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EYE THE LONG VIEW

Romila Thapar, 94, on her memoir, the battle over History, and why questioning remains essential to intellectual life

SCREEN Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari on how life can be

DAILY FROM: AHMEDABAD, CHANDIGARH, DELHI, JAIPUR, KOLKATA, LUCKNOW, MUMBAI, NAGPUR, PATNA, PUNE, VADODARA

Happening today

PM NARENDRA MODI will visit Sweden, where he will hold bilateral talks with PM Ulf Kristersson. The two leaders will also address a pan-European business leaders' forum, along with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC Front, which made a comeback in the recent Assembly polls in Kerala, is scheduled to submit its list of ministers to Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar.

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'PARASITES' REMARK

CJI: Misquoted, had criticised those who join professions with fake degrees

Express News Service New Delhi, May 16

CHIEF JUSTICE of India (CJ) Surya Kant on Saturday issued a clarification on his courtroom remarks in which he compared a section of unemployed youth to "cockroaches", saying that he had been "misquoted" by sections of the media and his criticism was directed solely at those who had joined different professions through "fake or bogus degrees".

"I am pained to read how a section of the media has misquoted my oral observations made during the hearing of a frivolous case yesterday. What I had specifically criticised were those who have entered professions like the Bar (legal profession) with the aid of fake and bogus degrees. Similar persons have sneaked into the media, social media, and other noble professions as well, and hence, they are like parasites. It is totally baseless to suggest that I criticised the youth of our nation. Not only am I proud of our present and future human resource, but every youth of India inspires me. It is not an exaggeration to say that Indian youth have great regard and respect for me, and I too see them as the"

NINTH ARREST SO FAR; HAD COMPLETE ACCESS TO BOTANY, ZOOLOGY PAPERS: CBI Pune botany prof held for NEET leak, was NTA's subject expert

Plotted with co-accused for deals with 70-75 students: Probe

Mahender Singh Manral, Nirbhay Thakur & Soham Shah New Delhi, Pune, May 16

A SENIOR professor of botany at a prominent private college in Pune who was appointed by the National Testing Agency (NTA) as a subject expert has become the ninth person to be arrested in the sweeping multi-city investigation into the question paper leak that led to the cancellation of NEET (UG) 2026 earlier this week.

Fifty-seven-year-old Manisha Gurunath Mandhare, who teaches at the junior college of the Modern College of Arts, Science and Commerce, popularly known as Modern College, was arrested in Delhi, a spokesperson for the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said on Saturday.



Manisha Mandhare and P V Kulkarni (right) were involved in the exam process on behalf of the National Testing Agency: CBI

INSIDE COURT PULLS UP CBI FOR CLOSING 2024 UGC-NET LEAK CASE

Mandhare's arrest came a day after the CBI arrested P V Kulkarni, a retired professor of chemistry, in connection with



the leak in Pune. Kulkarni, who was remanded in 10 days' CBI custody by a court in Delhi on Saturday, too was involved in the examination process on behalf of the NTA, the CBI has said.

The investigation has found that Kulkarni and Mandhare allegedly struck deals with at least 70-75 students, promising to provide them with the questions of chemistry and biology

NTA flags list of paper setters and translators on its radar to CBI

Abhinaya Harigovind New Delhi, May 16

WITH THE CBI arresting two persons associated with the process of preparing the NEET-UG question paper, the National Testing Agency (NTA) is learnt to have flagged a list of names of question paper setters and translators who are "on the agency's radar" to the CBI. The NTA is also learnt to be overhauling its existing list of question paper setters and translators ahead of the retest scheduled for June 21.

With the breach being traced to the first stage where the question paper originates

the exam process involves a sequence of steps, from setting of the question paper to the printing press and the exam centre — the NTA is now learnt to be "doing away" with a set of question paper setters and translators, whose names it has also submitted to the investigating agency.

NTA sources said the agency is trying to ensure a "foolproof" retest by replacing a set of people who were earlier associated with the process.

On Friday, the CBI arrested P V Kulkarni, a retired lecturer from Pune, identifying him as the "source of the NEET-UG"

Telangana police arrest minister Bandi Sanjay's son in POCSO case

Nikhila Henry Hyderabad, May 16

THE TELANGANA Police on Saturday evening arrested Bandi Sai Bhageerath, the son of Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar, in connection with a POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) case.

"The accused was apprehended at the end of a manhunt at 8.15 pm on Saturday and taken to Petbasheerabad police station," M Ramesh, the Cyberabad Commissioner of Police, told *The Indian Express*. Bhageerath will be sent for medical examination and produced before a local magistrate in Hyderabad, the commissioner said.

The minister, however, said his son had appeared for police questioning of his own volition.



Bandi Sai Bhageerath is accused of sexually assaulting a 17-yr-old

"In light of the allegations levelled against my son and out of deep respect for the law, I have today, through our legal counsel, handed him over to the police for interrogation." He said that his son "has been repeatedly asserting that he has committed no wrongdoing". "As soon as the complaint was lodged, I intended to"



Netherlands returns Chola-era artefacts

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Dutch counterpart Rob Jetten (right) during the restitution ceremony of 11th-century Chola dynasty copper plates in The Hague, Saturday. PTI

THE PLATES, in possession of Leiden University since 1862, are important sources of royal charters in South India

THESE ITEMS were likely excavated in Tamil Nadu's Nagapattinam between 1687 and 1700 and brought to Netherlands in 1712

THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE had sent a request for the return of these artefacts from the Netherlands in 2023. PAGE 6

Suvendu govt to re-verify 1.69 crore caste papers issued in TMC tenure

Ravik Bhattacharya Kolkata, May 16

IN A major decision, the newly elected Suvendu Adhikari-led BJP government in West Bengal has ordered re-verification of around 1.69 crore caste certificates issued in the state since 2011, when the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress (TMC) had first come to power. The government's order

also states that caste certificates issued to people whose names have been deleted in the Election Commission (EC)'s recent Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls will be examined and "may be cancelled".

The Adhikari government's move comes in the backdrop of allegations of fake caste certificates being issued to several people in recent years. "There were complaints

from different quarters that fake SC (Scheduled Caste), ST (Scheduled Tribe) and OBC (Other Backward Class) certificates have been issued to a large number of people since 2011. There is a need for scrutiny. That is why we have asked the authorities to re-verify all the caste certificates. If any officer is found guilty of issuing fake certificates, strict action will be"

People asked me to arrest their kids: L-G Sinha on J&K drug crisis

800 held in a month, calls to helpline surge, focus shifts to rehabilitation

Naveed Iqbal Srinagar, May 16

JAMMU AND Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha says people have walked into his office asking him to arrest their own children. That desperation, he told *The Indian Express*, is one of the reasons that pushed him to launch an aggressive,

month-long campaign against drug addiction and "narco-terror" in the Union Territory.

The results have been instantaneous: Over 1,400 people have been arrested under the NDPS (Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances) Act in J&K so far this year — more than 800 of them in the past month alone. "We are making every effort

EXPRESS interview



MANOJ SINHA J&K LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

possible to counter this threat. I've had people come to my

Day after High Court verdict, disputed Dhar complex wears 'Hindu' colours

Anand Mohan J Dhar, May 16

LESS THAN 24 hours after more than 2,000 people gathered at the Bhojshala-Kamal Maula mosque complex here to offer namaz, its transformation into an exclusively Hindu religious place has begun. On Saturday, marigold garlands hung from the carved stone pillars of the complex as devotees queued barefoot beneath the arches to offer prayers, take photographs and scatter flower petals across the dark stone floor. They recited Hanuman

Chalisa and offered prayers to 'Ma Vagdevi'. In a recessed chamber, flowers were arranged in the symbol of "Om" beneath a garlanded carving mounted against a blackened wall where Hindus believe an idol of Goddess Saraswati once stood.

On Friday, in its order on the long-standing dispute around the medieval complex, the Madhya Pradesh High Court ruled that its religious character was that of Bhojshala, or a temple of Goddess Vagdevi (Saraswati). Under a 2003 arrangement, Hindus had been performing puja at the complex on Tuesdays, while

Muslims, who regard it as a masjid, offered namaz at the adjoining pagah on Fridays.

In its 242-page verdict, the court made the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which has administered the monument since 1952, in-charge of preservation and regulation of access to the complex. It also said that Muslims would no longer be permitted to offer namaz at the site, and directed the state government to consider allotting alternative land in Dhar district for the same.

The Muslim side has said it will challenge the High Court's order in the Supreme Court. But, on the ground, the order



People offer prayers inside the Bhojshala-Kamal Maula mosque complex in Dhar, MP, Saturday. ANAND MOHAN J

has already started taking effect, with Chief Minister Mohan Yadav rallying behind it.

Kuldeep Tiwari, one of the petitioners in the case, stood near the entrance distributing ladoos to supporters. Referring to the High Court order that also asked the Centre to consider bringing back a Saraswati idol housed at the British Museum in the UK, which is believed to be the one that once stood at the Bhojshala complex, Tiwari said: "We now want the government to bring back the idol and respect the High Court decision." Tiwari and other Hindu activists present at the complex are also planning their next

CBSE makes third language must for Class 9 students from this year

At least 2 of 3 languages must be 'native Indian'; no board exam for 3rd language

Sophiya Mathew New Delhi, May 16

A MONTH after it released its new school curriculum, announcing that a third language would be made compulsory in Class 6 from the current academic session (2026-27), the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has made three languages — including at least "two native Indian languages" — compulsory for Class 9 students from July 1 this year.

The third language will be exempted from the Class 10 board examination, with its assessment to be "entirely school-based and internal".

The curriculum announced in April had taken a phased approach to implementing the three-language formula (R1, R2, R3), making it mandatory only in Class 6 this year. So, students

INSIDE CLASS 9 STUDENTS CAN STILL LEARN FOREIGN LANGUAGES, WITH CONDITIONS

who are in Class 6 in the current academic session would have been the first cohort to have R3 in Class 10 in 2030-31. But in its latest circular issued on Friday, the Board changed its earlier decision to not make R3 compulsory in Class 9 immediately, and explained that the scheme of studies for languages in Classes 9-10 is being aligned with the NCERT syllabus. "With effect from 1st July 2026, for Class IX, the study of three languages (R1, R2, R3) shall be compulsory, with at least one of them being a language of the region. The other two languages shall be chosen from the list of languages specified in the syllabus. This decision is subject to the availability of resources and infrastructure. The Board will continue to monitor the implementation of the three-language formula and take necessary steps to ensure its successful implementation. The Board will also continue to explore innovative ways to enhance the quality of language education. 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[FROM PAGE 1 | FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM]

Botany prof arrested

in the NEET paper in exchange for Rs 2.5 lakh to Rs 3 lakh per student.

A source said the probe so far has revealed that Mandhare and Kulkarni have known each other for many years, and that Mandhare had allegedly approached Kulkarni with the plan this January.

"After multiple in-person meetings and talks, she convinced him and decided to charge Rs 2.5 lakh per student. They had at least 70-75 students, and gave special classes together in the same premises," the source said.

The NTA is the government agency under the Union Ministry of Education that administers the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test for admission to undergraduate medical colleges across the country every year. The exam consists of a consolidated question paper in four sections, physics, chemistry, botany, and zoology. More than 22.7 lakh aspirants appeared for this year's exam on May 3. NTA announced the leak and cancelled the exam on May 12. A retest will be held on June 21.

"She (Manisha Mandhare) was involved in the NEET UG 2026 examination process and was appointed by the NTA as an expert. She had complete access to the botany and zoology question papers," the CBI spokesperson said.

In April, Mandhare had allegedly "mobilised prospective NEET examination candidates through arrested Manisha Waghmare of Pune and conducted special coaching classes for these students at her Pune residence", the spokesperson said.

Manisha Waghmare, the owner of a beauty salon in Pune, was arrested on May 14. Along with Kulkarni, she too was remanded in CBI custody for 10 days on Saturday.

"During these special classes, [Mandhare] explained and disclosed various questions from botany and zoology subjects and made the students note down the same in their notebooks and also mark them in their textbooks. Majority of these questions tallied with the actual question paper of NEET UG 2026 examination held on May 3," the CBI spokesperson

said.

The investigating agency has ascribed a similar role and modus operandi to Kulkarni as well. He too allegedly ran special coaching classes with the help of Waghmare, where he dictated questions to students, along with the options and the correct answers.

According to the CBI, the questions that Kulkarni dictated were noted down by the students, and they have tallied exactly with the question paper of the exam held on May 3.

"PV Kulkarni provided questions to certain persons through Manisha Waghmare. They were in conspiracy with each other to collect and distribute the leaked question papers," public prosecutor Neetu Singh, representing CBI, told Special Judge Ajay Gupta of Rouse Avenue Court in Delhi on Saturday.

The CBI has described Kulkarni, who taught chemistry in Dayanand Junior College in Latur, Maharashtra, before his retirement a few years ago, as the "source of the NEET-UG 2026 examination paper leaks".

"The probe has revealed that Kulkarni was involved in the process of examination on behalf of NTA. He had access to the question papers, and he organised special coaching

sessions at his Pune residence during the last week of April 2026, in which students were allegedly mobilised and taught the leaked material," a CBI spokesperson had said on Friday.

Seeking 14 days' custody for Kulkarni and Waghmare, the CBI told the Special Judge on Saturday that in order to investigate the "larger conspiracy" behind the paper leak, the agency "might have to take them outside [Delhi] as well".

"The investigation is at a crucial stage. We need custody to collect evidence," counsel told the court. In its remand papers, the agency said it wanted to "identify locations where questions were revealed to certain candidates".

Manisha Mandhare, who was arrested on Saturday, had been working at Modern College since 2002, and was due to retire in January 2027, college authorities said. She has an MSc degree in botany, and had been working for the NTA for at least five years, Nivedita Ekbote, principal of the college, said.

"I heard about her arrest through news channels... no one has contacted me... We are not involved due to the confidentiality [involved in the setting of question papers]...", Prof Ekbote said.

Was misquoted: CJI

pillars of a developed India," the CJI said in his statement.

The clarification came a day after a hearing in the Supreme Court, when the bench comprising the CJI and Justice Joy Mathy Bagchi pulled up a lawyer who had filed a petition seeking directions to the Delhi High Court over the designation of a Senior Advocate, a status he himself was aspiring to.

Annoyed with what the bench called a "frivolous" petition, the CJI had made a series of observations from the bench. "There are already parasites of society who attack the system and you want to join hands with them? There are youngsters like cockroaches, they don't get any employment, they don't have any place in profession. Some of

them become media, some of them become social media, some of them become RTI activists, some of them become other activists, and they start attacking everyone... And you people file contempt petitions," he had said.

The bench dismissed the plea, which was filed for the third time before the Supreme Court, and told the petitioner that "the whole world might be eligible for senior designation, but at least you are not."

When the petitioner apologised and sought to withdraw his plea, the bench agreed.

The CJI had also voiced concern that a large number of law degrees in Delhi could be fake, and said he would want the CBI to verify them.

NTA flags list

2026 examination paper leaks". Another professor from Pune, Manisha Gurnath Mandhare, was arrested on Saturday.

NTA sources said Kulkarni was involved in setting questions for the Chemistry section, and in translation into Marathi. Sources said the NTA has several experts associated with the question paper setting process, and sometimes uses the same individual for setting and translation in order to minimise the number of people who have access to the questions.

Candidates can opt for NEET-UG question papers in one of 13 languages.

A CBI spokesperson on Saturday said Mandhare was appointed by the NTA as an expert and had access to the Botany and Zoology section.

On paper — as recommended by an expert committee that was constituted in 2024 — the NTA has a protocol to ensure that question papers are set in a secure manner. As per the committee's recommendations, this includes drawing subject experts from across the country to set question papers, including a chief paper setter among them.

The paper setting team is to function in a room, as decided by the NTA, that is "acoustically insulated", does "not contain transparent glass", and does not have internet facilities. Paper setters are to leave personal belongings including cellphones and laptops outside, and the room is to include a "pantry area" with refreshments. The team's questions are used to prepare more than one question paper.

As per the committee's recommendations, "language experts must certify that no third party or press has seen... the marking scheme, number of questions, types of questions, or actual content of questions."

In 2024, when the matter of a leak and a petition for cancellation of the NEET-UG exam reached the Supreme Court, the NTA had informed the court that experts are invited to its office to generate questions in a restricted area, where they seal their work daily.

Earlier this week, NTA Director General Abhishek Singh told *The Indian Express* that the committee's recommendations on protocol had been followed

Monsoon marks early onset over Andaman & Nicobar, Bay of Bengal, Arabian Sea

Express News Service

Bengaluru, May 16

THE SOUTHWEST monsoon marked an early arrival this year over some areas of the southwest and southeast Bay of Bengal, Nicobar Islands and southeast Arabian Sea, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) announced on Saturday.

"The southwest monsoon has advanced into some parts of the southeast Arabian Sea, southwest and southeast Bay of Bengal, many parts of Andaman Sea, entire Nicobar Islands and some parts of Andaman Islands, including Sri Vijaya Puram, on May 16," the IMD said. This year's monsoon onset in these regions is earlier by at least six days than normal.

However, the onset here was marked even earlier, on May 13, last year. As per the IMD's monsoon onset schedule, the normal date for the monsoon onset over the south Andaman Sea, and Port Blair in Andaman and Nicobar Islands is May 22.

There has been an increase in the rainfall activity during the past two days over Nicobar Islands, the Andaman Sea and neighbourhood areas. In addition, the strengthening of the westerly winds and the desired outgoing longwave radiation

Monsoon onset over Bay of Bengal

Year	Onset date
2026	May 16
2025	May 13
2024	May 19
2023	May 19
2022	May 16
2021	May 21
2020	May 17
2019	May 18

*SOURCE: IMD

values indicating presence of convective cloud mass serve as a key criteria for declaring the monsoon onset.

The met department also shared that conditions are favourable for further advancement of southwest monsoon into some more parts of southeast Arabian Sea, southwest and southeast Bay of Bengal, remaining parts of Andaman Islands and Andaman Sea, and some parts of east central Bay of Bengal during the next 3-4 days.

The monsoon onset over Kerala is mostly likely on May 26. That will mark the commencement of the four-month monsoon season this year.

Bengal

taken against him or her," Kshudiram Tudu, Minister for Backward Classes Welfare, said.

The order dated May 14 was issued by the Backward Classes Welfare Department secretary to all district magistrates of the state. "You are aware that around 1.69 crore caste certificates have been issued since 2011 (SC: 1.00 crore, ST: 21 lakh and OBC: 48 lakh). Of these, around 47.80 lakh caste certificates (SC: 32.51 lakh, ST: 6.65 lakh & OBC: 8.64 lakh) have been issued by the respective certificate issuing authorities against applications received through the Duare Sarkar camps (in 10 phases) within the stipulated time frame," the order stated.

While communities such as Matuas and Rajbanshis are listed in the SC category, many Muslim groups are included in the OBC list. The Duare Sarkar (government at your doorstep) programme was a flagship initiative of the previous Mamata government, under which neighbourhood camps were organised to

facilitate access to schemes and receive applications for caste and other certificates.

"Now, it has been observed that the authenticity and genuineness of some caste certificates issued since 2011 have been challenged by different quarters," the order said. It noted that the issuance of caste certificates is a statutory responsibility of the sub-divisional officers (SDOs) and district welfare officers (DWO), Kolkata, which required detailed scrutiny and verification before any certificate could be issued.

"Considering the importance and sensitivity of the matter, re-verification of such caste certificates at the level of the respective issuing authorities will be done in accordance with the prevailing norms and statutory provisions," it added.

The order directed district magistrates (DMs) to ask all SDOs to re-verify all caste certificates issued since 2011 "along with the related 2nd generation caste certificates issued on the basis thereof, in terms of prevailing norms and statutory provisions, to ensure the authenticity and genuineness of the issued caste certificates and maintain transparency in the caste certificate issuing process".

The order also referred to the controversial SIR exercise. "Moreover, caste certificates issued to the persons and dependents whose names have been deleted from the electoral roll of the state in the recently conducted SIR exercises, shall be examined and may be cancelled following the due process..." it read.

'Pak must decide'

made since Operation Sindoor last year.

Last year, he told soldiers that if Pakistan wants to remain on the world map, it would have to stop sponsoring terrorism on its soil, adding that India would not show any restraint it showed last time.

On Saturday, the Army Chief also said the military is undergoing rapid changes and modernisation, causing technology to become obsolete within 18 months.

"If you have to adapt to that kind of technology, how are you going about it? Therefore, the ripples of change have to be felt at every level, starting from a soldier to a major to a major general, till a general like me... When you

look at the big picture, a whole-of-nation approach, how are you going to converge this complete India as a nation to fight a war? How are you going to establish the interlinkages? How are you going to provide the strategic guidance to the decision makers?" he said.

"Those are the big things that we are looking at while making sure that your halo effect and the reputation which you have made over a period of time comes down to a soldier or to a common citizen who is part of the whole-of-the-nation approach whenever you go for the next operations or war," he said.

He also said that as far as the Indian Army is concerned, there is leadership at every level.

Bhojshala

praying here for hundreds of years and do not need permission," Samad asserted, adding that the High Court had merely quashed the 2003 ASI arrangement. "We are studying the order and will work with the ASI to understand how namaz can continue. We will offer namaz only here," he said.

Dhar Shahr Qazi Waqar Siddiqui said there were several Islamic structures within the complex, and they are worried about them. "We have a mehrah, wazukhana, graves...

We want the ASI to protect these structures."

A few kilometres away, in the Muslim-majority lanes of Dhar's older quarters, most shops were shut Saturday, to guard against any trouble. Men huddled in groups discussed the verdict and the expected Supreme Court challenge, as police vehicles passed by slowly.

"My grandfather and his father before him offered namaz here," said Riyaz Ahmed, a dry fruits trader. "We should also have the same right. I cannot believe my sons may never be able to offer namaz at this historic site again."

L-G Sinha

office asking to arrest their kids because they could not handle this on their own. Generally, too, when people come to meet me, they raise this issue, and I realised that it needed greater intervention."

Sinha said that the administration is making "every effort" to contain the issue at the supply chain level, seizing narcotics that are in the system and handing out strict punishment to those involved. "A key aspect of this is awareness and rehabilitation, which I feel is our biggest challenge at the moment. We are working on all of this simultaneously," Sinha said. After consultation with several stakeholders, strategies have been developed to effectively monitor rehabilitation centres, he said.

"We have asked for at least one bed to be reserved in every health facility in the UT, irrespective of size, for victims of addiction, so that even if a patient can't immediately find a rehabilitation centre, they can at least

go to the nearest hospital and no one is turned away," he said.

According to Sinha, the ongoing 100-day campaign has also helped reduce some of the stigma associated with reporting a victim. "Calls to the MANAS helpline for J&K have increased six-fold over the past month, and people are coming forward to report anyone peddling or consuming drugs in their ambit. The societal impact has been immensely positive," he said.

Sinha said there is a "direct link between the inflow of drugs and terrorism". "The money ultimately travels back to these (terrorist) organisations. I've travelled to areas from which drugs are being sent into J&K, and we have enhanced security at these entry points with men and equipment," he said.

The administration has tracked forward areas on the Line of Control, such as Tangdhar, Keran, Gurez and Kathua, as entry points for the distribution of drugs in J&K.

Sinha added it was "expedient and necessary" to lay down a Standard Operating Procedure

for law enforcement agencies and administrative authorities to ensure "systematic and expeditious cancellation, impoundment, suspension and deactivation of passport, driving license, arms licence and Aadhaar card of persons accused of drug-related offences..."

Another aspect of deterrence by the security apparatus has been the demolition of properties linked to the distribution of narcotics. As per official data, 41 such properties have been demolished this year, drawing criticism from both the ruling National Conference and the opposition PDP, who say that families are being punished for the crimes of individuals.

"If these homes or properties have been constructed by way of smuggling, how is that okay? If someone is working to ruin society, what sympathy is expected for them? I have spoken to people about this and asked them if anyone innocent has been targeted, and (they say) that has not happened. People are in favour of action against those distributing narcotics," the LG said.

• J&K's war against drugs

	2023	2024	2025	2026*
FIRs registered	2,243	1,554	1,863	1,255
Persons arrested	3,194	2,213	2,592	1,472
Narcotic drugs seized	10,389 kg	4,823 kg	3,870 kg	1,300 kg
Psychotropic substances seized	1,68,094 units	1,31,742 units	76,476 units	39,303 units
PIT NDPS proposals sponsored	276	291	276	74
Detentions under PIT NDPS	270	275	240	40
Narcotic drugs disposed of u/s 52A NDPS Act	29,307 kg	10,133 kg	21,674 kg	4,962 kg
Poppy cultivation destroyed	1,865 kanals	320 kanals	20 kanals	30 kanals
Cannabis cultivation destroyed	7,583 kanals	5,560 kanals	2,771 kanals	81 kanals
Awareness programmes	4,432	4,511	4,668	2,360

*UNTIL MAY 11; A KANAL IS 1/8 OF AN ACRE



Himayat Mission Management Unit – Jammu and Kashmir
Rural Livelihoods Mission
Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj
Government of Jammu & Kashmir



Expression of Interest for empanelment of Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) under Himayat (DDU-GKY 2.0) in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir

Ref No.:
COO/HMMU/JKRLM/EOI/01/2026(Com.No.:7720253)
Date of Issue: 16-05-2026

Himayat Mission Management Unit, Jammu and Kashmir Rural Livelihoods Mission
38 A/B, Gandhi Nagar, Jammu-180004
2nd Floor, SFC House, Durganah, Srinagar- 190001, J&K

Expression of Interest (EOI) for Submission of Project Proposals under Himayat (DDU-GKY 2.0)
The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India, under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), is implementing a placement-linked skill development scheme, namely Himayat (DDU-GKY 2.0). The Himayat Mission Management Unit (HMMU), Jammu & Kashmir Rural Livelihoods Mission (JKRLM), functions as the Nodal Agency for implementation of the said scheme in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

HMMU-JKRLM hereby invites Project Proposals from eligible Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) for implementation of Himayat (DDU-GKY 2.0), with a focus on skilling and placement* of youth of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, for the Financial Year 2026-27 and 2027-28. (*Placements as per Clause 5.2.7 of the Guidelines)

PIAs possessing a valid Permanent Registration Number (PRN) issued by MoRD may submit their proposals through the designated MoRD portal, i.e., <https://kaushal.rural.gov.in>, along with a non-refundable Initial Screening Fee of ₹25,000 (Rupees twenty five thousand only) + applicable GST @18% i.e. ₹ 29,500, payable in favour of NIRD&PR.

NIRD&PR has been designated as the Appraisal Agency under Himayat (DDU-GKY 2.0) for the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir. All project appraisals shall be undertaken strictly through the designated IT platform of MoRD, i.e., <https://kaushal.rural.gov.in>.

Account Details for Submission of Initial Screening Fee:

- * Name of the Account: NIRD&PR DDU-GKY Savings Bank Account
- * PAN: AAAN4871B
- * GSTIN: 36AAAN4871B1ZT
- * Account Number: 62431332037
- * IFSC Code: SBIN0020965
- * Address: NIRD Campus, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad - 500030, Telangana

Payment Mode: Through RTGS/NEFT to the above bank account.

Projects shortlisted at the Initial Screening stage shall be taken up for Qualitative Appraisal. Such PIAs shall be required to deposit a separate non-refundable Qualitative Appraisal Fee, as prescribed under the applicable DDU-GKY norms. Intimation for the same shall be issued to the concerned PIAs in due course.

Applicant PIAs are advised to carefully review the DDU-GKY 2.0 Guidelines and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) prior to submission of proposals. The same are available at <https://kaushal.rural.gov.in>. It is reiterated that all expenses pertaining to project appraisal, including screening and qualitative appraisal fees, shall be borne by the applicant PIA.

- Eligibility/Barred PIAs:**
Eligibility of the applicant PIAs shall be governed strictly in accordance with chapter 7 of DDU-GKY 2.0 guidelines, read with notifications issued by MoRD from time to time.
- Indicative list of priority Sectors:**
Tourism & Hospitality, Retail, Logistics, IT&ITES, Healthcare, Apparel, BFSI, Electrical, Electronics, Handicraft, Aerospace & Aviation, Green Jobs, Construction.
- Other Conditions Applicable:**
 - The selected PIA shall ensure commencement of training for the first batch under the project on or before 31.10.2026. Further, all placement or self/gig employment of trained candidates must also begin on or before 31.03.2028, in accordance with the applicable Guidelines and SOPs.
 - Preference shall be accorded to those applicant PIAs proposing:
 - Captive employment with wages higher than the minimum wage rates applicable in the Union Territory;
 - Enhanced mobilisation from tribal and other priority areas; and
 - Establishment and operationalisation of training centres in Aspirational Districts of the Union Territory.
 - Allocation of targets shall be undertaken by HMMU-JKRLM based on sectoral demand, industry-aligned courses, strong employer partnerships for sustainable placements, existing training infrastructure and capacity of the PIA. Release of funds shall be governed strictly in accordance with the provisions of the Himayat (DDU-GKY) 2.0 Guidelines and SOPs.
- General Instructions to Applicant PIAs**
 - Non-compliance with any of the requirements stipulated in this EOI shall render the proposal liable for rejection at any stage of appraisal.
 - The proposal must be complete in all respects and accompanied by all requisite documents, as specified in DDU-GKY 2.0 SOP Chapter 1.
 - The DDU-GKY 2.0 Guidelines, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) issued by MoRD may be accessed from the official portal: <https://kaushal.rural.gov.in>.
 - Proposals shall be submitted strictly within the timelines prescribed under this EOI. Any extension in submission timelines, if required, shall be notified only through an official corrigendum to be posted on <https://kaushal.rural.gov.in>.
 - HMMU-JKRLM shall not be responsible or liable for any costs, expenses, or losses incurred by the applicant PIAs in preparation or submission of proposals.
 - Only those proposals which fulfil the eligibility criteria and comply with all terms and conditions of this EOI shall be considered for evaluation. The appraisal process shall be undertaken in accordance with DDU-GKY 2.0 SOP Chapter 1 of MoRD. Proposals lacking valid or requisite documentation shall be summarily rejected.
 - In case any information or document furnished by the applicant PIA is found to be false, fabricated, or misleading at any stage, the proposal shall be rejected, and such PIA shall be liable for blacklisting and other legal action as per applicable laws.
 - Proposals submitted through modes other than the prescribed online portal (such as fax, email, etc.) shall not be entertained. No correspondence in this regard shall be considered.
 - HMMU-JKRLM reserves the right to modify, amend, or relax any of the conditions or criteria stipulated in this EOI, at any stage, in public interest or in exigencies of programme implementation.
 - Sanction of a project under Himayat (DDU-GKY 2.0) does not confer any assurance or guarantee of revenue, business continuity, or additional future target to the PIA.
 - The applicant PIA shall not assign, transfer, or sublet, in whole or in part, any of its obligations under the project.
 - HMMU-JKRLM reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals without assigning any reason thereof, and its decision in this regard shall be final and binding.
- Submission of Proposals**
Eligible PIAs shall submit their applications online through the MoRD portal, i.e., <http://kaushal.rural.gov.in>, on or before 07-06-2026. (Sunday)
Only those applications submitted within the validity period of this EOI shall be considered for further processing.

Rajneesh Gupta (JKAS)
Chief Operating Officer
Himayat Mission Management Unit
JKRLM, Jammu

DIPJ-217926-DATE 16 MAY 2026

Class 10 students next year will learn from Class 7-level R3 books.

"To keep the focus on learning and reduce any undue pressure on students, no board examination shall be conducted for R3 at the Class X level," it said. "All assessments for R3 shall be entirely school-based and internal. The performance of students in R3 will be duly reflected in the CBSE certificate," it said.

The board also assured that "no student will be barred from appearing in the Class X board examinations due to R3."

On the availability of teachers, the board said that schools may "engage existing teachers of other subjects who possess functional proficiency" in the language. It also allowed "inter-school resource sharing... virtual or hybrid teaching support" and the engagement of retired teachers.

Schools have been asked to update their language options on the board's OASIS portal by June 30.

The Board has allowed relaxations for children with special needs, foreign students and CBSE schools abroad, permitting flexibility in implementing the third language requirement on a case-by-case basis.

Minister Bandi's son

hand him over at the police station immediately. However, we consulted with our lawyers, and he presented the evidence in our possession before them. Upon reviewing the evidence, the lawyers expressed confidence that the case would likely be quashed and that bail would certainly be granted. That is why there was a slight delay," he said.

Earlier in the day, Telangana Police had issued a Look Out Circular (LOC) against Bhageerath and conducted searches at his father's home in Karimnagar, his relative's residence in Hyderabad's Banjara Hills, and his friends' homes in Yousufguda.

Bhageerath is accused of sexually assaulting a 17-year-old between October and December 2025. The two had allegedly met through mutual friends in June 2025.

In a complaint lodged on May 8, the girl's mother alleged that Bhageerath subjected her to repeated sexual abuse and emotional blackmail. According to the complaint, he allegedly iso-

lated her and controlled her educational career decisions.

Police initially booked Bhageerath under charges of assault or using criminal force against a woman with intent to outrage her modesty and sexual harassment, along with provisions of the POCSO Act. Later, once the girl's statement was recorded, the police added the charge of aggravated sexual assault under the POCSO Act.

The Telangana High Court had on Friday night refused to grant Bhageerath interim protection from arrest.

His counsel, senior advocate S Niranjan Reddy, had argued that the police be directed not to arrest him, adding that stringent conditions may be imposed during the interim period. However, at the end of the hearing, which lasted over two hours, Justice T Madhavi Devi said, "I have gone through the statement of the victim, though not in detail but cursorily, and at this stage, I'm not inclined to grant any interim order."

INTEGRATION THROUGH DIGILOCKER AND API SETU PLATFORMS

DU to roll out digital UG, PG admission system linked to NTA

By Vidheesha Kuntamalla
New Delhi, May 16

FOR THE first time, Delhi University will introduce automatic digital integration of students' personal details and CUET scores in both undergraduate and postgraduate admissions this year, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

The university said the move is aimed at reducing paperwork, duplication and manual errors in the admission process. DU also opened postgraduate admissions on Saturday, marking the first full rollout of the postgraduate system envisioned under the National Education Policy (NEP).

The digital integration, being rolled out through the government's DigiLocker and API Setu platforms, will allow key student information — including names, dates of birth, gender, category, parents' names and Common University Entrance Test (CUET) scores — to be automatically fetched into the admission portal instead of requiring applicants to repeatedly upload documents or manually fill in forms.



DU opened postgraduate admissions on Saturday. FILE

In a statement issued Saturday, the university said the digital integration was part of the government's larger "Digital India vision", describing it as a "secure, scalable, and citizen-focused digital identity solution" that would reduce "the hassle of managing duplicate data", strengthen "data security", and create "a uniform authentication mechanism for Government services".

The university also acknowledged the role of the National Testing Agency (NTA) in "integrating the students' information on the national registry and extending it to universities securely".

This year, DU will, for the first

time, offer two distinct postgraduate pathways under the NEP framework — a one-year Master's programme and a two-year Master's programme.

For those opting for two-year Master's: Admissions to the two-year postgraduate programmes will continue through the university's Common Seat Allocation System (CSAS), with allocations based "solely on the scores obtained in CUET (PG)-2026", according to the admission notice.

Students currently in either the third or fourth year of their undergraduate programmes will be eligible to apply, provided they meet programme-specific eligibility conditions

and have appeared for the relevant CUET-PG paper.

The university said registrations for the two-year postgraduate programmes would begin on May 16 and close at 11.59 pm on June 7.

Candidates belonging to SC, ST and PwBD categories will have to pay an application fee of Rs 100 per programme, while applicants from UR, OBC-NCL and EWS categories will pay Rs 250 per programme.

The registration portal for admissions has been hosted on the university's postgraduate admissions website. For those opting for one-year Master's: The university also announced that admissions to the one-year postgraduate programmes would be conducted separately through another portal to be launched later.

Under the NEP-based structure, only Delhi University students pursuing a four-year Bachelor's Honours degree with Research or Entrepreneurship, or those completing a four-year Bachelor's degree with a major in the relevant subject, will be eligible for the one-year Master's track, subject to other conditions.

Honey trap extortion racket busted, four held

Express News Service
New Delhi, May 16

THE DELHI Police Crime Branch busted an organised honey-trap and extortion racket that preyed on users of dating applications by impersonating police officials. Four accused have been arrested in connection with the case.

According to investigators, the gang operated with a calculated modus operandi. Police said first, fake female profiles were created on dating platforms to lure victims. Once contact was established, conversations quickly moved offline. Victims were persuaded to meet in person, often at public places, before being taken to more isolated locations.

"One of the accused would impersonate a police official by wearing a uniform to create fear and legitimacy, after which victims were threatened with false criminal cases and forced to pay large sums as 'settlement'," said Pankaj Kumar, DCP, Crime Branch.

In one such case, police said, the complainant alleged that he was called to meet a woman at a popular outlet in Janakpuri after connecting on Tinder. He was then taken to a flat along with another associate. At the location, multiple men entered, including one in a police uniform, and threatened to implicate him in

a false rape case unless he paid Rs 15 lakh.

The ordeal was not over as yet. Police said the victim was allegedly forced into his own car and driven around for hours, while being pressured to arrange cash and withdraw money from ATMs.

"This was a well-organised racket where each member had a defined role — from creating fake profiles and luring targets to staging raids and collecting extorted money," Kumar said.

Acting on specific intelligence, a Crime Branch team laid a trap near Rajouri Garden on May 12. One of the accused, Sushil Kumar, was apprehended on the spot while wearing a fake police uniform, even as three others initially managed to escape.

Police said they were later tracked down and arrested. The accused have been identified as Deepak, Vinod and Neeraj, while efforts are underway to apprehend other members of the gang. Police said the accused were not first-time offenders. Three of them had been previously involved in a similar case registered at Bindapur, while another had faced arrest in 2017 in a case involving a similar modus operandi.

Advising caution, Kumar said, "Citizens must remain careful while interacting with unknown persons through social media..."



Cycle distribution scheme

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta distributed 500 bicycles to girls who had passed classes 10 and 12 at Kerala School, RK Puram, in New Delhi on Saturday. PRAVEEN KHANNA

21-year-old man assaulted, killed by group of youth; minor among 2 held

Express News Service
New Delhi, May 16

A 21-YEAR-OLD man was abducted, assaulted and killed allegedly by a group of youth in Central Delhi's Anand Parbat, with police arresting one of the accused and apprehending a juvenile in connection with the case, officers said on Saturday.

According to the police, arrested accused has been identified as Virat alias Gattu (22), a resident of Baljeet Nagar. A PCR call was received at Anand Parbat police station on Thursday reporting an assault near Ramjas Park, officers said.

The caller informed that three youths passing through the area were intercepted by a group of around 10 persons and attacked, following which one

of them was forcibly taken away, officers said.

When police reached the spot, they found an unidentified man lying unconscious near the boundary wall of Ramjas Park, close to a garbage dump in a forested stretch, officers added. "The victim had visible injuries on the left side of his chest and head and was declared dead after being taken to a hospital," an officer said.

Police said the identity of the deceased was later established through a SIM card recovered from a mobile phone found at the scene. A case was registered and investigation initiated. During the probe, police recorded the statement of a friend of the deceased, who alleged that seven persons attacked them following an ear-

lier dispute. According to the statement, the assailants allegedly dragged the victim into the forested area and attacked him with a knife and bricks, while the others managed to escape.

A team was subsequently formed to trace those involved in the crime. Following technical surveillance and local intelligence, police apprehended Virat near Ramjas Park. At his instance, the knife allegedly used in the crime was recovered from a nearby forested area.

During questioning, police said, Virat revealed that the alleged murder was carried out in retaliation for an earlier assault on their associate by the deceased and his friends two days prior to the incident.

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Eye on waterlogging, Rs 55-crore precast drain project launched on Narela-Bawana road

Express News Service
New Delhi, May 16

IN AN effort to tackle waterlogging, PWD Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh on Saturday laid the foundation stone for a Rs 55-crore precast Reinforced Cement Concrete (RCC) drain project along the Narela-Bawana road stretch, from the Narela railway crossing to the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) outfall.

Officials said the project, part of Delhi's drainage master plan, will cover 9.5 km in total length, with 5 km on one side, and another 4.5 km on the other. The project is aimed at providing a long-term solution to recurring waterlogging in the area, they added.

As per government sources, the drain will be constructed using precast technology, where structural components are manufactured off-site and assembled at the location. Officials said the method would en-

able faster execution, improve structural quality and reduce on-site disruption compared to conventional construction methods.

The use of precast elements is also expected to cut dust generation and material spread on roads, thereby easing traffic movement during construction. Officials said this would allow work to continue even during the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) period, without significantly impacting timelines.

Speaking on the occasion, the PWD Minister said the focus was on durable and "long-term" solutions to civic infrastructure challenges, adding that the project was expected to significantly improve stormwater drainage and reduce monsoon-related waterlogging once completed.

Officials have also been directed to expedite execution and complete critical stretches before the onset of the monsoon, a statement from the Minister's office noted.



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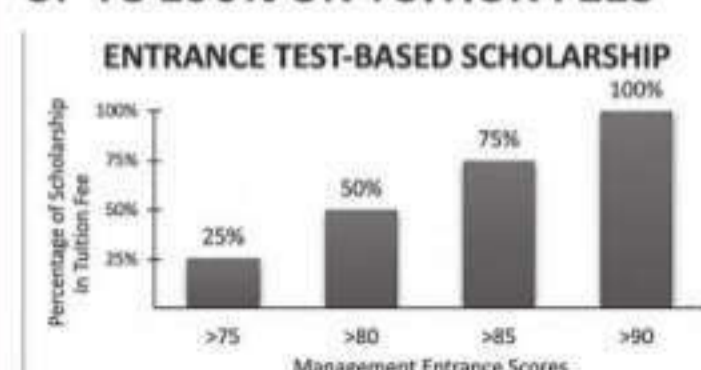
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26th, 2-5PM
Mahmood Farooqui Debashish Reang Shashadhar Acharya

26th, 6-9.30PM
Sujata Mohapatra Ronu Majumdar

27th, 2-5PM
Tarapada Rajak Achinta Kumar Behera Prahlad Singh Tipaniya

27th, 6-9.30PM
Tarun Bhattacharya Parween Sultana

28th, 2-5PM
Ghanakanta Bora Kanaka Sudarshan Parvathy Baul

28th, 6-9.30PM
S Sowmya Margi Madhu

29th, 2-5PM
Nise Meruno Manpreet Singh Warsi Brothers

29th, 6-9.30PM
Shahid Parvez Ulhas Kashalkar Suresh Talwalkar

OVERNIGHT, May 30th, 8 pm to May 31st, 6 am

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CBSE INTRODUCES 3-LANGUAGE RULE MID-SESSION

'Children being treated like guinea pigs': Delhi schools flag confusion

Principals warn of disruption, possible job losses for foreign language teachers, lack of clarity on execution



The move has come with little transition time, say schools. FILE

Sophiya Mathew
New Delhi, May 16

JUST WEEKS into the new academic session, teachers and parents of students studying in Delhi schools were left to grapple with a new directive of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) mandating that a third language will be introduced in Class 9 from this July. This, the schools said, would eventually force students to drop a foreign language and begin to learn an Indian language afresh mid-session.

The move, which extends the three-language formula to the secondary stage, has come with little transition time, leaving schools to rework timetables, reassign teachers and reconsider language options mid-term.

While the Board has mandated in a May 15 circular that two of the three languages have to be Indian, many schools said the practical outcome is a shift towards Hindi, English and Sanskrit, given constraints of staff and resources.

"It's a little too late in the session. We have already covered two to three lessons, and now suddenly we are being asked to change everything," said Mallika Preman, Principal of Tagore International School in East of Kailash.

"There are students who have not studied Sanskrit at all... how do we bring them to the same level? There is a lot of ambiguity, and it is very ill-timed," she added, pointing to the practical challenges the

schools now face.

A principal from a Dwarka-based school, requesting anonymity, said the sudden disruption has also upended earlier assurances given to staff.

"Earlier, when a third language was made mandatory from Class 6, I told my foreign language teachers not to worry... 'you have four years... you can sit for CTET (Central Teacher Eligibility Test) and BE'... since most of them have diplomas from institutes like Goethe. Now, what do I tell them? We might be forced to lay them off immediately," the principal added.

"We took part in exchange programmes, cultural collaborations and language-led activities that made learning meaningful. All of that now will be cancelled. What message are we giving the students? We are so helpless. We can't do anything," the principal said.

Foreign language teachers, meanwhile, are at a loss.

"Foreign languages have been removed. Sanskrit will be taught, no doubt... this is going to be a problem for everyone," said Aruna Sivaraj, Principal at Himalaya Public Senior Secondary School at Rohini.

She noted that many students who have studied French or Spanish for years are now being asked to switch.

"Most schools have been teaching these languages. I don't know how this is being made mandatory all of a sudden," she said.

Further, school principals

pointed out that now, teaching Class 7 and Class 8 students two Indian languages will become a necessity, as teaching a foreign language, only to drop it later, will prove detrimental in the long run.

"There is no clarity even on whether English is to be treated as a foreign or native language," said Pallavi Sharma, Principal of Mamta Modern Senior Secondary School in Vikaspuri, and a recipient of the National Teachers' Award 2024.

"All our books, the Constitution, even higher courts function in English. Now, we are being told two languages must be native to India... what exactly will this mean in practice?" she asked. Sharma said schools are still trying to interpret the directive.

Aparajita Gautam, Delhi Parents Association president said, "Parents are panicking. They are not able to process the sudden changes. Children are being treated like guinea pigs by CBSE and then the same people ask why children are under so much stress," she said.

"It has been done suddenly. There is no vision," she added. A parent, representing a South Delhi parents' group, said, "We are unhappy that foreign languages are being dropped. It becomes very difficult when a child moves from one city to another. This will also not help families that do not live in their home states, and it is hard to teach if parents themselves don't know the language."

While a foreign language has not been dumped altogether, it can be taught only within the three-language structure if the other two languages are native Indian languages. Otherwise, it may be taken only as a fourth language, subject to whether the school offers it.

Current students

The CBSE has not barred schools from teaching foreign languages. Students may still study French, German, Spanish, Japanese or any other foreign language, but not as a replacement for the two Indian language requirement.

A student studying two native Indian languages along with a foreign language may be able to continue the foreign language as part of the three-language structure. But a student studying English, Hindi and a foreign language may have to

Class 9 students can still study foreign languages, but with conditions

Sophiya Mathew
New Delhi, May 16

FOR CLASS 9 CBSE students, what is set to change immediately is that starting July 1, they will have to study three languages, with at least two of them being "native Indian languages". In its May 15 circular, the CBSE has said that students wishing to study a foreign language may do so only if the other two languages are native Indian languages, or as an additional fourth language.

The change

Until April, CBSE's three-language rollout was being understood as a phased change beginning with Class 6 in the 2026-27 session. But the May 15 circular brings Class 9 students under the three-language formula from July 1, though the session had already begun in April. This means students who were studying only two languages will now have to study a third language, while those who had chosen a foreign language will have to check if their existing subject combination satisfies the new rule.

While a foreign language has not been dumped altogether, it can be taught only within the three-language structure if the other two languages are native Indian languages. Otherwise, it may be taken only as a fourth language, subject to whether the school offers it.

Current students

The CBSE has not barred schools from teaching foreign languages. Students may still study French, German, Spanish, Japanese or any other foreign language, but not as a replacement for the two Indian language requirement.

A student studying two native Indian languages along with a foreign language may be able to continue the foreign language as part of the three-language structure. But a student studying English, Hindi and a foreign language may have to

check whether this combination meets the Board's requirement. In many English-medium schools, this is where the practical problem arises.

For students who have studied a foreign language for years, the change could mean having to shift to an Indian language such as Sanskrit, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Punjabi, Marathi or another CBSE-approved Indian language at the Class 9 level. If the school allows it, the foreign language may continue separately as a fourth language, club, activity period or optional programme, but that will depend on the school's timetable, staffing and demand.

R3 assessment

The third language will not be part of the Class 10 Boards. The CBSE said there will be no Board exam for R3 at Class 9 as well, and all assessments for it will be school-based and internal. The student's performance in R3 will be reflected in the CBSE certificate.

Challenges for schools

The first challenge is textbooks. The CBSE has acknowledged that dedicated R3 textbooks for the secondary stage are not yet available. As a transitional measure, Class 9 students will use Class 6 R3 textbooks until dedicated material is available. Schools have also been asked to supplement these books with local or state-level literary material such as stories, poems or non-fiction.

The second challenge is availability of teachers. Many private schools have teachers for French, German or Spanish. But they may not have enough for multiple Indian languages.

The third challenge is the time constraint. Schools have been asked to update their R3 offerings for Classes 6 to 9 on the OASIS portal by June 30. This means schools have limited time to finalise options, rework timetables and identify teachers.

THE 3-MONTH SIR PROCESS

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process will begin in Delhi from June 30, ending with the publication of the draft electoral rolls on August 5 and the final rolls on October 7. There are 1.48 crore voters in Delhi as of May 12, 2026.



At a special SIR camp held by the Noida administration. The final list of voters in Uttar Pradesh was released in April. Around 2.05 crore names were deleted from the electoral roll. FILE

FILLING THE FORM

- From June 30-July 29, booth level officers (BLOs) will visit homes to distribute enumeration forms.
- Form will already have your name, EPIC number, address, Assembly constituency and photograph.
- You will have to fill in the missing fields: date of birth, parents' names and their EPIC numbers (if available), mobile number, and Aadhaar (optional).
- Any adult member of the household can fill the form on your behalf.
- Form can also be filled online.

CHECKING 2002 ROLLS

- You will be asked to trace your, a parent's, or a relative's name in the rolls of 2002 — the last time SIR was conducted in Delhi.
- If you remember having voted in Delhi before 2002, you should be able to locate your name and details in the voters' list of 2002 on the website of Chief Electoral Officer, Delhi.
- If you moved to Delhi after 2002, go to the website voters.eci.gov.in and find the voters' list of the state where you lived earlier. Look for your name and details.
- If you can't find your own name in any roll, or if you weren't registered as a voter at the time, look for the name of a parent or close relative. If you can find those details, you can fill them in the form.

SUBMITTING THE FORM

- Hand it over to your BLO; you

KEY DATES

AUGUST 5

Publication of draft electoral rolls

AUGUST 5 TO SEPTEMBER 4

Claims & objections

AUGUST 5 TO OCTOBER 3

Hearings & verification

OCTOBER 7

Final rolls

will get an acknowledgment. If you've submitted the form online on voters.eci.gov.in, take a screenshot or save the receipt.

PREPARING YOUR DOCUMENTS

- This step applies only to voters who can't trace their own name or that of a parent/relative in the old rolls.
- After the draft rolls are published on Aug 5, you will be asked to produce one of the following documents:
 - ID card or pension payment order issued to a regular employee or pensioner of the central/state govts, PSUs; any ID issued by govt, local authorities, banks, post office, LIC or PSUs prior to 01.07.1987; birth certificate; passport; matriculation or educational certificate; permanent residence certificate; forest

rights certificate; caste certificate. (List not exhaustive) Aadhaar is not sufficient to prove eligibility, and must be accompanied by another document.

WHO HAS TO SUBMIT WHAT

- Born in India before July 1, 1987: document proving date and/or place of birth.
- Born between July 1, 1987, and December 2, 2004: Document for the elector and one parent.
- Born after December 2, 2004: Documents for elector, parents.

AFTER AUGUST 5

- Check if draft electoral roll has your name.
- If your name is missing or details are incorrect, you can file a claim or objection between August 5 and September 9.
- Between August 5 and October 3, all voters who could not trace their own or their family's name in the old SIR rolls will receive a notice from their Electoral Registration Officer seeking documents to prove eligibility.
- You will get this notice even if your name appears in the draft rolls, but you left the "past SIR roll" fields blank in the form.

AFTER FINAL ROLLS

- Final electoral rolls will be published on Oct 7. If your name is not there, you can appeal the decision with the DM within 15 days.
- If first appeal fails, you can submit a second appeal with the Chief Electoral Officer in next 15 days.

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RECLAIMING PUBLIC SPACES

Green belts to green drains: Gurgaon's plan to tackle waterlogging in monsoon

Abhimanyu Hazarika
Gurgaon, May 16

TO FACILITATE quicker stormwater drainage and improve groundwater recharge ahead of monsoon, the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) said it has, for the first time, begun lowering green belts across the city.

The GMDA is making the roadside green areas slightly lower than the roads so rainwater can flow into them more easily during the monsoon.

The primary aim is to develop these spaces into bioswales — landscaped channels specifically designed to treat and absorb stormwater runoff — effectively turning them into 'green drains', officials said.

By lowering the elevation of these belts below road level, surface water can naturally flow into them, preventing waterlogging on roads while simultaneously recharging the local groundwater table, they explained.

The initiative is part of a larger civic drive to reclaim public spaces, which involves extensive removal of construction and demolition (C&D) waste, debris, and excess soil from green belts along a 45-km master road network, officials said.

Operations are currently underway across major city corridors, including stretches from Signature Chowk to Atul Kataria Chowk, Subhash



Landscaping and green belt cleaning work underway at the IFFCO chowk-SPR stretches. EXPRESS

Chowk to Millennium City Centre, Old Railway Road, and the IFFCO Chowk to Southern Peripheral Road (SPR).

"GMDA is carrying out extensive city-wide operations for the improvement of the green environment across Gurgaon. With dedicated manpower and machinery deployed on the ground, work is being undertaken in mission mode to enhance the overall urban environment and strengthen preparedness during the monsoon season," P C Meena, GMDA Chief Executive Officer, said.

To execute round-the-clock operations, the authority has deployed more than 100 personnel and 20 earth-moving machines. Teams are undertaking large-scale clearance and levelling of green belts that have been encroached upon by dumped construction material

and silt over time.

Following this, phased plantation and landscaping works are being carried out to restore the roadside ecology at multiple intersections, including Rajiv Chowk and Sectors 89 and 90.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, GMDA executive engineer Amit Godara confirmed the lowering of the green belts is being done for the first time in the city. "It is an ongoing drive and will carry on even post monsoon, along with aggressive cleaning and desilting of drains. We are also ensuring that road gullies (placed along road edges to collect surface water runoff and channel it into underground pipes) are cleared," Godara said.

However, at the key Golf Course Road stretch, the lowering of green belts cannot be

executed due to structural limitations. "There, the belts are not carpeted in a way that it can be lowered (like being on raised dividers)," Godara explained.

Alongside the green belt modifications, sanitation drives are being conducted along key locations including Sector 84, Sector 102, Sector 14, Sectors 44/45, near the IFFCO Metro Station, and Subhash Chowk. "These efforts are aimed at preventing choke points in the drainage network and ensuring uninterrupted water flow during rainfall," officials said.

The GMDA has also removed over 200 damaged jersey barriers, concrete blocks, and other obstructions from New Railway Road, Rajiv Chowk, and adjoining stretches to streamline vehicular movement.

Approximately 4.1 km of surface drains along the Sector 46/39/40 dividing road and 1.55 km along the Sector 60/61 dividing road have been comprehensively desilted. Heavy silt deposits, sludge, and accumulated debris that had significantly reduced the carrying capacity of these drains have been removed. Additionally, desilting is currently underway along the Sector 39/46 master road and other critical stretches.

To further enhance stormwater run-off from main carriageways, the construction of new road gullies and the cleaning of existing water traps are being undertaken, officials said.

EOW busts fake GST rackets worth Rs 140 cr, CA held with 7

Express News Service
New Delhi, May 16

A CHARTERED accountant (CA) allegedly used his firm to swindle crores by using credentials of several companies. In another case, a man promised a job in the GST department allegedly allowed his Aadhaar, PAN and biometric details to be used to float a fake company that recorded transactions worth over Rs 128 crore.

The two frauds uncovered by the Delhi Police Economic Offences Wing (EOW), involving transactions worth over Rs 140 crore conducted through bogus GST returns and fake invoices, have resulted in the arrest of eight persons, including the CA, police said on Saturday.

The police identified the accused as CA Atul Gupta and seven others — Raj Kumar Dixit, Dilip Kumar, Vibhash Kumar Mitra, Amar Kumar, Nitin Verma, Mohd Waseem and Abid. In the first case, the EOW booked the CA, who allegedly used his firm to file GST returns in the names of several companies, including legitimate firms whose owners had no knowledge that their credentials were being used.

"GST dues and penalties linked to some entities were deposited through personal accounts of employees and later reimbursed. Accused allegedly created and operated dummy firms using forged or misused credentials and documents. These firms were then used to

route huge transactions through multiple bank accounts in order to obscure the money trail," said an officer.

The case originated from a complaint filed by one Yashashree Sharma, who alleged that unknown persons had fraudulently used the credentials and documents of his firm Swastik Enterprises to conduct suspicious business transactions worth nearly Rs 28.4 crore without his knowledge or consent.

Police said the bank accounts operated in the name of Swastik Enterprises were used for routing large sums received from multiple firms and entities. Analysis of banking transactions showed that funds credited into these accounts were either immediately withdrawn in cash or transferred to various beneficiary accounts through RTGS and NEFT transactions, said the officer.

In the other case, the EOW arrested six accused who allegedly created fake firms, generated bogus GST invoices and fraudulently claimed Input Tax Credit (ITC) without any actual supply of goods or services.

"The case was registered on March 24 at EOW police station after a complaint was received regarding fraudulent creation of a proprietorship firm, R K Enterprises, using the identity documents of an unsuspecting individual on the false promise of employment in the GST department," said Additional CP Ravi Kumar Singh.

Police said the victim's Aad-

haar card, PAN card, electricity bill and biometric details were misused to create the firm in September 2025 without his knowledge. The probe later revealed transactions exceeding Rs 128 crore and fraudulent availing of nearly Rs 10 crore as ITC.

During investigation, police identified Raj Kumar Dixit and Dilip Kumar as the alleged main conspirators. Dixit, a resident of Daryaganj, allegedly operated nearly 250 shell companies using forged documents and fake credentials despite having studied only up to Class 9.

According to the police, the syndicate relied on accountants, intermediaries, multiple bank accounts and disposable mobile numbers to conceal the financial trail and avoid detection. Vibhash Kumar Mitra and Amar Kumar allegedly facilitated registration and operation of shell firms by using identity documents of unsuspecting individuals for monetary gains. The EOW said the other accused — Nitin Verma, Mohd Waseem and Abid — allegedly provided bank accounts, Internet banking access and operational support for routing transactions linked to fake GST activities.

Multiple EOW teams in coordinated raids across Delhi-NCR arrested the accused from different locations on May 15.

Police said that like the previous case, this syndicate also relied on shell entities, created using forged credentials.

Skywatch



Forecast: May 17, 2026

Partly cloudy sky

Possibility of thunder

MAX: 42-44

3.6°C above normal

MIN: 25-27

1.5°C below normal

AQI Tracker



Anand Vihar Moderate AQI: 200

Narela Poor AQI: 204



Jahangirpuri Poor AQI: 238

Rohini Moderate AQI: 198



Good (0-50)

Satisfactory (51-100)

Moderate (101-200)

Poor (201-300)

Very Poor (301-400)

Severe (401-500)

BRIEFLY

Gogi gang shooter held

DELHI POLICE Special Cell has arrested a suspected shooter linked to jailed gangster Jitender Gogi gang from Outer Delhi's Alipur. Police identified the accused as Sonu alias Sachin Chaudhary (24), a Panipat resident. He was arrested on Thursday. PTI



दिल्ली जल बोर्ड द्वारा लगाए जा रहे INFRASTRUCTURE CHARGES (IFC) को तर्कसंगत बनाने का लिया गया फैसला

दिल्ली जल बोर्ड ने उपभोक्ताओं को दी IFC में अंतरिम राहत !

लाभ: 1 केवल 25% शुल्क जमा कर बिल्डिंग प्लान के लिए प्रोविजनल NOC प्राप्त करें।
शेष राशि, समीक्षा के पश्चात् निर्धारित हुई दर के अनुसार जल कनेक्शन स्वीकृति के समय देय होगी।
यह व्यवस्था निर्माण कार्यों में अनावश्यक विलंब को समाप्त करने में सहायक सिद्ध होगी एवं यह निर्णय Ease of Doing Business की दिशा में बड़ा कदम साबित होगा।

तीन लाभ एक साथ

दिल्ली जल बोर्ड लाया है बड़ी राहत का मौका!!

लाभ: 2

बकाया पानी बिल पर लगे सरचार्ज को शत-प्रतिशत खत्म करने का सुनहरा अवसर ! यह लेट पेमेंट सरचार्ज योजना (LPSC Scheme) अब घरेलू के साथ कमर्शियल उपभोक्ताओं के लिए भी लागू है।

सिर्फ बिल की मूल राशि जमा करें और सरचार्ज से 100% मुक्ति पाएं !!

इस योजना की अंतिम तिथि 15 अगस्त 2026 है।

लाभ: 3

अवैध जल/सीवर कनेक्शन नियमितीकरण (200 वर्गमीटर तक के प्लॉट्स) पर विशेष छूट लागू

घरेलू कनेक्शन

₹24,570 के बजाय
मात्र ₹1000 रुपये में

व्यावसायिक कनेक्शन

₹61,056 के बजाय
मात्र ₹5000 रुपये में

इस योजना की अंतिम तिथि 31 अगस्त 2026 है।

उपभोक्ता दिल्ली जल बोर्ड की अधिकृत वेबसाइट <https://djb.gov.in/DJBRMSPortal/> अथवा DJB mSeva मोबाइल ऐप द्वारा क्रेडिट कार्ड, डेबिट कार्ड, नेट बैंकिंग, PhonePe, Paytm, Amazon Pay, MobiKwik आदि UPI माध्यमों से घर बैठे बिल का भुगतान व कनेक्शन नियमितीकरण पर छूट प्राप्त कर सकते हैं।



शीघ्र लाभ उठाएं।
दिल्ली जल बोर्ड
दिल्ली सरकार

India's aspirations are no longer limited to its boundaries, Modi tells diaspora

Says country going through a phase of unprecedented transformation

Express News Service
New Delhi, May 16

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Saturday hailed the Indian diaspora in the Netherlands as a vibrant bridge between the two nations.

He urged all "friends of India" in the Netherlands to deepen their engagement with India. Even as he sought to underline the nation's development since the formation of the BJP-led government in 2014, PM Modi laid stress on India and the Netherlands' resilience in the midst of what was globally playing out to be "a decade of disasters".

"Today is May 16 and this day is special because of another reason. Twelve years ago, on May 16, 2014, something special had happened... the Lok Sabha results had come in. After decades, there was certainty of a stable and majority government in India. Then as today, the immense trust reposed in me by Indians neither allows me to stop nor to tire," he said.

Modi recalled the deep and enduring historical ties of the Surinami-Hindustani community with India, commending their efforts to preserve and celebrate their rich cultural heritage across generations. Underlining India's ambition to become a global growth engine, he said it has achieved record progress in creation of infra ranging from highways to being home to the third-largest startup ecosystem in the world.

"If a nation wants to progress, it must dream big. Today,

our India is dreaming big too. Today it says we do not want just transformation, we want the best. Not just the best, we want the fastest... When aspirations in India are unlimited, efforts are becoming limitless," he said.

"India's aspirations are no longer limited to its boundaries. It wants to host the Olympics, become a global manufacturing hub, a leader in green technology and the world's growth engine," the PM said.

From rail electrification and operationalising high-speed trains such as Vande Bharat, India is achieving the biggest targets as it progresses through a phase of "unprecedented transformation", he said.

"This aspiration-driven journey of India is also empowering our democracy. When people's dreams are realised, their trust in democracy is also strengthened... Assam, Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry saw 80 to 90% voting this time. Women participation increased significantly," he said.

"Today, humanity is facing significant challenges too... First Corona came then wars began and now there is an energy crisis. This decade is becoming one of global disasters for the world... If these conditions do not change, the achievements of previous years will go to waste," he said.

"The world is talking of resilient supply chains and India and the Netherlands are engaged in building a trusted and future-ready supply chain. From energy security to water security, the Netherlands and India are working together."



PM Narendra Modi at a community programme in The Hague, Saturday; the 11th-century Chola dynasty copper plates in The Hague. ANI, PTI



Netherlands returns 11th-century Chola plates

Divya A
New Delhi, May 16

MORE THAN 300 years after they were taken away from a remote site in Tamil Nadu's Nagapattinam, the 11th-century Chola plates were handed over to India by the Netherlands on Saturday during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit, marking a significant milestone in New Delhi's pitch for restitution of colonial pillage.

Behind the return of 30-kg Chola Plates is a foolproof provenance claim made by India and a national policy framed by the Dutch government for the return of colonial plunder. Even as they were handed over by Dutch PM Rob Jetten, the plates — in the possession of Leiden University since 1862 — will be returned to India in a few weeks, according to sources.

The restitution comes on the advice of the national Colonial Collections Committee of the Netherlands, they add, in response to a request by the Ministry of Culture in 2023, stating that the Copper Chola Plates

originate from India and record important agreements about the right of a Buddhist shrine and a number of monasteries in Nagapattinam in India to the revenue of villages.

Calling it a joyous moment for every Indian, the PM said in a post on X, "... The Chola Copper Plates are a set of 21 large plates and 3 small plates and largely contain texts in Tamil, one of the most beautiful languages of the world. They relate to the great Rajendra Chola I formalising an oral commitment made by his father, King Rajaraja I. They also showcase the greatness of the Cholas. We in India are immensely proud of the Cholas, their culture and their maritime prowess." He also thanked the Netherlands government and the Leiden University.

Thanking the PM, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on X, "This is a precious record of the great Chola kings Rajaraja and his successor Rajendra Chola, called Anaimangalam copper plates. You have relentlessly taken efforts to bring back valuable antiques."

One object (origin: 1687) comprises 21 copper plates held together by a bronze ring bearing the seal of King Rajendra Chola I during his reign in the 11th century. Five plates contain Sanskrit inscriptions, and the remaining are in Tamil. The other object (origin: 1688) comprises three copper plates with Tamil inscriptions also held together by a bronze ring bearing the seal of King Kulottunga Chola I (who ruled from 1070 to 1120).

According to a statement by Leiden University on Saturday, a Provenance investigation was launched. It also sought advice from the Colonial Collections Committee, which conducted another investigation, while taking the results of earlier research into account. In its advisory report, issued to Leiden University in 2025-end, the committee concluded that the Chola Plates should be returned to India.

As per the university statement, the provenance investigation demonstrated that the plates were most likely excavated during the construction of Fort Vijf Sinnen and the redevelop-

ment of the site at the 'Chinese' Pagoda in Nagapattinam by the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) between 1687 and 1700. At the time, Nagapattinam had been captured by the VOC.

The committee determined that the Chola Plates were taken out of the area without the consent of the rights holders at the time, which constitutes an involuntary loss of possession and advised the university to unconditionally return both sets of plates to India.

The committee said it was likely that the objects were subsequently brought to the Netherlands in 1712 by the Camper-Kettings — Florentius Camper was a pastor in Batavia. But how the couple acquired them is unclear. Their descendants donated the objects to Leiden University in 1862, where a relative, Hendrik Arent Hamaker, had been Professor of Eastern Languages until 1835. As per officials, the plates will come to the ASI in New Delhi and it will decide whether, and if so, where the objects will be exhibited to the public, they add.



Veteran actor and MNM president Kamal Haasan with Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Vijay in Chennai on Saturday. ANI

Vijay keeps Home, Police and Urban Affairs; Finance for Sengottaiyan

Arun Janardhanan
Chennai, May 16

CHIEF MINISTER C Joseph Vijay has retained control over some of the most politically sensitive departments in Tamil Nadu's new TVK government, including Home, Police, General Administration, Women Welfare, Youth Welfare and Municipal Administration, while allocating Finance to former AIADMK veteran K A Sengottaiyan.

According to a Lok Bhavan press release dated May 16, Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar approved the portfolio allocation recommended by Vijay.

Vijay will handle Public, General Administration, IAS, IPS, IFS, District Revenue Officers, Police, Home, Special Programme Implementation, Women Welfare, Youth Welfare, Welfare of Children, Aged and Differently Aabled Persons, Municipal Administration, Urban and Water Supply.

N "Bussy" Anand, the long-time organiser who helped convert Vijay's fan-club ecosystem into a political machine, has been named Minister for Rural Development and Water Resources. Aadhav Arjuna, one of the TVK's key campaign managers and a central figure in the party's negotiations, has been given Public Works and Sports Development, including build-

ings, highways and minor ports. Dr K G Arunraj, the former IRS officer and one of the TVK's most technocratic faces, will handle Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare.

Sengottaiyan, among the few ministers in the new government with long legislative and administrative experience, has been given Finance, Pensions and Pension Allowances — a significant assignment in a Cabinet otherwise dominated by first-generation TVK faces.

P Venkataraman will handle Food and Civil Supplies, Consumer Protection and Price Control, while R Nirmalkumar has been allotted Energy Resources and Law. Rajmohan, the digital-era communicator and TVK propaganda face, has been assigned School Education, Tamil Development, Information and Publicity.

Dr T K Prabhu has been made Minister for Natural Resources, with charge of minerals and mines, while S Keerthana has been given Industries and Investment Promotion. The allocation reflects Vijay's attempt to balance trust, visibility and administrative need: keeping command portfolios with himself, placing Finance with the most experienced political hand, and giving younger TVK faces departments tied to the party's campaign promises and development pitch.

IWT: India rejects 'so-called' arbitration award as 'null & void'

Express News Service
New Delhi, May 16

INDIA ON Saturday rejected the "so-called award" issued on May 15 by the "illegally constituted so-called" Court of Arbitration (CoA) regarding disputes with Pakistan over the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT).

Responding to media queries, Ministry of External Affairs official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said: "The illegally constituted so-called Court of Arbitration (CoA) has, on 15 May, 2026, issued what it termed an award concerning maximum pondage supplemental to the award on issues of general interpretation of the Indus Waters Treaty."

"India categorically rejects the present so-called award, just as it has firmly rejected all prior pronouncements of the illegally constituted CoA," Jaiswal said.

He said India has never recognised the establishment of

this "so-called" CoA. "Any proceeding, award, or decision issued by it is null and void. India's decision to hold the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance remains in force," he said.

The IWT was signed on September 19, 1960 after nine years of negotiations between India and Pakistan.

In January 2023, India issued a notice to Pakistan seeking a "modification" of the treaty. This was the first such notice in the more than six decades of the IWT's existence.

India upped the ante in September 2024 by issuing another formal notice to Islamabad, this time seeking the "review and modification" of the IWT. The word "review", according to experts, effectively signals New Delhi's intent to revoke and renegotiate the treaty, which will turn 65 this year. India decided to keep the IWT in abeyance after the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, in which 26 people were killed.

Nitin Nabin to visit Bhubaneswar today

Bhubaneswar: BJP chief Nitin Nabin is scheduled to arrive in Bhubaneswar on Sunday night on a maiden two-day visit to Odisha, a party leader said.

Nabin was earlier slated to

arrive on Monday, he said. He will participate in the state core committee meeting Monday, and also interact with ministers, party spokesperson Sudipta Ray said.

PTI

Sunetra vs old guard: Why NCP totters as first family cuts Praful, Tatkare down to size

Alok Deshpande
Mumbai, May 16

LAST MONDAY, when senior NCP leaders Praful Patel and Sunil Tatkare landed at the Guwahati airport to attend the next day's swearing-in ceremony of BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma as the Assam CM, they received an image on their phones of a letter sent to the EC by their party president and Maharashtra Deputy CM Sunetra Pawar.

NCP working president Patel and state party chief Tatkare were stunned to see that Sunetra's letter dated April 29 listing the party's national office-bearers did not name either of them. What was equally shocking to them was that Sunetra was a co-passenger in the flight to Guwahati to attend Sarma's swearing-in, but she did not give them any idea about her move.

Others senior NCP leaders like Chhagan Bhujbal and Dilip Walse Patil also did not feature in the 12-member office-bearers' list, which name Sunetra's two sons, Rajya Sabha MP Parth Pawar and Jay Pawar, as a national general secretary and a national secretary respectively.

The names of Patel and Tatkare appear in a separate list of 22 members of the NCP Working Committee, but even this does not specify their designations.

Later on Monday night, Su-



The move by Deputy CM Sunetra Pawar is seen in NCP circles as an attempt to sharpen the message that even after the demise of her husband Ajit Pawar, her family would continue to dominate the party.

netra clarified on X, saying the lists being circulated online contained "mistakes" and that corrections would be made soon.

It is however evident that Sunetra Pawar and her two sons have stamped their authority all over the lists. No senior NCP leader, who has been associated with the party since its inception in 1999 (when Sharad Pawar founded the NCP after walking out of Congress) seemed to have made it to their circle of trusted aides, and none was named as a national office-bearer.

The snubbing of Patel and Tatkare is being seen in NCP circles as an attempt by Sunetra to sharpen the message that

even after the demise of her husband Ajit Pawar, her family would continue to dominate the party and that their authority cannot be questioned. "Her message is very clear. Either you work for as told or you don't work at all," said an NCP MLA.

Rejigging the NCP office-bearers, Sunetra named MLC Shivajirao Garje and Jay Pawar as the party treasurers. Several virtually unknown party leaders from Delhi were inducted as national office-bearers. Some relatives of the Pawar family, such as Abhishek Bokey and Avinash Adik, were also picked as national secretaries.

"The roots of the crisis are found in the developments after

the sudden demise of Ajit Pawar in a plane crash, which had created an impression that Patel-Tatkare had attempted a hostile takeover of the NCP," a party functionary said, referring to a meeting of veteran party leaders on the eve of Sunetra's swearing-in as the Deputy CM on 31 January. "It was perceived as a coup against her after Ajit Dada's departure," he said.

On February 16, when the Patel-Tatkare faction reportedly submitted an "amended NCP constitution" to the EC, giving equal powers to the party national president and the working president.

To counter it, Sunetra shot off a letter to the EC to not consider any communication sent by the party between January 28 — the day of Ajit Pawar's death — and February 26 — when she took charge as the NCP chief. This move widened the rifts within the NCP leadership.

Parth, 36, is widely seen in NCP circles as the leader who is now calling the shots in the party affairs. NCP sources said that he has virtually become the "final authority on organisational matters" now. The Patel-Tatkare camp has maintained their recent actions were never against the Sunetra Pawar family, but to counter the narrative of a merger allegedly spread by the rival NCP (SP) faction led by Sharad Pawar.

GOVT AGENCIES ZERO IN ON SOUJANYA, A BUILDING IN KOLKATA'S UPSCALE ALIPORE; NO CHIEF MINISTER AFTER JYOTI BASU HAS STAYED IN THE OFFICIAL BUNGALOW

A House for Suwendu: After 25 yrs, Bengal CM may move into official residence

Atri Mitra
Kolkata, May 16

THE CHIEF Minister of the first BJP government in West Bengal, Suwendu Adhikari, is likely to move into a new house in the coming days for which various state agencies, including the PWD, have stepped up preparations.

These agencies have zeroed in on a palatial government building, called Soujanya, as the CM House, located in south Kolkata's upscale Alipore area. Kolkata does not have a permanent CM House that can be used as the official CM residence.

If Suwendu decides to shift to Soujanya, it will be the first time after 25 years that Bengal will have a designated CM House.

CPI(M) stalwart late Jyoti Basu was the last Bengal CM, who had stayed in an official chief ministerial bungalow, Indira Bhavan, in Salt Lake on the outskirts of Kolkata.

After Basu, both the CPI(M)'s three-time CM Buddhadeb Bhattacharya and TMC supremo and three-term CM Mamata Banerjee stayed at their own homes in Kolkata during their chief ministerial tenures.

Sources in the BJP government said Suwendu may shift to

a dedicated CM House from his current flat at Chinar Park in Kolkata. Top state administration officials have chosen the Soujanya complex as the new CM residence after finding it suitable on the grounds of logistics and security, sources said. However, it has yet to get a green signal from Suwendu himself.

Soujanya is on Judges Court Road, which falls under the Bhabanipur constituency where Suwendu defeated Mamata in the recent Assembly polls.

"We are preparing Soujanya as the CM residence. If Suwendu Adhikari agrees to stay there, it will become the official CM



'Soujanya' may make the cut as it is a separate complex and ideal for a CM House because of several facilities. FILE

House. Otherwise, we will have to search for a new home for the CM," said a senior PWD official.

"Adhikari may also stay in a quarter in the Lok Bhavan premises because of

heightened security considerations," a source in the administration said. "The CM currently stays in his Chinar Park flat but intelligence agencies have found it is not secure enough and have advised to shift the CM's residence either to the Soujanya complex or the Lok Bhavan. Soujanya may make the cut as it is a separate complex. However, everything depends on what the CM ultimately decides."

Interestingly, the then CM Mamata Banerjee had inaugurated Soujanya in October 2018, which was envisaged as a VVIP guest house of international

standards for high-profile dignitaries like the President, PM or important international leaders.

Its foundation stone was also laid by Mamata in June 2015. Soujanya is less than two kms from Mamata's residence at Harish Chatterjee Street in Kalighat.

A senior government official said, "Soujanya is ideal for the CM's residence as it has all facilities. The CM can do press conferences there and can also hold conferences or meetings."

In the first decade of his 23-year stint as the Bengal CM since 1977, Jyoti Basu used to stay at his own house at Hin-

dustan Park in South Kolkata. In 1987, he shifted to Indira Bhavan. Even after Basu demitted office as CM in November 2000, he continued to stay in the house, for which the CPI(M) paid a monthly rent. He remained there until his demise in January 2010.

In November 2000, Buddhadeb took charge as CM, but continued to stay at his two-room flat at Palm Avenue. He died in August 2024 in this residence.

After Mamata became CM in 2011, she continued to stay at her modest house at Kalighat during her 15-year tenure.

AMID NEET-UG PAPER LEAK ROW

Court raps CBI for closing 2024 UGC-NET leak probe

The 2024 exam was cancelled after an alleged paper leak on Telegram

Nirbhay Thakur
New Delhi, May 16

AMID THE heated row over the NEET-UG paper leak, a Delhi court has pulled up the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for closing the investigation into the 2024 UGC-NET paper leak case.

Neetu Nagar, Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate at Rouse Avenue Court on Friday demanded a written explanation from the agency, questioning why a closure report was filed in January 2025 despite the CBI's own findings explicitly stating that a suspect had collected money from can-

didates by "luring them with leaked question papers".

"Perusal of the closure report shows that it has been mentioned in para no. 16.30 by the IO (investigating officer) concerned that 'Nikhil Soni has collected money from the aspirants of the UGC-NET 2024 by luring them on pretext of giving/leaking the exam paper,'" said Nagar in her order dated May 15.

"It is manifest that crime has been committed as per the contents of para 16.30 but still the investigating officer has ignored the same and filed a closure report for reasons best known to him," she added.

Following this, the CBI's IO told the court that he needed some time to file an explanation in writing for the same, after which the judge posted the matter for May 21.

What's the case?

In July 2024, the CBI probe into the alleged UGC-NET paper leak found that the "evi-

dence" — which led the Education Ministry to cancel the exam just a day after over 9 lakh candidates appeared for it across 317 cities on June 18 — was "doctored".

As reported earlier by The Indian Express, just a day later that year, the Centre cancelled the exam crucial for entry-level teaching jobs and PhD admissions in Indian universities, following inputs from the Ministry of Home Affairs that stated that "the integrity of the examination may have been compromised".

The alleged evidence was a purported screenshot of the paper being circulated on a Telegram channel around 2pm on the day of the exam, with messages and comments suggesting it was leaked before the first session of the exam.

In its closure report filed before a special court in Rouse Avenue Court in January 2025, the CBI said there was no evidence of paper leak in the case. The agency claimed that as per

forensic experts, the purported screenshot of the paper was fabricated by a school student using a mobile application. The CBI had found that the said screenshot had been manipulated in a way to create the impression that it was available before the examination.

A candidate had allegedly shared a photograph of the question paper on a Telegram channel around 2 pm on June 18, 2024, right after the first session of the UGC-NET. The chatter on the Telegram channels was detected by the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre under the MHA. The University Grants Commission was informed the next day. Based on that input, the government had cancelled the exam.

The CBI took over the probe on June 23. As per the agency, the modus operandi was deciphered based on an analysis of the screenshot and digital trail of the messages exchanged on the Telegram channel where claims of the paper leak were made.

SECOND EXIT IN 30 MONTHS

Punjab Governor's ADC leaves office, set to join real estate firm

No conflict of interest, says Sqn Ldr Malik

Varinder Bhatia
Chandigarh, May 16



Former Aide-de-Camp to Punjab Governor, Squadron Leader Gaurav Malik

SQUADRON LEADER Gaurav Malik, the Aide-de-Camp (ADC) (Military) to the Punjab Governor was on Saturday relieved of his duties becoming the second officer to leave the post in last 30 months amid information that he is all set to join a plush job with a Punjab based real-estate developer.

"He comes from a Short Service Commission and had almost an year left in his service. Though he cited some personal reasons for resignation, he must have found some better opportunity," a senior officer privy to the development told *The Indian Express*.

Multiple sources in the Punjab Lok Bhavan told *The Sunday Express* that Malik had submitted his resignation a few ago

back but his release came suddenly, Saturday.

"Given the sensitive nature of his position in the Lok Bhavan, the move to the private sector for a lucrative job, especially in the same state, was being seen as a conflict of interest. It was also communicated to him that he should reconsider his decision. Had I been in his shoes, I would not have done that, especially not taken up a job in a real-estate firm and that too in the same State," a highly placed source said.

Talking to *The Sunday Ex-*

press, Malik said, "Yes, I have been relieved today. I had resigned due to family reasons. My parents are getting old, which is why I need to be with them".

Regarding the perception of conflict of interest, another senior officer privy to the developments, added, "It could be a coincidence too that he [Malik] was an ADC to the Governor of a State and got an opportunity to work in the same state. As such, defence officers do take up private jobs, post-retirement".

Malik, however, denied any conflict of interest. "There is nothing like that. We [ADCs] only fix appointments and tour programmes of the Governor. As such, my family is based in Haryana and my in-laws are in Gurgaon. I am going to settle with them," he said.

Malik had moved from Assam to Punjab as ADC (M) with Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria in August, 2024.

Similar is the story of former ADC (M) Sqn Ldr Amit Tiwari who moved from Tamil Nadu

to Punjab with the then Governor Banwari Lal Purohit as his ADC in January 2024. Purohit had earlier remained Governor of Assam and later of Tamil Nadu, before his stint in Punjab. Tiwari is currently the Officer on Special Duty (OSD) to Governor Kataria. The Punjab Governor is also the Administrator of Union Territory of Chandigarh.

Speaking with *The Sunday Express*, Tiwari said, "I did not resign from the India Air Force (IAF), but I retired. I completed my tenure as Short Service Commission officer. I had applied for other jobs too, including at the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and other organisations, but somehow things did not materialise. Yes, I am working as OSD to the Governor, but it is like most of other Short Service Commission officers who seek jobs post-retirement. Many of my friends [course mates] are working in private sector companies, because a lot of officers do not get permanent commission these days".

Rahul Gandhi seeks Pradhan's ouster over NEET paper leak

Express News Service
New Delhi, May 16

LOK SABHA Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi in a video statement on Saturday demanded Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's "sacking" and alleged that RSS-BJP "nexus" in universities is "making money" and "finishing" the education sector of the country. Rahul also said that if Pradhan is not sacked, then Prime Minister Narendra Modi should himself take responsibility for the paper leak.

The NEET-UG 2026 exam was cancelled following the paper leak, with a retest now scheduled for June 21. So far, nine accused have been arrested from Delhi, Jaipur, Gurgaon, Nashik, Pune and Ahilyanagar. Of these, five have already been remanded to seven days of police custody. Two accused arrested earlier were produced before a Pune court, granted transit remand and shifted to Delhi, where they are being produced before the court.

In a post on X, Gandhi said:

"22 lakh NEET kids have been cheated. But Modi ji isn't saying a word. Remove Dharmendra Pradhan ji right now, or take responsibility yourself. Modi ji, sack Dharmendra Pradhan ji now." In a video statement along with the post, Rahul said: "The entire country knows that two days before the examination, the NEET question paper was distributed. Dharmendra Pradhan, who is the Union Minister for Education, says he has nothing to do with it. A committee had made some recommendations but he said that Opposition people were sitting in committee and it has no meaning."

Rahul's reference was to a Parliamentary committee headed by Rajya Sabha MP and Congress leader Digvijaya Singh, which had in December last year said in a report that the National Testing Agency (NTA) "has not inspired much confidence" and it should quickly get its act together, and use the surplus of Rs 448 crore it has collected in the past six years to build its capabilities and conduct tests itself.

Centre clears two joint secys, joint directors for NTA

Express News Service
New Delhi, May 16

WITH THE CBI probing into the NEET-UG 2026 alleged paper leak and the government announcing that the test would be computer-based from next year onwards, the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet on Saturday cleared the appointment of two joint secretaries and two joint directors to the National Testing Agency (NTA), as per orders issued by the Department of Personnel and Training.

Anuja Bapat, a 1998-batch Indian Statistical Service officer, and Ruchita Vij, a 2004-batch IRS (Customs and Indirect Taxes) officer, have been appointed as joint secretaries in the NTA for five years each or until further orders. This has been done by temporarily upgrading the Deputy Secretary/Director-level posts in the NTA to the level of joint secretary.

Akash Jain, a 2013-batch IRS (Income Tax) officer, and Aditya Rajendra Bhojgadhya, a 2013-batch Indian Audit and Ac-

counts Service officer, have been appointed as joint directors in the NTA.

On Friday, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan admitted there was need for further reforms within the NTA. "We have received several suggestions for reforms. Reforms are a continuous process... That the NTA becomes zero-error, this is our responsibility, and we will do it... Certainly, there is a need for further reforms in the NTA. We have taken this seriously. We have fixed the loopholes that were found in 2024. Despite that, this unfortunate incident has happened," he said.

Over 22 lakh candidates had taken the NEET-UG exam on May 3 which was cancelled earlier this week over paper leak allegations, with the retest now scheduled on June 21. A high-level committee of experts formed in 2024 following the NEET-UG paper leak had recommended restructuring of the NTA, with 10 verticals headed by directors and two additional director generals.

UP: Ex-MLA, wife, son get 10-yr jail for property grab

Manish Sahu
Lucknow, May 16

A LOCAL court in Bhadohi has sentenced jailed former MLA Vijay Mishra (70) to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment in a six-year-old case of usurping the property of a relative.

His wife Ram Lali Mishra and son Vishnu Mishra have also been awarded 10-year imprisonment in the case, while his daughter-in-law Roopa Mishra has been sentenced to four years in jail.

This is the seventh conviction of Vijay Mishra, who has been lodged in an Agra jail since 2020.

District government counsel, Bhadohi, Dinesh Pandey said Vijay Mishra and Vishnu were already in judicial custody. Ram Lali Mishra, a former MLC, and Roopa Mishra, who had been released on bail earlier, were taken into custody being convicted by the court on Wednesday.

Pandey said Vijay Mishra appeared before the court through videoconferencing.

Remarks on Brahmins: Court orders FIR against director Anurag Kashyap

Surat: A court in Surat in Gujarat on Saturday ordered the registration of a criminal case against filmmaker-actor Anurag Kashyap over his social media remarks on the Brahmin community. The court of Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) A S Jani partly allowed a private complaint filed by lawyer and Vishva Hindu Parishad leader Kamlesh Raval, and directed that a criminal case be registered against Kashyap after noting there is reason to believe the so-

cial media post was made viral by the accused in a way that it defames a certain community.

The court directed registration of a case under relevant sections of the BNS. The complain-

ant, who hails from the Brahmin community, moved the court over Kashyap's "objectionable" social media post on X which he said defamed the entire Brahmin community. PTI

PUBLIC NOTICE

UPPAL CHADHA HI-TECH DEVELOPERS PVT. LTD.
Registered Office: M-4, First floor, South Extension-II, New Delhi-110049
This is to inform the general public that Uppal Chadha Hi-tech Developers Pvt. Ltd. (UCHDPL) has received the Environmental Clearance (EC) Certificate from State Level Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), Uttar Pradesh for its project WAVE CITY, under Proposal No. SIA/UP/INFRA2/550281/2025. The Environmental Clearance details are available for public access on the Parivesh Portal (www.parivesh.nic.in).
For and on behalf of
UPPAL CHADHA HI-TECH DEVELOPERS PVT. LTD.
Date: 16-05-2026
Place: Delhi

Lakshmi Bai National Institute of Physical Education, Gwalior
Deemed to be University
Government of India,
Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports

NATIONAL SCHOOL CONNECT PROGRAM
Under the leadership of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS), Government of India, New Delhi, the Lakshmi Bai National Institute of Physical Education (LNPE), Gwalior is launching the National School Connect Program 'YES PE' (Young Engagement in Sports & Physical Education) for students of classes 9th to 12th. For more information, please visit www.lnpe.edu.in.
(Prof. Yatendra Kumar Singh)
Registrar / I/c

Government of Maharashtra
School Education & Sports Dept.
Maharashtra Prathamik Shikshan Parishad
10th floor, K.G. Mittal Hospital, Netaji Subhash Marg, Charni Road, Mumbai- 400004

NOTICE FOR E-TENDER
MAHARASHTRA Prathamik Shikshan Parishad, Government of Maharashtra is inviting e-tenders from registered and experienced suppliers for the transportation of textbooks and educational materials from Balbharti and SCERT, Pune warehouses to taluka level to provided free textbooks and educational materials to students in schools for the academic year 2026-27 under Samagra Shiksha and PM Shri.
For the detailed Tender document, interested bidders should visit <https://mahatenders.gov.in>
Tender submission would be online and the deadline to submit the proposal is dt. 04.06.2026 at 4.00 pm.
Date : 14.05.2026
Sd/-
(Devidas Kulkal)
Joint Director (Admin),
MPSP, Mumbai
DGIPR-2026-27/811

अखिल भारतीय आयुर्विज्ञान संस्थान (अ.भा.आ.सं.), भुवनेश्वर
ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), BHUBANESWAR
(A Statutory body under aegis of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India)
Sijua, Post-Dumuduma, Bhubaneswar (Odisha) - 751019
File No.: RECT-11012/1/2026-RECU SEC (I/23298/2026) Date: 15.05.2026

NOTIFICATION
RECRUITMENT OF ASSISTANT PROFESSOR (GROUP 'A') POSTS IN LIVER TRANSPLANT UNIT OF AIIMS BHUBANESWAR ON DIRECT RECRUITMENT BASIS-2026: REG.
All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Bhubaneswar, an Autonomous Institute of National Importance, is one of the new AIIMS and apex healthcare institute being established by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) with the aim to address regional disparities in quality tertiary healthcare across the country while promoting self-sufficiency in undergraduate, postgraduate, and higher medical education, research and training.
The following Assistant Professor posts are being advertised for recruitment against the sanctioned vacant posts for the Liver Transplant Unit. Accordingly, the Online applications are invited from eligible Indian citizens and other candidates as permitted under applicable laws for the post of Assistant Professor in Liver Transplant Unit of AIIMS Bhubaneswar, on a Direct Recruitment Basis. The link for submission of online applications, along with detailed information regarding the advertised posts, shall be activated from the date of publication of this advertisement in the Employment News/Rozgar Samachar. All relevant details, including the cut-off dates and other important instructions pertaining to this recruitment, will be provided exclusively on the official website of AIIMS Bhubaneswar.

Sl. No.	Post Name	Category	No. of Posts
1	Assistant Professor (Critical Care)	OBC	01
2	Assistant Professor (HPB Surgery)	UR	01
3	Assistant Professor (Anaesthesia)	SC	01
4	Assistant Professor (Paediatric Hepatology)	UR	01

Abbreviation used:
OBC-Other Backward Classes, SC- Scheduled Caste, UR- Unreserved
For comprehensive details regarding educational qualifications, age requirements, and eligibility criteria, please refer to Advertisement No. RECT-11012/1/2026-RECU SEC (I/23297/2026) Dated 15.05.2026, available on the Institute's official website at <https://aiimsbhubaneswar.nic.in/recruitment-notice/>
Sd/-
(Prof. (Dr.) Ashutosh Biswas)
Executive Director
AIIMS, Bhubaneswar

TRAFFIC ADVISORY
IPL T20 CRICKET MATCH
DELHI CAPITALS VS RAJASTHAN ROYALS
on 17-05-2026
7:00PM TO 11:30PM

ARUN JAITLEY STADIUM, FERDZESHAN KOTLA GROUND, NEW DELHI

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

DIVERSION / RESTRICTION ON NEED BASIS
On need basis, there will be traffic diversions / restrictions on Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg and JLN Marg on 17-05-2026 from 05:00 PM to 01:00 AM
No heavy or commercial vehicles will be allowed on the roads from (1) Daryaganj to Delhi Gate Chowk on BSZ Marg (2) Delhi Gate Chowk towards Guru Nanak Chowk on JLN Marg and (3) ITO to Delhi Gate Chowk on BSZ Marg.
Commuters are requested to avoid the following roads from 05:00 PM to 01:00 AM on the day of match when the spectators would be coming to the stadium and congestion is expected:
J.L.N. Marg from Rajghat to Delhi Gate up to R/A Kamia Market (Both Carriageways)
Asaf Ali Road from Turkman Gate to Delhi Gate
BSZ Marg from Delhi Gate to Ramcharan Aggarwal Chowk / ITO Chowk (Both Carriageways)

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

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

PARKING
Labelled Vehicles
Limited parking is available for labelled vehicles in the proximity of the Stadium. Display of car parking label on windscreen is mandatory. Vehicle number must be written on the parking label. Those who do not display parking label with vehicle number will not be allowed in the proximity of the stadium.
Car parking label holders are advised to take Ring Road, J.L.N. Marg, Asaf Ali Road or Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, 'U' turn at Delhi Gate is allowed. Entry to parking lots P1, P2, P3, VIP and VVIP shall be from Bahadurshah Zafar Marg only from near the Vikram Nagar Cut, Shaheed Park.
General Vehicles
No vehicle shall be allowed to be parked on Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, Jawaharalal Nehru Marg & Ring Road from Rajghat to I.P. Flyover (both the carriageways) on the match day. Vehicles parked on these roads shall be towed away and prosecuted as per law.
All the spectators coming in their vehicles shall reach these Park & Ride sites, and avail 'Park & Ride' facility or walk down to reach stadium.

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

BUS All Buses will Start Their Services 2 Hours Before The Start of The Match And Will Continue Till 12:30 AM
TAXI Spectators using app based taxi and other taxis should use the service lane on Ring Road between I.P. Flyover & Rajghat crossing for drop & pickup.

24 Hours Traffic Helpline: 011-25844444 / 1095

'AGAINST FACTS, ASI'S PAST STAND'

AIMPLB says mosque panel to move SC over HC's Bhojshala verdict

Express News Service
New Delhi, May 16

A DAY after the Madhya Pradesh High Court concluded that the religious character of the disputed Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque complex was that of Bhojshala, described as a temple of goddess Vagdevi Saraswati, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) Saturday termed the verdict as "contrary to historical facts, official records, archaeological evidence, and even the earlier stand of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)" and said that the mosque committee will challenge it before the Supreme Court.

In a statement, AIMPLB said the verdict is also in direct conflict with the spirit and constitutional mandate of the Places of Worship Act, 1991. AIMPLB spokesperson S Q R Ilyas said that the verdict has been delivered in disregard of historical evidence, revenue records, colonial-era official documents, gazetteers, and centuries-old Muslim religious association with the site.

Ilyas said that the ASI's earlier position had acknowledged

the shared religious character of the site and for decades, ASI's official records and signboards described the site as 'Bhojshala /Kamal Maula Mosque', which amounted to official recognition of its disputed and shared religious status.

Ilyas said that under the administrative arrangement of 2003, Hindus were allowed to offer prayers on Tuesdays, while Muslims were permitted to offer Friday prayers.

"This arrangement itself was a clear acknowledgment that ASI recognised the historical claims and worship rights of both communities," Ilyas said. "Therefore, the HC's decision to terminate this arrangement marks a departure from ASI's own earlier stand," he said.

Meanwhile, Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind president, Maulana Mahmood Asad Madani, said this is not merely a matter related to a place of worship, but a question of the Constitution, justice, and religious freedom in the country.

"It is difficult to agree with decisions that overlook historical realities and constitutional principles," he said.

8TH CONVICTION SO FAR

Azam Khan gets 2-year jail over 'shoe cleaning' remark

Manish Sahu

Lucknow, May 16

JAILED SAMAJWADI Party leader Azam Khan has been sentenced to two years in prison in a case related to his alleged "cleaning shoes" objectionable remark against government officials, including the then Collector-cum-District Magistrate, during the 2019 Lok Sabha election campaign.

Khan, who is currently lodged in Rampur jail, was also fined Rs 20,000 by a Rampur district court. Aunjaneya Kumar Singh, who is Divisional Commissioner Moradabad, was the then District Magistrate, Rampur, in 2019.

This case is widely regarded as a turning point for Khan, marking the beginning of a prolonged legal action. Around 70 against him were lodged in 2019 alone. A 10-time MLA from Rampur Sadar and former Cabinet minister, Khan has been one of the SP's most prominent Muslim faces and a long-standing influential figure. He has been lodged in jail since November last year after



Azam Khan is currently lodged in Rampur prison. EXPRESS FILE

his conviction in a forgery case relating to the alleged use of two PAN cards.

On Saturday, Khan appeared before the court through video conference.

"The court sentenced Azam Khan to two years imprisonment and also imposed a Rs 20,000 fine on him," said Special Public Prosecutor, Rampur, Rakesh Maurya. The court examined 10 prosecution witnesses in the case.

Maurya added that court held Khan guilty under IPC sections 153-A (promoting enmity between two groups), 153-B

(imputations, assertions prejudicial to national integration), 505 (statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred or ill will between classes). The court also held him guilty under Section 125 of the Representation of People Act.

Khan's lawyer, Nasir Sultan, said an appeal would be filed against the judgment.

What is the 2019 case?

Khan was contesting as the joint candidate of the Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party-Rashtriya Lok Dal (SP-BSP-RLD) alliance from the Rampur parliamentary constituency when the alleged remarks were made in 2019.

According to the prosecution, the case was registered against Khan on May 11, 2019, at Bhot police station on a complaint by the then Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Rampur, Ghanshyam Tripathi.

The complaint alleged that at a public meeting during the Lok Sabha election campaign, Khan made objectionable remarks against government officials. The statement was cir-

culated on social media in a violation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), stated the complainant.

Mounting cases

According to Uttar Pradesh Police records, more than 81 cases were registered against Khan after the BJP assumed power in the state in 2017.

A significant majority of these cases — around 70 — were lodged in 2019 alone, with six additional cases reportedly registered in 2020. The charges span alleged offences including land grabbing, cheating, vandalism, criminal trespass, hate speech, and criminal intimidation. Including the current case, Khan has been convicted in eight cases — seven in Rampur and one in Moradabad. He has filed appeals against the judgments, which were allowed in a few cases. He obtained bail in some cases after conviction was suspended.

In addition, Khan has been acquitted in six other cases. However, the state government has challenged a few of these acquittals in higher courts.

• BRIEFLY



Home Minister Amit Shah at a meeting in Ahmedabad, Saturday, PTI.

GUJARAT

Convoy shrunk, no reception at airport: Shah's austerity measures

UNION HOME Minister Amit Shah, who began a two-day visit to Gujarat on Saturday, ensured that the austerity measures Prime Minister Narendra Modi suggested were followed even in meetings reviewing project progress in the Gandhinagar Lok Sabha constituency, which he represents. This included shrinking his convoy, deterring any reception at the airport upon arrival and having only officials from the "specific departments concerned" in the meetings. This is Shah's first visit to Gujarat after the BJP's victory in West Bengal and Assam. PTI

DRI recovers 2.5 kg cocaine at Mumbai airport

THE DIRECTORATE of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has seized cocaine worth Rs 13.2 crore from two passengers in separate operations at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, officials said Saturday. DRI officials intercepted a woman arriving from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and seized 1.575 kg of liquid cocaine concealed in eight pouches from her baggage. Also, an African male passenger was nabbed after he was found to have ingested 70 cocaine-filled capsules, yielding 1.084 kg of cocaine. PTI

Anantnag: Two killed as vehicle falls into gorge

TWO TOURISTS were killed and three persons, including a local driver, injured when their vehicle skidded off the road and plunged into a deep gorge in J&K's Anantnag district on Saturday, officials said. A cab carrying tourists from Gujarat met with an accident on the Pahalgam-Aru route in the south Kashmir district. Two tourists, including a woman, were killed in the accident, while three people, including the driver, were injured. The injured have been admitted to a hospital, they said. PTI

Man 'allows' landlord to sexually assault wife, daughter over 'pending rent'; held

Express News Service
Ahmedabad, May 16

AN INCIDENT has surfaced in Morbi district, Gujarat, of a labourer who "could not afford to pay rent" to his landlord and was allegedly forced to allow the latter to "have his way" with his wife and teenage daughter, a minor, police said on Friday.

The man (tenant) was arrested last month and the accused landlord held Wednesday, while police are on the lookout for a third accused — a relative of the landlord. The accused were booked on charges of rape and its abetment and

undersections of POCSO on the basis of a complaint filed by the woman's mother. Investigators told *The Indian Express* Friday that the tenant did not have enough employment to pay his house rent, which was Rs 1,000-1,500, leading to him allegedly making an oral agreement with the landlord to "have his way" with his wife and daughter.

The Investigation Officer (IO) said, "The landlord had intimate relations with the tenant's wife and also raped the couple's minor daughter with the tenant's permission. The accrual of rent and his inability to pay led to him making this arrange-

ment." The family first rented this house a few months ago and then left to live somewhere else, but returned to this house recently. However, after three months' rent had piled up, the tenant and landlord reached the "agreement". "When the family went back to live there, the landlord asked the tenant to pay what he could afford and give him permission to sexually assault the wife and daughter."

The IO said, "Police learnt through confidential sources that such an arrangement had been made..." Police have taken the minor's statement. Further investigation is underway.

Asansol: Mob clashes with cops over mosque loudspeaker curbs

Ravik Bhattacharya

Kolkata, May 16

VIOLENCE BROKE out in West Bengal's Asansol on Friday night after a mob allegedly pelted stones and vandalised a police post after complaints against the volume of loudspeakers at a mosque. At least seven people have been arrested in the incident, police said on Saturday.

Police sources claimed a police team urged the locals and mosque authorities to reduce the loudspeaker's volume in Asansol's Jahangir Mohalla. This angered the locals who protested outside the police outpost at around 9 pm. Soon, a scuffle broke out in front of the police outpost, and the mob allegedly pelted stones and vandalised the police outpost. Police claimed that several officers and civilian vehicles were also damaged in the incident. A huge police contingent later arrived at the spot, and police lathicharged the protesters to pacify the situation and disperse the mob.

Meanwhile, police pickets have been put up in the area and the situation is now under control, sources said. Throughout the state, police and the ad-



A policeman walks past a damaged vehicle in Asansol, Saturday, ANI.

ministration held meetings with religious leaders with a set of guidelines issued by the Supreme Court. As per its guidelines, no religious activity is allowed by blocking roads. Besides, all loudspeakers at religious places must maintain a volume between 65 to 75 decibels. Dhruva Das, DCP at Asansol-Durgapur Police Commissionerate, told media on Saturday: "Last night a crowd had gathered to discuss some issue. Police personnel were also there. Two groups had formed amid the crowd, and they started an argument with each other. Police attempted to break it off... However a section of the mob pelted stones at the police out-

post, which caused minor damage. So, we are examining the CCTV to identify those involved. Strict action will be taken."

Police said seven persons have been arrested. Agnimitra Paul, BJP MLA from Asansol Dakshin and the state's urban development minister, while speaking with mediapersons Saturday, said, "Nothing will be allowed which disturbs the public. You cannot block the roads and harass the public. There is an allowed noise pollution level. You cannot exceed it. You cannot exceed the volume level of loudspeakers. You can be Hindu, Sikh, Muslim or Christian, you can even play a DJ — but within the permitted level."

NCB arrests Syrian national, seizes 227 kg Captagon pills worth Rs 182 cr

Express News Service

New Delhi, May 16

THE NARCOTICS Control Bureau (NCB) has arrested a Syrian national and seized over 227 kg 'Captagon' drug worth around Rs 182 crore, marking what it called the country's first major interception of the synthetic drug popularly referred to as the "Jihad drug".

Around 196 kg of the drug powder was seized from Gujarat's Mundra while another 36 kg Captagon tablets from a Delhi house this week. The bust was

part of an NCB operation, code-named 'Operation RAGEPILL'. Captagon pills mainly contain fenetyline and amphetamine — psychotropic substances banned under the NDPS Act.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on X, "Glad to share that through 'Operation RAGEPILL', our agencies have achieved the first-ever seizure of Captagon, the so-called 'Jihad Drug', worth Rs 182 crore... Kudos to the brave and vigilant warriors of the NCB."

The NCB said that information was received from a for-

ign drug law enforcement agency that India is being used as transit for trafficking Captagon, and a house was identified in South Delhi's Neb Sarai.

"Search of the house on May 11 led to recovery of about 31.5 kg Captagon tablets, concealed in a commercial chapatti cutting machine which preliminary probe suggests was intended for export to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia," an NCB spokesperson said. The Syrian national "was illegally overstaying in India and had taken the said house in Neb Sarai on rent".

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

E-TENDERING NOTICE
Divisional Railway Manager (Electrical/General), North Eastern Railway, Varanasi for and on behalf of President of India invites Online (E-Tendering) "Open Tenders" for the following work:-

SL.No.-01, Tender reference No.: E-Tender-L-11-26-27, Name of work: Electrical work connection to (i) Construction of new running room 30 bedded at Ghazipur City (ii) Provision of construction of new running room 12 bedded at Azamgarh (iii) Provision of 30 bedded running room at Thawe Jn (iv) Provision of additional 30 bedded rooms at existing running room at Chhapra Jn. (v) Provision of additional running room for crew staff (30 bedded) at Banaras (vi) Provision of construction for new rooms for 02 bed capacity in Siwan running room. Approx. Cost. (in Rs.): ₹ 48,04,189.93, Earnest Money (in Rs.): ₹ 96,100-. Completion period: 04 Months. Date & time of Closing Tender: 09-06-2026, 14:30 Hrs. Date & time of Opening Tender: 09-06-2026, 14:30 Hrs., SL.No.-02, Tender reference No.: E-Tender-L-12-26-27, Name of work: Provision of Pre-cooling cum Battery charging Points at Siwan & Mau stations. Approx. Cost (in Rs.): ₹ 85,53,704.37, Earnest Money (in Rs.): ₹ 1,71,100-. Completion period: 04 Months. Date & time of Closing Tender: 09-06-2026, 14:30 Hrs. Date & time of Opening Tender: 09-06-2026, 14:30 Hrs., SL.No.-03, Tender reference No.: E-Tender-L-13-26-27, Name of work: Electrical work connection to: (i) Provision of Toilet for SS at 11 stations in CPI-TE section and 10 stations in CPI-TE section of BSB Division (ii) Provision of Interlocking of Level crossing gates more than 20000 TUV under jurisdiction of Sr. DSTE-II/BSB with RTU & power supply arrangement (Total 04 No. LC) (iii) Provision of Centralized Traffic control between GK (Excl'd)-CHPG & BUW (Excl'd)-STP section over NER. Approx. Cost (in Rs.): ₹ 18,57,683.00, Earnest Money (in Rs.): ₹ 37,200-. Completion period: 04 Months. Date & time of Closing Tender: 10-06-2026, 14:30 Hrs. Date & time of Opening Tender: 10-06-2026, 14:30 Hrs., SL.No.-04, Tender reference No.: E-Tender-L-14-26-27, Name of work: Electrical work connection to: (i) Construction of S&T Goomti under work Provision of 2x2 Goomti shed common running line of CSL-730m at Pharia (ii) Provision of modular Sewage Treatment Plant at NGT nominated stations Belthara Road (BLTR) & Khorshar Road (KRND) Stations. Approx. Cost (in Rs.): ₹ 11,24,082.67, Earnest Money (in Rs.): ₹ 22,500-. Completion period: 04 Months. Date & time of Closing Tender: 10-06-2026, 14:30 Hrs. Date & time of Opening Tender: 10-06-2026, 14:30 Hrs., SL.No.-05, Tender reference No.: E-Tender-L-15-26-27, Name of work: Electrical work connection to: (i) RCC overhead tank 50000 gallon capacity with Sinking of Tube well and improvement of pipe line. (ii) Widening of Road near 128A for truck movement and approach road at railway land at DEOS. (iii) Provision of New TOWP wagon shed at Chauri Chaura. Approx. Cost: ₹ 17,74,409.60, Earnest Money: ₹ 35,500-. Completion period: 04 Months. Date & time of Closing Tender: 11-06-2026, 14:30 Hrs. Date & time of Opening Tender: 11-06-2026, 14:30 Hrs. • For full details of above E-Tender work and to participate in tenders please visit Indian Railway Website www.treps.gov.in Sr. Div. Electrical Engineer (General), CPRO/Viduyt-42 Varanasi

Chennithala to join team Satheesan, Kerala Cabinet formation gains pace

Express News Service
Thiruvananthapuram, May 16

THE CABINET formation of the newly elected Congress-led UDF government in Kerala gained momentum on Saturday after senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala decided to join the V D Satheesan team. Chennithala, who lost in the race to the Chief Minister's post, decided to join the Cabinet after CM-designate Satheesan expressed his readiness to surrender the home portfolio to the senior leader, said sources.

Satheesan, who has already extended an olive branch to the upset leaders in the party, held discussions with Chennithala twice in two days. AICC general secretary K C Venugopal and former KPCC president K Sudhakaran also met Chennithala to convince him to join the Cabinet. After meeting the senior leaders, Chennithala told the media, "I am a true Congress leader who acts as per the direction of the party." Satheesan chipped in, "No one is unnecessarily stubborn".

The Congress has not officially announced the names of ministers in the 21-member Cabinet, including the CM. AICC general secretary in-charge of Kerala Deepa Das-munsi said discussions are on.

The final list of UDF ministers will be handed over to Governor Rajendra Arlekar on Sunday. The IUML, second leading ally in UDF, has demanded five Cabinet berths, regional Christian party Kerala Congress has sought two and other allies want one each. Congress hasn't announced whether IUML will be allotted five Cabinet slots or not. From the Congress camp, names doing the rounds for Cabinet berths are K Muraleedharan, Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan, A P Anil Kumar, Sunny Joseph, P C Vishnunath, Chandu Oommen, M Liju and Bindu Krishna.

Congress ministers will be selected after giving due representation to the camps of Satheesan, Chennithala and Venugopal, besides regional and community factors. Chennithala had served as state Home Minister from 2014 to 2016 in the Oommen Chandu government. During his two terms, former CM Pinarayi Vijayan had held the home and vigilance portfolios. However, in 2006 when the then CPI(M) government was led by veteran leader VS Achuthanandan, the party had handed over the home portfolio to senior leader Kodiyeri Balakrishnan since the party was not inclined to consign complete control of the government to the CM.

Shubham Tigga

Ranchi, May 16

HIV-INFECTED THALASSEMIA children and their families in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum have begun receiving monthly food baskets from hospital authorities after the Jharkhand High Court on May 5 directed district and legal services authorities to ensure they do not face social stigma or boycott.

Parents, however, said the assistance being provided is inadequate and difficult to access. Several families said they had to travel repeatedly to the Chaibasa hospital to collect rations and ART medicines, and for blood transfusions. "One time, we come for blood transfusion, another time for medicines, then for ration," said a father of



The food basket received by the families comprises 10 kg rice, pulses, soyabean, almonds and fruits. EXPRESS

one of the children. "We told them if food support is being given, it should reach our homes as repeated travel is expensive."

The children contracted HIV allegedly during blood transfusions for thalassemia treat-

ment last October. Families told *The Indian Express* that they received food support earlier this month from Sadar Hospital in Chaibasa. They said the basket included 10 kg rice, pulses, soyabean, almonds, Horlicks and

fruits, and they were informed that the support would likely be provided every month. Hearing a writ plea filed on behalf of five minors, the HC expressed concern over claims that the families were being treated as social outcasts and directed the district administration and District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) to ensure that they do not face social stigma or boycott.

It directed the DLSA and district administration to undertake sensitisation programmes in villages and involve local headmen to prevent discrimination against the families. In its order, the court recorded that the children, aged between five and seven years and belonging to very poor families, were infected with HIV during blood transfusions required for treat-

ment of thalassemia.

Another parent and petitioner alleged that families were made to wait for hours at the hospital on the day of distribution. "We came in the morning and waited till evening as officials said they wanted to meet us. Travelling back late at night is difficult," the mother of a young girl said, asking what sort of jobs would be given to them.

Families said that schooling had been disrupted for the children after the HIV infections became known everywhere. A father said his child had not attended school for seven months. The petitioners' counsel, Md Shadab Ansari, said this is just the initial stage of the fight; he will fight the case until the end.

FULL REPORT ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Govt lost sight of the ball



ACROSS THE AISLE
BY P CHIDAMBARAM

IT'S JUST all accumulating together. We have frayed relations with the US over tariffs, we are on the wrong side of the AI mania, we are a big energy importer during an Iran conflict, and we have El Niño to deal with. The government needs to think as passionately about getting foreign capital back — perhaps through tax cuts — as they do about elections. Private investment is stagnant because the ground-level business environment remains difficult due to regulation and investigative agencies. India consistently disappoints both the optimist and the pessimist. We still have the second or third most expensive stock market in the world, which is a note of caution." (The Indian Express, May 12, 2026).

I did not say those words, so the trolls may relax. It was a statement by Mr Ruchir Sharma (author of *The Rise and Fall of Nations, What Went Wrong with Capitalism, etc.*). It is a virtual indictment of the BJP government's management of the economy. But I admit to expressing views on the same lines — especially about the frayed relations with the US, getting foreign capital back, the unfriendly regulatory environment, the role of

investigative agencies, and so on. These issues were hidden from the public's information and were cleverly side-tracked during parliamentary and public debates.

In the corner

Pushed into a corner, a week after the results of the four state elections, the Hon'ble prime minister, Mr Narendra Modi, made a remarkable confession. For the government's sins of omission and commission, Mr Modi asked the people to make sacrifices.

The stark facts are:

- US/Israel vs Iran war will complete 3 months on May 31, and the end is not in sight;
- All West Asian countries are involved in the war one way or other;
- the price of Brent crude is hovering around USD 107 per barrel;
- the rupee is at its lowest level at Rs 95.70 to a US dollar;
- the official number of CPI inflation is 3.5% and food inflation is 4.3%; domestic LPG cylinder costs Rs 913 and commercial cylinder Rs 3071-3237; WPI inflation is 8.3%.
- net foreign investment in April-December 2025: FDI — a modest USD 3 billion, FII/FPI — negative USD 4.3 billion;
- private capital investment intentions in 2025-26 totaled Rs 6.6 to 6.8 lakh crore;
- the value of gold imports in 2025-26 was USD 72 billion; and
- after abolition of MGNREGS that gave work on average 50 days a year, there is no wage employment programme for the poor.

PM absolutely correct

The prime minister has asked the

	2012-13	2013-14
Revenue Deficit	3.6%	3.2%
Fiscal Deficit	4.9	4.5
Current Account Deficit	4.8	1.7
GDP growth rate	5.5	6.4
Forex Reserves (USD)	292 bn	304 bn (after low of \$ 275 bn)
Year-end Re/USD rate	Rs 54.39	Rs 60.10 (after low of Rs 68.85)

Source: GOI, MOSPI, RBI & CGA

The PM's plate is full. He must re-visit the regulatory regime; roll back the present regime which is as oppressive as the pre-liberalisation regime; sternly rein in the investigative agencies; stabilise the exchange rate; reduce the tax rates

people to do several things. Since the prime minister did not notice that his ministers were sleeping on their jobs, he had no choice but to make an appeal directly to the people. Gold imports must be curbed; austerity must be observed; self-restraint must be exercised in fuel consumption, cooking oil and fertilisers; unnecessary imports must be avoided; and so on. But what the prime minister needed to do was a critical analysis of his government's performance.

The prime minister is the most profligate in fuel consumption: he flies out of Delhi practically every day (and returns to Delhi) for inaugurations and even swearing-in of governments. His convoy was the longest, he has now curtailed it. His minister of finance has *not once* spoken about the *fragile* financial situation today (while she rejoices that under UPA *one* investment bank clubbed India with four countries and described India as a fragile economy). She does not acknowledge that the 'taper tantrum' triggered a world-wide financial crisis in 2013-14 or that the UPA took hard measures (which the BJP

mocked), and the situation was retrieved. The proof of the pudding are the following results, particularly the GDP growth rate (see box): The minister of commerce has been on a FTA-signing spree. By last count, he has concluded 9 Free Trade Agreements in the last 5 years. But then came the warning from the Chief Economic Adviser (CEA): there is a substantial gap between what the trade deals promise and what the regulatory frameworks actually allow.

To do list

It is obvious that the prime minister wants to compress the CAD, augment the foreign exchange reserves and stabilise the exchange rate. He is absolutely correct.

So, back to Mr Ruchir Sharma. The prime minister's plate is full. He must re-visit the regulatory regime (RBI, SEBI, CDDT, CBIT, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, among others); roll back the present regime which is as oppressive and control-oriented as the pre-liberalisation regime; and sternly rein in the investigative agencies and do not use them for oblique or political purposes; stabilise the exchange rate; and reduce the tax rates. Once these things are done, foreign capital will come back to India. He cannot do these with the present ministers (mostly, market sceptics). He must take the help of well-meaning and wise persons.

I suggest the prime minister appoint a market-friendly expert as the leader and allow the leader to choose the other team members, and advise on the urgent measures within 15 days.

NEXT COLUMN: MAY 31, 2026

Real change needed, not tokenism



FIFTH COLUMN
BY TAVLEEN SINGH

IF THERE is one thing that makes me instantly suspicious, it is when political leaders make appeals to us citizens in the name of patriotism. What always comes to mind is that old warning from the British political thinker Samuel Johnson. As long ago as the eighteenth century he noticed that 'Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel'. This is why it disturbed me a little when the Prime Minister while making his appeal for 'austerity' urged us citizens of India to start tightening our belts in the name of patriotism. Or '*desh bhakti*' as we like to call it since it evokes love of our beloved Bharat Mata instead of mere patriotism.

We all know that these are hard times not just for India but for the world. And that it is not the fault of our own dear leader that his dream for making our country fully 'developed' by 2047 could now be seriously endangered. It was in any case an ambitious goal considering that nearly half of our citizens survive on subsidised grain from the government. And our women are so very poor that they are inclined these days to vote for any political party that offers them pocket money of as little as Rs 1,500 a month.

In the Maharashtra election, I witnessed with my own eyes how this turned the tide in favour of the incumbent BJP/Shiv Sena government. So effective are these election time handouts that there is not a political party now who does not use this method to win elections. I feel the need to point out here to our revered political leaders that this kind of cynical trickery is certainly the opposite of patriotism. The money for this election time bribery comes out of funds that it would be far more patriotic to use on: building real assets like roads, schools, hospitals and improving the appalling state of urban slums.

The Prime Minister's appeal for 'patriotic' austerity does not affect me too much. I work from home and rarely buy gold. I will be personally affected by restrictions on foreign travel as it will make it much harder for me to see my exiled son even once a year. The Prime Minister's appeal to farmers to use less fertiliser worried me because I am old enough to remember when foodgrain was shipped to India under something called PL 480 which was an American charity exercise called 'Food for Peace'. More recently, we saw what happened in Sri Lanka because President Gotabaya Rajapaksa tried to save foreign exchange by restricting the import of fertiliser. Sri Lanka ran out of food and Rajapaksa lost his job when people took to the streets in protest.

What depressed me about the Prime Minister's austerity appeal is that it brought back memories of those dismal and bleak 'socialist' secular decades when everything was in short supply. Foreign travel was impossible because India did not have enough foreign exchange to allow its citizens to waste it on having fun in foreign countries. I remember that the first time I travelled abroad I was allowed barely enough foreign exchange to pay for a taxi from the airport into the city of London. Modi's appeal sounds like he is warning us all that his promise of '*ache din*' is now in temporary abeyance.

The other thing that worries me is that his appeal is inevitably going to lead to tokenism on the part of our duplicitous political leaders. After the Prime Minister cut the size of his own cavalcade, there were silly attempts by some to travel pillion on mopeds and to try to fool us into believing that for 'patriotic' reasons they were going to sacrifice their lavish and luxurious lifestyle for something humbler. We all know how soon they will go back to their old ways. We also know that those political leaders and bureaucrats whose children study in foreign universities, and there are far too many, will surely travel to spend summer holidays with their privileged progeny.

So here is a suggestion, dear Prime Minister. Instead of appealing to us 'patriotic' Indians to tighten our belts by forgoing our tiny comforts, would it not save much, much more money for you and all BJP chief ministers to cut government spending on itself? The man who writes the column next door to this one told me once, when he was Finance Minister, that at least a quarter of the items on the agenda of the Government of India could be cut without anyone noticing. At least half of our government departments could also be cut and the officials who man them can be employed more productively.

There are other things that government can and must do in these austere times. The Defence and Railway ministries have on their hands vast tracts of land that is just sitting idle and this often gets occupied by squatters and slumlords. Why can this not be used for commercial purposes and for building the affordable rental housing that our cities so desperately need? This time of war and tribulation can be turned into a time of real change for the way in which India is governed. Instead of cutting down on small things, could it not be time for us to start cutting down on the big things? It will help hugely to make us '*viksit*' on target.



INSIDE TRACK | BY COOMMI KAPOOR

DIPLOMATIC DRESSING DOWN

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi expressed his unhappiness at a meeting with heads of Indian missions in Delhi last month. The PM felt that our ambassadors have not been sufficiently proactive in projecting the country's positive image in the foreign media. They were also not always on the ball in alerting New Delhi of major changes in our neighbourhood. Dinesh Trivedi, the new political appointee ambassador in Bangladesh, was present when the PM pointedly remarked that *anubhavi* (experienced and knowledgeable) people should be selected for ambassadorial assignments.

Modi perhaps had in mind US Ambassador to India Sergei Gora as a role model. Gora has certainly made his presence felt in New Delhi. Last week, Gora attended the swearing-in ceremony of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in Guwahati and is leading the preparations at Bharat Mandapam, the government's trade centre building, for a party for US Secretary of State Marco Rubio to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of the US Republic. Rubio is slated to visit India later this month. Gora has even hired 250 Delhi auto rickshaws to put up American flags and stickers to mark the US anniversary celebrations.

SWITCHING COLOURS IN BENGAL

The most extraordinary political turnaround after Mamata Banerjee's defeat was of a Bengali daily owned by a businessman-lawyer known to be extremely close to Banerjee's nephew, Abhishek Banerjee. The newspaper's editor, in a signed piece, painted his periodical as a victim of Mamata's tyranny and claimed that because it carried a photograph of the candlelight vigil of doctors during the R G Kar Hospital murder and rape case in 2024, all government advertisements were withdrawn. The overnight political switch in a section of the Bengali media following the BJP's landslide victory in West Bengal is unabashed. During the Trinamool Congress's long reign, Mamata was generous with government advertisements to the media, provided they toed her line. In fact, a national TV channel conveniently adopted contrary editorial positions in Kolkata and Delhi. Indicative of changing times is the fact that last week, at least five Kolkata newspapers carried prominently an article by Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on Gujarat's Somnath temple. In earlier times, the article would have most likely been buried. In deference to the new reality, the Kolkata municipality which had for years painted traffic dividers blue and white, the colours of the Trinamool party, has now begun repainting them yellow and white. Even the CM's secretariat which was illuminated blue and white at night has switched to saffron.

REEL LIFE BESTED BY REALITY

Actor politician Joseph Vijay's victory at the polls is dramatic, magical and as full of twists and turns as any of his blockbuster movies. The novice politician was described dismissively as a "weekend politician" with a party "built on a cardboard foundation". The actor addressed a minimal number of election rallies, sometimes bailing out on programmes at the last minute, while his rivals campaigned from morning to night. He was handicapped by three major scandals: his wife of 27 years sued for divorce; his partner, actress Trisha Krishnan, accompanied him in public; and he was held responsible by his rivals for a stampede at a political rally in Karur in which 41 people died. But nothing could lessen the voter's ardour. Even the six-day wait before Governor Rajendra Arlekar agreed to swear in Vijay was as suspenseful as any movie climax. Vijay was a tantalising two votes short of the finishing line before he finally managed to persuade the VCK party to support him. But then the VCK leader had second thoughts, reportedly lured by the temptation that he could become king himself instead of Vijay. Udhayanidhi Stalin is said to have worked behind the scenes, using every trick in the trade to block Vijay from being sworn in as CM. He even proposed the unthinkable to the AIADMK, that its decades-long rival, the DMK, could offer it outside support. Udhayanidhi and Vijay started out as good friends and the DMK scion was the producer of Vijay's *Kuruvai* in 2008. The story goes that Udhayanidhi initially encouraged Vijay's political ambitions in the belief that he would eat into the AIADMK's anti-incumbency vote, but by 2025, he realised his script had backfired. Some other melodramatic lines in this real-life script: Vijay's mother, singer Shobha Chandrasekhar, in 2005 sang a ballad in a movie claiming prophetically, "If the poor decide, you become chief minister tomorrow." (The song has been re-released with a re-mix.) Vijay's much talked about movie, *Jana Nayagan*, yet to be cleared by the censors, has a scene showing the hero driving a car with the number plate TN CM 2026!

How 1970s marked a violent turn for Bengal's electoral politics



HISTORY HEADLINE
BY SHYAMLAL YADAV

THE FIRST three general elections in Independent India (1952, 1957 and 1962) were largely peaceful, including in West Bengal. However, by the 1967 elections, with the politics of the country in churn, things began to change. Political tensions rose, organised violence became more frequent, and within a few years, large parts of West Bengal had descended into what the Election Commission later described as a "reign of terror".

The period between 1967 and 1972 marked a turning point in West Bengal's politics. Violence entered electoral politics in a sustained way and continued for decades after.

Several political shifts took place before the 1967 elections. The Congress split in West Bengal and the Bangla Congress was formed. The Communist Party, too, split in 1964 into the CPI and the CPI(M). In the 1967 Assembly elections, the Congress won 127 seats, the Bangla Congress 34, the CPI(M) 43 and the CPI 16.

Ajoy Mukherjee of Bangla Congress became chief minister. After his government fell, Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, an independent MLA, took over as CM. Frequent defections and unstable coalitions — a trend visible in other states too — led to repeated mid-term elections in West Bengal in 1969, 1971 and 1972. The year 1967 also saw the birth of the Naxalite movement in Naxalbari. Together, political instability and radical violence changed the nature of elections in the state.

Yet, the first signs were not dramatic. The 1967 and 1969 Assembly elections were largely peaceful. The Election Commission's 1967 report noted: "It was indeed gratifying that a large State like West Bengal, where during the pre-election period tension was evidently acute in many places, should have been able to manage a



(left) Hemanta Kumar Basu, president of the All India Forward Bloc, was among those killed in 1971; in the 1972 elections that followed, Congress's S S Ray became CM. FILE

smooth and peaceful poll on a single day."

The situation changed sharply by 1971. Newspapers at the time carried daily reports of murders and attacks. That year, West Bengal went to mid-term Assembly polls alongside the Lok Sabha elections. The Election Commission fixed the polling date for the state for March 10, 1971, a few days after voting in the rest of the country, so that security forces could be concentrated there.

Then, as now, Opposition parties alleged that the one-day-poll was intentionally fixed by the Election Commission to make the "operation of chemicalised ballot papers" a success. The EC stuck to its position, recording that the state was passing through an "abnormal" phase marked by violence and killings by groups that did not believe in elections or the ballot box, including Naxalites. The poll panel later wrote that the state was in "consternation and extreme panic". The Army had to be deployed in Kolkata and other parts of the state. Armed police forces were brought in from Assam, Bihar, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and even Punjab.

The situation became so serious that many polling and presiding officers approached the Calcutta High Court, saying they could not be forced to perform election duty under such conditions.

The Election Commission eventually held the polls in West Bengal on March 10, 1971.

But polling had to be countermanded in three Assembly constituencies — Dum Dum, Ukhra (SC) and Shampukur — after

the murders of candidates.

Hemanta Kumar Basu, president of the All India Forward Bloc and candidate from Shampukur, was murdered on February 20, 1971. He was among the state's most respected leaders. The election there was cancelled and a fresh poll ordered with Ajoy Kumar Biswas nominated as the Forward Bloc's candidate. The election was fixed for June 6. But days ahead of the election, on May 28, 1971, Biswas, too, was murdered, forcing the poll to be countermanded a second time.

Then, in Ukhra, Bangla Congress candidate Debdatta Mondal was murdered on February 17, 1971. And in Dum Dum, Congress (O) candidate Pijush Chandra Ghosh was murdered on March 5, 1971.

In all, four contesting candidates were killed during the election period in 1971 — something unprecedented in independent India at the time.

Even then, violence continued. The Election Commission warned in its report that "the application of physical force to influence the pattern and trend of voting" had become one of the most dangerous features of the election.

Fresh elections could not be completed after the second Shampukur murder because the West Bengal Assembly itself was dissolved on June 25, 1971. The state went to fresh elections again in 1972.

The 1972 elections showed that the violence had not ended. The Election Commission recorded disturbances in several polling stations, especially in areas around Kolkata. It also noted "tension and strained feelings among the various political parties and their workers and supporters".

Large-scale rigging was later alleged by opposition parties in many constituencies, though the Election Commission recorded only a few formal complaints from voters who said they had been prevented from voting.

After the 1972 elections, Siddhartha Shankar Ray became chief minister. His tenure lasted until 1977, when the Left Front led by Jyoti Basu came to power. Ray remains the last Congress chief minister of West Bengal.

The writer is Senior Associate Editor, The Indian Express

Small sacrifices for tough times



ON THE LOOSE
BY LEHER KALA

merely abandoned Bharat for these places. Only to discover, to one's amazement, that the second one steps out of India, systems work with reliable predictability. Needless to say, tax-paying citizens have every right to spend precious time off and hard-earned cash any way they want, on pristine locales and exploring new cultures. And indeed, the attempt to shift responsibility to the 1% actually hosting marriages abroad ignores the economics of the wedding industry — holding events in Sri Lanka, Bangkok and Istanbul are cheaper, and arguably more memorable than Delhi, Udaipur and Jaipur.

All things being equal, the make/holiday/wed in India thrust is a reasonable ask at a difficult time — but is it our moral responsibility to pledge allegiance to the decrepit and crumbling Lonavalas' and Manalis' when it's so evident that our money is better utilised elsewhere? The PM's sermon, directed at the tiny smattering of well-to-do Indians, suggested we are duty bound to meet the current moment by redirecting self-

interest toward the greater good. A harkback to JFK's unforgettable line, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country. However, our experiences profoundly shape our civic and moral ambitions. For example, after the agonising bloodshed of the last three years, teenagers in Israel are challenging forced conscription, saying they don't want to be complicit in a genocide. Can that be called unpatriotic?

Human beings develop ideas about justice by the application of abstract principles absorbed over decades, combined with the rules we follow in our daily lives. A sense of duty makes us stop at red lights, or cast votes, for that matter. Ethics, broadly, are about how we choose to live but also, how we treat one another. In that vein, there's an expectation that society's rulers will act in ways to provide the best outcome for everyone. The Indian government was mysteriously silent about the impending chaos when they were consumed by winning elections, addressing the fallout of the Iran

war only after their selfish objectives were met. But do the wily manoeuvrings of the political class absolve ordinary citizens from their patriotic duty, of cutting back on frills during wartime, to produce more benefit than harm? If one subscribes to the postmodern perspective that there can never be any one fully correct answer to any moral dilemma, it's slightly easier to distinguish between alleged rights or wrongs.

Should someone who's booked non-refundable tickets to London and paid in advance for accommodation cancel their trip and philosophically absorb the loss? I think not. But if one was at a planning stage for an exotic vacation, a postponement may be considered. As individuals reacting to world events, it's easy to think our decisions have no intrinsic value. To pare down the issue to its most basic, an act is correct if it will produce a greater balance of positivity over negativity than the available alternatives.

The writer is director, Hutkay Films

Trump says Xi agrees Iran must open the Strait

War shouldn't have started, says Chinese President

Trevor Hunnicut & Jana Choukeir

Aboard Air Force One, Dubai, May 16

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump said Chinese President Xi Jinping had agreed Tehran must reopen the Strait of Hormuz, though China gave no indication it would weigh in.

Flying back from Beijing on Friday after two days of talks with Xi, Trump said he was considering whether to lift US sanctions on Chinese oil companies buying Iranian oil. China is the biggest buyer of Iranian oil.

"I'm not asking for any favours because when you ask for favours, you have to do favours in return," Trump said when asked by a reporter on Air Force One whether Xi had made a firm commitment to put pressure on the Iranians to reopen the vital strait.

Xi did not comment on his discussions with Trump about Iran, although China's foreign ministry criticised the war, calling it a conflict "which should never have happened, has no reason to continue".

Iran has effectively shut the strait, which carried one-fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas supply before the US and Israel launched attacks on February 28. The disruption to ship-

ping has caused the biggest oil supply crisis in history, sending oil prices skyrocketing.

Ebrahim Azizi, who heads the Iranian parliament's national security committee, said on Saturday that Tehran had prepared a mechanism to manage traffic through the strait along a designated route that would be unveiled soon.

Azizi said only commercial vessels and parties cooperating with Iran would benefit, and that fees would be collected for specialised services provided under the mechanism.

Thousands of Iranians were killed in the US and Israeli air strikes. Thousands more have been killed in Lebanon in fighting between Israel and the Iran-backed group Hezbollah, though Israel and Lebanon agreed on Friday to a 45-day extension of a ceasefire that has tamped down the conflict there.

The US paused its attacks last month but began a port blockade. Tehran, which carried out strikes against Israel, U.S. bases and Gulf states after the war began, has said it will not unblock the strait until the US ends its blockade. Trump has threatened to resume attacks if Iran does not agree to a deal.

"We don't want them to have a nuclear weapon, we want the straits open," Trump said in Beijing, alongside Xi.

Iran, which has long denied that it intends to build a nuclear weapon, has refused to end nuclear research or relinquish its hidden stockpile of enriched uranium, to Trump's frustration. REUTERS

Days after Trump's visit, Putin is set to meet Xi in China

Associated Press

Moscow, May 16

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT Vladimir Putin will meet with Chinese leader Xi Jinping on a two-day trip to Beijing next week, the Kremlin said Saturday.

The announcement comes less than 24 hours after US President Donald Trump finished his own state visit to China, where he also met Xi to discuss trade and the US and Israel's war in Iran.

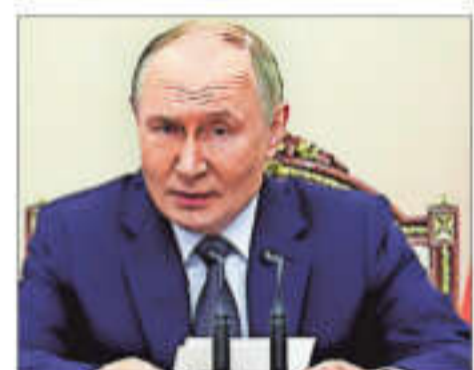
In a statement, the Kremlin said that Putin's trip, planned for May 19-20, had been scheduled to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the 2001 Sino-Russian Treaty of Friendship.

It said that the two leaders would discuss bilateral relations as well as "key international and regional issues" and economic cooperation.

Relations between China and Russia have deepened in recent years, particularly since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in early 2022 left Moscow shunned on the global stage and heavily reliant on Beijing for trade due to Western sanctions.

When Putin visited China in September 2025, Xi welcomed his counterpart as an "old friend." Putin also addressed Xi as "dear friend."

The Russian leader is also



Russian President Vladimir Putin will visit China next week

scheduled to visit China for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in the city of Shenzhen in November.

Ukraine repatriated the bodies of fallen soldiers Saturday following an earlier exchange with Moscow involving prisoners of war.

Russia returned 528 bodies that "according to the Russian side, may belong to Ukrainian servicemen," Ukraine's Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War said in a statement.

Experts will now "take all necessary measures aimed at identifying the deceased who have been repatriated," it said.

It comes after Russia and Ukraine swapped 205 prisoners of war on Friday.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said it was the first phase of a planned swap of 1,000 POWs from each side.

NIGERIAN PRESIDENT SAYS EARLY ASSESSMENTS CONFIRM ELIMINATION

ISIS deputy chief killed by US, Nigerian forces: Trump

Reuters

Washington, May 16

ABU-BILAL AL-MINUKEI, the second in command of ISIS globally, has been killed in an operation conducted by US and Nigerian forces in the northeast of the African country, US President Donald Trump and his counterpart in Nigeria, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, said.

Trump announced the strike in a Truth Social post late on Friday in the United States, with Tinubu on Saturday describing it as a "significant example of effective collaboration in the fight against terrorism".

"Tonight, at my direction, brave American forces and the Armed Forces of Nigeria flawlessly executed a meticulously planned and very complex mission to eliminate the most active terrorist in the world from the battlefield. Abu-Bilal al-Minuki... thought he could hide in Africa, but little did he know we had sources who kept us informed on what he was doing," Trump said on Truth Social.

In a statement posted on X, Tinubu said early assessments confirmed the elimination of al-Minuki — also known as Abu-Mainok — along with several of his lieutenants, during a strike on his compound in the

42 students missing after Nigeria school attack, says lawmaker

Maiduguri: At least 42 Nigerian school children were missing on Saturday a day after suspected Islamist militants attacked a school in the insurgency-hit northeastern Borno state, a senator for the area said.

Residents said on Friday that armed men abducted an unknown number of students from Mussa Primary and Junior Secondary School in Askira-Uba Local Government Area while classes were in session.

Ali Ndume, senator for Borno South district, where the school is located, said in a state-

ment that school authorities informed him that 32 students were abducted from the school while another 10 were seized from their homes close to the school. Nigeria's police and military did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Borno — an area the size of Ireland that borders Cameroon, Chad and Niger — remains the epicentre of an insurgency by the Boko Haram Islamist militant group that has lasted more than 15 years. No group has claimed responsibility for Friday's attack. REUTERS

Lake Chad Basin. The Nigerian Army, also on X, said the strike was carried out in Metele in Borno State, where troops carried out a precision air-land operation in close coordination with US Africa Command (AFRICOM). Borno has endured an insurgency waged by Boko Haram and its splinter group Islamic State West Africa Province for 17 years that has killed thousands and displaced 2 million people. The latest operation, carried out under Nige-

ria's ongoing counter-insurgency initiative, commenced at approximately 12:01 a.m. and concluded around 4 a.m. on Saturday and was executed with no casualties or loss of assets, the army added.

Al-Minuki, a Nigerian national, was designated a "specially designated global terrorist" by the Biden administration in 2023, according to the US Federal Register. The US carried out strikes targeting Islamic State-linked militants in



"Tonight, at my direction, brave American forces and the Armed Forces of Nigeria flawlessly executed a meticulously planned and very complex mission to eliminate the most active terrorist in the world from the battlefield..."

DONALD TRUMP

U.S. PRESIDENT

Nigeria in December. Since then, Washington has deployed drones and 200 troops to provide training and intelligence support to the Nigerian military against Islamic State and al Qaeda-linked insurgencies that are spreading across West Africa.

Israel says it has killed leader of Hamas' military wing in air strike

Associated Press

Tel Aviv, May 16

AN ISRAELI airstrike in Gaza killed the leader of Hamas' military wing, one of the last surviving architects of the October 7, 2023, attacks that triggered the war in Gaza, the Israeli military said Saturday.

Izz al-Din al-Haddad was killed on Friday, Israel's army said, describing him as one of the last senior commanders in Hamas' military who had directed the planning and execution of the October 7 attacks.

Israel's retaliatory strikes have devastated the Palestinian enclave and killed more than 72,700 people, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

The ministry is part of Gaza's Hamas-run government, but staffed by medical professionals who maintain and publish detailed records, viewed as generally reliable by the international community. REUTERS

Canada deepens its defence ties with Nordics after Trump threats

Maria Cheng

Cambridge Bay, May 16

SINCE US President Donald Trump's barrage of threats to seize Greenland, authorities on the frozen island have been seeking help from a northern ally: Canada.

A reserve unit of the Canadian armed forces called the Rangers has long maintained a year-round presence in mostly inaccessible Arctic communities. For three years, authorities in Greenland and Denmark have consulted with Canadian officials on how to set up their own version of the Rangers — conversations that grew more urgent with Trump's threats and growing fears of Russian hostility in the Arctic.

"The rhetoric coming out of the White House has sped up efforts to rebuff the idea that Arctic communities need the US to come in and save them," said Whitney Lackenbauer, an honorary lieutenant-colonel Canadian Ranger involved in the talks, who spoke with Reuters



A member of the 41 Canadian Brigade Group, in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada. REUTERS

during a recent 5,000-kilometre Arctic snowmobile trek by the Rangers. "The Nordic countries and Canada, we're increasingly realizing we can come together in military and diplomatic ways to send a message that carries moral weight."

As Canada attempts to pivot away from relying on the US to protect its vast Arctic, PM Mark Carney is strengthening ties and exchanging security tips with the Nordic countries, which he describes as trusted partners. Ca-

nada's increased defence collaboration with the Nordics is part of Carney's effort to strengthen alliances between what he calls "middle powers" in a world where the United States is considered a less reliable partner.

The White House said Trump's leadership has prompted allies "to recognize the need to meaningfully contribute to their own defence" and that the Arctic is a critical region for US national security and the economy. REUTERS

North America's largest rail system shuts down as workers go on strike

Philip Marcelo

New York, May 16

NORTH AMERICA'S largest commuter rail system was shut down Saturday after unionized workers in the New York City area went on strike.

The Long Island Rail Road that serves the city's eastern suburbs ceased operations early Saturday morning after five unions representing about

half its workforce walked off the job.

The two sides have been negotiating for months on a new contract, and President Donald Trump's administration had even interceded to try and broker a deal. But the unions were legally allowed to strike starting at 12:01 a.m. Saturday.

Kevin Sexton of the National Vice President of the Brotherhood of Locomotive

Engineers and Trainmen said no new negotiations have been scheduled. "We're far apart at this point," Sexton said early Saturday. "We are truly sorry that we are in this situation."

Janno Lieber, the MTA chairman, said the agency "gave the union everything they said they wanted in terms of pay" and that to him it was apparent the unions always intended to walk out. AP

Spain's Eurovision boycott over Israeli participation leaves contest fans torn

Associated Press

Madrid, May 16

NOSPECIAL menu, no themed decorations and no shared suspense over which musician's flamboyant performance proves victorious.

For the first time in seven years, Silvia Diaz won't get together with friends to watch the Eurovision Song Contest finals on Saturday night.

• BRIEFLY



John Travolta with his Honorary Palm d'Or at Cannes. REUTERS

FRANCE

John Travolta surprised with honorary Palme d'Or at Cannes

JOHN TRAVOLTA was surprised with an honorary Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival premiere of his directorial debut Friday. Thierry Fremaux, the festival's artistic director, brought out the award for Travolta just before the screening of his *Propeller One-Way Night Coach*. A visibly moved Travolta clutched his chest while Fremaux presented the trophy. "You said this would be a special night, but I didn't know it would mean this," Travolta said to Fremaux. "This is beyond the Oscar!" exclaimed Travolta. Clad in a white beret, Travolta walked the Cannes red carpet with his 26-year-old daughter Ella Bleu Travolta. The actor wrote, directed and co-produced "Propeller One-Way Night Coach," based on his own 1997 children's novel. AP

FRANCE

Judge opens inquiry into Khashoggi case

A FRENCH judge has been appointed to lead an inquiry over the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, the country's national anti-terrorism prosecutor's office (PNAT) said on Saturday, after a court ruled the case admissible. The probe follows a May 11 ruling by the Paris Court of Appeal that deemed complaints filed by human rights groups TRIAL International and Reporters Without Borders admissible, PNAT said. REUTERS

THAILAND

Cargo train hits public bus, at least 8 killed

A TRAIN crashed into a public bus on Saturday in Thailand's capital, Bangkok, killing at least eight people. Thai news reported the crash happened in the late afternoon near an airport railway station in the central area. The city's emergency services, Erawan Medical Centre, said at least eight people were killed and more than 20 others were injured. Footage showed a line of vehicles had stopped at a railway crossing when a cargo train struck an orange bus. AP

• NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

PAKISTAN

Unidentified assailants kill 2 security officials

UNIDENTIFIED GUNMEN killed two security personnel in northwest Pakistan on Saturday, police said. The incident occurred in the Tank district of restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, according to the police. The attackers opened fire at the security personnel of the Federal Constabulary (FC) who were off duty. The attackers managed to flee from the scene, police added. PTI

SRI LANKA

50% surcharge imposed on car imports

THE SRI Lankan government has imposed a 50% surcharge on vehicle imports — excluding motorbikes and three-wheelers. President Anura Kumara Dissanayake in a notification on Saturday said, "By this order levy on imported goods specified in the schedule here to a surcharge at the rate of 50 per cent on applicable customs duty effect from May 16 for a period of three months". PTI

• THE DIRECTOR'S DEEPLY OBSERVANT STYLE SUITS THE CENTRAL THRUST OF THE FILM, WHICH IS MAINLY SET IN A HOME FOR THE ELDERLY

Nothing sudden about Hamaguchi's leisurely unfolding drama — *All of a sudden*



SHUBHRA GUPTA

TOSAY that Ryusuke Hamaguchi's *All of a Sudden* (Cannes competition) is a long film — it weighs in at a solid 3.15 hours — is stating the obvious. In fact, he doesn't do events either; capturing moments like no one's

looking is more like it.

Here, his deeply observant style suits the central thrust of the film, which is mainly set in a home for the elderly, where the big themes accompanying end-of-life scenarios are a natural outcome.

Marie-Lou (Virginie Efira) is an empathetic doctor who runs this Paris establishment, less as a hospice than a home, for those who have diminished use of their faculties, or have fallen in the grip of dementia. She's just been promoted as director and is pushing for an attitude which is more people-centric rather than patient-centric, which would add more dignity and agency in dealing with patients.

It is not something mainstream cinema handles well, which tends towards saccharine and wailing violins. And here, while an outcome of a workshop run by theatre director Mari (Tao Okamoto), which encourages both the caregivers and the elderly group into a too-quick acceptance of what would be considered an airy-fairy approach towards touch-and-healing, it doesn't take away from the focus that the film lays on its conviction that everyone has the right to lead a full life, which then leads to a happy death, if such a thing were possible.

The fact that Marie is herself a terminal cancer patient —



A still from *All of a Sudden*. CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

she's at the fourth stage and has tried everything she could, but now is readying for all-too sudden decline — lends the

deepening connection between the two women, a pathos which is instantly moving. A night of getting to know each

other through conversation — those who have had the fortune to experience this know just how magical it can be — becomes a shimmery, incandescent set, with the lights glinting on the Seine, and falling on their faces, as they get more and more immersed in each other.

It isn't as if the establishment and its long-time employees get swept up by the idealism that holds Marie-Lou in its sway. Senior nurse Sophie (Marie Bunel) is adamant that these new-fangled ideals will lead them nowhere: what if, in their zeal to "allow" patients to walk at will, leads to falls? Who will be responsible? She does thaw in the end, but there's no

thing sudden there, that word again, about her looking at a different approach as a possibility.

All this intense unvarying focus impending deaths and dying could turn dreary in the hands of a lesser director. But Hamaguchi knows exactly how much to show, and what to hold back — even if a long sequence in which Marie uses a whiteboard to give a lesson on the evils of capitalism to a bemused Marie-Lou makes you want to tell them, both to hurry it up. The early introduction of a Japanese actor and his autistic grandson (beautifully played by Kodai Kurusak) gives the film yet another chance to tell us how the profoundly disabled can show us

the way, without it becoming a 'teachable' moment.

The film's brief detour from Paris to a rural Japanese outpost where Marie has come for a final perch is moving without being cloying, and back in Paris, the women find themselves closer than before. That there are no sexual overtones in their relationship is clear: finally, what stays with us is the emotion that wells up when the two women are in the frame, their affection for each other lighting up the screen: both Efira and Okamoto are absolutely wonderful. As well as the conviction that a bit of warmth is what makes the difference between living and dying.

NO CURB ON ITS IMPORT FOR PROCESSING, VALUE-ADDED EXPORTS AS JEWELLERY

After duty hike, govt curbs silver imports to aid rupee

ENS Economic Bureau
New Delhi, May 16

THE GOVERNMENT on Saturday put silver imports for domestic consumption under the restricted category, requiring prior government approval.

This follows a series of steps taken over the last few days to discourage precious metal imports, which strain the current account and increase forex outflow due to high global prices.

On Wednesday, the government raised the customs duty on imports of gold and silver to 15% from 6%, and on platinum to 15.4% from 6.4% to moderate these non-essential imports amidst the West Asia crisis.

A day later, it put a quantitative limit of 100 kg on the import of the yellow metal under a key export scheme to curb misuse of the duty-free import facility for value-added exports.

As per a Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) notification, imports of bars containing silver up to 99% would now be in the restricted category if it is meant for domestic consumption.

However, silver imported for processing and value-added exports as jewellery would continue to be unrestricted.

Imports by 100% export-oriented units and units located in Special Economic



Silver imports increased by 157% to \$411 million in April. REUTERS

Zones (SEZs) shall also not be subject to any restrictions provided the imported goods are not sold in the domestic tariff area. Rising imports of gold and silver amidst their rising prices in the past one year have been a cause of concern. With the onset of war in West Asia from February 28, the government has taken steps over the past week to curb imports and conserve foreign exchange in an uncertain global atmosphere.

In 2025-26, silver imports increased by 150% to \$12.05 billion. In volume terms, however, the increase was only 42%, reaching 7,334 tonnes. International prices of the metal rose

74% in the year.

Similarly, gold imports increased 24% to \$71.98 billion in the last financial year. This occurred despite a 4.7% drop in gold import volume to 721 tonnes, as international gold prices increased by 30% during the year.

The demand for these metals remained robust even in April with gold imports increasing 81.7% on year to \$5.6 billion while silver imports increased 157% to \$411 million.

As a large importer of crude oil, India remains vulnerable to elevated energy prices and supply-side disruptions, which can increase the import bill,

exert pressure on inflation, and the current account deficit, officials said at the time of the duty hike on gold and silver last week. "In such circumstances, prudent management of the country's external sector becomes essential," an official had said. Officials said precious metals, while culturally and financially significant, are "predominantly consumption and investment driven" in nature and that such imports involve "substantial outflow of foreign exchange".

A depreciating rupee is adding to the country's import bill burden. India's foreign exchange resources, therefore, must be prioritised towards essential imports such as crude oil, fertilisers, industrial raw materials, defence requirements, critical technologies, and capital goods, the official had said. Over the last few years, India has seen significant foreign exchange outflows on account of higher imports of precious metals and spending on overseas travel under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS).

The pressure on India's external sector has been felt amid the ongoing West Asia war, with forex reserves plummeting by \$32 billion in 10 weeks since the onset of the conflict, and crude oil prices continuing to hover above \$100 a barrel. WITH FE

Intra-BRICS trade accounts for just 5% of global trade: Comm secy

New Delhi: The intra-BRICS trade has increased multiple times over the last few years but it accounts for only around 5% of the global trade, reflecting huge untapped potential for deeper integration and stronger value-chain linkages, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal has said.

BRICS is a grouping of 11 developing countries — Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates.

It acts as a platform for consultation and cooperation on contemporary issues having global as well as regional significance, and issues of global political and economic governance. India has assumed the BRICS Chairship for the fourth time, after 2012, 2016 and 2021. Addressing the 2nd Meeting of the BRICS Contact Group on Trade and Economic Issues, held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, on May 14-15, Agrawal said intra-BRICS merchandise trade has risen 13-fold, from \$84 billion in 2003 to \$1.17 trillion in 2024. However, he said, this "trade still accounts for only around 5% of global trade, indicating significant untapped potential for deeper trade integration, stronger value-chain linkages". Issues such as promoting more balanced trade, and opening new opportunities in the services sector were also discussed. PTI

WEST ASIA WAR

Singapore pips UAE as India's second largest export destination

Exports to Singapore surged by 180% in April to \$3.2 billion

Ravi Dutta Mishra
New Delhi, May 16

INDIA'S TRADE flows have begun shifting amid the prolonged closure of the Strait of Hormuz since March, as traders have begun finding alternate routes to export goods amid disruption in trade with countries in the West Asia region, an analysis of data shared by the Commerce and Industry Ministry showed.

The most notable shift in trade routes was seen in the two transshipment hubs that India has free trade agreements (FTA) with - UAE and Singapore. Replacing UAE, Singapore became India's second largest export market in April, registering a five-fold jump compared to February.

The Strait of Hormuz was closed on March 2. While exports to Singapore surged by 180% in April to \$3.2 billion compared to \$1.14 billion a year ago, exports to UAE slipped by 36% to \$2.18 billion last month compared to \$3.43 billion a year ago. Exports from Singapore have been rising month-on-month too since February amid the disruption in trade with UAE.

On the import side too, the West Asia war has led to new import partners. Energy exporters such as Oman, Peru and Nigeria broke into India's top 20 import sources. Shipment from Oman alone more than tripled to \$1.48 billion in April compared to \$429.58 million.

These changes come as traditional sources of energy are facing restrictions. Imports from Qatar in March slipped by



On the import side too, the war has led to new import partners. Energy exporters such as Oman, Peru and Nigeria broke into India's top 20 import sources. REUTERS

47% to \$537.34 million compared to \$1.03 billion during March last year. However, imports from Saudi Arabia recovered sharply in April to \$3.85 billion compared to \$2.06 billion in March.

The war in West Asia has led to a sharp jump in global energy prices, with the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and damage to Gulf nations' energy infrastructure adversely impacting supplies. For India, in addition to a widening of the import bill and a cloudy outlook for exports, the conflict has directly impacted the rupee, which has fallen to multiple record lows against the US dollar on its way to tumbling 5.2% since the end of February.

To ward off further pressure on the currency, the government has been taking austerity measures to ease the strain on the use of foreign currency and reduce fuel consumption. In addition to a hike in the import duty on precious metals, oil marketing companies on Friday increased the pump price

of petrol and diesel for the first time in four years.

The Strait of Hormuz, the narrow waterway between Iran and Oman, is a critical maritime choke point that accounted for about a fifth of global oil flows before the West Asia war began on February 28. Since then, vessel movements through the strait have been effectively halted, leading to an unprecedented global energy supply crisis.

According to the latest assessment by the US Energy Information Administration (EIA), West Asian oil producers Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain collectively shut in 10.5 million barrels per (bpd) of crude oil production in April, up from 8.9 million bpd in March.

The EIA has also revised upwards — by 19% — the estimated West Asia oil production shut-in for March from its earlier estimate of 7.5 million bpd. The estimated shut-in in April is a little over 10% of the global liquid fuels consumption.

Sovereign Gold Bonds missed amid PM's austerity appeal, import duty hike

Siddharth Upasani
New Delhi, May 16

THE RAPID fall of the rupee has forced policymakers to come up with some quick solutions, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi calling for a certain type of austerity that reduces the need to expend foreign currency for imports.

Then, the import duty on gold, silver, and platinum was hiked — economists don't expect this to move to meaningfully bring down the gold import bill.

"Historically, the effectiveness of gold import duty hikes in controlling imports has been mixed," Nomura economists Sonal Varma and Aurodeep Nandi said.

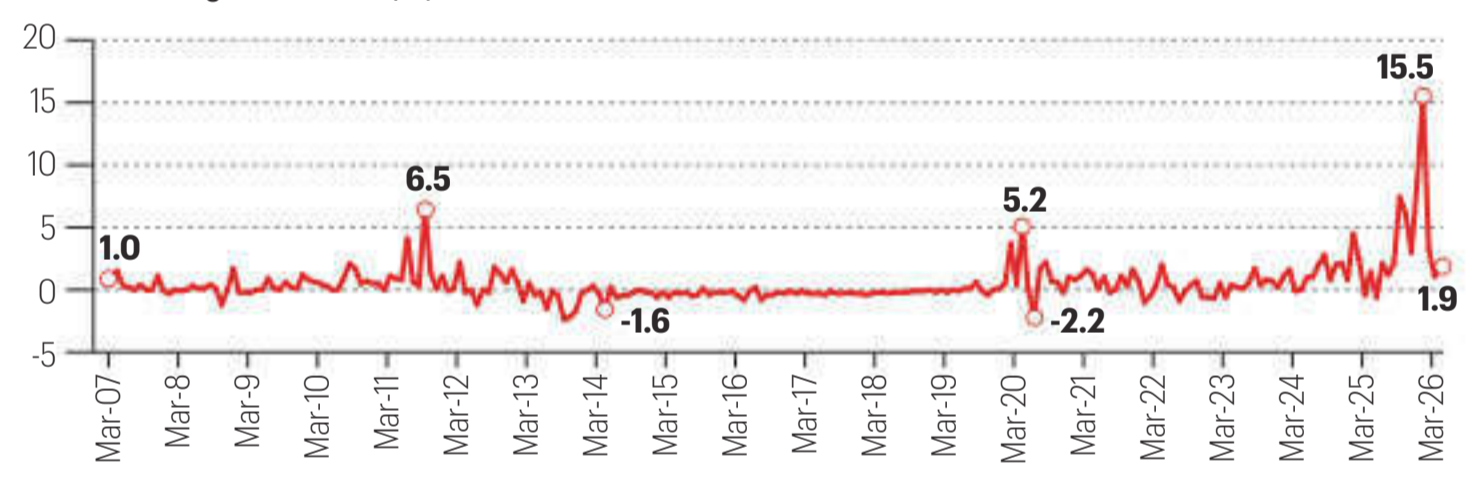
"When India raised duties to 10% in 2013, gold imports did decline initially, but gold smuggling increased to meet suppressed demand. More recently, the reduction of the duty to 6% was intended to curb smuggling and formalise the market."

One possible solution the government may not implement is something it has previously deployed: Sovereign Gold Bonds (SGBs).

Launched in late 2015, the scheme was discontinued in early 2024 despite being an amazing investment opportunity for the public, who bought bonds equivalent to 147 tonnes of gold and worth Rs 72,275 crore. These bonds are now giving eye-watering returns to their holders of more than

Gold investment mania fuels Indian ETFs

Indian ETFs gold demand (tn)



SOURCE: WORLD GOLD COUNCIL

200% of their life of eight years, and that is without taking into account the 2.5% interest and zero long-term capital gains tax on redemption.

So why was the scheme discontinued despite the obvious benefits for the public? Because the government felt it was having to pay too much.

Cost of saving forex

The logic of SGBs was sound: meet the investment demand for gold without importing the metal. All the government had to do was set aside money for interest payments and the market value of the bonds maturing in a year. However, the rationale for discontinuing the scheme had a different consideration: the cost of borrowing.

Any bond the government issues to an investor — be it banks, foreign investors, or individuals — is considered a borrowing. "The recent global geopolitical unrest has impacted

gold prices significantly, increasing the cost of borrowing through SGBs," the finance ministry told the Parliament in a written response to a question in July 2025.

"The government's endeavour is to minimise the cost of borrowings and hence it is imperative for a prudent debt management strategy to carefully consider the above factor while deciding on offering new tranches of Sovereign Gold Bonds." But the SGBs were never intended to be a way to finance the government's fiscal deficit.

Demand in SGBs only picked up pace after Covid struck, with roughly Rs 63,000 crore of these bonds being purchased from FY21 to FY24.

Over these four years, the central government borrowed Rs 40 lakh crore on a net basis to help meet its annual fiscal deficits. Yes, the scheme was expensive — the total annual interest outgo and redemption

liability of SGBs issued from 2015 to 2024-25 was nearly Rs 18,000 crore. But it was hardly a make-or-buy one for a government which is going to spend Rs 14 lakh crore in FY27 as interest on past debt.

If stopping the scheme was not enough, the FY27 Union Budget went one step further and said only those SGBs bought by someone and held till they matured eight years later were exempt from capital gains tax. This meant any gold bonds purchased in the secondary market — they are also traded on exchanges — will face capital gains tax at the time of maturity.

Rising investment demand

What the SGBs did was ease the strain on the import bill and reduce spending of foreign currency reserves of the country.

Indians' demand for gold is a structural weakness of the economy. While our inherent

affection for it offers an easy diversification of savings, the lack of domestic supply means almost the entire demand has to be met via imports, which adversely hits the trade balance.

And we import a lot of gold. It was \$72 billion in FY26, up 24% from FY25, or more than 700 tonnes. More than 9% of all our imports in FY26 was gold, with another 1.6% being silver.

In the absence of SGBs, Indians have gone the Exchange Trade Fund (ETF) route over the last year in a manner never seen before.

But gold ETFs — essentially mutual funds that invest in gold — require investments to be backed by gold holdings. In January 2026, for the first time ever, Indians invested more in gold ETFs than equity mutual funds: Rs 24,040 crore versus Rs 24,029 crore.

This required these funds to import a record 15.52 tn of gold. ETFs purchases that month accounted for 22% of all gold imports (Rs 1.1 lakh crore) in January. For silver ETFs, the figure was even larger: 52%. According to the World Gold Council, there has been a "structural shift" in India's gold demand, with investment demand making up nearly 70% of the total demand in January-March 2026, while the share of jewellery fell to around 30% - the lowest in at least 25 years.

Unless this investment demand for gold is met, imports — through ETFs and other routes — will continue and the rupee will keep weakening.

Samsung Elec & labour union to resume pay talks on Monday

Seoul: Samsung Electronics and its South Korean labour union will resume pay talks on Monday with a government mediator, the union said, in a move that could ease concerns over a potentially disruptive strike at the tech giant.

The union said in a statement on Saturday that Samsung Electronics had replaced the company's representative for the negotiations, while the two sides would have a separate meeting later on Saturday. The union did not elaborate on Saturday's agenda. Samsung Electronics declined to comment on either meeting when contacted.

The announcement came shortly after Samsung Electronics Chairman Jay Y. Lee apologised to customers and the public over the labour dispute in his first public comments on the issue. REUTERS

BRIEFLY

Tata, ASML join hands for chip manufacturing in India

New Delhi: Electronics manufacturing company Tata Electronics and Dutch semiconductor equipment major ASML have joined hands to enable chip manufacturing in India, a joint statement said on Saturday. The pact was announced during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the Netherlands. ASML is known for having monopoly in a category of lithography equipment which is critical for production of advance small size semiconductors. Through this partnership, ASML will enable the establishment and successful ramp of Tata Electronics' upcoming 300 mm (12 inch) semiconductor Fab in Dholera, Gujarat. PTI

Vodafone Idea posts surprise Q4 profit

New Delhi: Indian telecoms operator Vodafone Idea reported an unexpected fourth-quarter net profit on Saturday after receiving a 430 crore rupees (\$500 million) investment from Aditya Birla Group. The company posted consolidated profit after tax of 519.76 billion rupees (\$5.42 billion) in the three months to March 31. Analysts had expected a loss. Earlier this year, the Indian government capped Vodafone Idea's adjusted gross revenue dues at \$13.79 million annually for the next six years, easing near-term cash flow pressure for the firm. Vodafone Idea has invested heavily in its 4G and 5G networks in recent years to improve service quality and curb a steady decline in its subscriber base. REUTERS

OPENAI BELIEVES IT DID NOT RECEIVE THE COMMERCIAL & STRATEGIC BENEFITS IT HAD EXPECTED FROM THE DEAL

Why OpenAI plans to sue Apple over strained ties on ChatGPT integration

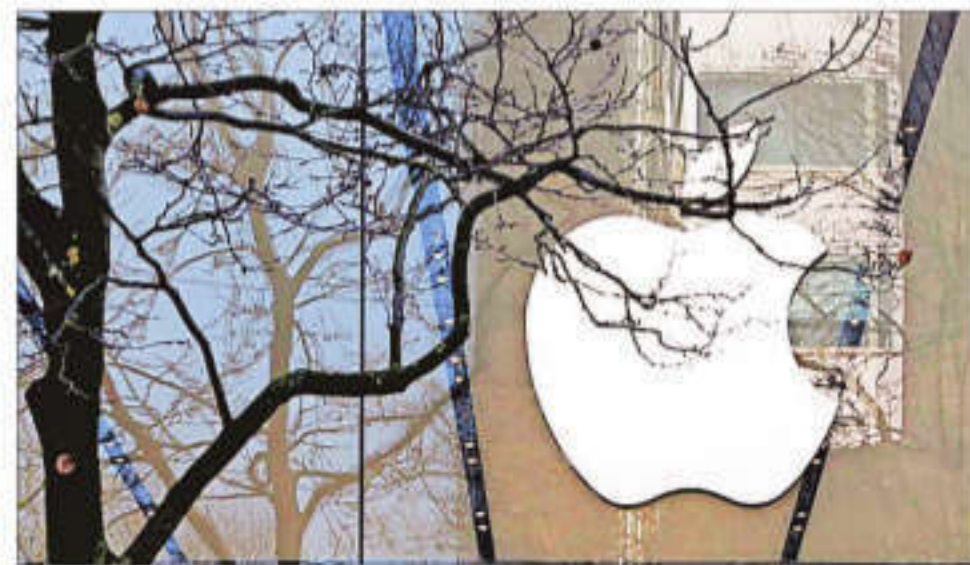
Soumyarendra Barik
New Delhi, May 16

OPENAI IS preparing legal action against Apple over what it sees as a breakdown in their two-year-old artificial intelligence (AI) partnership, Bloomberg reported. The Microsoft-backed AI firm reportedly believes it did not receive the commercial and strategic benefits it had expected from the deal that brought ChatGPT integration to Apple devices.

The partnership, unveiled in 2024 as part of the company's "Apple Intelligence" push, allowed Siri to route some user queries to ChatGPT and enabled iPhone users to sign up for ChatGPT subscriptions directly through Apple's ecosystem.

OpenAI had expected the arrangement to significantly boost subscriptions, visibility and deeper integration of its AI models across Apple's apps and services. However, Bloomberg and Reuters reported that OpenAI now feels Apple has not expanded the collaboration meaningfully enough.

OpenAI's lawyers are already working with an external law firm to examine possible legal options, including issuing Apple a formal breach-of-contract notice, according to reports. The company is still seeking a negotiated solution and may not immediately file a full lawsuit. The tensions have also been aggravated by Apple's broader AI strategy. Earlier this year, the company announced a multiyear AI



The deal allowed Siri to route some user queries to ChatGPT and enabled iPhone users to sign up for ChatGPT subscriptions directly through Apple's ecosystem. REUTERS

partnership with Google, which would see Gemini technology power the next generation of Siri on devices like the iPhone.

The dispute comes at a sen-

sitive moment for both firms. Apple has faced criticism and even legal scrutiny over delays to its AI-powered Siri features, while OpenAI is rapidly expan-

ding its consumer and enterprise footprint amid intensifying competition in the generative AI market.

The deal between Apple and Google

The partnership will see Apple pay about \$1 billion a year for a 1.2-trillion parameter artificial intelligence model developed by Alphabet Inc.'s Google to run its overhauled Siri voice assistant. The collaboration extends beyond just Siri.

According to a joint statement, the next generation of Apple foundation models will be based on Google's Gemini models and cloud technology. Apple confirmed it chose Google's technology after careful evaluation, determining it pro-

vides the most capable foundation for its AI ambitions.

While the two companies have not made specifics of the agreement public, it is anticipated that Google will license the base technology of Gemini to Apple, with the iPhone maker making tweaks to it to work across its ecosystem.

AI models like Gemini have two stages, one is called a pre-trained model, where it is trained to generate a string of words together, and then comes the post training phase, where the model is offered a distinct personality. Google would most likely offer the pre-trained version of Gemini to Apple.

To address any privacy concerns arising out of the deal, the companies have also said that

Apple Intelligence (the company's branding for its AI offerings) will continue to run on Apple devices and Private Cloud Compute (PCC), while maintaining Apple's privacy standards. The company says its personal cloud ensures that personal user data sent to the PCC isn't accessible to anyone other than the user.

The next-generation Siri is expected to arrive with iOS 26.4, likely releasing to the public in March or April 2026. Google's stock briefly touched above a \$4 trillion market valuation following the announcement.

Why Apple needs Google's help

Apple has largely stood on the sidelines of the AI revolution

that swept Wall Street following ChatGPT's launch in late 2022. While competitors like Amazon, Meta, and Microsoft invested billions in AI infrastructure and products, Apple struggled to deliver on its AI promises.

The company had announced a significant Siri upgrade during its WWDC 2024 keynote but was forced to delay the features. Apple acknowledged it would take longer than anticipated to deliver these capabilities, pushing the rollout from 2025 to 2026. Google's 1.2 trillion parameter model is larger and more powerful than Apple's own AI model, meaning the revamped Siri should be far more capable than what Apple could have developed independently in the same timeframe.

Classifieds PERSONAL

I,Rahil Mohd Siddiqui,son of,Rashid Ali Siddiqui,resident of-94,Pocket-L, Sarita-Vihar, New-Delhi-110076,have changed my name as Rahil Siddiqui and my-father's name as Rashid Ali,permanently 0040854958-6

I,MOHAMMAD RAFIQ,S/O-HAKIMULLA,R/O-House no-34,Tara-Puri, Lisadi-Road,Meerut, City,P.O-Lisari Gate,Dist-Meerut,Uttar Pradesh-250002,has changed my name to RAFIK MALIK Permanently,for all future,purpose. 0040854958-10

I,VARSHA RANI NANDA D/O KASHI RAM TULLI and W/O RAMESH NANDA R/O B-227, GALI NO 7, INDRANAGAR, ADARSH NAGAR, DELHI-110033, have changed my name from VARSHA RANI NANDA TO VARSHA NANDA permanently 0071036070-1

RECRUITMENT SITUATION VACANT UPCS Teachers Wanted. Compensation of Rs. 2500 per hour of video content. Teachers will need to be visible on camera while teaching. Please share a sample video for consideration. Email-schoolsnalkncontact@gmail.com 0040853936-5

PUBLIC NOTICE To be it known that, Vinod Chadha So Sh. Y. N. Chadha have lost/misplaced the original share certificate of Vinod Chadha bearing Membership No. 169 of Flat No. 109, 2nd floor, plot no. 32, Amit Apt, Sec-13, Rohini, Delhi-110085 issued by Amit CGHS Ltd. Rohini. An FIR to this effect has been lodged in Police Station vide LR No. 300327/2026 Date 13.05.2026

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY No. GSU/CPM/JPNIT/26-27 Date: 15.05.2026 OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE Chief Project Manager, Gail-Shakati Unit, N.W. Railway, Jaipur for and on behalf of President of India invites open E-Tender for the following works upto 15:30 hours on the date shown as below: Sr. No. 1. Name of work with location: GSU-Snt-JP-2026-27-03R Div. GSTE (GSU) JP Div: Signaling work in connection with Round Loop facility in Dhigawara Station of Jaipur division. Approx Cost of work: 32495493.84, Bid Security Rs.: 6499000/-

Rajasthan State Road Development And Construction Corporation Ltd., JAIPUR 8-ईंतिहाय सडक सडक 092/2026-27 दिनांकित करे के लिए केन्द्र / राज्य सरकार के अधिकाधिकी विभागी एवं उन्के अधीनगत सडकको में पंजीकृत एवं अनुमोदी सदसको में स्थितिपत्र एवं ई-अडक्शनके प्रक्रिया कुल अधिसूचनाके अधीनत अडक्शन को करी है

UTTARAKHAND SAHAKARI CHINI MILLS SANGH LTD. Near Railway Crossing, Badlipur Road, Jogiwala, Dehradun-248001 (Uttarakhand) Telephone No.: 0135-2974413 | E-mail: uksgurs@gmail.com Website: www.uttarakhandsugars.com

Letter No. 272/PUR/40/Sitarganj/2026-27 Date: 16 May, 2026 E-TENDER FOR RENOVATION OF OLD RESIDENTIAL QUARTERS TYPE C, D, E AND DORMITORY IN SITARGANJ SUGAR FACTORY (U. S. NAGAR) UTTARAKHAND IN THE YEAR 2026-27

Office of the Commissioner, Gwalior Municipal Corporation (NIT) Date: 15/05/2026 Gwalior Municipal Corporation, Gwalior Invites online for the following work:

Table with 7 columns: S. No., E-Tender No., Tender Name, Probable Amount of Contract (Rs), EMD (Rs), Tender Fee (Rs), Period of completion, and Sale Start/End Date & Time.

केनरा बैंक Canara Bank भारत सरकार का उपकरण A Government of India Undertaking ARM BRANCH, VIPIN KHAND, GOMTI NAGAR, LUCKNOW-22610

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable/Movable Properties under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002

Table with 4 columns: SL, NAME & ADDRESS OF BORROWER(S), MORTGAGOR(S) & GUARANTOR(S), DESCRIPTION OF IMMOVABLE/MOVABLE PROPERTIES, RESERVE PRICE EMD DEPOSIT, TOTAL LIABILITIES.

केनरा बैंक Canara Bank भारत सरकार का उपकरण A Government of India Undertaking ARM BRANCH, VIPIN KHAND, GOMTI NAGAR, LUCKNOW-22610

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable/Movable Properties under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002

Table with 4 columns: SL, NAME & ADDRESS OF BORROWER(S), MORTGAGOR(S) & GUARANTOR(S), DESCRIPTION OF IMMOVABLE/MOVABLE PROPERTIES, RESERVE PRICE EMD DEPOSIT, TOTAL LIABILITIES.

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY CORRIGENDUM Corrigendum Notice No.W.584/E-Tendering/31-DHN-2026-27 Dhanbad, dt. 14.05.2026.

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY E-NOTICE OF INVITATION TENDER Divisional Railway Manager, N.W. Rly, Bikaner for and on behalf of President of India invites sealed open tender for the following works on the date shown as below:

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale please refer the link "E-Auction" provided in Canara Bank's website (https://www.canarabank.bank.in/)

BRIDGE

When the contract looks secure try to imagine the distribution which might prove untractable. Take last week's problem hand for example. What sort of distribution did you play for in the grand slam in spades? Dealer: South Vulnerable: North/South

NORTH		SOUTH	
♠ A 6 4 2	♠ K Q 7 5 3	♠ K Q 7 5 3	♠ K Q 7 5 3
♥ A K 5 3 2	♥ Q	♥ Q	♥ Q
♦ 5 2	♦ A 8 4	♦ A 8 4	♦ A 8 4
♣ A 9	♣ K 6 4 2	♣ K 6 4 2	♣ K 6 4 2

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠ pass	3♠ pass		
2♠ pass	4♠ pass		
4NT pass	5♠ pass		
7♠ pass	pass		

West leads the queen of diamonds. Plan the play. There is no hope if spades are 4-0, no problem if they are 2-2. Assuming spades are 3-1, declarer will be able to set up a long heart with a 4-3 break. Thus, South should try to guard against a 3-1 spade split combined with a 5-2 or worse heart split. In such circumstances, the only chance for a club-heart squeeze, and South must manage his entries carefully to prepare to bring this about.

THE WEST HAND:
♠ 9 ♥ 10 9 8 7 4 ♦ Q J S ♣ Q 10 8 3

THE EAST HAND:
♠ J 10 8 ♥ J S ♦ K 10 9 7 3 ♣ Q J 7 5

The correct line is to win the diamond ace, cash the king and queen of spades and (assuming a 3-1 spade split) the queen of hearts, enter dummy with the spade ace and cash the top hearts, discarding diamonds. If hearts do not break favourably, declarer ruffs dummy's diamond. This will trump squeeze an opponent who started with five or more hearts and four or more clubs. Your problem for the week: Dealer: South Vulnerable: East/West

NORTH		SOUTH	
♠ A 5 3	♠ K Q J 10 9	♠ K Q J 10 9	♠ K Q J 10 9
♥ A 10 9	♥ 5 4 3 2	♥ 5 4 3 2	♥ 5 4 3 2
♦ 6 4 3 2	♦ A K	♦ A K	♦ A K
♣ 8 6 4	♣ A 5	♣ A 5	♣ A 5

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠ pass	1NT pass		
2♥ pass	2♥ pass		
2NT pass	4♥ pass		
pass	pass		

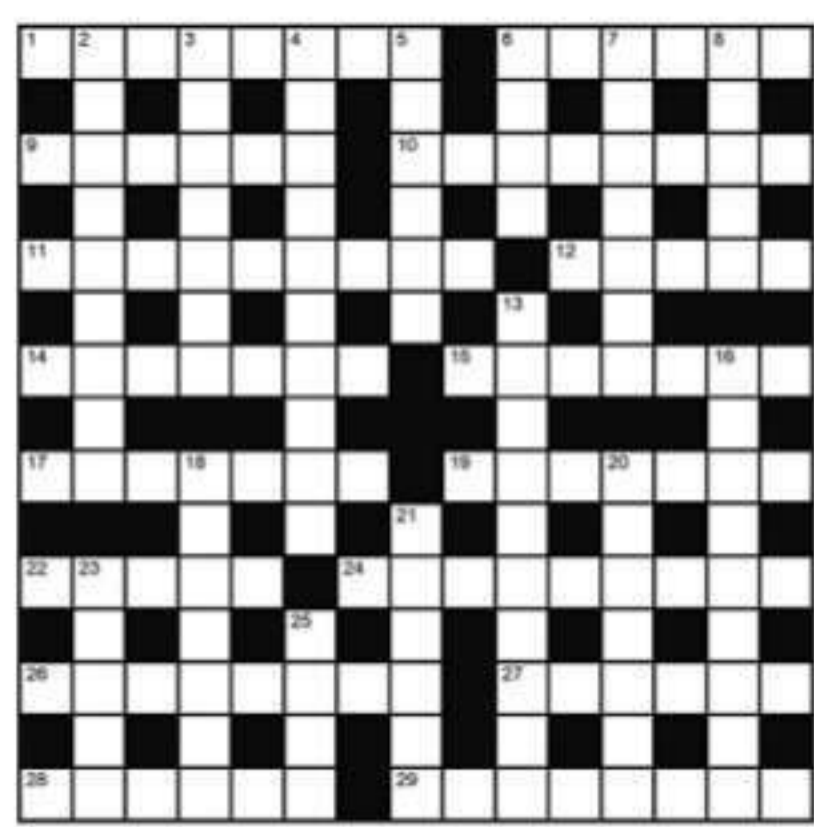
Spade deuce, three, seven, jack. Heart three, six, nine, jack. Spade eight, king, four, five. Heart four, seven. What now?

SUNDAY CROSSWORD

QUICK CLUES

- ACROSS**
1. Archaeological object (8)
6. Hordes (6)
9. Maximum (6)
10. Ashamed (3-5)
11. Dhania (9)
12. Some measures (5)
14. Fairly big (7)
15. Lessen the value (7)
17. Of a firm mind or firmly in place (4,3)
19. Gnarled (7)
22. Bungle (5)
24. Long, stout gloves covering the wrists (9)
26. Tries (8)
27. One making a speech? (6)
28. Involuntary muscular contractions (6)
29. Emptied of air (8)

- DOWN**
2. Fundamental reason (9)
3. Pressing to remove the creases? (7)
4. Provokes wonder (10)
5. Large bird (6)
6. Rogues (4)
7. Musical toy (7)
8. Because of (3,2)
13. Flaunting or boasting (7,3)
16. Battery pole (9)
18. Varies (7)
20. Seedless raisin (7)
21. Stopped temporarily or hesitated (6)
23. Cessation (5)



- 25.** Chooses or selects (4)
14. A flying start for an impersonation? (4-3)
15. First course once particular to London (3-4)
17. Step between age limits like a great dancer (7)
19. Contorts in pain from legal document he's received (7)
22. How to thrash a swimming mammal (5)
24. Chief support for getting spliced (4,5)
26. Completely out of port and unable to explain why? (3,2,3)
27. The long version lacks nothing in duration (6)
28. Five hundred over (7)

CRYPTIC CLUES ACROSS
1. Many of the wealthy not backing the admirable fellow (8)
6. Reason why you stir it round inside (6)
9. Band joshin' on the radio (6)
10. Dreadful body Mick discovered in big whale (4,4)
11. Old magistrate favouring criminals, dull at heart (9)
21. Adopt an attitude to keep one's composure (5)
23. Cessation (5)

SOLUTIONS TO 2581 QUICK CLUES ACROSS: 1 Ice-bag, 5 Operated, 9 Swimsuit, 10 Thatch, 11 Transition, 12 Less, 13 Measures, 16 Submit, 17 Stoles, 19 Believes, 21 Disc, 22 Oireachtas, 25 Malice, 26 Assisted, 27 Weighted, 28 Noodle
DOWN: 2 Cow, 3 Boman, 4 Gaudier, 5 Outfits, 6 Extents, 7 Available, 8 Excessive, 14 Extricate, 15 Selecting, 18 Slowest, 19 Barmaid, 20 Liaison, 23 Has to, 24 A bell
CRYPTIC CLUES ACROSS: 1 Old hat, 5 Pan-human, 9 Corvette, 10 Tiddly, 11 Catching up, 12 Rigg, 13 Villages, 16 Opener, 17 Puzzle, 19 Beta rays, 21 Verb, 22 Good looker, 25 Meaner, 26 Stinging, 27 Stashers, 28 Hunger
DOWN: 2 Loofa, 3 Havoc, 4 Tittling, 5 Pledges, 6 Not a pro, 7 Underwear, 8 Allegheny, 14 Inurement, 15 Lazybones, 18 Engorge, 19 Browses, 20 Tallish, 23 Organ, 24 Enrie

2582

- paper money, for a change, indicates inaction (6)
29. Suit worn by the wealthy (8)

- DOWN**
2. Puts pressure on the transport system (9)
3. Young reporter removed lice from the cell (7)
4. Instrument noted for precision (6,4)
5. Capital investment for the saintly (6)
6. Many old boys form unruly gangs (4)
7. Boring new diet going round America (8)
8. Alcohol and tobacco - they can get a grip on you, we hear (5)
13. Which Scottish country dance makes Lola repent? (10)
16. A French lover formerly quoted as lacking enthusiasm (9)
18. A little laser treatment makes her really attentive (3,4)
20. Down at heel Italian port (7)
21. Letters, first and last, in severe uncertainty (6)
23. Torment all round by way of greeting (5)
25. Is not curtailed in broken tins (4)

IF IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY

SUNDAY MAY 17: This year exciting changes will bring increased freedom. Stay flexible and let go of things that have impeded your progress. Seek out new opportunities. Be ready to act fast.

MONDAY MAY 18: This is a year of service, perhaps service to family. Take care of yourself so you can be a resource for those who turn to you for guidance, courage and comfort.

TUESDAY MAY 19: This is a year of reflection. Take time to renew your spiritual beliefs. Explore philosophies that give you better self-awareness and get you closer to the true meaning of your life.

WEDNESDAY MAY 20: This year you reap the benefits of your hard work. It's a year of major decisions and accomplishments. Seize opportunities. Expect acknowledgment, awards and kudos.

THURSDAY MAY 21: This is the final year of a nine-year cycle. Let go of people, places and things that have held you back. It's time to do some internal and external housecleaning.

FRIDAY MAY 22: This is a year of new beginnings and adventures. Keep your eyes open for new opportunities and be ready to take action. What you do now will bring great benefit in the future.

SATURDAY MAY 23: This is a slow-paced year. Take time to rejuvenate. Focus on business and relationships. Concentrate on what brings you happiness.

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

ARIES (MAR 21 - APR 20): This is the perfect 'choose your adventure' day. Take a short trip. Enjoy schmoozing with friends, siblings and neighbours. Learn something new. The feeling is festive and people are friendly. Get out and have some fun. This Week: Get cosy at home.

TAURUS (APR 21 - MAY 21): You are the financial wizard of the zodiac, and although today is a fun day, you also have one eye on your finances. You might find or lose money today. Protect what you own against loss, theft or damage. This Week: Strong energy for sports and work.

GEMINI (MAY 22 - JUNE 21): This is an upbeat day full of fun opportunities. However, you're a bit restless. Be careful to not leap without looking. Impulsive actions will be tempting. This Week: Impulsive shopping for things.

CANCER (JUNE 22 - JULY 23): Today is a bit restless. You are waiting for the other shoe to drop. Although it's a playful, social day, your ambition is aroused and you might choose to work and get things done. Your call. This Week: Buy yourself wardrobe goodies.

LEO (JULY 24 - AUG 23): This is a lovely, playful day. You make a great impression on everyone. A friendly mad surprise you or you might meet someone who is unusual. Charitable groups might interest you. This Week: Your ambition is aroused. Go after what you want.

VIRGO (AUG 24 - SEP 23): Today you're eager to do something different. Travel or be a tourist in your own city. Meanwhile, relations with parents, bosses and authority figures are a bit unpredictable today. This Week: Schmooze and travel.

LIBRA (SEP 24 - OCT 23): Travel plans might be interrupted. An unexpected flirtation with someone 'different' also might occur. Be patient with partners. This Week: You impress authority figures.

SCORPIO (OCT 24 - NOV 23): Because you need more rest this month, this could be the perfect day to sleep in. The vibes are sociable; nevertheless, double-check banking and shared property, because something unexpected might occur. This Week: Travel and learn.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV 24 - DEC 22): Sports events might catch your attention. You've got a lot of energy to socialise and have fun today. Be aware that a partner or close friend might do something that surprises you. Stay on your toes. This Week: Hard work yields productivity.

CAPRICORN (DEC 23 - JAN 20): Something unexpected might impact your work and health. Pet owners should know this is a mildly accident-prone day. Keep an eye on things. Having said that, this is a playful. This Week: Relations with others are warm and friendly.

AQUARIUS (JAN 21 - FEB 19): This is a positive, upbeat day. However, there's a mild accident-prone influence for your kids, so keep your eyes open. Meanwhile, social activities will be spontaneous. Double-check your plans. Increased activity and chaos at home.

PISCES (FEB 20 - MAR 20): Your home routine might be interrupted today. Small appliances might break down. Nevertheless, you're in a friendly frame of mind. There's a festive energy in the air. This Week: Socialise. Enjoy fun getaways.

JUMBLD WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective circles below. Select the letters in the shaded circles and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

It's easier to put on _____ than to carpet the whole world - Al Franken (8)

REFIX: ○○○○●●●●

LIVERY: ○○○○●●●●

SUNIS: ●○○○○●●●

EILTPP: ○○○○●●●●

ANSWERS: Fixer, Stains, Verily, Tipple
 Livery, Carpet, Sun, Tipple
 - Al Franken

DIFFICULTY LEVEL 5S INSTRUCTIONS

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL

1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 6320

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

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

See Section 82 Cr. P.C. / 84 BNSS
 Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person **Raju @ Raj Kumar S/o Ram Kishore R/o H. No. B-708, Madanpur Khadar, Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 04/2016 U/s 354/354D/506 IPC, P.S. Kalkaji, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Raju @ Raj Kumar** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Raju @ Raj Kumar** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).
 Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Raju @ Raj Kumar** of case **FIR No. 04/2016 U/s 354/354D/506 IPC, P.S. Kalkaji, Delhi** is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **25.06.2026**.
 By Order
 Dr. Neha Saini
 Judicial Magistrate First Class (Mahila Court)-02
 South East District, Room No. 507
 Saket Court Complex, New Delhi

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr.P.C.
 Whereas complaint has been made before me that the accused person **Sahil@Sameer S/o Shahid@Anif R/o Juggi No. 1, K Block, New Seelampur Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in **FIR No. 387/2023 U/s 380/411/ IPC PS: Krishna Nagar, Delhi**, and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Sahil@Sameer** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Sahil@Sameer** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).
 Proclamation is hereby made that the said **Sahil@Sameer** accused of (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in **FIR No. 387/2023 U/s 380/411/ IPC PS: Krishna Nagar, Delhi**, is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **03.10.2026**.
 By Order
 Sh. P. Bhargav Rao
 DP/6197/SHD/2026 JMFC-05, Room No. 3 Second Floor
 Karkardooma Court, Delhi

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

"SASHASTRA SEEMA BAL"
 Sashtra Seema Bal solemnly pays tribute to the braveheart **Shri Rohini Chandra Roy, SFA (Vety)** of 10th Bn SSB, who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. On this day, 16 years ago, he attained martyrdom in a tragic IED blast triggered by Naxals while traveling on the Dantewada-Sukma highway in Chhattisgarh. His unwavering courage, steadfast dedication and supreme sacrifice in service of the Nation will always be remembered with deep pride and gratitude.
 Shri Rohini Chandra Roy, SFA (Vety)
 17th May, 2010

UJVN LIMITED

H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006
 Telephone: 0135-2763898, Fax: 0135-2763508
 CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866 Website: www.ujvn.com
 Letter No: 420 Time Extension-I Date: 16/05/2026
 Due to some unavoidable reasons the critical dates against the T.No.03/EE(M)/RPS/2026-27 invited by the office of EE(M), R.P.S., Kalagarh, are hereby extended as follows:
Last Date/Time for downloading of tender documents : 29.05.2026
Last date for receipt of tender : 30.05.2026 up to 16:00 hrs
Date of opening : 01.06.2026 from 15:30 hrs
 For further details, kindly log on to <http://www.ujvn.com>
Executive Engineer (M)
"AVOID WASTEFUL USE OF ELECTRICITY"

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

NOTICE OF INVITING E-TENDER
 Sr.DMM, DRM Office, Bikaner, acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tender No. 34265071A Closing date 08.06.2026 at 14:25 hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. 1. **Description of Work:** Supply, Installation & Commissioning of IoT Based water level indicator System With e-SIM for Overhead Water Tank & Underslung Water Tank as per RDSO Specification IS/RDSO-CG/0002:2025 with latest rev. 2. **Quantity:** 1039 Nos. 3. **Date and time for submission of tender:** Submission of E-Tender up to 08.06.2026 at 14:25 hrs. 4. **Website Particular:** www.irops.gov.in 730-PH/26
 Follow us on [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [LinkedIn](#) [YouTube](#)

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

DIVISIONAL OFFICE, AJMER
No. WA/E-Tender/07/2026 Dated: 15.05.2026
 Following E-tenders are invited by DRM (Engg.) NWR/Ajmer at 15:00 Hrs. on the mentioned date. 1. **Tender No.:** 58/2026. **Name of work:** ADEN - FAJNA Sub Division - Zone No. 12 (2026-27 and 2027-28) - All Repairs & Maintenance and Sanitary Works in Staff Quarters between Bhirwalyia to Pindwara Section. **Approximate Cost:** Rs.1,43,77,114.36. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 2,87,600.00. **Tender Closing Date:** 27.05.2026. 2. **Tender No.:** 59/2026. **Name of work:** ADEN FAJNA Sub Division - Zone No. 13 (2026-27 and 2027-28) - All Repairs & Maintenance and Sanitary works in Service Building between Bhirwalyia to Pindwara section. **Approximate Cost:** Rs. 1,42,12,938.72. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 2,84,300.00. **Tender Closing Date:** 27.05.2026. 3. **Tender No.:** 60/2026. **Name of work:** ADEN Abu Road Sub Division - Zone No. 14 (2026-27 and 2027-28) - All Repairs & maintenance and Sanitary works in staff Quarters at Abu Road Station. **Approximate Cost:** Rs. 3,27,09,205.28. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 6,54,200.00. **Tender Closing Date:** 29.05.2026. 4. **Tender No.:** 61/2026 **Name of work:** ADEN Abu Road Sub Division - Zone No. 15 (2026-27 and 2027-28) - All Repairs & maintenance and Sanitary works in staff Quarters between Pindwara to Karjoda (excluding Abu Road). **Approximate Cost:** Rs. 2,64,80,886.70. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 2,69,600.00. **Tender Closing Date:** 29.05.2026. 5. **Tender No.:** 62/2026. **Name of work:** ADEN Abu Road Sub Division - Zone No. 16 (2026-27 and 2027-28) - All Repairs & maintenance and Sanitary works in all service Building under ADENABR jurisdiction including ORH - peaches, Holiday Home & Staff Accommodation at Mt. Abu but excluding Diesel Shed. **Approximate Cost:** Rs. 3,27,26,102.28. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 6,54,500.00. **Tender Closing Date:** 29.05.2026. 6. **Tender No.:** 63/2026. **Name of work:** ADEN Abu Road Sub Division - Zone No. 17 (2026-27 and 2027-28) - All Repairs & maintenance and Sanitary works in Diesel Shed (Shed, offices & Stores etc.) at Abu Road. **Approximate Cost:** Rs. 24,12,544.00. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 48,300.00. **Tender Closing Date:** 29.05.2026. 7. **Tender No.:** 65/2026. **Name of work:** ADEN/ABU ROAD Sub Division - Supply of potable water through contractor's road tankers at various Level Crossings, staff quarters & stations in jurisdiction of ADEN Abu Road. (For the period of 24 months.). **Approximate Cost:** Rs. 40,15,200.00. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 80,300.00. **Tender Closing Date:** 01.06.2026. 8. **Tender No.:** 76/2026. **Name of work:** Ajmer Division - Extension of DFC Side pedestrian subway at Fauna, Rani, Somesar railway station. **Approximate Cost:** Rs. 11,18,13,853.45. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 22,36,300.00. **Tender Closing Date:** 30.05.2026. 9. **Tender No.:** 49/2026. **Name of work:** Aii-Repairs to road approach pathway of staff quarters & bungalows in Ram Ganj colony, Hazari Bag colony, Jones Ganj colony, Beawer road etc under SSE/N/SOUTH AJMER Jurisdiction. **Approximate Cost:** Rs. 72,31,185.78. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 1,44,600.00. **Tender Closing Date:** 27.05.2026. 10. **Tender No.:** 52/2026. **Name of work:** AJMER Zone No. 01 (2026-27 & 2027-28) - All Type of repairs & maintenance work Residential building i.e in staff Qtrs. and Bungalows for civil works in the area of SSE/W/North Ajmer Jurisdiction. **Approximate Cost:** Rs. 3,98,93,997.30. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 7,97,900.00. **Tender Closing Date:** 08.06.2026. The detailed information of the above tender is available on website www.irops.gov.in and Tender Notice Board of DRM Office, NWR/Ajmer. **725-PH/26**
 Follow us on [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [LinkedIn](#) [YouTube](#)

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

(SEE SECTION 84 BNSS)
 Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person(s) **Krishna Kinna S/o Durga Prasad R/o H.No. 111-112, Pitampura, Rani Bagh, Outer Distt., Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in **FIR No./CC No. 80034309/2024 U/s 380/454 IPC, PS Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi** and it has been returned to a Warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused person(s) **Krishna Kinna** can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused person(s) **Krishna Kinna** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused person(s) **Krishna Kinna** of **FIR No./CC No. 80034309/2024 U/s 380/454 IPC, PS Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before dated **06.08.2026 at 10:00 AM**.
 By Order
 Ms. Preeti
 DP/6098/CD/2026 Judicial Magistrate First Class-03
 (Court Matter) Room No. 150, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

SEE SECTION 84 BHARTIYA NAGARIK SURKSHA SANHITA
 Whereas a complaint has been made before me that accused persons namely **Jafar S/o Zan Mohd R/o H.No. 235, D-Block, SRI Ram Colony, Khajuri Khas, Delhi** have committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence under **FIR No. 453/2023 U/s 27/61/85 NDPS Act.**, has been registered at **P.S. Kashmere Gate, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said, **Jafar** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said, **Jafar** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).
 Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused, **Jafar** of **FIR No. 453/2023 U/s 27/61/85 NDPS Act.**, registered at **P.S. Kashmere Gate, Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before **01.07.2026**.
 By Order
 Mr. Vaibhav Garg
 DP/6396/N/2026 JMFC-11 (Central), Room No.138
 (Court Notice) 1st Floor, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi

छत्तीसगढ़ शासन जल संसाधन विभाग

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The flaw IN THE GRIP

Batting coach Zubin Bharucha on how a subtle flaw in Rishabh Pant's bottom-hand grip is costing him runs, control — and a place in India's white-ball plans

Lalith Kalidas
New Delhi, May 16

TWO MONTHS ago, Rishabh Pant was sweating it out in Chennai's pre-season IPL heat. There was reason to be concerned. His stocks in India's white-ball set-up were at an all-time low — he was nowhere near the T20 World Cup-winning squad, and his last ODI appearance was in August 2024. No longer India's first-choice wicket-keeper in white-ball cricket, Pant arrived looking lighter, sharper. Interacting with Yuvraj Singh in Mumbai before the season, he stressed the finer points — bat swing, shape retention, clarity of shots. The intent was to force his way back in.

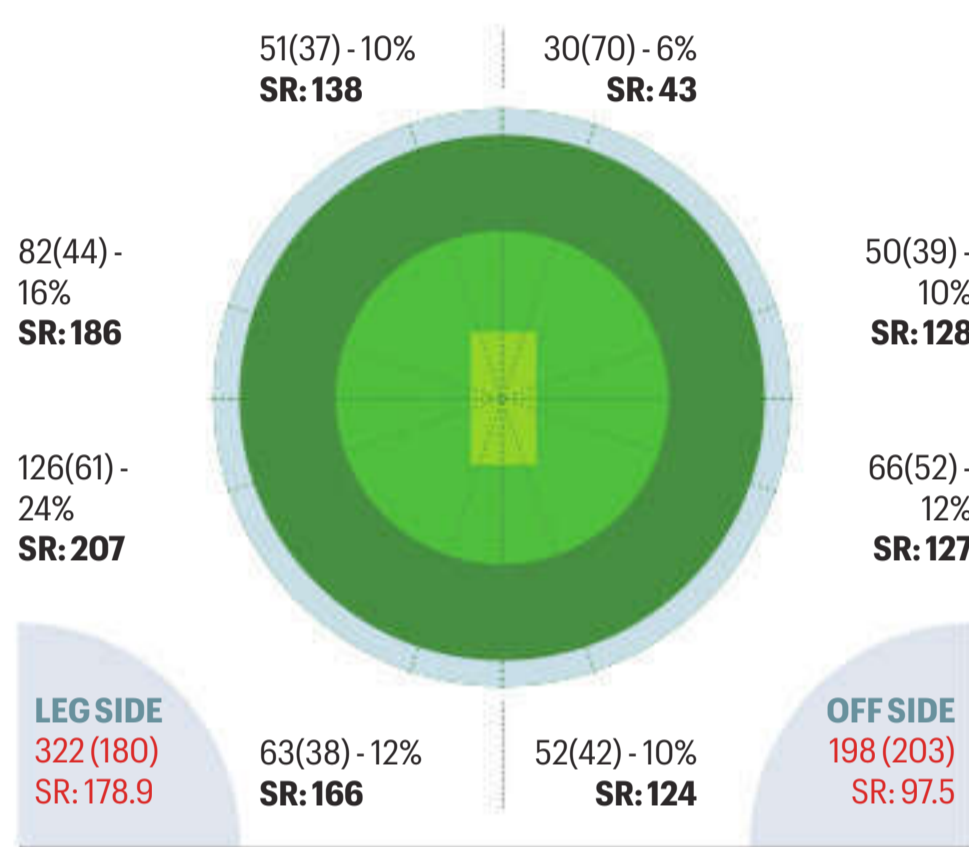
Two months on, in Chennai last Sunday, Pant was frozen by a Jamie Overton delivery that rushed him in the crease. The Lucknow Super Giants skipper was bowled for 15, dropping the momentum built by Josh Inglis's 33-ball 87. A cluster of wickets followed. LSG finished at 203 and fell short. After eight defeats, Pant has also run out of excuses to explain his team's rut.

The Overton dismissal exposed a weakness now extending to his defensive game — long considered a hallmark in Test cricket. As the ball skidded in towards off-stump from over the wicket, Pant's bat failed to cover the line. Inside edge back onto the stumps.

Renowned batting coach Zubin Bharucha explains the crippling side-effects of Pant's technique. "The dismissal against Overton is because of the inability to close the bat face. He should have played with the full face, but that's really tough with this bottom-hand grip. Hence, the inner edge. The bottom hand is also off the handle during impact."

His wrists are no longer in sync. The bottom hand — left, for Pant — works against the flow of his top hand. The ef-

• PANT'S SCORING AREAS SINCE IPL 2025



fects have seeped into multiple layers of his game: the falling scoops, the flicks and ramps that go one-handed, a profligate batting coach Zubin Bharucha explains the crippling side-effects of Pant's technique. All of it traces back to one subtle slip — the angle of his grip on the bat handle.

By convention, the thumb and index finger form a 'V' down the back of the handle — the foundational starting point when picking up a bat. Pant overextends this coil on his bottom hand, and the problems multiply from there.

"Pant's grip is over-rotated clockwise, past the back of the bat where it should be, leaving the bat face open on almost every ball. He also can't hold it firmly enough, causing the bottom hand to come off the handle on most shots. This means less power, which then forces him to look for runs behind the wicket as that's the only option left," explains Bharucha.

Not only does the wrongly-placed grip impede a full swing, but Pant's bottom hand is nearly absent at the point of contact. "It's not a backlift

issue. He has his own unique way with a big follow-through. But you can't do anything without holding the bat properly. If your hands are not functioning together, there's no way you're going to score a run," says Bharucha.

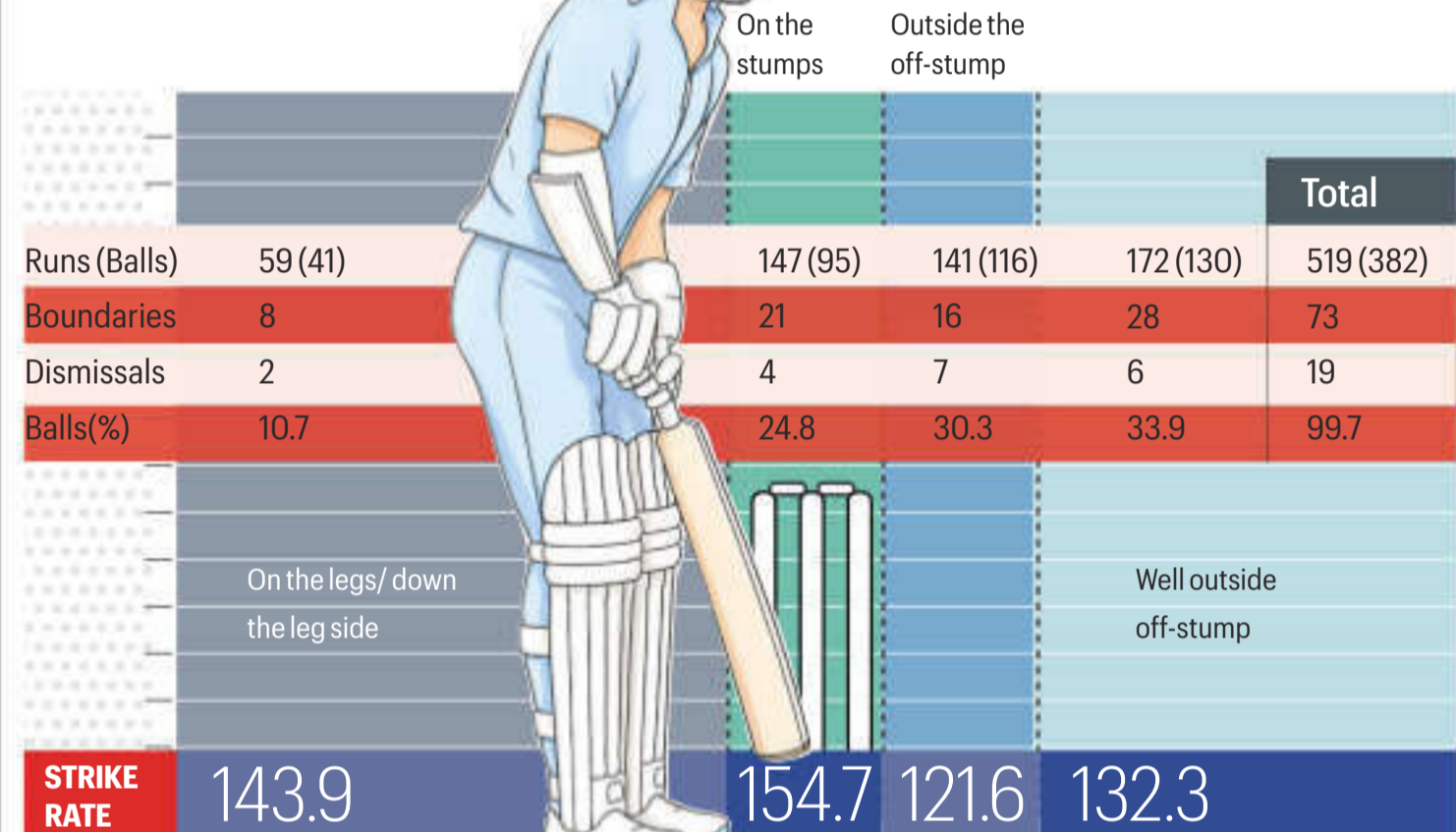
Batting at three slots — No. 2, 3 and 4 — across 11 innings, Pant's strike rate languishes at 138.67, against a top-4 cohort average of 163.46 this season. A blazing 32 not out off 10 deliveries against Royal Challengers Bengaluru last Thursday was the only instance his strike rate crossed 200. A rare slew of off-drives and reverse-ramps wowed the crowd — but Bharucha explained the adjustments Pant employs to stop his bat flipping on contact.

"Even when he was smacking it against RCB, he had to almost always make room to attack the off-side," Bharucha says. "So you have to make all sorts of adjustments to get that bat face in the right place, and it's super tough."

The numbers confirm it. The pull shot — relatively easier to execute — has yielded 108 of his 520 runs since the



• BALLS ON THE STUMPS GIVE PANT BEST RETURNS



2025 season, but with only a 56.5 control percentage; he muddled just 39 of 69 pulls. The slog — oxygen for any T20 batter — brought 22 runs for two dismissals, with only one in three deliveries middled. Leg-side strokes that require less precise contact — paddle

scoop (27.3% control), slog sweep (50%) — have combined for 86 runs.

According to *Cricinfo-21* data, Pant's overall control stood at 66.7 per cent with a 128.3 strike rate after 50 games this season — well short of the top-4 cohort, who measured 73 per cent control.

The slipping control has hit his record against spin hardest. Since last season, Pant has scored 162 runs against spin at a strike rate of 129.6 — a far cry from the carnage he inflicted on spinners at his peak between 2017 and 2019. Bharucha traces the mental knock-on: "When he knows he's not going to clear long-off or long-on, psychologically he is now thinking, 'if I hit in the air it's definitely not going for six, so what do I do?'"

The dwindling options have left him without a theme to build an innings. Of his nine dismissals this season, seven have come within 12 deliveries. The off-side has become a specific hunting ground for bowlers. Eight of his nine IPL dismissals this season have come to deliveries on off-stump or wide outside off; 13 of 20 since last season. Nearly 62 per

cent of his 520 runs since last year — 322 — have come through the on-side at a strike rate of 178. His entire off-side output: 198 runs at a strike rate of 97.5.

"It's a miracle at this level," says Bharucha. "Everybody has an off-side weakness, but this is not a weakness anymore. People say corridor of uncertainty and all this. This has nothing to do with uncertainty. This is just not being able to hit a ball."

A faltering technique will continue to afford him leeway in Test cricket — devoid of expansive fields — where he is already India's greatest six-hitter with 94 maximums in 49 Tests. The effects are magnified in the gung-ho expanses of white-ball cricket.

"Where he's really floundering is that he has no control. As soon as he connects the ball, the hand turns. There's nothing he can do to survive that. On a particular day, maybe his hand just sits slightly better on the handle, and he connects. Sometimes it could work," reasons Bharucha.

Power-packed left-handers and wicket-keepers are now storming India's white-ball circuits. Pant's range no longer sets him apart. An erring technique could soon confine him to one format — and perhaps even begin to question his undisputed place in India's Test set-up.



Yashvi Jaiswal has scored 315 runs at a strike rate of 157.50. PTI

Pant's grip is over-rotated clockwise, past the back of the bat where it should be, leaving the bat face open on almost every ball. He also can't hold it firmly enough, causing the bottom hand to come off the handle on most shots.

ZUBIN BHARUCHA, RENOWNED BATTING COACH

In Sooryavanshi's shadow, Jaiswal looks to shine again

Lalith Kalidas
New Delhi, May 16

IN THE last three weeks, their rivals have gathered steam or unravelled altogether. The Rajasthan Royals have been doing neither — two appearances on the field, two defeats, and a fortnight of enforced stillness in between.

The extended breaks have been unkind. After the bowlers' profligate returns undid a 225-run defence against Delhi Capitals, the batters imploded in a similarly hefty chase against Gujarat Titans in Jaipur. More of the same, and their playoff hopes begin to narrow.

RR head coach Kumar Sangakkara knows it. Speaking on Saturday, he stressed the immediate need for balance — for the unit and its lead anchors. He threw his weight behind out-of-form captain Riyan Parag and his deputy Yashvi

Jaiswal, even as both have endured a lean run of late.

The league standings have shifted considerably around them, but Rajasthan's playoff hopes remain intact. Starting Sunday against Delhi at the Feroz Shah Kotla, their top-four chances are in their own hands — three matches lined up against sides that have struggled for an identity all season.

"Sometimes during breaks, overtraining is a problem. Undertraining is also a problem. So, you've got to get the balance right," said Sangakkara. The focus between the lengthy gaps, he said, had shifted entirely off the field. "Social activities, just conversations, talking about things other than cricket. A lot of these breaks have been about refocusing, refreshing, keeping those guys having fun."

Much of that fun, and much



tempo, Jaiswal has found himself strangled. Hard lengths and extra pace have undone him four times in succession — a faulty pull, a hook, a loose flick to a Mitchell Starc full-toss in the previous meeting between the sides. The cross-batted strokes that have otherwise exuded clarity have, of late, cost him. Sangakkara was untroubled. "Everyone focuses a lot on Vaibhav because he's young, he's exciting. He does things other batters can't. That's the same with a batter like Yash. I consider him one of those polished products that you can bat anywhere. You just know he knows how to score runs. And I don't think there's any notion of him playing second fiddle."

Since their association began last season, Jaiswal and Sooryavanshi have put on 917 runs together at 12.19 runs per over, averaging 50 per dismissal — the fastest-scoring opening combination in the competition.

On Saturday evening, Jaiswal was in the nets. A string of firmer pulls and hooks soared over the mid-wicket stands — unhurried, deliberate, the footwork placed with care.

"Yash is very determined to get back out there," said Sangakkara. "Sometimes that means doing well for yourself, because it helps the side."

KKR STAY ALIVE

Allen, Narine star as Kolkata beat Gujarat

SYNOPSIS: Allen's hands and Narine's skill in his 200th IPL game light up Eden; GT's chase throttled despite captain Gill's 85 and Sudharsan's hurt pride.

Sayak Dutta
Kolkata, May 16

FINN ALLEN'S hands did the damage. Sunil Narine's 200th IPL game produced the turning point. Kolkata Knight Riders beat Gujarat Titans by 29 runs at Eden Gardens on Saturday night to stay alive.

Allen's hands

Finn Allen wanted to know how Nicholas Pooran did it. He watched the West Indians and found the answer in the hands. "They've got this beautiful flow," Allen told BBL broadcasters once. "I just try to load with my hands, keep my hands high for as long as I can, to get as much power as possible."

Kagiso Rabada, who has taken more powerplay wickets than any bowler this season, went for 94 metres over long-off in the third over. Then 92 metres over midwicket. Allen treated both lengths with identical contempt. Rashid Khan came on and was greeted with three consecutive sixes — 85 metres, 84 metres, then a pull over deep midwicket that barely needed a follow-through. Fifty off 21 balls.

In the sixth over, Allen pulled Holder hard and flat to long-on. Mohammed Siraj, running in, got fingertips, put it down. Allen was on 33 then. He went for 93. Sai Kishore tossed one up on the leg stump line, Allen backed away for the lofted drive, and the drift did what drift does — followed him, ballooned to Rashid at long-on. Only four batsmen in IPL history have hit ten or more sixes in an innings more than once — Chris Gayle four times, Abhishek Sharma and Vaibhav Suryavanshi twice each. Allen now joins them at two.

Raghuvaran then set about the chase together. They were watchful through the middle overs — 62 runs between overs eight and thirteen, the required rate climbing quietly. Gill attacked the spinners in bursts: two sixes off Narine in over six, two sixes and a four off Anukul in over nine, then 22 off Varun's 14th over. But the acceleration came a fraction late — Varun finished with 0 for 47 and the equation still demanded 71 off 24.

Narine found Gill at the moment it mattered most. The sweep was on but the ball found Anukul at the rope, who held his nerve with feet just inside the boundary.

Sudharsan returned and hit 53 off 28. Buttler reached 57 before Saurabh Dubey, in the 19th over, produced two dots, a wide, another dot, then Buttler caught at the boundary. Forty-one needed off seven balls. Green ended it off the last ball of the match, Watwata caught by Raghuvaran.

BRIEF SCORES: KKR 247/2 in 20 ovs (Allen 93, Raghuvaran 82, Green 52; Siraj 1/57) bt GT 218/4 in 20 ovs (Gill 85, Sudharsan 53*, Buttler 57; Narine 2/26) by 29 runs



Opener Finn Allen top-scored for Kolkata Knight Riders with 93 from 35 balls against Gujarat Titans in Kolkata on Saturday. AP

Kohli calls out invasion of privacy during practice

Express News Service
New Delhi, May 16

VIRAT KOHLI has spoken out about his discomfort with players being recorded by social media teams of Indian Premier League franchises while they are sharing personal conversations with other players or in training sessions. The Royal Challengers Bengaluru star asked for there to be some "streamlining" in terms of the footage that IPL teams' social media units capture in order to create viral moments.

Not comfortable

"You walk to practice and you have six cameras following you. It's not a comfortable feeling at all," Kohli said on the RCB Podcast. "As a sportsperson, you need to have the ability and the freedom to work on your game in peace. If everything

you do is an opportunity to film or display or to dissect, then you are not being organic. I'm not going to be able to try to do things at practice which I really want to do because I know tomorrow if someone films it and there are discussions on my practice sessions... You judge me on my performances during the game, not during the leadup. No one has the right to judge me on what I'm doing in terms of my preparation, the things I'm trying in the nets."

Kohli called for social media units of teams to understand what to record behind the scenes and when to roll the cameras. "I feel like there has to be more streamlining in terms of understanding how much to do, when to do, is the player okay with being filmed at all times. Those kinds of things need to be taken into account because it gets too much."

Parul clocks second-fastest Indian time in steeplechase



Parul Chaudhary finished seventh in the 3000m steeplechase at Shanghai Diamond League. FILE

Express News Service
New Delhi, May 16

MIDDLE-DISTANCE runner Parul Chaudhary ran the second-fastest 3000m steeplechase race by an Indian woman to finish seventh in the season-opening Shanghai Diamond League meeting on Saturday. Parul, the national record holder, clocked 9 minutes 12.84 seconds, slightly slower than her personal best of 9:12.46.

The 31-year-old from Uttar Pradesh was running her first race of the season after the 2025 World Championships in Tokyo and was up against a field which featured Tokyo Olympic champion Peruth Chemutai of Uganda and reigning World champion Faith Cherotich of Kenya.

Parul started in the middle running pack and maintained a consistent pace throughout the race. She remained in eighth position till 2800m before producing a kick in the final 200m to go past USA's Lexy Halladay to finish seventh and earned two points in the race for Diamond League Finals qualification.

Packed calendar

Parul has a packed calendar in the 2026 season with Commonwealth Games and Asian Games scheduled in the space of one month. While a double podium finish (in 3000 steeplechase and 5,000m) is expected from her at Aichi-Nagoya, the CWG will be a bigger challenge given the presence of African athletes in the middle-distance events.

Parul is expected to race next at next week's Federation Cup in Ranchi.

It was a dramatic photo finish between Chemutai and Cherotich in Shanghai on Saturday. Chemutai, who took the lead at around 1200m, maintained it thereafter but broke into a premature celebration that almost cost her the race. Cherotich, who was closely following the Ugandan got into a sprint in the last 200m but fell short by 100th of a second.

"I thought I had won. At the finish, I could see Faith's right hand and I knew it was close. It is special to win today. It gives me confidence ahead of next week when I race again in Xi'an." Chemutai said after the race. The duo would compete next week again.

FIRST BWF WORLD TOUR FINAL OF SEASON

Sat-Chi survive 82-min thriller to enter Thailand Open final

Indian pair defeated Malaysians Goh and Nur 19-21, 22-20, 21-16, will play Leo and Daniel of Indonesia next

Shivani Naik
Mumbai, May 16

COULD A sub-optimal, dis-comfitting but essential Plan B be deployed for a win?

That was the question posed to Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty throughout their first set of the Thailand Open Super 500. They lost the battle 19-21, but won the war, 22-20, 21-16 for a 82 minute three-set tussle that gave them their first final of the season. Like lightning, the light of the win followed the sound of noise of the past fortnight.

Plan B implied, allowing former World No.1s — now No.9, Malaysians Goh Sze Fei and Nur Izzudin to dictate the opening moves like in a chess game; the battle confined to flat, fast net exchanges, where the Indians would be starved of lifts, to smash down. A taut, tense front and midcourt warfare, where the Indians would necessarily need to defend Goh's jump smashes if an errant lift ballooned up.

Out of comfort zone

Out of their comfort zone, it would also mean Satwik playing front court, and Chirag manning the back — an adapting measure that's necessary to be trained for in contingencies, but not ideal. Plan B, a self-inflicted pressure-test started badly — 9-15 down. But then the Indians got past the criss-cross maze where they had to operate from a bending position. Not quite crouching tigers, more like scrambling rabbits, the two tall 6 foot upwards

shuttlers need to urgently speak to India's finest wrestlers or even Leander Paes to get that front court attacking crouch-squat stance right. But they have worked hard enough on the problem already and took 7 of the next 10 points by opening up the court a tad to reach 16-18. Chirag's round the head thereafter didn't connect, and Satwik, not very sharp on the day, watched the tape return the shuttle on his court. 19-21, the first set was lost.

But Satwik-Chirag have not reached World No.1 (they are No.4 currently), by giving up. Problem-solving is now second-nature to them and their coaching team, which astutely had Manu Attri, a chameleon of a front & back court former Olympian, a Meerut man who properly understands the Malaysian-Indonesian way of front court sorcery, along with coach Tan who can untangle the flat-exchange gameplan.

Early in the second set with the Indians still grappling with the stock Malaysian model, at 4-6 down, Satwik-Chirag went on a 5-point surge.

Dipping the shuttle to disrupt the parallels, they started forcing lifts out of Goh-Nur. It really is all that the Indians need to drop the defensive cloak and toggle to attack. It went to 16-16, but Chirag was breaking the shackles. He even reviewed a faulted serve and won.

His childhood coach Uday Pawar had once told Chirag bluntly that even if the duo were getting better at defense, they must not push it, and pretend they will win matches on



Satwik-Chirag reached their first final of the season and will eye another title in Thailand. BADMINTON PHOTO

Number Plate

1st

● This is the first final for the Indian duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty on the BWF World Tour 2026. They have previously won Thailand Open twice back in 2019 and 2024.

retrieves.

By instinct, the Indians are attackers, and must back their strength. Satwik was erring on lengths, but Chirag stayed sturdy and smashed at every opportunity to break away to 19-16. Nery rallies followed to 20-20, but the decider was earned when Satwik clutched up with a brilliant tall flat cross from backcourt.

Once released from the chains of forecourt flats, the Indians were well on their way in the third. Chirag, whose swivel serve and 'Huudd' exhales are

reassuringly back, still logged a high serve error, and a long rally ended with net tape drama as the shuttle clipped and tumbled onto Malaysian side.

But the Indians had their first final of 2026, second in two years at Thailand. They have won twice at Bangkok, and also were crowned Thomas Cup champions in the city.

While Chirag drew his motivation from how well the Indians defended even after lifting, and moved the Malaysians around, Satwik explained why the flat game played by shorter players is troublesome. It's a lesson learnt the hard way from losing to Minions early in their career and to Aaron-Soh at the Olympics.

"Malaysians and Indonesians always want to dominate the net. They don't want us to play back court. Goh-Nur had the upper hand at the net that's how they started first game. They were controlling front and mid court. They're quite

skillful with their hands at the net and being short guys they use net skills. We are tall and need to bend, and play tight shots to get there. For them it's very easy... it's tactical," he told the BWF.

Goh-Nur acceded that the higher tempo the Indians switched to, broke their back. "They increased pace and kept attacking. And put pressure on us. And we cannot sustain that. The attacking was too strong... we couldn't overcome," they told BWF. "Job not done yet," was Satwik's verdict to BWF, while Chirag accepted, "Slowly we are getting better, we are playing well in patches."

The Indians play Leo Rolly Carnando and Daniel Marthin, Indonesian 24-year olds, who they haven't faced since four victories over them in 2023. Marthin is a 6 footer himself, and their speed and tricks will be a challenge. But 'Working Sundays' is what they play badminton for.

Biggest Kolkata derby in years with ISL title on line

Rohit Mundayur
New Delhi, May 16

IT HAS taken six years but at long last, the Kolkata derby could actually be the match that decides the Indian Super League (ISL) crown, as opposed to being just a marketing pitch for the competition.

Going into Sunday's fixture at the Salt Lake Stadium, Mohun Bagan Super Giant and East Bengal are level on 22 points, second and third on the table respectively, after playing 11 games with the red and gold brigade ahead on goal difference. Effectively, though, the two Kolkata giants are the only teams with a chance to win the title — provided one of them wins on Sunday — with current league leaders Bengaluru FC having already finished their 13 matches with 23 points. In essence, it's the biggest Kolkata derby — in terms of consequence — in many a year. Bagan having drawn their last two matches in the heavily trun-



East Bengal players practising ahead of the Kolkata derby. AIFF

cated season has brought the title race to an intriguing conclusion.

The first of those two draws, against FC Goa, came after an inexplicable break of 20 days, which may have affected the rhythm of Sergio Lobera's team, and the malaise continued in their next game against an embattled Inter Kashi.

East Bengal have been in comparatively better touch but they too played out a rather dull goalless draw against Punjab FC at home in their previous match. Oscar Bruzon's side was clearly second-best for much of the outing, but Punjab couldn't find the net.

Both Kolkata giants have just one more match after Sun-

day's derby. If East Bengal beat their arch rivals, they would move to 25 points at the top of the table. In that case, with them having a superior head-to-head record against the Mariners, they will win the title even with a draw in their final game.

Mumbai City FC and Punjab FC are also on 22 points after 12 matches, with Jamshedpur FC and FC Goa on 21 and 20 respectively going into their final fixtures.

It has taken a long time for the Kolkata derby to actually mean something in the ISL title as East Bengal haven't really been able to compete with Bagan since the two sides became part of the league. Bagan have won nine of the 10 league games between the two sides, with the other one ending in a draw.

However, that gap seems to have narrowed recently. Bagan won the IFA Shield final against East Bengal only after a tie-breaker and the Super Cup fix-

ture between them ended in a draw.

Spanish coaches

Both teams have Spanish coaches at the helm now. Bruzon played down Bagan's recent slump, while making sure not to undermine his own side's strengths.

"If we need to talk about favourites, it's clear that Mohun Bagan has the advantage. But if we need to talk about performance, which is our part, I'm cool, I'm confident, I'm determined, I'm excited, and I really believe that our guys tomorrow can play a good game, and take the three points," he Spaniard said ahead of the derby.

Lobera, on the other hand, said he would prefer to let the football do the talking.

"It's a very good opportunity for us to show everyone that we can win one trophy because we are better than the opponent. But on paper, everything is amazing. It's time to speak on the pitch," Lobera said.

Semenyo's wonder strike helps Man City win FA Cup crown



Antoine Semenyo scored in the 72nd minute. ASSOCIATED PRESS

Reuters
London, May 16

MANCHESTER CITY'S Antoine Semenyo produced a moment of magic to win the FA Cup on Saturday, a 1-0 victory over Chelsea completing an English cup double for Pep Guardiola's side. Forward Semenyo turned and deftly back-heeled the ball past Chelsea goalkeeper Robert Sanchez from an Erling Haaland cross in the 72nd minuteto delight the City supporters.

"Everything happened so fast to be honest," Ghana's Semenyo, who joined City in January, told the BBC. "It came straight to me and I had to improvise myself as quickly as I can." "I have never competed for trophies like this before, so everything is new to me. Hopefully, we can finish the job off."

The former Bournemouth player's goal sparked what had been a cautious game into life with both sides having chances in the last 20 minutes, Rayan Cherki forcing a fine save from Sanchez and teammate Matheus Nunes hitting the post. City captain Bernardo Silva, who is leaving at the end of the season, described the victory as very special.

"It's really nice to finish this way and maybe we can still have a small dream that we can still fight for the Premier League," the Portugal midfielder said. City trail leaders Arsenal by two points in the title race going into the last two

games of the season. Semenyo said: "I don't think there will be much celebration tonight - it is getting ready for Tuesday."

City face sixth-placed Bournemouth in the league on Tuesday. Silva received the FA Cup from Prince William and raised it aloft alongside defender John Stones, who is also leaving the club, to wild cheers from the sky-blue end of Wembley Stadium. It was City's eighth FA Cup triumph and followed victory in the League Cup in March, in what could also be Guardiola's last season after 10 years in charge.

But it was a seventh successive domestic cup final defeat — the fourth in the FA Cup — for Chelsea, who had looked to the showpiece match for some relief after a turbulent season and two managerial changes.

Enzo Fernandez, Joao Pedro and Liam Delap all had chances to score for Chelsea but failed to find the target in what for long periods was an even, if unexciting, clash.

The London club's hopes of European football next season now look very slim, while their American BlueCo owners search for a new manager to replace interim boss Calum McFarlane, who took over from the sacked Liam Rosenior.

Rosenior lasted less than four months following the new-year departure of Enzo Maresca, with Chelsea having plunged down the Premier League to ninth place.

Lewandowski to leave Barcelona

Reuters
Barcelona, May 16

POLAND STRIKER Robert Lewandowski is set to leave Barcelona after four years at the club, during which the 37-year-old helped the club win three LaLiga titles. Media reports have said Lewandowski, whose Barcelona contract expires this summer, has received offers from Saudi Arabia, Italy and the U.S. "After four years full of challenges and hard work, it's time to move on. I leave with the feeling that the mission is complete," Lewandowski, who has scored 119 goals for Barcelona in all competitions, posted on Instagram on Saturday.

"I will never forget the love I

received from the fans from my very first days. Catalonia is my place on Earth. Thank you to everyone I met along the way during these beautiful four years." Barcelona paid an initial transfer fee of 45 million euros (\$45.4 million) plus add-ons to bring Lewandowski in from Bayern Munich, where he had scored 344 goals, winning eight Bundesliga titles and the Champions League. Lewandowski topped LaLiga's scoring charts with 23 goals in his debut season, helping Barcelona capture their first league title in four years. He was also Barcelona's top scorer in the next two LaLiga campaigns, scoring 27 goals in the 2024-25 campaign to help the club retain the title.

● BRIEFLY



Rishabh Das breaks 200m backstroke national record

MAHARASHTRA SWIMMER Rishabh Das created history at the Sydney Open 2026 by becoming the first Indian to clock under two minutes in the 200m backstroke event. The young backstroke specialist recorded a time of 1:59.84 in Sydney, improving his own national record

of 2:00.14 set earlier this year at the NSW State Open in March. Japan's Hidekazu Takehar won the event with a timing of 1:57.11, while the United States' Lee Se-bom finished second in 1:57.27. Australia's Stuart Swinburn claimed third place with a time of 1:58.04. Rishabh finished fifth overall. PTI

Sinner needs one win to complete Masters 1000 set

JANNIK SINNER played through exhaustion and maintained his focus overnight to beat Daniil Medvedev 6-2, 5-7, 6-4 when their rain-delayed semifinal resumed on Saturday to extend his winning streak to 28 matches and set up an Italian Open final against Casper Ruud. The top-ranked Sinner is one victory away from becoming only the second man after Novak Djokovic to win all nine Masters 1000 titles. Rome is the only event in the Master series — the biggest outside the Grand Slams — that Sinner hasn't won. Djokovic won each Masters event at least twice. Sinner had led 4-2 in the third set when the match was suspended late Friday. The Italian finished off the match quickly when play resumed on Saturday again. AP

● CHESS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS FINAL

'It's 50-50': Pragg weighs in on Gukesh vs Sindarov

Express News Service
Mumbai, May 16

AFTER DEFEATING Javokhir Sindarov in a round 2 clash of the Super Chess Classic 2026 tournament in Romania, India's Praggnanandhaa said that the upcoming World Chess Championship battle between the Uzbek prodigy and world champion D Gukesh will be an evenly poised battle. Sindarov has been in rampaging form in classical chess recently, scything through the Candidates tournament in Cyprus last month with an unblemished record to secure his spot in the world championship.

In fact, the defeat to Pragg was Sindarov's first in eight months. The Uzbek prodigy's last defeat in the classical format came in September 2025 against Bulgaria's Ivan Cheparinov in the 3rd round of the FIDE Grand Swiss 2025 at home in Samarkand. Sindarov went unbeaten at the FIDE World Cup in Goa and then the



Praggnanandhaa (R) against Javokhir Sindarov. LENNART OOTES/GCT

Candidates tournament.

But while former world champions Magnus Carlsen and Garry Kasparov have firmly installed Sindarov as the favourite for the World Championship against Gukesh, Pragg felt that no player has a clear advantage.

When asked by ChessBase

India about who he thinks is the favourite at the upcoming World Championship at the end of the year, Pragg said: "The world championship is 6 months away. No one knows what form they will go in. I think it's just 50-50. I don't think anyone is a favourite. It's

just about who plays the best at the World Championship that will take it."

Last month, when Carlsen was asked who would win the Gukesh vs Sindarov World Chess Championship clash during a Chess Party in Stockholm, he had named Sindarov to be the next world champion.

"At the moment it's impossible not to say Sindarov but we know anything can happen in a World Championship match," Carlsen had said. "I am first of all really curious as to what Sindarov will do in the next few months because he is very different from Gukesh. In the sense that Gukesh has very obvious weaknesses when it comes to his understanding and Sindarov does not. He is a lot more well-rounded."

Kasparov had also backed Sindarov to beat Gukesh.

"Compared to Gukesh, if you look at the games, Sindarov looks like the clear favorite. But this match is a special format. Gukesh is very mentally stable,

able to defend any position and find resources even in the worst situations. Gukesh has match experience, but for Sindarov, this will be his first serious match. Yes, it's relatively short — 14 games, we've played longer games before — but it will still be very interesting," Kasparov said in an interview with St Louis Chess Club's YouTube channel.

"Beating Sindarov is suddenly a good thing. He's lost a classical game after I don't know how many games! He's been in terrifying form. But I thought I played quite decently today," Pragg told Saint Louis Chess Club's YouTube channel after defeating Sindarov.

Playing with white pieces, Sindarov resigned after 42 moves in a game where he was trailing on the clock for long periods, had less material from as early as the eighth move, and had a knight less on the board from the 22nd move. The eval bar also indicated that Pragg had the edge.

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'I still haven't arrived'

Swiss author Nelio Biedermann on tasting fame at 22 with *Lázár*, handling praise and criticism and the silences in his family history

SCREEN | PAGE 3

Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari on how life can be



The Long View

Romila Thapar, 94, on her memoir, the battle over History, and why questioning remains essential to intellectual life

Devyani Onial

HISTORY MAY be a contested subject today, the site of shrill debates and ideological battles but there are no signs of the turmoil inside historian Romila Thapar's living room in south Delhi's Maharani Bagh. Her dachshund, Bulleh, named after Sufi poet Bulleh Shah, has quietened down after a few perfumatory barks and all is quiet. Frames of tribal art hang from the walls, on one corner is an unlikely series of her face photoshopped on cutouts of snazzy cars. The artwork, she says, were birthday gifts that her now 22-year-old grandnephew — her nephew, conservationist Valmik Thapar's son — fashioned for her as a child with a passion for cars.

Sitting on her red swivel chair, Thapar, who turned 94 last November, talks thoughtfully on her journey, one that also chronicles that of the nation. The entwined journey has resulted in the making of her memoir, *Just Being* (Seagull Books, 2026), a sprawling account of her life, memories, the history and making of a nation and the pulls and strains of its lived reality.

"I was uncertain about writing them, because I thought who would be interested in reading about my life. Then I said I will write them but I will have them published when I'm dead, so that I'm not there to answer questions, to face interviews! But various people said to me, 'don't be silly and don't wait till you're dead, publish them now'," says Thapar, who started writing them during the Covid pandemic.

One of India's pre-eminent historians, Thapar is known for her seminal work on early India and for being among India's historians who took history out of its simple narrative form to recreating the past by attempting to explain its whys and hows.

Thapar's interest in history came early though her first love was botany. "It was such fun to make drawings of flowers and plants and even the occasional frog," she laughs. But in the end she chose history.

THAPAR WAS a school girl in Pune when India got Independence. As a prefect, she was chosen to raise the Indian flag and give a speech. "There was a huge anticipation in 1947. Conversations were largely on what is the kind of nation and the kind of society that we are going to encourage and try to form," she says. Some dreams came to be realised. "A few, but really rather fewer than one had hoped, assuming that within the first generation of Independence there would be substantial changes. I think we were moving in that direction but somewhere along the line it got stymied. The big change that took place in those early years was when it was decided to have adult franchise," says Thapar.

Thapar, meanwhile, continued her education in various parts of India with the family moving to wherever her father, an army doctor, was posted. As a child growing up in Thal Fort in North-West Frontier Province, now known as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan, she remembers meeting Pathan women whose silver jewellery seeded a lifelong love for rings in her. Moving from one town to another, Thapar's interest in people and places only grew. Then her father got interested in sculptures after seeing Chola bronzes at a museum in Chennai.

"As a hobby, my father got very interested in the history of Indian art. He started reading on it and it coincided with the six-month gap which I had between

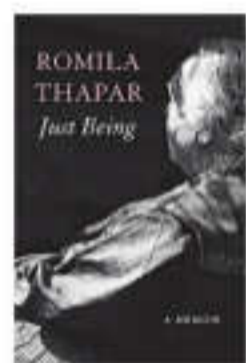
school and college. So, of course, he said to me, you're doing nothing, you may as well read these books. In the beginning I thought, this is terrible, as I won't understand what I'm reading. And then gradually I developed an interest but it was never really in art history as such, it was always in ancient history," she says. She took up philosophy in college though, finding it intellectually exciting and then set off to the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London where she found both history and freedom. Her father had set aside some funds for her future — either for her wedding or for an education. She chose the latter.

Studying for a BA (Hons) in Ancient Indian History under the legendary Indologist AL Basham, Thapar later chose to do her Ph.D dissertation on Ashoka, looking to place him in the context of his times. It was later published in 1961 as *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*.

"Professionally, when I started out, I wouldn't say history was an unlikely choice, but it was a hesitant choice in those days as history was treated as a narrative of what happened. History was learnt mostly by rote in my times in school... But when we became teachers of history and researchers of history, we were much more interested in the new kinds of questions that historians were beginning to ask, such as, if an event happens, why does it happen and how does it happen? And the why and the how become very fundamental questions of history,"

THAPAR'S RESEARCH into early Indian history was part of a movement that helped establish history as a social science. "One has to do ancient history in order to learn something about later history. This notion of continuity was beginning to be debated by historians at that time and it threw up some interesting ideas. What continues? Why do some things just die out, whereas others hang on and are present in even writing of a much later period," says Thapar, who has authored over two dozen books, including *A History of India: Volume 1* (1966), *Early India* (2002) and *The Past as Present* (2017). She was awarded the prestigious Kluge Prize by the US Library of Congress in 2008.

AT HOME WITH THE WORLD
Romila Thapar in her study at her residence in New Delhi



Thapar's memoir, *Just Being*, is a sprawling account of her life, the history and making of a nation

Thapar has grappled with questions through her life, a trait she always encouraged in her students, first at Kurukshetra University where she began her teaching career in India, then at Delhi University and later at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), where under the guidance of Satish Chandra, Sarvepalli Gopal, Bipin Chandra and her, the Centre for Historical Studies came up. Thapar, who retired in 1991, was subsequently appointed Professor Emerita at JNU. The university has been in the crosshairs of the government in recent years. "It breaks my heart when I see JNU in the condition in which it is now. I feel you cannot build an institution which ranks among the top institutions in your own country and abroad, and then systematically break it up, and more so intellectually. There's something peculiar about such an attitude that I don't understand. You may be committed to an ideology, but surely your ideology doesn't need you to destroy an institution?" she asks.

With the suppression of dissent on campuses reshaping the very character of universities, Thapar reflects on what a university really means. "A university was seen as a safe place and it was seen as a place that provided you with answers to problems, with explanations. But in the US as well as here, and in many other countries, which have had this problem of their educational institutions being maltreated, that confidence that people had that educational institutions will give you the answers, or encourage you in the direction of finding answers, that confidence has faded out," she says.

In a world where even leading universities in the US are finding it difficult to withstand pressure, how does one firewall the world of ideas? "Well, the world of ideas, of course, is a world that is absolutely necessary. It has to be encouraged and cultivated, because otherwise life becomes worthless. But because it is so important, it is equally necessary that there be extensive discussion on what form the state should take, what should be the agencies of society

which are the most productive. I mean, take an example like caste. We all talk about caste. But the point is that in a free society, there are aspects of caste which really cannot exist in contemporary times. You have to face inequalities of Indian society much more frontally if you're going to be talking about the modernisation of society. And this is something which we're not doing."

FROM THE day that she hoisted the flag in 1947 in a school in Pune to the India of today, both Thapar and the country have travelled a fair distance. In the intervening years, history has become a site of conflict and contestation, the past being recalled often to validate and justify the politics of the present. Thapar has often been target — for debunking the colonial segregation of Indian history as Muslim history and Hindu history and for her stand on the Aryan debate.

As someone who lived through Partition and its bloody aftermath, does the polarisation of society decades later surprise her? "What surprises me is that with all these changes that have been going on, there hasn't been more public reaction to what's happening. It's true that public reaction is stymied by the fact that if you react too publicly, you may be forced to be silenced. This is a bit like colonial times when people were advised to be quiet, and not talk about certain topics. We may call ourselves a democracy, but I think that's becoming a misnomer now," says Thapar, who declined the Padma Bhushan in 2005 saying she didn't accept state awards.

Thapar, however, has not shied away from speaking. Her book-lined study that lies beyond the living room and hosts old issues of *Seminar*; the magazine her brother Romesh and his wife Raj founded in 1959 and NCERT text books that she has authored, bears signs of her intellectual activity. From writing papers to delivering lectures to calling out the revision of history text books, Thapar has ensured her voice is heard. But in a social media landscape buzzing with theories about the past, how does a historian deal with the constant pressure to respond?

"As a professional historian, one tends to move away and say, all right, you do your thing, just leave me alone to do my thing,

And you go on writing your history. Currently this is, in a sense, a limitation because this will not succeed in changing the comprehension of the larger prevalent history. On the other hand, if one starts questioning what the social media is saying about history, one will never get to write any good professional history. One will just spend all one's time saying, no, you're wrong and this is why you're wrong. So, many of us have taken a very conscious decision that we will focus on professional history and let the social media people go on doing their own thing. If they come our way and we have to take a position, we'll take a position," she says.

In her long career, Thapar has received much acclaim and some criticism. Thapar and other Marxist historians have often been accused of academic gatekeeping and not allowing other voices, especially those from the Right, to come up. "That, I think, is largely make-believe. Nobody ever stopped anybody's voice. We might have said that some theories on social media were not tenable. I mean, for instance, there is one ongoing debate about whether the Aryans were indigenous to India or did they come from outside. Professional historians, by and large, say that they came from Central Asia, and they settled in a wide geographical area. But according to those writing in social media, the Aryans are entirely indigenous, and that Hinduism derives from Aryanism. And then when evidence is required to support the claim that they were indigenous, the evidence is not forthcoming," she says.

Looking back, Thapar says she has few regrets. Her days are now spent in reading, some writing, listening to music in the evenings, to songs of Talat Mahmood among others, and meeting friends and family.

Is there anything she would have done differently? She answers after some reflection. "I could have gone a little more into the kind of history that is being officially taught today. It is hard to understand why the Mughal period was taken out of the curriculum of Indian history but you are still calling it Indian history. At one level, it is playing around with history to make it suit a particular ideology. I think one could have done a little more — one can still do it — in terms of asking why this was necessary and discussing the reasons that are largely political. It's not enough that these major changes in the teaching of history can be made without there being more discussion of its implications. The implications are very serious. If you remove large chunks of history, then how do you explain the presence of this history which is visible in the world in which

you live? How will there be an explanation of why we are surrounded by the Mughal presence in many parts of northern India," she asks.

Looking ahead, in addition to social media, historians are increasingly grappling with yet another challenge in the shape of Artificial Intelligence (AI). "Artificial Intelligence is going to make it worse because those who will use AI will use it arbitrarily and put what they wish into it. I am anxious about Artificial Intelligence and what it's going to do to the intellectual life of this country, or any country. But it's a technology that everybody will be using and that may make it less terrifying. I will hopefully die before this technology becomes professional," she laughs. "But the question is what kind of knowledge will it spread — one has to be aware of the pluses and the minuses of this new technology and that's going to be tough," she says.

But then, Thapar has never turned her back on a challenge.

TASHI TOBGYAL

Reading Theatre

In *Centrestage*, Ananda Lal emphasises on the need to document theatrical trends, given the ephemerality of the medium

Bishnupriya Dutt

ANANDA LAL, literary scholar and drama critic, in *Centrestage: Essays on Theatre, Indian and Intercultural*, brings together a diverse range of essays that adopt a critical approach to writings and scholarship on theatre. Lal is not interested in intellectual nitpicking. Instead, he encourages the theatre community to shake off apathy towards academic literature and intervene in corrective treatment.

Emphasising the need to document theatrical trends — given its ephemeral nature — Lal talks about the 'growing incidence of interculturalism as more and more people from abroad arrive either to engage in collaborative productions or conduct research projects'. But their 'good intentions are not enough', he notes. This critical approach is most present in Chapter 8: 'Interrogating the Academic Representation of India', where he points out incongruous mistakes and misrepresentations in a range of publications, including *Guide to Theatre* and *Illustrated History of Theatre* among others. Lal offers an alternative method for approaching theatre practices with examples in topics ranging from drama to histories of both colonial and postcolonial theatre as well as the pedagogy of theatre through his personal experiences as the a professor of English in Jadavpur University.

An entire segment is dedicated to interculturalism as a new moment. Lal returns to its history through detailed case studies of Peter Brooke's *Mahabharata*. Many of Lal's essays have developed from his researched introductions to various publications and translations of plays. In *Centrestage*, they have been reworked to stand alone and demonstrate his deep engagement with the world of theatre.

Critical perspective is present throughout the book, but is particularly visible in 'Indian Drama in English', where he offers detailed archival research of previously unearthed material, specifically three key texts from 19th century drama: KM Bannerjee's *The Persecuted or Dramatic Scenes, Illustrative of the Present state of Hindoo Society in Calcutta* (1831), Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Rizia; Empress of India* (1849–50, 1855), and a lesser known play *Kaminee* (1874). Lal, on the trail of the unknown author of *Kaminee*, G Ritchie, and the fragmented text of *Rizia*, discovers obscure sources in family archives. He traces Ritchie's family tree and possible lineage, and collates an exciting narrative without compromising on rigorous academic research.

The following chapters — 'A Brief Historiography of Modern Indian Theatre', with Rabindranath Tagore at the centre, and 'Political Perspectives: A Quartet from the 1970s', ranging from Utpal Dutt's *Barricade* (1972) to examples from the first phase of experiments with roots and indigenous forms — are about a much later period but maintain chronological coherence and cogency. The section on *Barricade* unravels why some plays, because of their agonistic politics, were never incorporated into the nation's history of theatre despite their popularity and relevance. The other three, *Jokumaraswamy* (1972), *Charandas Chor* (1975) and *Pebet* (1975) are excellent examples of theatre representing regional identities.

Lal introduces a range of new dramatic texts and productions from Kolkata that he categorises as socio-politics that have women at the centre, focus on dramatist-director-leaders and are post-pandemic. Written in a lucid, non-jargonistic way, the book is not only a look back at history but, also in Lal's gentle and generous style, a recovery of what is positive while not shying away from valid criticism. He delves into processes and personal interactions, which are delightful to read, and recovers many of their artistic and aesthetic values from denigration.

Not as a critique of Lal but following in his footsteps, I ask a pertinent question: How can a publication, despite its grounded and researched work, but with a distinct regional slant and focus on urban Calcutta theatre, be able to counter the macro histories that are emerging out of the commercialisation of publication and neo-liberal education and scholarship, when it is written without an understanding of the material conditions of theatre practices? The book is an important step towards a more grounded scholarship on theatre but requires many more such publications to transform into an academic movement despite all odds. Reading it leaves one with a will to redress the problems.

The writer is a professor of Theatre and Performance Studies at School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi

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CENTRESTAGE: ESSAYS ON THEATRE, INDIAN AND INTERCULTURAL



The reburial of 1956 Hungarian Revolution martyrs in 1989 in Budapest's Heroes' Square that marked the end of Communist rule in Hungary; (below) Nelio Biedermann

'I think I still haven't arrived'

Swiss author Nelio Biedermann on tasting fame at 22 with his novel *Lázár*, handling praise and criticism, and deciphering silences in his family history

Aishwarya Khosla

AT 22, Swiss author Nelio Biedermann has arrived. His *Lázár* is among this year's most talked-about novels. Written in German, now translated into 31 languages, it is a sweeping, gothic family saga spanning three generations of Hungarian nobility: their gilded wealth, complicity during the wars, dispossession under Soviet-backed Communist rule and eventual exile. In a video interview from Zurich, Biedermann talks about writing the tome, being compared to Nobel laureate Thomas Mann and deciphering the silences in his family history. Excerpts:

You descend from Hungarian nobility, much like the protagonists of *Lázár*. How much of the novel is drawn from your own family and what was the process of excavating that history like?

It is hard to tell what is drawn from my family and what is just fiction. But that was also my aspiration — to create something where you couldn't tell exactly what is fiction and what is reality. The characters are all fictional but the things they experience are very close to what my family lived through.

My grandmother used to tell these stories over and over. For us children, they were fairy tales and adventurous stories. When I started writing, I soon realised I didn't know enough. So I went to Budapest, where my great-uncle still lives, to research and ask banal questions, such as what they ate, how they dressed, to recreate the atmosphere.

You wrote a gothic tale brimming with magic realism and violence. How did the childhood tales take a dark turn?

That is a good question. It certainly was not in the stories my grandmother used to tell. But, may be, I always had a sense of

that darkness in the family story, because as I grew older, I realised it wasn't as easy as she made it seem. There is this horror not only in the century but also in the families themselves. My great-uncle has this small archive, a family biography going back a long time. I was astonished to see how many ancestors committed suicide. So that darkness certainly existed. I was also probably influenced by ETA Hoffmann, who wrote these dark, mystical, fairy-tale-like novels.

Your generation is often associated with the famous Gen Z crypticness. Yet *Lázár* is the opposite, a sprawling, old-fashioned novel, patiently following three generations. How did you, when you began writing at 16, arrive at such an expansive form?

When I started writing, I knew I wanted to become an author but I would never have told anyone. It isn't something you can just become; you have to be lucky. So I didn't tell anyone but I wrote almost every day. This story felt very personal to me. I didn't set out to do the opposite of what is common; I just felt this was the most powerful and natural way to tell my family's story. I started at 16 and quickly realised I wasn't good enough. I put it aside, returned, put it aside again, and it only worked on the fifth attempt.

Your family has an interesting history. Could you tell us about it?

The big historical events are pretty much similar to the novel. My family had incredible wealth — all this land, these manor houses. I'm, however, unsure about their role during World War II. In the novel, Lajos organises the



LÁZÁR
NELIO BIEDERMANN
MacLehose Press
304 pages
₹699

deportation of the Jews. I don't know if that's true but in my great-uncle's archive, I found photographs of my great-grandfather in a high military uniform. I asked my great-uncle, and he sincerely couldn't tell me — he was born during the war. The possibility was enough for me to include.

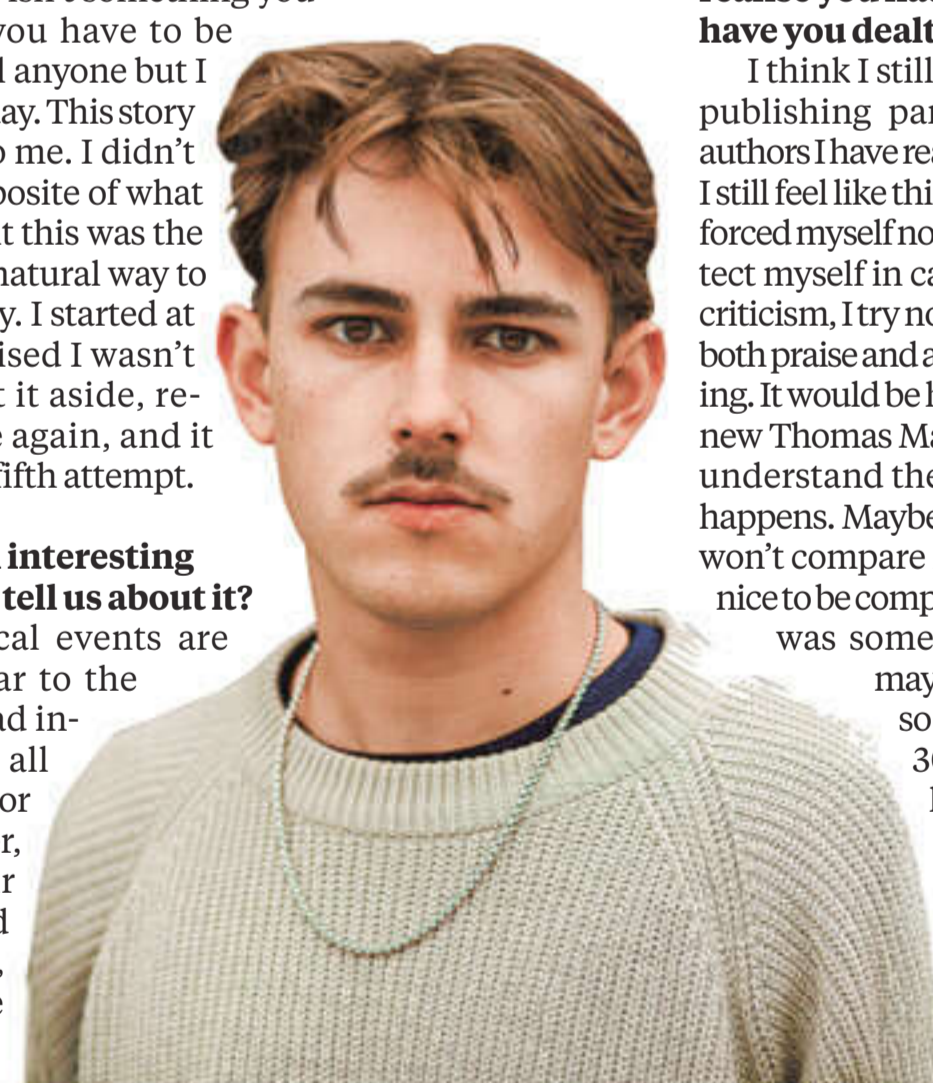
After the war, under Communism, they were expropriated and lost everything. My family was deported to the east of Hungary for forced labour until Stalin died. Then, they returned to Budapest but faced repressions because they were nobility. After the national uprising, when it became even harder, my grandparents fled to Switzerland; my grandmother was 20, pregnant with my aunt. So my aunt and father were born there.

There was a bidding war for your novel, you were called Wunderkind (wonder kid), and were compared to Thomas Mann. At what point did you realise you had made it, and how have you dealt with the success?

I think I still haven't really arrived. At publishing parties, talking to famous authors I have read, feels absurd and surreal. I still feel like this kid reading their novels. I forced myself not to believe the hype, to protect myself in case the novel failed. As for criticism, I try not to take it to heart because both praise and attacks are bad for your writing. It would be horrible if I believed I'm the new Thomas Mann. It's just not true. But I understand the urge to compare — that happens. Maybe after a few novels, people won't compare me to Mann anymore. It's nice to be compared to him, though. There was some criticism where I saw I maybe didn't get it right. I'm 22, so hopefully I'll get better. In 30 years, I'll think I could have done this novel better.

Has knowing that the next book will be measured against *Lázár* affected your

RUBEN HOLLINGER



An Elegy to Inheritance

In *Absolute Jafar*, Sarnath Banerjee creates a tender and precise, fond and faint mental archive of two cities as an attempt to let go



ABSOLUTE JAFAR
SARNATH BANERJEE
Harper Collins
266 pages
₹799

Kanupriya Dhingra

SARNATH BANERJEE calls the act of writing his sixth graphic novel *Absolute Jafar tarpan* — the ritual offering of water to ancestors, cupped in the palms and released. Not nostalgia, he insists; merely memory pieced together as objectively, or as unreliably as one can. It is a careful distinction, and the novel almost earns it. The muted watercolours, the non-linear drift, the figure who walks to avoid stopping; these aren't the gestures of someone releasing something. The text says *tarpan*. The drawings say elegy. Between those two claims, the book lives.

Absolute Jafar is the story of Brighu, a compulsive walker and reluctant patriarch who narrates Delhi and Kolkata to his son Jafar in loops of memory, myth and municipal absurdity. Jafar, born in Berlin to an Indo-Pak couple, is the novel's nominal subject and its structural absence. The child who will

receive none of what his father is trying to give him. Around this impossibility, Banerjee builds what is his most personal work.

Brighu walks the way some people drink: to metabolise what cannot otherwise be processed. His peripatetic method is also an epistemology. The city, for him, is not a place to be understood from above but accumulated underfoot through adjacency and accident rather than argument. What the walking body gathers over decades — the texture of a neighbourhood, the precise mood of a particular corner in a particular season — cannot be summarised or handed over. It can only be walked again. And this is where the novel's central sorrow quietly announces itself: Jafar is, at his core, a Berliner. He will not walk these streets. He cannot receive what his father has spent a lifetime learning.

That Jafar cannot inherit Delhi is not incidental — it is, in large part, the state's doing. The bureaucracy in *Absolute Jafar* is neither



WHAT REMAINS
An illustration from *Absolute Jafar*; (right) Sarnath Banerjee

subplot nor comic relief, though it is frequently both. It is the structural antagonist: the force that made the family's geography impossible before Jafar was even born. The

immigration officer who greets Brighu and his wife, Mahrukh, on their return from Berlin — "Madam, you are Pakistani, your husband is Indian, your child is Indian but born in Berlin, and you live in Germany. Couldn't you make it a little more complicated?" — is funny in the way that Kafka is funny: the joke lands, and then it settles. The documents required for an Indo-Pak marriage, the citizenship queries, the administrative bewilderment at a family that refuses to sort itself into clean national categories — these are not mere inconveniences. They are the mechanisms by which belonging is rationed and by which a child is already marked before he has had the chance to define himself.

Banerjee has always known how to make the state look ridiculous. What distinguishes *Absolute Jafar* is that the ridiculousness no longer feels like sufficient distance. The irony is still there: in the visual deadpan that places literal stag heads at a stag entry, that renders Jaisalmer House with the *Phantom's* Skull Cave at its gate. Banerjee's visual wordplay has always been his most distinctive instrument, a way of holding sentiment at arm's length even as the image makes the senti-

ment unavoidable. But here the arm's length keeps closing. The deadpan keeps cracking. Something is being admitted in this book that the earlier novels held carefully at bay.

This is what *tarpan* actually requires: not the serenity of release, but the difficulty of it.

The ritual exists because the open palm does not come naturally. The hand wants to close around the water. And *Absolute Jafar*, in its careful silences, circling structure and compulsive walking, is a book whose hand keeps closing — on Delhi, on Kolkata, on a time that Banerjee knows is not coming back and cannot stop trying to give away. Only the graphic novel can place grief and irony in the same panel and let both survive.

Banerjee has been building this archive of two cities for two decades. *Absolute Jafar* is, so far, its most honest entry. It pretends to be a book about letting go. It sets out to let go. It does not quite manage it. In that failure, tender and precise, fond and faint, is everything: a book that holds on, quietly, for as long as it possibly can.

Dhingra is an author and professor at the School of Liberal Studies, BML Munjal University

Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari marks 10 years with System, a father-daughter drama starring Ashutosh Gowariker, Sonakshi Sinha and Jyotika

Alaka Sahani

WHEN WRITER-DIRECTOR Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari first read the screenplay of *System* — a courtroom drama centred around a father and daughter navigating a clash of ideologies — she knew the story needed to be told. “Right from my directorial debut *Nil Battey Sannata* (2015) to my new release *System*, my desire to tell stories has always been driven by the thought: How do I add value to this movie?” she says.

For nearly a decade, Ashwiny has explored the aspirations of ordinary women doing extraordinary things, be it in *Nil Battey Sannata*, *Bareilly Ki Barfi* (2017) or *Panga* (2020). *System* is no exception. “My endeavour as a storyteller is to make the stories aspirational enough so that whoever watches them feels that they can break their own barriers,” says the director, who presents middle-class India through the evolution of her characters. Ashwiny has also directed the web-series *Faadu* (2022)



MAKING STORYTELLING A JOYRIDE

When you come from a certain section of society, you are observant. I have always been a believer that no matter who you are, where you come from, you have the right to dream and have a place in society

wood star, she believes in telling significant social stories like *System*.”

Ashwiny credits Harman Baweja, the film’s co-writer and co-producer, for the casting of Gowariker. They were looking for someone “who has a soft face but can also be gritty” and is tall enough to play Sonakshi’s father. When Baweja suggested Gowariker’s name, Ashwiny got excited. The *Lagaan* (2001) and *Swades* (2004) director, who had appreciated Ashwiny’s work in the past, soon came on board.

As a filmmaker, Ashwiny believes, it is necessary to keep questioning the intent behind making movies. “Yes, I want to entertain. There are various kinds of movies that are entertaining and will get you box-office results. Then, there are movies that are middle-of-the-road cinema. That’s something I keep talking about because we want to tell certain stories. Through these movies, I want to show a perspective regarding how life can be,” says the director who studied commercial arts from Mumbai’s Sophia Polytechnic and worked with advertising agency Leo Burnett (India) before making her feature film debut in 2016.

To contemporary Indian cinema, Ashwiny has added some fascinating women characters and celebrated their journeys. While in *Nil Battey Sannata* Chanda (Swara Bhaskar) is a domestic help who wants a better future for her daughter, Bitti (Kriti Sanon) in *Bareilly Ki Barfi* is a small-town young woman asserting her choices, and her last feature, *Panga*, had Kangana Ranaut play the Kabaddi player Jaya, re-



claiming her place in the world of sports after embracing motherhood. “When you come from a certain section of society, and I consider myself to be from a middle-class background, you observe people around you. I have always been a big believer that it doesn’t matter who you are, where you come from, you always have the right to dream and have a place in society,” she says.

After a successful career in advertising spanning nearly 15 years, what Ashwiny finds fulfilling is that her stories have connected with audiences from different walks of life. “It does not matter if I am known as long as my films are appreciated,” says Ashwiny, who is giving a talk at the Northwestern University Kellogg School of Management’s Indian Business Conference on May 17, and doing an interaction after the screening of *Bareilly Ki Barfi*.

Her love for telling stories and supporting storytellers, has prodded her to be an active producer. She co-founded Earthsky

CASE IN POINT
Filmmaker Ashwini Iyer Tiwari; (above) Sonakshi Sinha and Ashutosh Gowariker in a still from *System*

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Pictures, a production company, with her husband in 2018. In 2023, *Tarla*, *Tumse Na Ho Payega* and *Bawaal*, which are produced by her, were released. “I love when people strive and excel. It thrills me to identify talent, bring people together and turn the process of making a movie into a joyride,” says Ashwiny, who wishes to carry on directing as well as producing.

Being an art director, Ashwiny would, in the future, like to explore a subject that’s art heavy. She is already working on a couple of movies, including a love story. A fan of popular animation movies such as *Finding Nemo* (2003), *The Lion King* (2019) and *Ratatouille* (2007), she wishes to direct one some day. “I want to tell a story in its purest form and transport the audience to a beautiful world.”

Where the land remembers

Nihaarika Negi’s *Tenfa* emerges from years of listening to a place and its women



OF TELL-TALE SONGS
A still from *Tenfa*; (below) Nihaarika Negi

Alaka Sahani

OVER THE past four years, filmmaker Nihaarika Negi has made multiple trips to Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh, to re-connect to her roots. “I entered this process by listening to the stories of my family and while bearing witness to how the ecology that sustained the tribe was being eroded by industrialisation,” says Negi, whose paternal side of the family belongs to the indigenous region of Kinnaur.

During this period, Negi was moved by the “incredible acts of activism and preservation” that the community, especially the women, had undertaken. She wanted to make a film that celebrated the everyday acts of heroism. That’s how *Tenfa* (a gift from elders in Kinnaur) was born.

The short film was showcased at the recent Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles (IFFLA). *Tenfa* started to take shape as Negi began spending time with Dolma, her *buu* (paternal aunt). Dolma, a midwife, became central and through her gaze, the film unpacks themes of forgotten histories and building communities. Inspired by Dolma’s experience, *Tenfa* creates the narrative around someone who provides maternal healthcare in remote regions. Dolma treks to Kandardar to deliver the first baby to be born there in 10 years. The

village is abandoned after landslides from hydroelectric construction. When the childbirth goes awry, without access to medical facilities, Dolma’s only hope to save the new mother’s life is to find a rare herb. The only person who can identify the plant is an elderly grandmother raising her granddaughter. “The three women journey across scarred ancestral land searching for it, their only guide being a folksong in a language that



has been forgotten and the granddaughter has never learnt,” says Negi.

To build the narrative, the interdisciplinary artiste blends theatre, folktale and magic realism with cinematic elements. “My practice is centred around contemporary performance and participatory work — forms that inherently question the boundaries of reality and fiction, of artistic agency and collective authorship,” says Negi, who holds an MA in Theatre Practice (Exeter) and an MFA from USC’s Peter Stark Producing Programme.

Negi wanted *Tenfa*, which is made in collaboration with the community, to reflect the region’s multi-linguality, which includes Hamska (or Kinnauri), Pahadi Kinnauri and Hindi. “Since Kinnauri culture hasn’t been depicted in the mainstream, it was important for us to authentically represent the community... Making this film was my way of attempting to understand how I could archive the language, the landscape, the songs and the people through a form that seems connected to the Kinnauri ethos: storytelling,” says Negi.

The filmmaker is currently working on the post-production for her first feature film, *Birds of a Feather*, and has another, *Feral*, in the pipeline. She also wants to start a storytelling lab in Kinnaur for the elders and folklorists there.

No Treble, All Bass

Meet Nilanjana Ghosh Dastidar, AR Rahman’s bassist and the compelling new voice behind *Maskara*, the melody in *Imtiaz Ali*’s *Main Vaapas Aaunga* that is blowing up the Internet

Suanshu Khurana

FOR MAIN *Vaapas Aaunga* — a love story by filmmaker Imtiaz Ali set against the backdrop of sectarian violence and mass displacement during the Partition — promotions are being led by the breezy *Maskara*, a tease of a track, picturised on actors Sharvari Wagh and Vedang Raina. The ditty has not just flooded social media but also seeped into numerous Instagram reels, reigniting conversations about how ‘old-school Rahman’ is back. The song has already crossed over 10 million views on YouTube.

Penned by Irshad Kamil, Rahman’s composition in the Naseer-uddin Shah- and Diljit Dosanjh-starrer carries quite a bit within its three minutes: the freshness of a contemporary indie-pop track while still retaining the warmth and rhythmic familiarity of a Punjabi romantic number and about a minute that is like an old-style Bollywood serenade.

The song is also the debut of Kolkata-based bass player and singer Nilanjana Ghosh Dastidar, a new name in the list of current woman playback singers. But for those regular at Rahman’s live concerts, a sari-clad Nilanjana can often be spotted on one side of the stage, bass guitar slung

across her shoulder, playing amid the spectacle of the composer’s slickly mounted outings. Sometimes she sings some bits during the performance of *Patakha guddi* (*Highway*, 2014) and *Chhaiya Chhaiya* (*Dil Se...*, 1998). Rahman has always wanted her to sing more.

But *Maskara* came to her “in the most abrupt way”, in July 2025, when she was touring with the composer in the US. Ready to retire for the day in a Florida hotel, Rahman’s assistant called her to the next room, where he was working and asked her to record *Maskara* amid a basic set up. “I had no idea about anything when I walked into that room. I thought he wanted to tell me something about an upcoming show. But he just turned around and said, ‘Nilanjana, I want you to sing this song’.

It was so random,” she says in a telephone conversation from Kolkata. The song was recorded in a hotel room-turned-DIY studio and Nilanjana later also layered her bass guitar on the vocals. “I still didn’t know if this was going to be the final take or had I just sung a scratch to help someone else record. But I got a call that Imtiaz sir loved it... the newness and the quirkiness of it,” says Nilanjana, who has also played on the background score of the film.

Growing up in Bandel, West Bengal, a former Portuguese colony known for the



never asked me to sing in a particular tone. But he asked me to think of the flirtatious songs *Asha ji* has sung and understand that attitude and tonal texture. He then left the room and I was left alone with words and the tune,” says Nilanjana, who recorded without a scratch track with Hiral Viradia, Rahman’s music producer and editor.

The result is a song whose charms lay in Western pop textures and voice modulations in parts besides an easy melodic drift. Nilanjana later also layered her bass guitar on the vocals. “I still didn’t know if this was going to be the final take or had I just sung a scratch to help someone else record. But I got a call that Imtiaz sir loved it... the newness and the quirkiness of it,” says Nilanjana, who has also played on the background score of the film.

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RAW RHYTHM
(Top) Nilanjana Ghosh Dastidar; a still from the song *Maskara*

famed Bandel church from 1599, Nilanjana, always wanted to be a singer. Even though her father, Sandipan Ghosh Dastidar, is a bass player, Nilanjana followed her mother, a Rabindra *sangeet* practitioner and a huge Salil Chowdhury fan, and as is tradition in Bengali homes, began training in Hindu-

stani classical music. But what she heard was just about everything. While she liked what she was learning, including Rabindra *sangeet* and Nazrul *geeti*, her father would blast Bangla bands at home. Then, there was her fascination with Western music, which developed while listening to a lot of Cliff Richards and losing her head over Kenny G. There were also her prized Lata Mangeshkar and Asha Bhosle CDs gifted by her father.

Nilanjana added the bass guitar to her journey less than a decade ago. She was always a fan of the instrument, thanks to her father introducing her to the music of many noted bass players as a child. “My ears were always extra open to the bass parts of a song. But I never thought I was going to do music professionally,” says Nilanjana, who began learning the instrument in 2017. She was 21 then. “By learning the bass, I was attempting to sing better,” says Nilanjana.

She was looking at finishing her academics, “getting a job and building a good financial structure” so that she could invest in her music later on. She also participated in the Bengali edition of *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa* in 2022 and began making some money with concerts. But she felt she needed to learn more. That is when she decided to stop everything, shut herself in her room, work on her own music and take a deep dive into the world of practice. She was also uploading her bass guitar videos on YouTube around the same time.

She had just interviewed for a job at a bank when she got a call from Rahman’s assistant to travel with the concert crew as their bass player. Percussionist Ranjit Barot had discovered her online and told Rahman about her about five years ago. “I was super nervous. Once I got on the stage, with an amazing crew, the nervousness was all gone,” says Nilanjana, who is busy working on her own music, even as she continues to tour with Rahman. She is still finding the success of *Maskara* surreal. As the Internet bonds over it, Nilanjana still feels that she “could have sung it better.”

