or Extraordinary items)	(322.04)	(1,059.77)	(560.02)	(1,171.49)				
4	Net (Loss) / Profit for the period after Tax, (after Exceptional and/ or Extraordinary items)	(332.72)	(1,552.31)	(570.70)	(1,664.03)				
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising (Loss) / Profit for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	(332.78)	(1,545.73)	(576.44)	(1,657.45)				
6	Paid up Equity Share Capital	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50				
7	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)	(11,040.08)	(10,523.15)	(11,040.08)	(10,523.15)				
8	Securities Premium Account	-	-	-	-				
9	Net Worth	(11,039.58)	(10,522.65)	(11,039.58)	(10,522.65)				
10	Paid up Debt Capital / Outstanding Debt	15,116.93	12,583.16	15,116.93	12,583.16				
11	Outstanding redemption preference share	-	-	-	-				
12	Debt Equity Ratio*	-	-	-	-				
13	Earnings per Share (EPS) (Face value Per Share ₹ 10 each) -								
	- Basic (Amount in ₹)	(6,437.72)	(31,045.95)	(11,411.12)	(33,280.43)				
	- Diluted (Amount in ₹)	(6,437.72)	(31,045.95)	(11,411.12)	(33,280.43)				
14	Capital Redemption Reserve	-	-	-	-				
15	Debt Service Coverage Ratio**	-	-	-	-				
16	Interest Service Coverage Ratio	(0.88)	(9.58)	(1.56)	(10.59)				
17	Current ratio (In times)	0.72	0.54	0.72	0.54				
18	Total debts to total assets	1.03	1.11	1.03	1.11				
19	Long term debt to working capital (In times)#	-	-	-	-				
20	Bad debt to account receivable ratio (In %)	-	-	-	-				
21	Current liability ratio (In times)	0.78	0.95	0.78	0.95				
22	Debtor turnover ratio (In times)	0.09	-	0.57	0.85				
23	Inventory turnover ratio (In times)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01				
24	Operating margin (In %)	-	-	3.87	22.34				
25	Net profit margin (In %)	(289.13)	-	(389.55)	(1,347.46)				

* Ratio can not be calculated due to negative average shareholders funds.
** Ratio can not be calculated due to negative earning available for debt service.
Ratio can not be calculated due to negative working capital.
** Amount less than or equal to ₹ 5000.

Notes to the standalone financial results:

- The above results have been reviewed and approved by the Audit Committee and Board of Directors ('the Board') at its meeting held on 20 May 2026.
- The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly / Annual Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 52(8), read with 52(4) of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly/ Annual Financial Results are available on the Company's website (<https://www.embassyindia.com/tcl/>) and on the website of BSE (<https://www.bseindia.com>) and NSE (<https://www.nseindia.com>).
- Figures for the quarter ended 31 March 2026 and corresponding quarter ended 31 March 2025 represent the balancing figures between the audited figures for the full financial year and published reviewed year to date figures upto third quarter of the financial year.

Registered Office: Office No 202, 2nd Floor, A-18 Rama House, Middle Circle, Connaught Place, New Delhi- 110 001.



For and on behalf of the Board of Directors

Meyyappan Ramanathan
Whole-time director

Place : New Delhi
Date : 20 May 2026

Your Trusted Management Advisory

www.transglobeadvisors.in

Order Order

SC seeks response on plea to ban sale of liquor in tetra packs

The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought responses from the Centre and others on a plea seeking direction to forthwith ban the sale of alcohol in packaging such as tetra packs and sachets. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi agreed to hear the petition filed by organisation 'Community Against Drunken Driving'. Advocate Vipin Nair, appearing for the petitioner, said that definition of bottle was "vague" under the excise regime and some standardisation has to come in this regard. "They are confusing fruit juice with liquor. They use photo of apple and the pack contains Vodka," he said, adding the State has the duty to protect the health of citizens. (PTI)



SC rejects PIL challenging caste enumeration during Census

The Supreme Court on Wednesday rejected a PIL challenging the Centre's decision to conduct caste-based Census, saying the issue falls under the policy domain. The top court said the government must know the number of persons belonging to backward castes to frame welfare measures. A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul Pancholi did not agree to the submissions of PIL petitioner Sudhakar Gummula, who appeared in person to argue his case, that plenty of information and figures were available with the government on caste details. "These are all policy matters, whether the Census should be caste-based or not. What is wrong with it? The government must know as to how many people are in the backward class, what kind of welfare measures are to be taken for them. It is within the policy domain," the CJ said while dismissing the PIL. (PTI)



Ensure Aadhaar is used strictly as identity proof: Plea in SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Alleging that Aadhaar is being used as a proof of citizenship, domicile, and residential address, a PIL has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking directions to ensure that the card is used strictly as an identity proof. The plea filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay has sought directions to the Centre, states and the Election Commission of India to ensure that Aadhaar is used as a proof of identity, not as a proof of citizenship, domicile, address and date of birth. The plea, filed through advocate Ashwani Dubey, also sought directions that the use of Aadhaar as a proof of date of birth and residence in the application form for new voter registration be considered against Section 9 of the Aadhaar Act, 2016, Section 23(4) of the RPA, 1950 and Article 14 of the Constitution. "Section 9 of the Aadhaar Act, 2016 expressly states that



'Aadhaar is not the evidence of citizenship or domicile'. The Unique Identification Authority of India Notification dated August 22, 2023 clearly states that 'Aadhaar is proof of identity, not of citizenship, address or date of birth'... "Despite this, Aadhaar is not only being used as a proof of age, citizenship & domicile for school admission, property purchase and to obtain birth certificate, ration card, driving licence but also being used in the Application Form for New Voter Registration (Form-6) as a proof of date of birth & proof of residence. And thus, infiltrators & illegal immi-

grants are obtaining various documents using Aadhaar," the plea said. The petition contended that the existing verification mechanism under Form-6 is inadequate and might allow individuals without proper supporting documents to be included in the electoral database. The plea sought a comprehensive overhaul of the verification framework used in electoral processes and proposed the establishment of a high-powered monitoring committee comprising a retired Supreme Court judge along with cybersecurity and forensic experts to oversee reforms.

SC seeks response on women lawyers Govt panels

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought responses from the Centre, all states and Union Territories on a PIL seeking 30 per cent quota for women lawyers in government panels and law officer positions. A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi took note of the submissions of senior advocate and Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) president Vikas Singh and issued notices to the Centre and others on the PIL filed by the Ladii Foundation Trust. The PIL sought a direction

to the Centre, state governments, and Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) to implement a minimum 30 per cent quota for women across all legal tiers, from the Supreme Court panels to local legal aid authorities. At the outset, Singh said the PIL has been filed following the survey conducted by the SCBA on status and representation of women lawyers in the legal profession. "They needed to be included in government panels," the senior lawyer said. The CJ said on Tuesday some representatives of a Telangana bar body met him and he was pleasantly surprised to know that a woman lawyer has been appointed



secretary there. "She was thanking me. I enquired about the total strength of the Bar .. it is 19,000. Around 8,000 (advocates) come regularly, out of which 2,000 are women. Now only one woman member is appointed," the CJ said. Singh said the SCBA also proposes to file a separate PIL keeping in mind difficulties

being faced by women lawyers. The plea refers to startling empirical evidence to say that while women are entering law schools in record numbers, they are systematically blocked from professional advancement. "Ladii Foundation Trust is filing the present PIL under Article 32 of the Constitution seeking issuance of an appropriate writ, order or direction for a minimum of 30 per cent reservation/representation for women advocates in all governmental panels, including but not limited to the Supreme Court panels, high court panels, government law officer positions, legal aid panels and all

Central and State Government/PSU empanelments, so as to secure effective enforcement of the fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 14, 15(3), 19(1)(g) and 21 of the Constitution," the plea said. Citing the India Justice Report of 2022 and the SCBA survey, the plea said in over 75 years of independence, no woman has ever been appointed as Attorney General or Solicitor General of India. "In the 35 years since Justice M Fathima Beevi became the first woman judge of the Supreme Court in 1989, only 11 women have ever been elevated to the Supreme Court of India.

CBI court acquits IT officer after 19 years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Thane

A court here has acquitted a suspended Income Tax Officer and his wife in a 2007 case of disproportionate assets, pulling up the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for an "erroneous" and "casual" investigation. Invoking a Supreme Court precedent, Special CBI Court Judge DS Deshmukh on Tuesday said that a defendant in a corruption case does not need to prove innocence beyond a reasonable doubt, and a preponderance of probability is sufficient. The court acquitted Anil Ratnakar Malle (45), an Income Tax Officer then posted in Maharashtra's Thane, and his wife Suvama Anil Malle (43) of charges under the Prevention of Corruption Act



and Section 109 of the Indian Penal Code (abatement). The CBI Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), Mumbai, registered the case in January 2007, alleging that between September 1991 and December 2006, Anil Malle misused his official position to amass wealth in his and his family's name. While the initial FIR pegged the disproportionate assets at ₹15.34 lakh, the CBI escalated the figure to ₹28,57,984 in its final

chargesheet filed in November 2008. During the trial, defence lawyer MS More argued that the CBI completely ignored valid sources of cash flow, including a joint housing loan of 8 lakh taken by Malle's wife and his late mother, independent I-T returns filed by the wife since 2000, General Provident Fund withdrawals, and documented loans taken from relatives. The CBI had also wrongfully classified ₹2.43 lakh in cash found during a house search as Malle's personal asset, despite formal letters sent to the agency by his mother claiming ownership of the money, he said. The court, while striking down the prosecution's case, said various admissions by the investigation officer during cross-examination show that he has not properly considered the income of the accused.

HC grants anticipatory bail to one Bareilly violence accused

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Prayagraj

The Allahabad High Court has granted an anticipatory bail plea to Altamas Khan, one of the accused in last year's Bareilly violence case. Justice Ashutosh Srivastava on Monday allowed the anticipatory bail application of Altamas Khan. According to the police case, on September 26 last year, Maulana Tauqeer Raza



had given a call for members of a particular community to assemble at Islamiya Inter College in Bareilly. Despite prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the BNSS being in force, a crowd of about 500 people gathered, proceeding from Maulana Azad Inter College towards Shyamganj Chauraha. The crowd, holding boards and raising provocative slogans, paid little heed to the warn-

ings and persuasions made by the police personnel at the spot. The situation escalated when the accused persons became aggressive and adamant to proceed. Thereafter, allegedly, brickbats, stones and acid bottles were thrown at the police force by the accused persons in the crowd, and gunshots were also fired from the crowd at the police personnel.

RIL, two firms seek mediation in KG-basin dispute in SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) and two other foreign firms on Wednesday told the Supreme Court that they would write to the Centre for mediation in the Krishna-Godavari basin gas migration dispute. The matter was mentioned before a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi. "All the petitioners will be writing to the Government of India today seeking mediation... We are submitting that let us attempt mediation," the counsel appearing for the firms told the apex court. The counsel urged the bench that hearing in the case may be stopped till the mediation outcome.

However, Attorney General R Venkataramani, appearing for the Centre, requested the court to continue with the hearing in the case listed today. "If, in the meantime, anything will happen, we will inform the court," the top law officer said. The bench declined to stop the hearing and said the parties may inform it about the outcome of mediation. "If you come with a successful mediation, wonderful. We will dispose of the matter then," the bench said. On May 19, the top court commenced final hearing on appeals of RIL and two other foreign firms challenging a Delhi High Court verdict that set aside an arbitral award that set in their favour in the Krishna-Godavari Basin gas migration dispute with the Centre.



Hold Bengaluru civic body polls by Aug 31: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday extended till August 31 the time for holding the long-pending elections for the Bengaluru civic body. The tenure of the earlier elected body for the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) expired on September 10, 2020, and since then a government-appointed administrator was taking care of its day-to-day affairs. On January 12, the apex court had asked the Karnataka government and the state election body to hold the polls for the Bengaluru civic body by June 30. On Wednesday, a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi extended the time till August 31 and made clear that no further extension would be granted. The order was passed after senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the Karnataka government, referred to the shortage of manpower due to the Census work and the upcoming special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the state. He urged the bench that the time to conclude the polls be extended by two to three months. Singhvi said the budgetary allocation was also done



but there would be shortage of manpower. While extending the time, the bench observed, "You go and activate your machinery". On January 12, the top court had said that final ward-wise reservation list shall be published by the state government by February 20.

The order was passed on a plea of the Karnataka government which has challenged the high court's December 2020 order that directed the State Election Commission to hold BBMP elections expeditiously after finalising the electoral rolls. The top court is monitoring the

compliance of its earlier orders regarding polls to the BBMP and the newly created municipal corporations within the Greater Bengaluru Area (GBA). In its December 2020 judgment, the high court upheld the constitutional validity of the Karnataka Municipal Corporation Third Amendment Act, 2020, which increased the number of BBMP wards. The high court had, however, "read down" the amendment, holding that it would not apply to elections that ought to have been held under Article 243 of the Constitution before the amendment came into effect. On December 18, 2020, the top court stayed the high court order, and in 2022, it asked the state government to complete the process of delimitation of wards for BBMP and to notify the same within a period of eight weeks. The Karnataka government earlier notified reservations for 369 wards across five newly carved municipal corporations in the Greater Bengaluru Area. Unlike the previous civic body polls, which were held for 198 wards, the next elections will be held for 369 wards across five corporations, an increase of 171.

सेंट्रल बैंक ऑफ इंडिया
शाखा: सतपता (छ.ग.)

Central Bank of India
Branch: Satpata (C.G.)

Redemption cum Pre-Sale notice under Section 13(8) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002(For Immovable property)

Whereas:
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the Central Bank of India, the secured creditor, under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 in exercise of powers conferred under the said Act and Rules made thereunder, issued notices to discharge in your liabilities to Central Bank of India, the secured creditor. The details are as under:

No.	Details of Borrower / Guarantors / Branch Name	Property Details	Date of 13(4) Date of 13(4)	Demand Amount
01	Mr. Shakil Ahmad Ansari, House No. 280, Main Road, Mominpura, Ambikapur, Chhattisgarh-497001.	All that piece & parcel including land, building, super structure, common pathways and secured asset of the bank located at land bearing Khasra No. 2495/8, admeasuring 0.026 hectare situated at Ambikapur, P.H.N. 05, R.N.M. Ambikapur 01, Tehsil- Ambikapur, District- Surguja, Chhattisgarh, PIN- 497001. Boundary as per Registered Mortgage Deed: North- Public Road, South- Land of Hasamuddin, East- House of Niyaz Ansari, West- Road.	31/01/2026 23/04/2026	₹ 65,23,256.00

You are requested to repay Bank's dues along with future interest, all costs, charges and expenses etc. within 30 days from the date of receipt of this notice and/or at any time before the date of publication of the notice for public auction etc. Thus, your attention is invited to redeem the secured assets in terms of Section 13(8) within the aforesaid stipulated time.

In case you fail to act in accordance with this notice, Bank will proceed further in terms of the provisions of the SARFAESI Act, 2002 and the Rules made thereunder to recover its dues along with future interest, costs, charges and expenses etc.

Please note that this is without prejudice to Bank's rights and contentions available under the law(s) for the time being in force.

Date: 20.05.2026 Place: Satpata (C.G.) Authorised Officer/ Central Bank of India

सेंट्रल बैंक ऑफ इंडिया
शाखा: पांडवपारा (छ.ग.)

Central Bank of India
Branch: Pandavpara (C.G.)

Redemption cum Pre-Sale notice under Section 13(8) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002(For Immovable property)

Whereas:
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the Central Bank of India, the secured creditor, under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 in exercise of powers conferred under the said Act and Rules made thereunder, issued notices to discharge in your liabilities to Central Bank of India, the secured creditor. The details are as under:

No.	Details of Borrower / Guarantors / Branch Name	Property Details	Date of 13(4) Date of 13(4)	Demand Amount
01	Mr. Prithvi Raj Singh Smt. Usha Singh & Mr. Prithviraj Singh, Both Address: Schoolpara, Village- Champajhar, Tehsil and Dist- Baikonthpur, Chhattisgarh	All part and parcel of land along with building constructed on it, bearing Khasra No. 592/1 admeasuring 0.08 Hectare situated at Village- Champajhar, P. H. No. 21, RNM- Patna, Tehsil- Baikonthpur, Vikash Khand- Baikonthpur, District- Koriya, Chhattisgarh, PIN-497331. With following Boundaries as per sale deed: North- Land of Shivanarayan Gond, South- Land of Janpad Panchayat Primary School, East- Land of Khemraj, West- Road.	04/12/2025 08/04/2026	₹ 25,29,064.42

You are requested to repay Bank's dues along with future interest, all costs, charges and expenses etc. within 30 days from the date of receipt of this notice and/or at any time before the date of publication of the notice for public auction etc. Thus, your attention is invited to redeem the secured assets in terms of Section 13(8) within the aforesaid stipulated time.

In case you fail to act in accordance with this notice, Bank will proceed further in terms of the provisions of the SARFAESI Act, 2002 and the Rules made thereunder to recover its dues along with future interest, costs, charges and expenses etc.

Please note that this is without prejudice to Bank's rights and contentions available under the law(s) for the time being in force.

Date: 20.05.2026 Place: Pandavpara (C.G.) Authorised Officer/ Central Bank of India

Editor's TAKE

Dowry violence remains India's ugly reality

Rising dowry deaths reflect a collective moral failure. Until society challenges the mindset that commodifies women in marriage, laws alone will not end this menace

This is sad and unfortunate, but true. The much-cherished Indian marriage institution is largely becoming transactional, as marriages are more about a give-and-take relationship than the bond between two individuals choosing to spend a lifetime together. Thanks to patriarchy rooted in the Indian psyche, dowry is considered a necessary tradition where the groom receives gifts, often in cash and kind – and the bride's family complies with the irrational demands of the groom's family, failing which the girl pays the price through mental torture and, in some cases, with her life. That is the reality today: despite decades of legislation, public campaigns, and growing awareness about women's rights, India continues to witness a disturbing rise in dowry-related violence and deaths.

Two recent incidents of alleged dowry deaths have once again exposed the continuing menace of dowry-related violence despite strict laws. One of the most disturbing cases is that of Twisha Sharma, a 33-year-old woman from Bhopal whose death triggered nationwide outrage. Reports suggested that injuries were found on her body, leading to demands for a Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe. The incident shows that dowry deaths are not limited to weaker sections but also occur in well-to-do families.

Another shocking case emerged from Greater Noida, where 24-year-old Deepika Nagar died after allegedly being thrown from the terrace of her in-laws' house. Her family accused her husband and in-laws of demanding ₹50 lakh and a Fortuner car as dowry. Police arrested the husband and father-in-law while investigations continued. These incidents prove that the scourge of dowry is still very much rampant, though it has vanished from mainstream discourse. According to NCRB data, thousands of women still lose their lives every year because of dowry harassment, exposing deep-rooted patriarchy and greed.

Dowry deaths are registered under Section 80 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Yet, even with the Dowry Prohibition Act in force since 1961, implementation remains weak and convictions are few. At the heart of the problem lies patriarchy. In many families, daughters are still viewed as financial burdens, while marriage is treated as a means to enhance status through gifts, cash, or property. Rising consumerism has worsened the situation, with demands extending beyond traditional gifts to luxury cars, apartments, and expensive lifestyles. Another major reason is silence. Many women endure emotional abuse, violence, and coercion in silence.

The way forward requires more than stricter laws. Legal provisions already exist, but enforcement must become faster and more effective. Women's economic empowerment is another critical step. Greater access to education, employment, and property rights can help women gain independence and resist abusive situations. But most importantly, society must change and create stronger support systems for victims. Ultimately, it is a menace that can only be controlled through a changed mindset, as law alone cannot prevent it.

Beijing's Thucydides gambit

By invoking the ancient Greek concept of the 'Thucydides Trap,' Chinese President Xi Jinping sought to frame the US-China rivalry not as a temporary dispute but as a structural contest embedded in the logic of history itself



BHASKAR JYOTI MAHANTA

The ancient Greek historian Thucydides observed that the Peloponnesian War became inevitable because of the rise of the power of ancient Athens and the fear it generated in Sparta, which was the dominant power at that time. The historical construct of the "Thucydides Trap" was popularised by Harvard professor Graham Allison, who warned that when a rising power threatens to displace an established superpower, structural friction frequently culminates in war.

Occurring against a backdrop of global economic turbulence, Middle Eastern instability involving Iran, and an unrelenting tech war, the recently concluded US-China summit was heavily scrutinised for its symbolic and structural implications.

In Beijing, this ancient Greek thesis was intentionally revived, serving as the canvas upon which China painted a complex, multi-layered strategic narrative. During the opening sessions at the Great Hall of the People, President Xi explicitly invoked Allison's coinage, asking President Trump whether their respective nations could "overcome the Thucydides Trap and establish a new paradigm for relations between great powers." Far from a casual academic reference, this query encapsulated China's multi-pronged messaging strategy directed at both the White House and the global community.

The narrative posits that friction is an inevitable law of history, thereby demanding mutual accommodation. Xi's framing subtly pressured the United States to treat China as a geopolitical equal, arguing that "Planet Earth is vast enough to accommodate the respective development and common prosperity" of both powers. Beneath the diplomatic vocabulary lay a stark, conditional warning. Chinese state media and Foreign Ministry spokespersons quickly tethered the Thucydides metaphor to the Taiwan question. The messaging was clear: avoiding the "trap" of open conflict is entirely contingent on Washington respecting Beijing's red lines. Xi explicitly noted that mishandling Taiwan would push the relationship into "dangerous" territory, effectively communicating that if the trap snaps shut, it would be due to American provocations on cross-strait sovereignty.

Concurrently, China targeted international observers, particularly the Global South and European markets. By publicly asking whether conflict could be avoided, Beijing positioned itself as the responsible, rational actor seeking "tactical stabilisation" and global predictability, contrasting its posture with the perceived volatility of the Trump administration's trans-



CHINA YIELDED NO GROUND ON TAIWAN, SUCCESSFULLY REINFORCING ITS DETERRENCE POSTURE WITHOUT PROVOKING IMMEDIATE ESCALATION. ON IRAN, BEIJING AVOIDED MAKING CONCRETE CONCESSIONS, KEEPING ITS STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH TEHRAN INTACT WHILE PLAYING THE ROLE OF A DETACHED DIPLOMATIC OBSERVER

actional foreign policy. The meticulous choreography of the summit revealed deep-seated mutual suspicion, particularly within the digital domain. Behind-the-scenes preparations were heavily shaped by defensive cybersecurity measures and radically divergent strategic expectations. The summit took place immediately following intense domestic friction regarding "AI distillation attacks." In the months leading up to May 2026, leading American AI firms – including OpenAI and Anthropic – disclosed industrial-scale cyber campaigns aimed at harvesting proprietary algorithmic models, pointing directly to Chinese threat actors. In response, the White House issued National Security Presidential Memorandum (NSPM-4), elevating these digital extraction campaigns to a core national security threat.

Consequently, cybersecurity precautions for the US delegation were unprecedented. Air-gapped communication networks, highly encrypted satellite links, and strict physical and digital isolation of devices were implemented to prevent espionage. On the Chinese side, cyber defences were heightened to prevent retaliatory data poisoning or disruptive countermeasures by US intelligence. Furthermore, the presence of high-profile tech leaders such as Elon Musk, Tim Cook, and Jensen Huang in Trump's delegation turned the summit venue into a virtual fortress of intellectual property protection, with both sides treating digital networks as live combat zones.

The two leaders entered the summit room with fundamentally incompatible frameworks. President Trump approached the bilateral meeting through a highly transactional lens. Flanked by American CEOs, his expectations were heavily weighted towards concrete commercial concessions: extracting large-scale Chinese commitments to purchase US soybeans, liquefied natural gas (LNG), and Boeing aircraft. Additionally, Washington prioritised pressuring Beijing to de-escalate its oil-buyer relationship with Tehran to de-escalate the Middle Eastern crisis.

President Xi, on the other hand, preferred a structural and institutional approach. Facing domestic economic headwinds, low consumer demand, and real estate vulnerabilities, Beijing sought a prolonged runway of stability. Its primary objective was to maintain the October 2025 Busan trade truce, avoid impending Section 301 tariffs on industrial overcapacity, and prevent further tightening of US restrictions on mid-tier semiconductors.

As Air Force One departed Beijing, the summit was widely categorised by international analysts as the "Stalemate Summit." While President Trump characteristically declared that they had "settled a lot of different problems," the actual readouts revealed a lack of structural breakthroughs, resulting in a highly managed tactical equilibrium.

However, the US achieved notable short-term commercial gains. Trump secured renewed Chinese promises to honour agricultural and energy import quotas, providing a political boost to his domestic base. Furthermore, the codification of the January 2026 TikTok joint venture – where American investors take majority control while Oracle oversees algorithmic security – was presented as a successful blueprint for handling Chinese tech expansion. On geopolitics, Washington succeeded in forcing China to publicly acknowledge the shared risk of a prolonged blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, given Beijing's reliance on Middle Eastern energy.

China achieved its core objective – namely, buying time. By preventing a breakdown of the

Busan truce, Beijing preserved its export pipelines to the US until at least November 2026. Given that recent US Supreme Court rulings had limited the presidency's emergency powers to impose sweeping tariffs, Xi managed to exploit American domestic institutional divisions, effectively weakening Trump's tariff leverage.

Moreover, China yielded no ground on Taiwan, successfully reinforcing its deterrence posture without provoking immediate escalation. On Iran, Beijing avoided making concrete concessions, keeping its strategic partnership with Tehran intact while playing the role of a detached diplomatic observer.

Ultimately, the 2026 Beijing Summit did not resolve the systemic rivalry that characterises the US-China relationship, nor did it permanently dismantle the Thucydides Trap. Instead, it served as an elaborate mechanism for relationship management. By utilising the vocabulary of ancient history, China successfully signalled the catastrophic costs of conflict, while the United States leveraged the meeting to secure immediate transactional concessions. The final outcome was a fragile, heavily managed stabilisation – a diplomatic truce that temporarily lowered the geopolitical temperature, even as both powers continued to build up their cyber, economic, and military assets for a prolonged historic confrontation.



The writer is a former DGP of Assam and General Secretary of the think tank 'SHARE'

dailypioneer
@TheDailyPioneer
bhaskar-mahanta-ips-retd-a8a1a27b

PICTALK



Workers wearing traditional hats pluck tea leaves at the Durgabari Tea Estate on a hot summer day on the outskirts of Agartala, Tripura. PHOTO: PTI

An open letter to the young lives lost too soon



ASHA IYER KUMAR

2ND OPINION

Dear children, You may never read this open letter I am writing to you – or perhaps you will, from the balcony of the world you chose to ascend to after the NEET-UG examination was cancelled. Already distressed by the paper leak and the lapse in the system, the news of your deaths came as a horror to me, and I am crestfallen. I sincerely wish to have a conversation with you, between the two realms to which we now belong. This is not a newspaper column; it is a heartfelt epistle written in the knowledge that I may never receive a reply. Or perhaps I will – from those who read this – and their responses may help stop the growing trend of young people choosing self-annihilation instead of courage and confidence when the system fails them.

The first question that comes to my mind is this: what on earth made you end your lives for a mistake that was never yours? I understand that your years of hard work seemed wasted. Your dreams shattered into smithereens, and suddenly you felt stranded in darkness. But who told you there was no light beyond it? Which devil convinced you that this was the end of the road? Why did suicide appear to be the only response to this crisis?

I have often tried to understand the logic behind taking one's own life. Statistics suggest that there are nearly 14 to 15 million suicide attempts worldwide every year, of which around 720,000 end in death. I deliberately avoid saying people "succeed" in suicide because choosing death when life still stretches ahead can never be called a triumph.

Life has a way of disrupting plans and pushing people to the edge. I, too, have gone through moments when the future appeared bleak and death seemed easier than enduring life's burdens. I have had fleeting thoughts of escape. But those thoughts always passed. Over time, I realised that the future still holds possibilities, however hidden they may appear in moments of despair. The struggles we endure often shape us into stronger and wiser human beings.

I must confess – as many others would – that thoughts of escaping life's harshness are not uncommon. What

keeps most of us going is faith: faith that setbacks are temporary and that life offers more than one path. But in your case, you believed that this setback was permanent, that there was no life beyond becoming a doctor. Dear children, what happened to you was deeply unfair, but it could never have determined your entire future. One examination could not define what you were destined to become. There are countless ways to fulfil one's dreams, and there are many dreams worth pursuing. Life never offers only one route to success. Sadly, no one may have told you that – not your parents, teachers, or guardians. People

often say suicide is not a solution. Perhaps you were not even seeking one. Perhaps you were only trying to escape the pain and humiliation that overwhelmed you. But you had not failed. The system had. That you paid with your lives for someone else's failure is heartbreaking. You could have become symbols of hope for future generations. Instead, your deaths have become reminders of despair. I only wish someone had taught you that life renews itself every day with fresh opportunities. Your lives were precious, and it is tragic that you could not see it. You had not reached a dead end; you merely mistook a curtain for a wall and stopped walking.



The writer is a Dubai-based author, columnist, independent journalist and children's writing coach

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

www.dailypioneer.com
facebook.com/dailypioneer @TheDailyPioneer
instagram.com/dailypioneer linkedin.com/in/ThePioneer

PHYSICAL INACTIVITY: A GROWING GLOBAL CONCERN

A recent report published in Nature Medicine, analysing data from 68 countries, reveals that physical activity levels have remained stagnant over the past two decades despite increasing awareness and policy recommendations. Globally, around 80 per cent of adolescents and one in three adults fail to meet the World Health Organization's prescribed physical activity guidelines. This makes the WHO's target of reducing physical inactivity by 15 per cent by 2030 appear increasingly difficult to achieve.

The issue is particularly serious in developing countries such as India. The 2026 Time Use Survey showed that only one in ten Indians exercised on a given day in 2024, most of them men. For millions living in overcrowded cities, leisure and

exercise have become luxuries amid long commutes, demanding work schedules and inadequate public infrastructure. Another study in Nature Health highlighted poor implementation of physical activity policies, noting that many countries failed to set measurable targets for assessing progress.

The challenge now is to democratise physical activity. Governments must treat exercise as a civic necessity rather than a personal choice alone. Cities need pedestrian-friendly roads, parks and cycling tracks, while workplaces should encourage movement instead of prolonged sedentary routines. Women and marginalised communities must also have safe access to public spaces for recreation and exercise.

YASH PAL RALHAN | JALANDHAR

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

Brewing hope, one cup at a time

Tea is the world's second most consumed beverage after water, cherished across cultures and generations. Whether enjoyed early in the morning, during a midday break, or on a quiet evening, tea offers comfort, warmth and a sense of togetherness. It is often said that buying tea is akin to buying happiness. While every day may feel like "tea day", the United Nations officially observes International Tea Day on May 21 each year.

The 2026 theme, "Fostering Growth and Inclusion", highlights the need to empower tea farmers and strengthen livelihoods linked to the tea industry. Tea supports millions of families, especially in economically weaker and remote regions, while also symbolising cultural heritage and diversity. The UN continues to promote tea as a tool for sustainable development, poverty reduction, hunger eradication and women's empowerment.

At the same time, challenges such as climate change and declining tea production require urgent attention.

As the saying goes, life is like making tea – boil the ego, evaporate worry, dilute sorrow and filter mistakes. The result is a happier and richer life.

GANAPATHI BHAT | AKOLA

Revision in auto-taxi fares

This refers to the report, "Cab, auto drivers' unions call 3-days strike" (May 20). The commercial vehicle unions in Delhi-NCR have disturbed not only the peaceful sleep of the Delhi government and officials but also that of commuters by announcing a three-day strike. Consequently, the possibility of an increased financial burden falling upon common people – who already rely on expensive taxi services – has become stronger.

According to the "Chalak Shakti Union", taxi fare slabs in Delhi-NCR have remained unchanged for the past 15 years, even as fuel prices and operational costs have steadily increased. This has reportedly disrupted the financial balance of drivers' earnings. By submitting memorandums to the Chief Minister, Transport Minister, Lieutenant Governor and Police Commissioner of Delhi, the union has further intensified the issue by extending support to the nationwide protest call given by the All India Motor Transport Congress. On the other hand, the general public points out that many auto-rickshaw drivers frequently claim their meters are out of order to justify charging arbitrary and exorbitant fares. As a result, people now prefer app-based services such as Ola, Uber and Rapido for safer travel. The government must consider the burden on common people before revising fares.

YUGAL KISHORE SHARMA | FARIDABAD

Balancing human safety and animal welfare

Apropos, "SC refuses to recall order on sterilisation of stray dogs" (May 20). The Supreme Court's refusal to dilute its directions on removing stray dogs from public institutions is a timely and necessary intervention in an escalating public safety crisis. For years, civic authorities across the country have failed to address the alarming rise in dog-bite incidents, forcing the judiciary to step into what has effectively become an administrative vacuum.

The ground reality today is deeply concerning. Children near schools, elderly citizens on morning walks, and residents in housing colonies often live in fear of aggressive stray dog packs. The Court has rightly observed that humane treatment of animals cannot come at the cost of human safety, just as public safety cannot justify cruelty towards animals. The solution lies in striking a careful balance. Municipal authorities must now match the Court's directions with serious investments in shelters, sterilisation centres, vaccination drives, and veterinary care facilities. The issue cannot be resolved through knee-jerk reactions or violence. Instead, local administrations must develop a humane, accountable and effective stray management system that safeguards both citizens and animal welfare.

N SADHASIVA REDDY | BENGALURU

Great Nicobar project: Balancing strategy, ecology and national interest

Great Nicobar Island occupies one of the most strategic locations in the world. Situated close to the Malacca Strait, through which a substantial portion of global maritime trade passes, the island offers India a unique opportunity to strengthen its presence in the Indian Ocean



VK BAHUGUNA

The Great Nicobar Development Project proposal of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, stands at an important stage for the future geo-strategic dominance of the country in trade and defence. The proposed project, which includes an international transshipment port, airport, power infrastructure, roads, and an urban township, has generated intense debate across the country. To some, it represents India's strategic and economic future in the Indo-Pacific region. To naysayers, it is a threat to fragile biodiversity and indigenous tribal communities. The truth, however, lies not in extreme positions but in finding a balanced and workable path that protects both national interest and environmental responsibility.

Great Nicobar Island occupies one of the most strategic locations in the world. Situated close to the Malacca Strait (40 to 90 nautical miles away), through which a substantial portion of global maritime trade passes, the island offers India a unique opportunity to strengthen its presence in the Indian Ocean. At present, a major share of Indian cargo depends upon foreign transshipment hubs such as Singapore and Colombo. A modern port in Great Nicobar could reduce this dependence, improve India's trade competitiveness, and strengthen maritime self-reliance. The strategic significance of the island goes beyond economics. In an era of rising geopolitical competition in the Indo-Pacific, India requires stronger naval logistics, surveillance capability, and rapid-response infrastructure in the Andaman and Nicobar region. The project, therefore, has undeniable defence value. Stronger infrastructure in the islands would enhance India's maritime security and reinforce its role as a leading regional power. At the same time, critics of the project have raised legitimate concerns. Great Nicobar is home to dense tropical forests, mangroves, coral reefs, and several rare species such as the globally threatened Nicobar Megapode, Nicobar Tree Shrew, crab-eating long-tailed macaque, and Giant Leatherback Sea Turtle. Environmental groups fear that large-scale construction may damage fragile ecosystems and threaten wildlife habitats.

The island is also ecologically vulnerable because of earthquakes, tsunamis, and rising sea levels. The devastating tsunami of 2004 remains a reminder that the Nicobar region cannot be treated like an ordinary urban expansion zone. Some people have also raised concerns regarding indigenous communities such as the semi-nomadic Shompen tribe, recognised as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group, which has lived in relative isolation for centuries. According to critics, uncontrolled urbanisation could disturb their traditional lifestyle and cause cultural disruption. However, it is also necessary to place the debate in perspective. Opponents argue that tribal reserves must remain inviolable and completely insulated from commercial expansion, tourism, and migration pressures. On the other hand, I am a strong proponent of bringing tribal communities into mainstream society for development, healthcare, education, and employment, based on my 40 years of experience in tribal-dominated states of North-East and Central India. What is needed is the preservation of tribal languages, music, art, and cultural practices, including indigenous medicine.

An integrated tribal development project should be implemented by the Forest Department not only in the project area but across the entire Andaman and Nicobar Union Territory. Since the area is prone to earthquakes and tsunamis, infrastructure must be designed to withstand earthquakes, cyclones, and tsunamis through advanced engineering standards.

Reports indicate that the actual core development area constitutes less than 1 per cent of the total island area. This means the challenge before policymakers is not whether development should happen, but how it should happen responsibly. In this regard, one aspect of the proposal that needs modification is the plan for a massive township of nearly six lakh people. Such a large urban settlement may place



The Pioneer
SINCE 1865

THE STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ISLAND GOES BEYOND ECONOMICS. IN AN ERA OF RISING GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITION IN THE INDO-PACIFIC, INDIA REQUIRES STRONGER NAVAL LOGISTICS, SURVEILLANCE CAPABILITY, AND RAPID-RESPONSE INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR REGION. THE PROJECT, THEREFORE, HAS UNDENIABLE DEFENCE VALUE

The writer is former Director-General ICFRE and Chairman of Centre for Resource Management and Environment

dailypioneer
VKBahuguna2
bahuguna-vk-39b46350

unsustainable pressure on the fragile island ecosystem. A more realistic and nationally prudent approach would be to limit the township population to around 50,000 to one lakh people, primarily consisting of defence personnel, port workers, researchers, administrators, and trade-related professionals. Great Nicobar should therefore become a strategic trade and defence hub rather than a densely populated commercial city.

Environmental safeguards must also become central to the project, and the Forest Department should be empowered under the Environmental Protection Act, 1986, to constantly monitor developmental activities, sea pollution, and ensure the protection of biodiversity and the overall environment.

Sensitive areas such as turtle nesting beaches, coral reefs, mangroves, and primary forests should remain protected as no-development zones. Construction should follow strict green standards with renewable energy systems, controlled waste management, rainwater harvesting, and disaster-resilient infrastructure. Development should proceed in carefully monitored phases rather than through uncontrolled expansion.

In a nutshell, India today requires infrastructure, maritime capability, and economic strength to secure its place in the changing global order as a global power. At the same time, development that destroys ecological wealth and cultural heritage cannot truly serve national interest. Strategic progress and environmental conservation must therefore go hand in hand.

The Great Nicobar Project should not become a victim of either blind opposition or reckless expansionism. India must pursue a middle path — one that combines strategic necessity with ecological wisdom. A carefully regulated, defence- and trade-oriented development model with limited urbanisation can ensure that Great Nicobar strengthens India's future without compromising its environmental and moral responsibilities.

The real success of the project will not be measured merely by the size of its port or township, but by whether India can demonstrate that it can emerge as a global power in the Indian Ocean without harming its ecology. The Great Nicobar Project must therefore be implemented both efficiently and carefully. Since the proposal is being piloted by the Home Ministry, it needs to be fine-tuned after discussions with the Andaman Forest Department and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change before it is put out for tendering or assigned to an implementing agency.

India's national interest requires strategic depth along with environmental stability. A smarter, carefully regulated, defence — and trade-oriented development model would allow India to secure its maritime future while preserving biodiversity and protecting indigenous communities. If planned wisely, Great Nicobar can become an example of sustainable strategic development rather than a case of ecological overexpansion.

Congress cannot afford another Karnataka mistake



TEHEEN POONAWALLA

Indian politics has a cruel way of exposing weakness. It does not merely punish defeat; it punishes indecision, hesitation, and the inability to learn from repeated mistakes. That is precisely where the Congress party finds itself today.

There is an old political saying that parties in decline eventually learn how to lose. Over the past decade, the Congress seems to have turned that lesson into routine practice. The tragedy for the party is that many of these defeats are not inevitable. Often, the Congress enters contests with enough political space, public dissatisfaction against its opponents, and organisational presence to remain competitive. Yet, time and again, it fails to cross the final hurdle. The examples are many. Haryana and Madhya Pradesh remain painful reminders. In both states, the Congress was not irrelevant. It was in the contest. It had momentum, visibility, and voter support. Yet, in both instances, it failed to convert opportunity into victory. The party leadership continues to blame external factors, including allegations of electoral manipulation and "vote chori", but far less attention is paid to internal dysfunction. Delayed decisions, factional rivalries, confused messaging, and a lack of clarity in leadership continue to haunt the party.

For Congress supporters, this is perhaps the most frustrating aspect. These are not new problems. They are recurring patterns. Every election seems to expose the same weaknesses in different forms. At the centre of this crisis lies a simple but critical issue: the inability to place the right person in the right role at the right time.

Voters may disagree with a party's ideology, but they rarely forgive confusion. The Congress often appears unsure of itself. It hesitates when it should act, debates when it should decide, and second-guesses itself when political instinct demands confidence. Its opponents have understood this far better. The Bharatiya Janata Party operates with a level of organisational aggression and strategic clarity that the Congress has struggled to match. The contrast between the two leadership styles is striking. In the race between a diabetic Amit Shah and a seemingly fitter Rahul Gandhi, the former consistently wins not because of physical energy, but because of political agility, sharper decision-making, and organisational discipline.

Karnataka is not just another Congress-ruled state. It is the party's southern anchor, one of the few major states where it still possesses organisational strength, leadership depth, and electoral viability. Losing Karnataka would not simply reduce the Congress tally by one more state. Psychologically, it would be devastating. It would deepen the national perception that the party is incapable of retaining even its strongest remaining bastions.

And yet, even in Karnataka, familiar fault lines are emerging. The leadership tussle between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar is no longer an internal matter whispered about in political corridors. It has become public, visible, and constant. The media tracks every development, every statement, and every signal from Delhi. Naturally, voters are watching too.

Both leaders bring undeniable strengths to the table. Siddaramaiah represents experience, governance, and a social coalition that has historically benefited the Congress. DK Shivakumar, meanwhile, represents organisational energy, aggressive politics, and political management. Within the party, he is often viewed as the dependable troubleshooter capable of keeping the organisation functioning during difficult times. The problem is not the existence of two strong leaders. The problem is the inability of the party leadership to clearly define how both leaders fit into the future structure of power. Earlier signals suggested that DK Shivakumar might eventually get an opportunity to lead the state. Those signals now appear uncertain. The high command once again seems trapped in hesitation.

This indecision is dangerous because politics does not wait. Time is never neutral. Delay almost always benefits the opponent. Uncertainty at the top filters down rapidly. Workers begin forming camps. Rivalries deepen. Authority weakens. By the time Karnataka heads into the next Assembly election, unresolved tensions could become a serious liability for the Congress. There is also a generational dimension to this debate. Many within the party believe DK Shivakumar represents the future. His style is more combative, more aggressive, and arguably more aligned with the current political mood of the country. Siddaramaiah, while respected for his administrative experience, represents continuity with an older political approach. Neither model is inherently wrong, but the Congress appears unable to decide which direction it truly wants to embrace.

This broader drift now defines the party nationally. The Congress frequently builds momentum only to squander it. It raises expectations and then fails to meet them. It gets close to victory and then retreats at the decisive moment. "Pulling defeat from the jaws of victory" has increasingly become associated with the party. Why does this continue to happen? One reason lies in structure. The Congress still functions through an overly centralised high-command culture. State leaders often wait endlessly for approval from Delhi instead of acting decisively on the ground. This slows responses and weakens political momentum. A second reason lies in unmanaged ambition. Political ambition is natural and even necessary. But when ambition is not balanced through timely decisions, it turns into rivalry. Rivalry without resolution eventually leads to paralysis.

A third reason is the absence of a coherent narrative. Too often, voters remain unsure about what the Congress stands for in a specific election. Local concerns get mixed with vague national positioning. Messaging becomes cluttered, inconsistent, and uninspiring. The Kerala victory demonstrates that the Congress is not politically irrelevant. It can still mobilise support and win elections under the right circumstances. This is why Karnataka matters so profoundly. The state presents the Congress with an opportunity to prove that it can still act decisively — an opportunity to demonstrate that leadership conflicts can be resolved before they become destructive, and an opportunity to show that it can protect and strengthen what remains of its political map.

The solution itself is not particularly complicated. The party must settle the leadership question early. It must clearly define roles. It must prevent factional warfare from spilling into public view. Above all, it must project unity and confidence. Politics ultimately rewards those who act with clarity and conviction. It punishes hesitation. Right now, hesitation remains the Congress party's biggest enemy.



The writer is a political analyst, entrepreneur and television personality

teheenpoonawalla
@teheenp
The Pioneer

Mandate for a new Bengal: Be royal again, be great again!



SAYAN CHATTERJEE

By the time this column reaches its readers, Bengal will likely have settled into that familiar, contemplative pause that follows a decisive electoral verdict — poised between memory and mandate. Elections in the state have never been mere arithmetic; they are textured, almost cultural expressions shaped by identity, emotion, and an evolving idea of justice. This time, however, beneath the cadence of campaign rhetoric and the machinery of party politics, a quieter but more consequential shift is discernible. After fifteen years of continuity, Bengal is not simply weighing a change of guard — it is reconsidering what it expects from power itself.

At the centre of this transition stands an unlikely figure: Ratna Debnath. Neither a career politician nor a product of institutional grooming, she enters public life as a mother marked by loss and reshaped by it. Her political journey does not follow the familiar arc of ambition; it emerges instead from disruption — personal, moral, and ultimately civic. Until recently, she existed outside the conventional contours of political relevance, working within communities, engaging with local concerns, and building a presence that was neither headline-driven nor strategically curated. Yet today, she has

come to embody one of the most compelling shifts in Bengal's political narrative.

Her victory in the Panchhati Assembly constituency is significant not merely because she has won, but because of what her win unsettles. Panchhati, located in North 24 Parganas, has long been defined by structure — dense grassroots networks, organisational loyalty, and a consistent inclination towards the Trinamool Congress. Electoral outcomes here were historically shaped less by individual candidatures and more by the durability of party machinery. In 2026, that script has been meaningfully altered.

Contesting on a Bharatiya Janata Party ticket, Debnath secured a decisive margin — one that moved beyond statistical comfort into the realm of unmistakable public endorsement. The contest, featuring TMC's Tirthankar Ghosh and CPI(M)'s Kalatan Dasgupta, ultimately reflected the bipolar dynamic that has increasingly come to define Bengal's electoral landscape. Yet within this familiar polarity, something distinctly unfamiliar unfolded.

Debnath did not arrive with a legacy of political inheritance or an entrenched organisational base. What she carried instead was a narrative — one that the electorate did not merely register but internalise. The "Abhaya" case, as it came to be widely known, transcended the contours of a criminal investigation to become a rupture in Bengal's collective conscience. The alleged sexual assault and death of her daughter, a young trainee doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, catal-



ysed a broader public introspection on women's safety, institutional accountability, and the perceived distance between governance and justice. In the months that followed, the discourse evolved from immediate outrage into something more enduring. It became a mirror, reflecting anxieties long present but seldom articulated with such urgency. Urban constituencies like Panchhati, marked by political awareness and media visibility, absorbed this discourse in layered ways. Voter behaviour did not abandon its reliance on organisational strength, but it expanded its evaluative lens. Credibility remained central — but its meaning evolved. For decades, credibility in such constituencies was synonymous with organisational depth and political continuity. In 2026, it began to be measured through lived experience and perceived integrity. This shift, though subtle, is consequential. It signals an electorate that is no longer sat-

isfied with representation that is merely functional; it seeks representation that resonates.

Panchhati, in this sense, becomes a microcosm of a broader transformation. It moves from predictability to empathy, from structure to sentiment, from alignment to assertion. Ratna Debnath's victory, therefore, is not just another electoral outcome; it reads as a quiet yet pointed commentary for any government that occupies, or aspires to occupy, the seat of power. It suggests that Bengal, even if momentarily, is willing to suspend its entrenched loyalties to acknowledge a different kind of political legitimacy — one that is neither inherited nor engineered, but earned through an unfiltered connection with public emotion.

This is not to suggest that Bengal's deeply rooted political frameworks have weakened. They remain potent, relevant, and often determinative. What this election reveals, however, is that within these structures there is now space — however narrow — for disruption. For individuals who do not conform to the mould yet possess the ability to redefine it. Embedded within this moment is also a larger question for governance. When an electorate responds so emphatically to a narrative born out of institutional failure, it is not merely endorsing a candidate — it is issuing a reminder that governance is not only about delivery, but about trust; not only about systems, but about how those systems respond under strain.

In that sense, this result is as much a mandate as it is a message. Governance has prevailed — but not in the conventional sense of administrative effi-

ciency or policy articulation. It has met its most fundamental expectation: listening, acknowledging, and responding. Debnath's journey — from enduring an unspeakable personal loss to stepping into public life and earning the mandate of a constituency — captures a transformation that is often invoked but rarely witnessed with such clarity: the conversion of private grief into public leadership.

It is a reminder that politics, at its most consequential, is not about control — it is about connection. And perhaps that is the deeper takeaway for what has long been regarded as India's cultural capital. If the system falters, people may no longer wait for its correction; they may instead seek to become the system themselves. For Bengal, a state that has historically prided itself on intellectual and cultural leadership, this moment offers an inflection point — to reimagine not just its politics, but its priorities.

To align governance with empathy. To ensure justice is not episodic but embedded. To rebuild trust not through rhetoric, but through response. Bengal has turned a page. Whether it evolves into a chapter of renewal or remains a brief departure from continuity will depend on what follows. For now, however, one conclusion is inescapable: the electorate has spoken — not just in numbers, but in nuance.

The writer is a Delhi-based independent contributor to print and online publications

dailypioneer
@sayande
The Pioneer

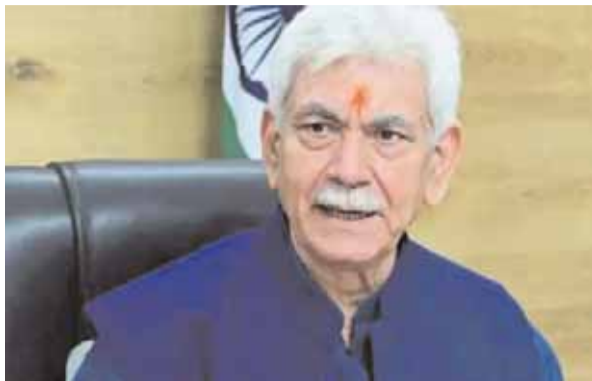
Police ensured secure environment for progress in J&K: LG Manoj Sinha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Jammu

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday said peace is the fundamental prerequisite for development and credited the Jammu and Kashmir Police for maintaining a secure environment that enabled significant progress in the Union Territory over the past six years.

Calling for enhanced efficiency and professionalism, the Lieutenant Governor said terrorism survives on funding, networks, and support systems, which must be identified and dismantled systematically.

"Until peace is established, the dream of development cannot be fulfilled. In any part of the world where peace does not prevail, development is not possible," he said while addressing a gathering after distributing appointment letters



to 100 newly recruited constables. Sinha said the development witnessed in Jammu and Kashmir over the past six years was the result of the efforts of successive administrations and the people, but added that the Jammu and Kashmir Police also deserved credit for maintaining peace and creating an environment conducive to development.

He said the police force has worked with a spirit of

selfless service, collective welfare, and constructive public engagement despite operating in a challenging security environment.

"The force remains on the frontline in dealing with threats of terrorism emanating from across the border," he said. The Lieutenant Governor said security threats have evolved significantly, with terrorism now taking new and more complex forms, requiring constant vigilance and

alertness from security forces.

"Today, terrorists no longer come only with visible weapons, nor do they always appear in forms that can be easily identified. The nature of terrorism is changing and demands a new kind of alertness and constant vigilance," he said.

He urged police personnel to remain continuously alert and cautious to ensure national security.

Sinha said officers of the Jammu and Kashmir Police have distinguished themselves through courage, commitment, and teamwork, and have carved a respected place in the history of the Union Territory as well as the nation.

"Whenever you wear the uniform of the Jammu and Kashmir Police, remember that you are carrying forward a glorious legacy and contributing to a continuing tradition of service and protection," he said.

Bihar Cabinet nods to IndiGo Gaya-Bangkok flights

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Patna

The Bihar Cabinet on Wednesday gave its nod to IndiGo Airlines to operate direct flights on the Gaya-Bangkok route for 12 months to enhance international air connectivity.

The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary.

According to a proposal of the civil aviation department approved by the cabinet, Interglobe Aviation Limited (IndiGo) was selected on a nomination basis after it emerged as the sole bidder for providing non-stop international air service on the route.

The State Government said direct air connectivity between Gaya International Airport and Bangkok would facilitate easier travel for foreign tourists, particularly Buddhist pilgrims, and is expected to boost the State's tourism.

Every year, a large number of Buddhist tourists from Thailand visit Bodhi Gaya and other Buddhist religious destinations in the State.

"The commencement of this air service will promote Buddhist tourism and expand tourism-related activities in the State," the proposal said.

The Government said increased tourist footfall would also boost economic activities in sectors such as hospitality, transport, handicrafts and



local trade, generating direct and indirect employment opportunities.

In another decision, the cabinet approved the Young Professionals Selection Policy-2026 for technical and specialised services in the Department of Science, Technology and Technical Education and its subordinate institutions.

"With the implementation of this policy, the Department of Science, Technology and Technical Education and its affiliated institutions will be able to ensure prompt availability of talented young professionals. Their support can also be utilised to enhance the effi-

ciency of institutions and in carrying out research and other activities", said the Cabinet note. The Cabinet also approved the creation of a new post of Inspector General of Police (Border) under the Special Branch to strengthen border security and intelligence systems along international and inter-state borders.

Besides, the Cabinet approved continuation of the recommendations of the Fifth State Finance Commission during the financial year 2026-27, as the recommendations of the Seventh State Finance Commission are yet to be received.

Karnataka LoP accuses Congress of delaying GBA elections

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Bengaluru

Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly R Ashoka on Wednesday alleged that the Congress Government is repeatedly postponing the GBA elections out of fear of defeat, calling it a "betrayal of the people of Bengaluru."

He said that after dividing Bengaluru into five parts, internal Congress surveys reportedly showed the party would lose in all five corporations, leading the Government to deliberately delay the elections.

He further claimed that Bengaluru in-charge Minister and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar does not want the elections held before the transfer of power to him as CM is complete.

"Due to infighting within Congress, no decision is being taken. Heaps of garbage are piling up across Bengaluru streets, and no development work is taking place. The Congress Government is directly responsible for this situation. Since the court has once again given a final deadline, elections must be conducted within that time



frame," Ashoka said. Speaking to reporters, he said the BJP is fully prepared for the elections, and the Government should announce the polls at the earliest.

Accusing the Congress of blaming Opposition parties after realising through internal surveys that defeat is certain in the Greater Bengaluru Authority polls, Ashoka pointed out that the BJP had earlier written to the Election Commission requesting immediate elections. "If they are confident of winning in surveys, why are they not conducting elections?" he asked.

On Wednesday, the Supreme Court extended the deadline to August 31 for holding the long-pending

elections to the five city corporations under the GBA.

On January 12, the apex court had directed the Karnataka Government and the State Election Commission to hold the polls for the Bengaluru civic body by June 30. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi extended the deadline to August 31 and made it clear that no further extension would be granted.

The order was passed after senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the Karnataka Government, cited manpower shortages due to Census work and the upcoming Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the State.

Gujarat Govt curbs foreign trips, promotes EV use to save fuel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Gandhinagar

The Gujarat Government has announced measures, including curbs on official trips abroad and the use of technology to minimise travel, to regulate the use of fuel and foreign exchange in the wake of the West Asia crisis.

"In view of the prevailing global situation, the State Government has decided to implement measures regarding the use of petrol, diesel and foreign exchange. The instructions



issued should be followed with immediate effect," it said in an 11-point circular issued on Tuesday.

The Government said its staff should

avoid travel by maximising the use of technologies such as telephone, mobile, e-mail and video conferencing, except in extremely essential cases. As per the circular, foreign tours should not be planned except under "unavoidable circumstances". Participation in training programmes, seminars, study tours and conferences held abroad should also be avoided unless absolutely necessary, it said.

Meetings outside Gujarat should be held online, and if travel is unavoidable, senior officers should ensure that

their subordinates do not accompany them unless extremely necessary, according to the circular.

Officers or employees should avoid official travel outside their respective district as far as possible.

If such travel becomes necessary, prior approval from the controlling authority must be obtained, it added.

All administrative departments and their subordinate offices should review the Government vehicles available to them and keep surplus vehicles out of use, the circular said.

Sikkim Governor promises support to highway project

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Gangtok

Sikkim Governor Om Prakash Mathur on Wednesday assured support for the proposed Yuksam-Legship highway via Pelling. The assurance came after Lok Sabha MP Indra Hang Subba informed the governor about the project initiated by the State Government during his visit to Gyalshing district, according to an official statement.

Embassy Developments Limited

(Formerly Equinox India Developments Limited and earlier Indiabulls Real Estate Limited)

Statement of Audited Consolidated Financial Results for the quarter and year ended 31 March 2026

Sl. No.	Particulars	3 months ended		Previous year ended		
		March 31, 2026 (Refer Note 4)	Dec. 31, 2025 (Unaudited)	March 31, 2025 (Refer Note 3)	March 31, 2026 (Audited)	31 March 2025 (Audited)
1	Total income from operations	3,424.63	2,127.82	8,888.89	17,318.32	21,795.04
2	Net Profit / (Loss) for the year/period (before Tax, Minority Interest and Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	(3,489.12)	(2,338.86)	1,572.63	(8,974.83)	553.18
3	Net (Loss) / Profit for the year/period before Tax and Minority Interest (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	(3,448.74)	(2,382.63)	1,292.63	(8,973.22)	273.18
4	Net (Loss) / Profit for the year/period after Tax and Minority Interest (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	(3,234.32)	(2,333.39)	1,229.93	(8,724.75)	1,936.33
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the year/period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the year/period (after tax) and					
6	Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	(3,232.26)	(2,402.26)	1,410.23	(8,774.22)	2,111.68
7	Earnings per Share (of ₹ 2/- each)					
	- Basic (Amount in ₹)	(2.33)	(1.67)	1.06	(6.43)	2.76
	- Diluted (Amount in ₹)	(2.33)	(1.67)	0.90	(6.43)	2.65
8	Paid up Equity Share Capital	2780.07	2780.07	2443.88	2780.07	2443.88

Notes to the unaudited consolidated financial results:

- The above consolidated results have been reviewed by the Audit Committee and subsequently approved at the meeting of the Board of Directors held on 20th May 2026. The full year financial results have been audited by the statutory auditors of the Company.
- The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly / Annual Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly / Annual Financial Results are available on the Company's website (<https://embassyindia.com>) and on the website of BSE (<https://www.bseindia.com>) and NSE (<https://www.nseindia.com>).
- The figures for the quarter ended March 31, 2025 represents the balancing amounts between the audited consolidated financial results for the year ended March 2025 and the management accounts prepared year to date figures up to December 31, 2024.
- The figures for the quarter ended March 31, 2026 are the balancing figures between audited figures in respect of full financial year and the published year to date figures up to December 31, 2025.

Embassy Developments Limited

(Formerly Equinox India Developments Limited and earlier Indiabulls Real Estate Limited)

Statement of Audited Standalone Financial Results for the quarter and year ended 31 March 2026

Sl. No.	Particulars	3 months ended		Previous year ended		
		March 31, 2026 (Refer Note 4)	Dec. 31, 2025 (Unaudited)	March 31, 2025 (Refer Note 3)	March 31, 2026 (Audited)	31 March 2025 (Audited)
1	Total income from operations	958.11	312.86	5,885.68	4,121.87	21,070.24
2	Net Profit / (Loss) for the year/period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	(865.32)	(783.39)	(221.51)	(2,972.96)	803.14
3	Net (Loss) / Profit for the year/period before Tax and (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	(830.01)	(810.26)	(501.51)	(2,959.52)	523.14
4	Net (Loss) / Profit for the year/period after Tax and (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	(798.20)	(739.63)	(472.89)	(2,830.66)	2,641.78
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the year/period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the year/period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	(797.85)	(745.54)	(2,137.62)	(2,818.20)	977.05
6	Earnings per Share (of ₹ 2/- each)					
	- Basic (Amount in ₹)	(0.57)	(0.53)	(0.39)	(2.08)	3.66
	- Diluted (Amount in ₹)	(0.57)	(0.53)	(0.39)	(2.08)	3.51
7	Paid up Equity Share Capital	2780.07	2780.07	2443.88	2780.07	2443.88

Notes to the unaudited standalone financial results:

- The above standalone results have been reviewed by the Audit Committee and subsequently approved at the meeting of the Board of Directors held on 20th May 2026. The full year financial results have been audited by the statutory auditors of the Company.
- The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly / Annual Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly / Annual Financial Results are available on the Company's website (<https://embassyindia.com>) and on the website of BSE (<https://www.bseindia.com>) and NSE (<https://www.nseindia.com>).
- The figures for the quarter ended March 31, 2025 are the balancing figures between the audited standalone financial results for the year ended March 31, 2025 and the management accounts prepared year to date figures up to December 31, 2024.
- The figures for the quarter ended March 31, 2026 are the balancing figures between audited figures in respect of full financial year and the published year to date figures up to December 31, 2025.

Registered Office: Office No. 01-1001, WeWork, Blue One Square, Udyog Vihar Phase 4 Rd, Gurugram, Haryana 122016

Place : Bengaluru
Date : May 20, 2026

For and on behalf of the Board of Directors

Aditya Virwani
Managing Director

Tapir Constructions Limited

(CIN: U70200DL2014PLC267441)

EXTRACT OF AUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

(₹ in Millions)

Sl. No.	Particulars	Quarter ended 31 March 2026 (Refer note 3)	Corresponding quarter ended 31 March 2025 (Refer note 3)	Current year ended 31 March 2026 (Audited)	Previous year ended 31 March 2025 (Audited)
1	Total Income from Operations	131.18	3.15	4,765.24	3.49
2	Net (Loss) / Profit for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	(133.98)	(101.15)	(115.22)	(182.73)
3	Net (Loss) / Profit for the period before Tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary Items)	(132.64)	(101.15)	(115.86)	(182.73)
4	Net (Loss) / Profit for the period after Tax, (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	(132.68)	(101.15)	(115.90)	(182.73)
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising (Loss) / Profit for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	(133.07)	(97.55)	(123.54)	(179.13)
6	Paid up Equity Share Capital	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
7	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)	(2,351.94)	(2,268.54)	(2,351.94)	(2,268.54)
8	Securities Premium Account	-	-	-	-
9	Net Worth	(2,351.44)	(2,268.04)	(2,351.44)	(2,268.04)
10	Paid up Debt Capital / Outstanding Debt	4,545.31	4,438.81	4,545.51	4,438.81
11	Outstanding redemption preference share	-	-	-	-
12	Debt Equity Ratio*	-	-	-	-
13	Earnings per Share (EPS) (Face value Per Share ₹ 10 each)				
	- Basic (Amount in ₹)	(2,652.13)	(2,022.74)	(2,317.25)	(3,654.38)
	- Diluted (Amount in ₹)	(2,652.13)	(2,022.74)	(2,317.25)	(3,654.38)
14	Capital Redemption Reserve	-	-	-	-
15	Debt Service Coverage Ratio**	-	-	-	-
16	Interest Service Coverage Ratio	(1.13)	(1.09)	(0.29)	(0.66)
17	Current ratio (In times)	0.98	1.02	0.98	1.02
18	Total debts to total assets	1.43	0.73	1.43	0.73
19	Long term debt to working capital (In times)#	-	19.38	-	19.38
20	Bad debt to account receivable ratio (In %)	-	-	-	-
21	Current liability ratio (In times)	0.57	0.71	0.57	0.71
22	Debtor turnover ratio (In times)	297.20	-	10,795.89	-
23	Inventory turnover ratio (In times)	0.04	-	1.05	-
24	Operating margin (In %)	-	57.56	4.37	11.31
25	Net profit margin (In %)	(96.48)	(2,529.51)	(2.42)	(783.67)

* Ratio can not be calculated due to negative average shareholders funds.
** Ratio can not be calculated due to negative earning available for debt service.
Ratio can not be calculated due to negative working capital.

Notes:

- The above results have been reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors ("the Board") at its meeting held on 20 May 2026.
- The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly / Annual Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 52(8), read with 52(4) of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly / Annual Financial Results are available on the Company's website (<https://embassyindia.com>) and on the website of BSE (<https://www.bseindia.com>) and NSE (<https://www.nseindia.com>).
- Figures for the quarter ended 31 March 2026 and corresponding quarter ended 31 March 2025 represent the balancing figures between the audited figures for the full financial year and published reviewed year to date figures upto third quarter of the financial year.

Registered Office: Office No. 202, 2nd Floor, A-18, Rama House, Middle Circle, Connaught Place, New Delhi- 110 001.

Place : New Delhi
Date : 20 May 2026

For and on behalf of the Board of Directors

Abhishek Rajnath Surve
Whole-time director

Multilateral military exercise Pragati 2026 begins in Meghalaya

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

Multilateral military exercise PRAGATI 2026 commenced today at Umroi Military Station, Meghalaya, with the participation of 12 friendly nations, namely Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.

The contingents were accorded a warm and traditional welcome by the Indian Army on their arrival, reflecting India's rich cultural heritage and hospitality.

PRAGATI, which stands for Partnership of Regional Armies for Growth and Transformation in the Indian Ocean Region, is being conducted in the spirit of equality, friendship and mutual respect.

The exercise provides a common platform for participating armies to engage in professional exchange, learn from one another's experiences and build closer military-to-military ties.

The opening ceremony was attended by senior military officials and dignitaries. In his address, Major General Sunil Sheoran, Additional Director General of Infantry, Indian Army, welcomed all contingents and highlighted the importance of collective engagement in addressing contemporary security challenges.

He encouraged all partici-



pants to engage with openness, mutual respect and a willingness to learn from one another's experiences, while highlighting that the strengths and perspectives brought by each nation would contribute meaningfully towards achieving the collective objectives of the exercise.

The objectives of the exercise include enabling seamless coordination among participating nations in joint operations and identifying common areas of cooperation; sharing expertise and establishing an institutionalised mechanism for exchange of best practices evolved through individual

experiences; strengthening defence ties and camaraderie through joint training and cultural exchange; and evolving common concepts for management and sharing of intelligence in a multinational environment.

The two-week exercise will focus on counter-terrorism operations in semi-mountainous and jungle terrain.

The training programme will include joint planning exercises, tactical-level drills and coordinated operations designed to improve adaptability, endurance and tactical proficiency of participating troops.

Emphasis will be laid on physical fitness, discipline and coordination while operating in challenging conditions.

As part of the exercise, Indian technology and defence companies will showcase indigenous equipment and innovations under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative, providing a platform for knowledge exchange and highlighting India's growing capabilities in defence production, innovation and self-reliance.

Exercise PRAGATI 2026 is expected to further strengthen military-to-military cooperation, deepen professional bonds and contribute towards a shared approach to common security challenges among regional partners.

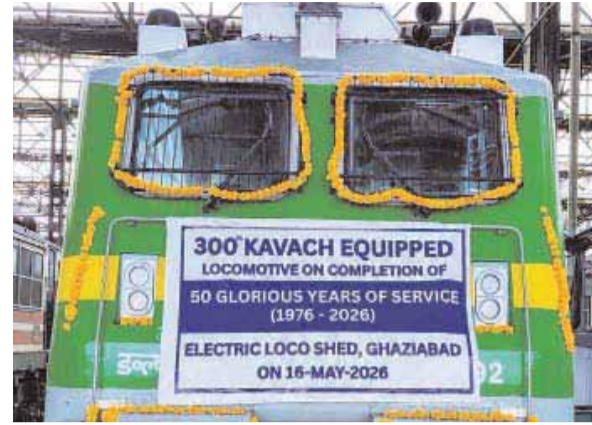
Delhi Division sets record with installation of Kavach system on 300 locomotives

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Ghaziabad

In a major achievement for railway safety and modernization, the Delhi Division of Northern Railway has successfully completed the installation of the indigenous Kavach safety system on 300 locomotives at the Electric Loco Shed, Ghaziabad.

The milestone was achieved on May 16, 2026, with the successful completion of the 300th Kavach installation, marking a new record in the field of safety system implementation across Indian Railways.

Kavach, India's indigenously developed automatic train protection system, has emerged as a key component in enhancing railway safety.



The Electric Loco Shed, Ghaziabad has earned recognition for completing the 100th, 200th, and 300th Kavach installations at the fastest pace in Indian Railways.

The shed had earlier created another record on September 10, 2024, by completing the Kavach installation on locomotive number 30623/WAP-7 within a single day — the fastest such instal-

lation recorded in Indian Railways.

Apart from achieving installation milestones, the Ghaziabad shed has also contributed significantly to technical training and knowledge sharing.

It organized seven one-day training programmes on Kavach installation procedures for officers and supervisors from different railway zones and sheds.

According to railway officials, a total of 309 officers and supervisors from 71 loco sheds across Indian Railways participated in these sessions. The training programmes focused on installation techniques, operational procedures, and technical best practices related to the Kavach system.

Govt strengthens legal metrology verification infra: Joshi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi on Wednesday said the Government has strengthened India's legal metrology verification infrastructure and emphasised the importance of accurate measurement.

According to an official statement, the Department of Consumer Affairs on Wednesday commemorated World Metrology Day 2026, marking the 151st anniversary of the historic

Metre Convention signed in Paris on May 20, 1875.

The theme of this year's World Metrology Day is "Metrology: Building Trust in Policy Making". Joshi, in his virtual address, highlighted the vital role of metrology in ensuring fairness, consumer protection, scientific reliability and transparent governance.

Referring to this year's theme, the minister emphasised that "accurate and reliable measurements form the backbone of effective public policy, trade, health-



care, environmental protection and industrial growth". Joshi informed that the department has strengthened India's legal metrology

verification infrastructure by issuing 40 Government Approved Test Centre (GATC) certificates to eligible private entities. He highlighted several key reforms undertaken by the department.

These include the decriminalisation of minor offences under the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2026, introduction of improvement notices for certain minor violations, and transition from a licensing regime to a registration-based system for improving ease of doing business.

PROSPECT

Ganga Acrowools Limited unveils Hand-Knitting Yarn Collection 2026

Ganga Acrowools Limited (GAL) hosted its 'Premium Hand Knitting Yarns Collection 2026' at Le Méridien, New Delhi, in collaboration with Heartbeats Premium Yarns. The event brought together distributors, retailers, designers, self-help groups (SHGs), artisan communities and boutique entrepreneurs to celebrate India's growing premium handmade craft economy.

Speaking at the event, Amit Thapar, President, Ganga Acrowools Limited, said that knitting and crochet in India are evolving beyond winter wear into categories such as home décor, gifting, boutique fashion and designer collaborations.

He added that Gen Z consumers, social media trends and the rise of slow fashion are driving crochet and knitting as new-age avenues for entrepreneurship and self-employment. The event also highlighted GAL's community-focused initiatives through partnerships with NGOs and SHGs aimed at training and empowering women artisans.

CM Himanta reviews industrial projects in Morigaon, visits Zubeen Khetra memorial site

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dispur

Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday visited multiple project sites in Assam's Morigaon district to review the progress of key industrial and infrastructure initiatives aimed at transforming the state into a major industrial hub.

During the visit, the Chief Minister inspected the proposed Mega Industrial Park project spread across 1,067 bighas of land in the Sipiri-Duraladubi revenue villages under the Jagiroad constituency. The project is being developed as part of the state Government's broader push to strengthen industrial growth and generate employment opportunities in Assam.

Dr. Sarma also visited Ahatguri in Morigaon district and reviewed more than 331 bighas of reserved



CM Himanta Biswa Sarma paying his tributes to Assam's eternal hearth and reviewed the progress of the development work underway at Zubeen Khetra near Guwahati. PIONEER PHOTO

Government land at Borbori, which has been earmarked for establishing various Government institutions and related infrastructure facilities.

The Chief Minister interacted with local residents during the

inspection and directed officials to ensure timely implementation of the proposed projects. Local MLA Pijush Hazarika, Assam Chief Secretary Ravi Kota and senior officials from concerned departments

accompanied him during the visit.

A major highlight of the tour was Dr. Sarma's inspection of the proposed Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test project site at Jagiroad. The semiconductor facility is expected to play a significant role in boosting Assam's economy and creating large-scale employment opportunities in the region.

Senior company officials, including Project Director Ashish Mishra, briefed the Chief Minister on the status of the project. Dr Sarma instructed officials to ensure fast and efficient execution of construction activities to keep the project on schedule.

Later in the day, the Chief Minister visited Zubeen Khetra at Komarkuchi in Sonapur, Kamrup Metropolitan district, where he paid tribute to late Assamese musician Zubeen Garg by lighting a cer-

emonial lamp at the memorial site. He reviewed the progress of the memorial construction work and inspected the surrounding areas. The Assam Government plans to develop Zubeen Khetra into a culturally significant memorial and inspirational centre for future generations.

Officials informed the Chief Minister that construction of the boundary wall has already begun at an estimated cost of around Rs 3 crore as part of the project's first phase. Measures to prevent soil erosion in the surrounding areas have also been initiated. Dr Sarma directed officials to expedite the next phase of the project.

During his visit to Morigaon district, the Chief Minister also offered prayers at the historic Gobha Deoraja Charibhai Deosal Shiva Temple for the welfare, peace and prosperity of the people of Assam.

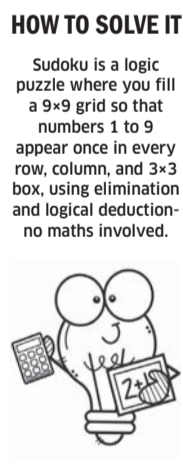
DAILY SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

HOW TO SOLVE IT

Sudoku is a logic puzzle where you fill a 9x9 grid so that numbers 1 to 9 appear once in every row, column, and 3x3 box, using elimination and logical deduction—no maths involved.

	7	4						1
3		8		1				6
		1	5					
7			3				2	5
			4		5			
	2	5			9			1
				4	9			
	3			9		5		7
		9				3	2	



SOLUTION (20.5.26)

4	5	7	1	2	6	3	9	8
9	8	6	4	7	3	5	1	2
3	2	1	9	8	5	6	4	7
8	1	2	3	9	4	7	6	5
5	3	4	8	6	7	1	2	9
7	6	9	5	1	2	4	8	3
1	4	8	7	5	9	2	3	6
6	7	3	2	4	8	9	5	1
2	9	5	6	3	1	8	7	4

DOUBLE CROSSWORD THURSDAY | MAY 21, 2026

ACROSS

3 Might it make a poker player affluent? (5)

8 No longer hired as a woodman (5)

10 Informal (and informative?) entertainment (5)

11 Good when used for cooking (3)

12 Refers to punishment that finishes men in the ring (5)

13 Garments for show? (7)

15 Curse that combination bottle opener and salt shaker? (5)

18 Unit of nuclear energy? (3)

19 If duller, a gloss finish is poorer (6)

21 Hairy, but not necessarily dangerous (7)

22 We have a right to deteriorate (4)

DOWN

1 Produce by spade-work? (3,2)

2 Be hopeless at naming twins (7)

4 Lives heartlessly by deception (4)

5 Steady but, being old, about to start badly (6)

6 A greeting for one you hadn't expected? (7)

7 Friendly with Glenn? (5)

9 Somewhat up-market animal? (3)

12 Did this star show inquisitiveness about stewed eels? (7)

14 To growl at an egghead is the wrong thing to do (3)

16 Terrible flaw in staggering round the bend (5)

ACROSS

19 Ramps

20 Totter

22 Bit-e

24 Spa

25 Anglers

26 Beefy

27 Friar

28 Stave (vesta)

29 Wipe-out

30 Aside

31 Bowls

DOWN

2 Asle-eP

3 Amazon

4 Dard (rev)

5 O-gle-t

6 De-vice

7 A-tom

8 Ricket

12 Debar

13 Roots

14 Vesta

15 Mar-i-e

16 Pokes

18 Sp-in-y

19 R-ever-ile

21 Operas

22 Blotto

23 Travel

25 After(-s)

26 Ba-Wed

28 Sub (rev)

SOLUTION (20.5.26)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44

Assam Rifles, Indian Army conduct joint flood relief training in Agartala, Tripura

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Agartala

The Assam Rifles and the Indian Army conducted a two-day joint flood relief training exercise in Tripura to strengthen disaster response preparedness and improve coordination during flood emergencies in the state.

The exercise was organised with the objective of ensuring smooth and effective flood relief operations during natural disasters.

It focused on enhancing synergy, operational coordination, readiness and response capabilities between the two forces.

Troops from both Assam Rifles and the Indian Army jointly participated in a series



of disaster management drills, equipment and operational procedures to ensure uniformity in execution and better coordination during real-time emergency situations.

Officials said the exercise significantly improved inter-

operability between the two security forces and strengthened their ability to undertake coordinated disaster relief operations whenever required.

The joint training exercise also reaffirmed the commitment of the security forces to providing timely assistance to civil authorities and ensuring the safety and well-being of people during natural calamities and other emergencies.

Tripura and several other northeastern states frequently face flood-related challenges during the monsoon season, making coordinated disaster preparedness exercises crucial for effective emergency response.

Mystery, silence and shadows: *The Midnight Therapist* 1st look goes viral

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

The first look poster of the upcoming short film *The Midnight Therapist* has sparked massive curiosity online, with cinephiles and advertising enthusiasts alike intrigued by its haunting visual language and mysterious premise. Produced by ADCSII Media and EDWORLD INC, the film stars Titus Upputuru and Keshav Bharadwaj in the lead roles and is directed by Titus Upputuru himself.

The poster, which dropped across social media platforms this week, has quickly become the subject of intense discussion for its unsettling atmosphere and emotionally charged

imagery. What has especially caught everyone's attention is Titus Upputuru appearing in the role of a farmer—a striking departure from the polished creative world he is usually associated with.

Dressed in earthy tones with a deeply weathered look, Titus appears almost unrecognizable, hinting at a layered and emotionally intense character. Equally intriguing is the shadowy silhouette of another man standing in the darkness behind him, adding to the mystery surrounding the film's narrative.

The poster carries the chilling tagline: "The night listens to everything." The line has already begun circulating widely online, with audiences speculating whether the film

is a psychological thriller, an emotional drama, or something far more haunting.

Known primarily as one of advertising's most celebrated creative minds, Titus Upputuru has spent years redefining storytelling in Indian advertising through emotionally immersive narratives and award-winning campaigns.

With acclaimed works such as *Nip in the Bud*, *Parcel*, *Long Distance Love*, *Tumhaari Amma* and *Baggage*, Titus built a reputation for blending cinema and advertising with remarkable emotional depth.

However, *The Midnight Therapist* seems to mark a significant new chapter in his artistic journey. Industry observers believe the film-

maker is now pursuing cinema with full passion and intensity, moving beyond branded storytelling into darker, more layered cinematic territory.

The first look poster suggests a film rooted in emotional conflict, mystery, and psychological tension. While the makers have remained tight-lipped about the story, the rural setting, the farmer's appearance, and the ominous silhouette have already triggered widespread theories online.

The pairing of Titus Upputuru and Keshav Bharadwaj has also generated excitement, with audiences eager to witness the chemistry between the two actors in what appears to be a deeply atmospheric narrative.

FROM THE WORLD

PERU
27 injured in earthquake

A 5.8 magnitude earthquake struck the Pacific region of southern Peru late Tuesday, injuring 27 people and damaging buildings, officials said. No deaths were reported. The US Geological Survey said the quake's epicentre was 20 km east-southeast of the town of Pampa de Tate, in the Ica region, at a depth of 56.5 km. Peruvian Defence Minister Amadeo Flores visited the city of and visited some damaged buildings, including San Luis Gonzaga University. Earthquakes are common in Peru, as the country lies on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines encircling the Pacific Basin. Local media reported that many people evacuated buildings, shopping centres, and homes following the quake, which was felt as far away from Lima, located 400 kms from Ica.

BANGLADESH
UNICEF flags measles risk

As the death toll due to measles touched 500, UNICEF on Wednesday claimed it had warned the interim Government of Muhammad Yunus at least "10 times" about the impending outbreak following procedural delays in vaccine procurement. The comments by UNICEF representative in Dhaka Rana Flowers came on a day Government data showed that there were 481 deaths since March due to measles or its symptoms as of date even as the viral disease claimed six children in the past 24 hours while 1,270 others were diagnosed afresh with symptoms. "We raised concerns over the vaccine shortage in at least 10 meetings with the Government since 2024, alongside sending five to six formal letters," UNICEF's Flowers told a press conference on the measles issue. "From 2024, we were warning the Government that the shortage of vaccines could lead to an outbreak," she said.

Risk of Ebola spread high regionally but low globally: WHO

JUSTIN KABUMBA/
MONIKA PRONCZUK
Bunia

The World Health Organisation said on Wednesday the risk of spread of the Ebola virus in Congo and Uganda is high at national and regional levels, but low at the global level.

The risk assessment came as the leader of the WHO team in Congo said the outbreak, which has led to over 130 suspected deaths, could last at least another two months as aid efforts intensify to stem the spread.

WHO has declared the Ebola outbreak a public health emergency of international concern, requiring a coordinated response.

On Tuesday, it expressed concern over the "scale and



speed" of the outbreak.

Worried residents in eastern Congo have reported rising prices for face masks and disinfectants following the outbreak of the rare type

of Ebola, known as the Bundibugyo virus.

It spread undetected for weeks following the first known death, while authorities tested for another, more

common Ebola virus, which came up negative, health experts and aid workers said.

There are no approved medicines or vaccines for the Bundibugyo virus. So far, 51 cases have been confirmed in Congo's northern provinces of Ituri and North Kivu, as well as two in Uganda, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Wednesday. Beyond that, there are 139 suspected deaths and almost 600 suspected cases, he said.

"We know that the scale of the epidemic is much larger," he said. "We expect those numbers to keep increasing." Congo was expecting shipments from the United States and Britain of an experimental vaccine for different types of Ebola, developed by

researchers at Oxford, Jean-Jacques Muyembe, a virologist at the National Institute of Biomedical Research, said reporters.

"We will administer the vaccine and see who develops the disease," he said. Eastern Congo suffers an immense lack of resources. In Bunia, the site of the first known death, schools and churches remained open on Wednesday, and some residents were wearing masks in the street.

Residents said that masks have become harder to find and that some disinfectants previously sold for 2,500 Congolese francs (about \$1) now cost up to 10,000 francs (\$4.4). "It's truly sad and painful because we've already been through a security crisis, and now Ebola is

here too," said Justin Ndsi, a resident of Bunia. "We have to protect ourselves to avoid this epidemic." Trish Newport, emergency programme manager at aid group Doctors Without Borders, posted on social media that her team in Bunia identified suspected cases over the weekend at the Salama hospital, which has no isolation ward.

They unsuccessfully tried to place them at another health facility in Bunia.

"The team called around to other health facilities to see if they had isolations," she said. "Every health facility they called said, 'We're full of suspect cases. We don't have any space.' This gives you a vision of how crazy it is right now." In Mongbwalu, the town at the epicentre of

the current outbreak, the border with Uganda remains open, and gold mining activities continue, Cherubin Kuku Ndilawa, a local civil society leader said. "There's no panic. People continue with their normal lives, but they're also starting to spread the word," said Ndilawa, adding that controlling the outbreak has been hindered by a lack of public handwashing stations.

Dr Didier Pay, a former director of the Mongbwalu General Hospital, said his clinic was treating around 30 Ebola patients and that a student from the local medical technology institute died on Wednesday morning. "The deployment is already underway for the construction of a treatment center," he said. (AP)

US test-fires mobile rocket system near Mount Fuji in rapid shoot-and-scoot drill

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Gotemba

US Marines test fired a dozen rockets from a mobile launcher on Wednesday at a range in the foothills of Japan's iconic Mount Fuji, in an exercise to keep sharp on weapon that is a growingly important component of the American military's arsenal.

The High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) is a launcher mounted on the back of a military truck that can be rapidly brought out from concealment, fire its rockets, then move quickly to a new location to avoid counter-battery fire.

The so-called "shoot and scoot" tactics are becoming increasingly important with the proliferation of



drones over the battlefield, which make static positions more vulnerable. The system has been used by US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, and most recently US Central Command said it was employed in the opening attack on Iran where it

launched a new precision-guided rocket that could reach targets hundreds of miles away.

That is particularly meaningful in the Pacific, where the US hopes to deter a possible Chinese invasion of the island of Taiwan, which China claims as its own and has not ruled out taking by force.

HIMARS systems with the latest missiles could easily reach targets in the Taiwan Strait between Taiwan and mainland China, if deployed on Japanese or other islands nearby.

The HIMARS is generally equipped with shorter-range rockets, however, and the exercise at the US military's Camp Fuji, about a two-hour drive from Tokyo, involved only dummy projectiles.

Indian aviation experts to attend LCC meet in China

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Beijing

Indian aviation experts will attend the Low Cost Air Carriers Summit (LCC) to be held in Shanghai on May 21-22. Indian Consulate General in Shanghai Pratik Mathur met with aviation experts Kamal Hingorani, Chief Customer Officer of Spicejet, and Prof Sandeep Bahl, Lead Advisor for Asia Aviation, and discussed recent developments in the aviation sector across Asia.

They also discussed opportunities for regional cooperation and India's expanding role in global civil aviation, a press release from the Consulate said. The Summit



is expected to bring together aviation industry leaders, airline executives, policymakers, airport operators, aircraft manufacturers, leasing firms, logistics providers, and experts from across the Asia-Pacific region to deliberate on emerging trends and opportunities in the low-cost aviation ecosystem.

Tehran weapons display sends message as war looms

JON GAMBRELL ■ Dubai

Iranian Revolutionary Guard members now regularly show the public in Tehran how to handle Kalashnikov-style assault rifles. Parades through the capital feature military vehicles mounted with belt-fed Soviet-era machine guns.

And at one mass wedding, a ballistic missile, like the one that rained down cluster munitions on Israel, adorned the stage. Weapons are now regularly brandished in Tehran, an increasing show of defiance as US President Donald Trump threatens he could restart the war with Iran should negotiations break down and the Islamic Republic refuses to release its grip on the Strait of Hormuz.



A member of the Revolutionary Guard's volunteer Basij force shows how to handle a Kalashnikov-style assault rifle. AP

The weapons displays reflect the genuine threat Iran faces: Trump has suggested American forces could seize Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium by force and previously said that he sent arms to Kurdish fighters to pass onto anti-Government protesters. But

they also offer reassurance and motivation to hard-liners and provide rare entertainment at a time of great uncertainty, when Iranians are facing mass layoffs, business closures and spiralling prices for food, medicine and other goods. Suggesting more hard-liners will be

armed could also help suppress any new demonstrations against Iran's theocracy, which violently put down nationwide protests in January in a crackdown that activists say killed over 7,000 people and saw tens of thousands detained.

"This is necessary for all our people to get trained because we are in a war situation these days," said Ali Mofidi, a 47-year-old Tehran resident at a weapons training Tuesday night.

"If necessary, everyone should be available and know how to use a gun." For months, state television and government-sponsored text messages have bombarded the public with calls to join the "Janfada," or the "ones who sacrifice their lives". At

one point, hard-liners encouraged families with boys as young as 12 to send them to the Revolutionary Guard to work checkpoints - which Amnesty International denounced as a war crime.

Government officials say more than 30 million people in Iran - home to a population of some 90 million - have volunteered via an online form or at public gatherings to lay down their lives for Iran's theocracy.

There is no way to confirm that figure and there's been no sign of a mass mobilisation yet, like the one that Ukraine underwent in the days before Russia's full-scale 2022 invasion, in which officials handed out rifles and people banded together to make gasoline bombs. (AP)

New UK education tie-up to benefit youth in India with jobs, training

ADITI KHANNA ■ London

Cambridge University Press and Assessment and an education charity have signed an agreement at the Education World Forum in London that will offer a new qualification for young people in India and around the world.

The G12++ qualification to be offered by Cambridge and Alsama Project is designed to tackle the education crisis faced by displaced youth worldwide by providing them with a recognised pathway to further education, training and skilled employment. A call out has also been launched



supporting displaced people who come to the UK," said Professor Bhaskar Vira, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Environmental Sustainability at the University of Cambridge. "Now, working with Alsama Project, we will be able to support them in India and across the world, while demonstrating that high-quality assessment for displaced and marginalised learners is both achievable and replicable.

"As such, the G12++ is a unique, transformative opportunity for refugee youth, universities and the global education community alike," he said. (PTI)

for universities, employers and policymakers to help scale the offer globally to benefit youth who may be excluded from university, training and employment.

"As a University of Sanctuary, the University of Cambridge is committed to

Detained flotilla activists deserve long jail terms, says Israel minister

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Jerusalem

Detained activists from a flotilla of boats that tried to get past Israel's blockade of Gaza arrived in the port city of Ashdod aboard Israeli naval ships on Wednesday, as National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir told them that they should remain in prison for a "long, long time."

Video released by Ben-Gvir showed the minister walking among some of the approximately 430 detained activists flanked by police and soldiers as he waved a large Israeli flag and told them "Welcome to Israel, we are the landlords." One



handcuffed activist shown in the video shouting "Free Palestine" as Ben-Gvir was walking past was immediately pushed to the ground by security personnel.

The video showed activists with their hands tied behind their back kneeling with their heads touching the floor inside what appears to be a makeshift detention area at Ashdod

port and on the deck of a ship. In a second video, Ben-Gvir says the activists "came here all full of pride like big heroes. Look at them now," while appealing to Israeli PM Netanyahu to grant him permission to imprison them.

"I say to Prime Minister Netanyahu, give them to me for a long, long time, give them to us for the terrorist prisons, that's what it should look like," Ben-Gvir said.

An Israel-based legal advocacy group, the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, or Adalah, accused Israeli authorities of "employing a criminal policy of abuse and humiliation against activists."

Pakistani Minister visits Tehran amid US talks

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
Islamabad

Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi travelled to Tehran on Wednesday for the second time within a week for meetings with senior Iranian officials, amid Islamabad's efforts aimed at reviving the stalled Iran-US peace talks to end the war in West Asia.

Naqvi has departed for Tehran to discuss the US-Iran peace talks with Iranian leaders, Geo News reported, citing sources.

"His departure comes as Islamabad continues to lead mediation efforts between Washington and Tehran," it reported. Iranian official media has also reported the visit of Naqvi to Tehran.

"Pakistan Interior Minister arrives in capital Tehran amid Islamabad efforts to mediate talks between Iran, US," Iran's state-run Press TV said in a post on social media.

Separately, Iran's state-run IRNA news agency also reported, citing informed diplomatic sources in Islamabad, that Naqvi departed for Tehran to hold talks with officials of Iran. There was no reaction from the Pakistan side, which often maintains silence on diplomatic outreach to mediate between the US and Iran.

Naqvi's reported visit is the second by him to Iran in less than a week and comes amidst mixed signals from Tehran and Washington. During his last visit, Naqvi met with Iranian President



Masoud Pezeshkian, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni over the weekend.

The latest visit came as Trump on Tuesday offered a deadline of several days for resuming strikes if a deal is not agreed. He had said a day earlier that Gulf Arab leaders asked him to hold off on an attack at the 11th hour.

On the other hand, Iranian Foreign Minister Araghchi warned that a "return to war will feature many more surprises". Separately, the Revolutionary Guards issued a warning that any further attack on Iran will "lead to a conflict that extends far beyond the borders of West Asia." Meanwhile, US Vice President JD Vance has talked about progress in talks with Iran. "We're in a pretty good spot here," Vance told a White House press briefing.

Naqvi's visit to Tehran is significant, given his closeness to Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir. Naqvi was part of a delegation led by Munir that visited Tehran last month when Iran-US negotiations were a major focus of the trip. (PTI)

Vilnius residents told to shelter after drone alarm stirs NATO fear

LIUDAS DAPKUS ■ Vilnius

Residents of Vilnius were told to take shelter and Lithuania's president and prime minister were taken to safe locations on Wednesday because of an alarm over drone activity near the border with Belarus, underlining jitters on NATO's eastern flank over incursions related to Russia's war with Ukraine.

An emergency announcement from the military told people in the Vilnius region to "immediately head to a shelter or a safe place."

The alert, which lasted for about an hour, also led to the closure of the airspace over



Vilnius Airport. President Gitanas Nausėda and Prime Minister Inga Ruginienė were taken to shelters, and there was also an evacuation order at Lithuania's parliament, the Seimas, the BNS news

agency reported. It was the first major alert that sent residents and political leaders in a European Union and NATO capital rushing to shelters since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February

2022. "Based on the parameters we saw, it's most likely either a combat drone or a drone designed to deceive systems and lure targets," Vilmantas Vitkauskas, head of Lithuania's National Crisis Management Centre, said in a news briefing. "The electronic countermeasures here can't tell us whether an explosive device detonated or not. It's very, very difficult."

Based on the altitude and speed, it was probably a drone, he said, "though we can't say at this stage exactly what kind of drone it was or where it was launched from." Lithuania borders Russia-allied Belarus to the east and Russia's Kaliningrad

exclave to the west. Wednesday's alert came after the military said it detected drone activity in Belarus, but no drones were sighted over Lithuania.

On Wednesday, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte commended the alliance's reaction to several drone incidents in recent days, saying that they had been met with "a calm, decisive and proportionate response." Rutte said: "This is exactly what we planned and prepared for," and he blamed Russia's war on Ukraine for the problem.

In recent months, Ukrainian drones aimed at Russia have crossed or come

down in NATO territory on numerous occasions. Western officials have blamed what they say is likely Russian electronic jamming of the drones.

Russia, meanwhile, has renewed threats that it would retaliate if Ukrainian drones are launched from Baltic countries or if those countries are complicit in their use against Russia.

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Kestutis Budrys wrote on social media that "Russia is deliberately redirecting Ukrainian drones into Baltic airspace while waging smear campaigns" against Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. (AP)

BRIEFLY

Fakhar, Saim not available for ODIs against Australia



Pakistan openers Fakhar Zaman and Saim Ayub will not be available for the upcoming three-match ODI series against Australia starting May 30 due to injuries.

The Pakistan Cricket Board on Wednesday said both the players are having advised rehabilitation programmes under the supervision of a PCB medical panel. The first ODI against Australia will be held in Rawalpindi, followed by games in Lahore on June 2 and 4.

The board didn't elaborate on the nature of their injuries or the expected recovery time. However, a source said they had knee and ankle issues. The experienced Fakhar has, in the past, missed matches because of his chronic knee problem while Saim is said to have again injured his ankle during the Pakistan Super League. Saim had fractured his right ankle while fielding during the second Test against South Africa in January last year and made a comeback to the national side after several months.

He struggled for form in the PSL and was not a part of the ODI squad that played in Bangladesh after the T20 World Cup. (PTI)

Southampton expelled from Championship playoffs



Southampton was expelled from the Championship playoffs on Tuesday after admitting to repeatedly spying on opponents. The English Football League reinstated Middlesbrough to play in the Wembley final – the richest game in soccer – against Hull City on Saturday. The winner gets promoted to the Premier League.

Southampton was charged earlier this month for a breach of league regulations, accused of the unauthorized filming of Middlesbrough's practice sessions ahead of their semifinal. It went on to win the two-legged tie to go within one game of promotion to the top flight.

The league said the southcoast club had subsequently admitted further breaches this season concerning games against Oxford United and Ipswich. It was also deducted four points for next season. (AP)

Bangladesh beats Pakistan to complete 2-0 test series sweep



ASSOCIATED PRESS
Sylhet (Bangladesh)

Taijul Islam finished with six wickets as Bangladesh dismissed Pakistan for 358 on Wednesday for a 78-run win in the second cricket Test and a 2-0 sweep of the series.

The left-arm spinner took two of the three wickets to fall on Day 5 and returned 6-120 from 34.2 overs, clinching the series after helping reduce the tourists to 316-7 on Day 4.

Pakistan added 42 runs on the fifth morning before losing three wickets without addition to the total in 13 deliveries as Bangladesh rushed to victory.

"Our bowlers did a great job in hot conditions, on a flat wicket," Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto said.

"In the batting sometimes (in the past) we lost too many wickets, but nowadays we have brilliant partnerships. Our tailenders also contribute a lot. Those are

the things we wanted to improve and I hope we continue."

Bangladesh won the first Test by 104 runs.

The victory marked Bangladesh's second successive series sweep against Pakistan, having previously completed a 2-0 victory in 2024. The end of Mohammad Rizwan's defiant, 166-ball innings signaled the end of Pakistan's hopes of chasing down an improbable victory target of 437.

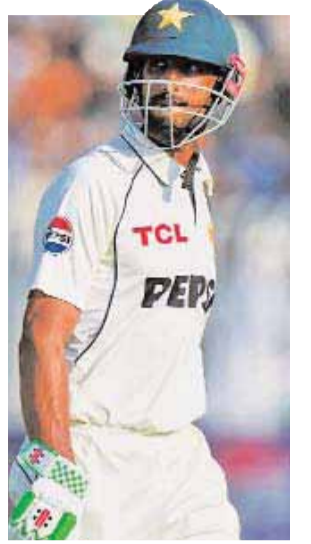
Rizwan (94) struck Nahid Rana (2-71) for consecutive boundaries in the third over of the day to make Pakistan's intention clear. Sajid Khan also scored freely to maintain pressure on the bowlers from the home team.

But Taijul's breakthrough, dismissing Sajid for 28, ended a 54-run partnership, marked his 18th five-wicket haul in test matches and hastened the result.

In the next over, Rizwan cut a Shoriful Islam delivery straight to gully.

It is for the PCB to decide on my captaincy: Masood

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Karachi



Disappointed Pakistan captain Shan Masood on Wednesday said the country's cricket board will take a call on his leadership role in the red ball format after Bangladesh handed them a 0-2 rout in the just-concluded Test series.

Bangladesh defeated Pakistan by 78 runs in the second Test at Sylhet on Wednesday, as the latter is languishing at eighth in the nine-team World Test Championship table.

When reminded that under his captaincy Pakistan have lost 12 out of 16 Tests, Masood said his conscience was clear and had tried his best to get good results for Pakistan.

"I don't want to criticise or praise anyone. Why we are not doing well in Test cricket – I will sit down with the board and discuss this. As far as the captaincy is concerned it is for the board to decide," Masood said in the post-match press conference.

Masood said he didn't think much about individual performances unless the team wins.

"I can understand the emotions of the people with the result and I can only offer my sincere apologies for the loss

but we can't look at things emotionally and we have to find a way to do well in test matches," he added.

The 36-year-old, who has been Test captain since December 2023, said he would like to appreciate the people who had prepared the pitches for the two Tests in Bangladesh.

"The pitches were very good Test tracks. They were good for batting and had something in them for the spinners and also pace and movement. They were very good Test pitches," he said.

R Praggnanandhaa faces Romania's Bogdan-Daniel



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Bucharest (Romania)

Second-placed Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa will take on Romania's Deac Bogdan-Daniel in the sixth round of the Super Chess Classic, a part of the Grand Chess Tour, seeking to break his run of draws, here.

After five rounds, Germany's Vincent Keymer (3.5 points) is in sole lead by half a point over a chasing pack that includes Dutch duo of Anish Giri and Jorden van Foreest, top seeded American

Fabiano Caruana and Praggnanandhaa.

Caruana joined the shared second spot by defeating Alireza Firouzja of France in his fourth round game that was pushed back to the rest day as the latter suffered an ankle injury.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France and Wesley share the sixth spot on 2.5 points each while World Championship challenger Javokhir Sindarov of Uzbekistan are right behind on two points. Romanian Bogdan-Daniel is in ninth spot on 1.5 points, half point ahead of Firouzja.

Arsenal wins first Premier League title in 22 years

JAMES ROBSONAP London

Arsenal's decades-long wait is over. Mikel Arteta's team was crowned Premier League champion for the first time since 2004 on Tuesday after Manchester City drew 1-1 with Bournemouth.

"I told you all... it's done," Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice posted on social media with a photo of he and his teammates celebrating.

The result put an end to what might be Pep Guardiola's final title challenge with City after the decorated manager didn't dismiss reports he was set to leave the club at the end of the season.

City needed to win at Bournemouth to take it down to the final game of the campaign on Sunday. But the draw left Arsenal with an unassailable four-point lead at the top, ending its 22-year wait for the title.

Arsenal fans celebrated wildly outside its Emirates Stadium, setting off flares



and partying in the street. There were celebrations at the club's training ground, too, where the players had gathered to

watch the match. City threatened another twist in an engrossing title race when Erling Haaland scored in stoppage time to equalise after Junior Kroupi's first-half strike, but it was too late to find a winner.

Arteta's players can now stand alongside club icons Thierry Henry, Dennis

Bergkamp and Ian Wright, who previously reached the summit of English soccer. And Arsenal's current class could yet break new ground by winning the Champions League for the first time in its history later this month.

Thoughts of the May 30 final against defending champion Paris Saint-Germain can be put on the backburner for now. (AP)

The painful irony of Indian sport: Celebrating champions, abandoning athletes

AMANPREET SINGH New Delhi

For years, India has celebrated sport in flashes. An Olympic medal here, a historic world title there, a stirring anthem at a distant arena that briefly unites millions.

Then, almost as quickly, the applause fades.

The spotlight swings back to cricket, the headlines return to IPL auctions and sponsorship battles, and athletes from other disciplines quietly resume their struggle for recognition, respect and often, basic financial security.

That uneasy truth surfaced again recently: India's star badminton pair Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty spoke with visible disappointment about how the country does not celebrate badminton achievements enough

despite years of global success. Soon after, veteran chess Grandmaster Abhijit Gupta revealed that an organiser delayed his prize money payment and that even the national federation was initially slow to intervene. In January this year during the badminton nationals in Greater Noida, players were forced to sleep on floors since the fee was not paid by the federation to the hostel.

Even during the domestic wrestling event, the arrangements were not as they should be in Gonda.

These are different stories from different sports. Yet the same emotion runs through all. The feeling that Indian sport still values athletes selectively.

These are not isolated incidents. They are symptoms of a



larger sporting culture that still treats non-cricket athletes as temporary heroes instead of permanent national assets.

To be fair, India has made undeniable progress. Government-backed schemes such as the Target Olympic Podium Scheme

(TOPS), the Target Asian Games Group (TAGG) and the ACTC Funds have transformed athlete preparation.

Elite athletes today travel with physiotherapists, nutritionists, psychologists and foreign coaches, support systems that

barely existed a decade ago. But funding excellence at the top is only one layer of sporting development. The real crisis lies beneath it.

A sporting superpower is not built only by financing a handful of elite athletes.

It is built by creating an ecosystem where athletes from every discipline are identified, supported, and valued long before they stop winning medals.

India still lacks that ecosystem.

Why China and USA excel at Olympics is because there is a system that positively influences the sport and athletes. This is despite the fact that the two major sporting superpowers have conflicting attitudes, yet the ambition and purpose is no different.

In China, Ye Shiwen, the 2012

Olympic champion in 400m, was trained in swimming because her hands and feet were disproportionately large compared to her height. She was taken into the state-sponsored system and groomed. There is a system that creates champions.

China thrives on discipline, and repetition of technique: In USA, it's a well-crafted system that aims at gradual progress. From small leagues to school leagues to getting sponsorships to moving to College and then the national governing bodies of respective sports deal with the promising athlete.

In India, the obsession with just cricket is not difficult to understand. Cricket mastered television early, built icons across generations and became commercially irresistible.

The Indian Premier League (IPL) turned cricketers into year-round celebrities and converted sport into entertainment on a scale no other Indian federation could match.

Cricket became India's dominant sport because it built an ecosystem that no other sport managed to create. A middle-class Indian parent can now imagine a stable life through cricket.

Most Olympic sports still cannot offer that certainty: Other sports never received that level of sustained storytelling or investment.

A badminton player may win a Super 1000 title, a wrestler may become world champion, a chess player may beat elite grandmasters, but outside major tournaments they disappear from mainstream conversation. (PTI)

Switzerland picks Amdouni in World Cup squad

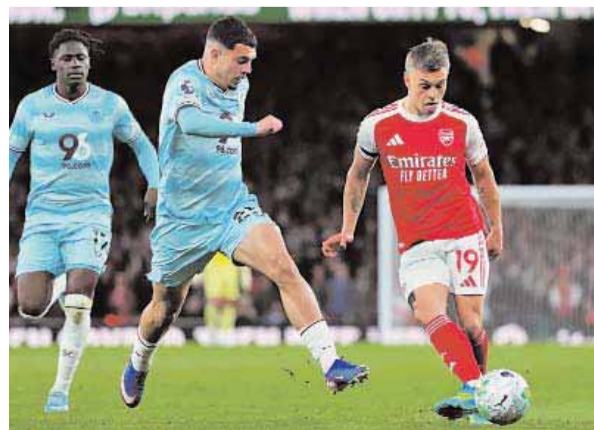
ASSOCIATED PRESS Bern

Switzerland forward Zeki Amdouni was picked in the World Cup squad Tuesday with less than one hour of playing time all season after a serious knee injury.

Amdouni's appearance at Arsenal on Monday as a late substitute for Burnley was just his third game off the bench this month since recovering from an ACL rupture last July.

A solid record of 11 goals in 27 national-team games helped Amdouni earn a place in Switzerland coach Murat Yakin's 26-man squad that should be favored in a group with co-host Canada, 2022 host Qatar and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The 26 names were



revealed over two days in a social media campaign, with fans invited to find them hidden in a series of photographs of Swiss residents at their workplaces.

Granit Xhaka will lead the

team as captain at what is the 33-year-old former Arsenal and Bayer Leverkusen midfielder's fourth straight World Cup to extend his national record of 144 games.

Switzerland's surprise picks with attacking options Christian Fassnacht and Cedric Itten, who each played just a handful of minutes for Switzerland since 2023.

Fassnacht, the 18-goal top scorer in the national league this season, and his Young Boys teammate, goalkeeper Marvin Keller, are the only players selected from clubs in Switzerland. Swiss champion Thun is not represented.

Inter Milan defender Manuel Akanji just won a Serie A title and Johan Manzambi will play for Freiburg in the Europa League final Wednesday against Aston Villa.

Manzambi made an instant impact against World Cup co-hosts in the United States last June.

Coco Gauff has a new mindset for French Open

ANDREW DAMPFAP Paris

Coco Gauff has a new approach for her second time around attempting to defend a Grand Slam title. The American's strategy heading into the French Open – the clay-court major that starts Sunday and which she won a year ago – goes something like this: Don't think about it as defending something.

"I realize that the defending means nothing in a way," Gauff said. "I don't really look at it as defending anymore."

Gauff's first Grand Slam title defense at the US Open two years ago ended in the fourth round with 19 double faults. "At the US Open I was like, I need to defend, defend." When you're playing a tournament that you didn't



win, what is it called?" Gauff said recently in Rome. "That's why I just say now it's just another tournament: I won it last year. I'll try again to do it this year. I'm not going to be able to defend every year. I'm not Rafa."

Rafa, of course, would be

Rafael Nadal, the record 14-time French Open champion.

Gauff's first Roland Garros title came with a victory over top-ranked

Aryna Sabalenka in the final a year ago.

Just like last year, Gauff was the runner-up at the Italian Open – a major clay-court warmup for Roland Garros.

"There's a lot of positives I can take from this tournament and a lot I can learn from," Gauff said after losing the final in Rome to Elina Svitolina. "This week I experienced all the ups and downs of a tournament... I've been down, had the lead, lost the lead, I've been in the final, been down match point. I think I've experienced every scenario that can prepare me for Roland Garros." (AP)

Xi calls for immediate end to all hostilities in West Asia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday called for an immediate end to hostilities in West Asia, saying the situation had reached a "critical juncture", as he held talks with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin amid escalating regional tensions.

Welcoming Putin at the Great Hall of the People, Xi said renewed fighting in the Gulf and the wider West Asia must be avoided and stressed that negotiations should continue.

An early end to the conflict will help ease disruptions to energy supplies, industrial and supply chains, and the international trade order, the Chinese president said.

The talks between Xi and Putin came days after US President Donald Trump visited China from May 14-15 and held extensive discussions with the Chinese leader on the Iran-Israel conflict, the Strait of Hormuz and bilateral trade frictions.

The meeting is being closely watched as both China and Russia are key strategic partners of Iran with close economic and military ties to Tehran and could influence its tough stand on the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, which has triggered a major global energy crisis.

Xi described the international situation as "fluid and turbulent" and, in an apparent criticism of Trump's policies, said that "unilateralism and hegemonism are resurg-



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping inspecting an honor guard during a welcoming ceremony in Beijing, China

ing". "Yet peace, development and cooperation remain the aspiration of the people and the prevailing trend of our times," he said.

Calling for closer China-Russia coordination, Xi said the two countries should work together to make the global governance system "more just and reasonable".

"As permanent members of the UN Security Council and important major countries in the world, China and Russia should take a strategic and long-term perspective, drive the development and revitalisation of our respective countries through comprehensive strategic coordination of even higher quality, and work to make the global governance system more just and reasonable," he said. According to

the Kremlin, around 40 deals are expected to be signed during Putin's visit. Putin, who is making his 25th visit to China, described Xi as his "dear friend" and highlighted the close coordination and cooperation between the two strategic partners.

"Dear Mr President, Mr Xi Jinping, dear friend! It would be appropriate to use a Chinese saying: as far as we know, people in China say, 'One day apart feels like three autumns'." Russian news agency Tass quoted Putin as saying in his opening remarks.

"We are really happy to see you, and we constantly synchronise watches — both personally and through our aides," he said.

The two leaders also agreed to further extend the China-Russia Treaty of Good-

Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation, signed 25 years ago. Xi said the treaty had laid the institutional foundation for long-term friendship and comprehensive strategic coordination between the two countries, adding that bilateral ties had achieved "leapfrog development" since then. "China supports the further extension of the treaty," Xi said, adding that Beijing will work with Moscow to uphold the spirit of the agreement and firmly advance China-Russia "back-to-back strategic coordination".

Ahead of the talks, Putin was accorded a ceremonial welcome by Xi.

The Russian leader, who arrived in Beijing on Tuesday night, was received by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. In a video message issued ahead of his visit, Putin said Russia-China ties had reached an "unprecedented level" and noted that bilateral trade had crossed USD 200 billion, with transactions increasingly being conducted in roubles and yuan.

He also said the Russia-China strategic partnership played a "major stabilising role" globally and stressed that the two countries would continue coordination through multilateral forums such as the United Nations, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and BRICS.

Putin's visit comes amid heightened tensions in West Asia following Iran's blockade of the Hormuz and the US seizure of Iranian ports. (PTI)



Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh with air force officials during his visit, in Sri Lanka

Torrential rain, floods batter China, 12 killed

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Beijing

Torrential rain and floods hit parts of China this week, killing at least 12 people and forcing tens of thousands of people to evacuate, State media reported.

State broadcaster CCTV reported on Wednesday five deaths and 11 people missing in Shimen County of Hunan province in central China after rain battered the region. A rescue operation is underway. By Tuesday evening, more than 19,000 had been relocated, Chinese official news agency Xinhua reported.

Xinhua said the county recorded a cumulative rainfall of 339 millimeters (about 13 inches) within a 24-hour period ending at 7 am on Monday.

One of its towns once received a rainfall of 240 mm (about 9 inches) within just a few hours, breaking historical records, it said. In nearby Hubei province, some streets were turned into rivers and rescuers had to deploy inflatable boats to help stranded residents.



Some houses were flooded or collapsed, Xinhua reported. Three people were killed and four others were missing as of Tuesday morning, it said. CCTV on Tuesday also reported that heavy rain and floods have caused four deaths and left five others missing in Guizhou Province in southwestern China. In some areas, houses flooded, roads were damaged, and communications were disrupted, it said. One area had to relocate more than 3,700 people, Xinhua added. Separately, 10 people were killed after a pickup truck fell off a bridge in the southern region of Guangxi on Saturday, Xinhua reported.

Finnish divers recover remaining two bodies of Italians

MOHAMED SHARUHAAN/
KRISHAN FRANCIS
Male

Divers on Wednesday recovered the last two bodies of the four Italians who died deep inside an underwater cave in the Maldives last week.

The Italian divers had been exploring the cave in Vaavu Atoll last Thursday when they disappeared. The body of their Italian diving instructor was recovered outside the cave, and the Finnish recovery divers brought the bodies of two of the divers to the surface Tuesday.

Presidential spokesperson Mohameed Hussain Shareef said the last two bodies were recovered by three Finnish divers supported by the Maldives coastguard and police. The bodies were taken to a morgue and were identified as Muriel Oddenino and Georgia Sommacal.

On Tuesday Monica Montefalcone and Federico Gualtieri were brought out, Government spokesperson Ahmed Shaam said.

The instructor, Gianluca Benedetti, was found near the mouth of the cave the day the divers disappeared. (AP)



India key partner, Estonia will be 'very happy' if PM Modi visits: FM

ASIM KAMAL ■ Tallinn

Estonian Foreign Minister Margus Tsahkna has called for more high-level visits from India to deepen bilateral ties and said Estonia would be "very happy" if Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits the northern European country. In an exclusive interview with PTI, Tsahkna said Estonia is organising the Ukraine recovery conference in 2027 and hoped that India could also be part of the rebuilding process of the war-hit country. "India is a very important partner for Estonia. Our scales are totally different, from 1.3 million people (Estonian population) to 1.4 billion (Indian population). India is also the largest democracy in the world. Our president (Alar Karis) was in India in February for the AI summit. Our bilateral relations are increasing in business terms," the Estonian



foreign minister told PTI. "Be it the defence industry, IT, or AI solutions, Estonia is the perfect place for investments.

We have the E-residency programme through which Indian companies and people can become E-residents and be a part of our brilliant startup environment." "I see the economic growth of India and also the leadership of the Indian Government on economic development, which is something our companies are very much interested in," Tsahkna said. The E-residency programme grants foreign nationals a secure Government-issued digital identity. This allows entrepreneurs to establish and manage an EU-based company entirely online, streamlining processes like document signing, banking, and tax filing from anywhere in the world.

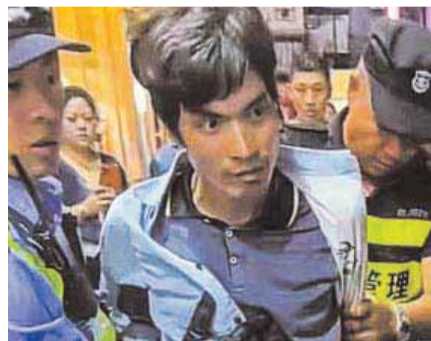
Shanghai attack injures 3, including 2 Japanese; China calls it isolated incident

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Beijing

A knife attack at a restaurant in Shanghai injured three people, including two Japanese citizens, the Chinese foreign ministry said on Wednesday, calling it an isolated case. The ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said Chinese authorities were investigating Tuesday's attack and that the suspect, whom he described as a person with a mental disorder, had been detained.

The two Japanese citizens, alongside a Chinese citizen, were sent to the hospital for treatment, he added. "I would also like to stress that the media outlets and individuals should not make groundless speculation or unwarranted associations," Guo told reporters at a news briefing.

The attack occurred amid rising tensions between China and Japan. Ties between Beijing and Tokyo have been strained since Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's comment in November that any Chinese mil-



itary action against self-ruled Taiwan could be grounds for a Japanese military response. China imposed diplomatic and economic measures against Japan.

In April, the Chinese Embassy in Japan said it had received multiple threats and accused Japanese authorities of failing to take effective measures despite repeated reports to the police.

4 militants killed in clash between two rival groups in Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Peshawar

At least 14 militants were killed and several others injured in a clash between rival armed groups in Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Wednesday, police said. According to a police officer, fighting erupted between groups led by militant commanders Kazim and Mumtaz Imti in the Manoto Kamran Killay area of Central Kurram district, bordering Afghanistan. Commander Mumtaz Imti was killed during the exchange of fire, the officer said. After the clash, locals buried the bodies in the area. Authorities said multiple operations have been conducted in Central Kurram amid reports of the presence of several militant factions in the region. (PTI)

Two Indian-origin scientists receive South Africa's highest civilian honour

FAKIR HASSAN ■ Johannesburg

Two of South Africa's internationally-recognised, Indian-origin scientists were among the 38 people awarded the country's highest civilian awards in recognition of their outstanding contributions toward public health.

Professor Salim Abdool Karim and Professor Keertan Dheda, were formally awarded the prestigious Order of Mapungubwe by President Cyril Ramaphosa at Pretoria.

This specific order recognises South African citizens who have achieved excellence and exceptional accomplishment to the direct benefit of South Africa and the global community.

The citation for Karim, who was awarded the Order of Mapungubwe in Gold, honours



his monumental contributions to medical science and public health, particularly his groundbreaking research into HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis (TB) epidemiology, and his exceptional leadership in national health policy development. (PTI)

Corporate Training

THAT BUILDS PEOPLE, BUILDS BUSINESS.

Empowering Professionals. Transforming Organizations. Delivering Real Results.

ABOUT THE TRAINER

Passionate about empowering individuals and organizations through practical knowledge, real-world experience and result-driven training sessions.

Trainer
NARENDRA DEWANGAN
Corporate Trainer | Sales & Soft Skills Coach

CORPORATE TRAINING SESSIONS

Leadership Development	Problem Solving & Decision Making
Sales & Communication Skills	MS Office (Advanced Level)
Time Management & Productivity	Presentation & Public Speaking
Team Building & Collaboration	Personality Development & Soft Skills

Why Corporate Training?

- Improved Performance
- Increased Productivity
- Skilled & Motivated Teams
- Better Leadership
- Stronger Communication
- Organizational Growth

Invest in your people today, to build your business for tomorrow.

ND CORPORATE TRAINING

Adarsh Nagar, Mowa, Raipur, (C.G.)

8103616567 & 7509899932