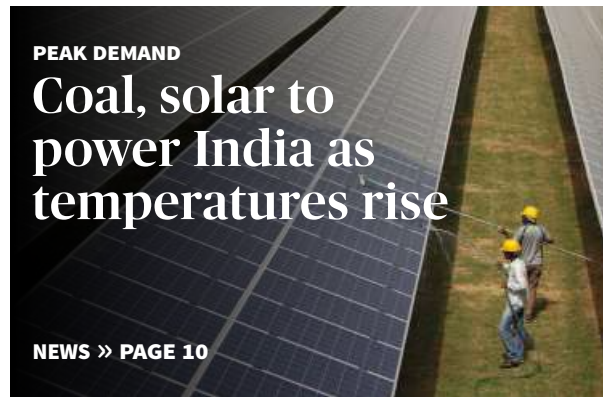




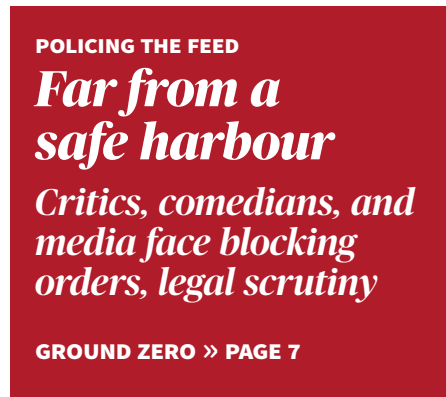
STANDING STRONG
Ladakhis serve as first line of defence: Shah
NEWS » PAGE 8



PEAK DEMAND
Coal, solar to power India as temperatures rise
NEWS » PAGE 10



NARCOTICS RING BUSTED
NCB seizes 349 kg cocaine in Mumbai
STATES » PAGE 3



POLICING THE FEED
Far from a safe harbour
Critics, comedians, and media face blocking orders, legal scrutiny
GROUND ZERO » PAGE 7



THOMAS CUP
Lakshya, Ayush power India into semifinals
SPORT » PAGE 15

IN BRIEF



Punjab: AAP gov. wins confidence motion in House

CHANDIGARH
The ruling Aam Aadmi Party in Punjab sailed through the confidence motion in the State Assembly moved by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday. Mr. Mann said the party was "united", but it was moved to counter "false rumours and news". » Page 8

Karnataka gov. launches portal for gig workers

BENGALURU
In a move to secure the rights of the growing platform-based labour force, the Karnataka government operationalised a specialised grievance redressal mechanism for platform-based gig workers. » Page 4

Commercial LPG, 5-kg cylinders to cost more

Price of commercial LPG hiked by ₹993 a cylinder and that of 5-kg cylinder by ₹261; price of ATF for international carriers raised; gov. also reduces excise duty on export of diesel, aviation fuel

Saptaparno Ghosh
NEW DELHI

Oil marketing companies (OMCs) on Friday sharply hiked the price of commercial LPG by ₹993 per cylinder and that of 5-kg free trade LPG by ₹261 per cylinder. Further, the price of bulk diesel was raised from ₹137 to ₹149 per litre.

Whilst the OMCs did not hike the price of LPG meant for domestic usage and that of aviation turbine fuel (ATF) for domestic scheduled carriers, the price of ATF for international airlines has been pushed up by \$76.55 per kilolitre from \$1,435 per kilolitre.

The prices of retail petrol and diesel are unchanged. In a separate move, the



Fuel crisis: Commercial LPG cylinder delivery workers unload cylinders from a truck at a distribution centre. J. ALLEN EGENUSE

Ministry of Finance reduced the excise duty on the export of diesel to ₹23 for every litre from ₹55.5 per litre and that of ATF to ₹33 per litre from ₹42 per litre, whilst the special additional excise duty (SAED) on the export of petrol continues to remain nil. The previous revision to

Congress slams government on hike in LPG rates

NEW DELHI
The Congress on Friday slammed the Narendra Modi government over the latest price hike for commercial LPG cylinders, with Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi calling it the "bill for elections". » PAGE 9

change in that stance. Whilst the prices of domestic LPG being unchanged offer respite, the steep hike in prices of commercial LPG and that of 5-kg free trade LPG raise concerns.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8

GST revenue hits record ₹2.43 lakh crore in April

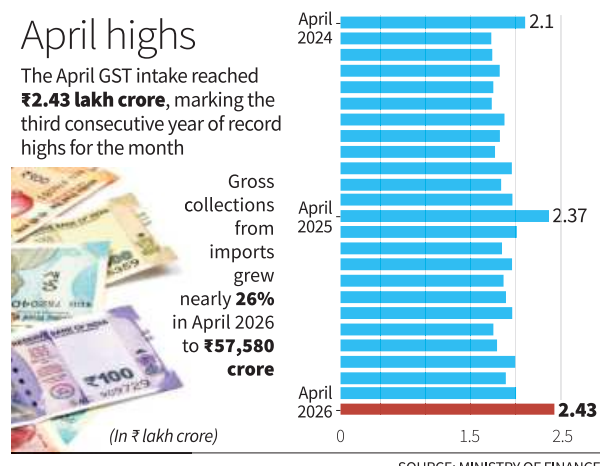
T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

The government's Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue in April 2026 surged to an all-time high of ₹2.43 lakh crore, up 8.7% over April last year. Growth was once again driven by collections on imports, with revenue from domestic sales growing slower.

Tax experts, however, note that collections in April, which represent activity in March, typically come in higher as both industry and the tax administration make a final push to achieve the financial year-end targets.

Data show that there has been a record collection every April ever since the GST was rolled out in 2017, except for April 2020, which was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown.

"April 2026 GST collections cap off a resilient FY26 for the GST regime,



The data show that net collections, once refunds are accounted for, stood at ₹2.11 lakh crore in April 2026, up 7.3% over April

last year. Notably, the data also show that the growth in collections was once again driven by imports.

Gross collections from imports grew nearly 26% in April 2026 to ₹57,580 crore. Collections from domestic sales grew at 4.3% to ₹1.85 lakh crore in the period.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8

Watery grave



Rescue workers, including NDRF personnel, conduct operations to recover an overturned cruise boat at the Bargi Dam in Jabalpur district of Madhya Pradesh on Friday. Nine bodies have been recovered, while four persons remain missing. PTI (REPORT ON PAGE 10)

SC grants anticipatory bail to Congress leader in case filed by Assam CM's wife

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has granted Congress leader Pawan Khera anticipatory bail in a criminal case instituted on a complaint filed by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife, saying the case appears to be motivated by political rivalry and does not warrant custodial interrogation.

A Bench headed by Justice J.K. Maheshwari cautioned the State of Assam against using the power to arrest so casually, as if to strike a blow at a political rival. The 22-page order said the right to personal liberty cannot be jeopardised lightly. The order was published on May 1.

"Criminal process must be applied with objectivity and circumspection so as to ensure that individual liberty is not imperiled by proceedings that may be coloured by political rivalry. We are further of the opinion that the allegations and counter-allegations, as apparent in the present case, prima facie, appear to be politically motivated and seemingly influenced by such rivalry, rather than disclosing a situation warranting custodial interrogation, and the veracity of the allegations can be tested at trial," the Supreme Court Bench, also comprising Justice Atul S. Chandurkar, observed in the order.

The court said shackling a cherished fundamental



Pawan Khera

right like personal liberty should be justified at a higher threshold than what seemed to be political rivalry.

Mr. Khera had accused Mr. Sarma's wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sharma, of holding three passports of Egypt, the UAE, and Antigua and Barbuda. He had stated that two of these nations were "Muslim coun-

tries, however, the husband's politics is based on hatred against the Muslim community in the State". He had also exhibited documents stating that she had a company registered in the U.S. with an investment of more than ₹50,000 crores, besides owning assets in Dubai.

Mr. Khera had stated that Mr. Sarma's election affidavit had not disclosed any of these details of wealth.

The FIR was registered by the Assam Police after Ms. Sharma denied the veracity of these documents and stated that they were fabricated with forged seals and QR codes.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8

Trump 'not satisfied' with Iran's peace proposal

Stanly Johny

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Friday he was "not satisfied" with Iran's latest proposal in negotiations to end the war between the countries, rejecting the plan almost as soon as it was delivered.

Tehran delivered the new proposal for talks with the U.S. via Pakistan, which is acting as a mediator between the two sides, even as the Revolutionary Guards warned American warships "will burn" like U.S. bases in the region, if Iran is attacked again. The text of the proposal was handed to Pakistan on Thursday, state-run Islamic Republic News Agency reported on Friday.

"Ending the war and establishing a sustainable peace remain Tehran's main priorities in negotiations with the U.S.," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baqaei said in a TV interview.

"They want to make a deal, I'm not satisfied with it, so we'll see what happens," Mr. Trump told presspersons on Friday at the White House, Associated Press reported. He did not elaborate on what he saw as the latest proposal's shortcomings. "They're asking for things I can't agree to," he said.

After Mr. Trump announced a ceasefire on April 8, Pakistan hosted direct talks between Iran and the U.S. which ended without any breakthrough. After the collapse of the Islamabad talks, Mr. Trump announced a blockade of Iranian ports, which remains in place.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8

SC to hear TMC plea against EC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

A Special Bench of the Supreme Court is scheduled to urgently hear a petition from the Trinamool Congress on Saturday. The pe-

tion challenges a Calcutta High Court decision from April 30, which had dismissed their challenge to an Election Commission order on April 13, mandating that at least one counting supervisor and assistant at

each counting table for the West Bengal Assembly elections must be a Central government or Central Public Sector Unit employee.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8



LAL BHADUR SHASTRI
INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT, DELHI



AACSB
ACCREDITED

Chairman and Members of the Board of Governors

cordially invite you to the

29th CONVOCATION

Saturday May 02, 2026 | **05:00 PM** | **LBSIM Auditorium**



Chief Guest
Dr. Alok Kumar Rai
Director, IIM Calcutta

will deliver the Convocation Address

YouTube Watch Live |  | <https://t.me/lbsim.ac.in>

R.S.V.P.
Tel : 011-25307700
Mob. : +91-9958137595, +91-9811320320

Dr. Praveen Gupta
Director, LBSIM Delhi



INBRIEF



Govt. compelled parents to buy expensive uniforms: AAP

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Friday accused the Delhi government of having compelled middle-class families to buy expensive uniforms, books and stationery ahead of the upcoming session. It hit out at CM Rekha Gupta for "putting on a show of school inspections". "Everything that was to be sold has already been sold. If the CM truly wants to act, she should act against increased school fees," said AAP's Delhi unit chief Saurabh Bharadwaj.

Police constable arrested in ₹50-lakh robbery case

A Delhi Police constable has been arrested in connection with a ₹50-lakh robbery near the Azad Market underpass last month, an officer said on Friday. Four men intercepted a moving autorickshaw near the underpass and left with cash worth around ₹50 lakh. A case was registered and an investigation launched. The role of the constable was revealed during the investigation, the officer said, adding that the other accused had been arrested earlier.

Healthcare providers to report every new case of leprosy: govt.

Leprosy will be declared a notifiable disease under the Delhi Epidemic Diseases Act, making it mandatory for all healthcare providers to report every new case of leprosy to the District Leprosy Officer, the government said on Friday. "This will ensure effective surveillance, targeted intervention, early detection of the disease and prompt treatment through multi-drug therapy," read an official release. The therapy is available free of charge at government healthcare centres.

CM unveils upskilling drive scheme, mobile clinics for workers

On May Day, Gupta announces welfare schemes for construction workers, including financial support for wedding, PSK-style Shramik Seva Kendras

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced several welfare initiatives for construction workers, including a skill development programme, mobile health facilities and financial assistance for weddings, on Friday, May Day. She said her government will set up modern labour chowks and Shramik Seva Kendras, based on the Passport Seva Kendra (PSK) model for the registration of construction workers and the delivery of services and welfare schemes to them.

Earlier in the day, Ms. Gupta interacted with workers in north-east Delhi's Dhirpur and distributed safety kits to 1,000 construction workers.

Central programme
The skill development initiative will be conducted under the Centre's Recognition of Prior Learning programme, and will provide for the training of nearly 35,000 workers annually, said the Chief Minister's Office (CMO).

The skill development programme will be implemented in several phases, with batches of at least 20 workers. "In the first phase, five batches have been picked, each comprising 100 workers. The



Ground connect: Chief Minister Rekha Gupta interacting with workers at an event in north-east Delhi's Dhirpur on Friday. ANI

training will be conducted at the district level through empanelled agencies and will cover key trades such as assistant mason, bar bender, electrician, construction painter and decorator, and shuttering carpenter," the CMO stated.

Under the 'Collective Marriage Scheme', eligible couples will receive financial aid from the government, which will also bear the cost of essential arrangements for the ceremony, it added.

"Facilities, including drinking water, seating, toilets, first aid, employment linkages and grievance redressal, will be made available, reducing the need for long queues and ensuring transparency and ease of access," it quoted Ms. Gupta as saying.

Better quality life
"Every development milestone in Delhi rests on the tireless efforts and dedication of its workers," said the Chief Minister. She added, "Workers do not merely labour. They lay the foundation of the nation's progress. Our responsibility is not limited to utilising their workforce, but also extends to improving their quality of life, ensuring their safety and creating opportunities for their families."

Workers' welfare initiatives launched by the Central government such as the e-Shram portal have benefited millions of workers across the country, said the Chief Minister.

Self-enumeration for Census starts in MCD areas; L-G, CM register

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The 15-day self-enumeration window under the first phase of Census 2027 was opened in areas under the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) jurisdiction on Friday.

The online drive started with the Lieutenant-Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu and Chief Minister Rekha Gupta registering themselves in the presence of election officials. Both appealed to residents to participate in the exercise.

'Reliable data essential'
Calling it a major step towards digital governance, Mr. Sandhu said the initiative allows citizens to submit their household details directly. "Reliable data are essential for inclusive governance and for building a stronger, developed nation," he said.

In a statement, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta encouraged people to self-enumerate on the Election Commission portal.

"Today, I entered my details through self-enumeration. The process is simple, easy and completely secure, making it convenient for every citizen to participate," she said.

Residents in the 250 wards of the civic corporation have until May 15 to complete the online process by providing the coordinates of their residence, either by selecting the location on a satellite map, searching the address on the portal, or manually en-

Residents in the 250 wards of MCD can complete the online process by providing the coordinates of their residence

tering the latitude and longitude, said an official explaining the process.

"The self-enumeration portal is available in 16 languages, including Hindi, English, Bengali, Tamil and Urdu," the official added.

After submission, an 11-digit self-enumeration ID will be generated, which will be required for verification during door-to-door surveys for Houselisting and Housing operations from May 16 to June 14.

The first phase of the Census, involving houselisting and housing census, focuses on gathering detailed data on housing conditions, household composition, and access to basic amenities.

The second phase, which will include caste enumeration, is scheduled for February 2027. The questionnaire for that phase is yet to be notified.

Process on in New Delhi
Phase 1 of Census 2027 started in the New Delhi district under the New Delhi Municipal Council and Delhi Cantonment areas on April 16, and is still underway.

The self-enumeration drive in the district ended on April 15. The house-listing and housing census will continue till May 15.



'Neera', the mascot for 'Catch the Rain 2026' drive. ANI

Govt. launches drive to boost rainwater harvesting

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The water crisis can no longer remain merely a subject of discussion and demands immediate and decisive action, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said on Friday as she launched 'Catch the Rain 2026' campaign at an event organised by the Delhi Jal Board. Unveiling the campaign's official water mascot, 'Neera', Ms. Gupta called for renewing the focus on rainwater harvesting and groundwater recharge.

"With rising population and rapid urban development driving up demand and limited water sources, rainwater harvesting must be prioritised," she said.

Water Minister Parvash Sahib Singh, who was also present at the event, said, "The time has come for every household and residential society to adopt rainwater harvesting. This is not solely the government's task, but a collective responsibility shared by us all."

Expelled DU student hit college staff, says principal

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A student who was rusticated following a brawl at Delhi University's South Campus returned to Shaheed Bhagat Singh College on Thursday with outsiders and attacked staff members, Principal Arun Kumar Attree said on Friday. "He attacked the student who had complained about him and a security guard," said Mr. Attree.

Delhi schools told to collect fee every month

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Directorate of Education (DoE) has directed all private, unaided, recognised schools in the Capital to collect fees every month, warning of strict action for violations.

In the April 30 order, the DoE stated that it had received multiple complaints from parents alleging that some schools were forcing them to pay fees in advance on a bimonthly, quarterly, or other advance basis, placing an undue financial burden on families.

The directive reiterated that schools must not "mandate, require, or compel payment" of fees in a single instalment for a period exceeding one calendar month. The move aligns with earlier instructions and a Delhi High Court ruling that emphasised structuring fee collection in a way convenient and fair to parents, it added. "No school shall, in any manner whatsoever, mandate, require, or compel any parent or guardian to pay fees for a period exceeding one calendar month in a single instalment," read the order.

It added, "It is, however, clarified that parents or guardians who, of their own volition and without any coercion or pressure or inducement, find it convenient to pay fees for more than one month in a single instalment may be permitted to do so."

Advance payment
The order also stated that no school should make an advance fee payment a precondition for admission, continued enrolment, or access to any student services.

"All schools are required to display this order promi-

nently on their notice boards and upload it on their official websites within seven working days," said the DoE.

Citing provisions under the Delhi School Education Act, 1973, the department warned that non-compliance could invite serious action, including withdrawal of recognition or even takeover of school management.

The DoE said the measure aims to ensure equitable access to education and safeguard the interests of parents, particularly those from low-and middle-income groups.

Census 2027: Central district launches awareness drive on self-enumeration

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

In a bid to boost public participation in Census 2027, District Magistrate (Central) Ranjana Deswal on Friday launched an awareness drive on self-enumeration at the Patel Nagar metro station.

The initiative featured engaging public outreach activities such as *nukkad natak* and music performances to educate citizens about self-enumeration and encourage voluntary participation. Self-enumer-



Officials at the awareness drive on Friday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ation allows individuals to submit their details inde-

pendently through an online platform without waiting for an enumerator.

The facility is available at: <https://se.census.gov.in>. Addressing the public, Nitin Shakya, the Patel Nagar Sub-Divisional Magistrate, said the process is "convenient, time-saving, and improves accuracy" as individuals provide their own information.

He said the process also ensures "greater privacy" and enhances the overall efficiency of the Census by easing the workload of enumerators.

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY SUPPLY OF STORES ITEMS
No: 52265080 Date: 27.04.2026
"THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT TENDERS"
Sr.DMM/NWR/AJMER acting for and on behalf of the President of India invites E-tenders on www.ireps.gov.in site as follows. E-Tender will be closed at 11.05.2026 14:30 Hrs.

Sr. No.	Tender No.	Tender Notice No	Tender Description	Amendment as	Tender Opening date
1	52265080	52265080 DT 26.03.26	Supply, Installation & Commissioning of IoT Based Water Level Indicator System	Prototype Approval Plan (Annexure-A) clause added in tender as per RDSO Specifications. For details, please refer to IREPS website.	11.05.2026 at 14:30 Hrs.

Note (1) Interested tenderers may visit the website ireps.gov.in for full details/description/specification/EMD & tender cost etc. All tenderers are requested to obtain digital signatures and get them registered on above site and quote electronically only. (2) For viewing and participating in other tenders such as open tender costing below Rs. 50 Lakh, limited tenders, special limited tenders and low value tenders, please visit www.ireps.gov.in.
621-PS/26 Sr. Divisional Material Manager, Ajmer

TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT
Mr. N SELVA KUMAR
PH: 9820350726
selvakumar.n@thehindu.co.in
THE HINDU
India's National Newspaper

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY E-Tender Notice
Open E-tender is invited by DRM(S&T), Jodhpur for and on behalf of the President of India for S&T work. Details as below. **Name of Work:** SNT Associated works in c/w safety and replacement work of various signaling assets in DSTE/JU section of JU Division of NW Railway. **Estimated cost of the work:** Rs 81,92,084/- (RO). **Address of the NIT Issuing office:** Sr. DSTE/JU NWR, DRM Office Harish Joshi Marg, Jodhpur. **Bid security to be deposited:** Rs. 1,63,900.00. **Last Date & time for submission of E-tender and opening of tender:** 22.05.2026 Up to 15:00 Hrs through E-tendering online submission on IREPS. Tender will be opened at 15:00 Hrs. **Website particulars, where complete details of tender can be seen and participated:** www.ireps.gov.in. **Note:** This is an E-Tender, so tenderer can participate through e-tendering process only on mentioned website **630-PS/26**
Follow us at [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/NWRRailways) [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/NWRRailways) [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/NWRRailways) [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/NWRRailways)

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE
DEATH
OBITUARY
Born: 19.07.1955 Died: 01.05.2026
Mrs. ASHA VIJAYARAGHAVAN
RETD. JUDICIAL MEMBER, ITAT,
W/o Mr. R.VIJAYARAGHAVAN
D/o Mr.K.R.RAMAMANI - Mrs. HEMALATA RAMAMANI
DEEPLY MOURNED BY
R. Vijayaraghavan, Mridula, Vikram, and Family Members
Staff and Advocates - SAPR Advocates
Staff RMT SCHOOL
Last Rites on 3rd May 2026 (Sunday) at 9.00 AM
New No:75A, Old No:105A, Dr. Radhakrishnan Salai, Mylapore, Chennai - 4.
Mobile: 98402 96186
In Memory of your loved ones
To dedicate a space in this section, Please contact:
011-43579797
from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
For Placing Advertisements Online log on to
www.thehinduads.com
DONATE EYES - GIFT SIGHT

Hate speech case: no cognisable offence made out against Anurag Thakur, Parvesh, says apex court

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has said that no cognisable offence is made out against Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders Anurag Thakur and Parvesh Sahib Singh for their alleged hate speeches during the protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) in Delhi in 2020.

Mr. Thakur is a former Union Minister and Mr. Singh is a Minister in the Delhi government.

April 29 verdict

In its April 29 verdict on a batch of pleas concerning hate speeches, a Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta also dealt with the petition filed by CPI(M) leaders Brinda Karat and K.M. Tiwari, who had challenged a June 2022 verdict of the Delhi High Court. The High Court had

placed on record, including the alleged speeches, status report submitted to trial court, and the reasons recorded by courts, we are in agreement that no offence is made out

JUSTICES VIKRAM NATH AND SANDEEP MEHTA
Supreme Court

dismissed a plea by the CPI (M) leaders challenging the refusal by a trial court to direct an FIR against the BJP leaders for their alleged hate speeches over an anti-CAA protest held in Shaheen Bagh.

In its judgement, the apex court noted that the High Court had, based on an independent assessment, held that the speeches did not disclose the commission of any cognisable offence, and also ob-

served that the statements were not directed against any specific community nor did they incite violence or public disorder.

"Upon a careful consideration of the material placed on record, including the alleged speeches, the status report dated February 26, 2020 submitted before the trial court, and the reasons recorded by the courts below, we are in agreement with the conclusion that no cognisable offence is made out," stated the Supreme Court.

The petitioners alleged that Mr. Thakur delivered a hate speech on January 27, 2020, and Mr. Singh on 28, 2020. The trial court had, on August 26, 2020, dismissed the petitioners' complaint on the grounds that it was not sustainable as the "requisite sanction from the competent authority" had not been obtained.

Your feedback will keep us Cleaner, Sharper and Bolder
Call our toll-free number **1800 102 1878**
Or write to us at customercare@thehindu.co.in
Scan the QR code to register your feedback
THE HINDU thehindu.businessline.com
FRONTLINE SPORTSTAR thehindu.youthworld.com THE HINDU

Jewar MLA seeks policy for workers' welfare in U.P.

Press Trust of India
NOIDA

BJP's Jewar MLA Dharendra Singh has urged the Uttar Pradesh government to formulate a comprehensive policy covering education, health care, housing and social security for labourers, saying welfare measures must go beyond employment to ensure overall well-being.

In a letter addressed to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Mr. Singh highlighted the "actual plight" of workers and called for targeted interventions to address their needs.

Referring to the recent labour-related unrest, the MLA said the situation underscores the urgent need for "more concrete and pragmatic measures" to resolve issues faced by the working class.

He proposed issuance of a "Green Card" to enable workers and their families to avail free OPD services at private hospitals.

U.P. CM announces wage reform, warns industrial unrest will harm progress

Efforts are under way to also provide free annual health insurance coverage of ₹5 lakh to workers in industrial regions, says Adityanath; reaffirms commitment to ensuring stability in workers' lives

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday said the Labour Department has been instructed to form a new wage board and ensure that all workers, particularly those employed in industries with 10 or more employees, receive equitable wages.

Addressing the 'Shramveer Gaurav Samaroh 2026' on International Labour Day in Lucknow, he said industry and labour were interdependent.

"If industry advances, workers will also advance; and if workers thrive, industries will flourish swiftly. Additionally, efforts are under way in collaboration



Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath at the 'Shramveer Gaurav Samaroh 2026' in Lucknow on Friday. ANI

with insurance companies and entrepreneurs to offer free annual health insurance coverage of ₹5 lakh to workers in industrial regions, facilitating treatment in approved hospitals," he said.

The Chief Minister's remarks come against the backdrop of the recent

protests by workers in Noida. Workers in the industrial area staged a series of protests last month over issues like wage hike, working hours and better overtime pay, with violence reported during one such stir on April 13.

Similar protests were reported from neighbouring

Greater Noida.

Mr. Adityanath said industrial unrest must not be allowed under any circumstances, as it ultimately leads to ruin and hampers development.

"Elements who oppose development and prosperity do not want industries to function. They will try to mislead people, but we must not be misled. Industries and workers must progress together. Industrial unrest must not be allowed under any circumstances; where there is industrial unrest, nothing remains except ruins," he added.

The Chief Minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to ensuring security, dignity, and stability in workers' lives.

Self-enumeration phase of Census begins in Jharkhand; Soren enrolls on web portal

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Friday launched the self-enumeration phase of Census 2027 in the State by recording his own details on the web portal. He appealed to all Jharkhand residents to fulfil their responsibility by participating actively in the Census process.

Senior Census officials briefed the Chief Minister on the detailed procedures regarding registration on the online self-enumeration portal, noting that the self-enumeration campaign will be conducted until May 15.

"Following this, the House Listing and Housing Census operations will be conducted across the entire State from May 16 to June 14, 2026. During this intensive Census drive, enumerators and associated personnel will conduct door-to-door visits to col-



CM Hemant Soren with his wife Kalpana Soren after registering his details through self-enumeration in Ranchi. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

lect data. Administrative preparations for this exercise have already begun in all districts," an official said.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Soren said the Census would facilitate the State government in delivering its various schemes to eligible beneficiaries more effectively and efficiently.

Mr. Soren also instructed the Census officials to ensure the inclusion of officers and personnel proficient in regional languages

during the execution of the exercise. He called on all residents of the State to make the national Census campaign a success.

Key for policymakers
Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar also recorded his details through the self-enumeration process at the Lok Bhawan, Ranchi. He said the Census provides fundamental data, which proves instrumental in formulating development-oriented plans.

ED grills W.B. Minister in civic body hiring scam

Press Trust of India
KOLKATA

The Enforcement Directorate on Friday questioned West Bengal Minister Sujit Bose for nearly nine hours in connection with its probe into the alleged civic body recruitment scam, a senior official said.

Accompanied by his son Samudra and two lawyers, Mr. Bose reached the ED office at CGO Complex in Salt Lake a little before 10.30 a.m.

"I have cooperated with the ED officers and answered all their queries. I will definitely come if they call me again. But my only request is not to harass me," Mr. Bose told reporters while leaving the office of the Central agency in the evening.

He had ignored three previous summonses from the ED, stating that he was busy with poll campaigns. He is seeking re-election from the Bidhanagar seat.

Mr. Bose had also moved the Calcutta High Court against the summonses, alleging harassment. The court had directed him to appear before the agency before 10.30 a.m. on Friday.

Establishments owned by Mr. Bose and his son were twice searched by the agency in connection with alleged recruitment irregularities at the South Dum Dum Municipality.

Rajasthan rights panel takes cognisance of disruptions in health scheme services

Press Trust of India
JAIPUR

The Rajasthan State Human Rights Commission has taken *suo motu* cognisance of reported disruptions in medical services under the Rajasthan Government Health Scheme (RGHS), observing that denial of treatment to State employees could amount to a violation of human rights.

In an order dated May 1, the commission noted that RGHS, which is aimed at providing free medical facilities and medicines to government employees,

has been facing serious implementation issues in recent months. Referring to media reports, the commission said hospitals, diagnostic centres and chemists empanelled under the scheme have allegedly been refusing services, including treatment and supply of medicines, to beneficiaries.

Pending payment

The commission cited reports indicating that payments of around ₹2,200 crore to service providers have been pending for the past eight to nine months, severely affecting health-

care delivery under the scheme. The commission observed that denial of timely medical care to employees raises serious concerns relating to their fundamental human rights.

Taking note of the gravity of the issue, the commission issued notices to the State's Finance Department, Medical and Health Department, RGHS authorities and the Indian Medical Association, Jaipur, seeking factual reports.

It has directed all stakeholders to resolve pending issues through coordination and listed the matter for hearing on May 20.

349-kg cocaine worth ₹1,745 cr. seized, major narcotics ring busted, says Shah

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday said the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has busted a major international narcotics ring, seizing 349 kg of high-grade cocaine worth ₹1,745 crore in Mumbai.

Announcing the drug haul on X, Mr. Shah asserted, "We are resolved to ruthlessly crush the narcotics cartel." "The @narcoticsbureau has cracked down on a major international narcotics ring, seizing 349 kg of high-grade cocaine worth ₹1,745 crore in Mumbai. This is a trailblazing example of a bottom-to-top approach



The breakthrough came after more than six months of intelligence development and surveillance by the NCB. @NARCOTICSBUREAU

where the agency traced back a smaller consignment to net a massive network. Congratulations to Team NCB for this monumental success," he wrote.

The major chunk of the seized contraband was found concealed in the

cavity of machinery imported from abroad. The NCB busted the network after the driver of a van in which the first lot was seized spilled the beans during sustained interrogation. The NCB conducted Op-

eration White Strike in which it uncovered a large transnational cocaine trafficking syndicate, culmination of more than six months of sustained intelligence development and surveillance by NCB.

"Acting on specific and credible inputs, multiple teams launched coordinated strikes in the Kalamoli-Bhiwandi corridor (Navi Mumbai-Thane region), exposing a highly organised transnational drug supply network using warehouse infrastructure and concealed transport mechanisms," the Union Home Ministry said in a statement.

One accused was apprehended on the spot, it said.

Poll code case: Vishwas, Jain, Bharti summoned

Press Trust of India
SULTANPUR (U.P.)

A special MP-MLA court in this Uttar Pradesh district has summoned former Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Kumar Vishwas and former Delhi Ministers Satyendar Jain and Somnath Bharti in connection with alleged violations of the

model code of conduct during the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, officials said on Friday.

Taking cognisance of the case, Special Magistrate Shubham Verma issued summonses to the accused and directed them to appear in the court in person on May 15.

Special Public Prosecu-

tor (SPP) Kalika Prasad Mishra said the matter dates back to May 6, 2014, when Mr. Vishwas was contesting the poll from the Amethi Lok Sabha constituency as an AAP candidate. It is alleged that despite directions from the then SHO Mohammad Hameed to leave the constituency, as they were not registered vo-

ters there, Mr. Vishwas and his supporters remained in the area in violation of the Election Commission's norms, which prohibit the presence of outsiders in a constituency 48 hours before polling.

Police subsequently registered a case against Mr. Vishwas, Mr. Jain, Mr. Bharti, and others.

Fresh hike in commercial LPG price puts Mumbai eateries, tea stalls in a tight spot

Chinmay Gaikwad
MUMBAI

The Union government's move to increase the price of commercial LPG cylinder on Friday has sent shock waves through roadside eateries, tea shops, caterers, bakeries, and cloud kitchens in Mumbai, with several of them planning to raise the price of food items or cut short the menu.

Baban Yadav, who runs a vada pav outlet in a Mumbai suburb, said he will raise the price of the iconic Maharashtrian street food by ₹3 because the cost of pav (bread roll) has shot up. He stopped frying samosas too. He has only vada pav and pakodas on his menu. Mr. Yadav said that the turnaround time for his business has reduced. Some of his customers said



Business owners in suburban Mumbai said they expect a drop in footfall if prices rise further. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the spiked price will affect the poor and migrant workers, since vada pav is a common man's food.

Sanjay Garud operates a tea stall in the same area. He said he bought an induction stove last month.

The LPG shortage has abated, but the price increase has affected his business. Mr. Garud, who has been in the business for 25 years, said the cost of a small cup of tea could go up to ₹15 or ₹20.

When forced to choose between quality and quantity, there is no dilemma, he said. Mr. Garud said his customers come to him for the quality of milk and tea.

'Running at loss'

To keep the same price with the same quality will not be profitable, he said, adding that the tea stall is already running at a loss. He said he is thinking of closing the business or handing it over to someone else.

Yogesh Shetty, who owns Shree Rath Hotel in Ambernath, said he will reduce frying and rely more on the tandoor. This approach will help him keep prices on the menu steady. He is also considering removing items that consume more gas from the menu. The hotel will retain its core offerings.

Timings
DELHI

SATURDAY, MAY. 02		
RISE	05:40	SET 18:57
RISE	19:45	SET 05:37
SUNDAY, MAY. 03		
RISE	05:39	SET 18:58
RISE	20:42	SET 06:14
MONDAY, MAY. 04		
RISE	05:39	SET 18:58
RISE	21:38	SET 06:56

Delhi Weather

	max	min
Delhi City	40	25
Safdarjang	40	25
Palam	39	25

Delhi Palam Today
40°C The weather will be mostly dry. Day will be hot and uneasy. Night will be comfortable.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
38°C The weather will be slight hot. Night will be pleasant. Spell of dust storm with light rain and thundershower may occur.

ADMISSION NOTICE

Common Entrance Test-2026 F for Admission at

INSTITUTE	COURSES
Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya National Institute for Persons with Physical Disabilities (Divyangjan) (PDUNIPPD) 4, Vishnu Digamber Marg, New Delhi-110002 Website: https://pdunippd.nic.in, E-mail: cetpdunippd2026@gmail.com	• BPT • BOT • BPO
Swami Vivekanand National Institute of Rehabilitation Training and Research (DIVYANGJAN), Cuttack (SVNIRTAR) Olatpur, PO- Bairoi, Cuttack, Odisha - 754010 Website: https://svnirtar.nic.in, E-mail: nirtar@nic.in	• BPT • BOT • BPO • BASLP
National Institute for Locomotor Disabilities (DIVYANGJAN), Kolkata (NILD) B.T. Road, Bonhooghly, Kolkata -700090 website: https://nild.nic.in, E-mail: nild@nic.in	• BPT • BOT • BPO • BASLP
National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (DIVYANGJAN), Chennai (NIEPMD) East Coast Road, Muttukadu, Kovalam Post Chennai-603112, Website: www.niepmd.tn.nic.in, E-mail: niepmd@gmail.com	• BPT • BOT • BASLP
Ali Yavar Jung National Institute of Speech & Hearing Disabilities (Divyangjan), Mumbai (AIJNSHD) K.C. Marg, Bandra (W) Reclamation Mumbai - 400 050 Website: http://ajynishd.nic.in, E-mail: ajynishh-mum@nic.in	• BASLP
Composite Regional Centre, Secunderabad Manovikas Nagar, Bowenpally, Secunderabad, Telangana-500009.	• BASLP
Composite Regional Centre for Skill Development, Rehabilitation & Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, (DIVYANGJAN), Guwahati (CRCSRE) Guwahati Medical College Hospital Campus Post Office Indrapur, GMC Hospital Rd, Bhangagarh, Guwahati, Assam-781032 Website: creguawahati.nic.in	• BASLP
Composite Regional Centre, Patna Sheikhpura, (Old Dharamshala), Near Nursing College, Patna-800014 Website: https://crcpatna.nic.in, E-mail: crcpatna@rediffmail.com	• BPO

Starting date of online publication of Information Brochure & App
Closing date of online receipt of Application form
Date of Entrance Test
For Details Log On to pdunippd.nic.in

All Concerned may please note

Director, PDUNIPPD, New Delhi
cbc 38103/12/0001/2627

IN BRIEF



TVK's temporary election office set afire near Tiruchi

A temporary election office of the TVK was set on fire by unidentified persons at Pettavaithalai near Tiruchi in the early hours of Friday. Police sources said the office, functioning from a thatched pandal at the entrance of a house, belonged to Veerasiva, 48, secretary of the district farmers' wing of the party. The police said the structure served as an election office for the Srirangam constituency. Around 2.30 a.m., unidentified persons allegedly set fire to the pandal, which was gutted. On information, the police rushed to the spot and doused the flames with the help of residents.

Nitish Kumar vacates CM's residence after four decades

Janata Dal (United) national president Nitish Kumar on Friday vacated the Bihar Chief Minister's official residence, which he occupied for around two decades, and shifted to a new address. Mr. Kumar, who is now a Rajya Sabha MP, relinquished the Chief Minister's post on April 14, and the BJP's Samrat Choudhary became the CM the next day. The JD(U) leader has served as the Chief Minister continuously since November 2005. "We have shifted from 1 Anne Marg (the official CM residence) to 7 Circular Road, and will live there," Mr. Kumar's son Nishant said. The 1 Anne Marg house was notified as the Bihar Chief Minister's residence in 2006. PTI

In a first, Karnataka govt. unveils digital grievance portal for gig workers

Mechanism developed to act as a bridge between workers and the aggregators they serve, says govt.; gig workforce has so far operated without a formal or legal dispute resolution framework

Shilpa Elizabeth
BENGALURU

In a move to secure the rights of the growing platform-based labour force, the Karnataka government has officially operationalised a specialised grievance redressal mechanism for platform-based gig workers. The mechanism, a first of its kind in India, has been developed by the Karnataka Platform-based Gig Workers' Board in collaboration with the Department of e-Governance.

Transparency
With the new initiative coming into force, gig workers can now officially lodge grievances, including regarding pay, working conditions, and platform-specific disputes, through the Integrated Public Grievance Redressal System (IPGRS) portal. This creates a formal bridge between lakhs of gig workers in Karnataka and the technology aggregators they serve. This is expected to bring transparency and legal recourse for a work-



Gig workers can lodge grievances, including regarding pay and working conditions through the IPGRS portal. SUDHAKARA JAIN

force that has so far operated without a formal dispute resolution framework.

Under The Karnataka Platform-Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Act and Rules, every aggregator platform must constitute an Internal Dispute Resolution Committee (IDRC). Grievances filed on the IPGRS will be automatically routed to the respective platform's IDRC to be addressed and settled within a strictly defined timeframe. The government will act as a central facilitator, monitoring the process to ensure a smooth and transparent flow of communication between workers and platforms.

tion between workers and platforms.

'Every voice is heard'
Labour Minister Santosh Lad said that Karnataka, technology capital of the country, is leveraging this potential for worker welfare as well. "By launching this system, we are ensuring that the gig economy is no longer an informal space, but a structured one where every worker's voice is heard," he said.

So far, details of 12 lakh active gig workers have been shared by platforms, according to G. Manjunath, Additional Labour Commis-

sioner and CEO of the board.

Schemes for gig workers, depending on the platform they are working for, are also being worked out and will be placed for deliberation in the next board meeting.

"The schemes will vary based on the type of platforms. For example, cab rides are mostly undertaken by men whereas urban domestic activity is undertaken mostly by women. It may also be based on the contribution made, and the quantum of gig work done by a gig worker. Some gig workers work for more than eight hours, while some may work on a few gigs. So, workload, nature of work, and time period of work could vary," Mr. Manjunath explained.

"It has to be scientifically structured based on their effort and labour. We are working with experts, including academicians from Bristol University, King's College, and IISc, and other stakeholders, including board members," he said.

Hard work by DMK cadre will yield results on May 4, says Stalin

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Due to the hard work of DMK cadre in the run-up to the Assembly election, the party will secure the desired result on counting day on May 4, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said in Chennai on Friday.

Addressing party workers on the occasion of International Workers' Day at the May Day Park, Mr. Stalin said there would be no change (in the government), adding that he was not saying this based on the exit polls, but because he understood the feelings of the party workers.

"The election results will be out in a couple of days, and I believe you will get good news," the Chief Minister said.

Mr. Stalin said the State would continue to be guided by the DMK's principle of "everything for everyone". He noted that Chennai was the first city in India to celebrate May Day, under the leadership of labour organiser M. Singaravelar.

Recalling the Dravidian movement's role in institutionalising the day, he said former Chief Minister C.N. Annadurai declared May Day a government holiday, while his successor M. Ka-



CM Stalin at an event to mark International Workers' Day in Chennai on Friday. R. RAGU

runanidhi ensured it became a paid and legally recognised holiday. He added that sustained efforts by DMK leaders led to its adoption as a paid public holiday across the country during the tenure of former Prime Minister V.P. Singh.

Workers' dignity
Mr. Stalin said workers' dignity, rights, and fair compensation remain central to the government's approach.

He also noted that the May Day Memorial Park in Chennai was established under Karunanidhi's leadership, reflecting his commitment to labour welfare.

Calling for continued collective effort, Mr. Stalin urged the cadre and the public to work together in upholding workers' rights.

Documentary on Venugopal the latest 'casualty' in 'tussle' for post-election leadership

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A documentary detailing the life and times of All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary, K.C. Venugopal, KC@50, appears to be the latest "casualty" in the alleged organisational tussle in the Congress in Kerala over the post-poll leadership of the United Democratic Front (UDF).

According to a Congress insider, the party's high command had strongly conveyed to the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) to request the rank and file in the State to desist from publishing acclamatory material on leaders on "social, television and print media" till after the high command settles the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leadership question in consultation with elect-



Congress leader K.C. Venugopal during a voter outreach for party's Tamil Nadu chief K. Selvaperunthagai. FILE PHOTO

ed party legislators and incumbent MPs after the Assembly election results on May 4.

'Extraordinary fiat'
However, the insider added, media reports that the high command had issued an "extraordinary fiat" to stop the work on the documentary directed by Vinod Mankara had no factual basis. The work on the documentary, which

seeks to highlight Mr. Venugopal's 50 years in politics, he claimed, was still on.

However, another Congressperson said that it was likely Mr. Venugopal's office would delay its release in deference to the AICC's apprehension that voters might deem such "celebratory programming" as brazen lobbying for UDF's prospective Chief Ministership.

Stray dog issue: Punjab Minister orders officials to take immediate steps

Press Trust of India
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Minister Sanjeev Arora on Friday directed municipal corporation commissioners and the additional deputy commissioners to take immediate, coordinated and result-oriented action to effectively tackle the growing issue of stray dogs across the State.

Mr. Arora, the Minister for Industries and Commerce, Investment Promotion, Power and Local Government, described the matter as a serious public safety and public health concern, and emphasised that the increasing number of stray dogs in urban and semi-urban areas has become a significant challenge affecting the daily life of citizens.

According to an official statement, Mr. Arora highlighted that incidents of

dog bites, attacks on children and elderly persons, and aggressive packs roaming in residential areas have created fear and insecurity among the public.

He noted that "the stray dog menace is not only a safety issue but also a major public health risk, as dog bites can lead to life-threatening diseases such as rabies".

Frequent complaints
Mr. Arora added that frequent complaints are being received regarding stray dogs chasing pedestrians, two-wheeler riders and school-going children, often leading to accidents and injuries. The Minister pointed out that the unchecked population growth of stray dogs is largely due to a lack of systematic sterilisation and improper waste management.

Underperforming legislators will not be renominated, says Naidu, hits out at previous govt.

The Hindu Bureau
PAMIDIMUKKALA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Friday launched a blistering attack against the Opposition, accusing it of pursuing destructive politics, while asserting that only performance-driven leadership would have a place in his government.

Addressing a public meeting in connection with the May Day and 'Pedala Sevalo' programmes at Pamidimukkala in Krishna district, Mr. Naidu made it clear that underperforming MLAs would not be renominated.

"I will directly seek feedback from the people. Those who fail to deliver will not get another chance," he warned, signalling a strong stand on accountability. Terming the NDA as a



Andhra Pradesh CM N. Chandrababu Naidu interacting with children at an anganwadi centre in Krishna district on Friday.

force of "reconstruction", Mr. Naidu said Andhra Pradesh was witnessing a renewed phase of development.

Striking a chord
Striking a chord with the residents, Mr. Naidu highlighted Krishna district's importance in the State's growth story, noting that it ranked among the top regions for development and

revenue generation.

Targeting the previous regime led by Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, the Chief Minister alleged that crucial projects such as the Polavaram irrigation project and Amaravati capital city were derailed due to "negligence and vindictive governance".

He said that partially completed works too were neglected.

Bengaluru's beloved bookstore slowly picks up pieces after floods damage collections

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Bookworm, one of the beloved bookstores of bibliophiles in Bengaluru, is slowly picking up the pieces and limping back to normalcy after the April 29 torrential rains flooded the bookstore, damaging nearly 5,000 books. The books that were drenched in water are now being dried out in the sun. While some are partially damaged, many books have been damaged extensively. A big collection of author-signed books and coffee-table books are also damaged. The extent of loss runs into several lakhs.

"There is another room full of books that was also flooded. We are yet to clear them from that room. Only



Books that got wet in the floods following a downpour in Bengaluru on April 29 being kept in the sun to dry. ALLEN EGENUSE J.

after that will we be able to assess the damage correctly," said Krishna Gowda, owner of the bookstore. The incident has created a lot of chatter online, and several customers have visited the bookstore and

called Mr. Gowda to express solidarity. Historian Ramachandra Guha also visited the store on Friday. "The support from readers has been overwhelming," Mr. Gowda said. However, the bookstore

owner said Bookworm had not sought financial help and had not authorised any fund-raising campaign. "I am told there has been talk of such initiatives online. We have not authorised any," he said.

Back in business
The bookstore is back in business and readers can walk in anytime. "A few readers are buying books that got wet in the floods and dried later. This will help us. Former IPS officer K. Annamalai has bought books on sports, current affairs and politics among the books damaged. A few other readers have also come forward to do the same. Apart from this, we are not accepting any form of help," Mr. Gowda said.

No move to drop Urdu language from job recruitment eligibility rule, says J&K CM

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday said no decision has been taken to drop Urdu as a mandatory qualification for lower- and middle-rung posts in the Revenue Department. Accusing political opponents of spreading misinformation, the Chief Minister said the government has merely sought public feedback.

"There is no move to drop Urdu. We only sought public feedback. The file remains with me and I have no intention of approving it," Mr. Abdullah said.

The Chief Minister accused the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) of using the Urdu issue as "a diver-



CM Omar Abdullah during the inauguration of 368 residential units for government employees in Pulwama on Friday. ANI

sion tactic". "Iltija Mufti [of the PDP] is educated. She knows the difference between seeking public opinion and dropping a subject. Stop spreading lies to mislead people," said Mr. Abdullah.

Cabinet Minister Sakina Itoo termed Urdu as an "essential part" of J&K's identity. "Nobody can remove Ur-

du. It is our life, like Kashmiri and Pahari. They spread lies to hide their past mistakes, supported the BJP [in the Rajya Sabha election], and raise baseless issues while people suffer without Statehood, jobs, and rights taken from J&K youth," said Ms. Itoo.

Leaders of the ruling National Conference (NC)

made the statements in the wake of street protests by the PDP over Urdu being "sidelined" in the Revenue Department and translating all revenue papers into English. The PDP alleged that Urdu as a mandatory subject was also dropped for the revenue services. Last year, the BJP raised the issue of Urdu being the "sole criteria for recruitment" in the revenue services and sought the language to be dropped as the main eligibility criterion.

Meanwhile, J&K Apni Party chief Altaf Bukhari too accused the NC of failing to clear the confusion. "Omar Abdullah needs to clarify the government's stand and remove confusion over its language policy immediately," he said.



RAISE THINKERS. NOT FOLLOWERS.

Teens today hear a lot of opinions. What they don't get enough of is space to form their own.

Teen Digest is built to inform, not instruct.
To spark curiosity, not shut it down.
To engage, educate, and enlighten.

Because curiosity doesn't come from being told what to think.
It comes from learning how to think.

THE HINDU
TeenDigest
ENGAGE • EDUCATE • ENLIGHTEN

TD



GET A FREE SAMPLE COPY!
Scan the QR code or give
a missed call to 7665538550

To subscribe, visit www.thehindu.com/teendigest
For queries, call 1800 102 1878



Follow us on    @thehindu_teendigest



Work in progress

India must strengthen public sector hospital capacity

The 80th, and latest, round of the household social consumption (health) survey conducted by the National Statistical Office is the first comprehensive survey of its kind in both the post-pandemic era and the period in which the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) scheme attained maturity. The previous two surveys of the same kind revealed that most Indians did not have any form of health insurance. Since PMJAY's launch in 2018, the 80th round shows that insurance coverage has expanded around threefold, accounting for an increasing share of health-care financing in hospitals. However, the hospitalisation rate has not recovered to the 2014 level, meaning that having an insurance card still does not guarantee access to a bed, and hidden costs continue to limit access. The reimbursement rates under PMJAY and State-funded insurance schemes are often below market rates, so private hospitals compensate by billing patients separately for diagnostics and ancillary services. In other words, while state-funded health insurance is subsidising private health-care providers' access to low-income markets without also enforcing regulated prices, the combined system provides a safety net where insurance covers hospitalisation and the public network has improved financial protection for households seeking primary care. Second, the Proportion of Population Reported Ailing has doubled, while infectious diseases have declined and non-communicable diseases have increased. Economists have interpreted this as a sign of more people seeking care, thus becoming 'visible' to the health-care sector.

Previous surveys singled out out-of-pocket expenses (OOPE) on health care as a leading cause of poverty. In the 80th round, while the mean OOPE has roughly doubled, the median OOPE has dropped, to ₹11,285 per hospitalisation and at nearly nothing for public outpatient care. Health-care expenses in India are a mix of many low-cost consultations and a few significant and expensive interactions, such as surgeries and chronic care. The two trends thus mean that while health care is becoming more affordable, thanks to the public sector absorbing the cost of primary and secondary care, health care's ability to inflict financial deprivation in a few cases remains high. Part of the problem is the AAM network, which provides free medicines and diagnostics, of Ayushman Bharat still being significantly underfunded relative to the needs of managing chronic diseases, and where the private sector dominates. Thus, overall, the poor have nominal coverage but are often excluded from the benefits of coverage in practice while the more insured middle class faces rising catastrophic costs. The next phase of health-care reform, after shielding care-seekers from poverty and achieving near-universal institutional delivery, will need to strengthen public sector hospital capacity to compete with the private sector for tertiary care.

Primary league

In Kerala, the UDF is engaged in ugly manoeuvres for the CM's post

The Congress in Kerala has been counting its chickens before they hatch. For several weeks, senior leaders have been positioning for the Chief Minister's post, assuming that the United Democratic Front (UDF) would win the Assembly elections on May 4. Just as the party sought to put a lid on the unseemly public display of personal ambition, its most important ally muddied the waters. Panakkad Sadiq Ali Shihab Thangal, State president of the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), publicly backed V.D. Saheesan for Chief Minister, citing exit polls of dubious authority, and urging the Congress's central leadership to let public sentiment guide the choice. The blowback was immediate. Sectarian leaders who have been whipping up anti-Muslim sentiment were quick to claim that the Congress and the UDF were in the IUML's stranglehold. The charge has a history to feed on. The IUML's maximalist demands for seats, cabinet berths and portfolios have contributed to that impression, and are at least partly linked to rising tensions between the Muslim community on the one side and Hindus and Christians on the other — a realignment that has proved beneficial for the BJP. The UDF may have barely stalled the disintegration of its social base in this election, if at all. The IUML's public posturing is a stinging reminder of what to avoid if the Front is to remain viable in the face of rapid social change.

The conventions of Kerala's coalition politics are clear and have held for decades. A single party rarely wins an absolute majority; the partners of a Front collectively win those numbers. The leading party — Congress in the UDF, CPI-M in the LDF — elects its legislature party leader, who is then accepted by the Front as Chief Minister. There is no record of that decorum being broken by any junior partner in either Front. Neither Front contested this election with a declared chief ministerial candidate; even the sitting Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan, was not named as the LDF's CM candidate. In both Fronts, the Chief Minister has emerged through a two-step process involving newly elected MLAs and the central leadership of the party concerned. In the UDF and LDF, popular leaders have often missed the top post simply because there are always multiple contenders but only one post. The IUML would serve itself, the culture of coalition politics and the social fabric of Kerala far better by respecting that decorum. The Congress high command, for its part, must demonstrate that manoeuvres that embarrass the party carry a cost, not a reward.

India's global right linkages, costs and consequences

Philosopher John Locke tellingly argued that "things of this world are in so constant a flux, that nothing remains long in the same state". Seemingly localised events such as the French Revolution, the two world wars, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the September 11 attacks and Lehman Brothers' crash all kickstarted profound global disruptions. The 2008 financial crisis unleashed socio-economic pressures that heralded a tsunami of populist-autocrats leading right-wing parties (henceforth the Right). As evidenced by contemporary global upheavals (the conflict in West Asia being just the tip of the iceberg), this tsunami is the single biggest threat to the liberal world order.

Most analyses focus on the 'what' of this phenomenon, namely that the Right is fashioning a neo-conservative world order — where nations have spheres-of-influence and might is right; are culturally pure (code for xenophobia and racism); and where the liberal world order's norms are vilified as impediments to a mythical golden period. Other analyses outline the similarities in the Right's domestic politics or how it embeds undemocratic and atavistic norms in the new world order they are forging. What is understudied is how the Right breathes life into its shared goals and why it acts like it does.

In deciphering the how, the Right has colluded to establish an "international ideological axis" over decades. Networks such as the International Democracy Union, the Movement, the National Conservatism Conference, the Conservative Political Action Conference, the Heritage Foundation (whose Project 2025 United States President Donald Trump is scrupulously unleashing globally) either train parties on manufacturing consent, create networking opportunities for right-wing politicians, frame coordinated responses on global issues, and weaponise their respective diasporas to support populist-autocrats. Through these, the Right has unleashed undemocratic upsurges against progressive values and parties, as well as the liberal world order. It is no coincidence that 91 countries representing 72% of the world's population are classified as autocratic by the Varieties of Democracy Institute.

A global right alignment

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s role in this counter-hegemonic project is illustrative. Having effected a gleichschaltung on the Indian state, the BJP has redeployed the nation's foreign policy systems to help redraw the global map ideologically. As outlined in a recent book, *India's Tryst with the World*, Indian missions are bypassed as the BJP's ideological outposts (the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh or HSS, the Overseas Friends of BJP and other Sangh Parivar affiliates) map and harass liberal academics working on India, obfuscate the targeting of foreign citizens (highlighted in a 2024 Canadian Security Intelligence Service report) and support the Right as part of an ideological internationalism.

Evidence of boots-on-the-ground collaboration can be found in the Operation Dharmic-Vote campaign in the 2019 British general election, which saw the Overseas Friends of BJP campaigning for Conservative Party candidates in



Salman Khurshid

Former Minister for External Affairs



Pushparaj Deshpande

Director, Samruddha Bharat Foundation

48 constituencies. Similarly, the 'Howdy Modi' and 'Namaste Trump' rallies stumped for Mr. Trump, as did Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pre-Operation Roaring Lion visit, which politically endorsed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ahead of Israel's national elections.

Likewise, exorbitant funds are channelised for extremist causes (a 2022 report by Jasa Macher found that just seven Sangh Parivar affiliates in the United States spent over \$158.9 million on right-wing causes). Some of this has yielded results, as democratic regressions in France, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. testify.

Although this evokes a perverse epicaricacy among some in India, the BJP's Janus-visage lies bare abroad. Belying efforts to project Mr. Modi as a Gandhian *vikas-purush*, the BJP's role in this international axis has sparked deep unease.

First, transparency groups have alleged that the Prime Minister's personalised diplomacy transcends collusion with populist-autocrats, and furthers the interests of crony-capitalists (who support the BJP's politico-ideological objectives).

Second, progressive parties increasingly perceive the BJP's ideological internationalism as arming the Right in their respective nations. For example, as a *Daily Mail* report alleged, the BJP's involvement in fomenting tensions in Leicester vitiated politics and tried to strengthen the Right. Likewise, BJP delegations actively courting far-right parties across Europe has sparked deep unease among global progressives.

Third, the BJP's ideological adventurism has triggered diplomatic reprisals (including the expulsion of Indian intelligence officials from various nations — a historic first).

Fourth, hate speech and racist attacks on Indian students abroad has mushroomed, while restrictions to visas for skilled Indian immigrants have escalated. Both suggest that the BJP-enamoured-diaspora's efforts to ingratiate themselves with the Right yield no returns.

Finally, the BJP's adventurism has also compromised India's national interests. For example, by condoning kidnappings and assassinations of heads of state, wilfully ignoring the conversion of India's strategic backyard into a conflict-theatre, circumscribing India's historical support for a two-state solution and peace (because of an iron-alliance with Mr. Netanyahu's Likud party) and tacitly sanctioning coercive unilateralism in West Asia and South America, the BJP has undermined India's case on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir while imposing massive geo-economic and geo-political costs on India (as the adverse impacts of the war in West Asia prove).

The response to India's reticence

The world reads India's reticence under the BJP government as an abdication of India's moral leadership of the Global South, and not responsible statecraft. Contrary to Jawaharlal Nehru's principled internationalism (which successive Indian governments continued), in doing nothing to mitigate conflicts between NATO/Ukraine-Russia, or America/Israel-Iran, or on the Palestine issue, the BJP government is tacitly conceding that nations can violently forge hemispheric hegemonies, which is why few

nations condemned China's aggression in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh, or Pakistan after Operation Sindoor (2025).

This brings us to why the Right is dismantling the liberal world order. Focusing on the domestic to illustrate the point, even though the BJP blithely continues India's long-standing efforts to forge a multipolar world, it is primarily striving to inscribe itself into a global conservative cartography (partly because of its ideological proclivities, and partly because it mistakenly buys into its self-propagated synonymy with the nation-state). The reason why the BJP's covert support for the dismantling of the rules-based world order (evocatively wrapped in decolonisation rhetoric) has traction is because of the injustices of the neoliberal world order — dealt with in the article in this daily, "Navigating the global economic transformation", October 16, 2025. After all, the Global North's economic colonialism (including structural adjustments, capital accumulation, cheap labour, environmental colonisation and trickle-down economics), and ruthless pursuit of national interests (including through sanctions and tariffs) predate the Right.

Similarly, the Global North's liberal incrementalism on overhauling international institutions (a *sine qua non* for India and the Global South) and inertia (despite conflicts afflicting five continents, there has not been a substantive United Nations Peacekeeping operation since 2014) has made the attack on transnational institutions seem kosher. Likewise, the Global North's promotion of cloud-capitalism has not only exacerbated socio-cultural fault-lines, but inevitably rewarded populist-autocrats.

Ironically then, it is the "progressive" establishment's standpattism that has paved the way for the Right. If progressives are to reclaim the centre, they must cut the self-created Gordian knot and shed familiar comforts. This means restoring confidence in shared futures, accommodating rising powers, honouring historical grievances, rewriting the geo-economic norms underpinning the world order, and reimagining multilateral institutions.

What the fightback must entail

Given the polycrisis engulfing us, progressives must shed their Macbeth-like fog of nostalgia, bureaucratic hesitation and technocratic chimeras. Eschewing liberal echo-chambers, progressives should mould new value-aligned partnerships with each other (especially between the Global-North and Global-South parties) and non-political stakeholders. This necessitates new institutional arrangements (like what Spain's Global Progressive Mobilisation and India's Bharat Summit promise) that allow structured dialogues between evangelical accelerators from all nations (which the Non-Alignment Movement once was). This means exerting unprecedented political will, and recalibrating operational methodologies (such as the recent Hungary, Poland and New York campaigns) to sway the silent majority more effectively than the Right. Only then can we weave multiple national visions into a global symphony, and put democracy back on track.

Abu Dhabi exits OPEC for an ascent of 'peak oil'

Although in recent years the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has frequently threatened to leave the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), its actual announcement, on April 28, took observers by surprise. It was also conspicuous in its context. It provided only three days' notice for exit from OPEC and OPEC+ on May 1, just five days before the next OPEC meeting. The decision was also counterintuitive to the ongoing double blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, staunching oil exports of the UAE and other Gulf states.

A subsequent Emirati official statement was elaborate but elliptical. It sought to both rationalise the decision aimed at pursuing national interest and reassure the stakeholders of its continued intention "to contribute to stability (of the oil market) in a measured and responsible manner", promising "to bring additional production to market in a gradual and measured manner".

These anodyne references prompt the analysts to look deeper to fathom the real reasons for the Emirati step and assess its impact on the global market.

The UAE's grouse

The UAE's oil and gas reserves, estimated at 113 billion barrels, are the world's sixth largest. These are almost exclusively in the Abu Dhabi emirate. The UAE has a \$150 billion investment plan (2023-27) to raise its oil production capacity to five million barrels per day (mbpd). However, its OPEC production quota is limited to 3.45 mbpd, leaving it with nearly 1.5 mbpd unutilised spare capacity. This has been a source of the UAE's grouse against OPEC, which is perceived to operate under Saudi hegemony. Riyadh, as OPEC's 'swing producer', often trims its oil



Mahesh Sachdev

Retired Indian Ambassador with an interest in West Asia and oil matters

War's impact

Over the long run, Emirati strategists believe that global oil demand is approaching a "Peak Oil" moment after which crude requirement and unit value would begin their decline. Consequently, they wish to sell as much oil as possible before the "Peak Oil". They contend that the Iran war brings "Peak Oil" even closer by causing an unsustainable surge in oil prices, destroying the demand and accelerating the shift towards alternative fuels. In the short run, the UAE wishes to take advantage of the current higher oil prices. With the 1.5 mbpd Abu Dhabi (Habshan)-Fujairah oil pipeline already operational outside the Strait of Hormuz, the UAE is well placed to do so. By quitting OPEC, Abu Dhabi has unfettered itself from any quota restrictions in anticipation of a scramble among the Gulf exporters for greater market share once the two blockades on the Strait of Hormuz are lifted.

The Emirati statement conspicuously omits the Gulf geopolitics, the 640-pound gorilla in the room. Iran hurled over 2,200 drones and missiles at the UAE during the war as retribution for its strategic ties with Israel. Separately, during the past decade, the barely concealed political and economic rivalry between Saudi Arabia and the UAE has reached a crescendo. It is hardly coincidental that the UAE's OPEC exit announcement was timed with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Consultative Summit,

production to absorb the global oil glut; it resists Abu Dhabi's pressure for a larger OPEC quota. The UAE's ambitious plans for a post-oil advanced technologies-based economy require mega-investments in Artificial Intelligence, and data centres, ironically, requiring higher oil revenues.

War's impact

Over the long run, Emirati strategists believe that global oil demand is approaching a "Peak Oil" moment after which crude requirement and unit value would begin their decline. Consequently, they wish to sell as much oil as possible before the "Peak Oil". They contend that the Iran war brings "Peak Oil" even closer by causing an unsustainable surge in oil prices, destroying the demand and accelerating the shift towards alternative fuels. In the short run, the UAE wishes to take advantage of the current higher oil prices. With the 1.5 mbpd Abu Dhabi (Habshan)-Fujairah oil pipeline already operational outside the Strait of Hormuz, the UAE is well placed to do so. By quitting OPEC, Abu Dhabi has unfettered itself from any quota restrictions in anticipation of a scramble among the Gulf exporters for greater market share once the two blockades on the Strait of Hormuz are lifted.

The Emirati statement conspicuously omits the Gulf geopolitics, the 640-pound gorilla in the room. Iran hurled over 2,200 drones and missiles at the UAE during the war as retribution for its strategic ties with Israel. Separately, during the past decade, the barely concealed political and economic rivalry between Saudi Arabia and the UAE has reached a crescendo. It is hardly coincidental that the UAE's OPEC exit announcement was timed with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Consultative Summit,

in Jeddah, on the Iran war, where the UAE was under-represented by its Foreign Minister. The move was widely interpreted as Abu Dhabi flaunting its regional autonomy of action to the GCC states and Iran. By ditching OPEC, the UAE, apparently, aims to steal a march over Iran and Saudi Arabia, both OPEC members, for Asia's very large and thirsty crude markets. The move may also favour U.S. President Donald Trump, who desperately needs lower oil prices before the mid-term Congressional elections. At a wider ambit, this may be the opening overture of the UAE openly pursuing a more nationalistic foreign policy. Most observers believe that the exit of the UAE, OPEC's third-largest producer, would not derail the cartel, although its grip on the global market would slip further below that of independent producers, such as the U.S., Canada, Brazil, and Norway. For some, the departure of the UAE, the fifth member to leave OPEC since 2016 and the biggest producer so far, may even mark the beginning of the end for OPEC.

An opportunity for India

While the Emiratis have their reasons for quitting OPEC, consumers in India, the world's third-largest and fastest-growing crude importer, would see it with tentative hope for lower pump prices. India enjoys strategic ties with the UAE, its third-largest trading partner and fourth-largest crude supplier. To anchor the hydrocarbon relationship with the "OPEC-free" UAE, India may propose strategic joint investments in Indian downstream projects.

For the past half a century, the OPEC dictates often made Indians shudder and issue a "May Day!" call. Thanks to the UAE quitting the producer cartel, this May could have a different ring.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Iran war and U.S. line

The U.S. administration's claim that the war on Iran has already ended is one that would perhaps allow the White House to circumvent the requirement of Congressional approval

under the War Powers Resolution, which constrains the President's military powers. Obviously, such a process would have raised serious questions about the reckless and dangerous

misadventure that the U.S. began on February 28. It is important that nations come together to persuade all three — the U.S., Iran, and Israel — to eschew the path of violence. Deeply regrettable in all this is the

UN's virtual absence. **Angara Venkata Girija Kumar,** Chennai

Vaping incident

The recent incident of vaping during the IPL 2026 season is alarming, and the

BCCI's response of imposing a mere fine is inadequate. The IPL commands a vast audience, including impressionable youth, and an incident such as this risks normalising harmful behaviour. Accountability

must go beyond token punishment to uphold discipline and responsibility. **Nagarajamani M.V.,** Hyderabad

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

GROUND ZERO



Sanjay Sharma, editor of 4pm News on YouTube, recording a video for his channel at a makeshift studio in Mumbai. EMMANUAL YOGINI

Far from a safe harbour

An infrastructure of censorship is emerging, enabling the Central and various State governments to take social media content down using existing laws and rules. Independent media outlets and online critics now find their reach at a precipice. **Aroon Deep** reports on how in an environment of misinformation and deepfakes, opposing voices also become targets

Six months after the Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh in 2017, in which the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) achieved a landslide victory, Sanjay Sharma, the editor of an evening newspaper in Lucknow, was summoned by a senior official close to the Chief Minister's Office.

"The officer told me, 'The Chief Minister is very upset with you; he thinks you are Akhilesh's man,'" said Sharma, referring to Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, who was Chief Minister of the State from 2012 to 2017. He was recounting the episode over Zoom at a public policy event in April 2026.

Responding to the officer's allegation, Sharma showed him a series of articles published in 4PM News, the evening newspaper he edited, scrutinising the previous government led by Yadav.

The officer was not convinced. Sharma said the officer asked him to change at least the front page of the newspaper on a regular basis, since politicians from the Opposition were highlighting portions of what the paper had published.

Sharma said he refused. This decision allegedly came at a cost. His State press accreditation, which gave him access to subsidised housing and a host of other benefits, was not renewed. He was compelled to move houses.

In 2018, even as he continued as editor of 4PM News, he decided to start a YouTube channel of the same name, anchoring most of the videos himself. "I didn't know that a new world awaited me," he said at the policy event. In the eight years that followed, his follower count increased to over 8 million, far from the reach of the Uttar Pradesh police. He had found a national audience.

However, during the India-Pakistan conflict last year, Sharma ran into trouble again for his videos on Operation Sindoor. The 4PM News channel was blocked in India by a government order. He approached the Supreme Court, which remarked that blocking was a "chilling assault on journalistic independence". The government withdrew the order.

In March, the 4PM News channel was blocked in India again. This time, the government defended its decision in the Delhi High Court, accusing Sharma of spreading "conspiracy theories" around the Pahalgalam attack and 4PM News of being a "foreign influence infrastructure".

A problem across States

Sharma is not alone. Over the last few months, across States, several YouTube videos, Facebook posts, Instagram reels, and posts on X have gone missing and so have entire accounts that posted them. Those affected include individual users, at least one political party, independent journalists, and online news outlets.

In Kerala this March, police sent notices to many users for sharing images of an Election Commission document with a BJP seal. The document and seal were real, but the Commission later said it was just a party annexure that was mistakenly included in an official reply.

These kinds of takedowns make you think twice about posting about the government.

SANDEEP SINGH
Activist

In Tamil Nadu last year, the police issued notices for posts on X by BJP party and politicians' accounts about the National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test (NEET), and also for a cartoon by an All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam-associated news account, according to an affidavit made by X in the Karnataka High Court.

West Bengal, too, has issued notices under Section 79(3)(b) of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, on content about Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. In Punjab, the Press Di Azaadi Bahal Karo Sangharsh Committee Punjab (Committee for the Struggle to Restore Press Freedom) described growing number of notices against independent media by the Aam Aadmi Party-led government in the State.

Gone in a jiffy

On March 18, 2026, multiple accounts were removed from X and Instagram. The Hindu counted dozens of such posts in a review of takedown orders posted by affected users, but comprehensive statistics are not available, as these orders are confidential. Many of the accounts were critical of Prime Minister Narendra Modi or mocked him. One such reel, made by the comedian, Pulkit Mani, mimicked Modi's mannerisms while interacting with foreign dignitaries. While the takedown triggered the Streisand effect, as Opposition politicians and content creators such as Dhruv Rathee reposted it, that did not stop more censorship from following.

DrNimoYadav, an anti-establishment handle on X with over 1.3 lakh followers, was censored the same day; so were Nehr_who? (2.4 lakh followers) and ActivistSandeep (1.2 lakh followers). Some of the owners of these accounts complained about the ban from other handles, while some accounts had such a large number of fol-

lowers that their absence was noticed.

Sandeep Singh, who runs ActivistSandeep, lives in Delhi. "I am a Dalit activist, and a lot of my activity is on the ground. I have been posting about it on social media since 2018," Singh says. His following - 1.2 lakh followers on X and 7 lakh subscribers on YouTube - did not contribute much by way of revenue, he adds. He has also done public relations and campaigning work for Nitin Raut, a Congress leader in Maharashtra.

On the night of March 18, Singh got an email from X, informing him that his account had been withheld in India under Section 69A of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, which allows the Indian government to block public access to online information in the interest of India's sovereignty, defense, security, friendly relations with foreign states, or public order. He had received no warning and no copy of the legal order. There was no way of finding out what he had posted that had led to his account being blocked.

Singh contacted the Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF) advocacy group in Delhi, which has been helping people with cases such as his. IFF lawyers approached the Delhi High Court for Singh, DrNimoYadav, and Nehr_who? The latter two were compelled to disclose their real names in the process. On April 6, after receiving a list of the actual posts that had led to the expulsion, the court ordered that their accounts be unfrozen.

On April 13, Singh was granted a post-decision hearing at the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology. "There were 11 officers there," he says, many of them from the Indian Administrative Service. Some of the senior-most officers allegedly grilled the activist on why he invoked the Prime Minister's name so often. Singh says he declined to take down the posts and will continue to challenge the government in court.

The rules that govern speech online

The IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 established a framework for social media intermediaries and streaming platforms in India. They govern a concept known as 'safe harbour' under which social media platforms are generally exempt from legal action in court, including criminal proceedings against their employees, as long as they take down content when they receive "actual knowledge" of "illegal content". The *Shreya Singhal v. Union of India* case (2015) had narrowed down "actual knowledge" to mean a court order or a Section 69A order.

Over the years, the IT Rules have created an alternative interpretation that is yet to be tested fully by the legal system: actual knowledge could be a message from the government or from authorised police officers around the country. Ignoring

such communication could mean loss of safe harbour. The IFF, in a filing with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, argued that the IT Rules' use for take-downs is improper.

These concerns became more immediate in February this year, when an amendment reduced the deadline for removing unlawful content to secure safe harbour protection from 36 hours to three. In April, it turned out that those concerns came true for Meta. As *The Hindu* reported, the Facebook and Instagram parent now immediately takes down content referred to it under Section 79(3)(b) of the IT Act, which removes 'safe harbour' immunity for intermediaries if they fail to expeditiously remove unlawful content after receiving actual knowledge or a government notification.

However, not all firms have reacted the same way. A review by *The Hindu* of takedown notices sent to X shows that while the firm notifies users, it continues to only act on a narrow slice of Section 79(3)(b) notices, something the government flagged in submissions with the Delhi High Court.

The Union government had created the Sahyog portal under the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2014 for the rapid removal of unlawful content. This has taken a larger role in online content governance in recent months. Within a year, over 1 lakh pieces of content were flagged by the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C) alone. It is unclear how many were taken down. The government does not disclose blocking orders. Social media platforms disclose government takedown orders in bulk on a biannual basis. The extent of takedowns on Meta's platforms will only be known well into the second half of this year.

While the Union government is in charge of amending the IT Rules, its use as a takedown mechanism is far from restricted to the IT Ministry and the I4C. There is growing usage of Section 79(3)(b) in non-NDA-led States, such as Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Punjab and Kerala, where police have over the last few months not only used the Sahyog portal to issue takedown notices, but also separately contacted social media platforms directly with such communications.

India has always provided broad exceptions to freedom of expression under Article 19(2) of the Constitution. These restrictions are extensive, covering anything that may affect the "sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality," as well as matters involving contempt of court, defamation, or incitement to an offence.

The IT Act has long had a procedure for forcing "intermediaries", such as internet service providers, and later social media platforms, to take down content. These blocking rules, largely under Section 69A, allow the government to block content that falls within a subset of Article 19(2) exemptions.

The IT Rules, 2009, mandate a committee to review each blocking request made by designated officers and provide the affected party a chance to be heard. IT Ministry officials have argued in recent years that time is of essence on social media, and that quickly taking down "illegal content" is appropriate. One official quoted the maxim, "Lies go around the world before the truth has put on its shoes."

Choice of targets

The choice of targets so far - critics and media outlets - largely "follows a template," said Susan Koshy, an assistant professor at the Department of Media Studies, GITAM School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Hyderabad. "They target the fringe elements before going for the main guys. Even when they go after political people, there is some material based on which they pursue them," she said.

Some of the pushback has not been as fierce in the past: "There is a certain exhaustion which sets in," she conceded. "But there are memes in response to the censorship that are a positive aspect," she said, referring to online reactions to some viral instances of takedowns.

Platforms, on their part, are not keen on emphasising user rights, but they are voicing concerns. "Let me begin by saying that we are not doubting the intention of the government," Vertika Misra, director of public policy at Nasscom, whose members include Google and Meta, said on April 30 in a small online discussion held over Zoom with tech policy speakers from the industry. "There are duplications, there is ambiguity, and there is a great deal of confusion regarding the obligations being introduced."

She was referring to a new batch of amendments to the IT Rules, which propose making guidelines issued by the IT Ministry "binding" on platforms. "If the government keeps coming up with these amendments and regulations on a regular basis, how do you plan your systems and how do you cater to such large volumes of user-generated content in real time?"

When asked at a press conference in March about accounts being taken down on a large scale, IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw denied such actions. "A huge quantity of deepfakes has started coming in the social media world. And the world and social media platforms have ramped up their efforts in removing deepfakes. Platforms themselves have doubled or tripled their own takedowns, which are basically deepfake takedowns. It is a new menace and a new threat for the society," he said.

Rajneil Kamath, vice president at the Trusted Information Alliance, a group of fact-checkers which debunks deepfakes, does not buy this argument. Speaking during a small discussion, Kamath said, "The word deepfakes in many ways is being used as a blanket term to describe any content that you don't like, and that becomes a pretext for content being taken down."

Singh said that social media was the only space left with unfiltered criticism of the government. "This kind of takedown makes you think twice about posting about the government," he said.



Activist Sandeep Singh during an interview in New Delhi. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

From Page One

Commercial LPG, 5-kg cylinders to cost more

The latter primarily caters to the needs of migrant populations in urban and semi-urban areas who do not have a local address proof to avail a regular connection. Commercial LPG is used by businesses, both big and small, on a daily basis. Key among these are restaurants and hotels. Higher costs are expected to be passed on to their customers.

According to government estimates, 5-kg cylinders comprising more than 22.54 lakh kg of LPG were sold in April. The price of the smaller cylinder was last hiked by ₹51 per cylinder in April. It was on April 7 that the government had also doubled the allocation of the cylinders in all States.

The hike in commercial LPG prices follows a ₹195.5 per cylinder hike on April 1, when the crisis in West Asia had completed a full month.

GST revenue hits record ₹2.43 lakh crore in April

“Post GST 2.0, a steady 7-8% monthly growth seems to be emerging as the norm which is broadly in line with budget estimates,” Pratik Jain, partner, Price Waterhouse & Co., said. “Notably, growth in import-led revenues continues to outpace domestic transactions, which could indicate some softness in consumption.”

Manoj Mishra, partner and tax controversy management leader at Grant Thornton Bharat, said that the growth in tax revenue from imports also “points to resilient external demand linkages and supply chain normalisation”.

Mr. Jaising, on the other hand, pointed out that the growth in revenues from domestic sales has remained steady, which reflects the nature of consumption activity in the economy.

That said, Saurabh Agarwal, tax partner at EY India, did warn that the coming months are not likely to replicate these record collections. “A note of caution for the quarter ahead: April’s record figures reflect the year-end push for targets by both industry and administrators,” he said. “As we transition into the new fiscal year, we should anticipate a stabilisation in the coming months.”

Trump ‘not satisfied’ with Iran’s peace bid

Last week, Iran reportedly submitted a proposal to Pakistan to ease its control of the Strait of Hormuz if the U.S. lifts its blockade. Mr. Trump said in an interview on Wednesday that he would keep the blockade in place until a deal is reached over Iran’s nuclear programme.

Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei said on Thursday that the country would protect its “nuclear and missile” facilities and vowed to introduce a new legal framework to manage the Strait of Hormuz.

U.S. media reported that the U.S. Central Command would brief Mr. Trump about potential military options, including strikes on Iranian infrastructure. Brig. Gen. Seyyed Majid Mousavi, commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Force, warned U.S. Centcom on Thursday that any such strike would be met with a swift response.

SC to hear Trinamool plea against EC order

A Bench of Justices P.S. Narasimha and Joyimalya Bagchi will hear the petition as the counting of votes is scheduled for May 4.

The High Court had refused to entertain the petition filed by West Bengal’s ruling party, invoking the bar under Article 329(b), which mandated that no election to Parliament or State Legislatures could be questioned except through an election petition.

“Appointing counting supervisors and assistants, who perform the most critical task of vote counting, exclusively from a pool of employees under the administrative control of the Central government, which is run by the petitioner’s main political adversary, creates a manifest and reasonable apprehension of bias,” the Trinamool’s petition said.

SC grants anticipatory bail to Pawan Khera

Mr. Khera was booked for conspiracy, forgery and criminal defamation.

Through senior advocate A.M. Singhvi, he said the FIR was driven by an ulterior political motive and was intended to humiliate him with his arrest.

The court said *prima facie* it seemed Mr. Khera’s statements were designed to gain “some political momentum in favour of his party”. On the other hand, the court highlighted that it could not “lose sight of the fact that the Chief Minister of the State, who is also the husband of the complainant, has made certain unparliamentary remarks against the appellant in various press statements which have been filed before this court”. The Bench ordered that Mr. Khera would be released on anticipatory bail in the event of his arrest.

Ladakhis serve as nation’s first line of defence: Shah

On his first visit to Ladakh in seven years, the Home Minister says the demand for U.T. status stemmed from lack of development, noting that there has been significant progress since 2019

Peerzada Ashiq
LEH/JAMMU

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who is on a two-day visit to Ladakh, on Friday said Ladakhis have proven to be the first line of defence whenever the country faced external threats. He also highlighted the upward development graph of the region after attaining the Union Territory status in 2019.

“Whenever an external threat emanated, people of Ladakh reached long before the security forces and took bullets on their chests for the country. The bravery of Ladakh Scouts is well known across the length and breadth of the country. Every citizen of the country praises the patriotism of Ladakhis and remains indebted to them,” said Mr. Shah.

Mr. Shah is visiting Ladakh after a gap of seven years. It is also his first visit to Ladakh since street protests over the demands of Statehood and Sixth Schedule left four dead and 80 injured in Leh in September last year.

Mr. Shah inaugurated a series of key initiatives at



Amit Shah interacts with a novice monk at the inauguration of the first international Buddha relics exposition in Ladakh. PTI

the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, Leh. They included dairy plant with capacity of 10,000 litres per day at Kargil, dairy processing units in Leh, a bulk milk cooler system and transportation infrastructure. He also launched an Android-based Automated Milk Collection System (AMCS) “to streamline procurement processes and ensure transparency in payments to farmers”.

Mr. Shah said the Centre fulfilled the long pending demand of Union Territory status for Ladakh in 2019. “The main reason behind the U.T. demand was the lack of development in the region. However, the region has witnessed a leap in many sectors since 2019.

It is because Prime Minister Narendra Modi remains focused on the region,” said Mr. Shah. Mr. Shah said the region was granted around 193 panchayats, five new districts and official language status for Bodhi and Purgi alongside Urdu, Hindi and English.

He said the road infrastructure took a leap from 1,800 km in 2019 to 4,040 km in 2026, from 19 bridges to 72 bridges, from 344 mobile towers to 653 towers, from seven helipads to 41, from 60 snow machines to over 200. Mr. Shah said Ladakh’s budget has gone up to ₹6,000 crore compared to ₹1,000 crore when it was a part of J&K.

“The Kashmir-Zojila, which used to remain

closed for 127 days, remained closed for just 19 days this year. The Kargil-Zanskar road, which would remain closed for 175 days, was closed for just 11 days. The work on Zojila Tunnel is on and the Shinkula Tunnel has already started,” said Mr. Shah.

Earlier in the day, he addressed the first international exposition of the sacred relics of Lord Buddha in Leh.

“In a way, the significance of today’s Buddha Purnima has increased greatly. After 75 years, these sacred relics have arrived in Ladakh. When these relics came here 75 years ago, very few people were able to have their sacred viewing, experience their spiritual energy, or receive the message of Lord Buddha,” he said. “It was through Ladakh and adjoining routes that the teachings of Tathagata Buddha, which originated in India, spread to China and several other countries. The Silk Route linking Kashmir, Leh, Yarkand, Khotan and Tibet became a channel not only for trade but also for ideas, monks, manuscripts and artistic traditions.”

Congress questions govt. ‘silence’ on Ladakh’s demands

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday criticised Union Home Minister Amit Shah for remaining “silent” on key political demands of the people of Ladakh during his ongoing visit, even as he participated in events linked to the display of sacred Buddhist relics.

In a post on social media, Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh said the Home Minister appeared to be “basking in the glory of the Piprahwa relics” while sidestepping pressing issues such as Statehood.

“The HM is in Ladakh today basking in the glory of the Piprahwa relics, while remaining silent on the demands of the people there for statehood, Sixth Schedule status, and protection of land and employment. He will be unaware of previous such displays in Ladakh,” Mr. Ramesh said in a post on X.

The Congress, however, sharpened its attack by contrasting the visit with what it described as the Centre’s continued reluctance to engage with long-standing local demands.

Recalling history, Mr.

It has asked whether the Centre is willing to grant full Statehood to the Union Territory

Ramesh invoked Jawaharlal Nehru’s engagement with Ladakh in the early years after Independence. He noted that sacred relics of the Buddha’s disciples – Sariputta and Maha Moggallana – were brought back to India in 1949 from the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and later taken to Ladakh following a request by Kushok Bakula Rinpoche during Nehru’s visit to the region.

According to him, the relics were taken across Ladakh for several weeks in 1950 before being enshrined at multiple locations, underscoring what he suggested was a more responsive political engagement with the region in the past. The Congress has, in the recent days, repeatedly flagged the Centre’s “silence” on Ladakh’s political aspirations. It has demanded clarity on whether the Centre is willing to grant full Statehood to the Union Territory and extend Sixth Schedule protections.

‘India’s commitment to normalise ties with Bangladesh intact’

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

A day after Bangladesh’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) summoned the Indian envoy over remarks by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, officials distanced themselves from Mr. Sarma’s observations saying those were “individual opinions”.

Stakeholders aware of the formal direction of India’s neighbourhood policy said India’s commitment to normalise ties with Bangladesh will not be affected by remarks from individual commentators who may have differing opinions.

The *Hindu* was told that stakeholders at multiple levels, especially at the level of States, may look at India’s neighbourhood from their point of view. However, that cannot be interpreted as a reflection of Delhi’s current position

which remains focused on re-tracking ties with Dhaka after the turbulence that followed the toppling of the Sheikh Hasina government in 2024.

Mr. Sarma had earlier revealed an aggressive policy of the Assam government on preventing ‘infiltration’ from Bangladesh into the State. He said that the Border Security Force “pushes” infiltrators back into Bangladesh through border areas that are not manned by Bangladesh. He explained that it was not possible to process such a “push-in” policy through the Centre and that is why his government has been following this tactic. The remarks by Mr. Sarma drew a tough response from Dhaka with the MoFA terming them “disparaging”. On Thursday, India’s Deputy High Commissioner Pawan Badhe met chief of MoFA’s South Asia wing Israt Jahan.

First dialogue under new Manipur govt. held with Kuki-Zo insurgent groups

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Amid fresh unrest in Manipur, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the State government on Friday resumed talks with Kuki-Zo insurgent groups who are in a suspension of operations (SoO) pact with the government.

The dialogue, which resumed after a gap of two months, is significant as it was also attended by Manipur government officials – the first such meeting after an elected government under Chief Minister Y. Khemchand Singh was restored in Manipur on February 4.

The Biren Singh government had refused to extend the SoO pact when it came up for an annual renewal on February 9, 2024. The pact was signed with “re-negotiated terms and conditions or ground

Both sides agree on need to relocate some SoO camps to reduce friction with local populations

rules” on September 4, 2025 when the State was under President’s Rule, days ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s first visit on September 13 since ethnic violence between the Kuki-Zo and Meitei people erupted in the State on May 3, 2023.

The tripartite pact was first signed in 2008 by the United Peoples’ Front (UPF) and the Kuki National Organisation (KNO), an umbrella of 24 insurgent groups.

The meeting held in Delhi was led by Ajit Lal, Adviser, North East, MHA and attended by Intelligence Bureau (IB) officials, Mani-

pur Home Secretary N. Ashok Kumar and Additional Director General of Police Ashutosh Kumar Sinha.

A joint statement by the KNO and the UPF said that the day-long discussions focused on operational and security-related issues and “both sides broadly agreed on the need to relocate certain SoO camps to reduce friction with local populations and improve security”.

The government has asked the SoO groups to relocate seven of the 14 camps. Kuki-Zo groups said they have decided to consolidate their camps to 12. Kuki-Zo groups said they drew the attention of MHA officials to the unrest in Ukhrul district, claiming that the Kuki people continue to live under constant fear of attacks, allegedly by Tangkhul armed groups.

Allahabad HC junks plea for sedition case against Rahul

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

Stating that criticism of government action or policies is not only permitted but is essential in a parliamentary democracy, the Allahabad High Court on Friday rejected a petition seeking the registration of a sedition case against the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, over his alleged remark that he was engaged in a “fight against the Indian state”.

The single-judge Bench of Justice Vikram D. Chauhan upheld a lower court’s order that declined a plea for registration of a criminal case against Mr. Gandhi.

The issue stems from a speech delivered by Mr. Gandhi on January 15, 2025, at the inauguration of the Congress party’s new headquarters where he alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Rashtriya Swamsevak Sangh (RSS) had taken control of key institutions, including the judiciary and the media. He added that he was in a fight against the two organisations along with ‘Indian state’.

The petitioner, Simran Gupta, a member of a right-wing organisation, approached the High Court challenging the Sambhal court order that had refused to register an FIR against Mr. Gandhi.

The petitioner told the court that his statements would trigger instability, rebellion, and discontent in society and were against the basic spirit of the Constitution.

The court said the ‘offending’ speech is alleged to have been made in January 2025. Even after a year, it had not been shown before the court that the aforesaid speech had resulted in any of the mischief covered by Section 152 [covering acts endangering sovereignty of India] of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, the court said.

AAP govt. wins confidence motion in Punjab Assembly

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

The ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Punjab sailed through the confidence motion in the State Assembly moved by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann during a one-day special session on Friday.

Before the passage of the motion, Mr. Mann said the party was “united”, but it was moved to counter “false rumours and news”. He asserted that the confidence motion should be passed unanimously in the State Assembly. “In today’s national politics, the Aam Aadmi Party has established its position in such a way that candidates – from councillors to the Chief Minister, and Mayors in cities – have



Bhagwant Mann

been winning,” he said.

Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema, who seconded the motion, slammed the BJP-led Centre over the issue of defection of AAP’s seven Rajya Sabha MPs.

The ruling party had earlier issued a whip to all legislators to attend the one-day session.

In the 117-member Punjab Assembly, AAP enjoys an overwhelming majority

with 94 MLAs, while 16 belong to the Congress, one BSP, three Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), two BJP and one Independent.

When Mr. Mann moved the confidence motion, no one from the Opposition camp was present in the House, barring lone Independent MLA Rana Indrapratap Singh, with the Congress having staged a walkout and the BJP boycotting the session.

SAD MLAs and the lone BSP legislator were also not present. The ruling party’s move came amid chaotic scenes in the State Assembly with Opposition parties levelling allegations against CM, claiming he appeared intoxicated during the Vidhan Sabha proceedings.

(With PTI inputs)

HC bars RTI disclosure of husband’s income amid matrimonial row

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has ruled that a man’s net taxable income details cannot be disclosed to his estranged wife under the RTI Act, holding that income tax returns are personal information exempt from disclosure.

Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav passed the order on April 28 while hearing a petition filed by a man challenging the July 22, 2021 decision of the Central Information Commission ordering disclosure of details of his net taxable income for the financial year 2007-08 and onwards.

The case stemmed from

an ongoing matrimonial dispute, with the wife seeking maintenance and arguing that she had a legitimate interest in knowing her husband’s income details to pursue her claim.

The husband contended that the information sought was personal and exempt from disclosure under the RTI Act, which bars release of personal information unrelated to public interest, or that would cause an unwarranted invasion of privacy.

The court ruled that the information directed to be disclosed, by way of the CIC order, does not fall under the exception of “larger public interest”. It said the RTI Act was enacted to promote transparency.

U.P. caterers' body opposes commercial LPG price hike

Press Trust of India
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Tent Caterers and Decorators Welfare Association on Friday expressed protest against the steep increase in the prices of commercial LPG cylinders, saying it would burden traders and the general public alike.

Association president Vijay Kumar said the hike comes at a time when catering contracts for weddings in May have already been finalised at earlier rates due to the ongoing wedding season, forcing caterers to absorb the increased cost.

"Earlier, the cylinder cost around ₹1,850. When supply was disrupted and later resumed, it rose to ₹2,200. Now it has been increased to ₹3,200," Mr. Kumar said, adding that such a sudden hike would burden both common people and traders. "This gives the impression that traders are being pushed to express resentment against the government. Its impact may also be seen in the 2027 Assembly election," he added.

The association has demanded that the government roll back the revised rates.

Cong. slams govt. on hike in commercial LPG price

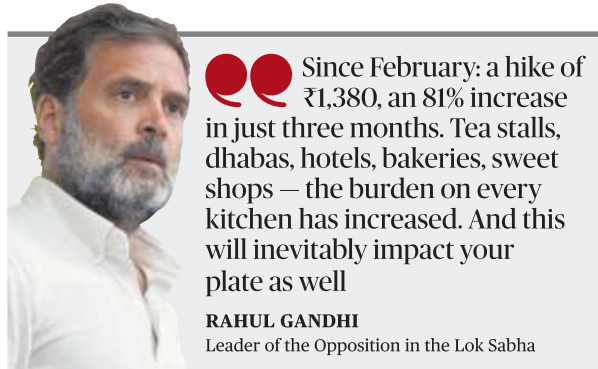
Rahul Gandhi calls the latest increase 'bill for elections'; K.C. Venugopal says hike will affect 'crores of Indians who rely on small eateries'; Kharge hits out at Modi govt. on International Labour Day

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday slammed the Narendra Modi government over the latest price hike for commercial LPG cylinders, with Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi calling it the "bill for elections".

Attacking the steep increase in commercial LPG prices, Mr. Gandhi said the hike – the largest ever in a single day – was proof that the burden of inflation would intensify after elections. "Today, commercial gas cylinders have become ₹993 more expensive. This marks the single largest hike in a single day. This is an election bill," Mr. Gandhi said in a post on X, warning that petrol and diesel prices could be next.

He noted that commercial LPG prices had risen sharply in recent months. "Since February: a hike of ₹1,380, an 81% increase in just three months. Tea stalls, dhabas, hotels, bakeries, sweet shops – the burden on every kitchen has increased. And this will



Since February: a hike of ₹1,380, an 81% increase in just three months. Tea stalls, dhabas, hotels, bakeries, sweet shops – the burden on every kitchen has increased. And this will inevitably impact your plate as well

RAHUL GANDHI
Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha

inevitably impact your plate as well," the Opposition leader added.

The price of a 19-kg commercial LPG cylinder – used by hotels and restaurants – was raised by ₹993 to ₹3,071.5 (in Delhi). Rates had earlier been hiked by ₹195.5 on April 1 and ₹114.5 on March 1.

'Election over'

Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal said the timing of the hike showed the government's "disregard" for ordinary citizens. "Just as the election cycle concluded, the Modi government wasted no time to increase prices of LPG cylinders. A whopping increase of nearly ₹1,000 on commercial cylinders will

affect crores of Indians who rely on food from small eateries for sustenance. Similarly, crores of small food businesses will have to bear the burden of this hike," Mr. Venugopal said.

Mr. Gandhi had earlier alleged that the government had "profiteered" when global crude prices were low and would now shift the burden to the public as prices rise.

Anti-labour policies

Meanwhile, on International Labour Day, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge accused the government of pursuing policies detrimental to workers and demanded a review of the new labour

codes. "Driven by the 'Hum Do, Hamare Do' policy, the Modi government implemented an anti-worker Labour Code. As a result, unrest has erupted everywhere – be it in Noida, at the IOCL facility in Panipat, Adani's factory in Raikhedra, NTPC Patratu, or the Samsung factory in Sriperumbudur," the Congress chief posted on X.

He alleged that the new labour framework promoted "contractualisation" and "hire and fire" practices while weakening job security. The Congress chief also called for reviving the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and introducing a national minimum wage of ₹400 per day.

Claiming that wages had stagnated and unemployment had risen, Mr. Kharge said nearly 69% of workers earned below the statutory minimum wage and the government had failed to fill about 30 lakh vacancies. He also reiterated demands for universal health coverage for workers and insurance for those in the unorganised sector.

Govt. absorbed global oil shock, didn't pass it on to consumers: Hardeep Puri

Abhinav Deshpande
AHMEDABAD

Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Friday that India had maintained stable energy supplies and shielded consumers from global price shocks despite a prolonged disruption caused by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz amid the West Asia crisis.

Mr. Puri said the country had remained resilient even after 60 days of supply disruption, attributing the stability to long-term planning and timely policy interventions by the BJP government.

"The government absorbed the global shock at the fiscal level instead of passing it on to consumers," Mr. Puri said, adding that India ensured uninterrupted availability of crude oil, LNG, LPG, petrol, diesel and aviation fuel through continuous monitoring since the crisis began.

He noted that disruptions of 20%-30% in global supply chains typically forced countries into difficult trade-offs, including higher freight and insurance costs. "No country



Hardeep Singh Puri

can remain insulated from such shocks," he said.

Mr. Puri, who was speaking at the third Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference (VGRC) in Surat, said fuel prices rose significantly across major economies between February 28, when the strait's closure began, and April 23. Diesel prices in the U.S. surged by as much as 58%, while neighbouring regions saw increases exceeding 40%.

"In India, there has been zero increase at the retail pump during this period," he said.

Mr. Puri dismissed allegations that fuel price stability was linked to recent State elections, stating that prices had remained steady over the past four years. "If the time comes, the go-

vernment will take necessary decisions, but the commitment to consumers remains paramount," he said.

The Minister said India activated contingency measures developed over the past decade to respond to such crises. As part of its strategy, the country expanded its crude sourcing base from 27 to 41 countries and diversified LPG imports to include suppliers such as the U.S., Norway, and Algeria.

Domestic LPG production was increased by 60%, while industrial consumption was optimised by shifting users from LPG to piped natural gas, ensuring uninterrupted supply for households, he said. Overall daily LPG consumption was reduced through this strategy.

Mr. Puri said a coordinated national response under Operation Urja Suraksha brought together oil marketing companies, Union Ministries, State governments, and global suppliers. Measures included absorption of under-recoveries by oil companies, excise duty adjustments, and export levies to stabilise domestic markets.

'Missing Link' inaugurated on Mumbai-Pune highway

Snehal Mutha
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government on Friday inaugurated the much-anticipated "Missing Link" project of the Mumbai-Pune Expressway, aiming to cut travel time and bypass the risky ghat section near Lonavala in Maval district.

However, the launch time also coincided with commuters getting stuck in heavy traffic for nearly three hours on the Bhor ghat.

Calling it a world-class example of Indian engineering excellence, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said, "Along with saving time, it will also act as an economic multiplier, accelerating the State's economy by ₹70,000 crore."

"It should be called 'Connecting Link' instead of 'Missing Link'. Despite obstacles during the COVID-19 pandemic, the



The Mumbai-Pune Expressway 'Missing Link' project is seen on the day of its inauguration, in Mumbai, Maharashtra on Friday. PTI

₹7,181 crore project is now completed," he added.

Mr. Fadnavis apologised to the public for the traffic caused during inauguration of the project. NCP (SP) leader Supriya Sule was among those stuck in the traffic in the morning.

The cable-stayed bridge comprises Asia's broadest tunnel and the project has been included in the Guinness Book of World Records. The project cuts away the difficult ghat terrain road and the bridge

passes from under Lonavala lake.

The distance between the two cities will be reduced by 13.3 km after the opening of the link.

According to Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) officials, the road will ease congestion at Khandala Ghat saving commuters around 25 to 30 minutes of travel time.

The foundation stone was laid in 2019, as per the MSRDC officials.

Strongrooms under strict watch, says Bengal CEO; repoll in 15 booths today

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

A day after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee spent hours at an EVM strongroom in the Bhabanipur constituency alleging malpractices, State Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Manoj Agarwal on Friday said there was no scope for wrongdoing at the counting centres.

"There is CCTV surveillance round the clock and people can monitor the counting centres from outside," Mr. Agarwal said.

The CEO visited several counting centres and took stock of the security arrangements. "Only making allegations is not enough, there has to be some ground, reason and evidence of the allegations made," the CEO said, alluding to Ms. Banerjee's remarks.

The Election Commission has assured parties of



Officials look at the CCTV camera footage of different Assembly constituencies ahead of counting in Bankura on Friday. ANI

a triple-layer security at all counting centres with specialised patrols in vulnerable zones. Only authorised personnel with QR-coded IDs are permitted entry in the counting venue.

On Thursday, there were dramatic developments outside two counting centres in Kolkata, where the Trinamool Congress alleged attempts to tamper with the EVMs and postal ballots.

Ms. Banerjee landed at the Sakhawat Memorial School counting centre where the EVMs of Bhabanipur constituency are stored, and stayed there for about four hours. She came out of the premises past midnight, claimed that there were attempts at EVM tampering, and urged her party leaders and supporters to keep a vigil outside the counting centres.

There was also a gathering outside Khudiram Anushilan Kendra on Thursday, a counting centre in Kolkata where Trinamool candidates Shashi Panja and Kunal Ghosh held a sit-in. The supporters of the Trinamool and the BJP came face-to-face outside the counting centre.

On Friday, the Leader of Opposition and BJP candidate from Bhabanipur, Suvendu Adhikari, visited the counting centre at the Sakhawat Memorial School.

Ms. Banerjee landed at the Sakhawat Memorial School counting centre where the EVMs of Bhabanipur constituency are stored, and stayed there for about four hours. She came out of the premises past midnight, claimed that there were attempts at EVM tampering, and urged her party leaders and supporters to keep a vigil outside the counting centres.

There was also a gathering outside Khudiram Anushilan Kendra on Thursday, a counting centre in Kolkata where Trinamool candidates Shashi Panja and Kunal Ghosh held a sit-in. The supporters of the Trinamool and the BJP came face-to-face outside the counting centre.

On Friday, the Leader of Opposition and BJP candidate from Bhabanipur, Suvendu Adhikari, visited the counting centre at the Sakhawat Memorial School.

Repoll ordered

The EC on Friday ordered repolling in 15 polling stations in two Assembly constituencies, Magrahat Paschim and Diamond Harbour, in South 24 Parganas district on May 2.

There have been allegations of electoral malpractices at several booths in the Falta constituency. The EC is yet to decide on the repolling at Falta.

LNG ship from India sailing near Hormuz drops anchor

M. Kalyanaraman
CHENNAI

Umm Al Ashtan, the LNG carrier that had set sail from Dahej, Gujarat, to the Persian Gulf for loading, has dropped anchor at Khor Fakkan, just downstream of the Strait of Hormuz, as per marinetraffic.com.

The ship would have been among the first to cross the Strait of Hormuz from the Gulf of Oman to load cargo if it had made the scheduled transit on Friday.

Umm Al Ashtan had stayed close to Oman during its transit unlike typical Iran-approved transits that hug the Iranian coast. The scheduled passage of the ship had given hope of normalcy returning.

Idemitsu Maru, the supertanker bound for Nagoya, Japan, had hugged the Iranian coast.

Govt. empowered ED to fight financial crimes; not to target anyone: Minister

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary on Friday said that under the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has been vested with the powers necessary to effectively combat financial crimes and terror funding, not to target anyone.

"There exists an ecosystem in the country that finds problems in every solution and criticises every action. Ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed office in 2014 and started taking tough decisions in the national interest, this ecosystem has been unsettled. Such critics often claim that excessive powers have been gi-



MoS Finance Pankaj Chaudhary, right, with ED Director Rahul Navin at the Enforcement Day celebration in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

ven to the Enforcement Directorate, but they only present half the truth," said Mr. Chaudhary at the 70th Enforcement Day event.

Crimes on the rise

"The complete truth is that these powers have been granted to the ED to com-

bat financial crimes, not to target anyone. These powers became necessary because money laundering, 'hawala' transactions, 'benami' properties, corporate frauds, and terror financing were on the rise. Black money was being diverted abroad, banking scams were increasing,

and the common citizen's money was being misappropriated," he said.

"Such offences are no less than cancer for the country, and they cannot be curbed through mild measures. Therefore, the ED has been strengthened to effectively tackle these threats," Mr. Chaudhary said, while lauding the agency for its achievements, including the attachments worth ₹2.36 lakh crore since 2005.

Under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act (FEOA), criminals have so far been deprived of properties worth ₹65,872.72 crore till March 31, 2026, of which assets valued at ₹63,142 crore were restored to rightful claimants till now.

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Welcoming the Supreme Court order that granted anticipatory bail to party spokesperson Pawan Khera in a defamation case filed by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife, the Congress on Friday termed it a "victory of the Constitution" and said the ruling reaffirmed that the law stands above all.

Addressing a press conference with Congress communications chief Jairam Ramesh, senior leader and Rajya Sabha member Abhishek Manu Singhvi said the verdict underscored that courts remain the "ultimate bedrock of hope" when personal liberty is at stake.

Mr. Singhvi, who argued the case in the Supreme



Congress leaders Abhishek Manu Singhvi and Jairam Ramesh at a press conference at AICC office on Friday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Court, urged the Assam Chief Minister to reflect on his "deeply inappropriate" remarks against Mr. Khera, noting that portions of these had been cited by the court, and called on him to express regret.

The Supreme Court had granted pre-arrest bail to Mr. Khera in connection

with allegations he had made regarding the Assam Chief Minister's wife, observing that the dispute appeared to stem from political rivalry.

Constitution on top

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the ruling demonstrated that

"constitutional values have prevailed", alleging that the Constitution was under "continuous attack" under the BJP-led government.

Mr. Singhvi argued that in cases involving reputational damage, arrest should be a "last resort", alleging that the intent behind seeking Mr. Khera's arrest was to "humiliate and harass" him. He pointed out that most of the charges invoked were bailable. "In any democracy, space must be preserved for political dissent. Without that, the fundamental right to free speech is at serious risk," he said.

Hitting back in a post on X, Mr. Sarma said that the issue was not about politics but about the "character assassination of a woman on national television using forged documents".

IN BRIEF



Sixth Nilgiri-class frigate joins fleet, boosting naval power

The Indian Navy on Thursday, took delivery of *Mahendragiri* (Yard 12654), the sixth ship of the Nilgiri-class (Project 17A) and the fourth constructed by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited in Mumbai. According to Indian Navy, the delivery marks a major milestone in India's push for self-reliance in warship design and construction. Project 17A frigates are advanced multi-mission platforms built to tackle evolving maritime challenges. Designed by the Warship Design Bureau, the ships represent a significant leap in stealth, firepower, automation, and survivability, reinforcing India's indigenous defence capabilities, it further added.

Flight aborts take-off after monkeys spotted on runway

An IndiGo flight bound for Raipur aborted its take-off at Lucknow airport after a group of monkeys was spotted crossing the runway, airport officials said on Friday. Flight 6E 6521 with around 150 passengers aboard had begun its take-off roll and was about 20%-30% down the runway around 9 a.m. on Thursday when the pilots noticed monkeys moving across. The pilots immediately aborted the take-off and informed air traffic control, following which the aircraft returned and departed about an hour later, after refuelling. Following the incident, the airport's wildlife management team acted as per standard operating procedures and cleared the runway.

Jabalpur boat capsized toll rises to 9; survivors allege negligence by crew

Survivor says they were not provided with life vests until water started entering the cruise boat; operator paid no heed to passengers' cry to take vessel ashore, instead he took it towards the middle of the dam, she says; M.P. govt. orders probe

Mehul Malpani
BHOPAL

Five more bodies were recovered on Friday from the Bargi Dam in Jabalpur district of Madhya Pradesh, where a cruise boat capsized the previous evening. Rescuers faced a difficult moment when they found the body of a mother clutching her four-year-old son under her life jacket.

The death toll has now reached nine, while four people, including three children, remain missing.

A diver of the Indian Army's 411 Parachute Field Company who recovered the bodies of Marina Messi and her son Trishaan, residents of Delhi, said, "It was very difficult to pull her out as she was holding her son. They were stuck behind a small window [in the vessel] and it proved tough to bring them out together because the mother's grip on the child was unyielding."

Ms. Marina's husband, Pradeep Messi, and their daughter survived the incident.

The tragedy unfolded on Thursday evening when a cruise boat of the Mad-



Officials recover the cruise boat, which overturned in the Bargi Dam due to a sudden storm, from the Narmada river in Jabalpur. ANI

hya Pradesh Tourism Department ran into a storm on its way back to the shore and overturned in the reservoir on the Narmada river. The boat was carrying 39 tourists and two crew members.

28 people rescued

According to officials, some of the 28 survivors, including the crew members, were rescued shortly after the tragedy by workers of a private construction company nearby; personnel of the NDRF, SDRF, local police, and home guards took over later.

Special rescue and diving teams of the Indian Army from Hyderabad and Agra also joined the efforts on Friday morning with authorities deploying heavy equipment, including excavators to look for people who might have been trapped under the vessel.

Jabalpur Deputy Inspector-General of Police Atul Singh told *The Hindu* that the 18-tonne cruise vessel was stuck about 20-25 feet under water and divers were unable to reach some parts of the boat.

"After the Army divers recovered five bodies in the morning, some people were still missing so we de-

cid to pull the vessel out of the water. The whole task took about seven hours," Mr. Singh said, adding, however, that no more bodies or survivors were found in the boat.

Several witnesses and survivors recounted the horrors of the tragedy. They alleged lack of safety protocols, and negligence on part of the crew. They said they were not provided with life vests until water started entering the boat.

Ms. Marina's teenage daughter said, "All of a sudden, we were beset by strong winds and waves. People began screaming in terror and asked the pilot to take the vessel ashore, but he would not listen and took it further towards the middle of the dam. Then water began gushing into the cruise boat and it overturned."

"Nobody was providing life jackets, so my father and another person broke a locker and got the jackets. Since, the boat overturned suddenly and there was no time, my mother covered my brother with her jacket. We found them the same way," she said, adding that the crew did

not help anyone. The State government has announced financial assistance for the victim families and the injured.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav visited Jabalpur on Friday evening to supervise the rescue efforts. Mr. Yadav said a high-level committee had been formed to conduct a probe.

He said that the services of cruise pilot Mahesh Patel, helper Chhotel Gond, and ticket counter in-charge Brijendra had been terminated with immediate effect due to negligence in the incident. "Sunil Maravi, manager of Hotel Maikal Resort and Boat Club Bargi, has been suspended for negligence in the discharge of his duties. Regional Manager Sanjay Malhotra has been attached to the headquarters, and a departmental inquiry has been initiated against him," Mr. Yadav said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the tragedy and announced an ex gratia of ₹2 lakh from the PM National Relief Fund (PMNRF) for the next of kin of the deceased and ₹50,000 for the injured.

Changes to Citizenship Rules notified by Centre

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry on Thursday notified changes to the Citizenship Rules, 2009, introducing a digital shift across various processes for Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders and citizenship applications.

In a gazette notification published on Thursday, the government has added a specific proviso for citizenship applicants that "the minor child cannot at any time hold the passport of any other country while also holding the Indian passport".

The Citizenship Rules, 2009, allowed a person to submit an application for the registration of the birth of his minor child born outside India to the Indian consulate in the country where the child was born, together with a declaration that the child does not hold a passport of any other country.

The changes, known as the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2026, introduce a slew of online initiatives for OCI cardholders, including a digital application and renunciation process through an official portal, <https://ociservices.gov.in>.

'48% of NSE firms have no women as key managers'

A. M. Igeesh
NEW DELHI

Almost half of the 2,647 companies listed on the National Stock Exchange do not have any women in key managerial positions at all, according to an analysis of company submissions.

On average, there were 0.64 women in these positions per company in 2024-25, with only 10% of firms listed on the NSE employing more than one woman in such leadership positions.

Formal workforce

The study, conducted by the Udaiti Foundation, a non-profit organisation, found that women's representation in the formal workforce remained at 18%, a decrease of one percentile point compared to 2020-21. The situation is even worse among formal workers earning more

than ₹18,000 per month – while women made up 21% of this group in 2020-21, their share had shrunk to just 12% in 2024-25. In contrast, the representation of women among lower-paid employees, as defined by the Code on Wages, rose from 19% to 23% over the same period, indicating that women are being shut out of higher-paying jobs in the formal sector, and shunted to lower-wage positions.

The largest employment provider for women in the formal sector are hospitals and lab services, where women make up 48% of the workforce, followed by textiles (37%), consumer services (34%), and information technology (34%). In banks and fast-moving consumer goods firms, women account for 26% and 21% of employees respectively. Women make up only 2% of employees in the construction sector, ac-

ording to the Close the Gender Gap (CGG) data, collected by the Foundation.

Udaiti Foundation chief executive officer Pooja Sharma Goyal said the latest periodic labour force survey data (PLFS 2025) reiterates the fact that even when women secure regular wage jobs, the "quality" of that work often fails the test of true formalisation. "Women represent only 24% of regular wage employees. A staggering 57% of women in regular wage jobs have no written job contract and they earn ₹5,664 less than men in a month (₹18,353 vs ₹24,217). The new Labour Codes have clear provisions for pay parity and non-discriminatory hiring. But as the rules are finalised, it is critical that clear ground-level mechanisms are built in to translate these provisions into practice," Ms. Goyal said.

India to tap augmented solar capacity, coal to weather El Nino, summer power demand

Saptaparno Ghosh
Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

Amidst expectations of further increase in energy demand with peak summers approaching and an El Nino in sight, India could be looking at meeting its increased power requirements from the traditional coal-powered thermal plants and augmented solar plants.

In fact, when the country scaled its peak demand of 256.1 gigawatts on April 25, thermal plants nearly retained its dominant position accounting for 66.9% of the generation, while solar augmented its position to account for 21.5% of the power generated.

The augmented solar capacity and traditional thermal plants are of pivotal importance in the dual paradigm of peak summers and El Nino effects.

Renewable growth

Solar contribution reaches new highs amid rising peak demand

Date	Peak demand during the day (GW)	Solar generation* (contribution to total daily generation in %)	Wind generation* (contribution to total daily generation in %)	Total generation*
30-05-2024	250	421 (7%)	437 (7.4%)	5,887
09-01-2026	245	488 (9.4%)	274 (5%)	5,168
24-04-2026	252	665 (11%)	199 (3%)	6,014
25-04-2026	256	657 (10.8%)	156 (2.5%)	6,102

Although, speaking to *The Hindu*, highly placed government officials said the country was in a stable position with adequate supplies of coal to meet a potential increase in power demand.

While the historical data assessing contribution of each of the power sources could not be traced, for context, an average contribution of each of the sources through the day indicates solar energy accounted for about 8.9% of power generated on the

day of peak power demand in 2025, 7.3% in 2024, about 6% in 2023 and 5.63% in 2022. Though solar power makes up about 30% of India's installed power capacity at present, it cannot be fully utilised due to limited battery storage. In fact, solar power is frequently curtailed to keep the grid stable.

Manoj Kumar, India Analyst at the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) says: "With stronger transmission networks, more flexi-

ble grid operations, and faster battery deployment, a larger share of evening and night-time demand can also be met through non-fossil sources."

Essential to note here that India added a record 44.61 gigawatts of solar capacity in the fiscal year 2025-26, which was more than the double it had added in the preceding fiscal.

Hotter months ahead

On Friday, the India Meteorological Department said El Nino conditions –

which usually translate to weak monsoon rains and therefore longer dry spells – are likely to prevail during most of the monsoon months from June to September. Temperatures in May, broadly, would be less searing with more rain than what is usual for May expected over most parts except eastern India. Gujarat, Maharashtra, coastal Odisha, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh and Himalayan foothills are likely to see more than its usual share of 'heatwave' days.

Ample coal stocks

India has approximately 200 million tonnes of coal stocks as on date, thus, with approximately 2.3-2.4 million tonnes being utilised daily by thermal plants, the stocks would suffice for more than 83 days, a highly placed government official told *The Hindu*.

THE CROSSWORD+ 14783 Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at <https://thehindu.com/crosswords>

(set by Incognito)

Across

- 8 A student leaves Salem, India in a type of truck (4)
- 9 Thai travels around one Caribbean country (5)
- 10 Lake that is next to latter part of river (4)
- 11 9 flying around model island (6)
- 12 Serpent from broken down tipper encircles 6 (3,5)
- 13 Direct, "Nothing to be added to drink" (8)

Down

- 15 Confused, Greta follows team leader's goal (6)
- 17 State: "Mona hugs Brown" (7)
- 19 Facial expression from stern and highly successful fighter pilot (7)
- 22 Rose climbed (4,2)
- 24 On secret agents having temperature in breaks (8)
- 26 Indian make up? (3,5)
- 28 Adds, "Kid is no longer asleep" (4,2)
- 30 Arabic leader's French friend is at end of pier (4)
- 31 Ship some tailoring material (5)
- 32 Stagger in short video (4)
- 1 Wrongly gave a star (4)
- 2 Watchful soldier initially living wildly after losing bearing (8)
- 3 Drawing back, throw gin cocktail (6)
- 4 Argument from princess? Terribly upset! (7)
- 5 Perhaps what Hitler's steno called him? (8)
- 6 Spanish gentleman hugging setter is an old person (6)
- 7 Take on rent in Sitamarhi region (4)
- 14 Them having a type of shirt and hosiery item (5)
- 16 Dash, perhaps, in front of church with English host of a ceremony (5)
- 18 I stun pal dancing for weddings (8)
- 20 Wetness from our items going bad (8)
- 21 Act before nurse (7)
- 23 Animals from Paris roundabout appearing after tea, I hear (6)
- 25 God took seat on pot (6)
- 27 Top class manuscript ends (4)
- 29 Consumed and sued wrongly (4)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

G	O	N	A	L	O	F	I	N	A	M	O	G
A	T	I	C	A	R	R	A	T	E			
W	A	G	I	C	A	T	R	W	C	R	H	V
A	E	R	R	A	T	I	F	H	S			
G	A	R	D	E	N	I	N	G	A	T	O	N
I	T	I	N	A	R	N	S					
N	I	A	G	A	R	A	T	R	I	C	O	N
G	N	W			C	A	T	E	K	R		
G	N	W			C	A	T	E	K	R		
P	A	T	E	R	N	E	L	A	E	D		
S	T	E	R	Z	E	L	A	C	H	M	A	T
P	R	S	T	E	S	A	G	E	T			
E	M	A	R	R	O	S	S	A	L	I	B	A
C	E	T	M	T	E	S	A	L	I	B	A	
T	O	R	S	E	A	R	C	H	L	I	G	H

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Variyar's lessons of life

Sri Vadharan Ayya shared spiritual insights and meaningful anecdotes about renowned scholar Sri Kripananda Variyar. Variyar Swami often advised people not to focus on writing new books. Instead, he emphasised the importance of preserving and studying the great works that already exist, such as *Thirukkural*, *Thiruvasagam*, *Thevaram*, and *Divya Prabandham*.

He also expressed a strong desire that children read traditional moral texts such as *Aathichudi* and *Neethi Neri Venba*, which instil essential values and discipline.

Variyar Swami laid down simple yet powerful principles for effective communication: speak with sweetness, speak the truth, speak in moderation, and speak in context. These guidelines help build meaningful and respectful relationships.

In his *Manimozhigal*, Variyar Swami shared traditional insights on health. Exposure to the gentle evening sun is believed to promote longevity, while harsh midday sun may reduce it. The sacred smoke from a *homa* (ritual fire) can contribute to well-being and a longer life, he said.

Another important teaching highlights the hierarchy of guidance: "*Mata, Pita, Guru, Deivam*" – mother, father, teacher, and the God. The mother introduces the child to the world, the father guides the child to the guru, and the guru ultimately leads one to God.

Variyar Swami often mentioned a teaching from the *Mahabharata*, where Bhima speaks about four important virtues: Treat all other women as one would treat one's mother, consider others' property as poison, refrain from backbiting, and feel the suffering of others as one's own.

IN BRIEF



Noida airport to start flights on June 15 after CEO change

Noida International Airport will commence commercial flight operations from June 15 after appointing an Indian CEO, following the security regulator's refusal to grant clearance to its previous Swiss chief, which had delayed the airport's launch. The airport said the start date follows the 'receipt of approval for its Aerodrome Security Programme (ASP) from the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), certifying that its security framework, systems and operating procedures meet regulatory requirements for commercial operations,' according to a press statement. Last week, the airport appointed its chief financial officer, Nitu Samra, as interim CEO after the BCAS denied security clearance to Christoph Schnellmann, a Swiss national who was earlier heading the project.

'Govt. to sustain capex push despite fiscal stress on war'

The government will proceed with the planned ₹12.22 lakh crore capital expenditure in the current fiscal to maintain the growth momentum despite the fiscal stress arising from the ongoing West Asia conflict, a senior official said on Friday. Expenditure Secretary V. Vaidyanathan said the upcoming few quarters and the coming year would possibly have a "lot of stress points". Tax buoyancy could be impacted by a cut in excise duties on petrol and diesel brought about in late March. "The fiscal stress is indeed very much a reality, but at the same time... the capex would really be a priority item, which we would like to preserve and ensure that it continues at the budgeted level," Mr. Vaidyanathan said at the ICPP Growth Conference here. He said highways, railways, shipping, ports and urban development sectors would be the focus areas for FY27 capex. India's fiscal prudence has put it on a good stead in these unpredictable times, he added. PTI

Auto firms' wholesales surge in April

Most automakers reported a double-digit growth and lower inventory, indicating sustained demand despite the West Asia conflict; Maruti Suzuki India Ltd., the country's biggest passenger car maker, sold 2,39,646 units, the highest-ever monthly sales volume, increasing 33% year-on-year

Lalendu Mishra
MUMBAI

Passenger car sales continued to gain momentum in April backed by the velocity created by the September cut in GST rates. Most automakers reported a double-digit growth and lower inventory, indicating sustained demand despite the West Asia conflict.

Maruti Suzuki India Ltd., the country's biggest passenger car maker, sold 2,39,646 units, the highest-ever monthly sales volume, up 33% year-on-year. Domestic sales touched an all-time high of 1,91,122



In fast lane: Maruti Suzuki Ertiga cars parked at the company's plant in Manesar, Haryana. REUTERS

units, up 35%. Backed by a reduction in the GST rate, sales of small cars, attracting 18% duty, skyrocketed. The firm's mini segment, com-

prising Alto and S-presso, reported sales of 16,066 units, up 154%.

The sales to other OEM slid 14% to 8,470 units from 9,827 units a year ago while

Maruti sales to other OEMs slid 14% to 8,470 units while exports stood at 40,054, up 44%

exports stood at 40,054, up 44%.

Tata sales rise 31%

Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd. reported domestic and international sales at 59,701 units, up 31%. This includes sales of Tata Passenger Electric Mobility Ltd., a subsidiary of Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd.

Mahindra & Mahindra

Ltd. (M&M) said the overall auto sales stood at 94,627 vehicles, up 14%.

In the Utility Vehicles segment, the firm sold 56,331 vehicles in the domestic market, a growth of 8% and overall, 57,833 vehicles, including exports. The domestic sales of commercial vehicles stood at 23,427 units, up 7%.

Hyundai Motor India Ltd. achieved monthly domestic sales of 51,902 units in April, up 17%. HML logged monthly export sales of 13,708 units.

Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) said it sold 32,086 units, reflecting a growth of 17% compared with

27,329 units sold in April 2025. This includes 30,159 units sold in the local market and 1,927 in exports.

Kia India for the month of April reported wholesale volumes of 27,286 units, marking a 16% year-on-year growth over 23,623 units sold in April 2025.

JSW MG Motor India registered a 3% YoY growth clocking 6,018 in wholesales during the month.

Nissan Motor India Pvt. Ltd. recorded 75% growth in sales at 5,388 units. The firm recorded total sales of 5,388 units, including 3,203 units in the domestic market and 2,185 units through exports.

Centre eyes new E-bus scheme

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

The Centre may roll out a fresh electric bus scheme for States after completing the tendering and allocation of all 14,000 buses under the PM E-DRIVE programme, a government official said.

Under the ₹10,900 crore PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-DRIVE) scheme, almost half the outlay—₹4,391 crore—is meant for the procurement of 14,028 electric buses.

"The Convergence

Energy Services Limited (CESL) has successfully tendered all 14,000 buses and allocated them (to States). States will receive them in the next 2-3 years. This is a huge push for electrification of public transportation," the official said, adding "we will ask States if they want more buses, and then we may think of providing more buses by either extending the current scheme or launching a new one."

The official said absorbing such a large fleet poses a huge challenge for operators in terms of depot capacity and route planning.

Review of pharma, medical devices' supply-chain resilience on cards

N. Ravi Kumar
HYDERABAD

India is undertaking an assessment of the industrial supply chain resilience and manufacturing capabilities of the pharmaceutical and medical devices sector.

It is a crucial exercise and the Supply Chain Division of the Department of Commerce is behind this, pharmaceutical exporters body Pharmexcil informed members, seeking inputs.

The information provided will play a crucial role in identifying critical supply chain dependencies and in

The assessment assumes significance in the backdrop of India's plans to boost local manufacturing

shaping policy steps to boost local domestic manufacturing in the pharmaceutical and medical devices sector, Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India Director General Raja Bhanu said.

Sector-specific inputs from industry experts and stakeholders is sought in Pharmexcil's question-

naire. Production capacity and utilisation; supply chain dependencies and disruptions; import vulnerabilities and logistics risks are some of them.

The respondents have been asked about key constraints impacting manufacturing competitiveness; challenges around staff availability, skills and productivity; costs, pricing pressures and global price fluctuations; regulatory issues and policy impacts.

Information on market conditions, competition, and domestic ecosystem gaps as well as the business

outlook, expansion plans and support needed from government, especially the factors that can help raise investment in local production and biggest challenges in manufacturing are other aspects on which Pharmexcil has sought inputs from its members.

The assessment assumes significance in the backdrop of India's plans to ramp up domestic manufacturing, through the PLI or the production-linked incentive scheme and reduce dependence on imports ever since the COVID-19 pandemic.

How prediction markets are making their way into top newsrooms



Risk laden: Gannon Ken Van Dyke 'used classified information' to win money on Polymarket. AP

NEWS ANALYSIS

Mohamed Yunuss
CHENNAI

Major news publishers such as CNBC, CNN, Fox News, have struck deals with prediction market platforms recently. While the platforms operate by betting on various topics, including sports, finance, science, and culture, the question of why they sign deals with news outlets looms large.

Deal goals unclear

The two largest prediction market platforms, Polymarket and Kalshi, say that their media partnerships are a boon for journalism. However, the deals' details and goals are unclear. "The world of finance depends on real-world outcomes, Kalshi predicts those outcomes," said Kalshi CEO Tarek Mansour after signing a deal with CNBC in December, 2025.

According to Bernstein Research, prediction markets are expected to grow up to \$1 trillion by 2030. U.S. President Donald Trump's Truth Social has also announced its own

prediction platform: Truth Predict, which is yet to be released publicly.

Sports gambling and sports news outlets have long co-existed even before the boom of major prediction market platforms.

Danny Funt, the author of Everybody Loses: The Tumultuous Rise of American Sports Gambling, told *The Hindu*, "In the U.S., many news outlets are fighting for survival, or at least facing difficult financial times. Under those circumstances, it is difficult to decline a potential new revenue stream, and these prediction market platforms certainly have a lot of money to spend."

He said that it's advantageous for these companies to be promoted on big news platforms. "These partnerships typically require news outlets to incorporate references to prediction markets in their coverage, which legitimises prediction markets and gives them more visibility."

"These partnerships will likely motivate journalists to go out of their way to reference prediction markets, even when it doesn't necessarily benefit their

coverage. Worse, it might silence journalists, who'd otherwise be inclined to cover negative aspects of it," he added.

Inherent risks

Apart from this, experts suggest that people who have access to confidential information may buy cheap shares in that outcome when market probability is low.

When the news officially breaks, the probability and share price skyrocket, allowing insiders to cash out for massive profit.

On April 23, a U.S. special forces soldier involved in the military operation to capture Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro was charged with using classified information about the mission to win more than \$400,000 in Polymarket.

"It is very important that journalists are seen as serving their audience, looking out for their best interests. Promoting gambling potentially undermines that commitment, especially at a time when gambling problems are surging in the U.S., and people are already losing faith in the media," Mr. Funt added.

More flight cuts loom at Air India amid cost pressures

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

After implementing a 10-12% cut on international flights in April and May, Air India (AI) is preparing for further cuts in June and July amid soaring fuel prices and longer flight paths that have raised operating costs and impacted profitability.

"The airspace and ATF price situation are extremely challenging, leaving us with no choice but to further trim schedules for June and July," AI CEO Campbell Wilson told staff.

This, he said, was on top of cuts enforced for April and May as many international flights had "become unprofitable to operate".

Airline and government sources said cancellations were to the tune of 10-12%. But domestic flights were not impacted thus far, said AI sources. AI operates 1,100 international and domestic flights daily. AI sources said the carrier had not withdrawn from any destination but cut frequencies on select routes.

Services to San Francisco, New York, Toronto, Vancouver and parts of Europe, including Copenhagen, Paris and Zurich have seen some curtailment, while routes to London, Milan, Vienna and Amsterdam remain unaffected.

Though AI maintains no cuts had been effected for domestic flights, the CEO said its profitability too had "been significantly affected, but to a lower degree" as the government limited the hike in ATF prices from April 1 to 25% even as international flights saw a 100% rise. AI posted a wider-than-expected annual loss exceeding ₹22,000 crore for FY26, as per reports.



THE HINDU GROUP

GIFT THEM LIMITLESS OPPORTUNITIES WITH 21ST CENTURY COMMUNICATION SKILLS





STEP LIVE Junior
NEXT-GEN SOFT SKILLS

An interactive English learning course for kids from classes 4-7.

Coach your kids with 10 LIVE classes on various aspects of communication.

<p>SPEAKING</p> <p>Strategies to improve public speaking skills with focus on aspects such as persuasion, expression of emotions, etc.</p>	<p>WRITING</p> <p>Best practices to improve writing structure and introduction to using tools like PowerPoint</p>	<p>LISTENING</p> <p>Engaging exercises and activities to actively develop listening skills</p>	<p>PRACTICE</p> <p>Practical tips and guidance to continue developing communication skills</p>
---	--	---	---

Limited Seats!

Scan the QR code



PESHAWAR
13 militants killed in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: military



At least 13 militants have been killed by Pakistani security forces along the Afghanistan border in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the military's media wing said on Friday. The militants, belonging to Fitna-al-Khwarji, were killed in Mohmand and North Waziristan districts on April 28 and 29, Inter-Services Public Relations said. PTI

ABU DHABI
U.S.'s Hormuz plan 'not competing' with France, U.K.-led bid: French FM



France's Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot on Friday said a new U.S.-led coalition to reopen the Strait of Hormuz would complement and not compete with a similar mission spearheaded by France and Britain. The U.S. mission is "not of the same nature as the one we established", Mr. Barrot said. AFP

UNITED NATIONS
UN extends peacekeeping mission in South Sudan, but shrinks it



The UN Security Council on Thursday passed a resolution extending the United Nations peacekeeping mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) by one year but reducing its size, despite pushback from several member states. The resolution, adopted with 13 votes in favour, prolongs the mission until April 30, 2027. AFP

ISTANBUL
Turkish police fire tear gas, arrest dozens at May Day demonstrations



Turkish police on Friday fired tear gas and arrested dozens of people holding May Day demonstrations in Istanbul, as thousands rallied nationwide. According to the CHD Lawyers Association, nearly 200 people were arrested in Istanbul, where police fired tear gas from riot-control vehicles into the crowd. AFP

Ukraine says it hit Russia's Tuapse oil terminal, fourth attack in region

Explosions and a fire were recorded on the premises; repeated strikes on April 16, 20, and 28 have damaged infrastructure; Russia launches over 50 drones at Ternopil, injuring at least 10; damages recorded in Kryvyi Rih city and Kharkiv region

Associated Press
KYIV



A satellite image showing a plume of smoke rising from the Tuapse oil refinery in the Russian port of Tuapse on April 28. AFP

Ukrainian forces struck an oil terminal in the Russian Black Sea city of Tuapse, Ukraine's General Staff said on Friday, marking the fourth attack targeting the region's oil infrastructure in just over two weeks.

Explosions and a fire were recorded on the premises of local oil infrastructure, the statement from the General Staff said. Local officials in Russia said a Ukrainian drone attack sparked the blaze and that no casualties were reported.

The facility had been hit

previously on April 16, April 20, and April 28. Regional governor Veniamin Kondratyev said a fire at the city's oil refinery had also been extinguished on

Thursday, less than 24 hours before the latest strike.

Meanwhile, Russian attacks continued to strike Ukraine.

Russia attacked the western Ukrainian city of Ternopil with over 50 drones on Friday, according to mayor Serhii Nadal.

Hits were recorded in industrial facilities and infrastructure, he said. At least 10 people were wounded, he added, while some neighbourhoods remain without electricity as a result of the mass attack.

Two multi-story residential buildings and port infrastructure in Odesa were damaged after Russian forces launched another overnight drone attack on the southern region, local authorities said.

As a result of the strikes, an apartment in a 16-story

building was destroyed and the roof caught fire. In another high-rise residential building, a fire engulfed the 12th floor, according to Ukraine's Emergency Service.

In a post on Telegram, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said at least five persons were wounded in the region. He said damage from overnight attacks was also recorded in the central city of Kryvyi Rih and the northeastern Kharkiv region, where railway infrastructure was hit.

"Russia continues to attack our energy infrastructure, critical infrastructure, and civilian objects," Mr. Zelenskyy wrote.

Israel's death penalty law perpetuates racial bias: UN

Agence France-Presse
GENEVA

Israel's new death penalty law permitting the execution of Palestinians convicted of deadly attacks perpetuates racial discrimination against them, a United Nations committee said on Friday, urging its immediate repeal.

The law amounts to a grave erosion of human rights, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination said in a statement.

Under the new law, passed by the Israeli Parliament in March, Palestinians in the occupied West Bank convicted by military courts of carrying out deadly attacks classified as "terrorism" will face the death penalty as a default sentence.



Displaced Palestinian activists hold a rally in support of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails, in Gaza City on April 20. AFP

"The new law is a severe blow to human rights, rolling back Israel's long-standing de facto moratorium on executions since 1962 and expanding the use of the death penalty," the committee said.

The law is "de facto applicable to Palestinians only" and sets a 90-day deadline for executions once a

final judgement is rendered, the committee said. The committee also called on Israel to "end all policies and practices that amount to racial discrimination against and segregation of Palestinians".

In March, UN rights chief Volker Turk branded Israel's new law "cruel and discriminatory".

Taiwan expresses concern after China calls it 'biggest risk'

Associated Press
TAIPEI

Taiwan's government expressed concern on Friday hours after a call between China and the United States' top diplomats in which Beijing stressed that self-ruled Taiwan was the biggest risk in relations.

"Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is concerned about the press release issued by China ... which again unilaterally made threatening remarks on the Taiwan issue," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

In a call with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Thursday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi

Beijing asks the U.S. to 'make the right choices' on Taiwan for 'stability' between the two nations

urged the United States to "make the right choices" on Taiwan in order to safeguard "stability" between the two nations, according to a statement by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

The call came about two weeks ahead of a highly anticipated summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

China sees self-ruled Taiwan as its own breakaway province.

Echoing unity



Steady flame: Girls sing a song as they show the movement of missiles with their hands next to the portraits of late Iranian revolutionary leader Ayatollah Khomeini, late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, in a state-organised rally celebrating the birthday of Imam Reza, the 8th Shia Muslims' Imam, in Tehran on Wednesday. AP

Trump orders new sanctions against Cuban government

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday ordered new sanctions against Cuba, targeting a broad set of people in the communist-run country and threatening foreign banks that work with them.

In an executive order, Mr. Trump said he would

impose sanctions on people involved in sweeping sections of the Cuban economy, which is steered by the government.

Mr. Trump will target people known to "operate in or have operated in the energy, defence and related materiel, metals and mining, financial services, or security sector of the Cuban economy".

Trump 'to raise' EU autos tariffs to 25%, accuses it of non-compliance with deal

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Friday that he will increase the tariffs charged on cars and trucks from the European Union next week to 25%, a move that could jolt the world economy at a fragile moment.

Mr. Trump said in a social media post that the EU "is not complying with our fully agreed to Trade Deal," though he did not flesh out his objections in the post.

Asked by presspersons on Friday about the increase in import taxes as he departed the White House for Florida, Mr. Trump said the EU was not "as usual" adhering to last



Donald Trump and Ursula von der Leyen had agreed to a trade deal last July, which set a tariff ceiling of 15% on most goods. AFP

year's trade framework, without detailing the source of the tension. He added that he believed the shift to higher tariffs "forces them to move their factory production much faster" to the U.S.

Mr. Trump and Euro-

pean Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had agreed to the trade deal last July. It set a tariff ceiling of 15% on most goods, though the Supreme Court this year ruled against the legal authority that Mr. Trump

had used to charge that tax. This left Mr. Trump looking for substitute authorities, and his administration has imposed a 10% tax while investigating trade imbalances and national security issues to put in new tariffs to make up for lost revenues.

Both the U.S. and the EU had previously confirmed their commitment to preserving the trade framework, known as the Turnberry Agreement, which was named after Trump's golf course in Scotland.

The value of EU-U.S. trade in goods and services amounted to 1.7 trillion euros (\$2 trillion) in 2024, or an average of 4.6 billion euros a day, according to EU statistics agency Eurostat.

Israel takes 2 activists on flotilla bound for Gaza for questioning

Associated Press
BARCELONA

Israeli authorities say they are taking two activists who led an aid flotilla bound for Gaza - and who were captured by Israel in international waters of the Mediterranean Sea - to Israel for questioning.

The activists - Palestinian-Spanish citizen Saif Abukeshk and Brazilian citizen Thiago Avila - were among dozens of activists intercepted by the Israeli navy off the coast of Crete.

They are members of the Global Sumud Flotilla's steering committee, whose mission was to break Israel's naval blockade and

bring some humanitarian aid to the Palestinian territory. In all, some 20 boats and 175 activists were intercepted by the Israeli navy.

On Friday, the Israeli Foreign Ministry said on X that it was taking the two activists to Israel for questioning, and that Mr. Abukeshk was "suspected of affiliation with a terrorist organisation" and Mr. Avila was "suspected of illegal activity," without providing evidence.

The Global Sumud Flotilla appealed for international support.

"We demand that all governments pressure the Israeli regime to release all the illegal abductees."

BRIC NABI
NATIONAL AGRI-FOOD AND BIOMANUFACTURING INSTITUTE
(Formerly National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute & Center of Innovative & Applied Bioprocessing)
(Deptt. of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology, Govt. Of India)
Knowledge City, Sector-81, Mohali

RECRUITMENT NOTICE
BRIC-National Agri-Food and Biomanufacturing Institute (formerly National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute & Center of Innovative and Applied Bioprocessing) is an autonomous Institute under the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India. This futuristic innovation institute of its own kind in the country has a mission of advancing knowledge, leads and emerging technologies/processes relevant to Agri-food & Biomanufacturing sector towards applications and products. BRIC-NABI invites applications from the Indian Citizens for filling up the Scientific, Administrative and Technical positions on Direct Recruitment basis, as mentioned below:-

Scientific [Advt. No. NABI/ADMIN/1/(001)/2026-01/Recvt.]				
Sr. No	Name of the Post	No. of Post & Category	Age Limit	Level as per 7th CPC
1.	Scientist D	01 (EWS)	50 years	Level-12 (₹ 78,600 - ₹ 2,09,200)
Administrative & Technical [Advt. No. NABI/ADMIN/1/(001)/2026-02/Recvt.]				
2.	Sr. Private Secretary	01 (UR)	35 years	Level-8 (₹ 47,600 - ₹ 1,51,100)
3.	Assistant Engineer (Civil)	01 (OBC)	30 years	Level-7 (₹ 44,900 - ₹ 1,42,400)
4.	Assistant Engineer (Electrical)	01 (UR)	30 years	Level-7 (₹ 44,900 - ₹ 1,42,400)
5.	Senior Technical Assistant	02 (UR)	30 years	Level-6 (₹ 35,400 - ₹ 1,12,400)
6.	Senior Technical Assistant	01 (ST)	30 years	Level-6 (₹ 35,400 - ₹ 1,12,400)

*Age relaxation shall be as per the Government of India (GOI) norms. The detailed advertisement and procedure for submitting the online application are available at our website www.nabi.res.in.
If there is any Corrigendum/Amendments in the advertisement, it shall be published on institute website only. Before applying, candidates may refer to the BRIC-NABI website and apply accordingly.
(Manager Administration)

Samson season: Sanju eventually bends time to his will

The 31-year-old has long been considered an elite talent, but it has taken him a while to show just how exceptional he can be. Things looked bleak for him at the end of January before circumstances conspired to give him another shot at the international level. He won India the T20 World Cup and then got his new IPL team, CSK, going with two unbeaten hundreds



PTI

P.K. Ajith Kumar

The young scorer from the Kerala Cricket Association spoke of the two boys who had moved to the city from New Delhi just a couple of days earlier.

“Could you take a look at them?” Sudhir Aly asked Biju George, the SAI coach who conducted training camps at the Govt. Medical College Ground in Thiruvananthapuram and had earned a reputation for nurturing young talent. Of course, Biju would.

The following day, the kids came with their father, a former footballer who had returned home after leaving his job with the Delhi Police for the sake of his sons’ careers in cricket.

Early impression

The coach was impressed with both. The elder was sent to Wayanad, the other end of Kerala, where the State’s under-16 camp was going on. The younger one stayed back.

Biju felt the boy was an exceptional talent. “He had a lot of time to play his shots,” the former India women’s fielding coach tells *The Hindu*. “He was lovely to watch, and had a beautiful on-drive. I knew he was special.”

Sanju Samson certainly is. Like Biju, everyone who saw him bat knew it.

It, however, took the world long to find out that he is special enough to win India a World Cup. After leading India’s chase with an unbeaten 97 in a virtual quarterfinal against the West Indies, he made 89 both in the semifinal and the final, against England and New Zealand respectively, to headline India’s memorable title defence at home in the T20 World Cup a couple of months ago.

It had indeed been a long wait for Samson to fully realise his potential. He had made his India debut way back in 2015 but couldn’t establish himself in



He was lovely to watch, and had a beautiful on-drive. I knew he was special

BIJU GEORGE
Coach



GETTY IMAGES

the team despite being one of the most prolific and impactful batters in IPL history. In cricket’s most glamorous tournament, he played for Rajasthan Royals for much of his career, until he moved to Chennai Super Kings this season. He has already hit two unbeaten hundreds to revive the hopes of the five-time champion after a poor start



Sanju has tremendous fighting spirit. He comes back strongly from hopeless situations. He has the ability to introspect and find the answers himself. His strength lies in grit, determination and persistence

TINU YOHANNAN
Former India cricketer

(for him as well).

The highs of the World Cup were followed by lows at the IPL: six, seven and nine were his scores before he struck 115 not out against Delhi Capitals to give CSK its first win of the season. He already looks rather at home in Chennai; he probably left Jaipur at the right time, after 11 seasons.

In his time in Rajasthan, he had lit up the Sai Mansingh Stadium on those warm summer nights – the sun would reluctantly retreat behind the horizon only after lingering well past seven o’clock in Jaipur – with his silken, clean shots. His sixes and fours came not from brute power but more from sheer timing and a sense of placement.

Among his admirers were Brian Lara, who picked him as a future superstar, and Gautam Gambhir, who argued he should be in the Indian team. Years later, the gritty former India opener walked the talk: when he became the national coach, he got him in the team and gave him opportunities, although the decision to push him down the order to accommodate Shubman Gill

was debatable.

Even Gambhir may have been disappointed after Samson’s string of poor scores in the T20I series against New Zealand, and all those tame dismissals. And this was after a sensational run on his return to the Indian team in late 2024, with three hundreds in the format within the space of a month. That, however, was followed by a horrendous face-off with Jofra Archer in the home series against England.

The low before the highs

The five-match New Zealand series had been slotted as India’s dress rehearsal before the World Cup. But Samson failed big time. To be fair to the team management, he was played in every game, as opener: his highest score was 24.

The last match of the series was played at Thiruvananthapuram. And it was Samson’s first match for India in his hometown despite having made his international debut a decade earlier. Watching him trudge back after edging a 146 kph ball from Lockie Ferguson was a sorry sight.

And there was more to come: the wicketkeeper’s gloves were given to Ishan Kishan, who had forced his way into the World Cup squad with some stunning batting after spending more than two years out of international cricket.

History, Samson – and his large number of fans – feared, could repeat itself. He might have to warm the bench, like he did at the 2024 T20 World Cup in the Americas.

Now, to get a slot in the Indian top-order, even after the retirement of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, is perhaps the toughest challenge in cricket. It is like breaking into Clive Lloyd’s West Indies team as a fast bowler or into the Indian team as a spinner at the time of the famous quartet. If you don’t utilise your opportunity, you may not get another one easily.

Circumstances, however, conspired to give Samson another chance.

Injuries, family emergencies, and an abundance of left-handedness in the batting order resulted in him returning to the eleven. Suddenly, he could afford to dream the dream which he feared had died: to be the player of the tournament in India’s World Cup win.

Tinu Yohannan, the first cricketer from Kerala to play for India, isn’t surprised that Samson fought back from the dead. “Sanju has tremendous fighting spirit,” says Yohannan, who has worked with him as a coach in domestic cricket. “He comes back strongly from hopeless situations. And he has the ability to introspect and find the answers himself. There has been some criticism about his technique, but I think Sanju must have found the solution from within. His strength lies in grit, determination and persistence.”

He believes Samson is good enough for Test cricket, too. Several years ago, Lara had said that he and Rishabh Pant could control all forms of cricket for India.

All-format potential

Batters with better First Class records (Samson averages 39.27) might be struggling to make the Test team, but Yohannan believes Samson could serve India well on lively tracks overseas. “And he showed how good he could be against the red ball in the Duleep Trophy in 2024-25,” says Yohannan. “He has the game to succeed in the long format, too. And when he stays at the wicket, runs come fast, regardless of the format.”

That has been the case since Samson was a boy. One recalls interviewing him after he made 200 not out off 138 balls in a South Zone Vijay Merchant Trophy (Under-16) match, out of his team’s total of 240 for one; he had already scored 10 hundreds for Kerala in age-group cricket.

That was in 2010.

Samson has taken his time, yes. But, he still has enough time to delight fans even more and further enhance his legacy.

STACKING UP



ATP Men's Top 15

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Jannik Sinner	24	13,350	20
2	Carlos Alcaraz	22	12,960	18
3	Alexander Zverev	28	5,255	22
4	Novak Djokovic	38	4,710	17
5	Felix Auger-Aliassime	25	4,100	25
6	Ben Shelton	23	4,070	22
7	Taylor Fritz	28	3,870	23
8	Alex de Minaur	27	3,845	22
9	Lorenzo Musetti	24	3,715	23
10	Daniil Medvedev	30	3,560	24
11	Alexander Bublik	28	3,445	26
12	Andrey Rublev	28	2,630	24
13	Flavio Cobolli	23	2,600	28
14	Jiri Lehecka	24	2,540	22
15	Casper Ruud	27	2,535	21



English Premier League Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Arsenal	34	22	7	5	64	26	38	73
2	Man. City	33	21	7	5	66	29	37	70
3	Man. United	34	17	10	7	60	46	14	61
4	Liverpool	34	17	7	10	57	44	13	58
5	Aston Villa	34	17	7	10	47	42	5	58
6	Brighton	34	13	11	10	48	39	9	50
7	Bournemouth	34	11	16	7	52	52	0	49
8	Chelsea	34	13	9	12	53	45	8	48
9	Brentford	34	13	9	12	49	46	3	48
10	Fulham	34	14	6	14	44	46	-2	48
11	Everton	34	13	8	13	41	41	0	47
12	Sunderland	34	12	10	12	36	45	-9	46
13	Crystal Palace	33	11	10	12	36	39	-3	43
14	Newcastle	34	12	6	16	46	50	-4	42
15	Leeds United	34	9	13	12	44	51	-7	40
16	N. Forest	34	10	9	15	41	45	-4	39
17	West Ham	34	9	9	16	42	58	-16	36
18	Tottenham	34	8	10	16	43	53	-10	34
19	Burnley	34	4	8	22	34	68	-34	20
20	Wolves	34	3	8	23	24	62	-38	17

Spanish LaLiga Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Barcelona	33	28	1	4	87	30	57	85
2	Real Madrid	33	23	5	5	68	31	37	74
3	Villarreal	33	20	5	8	59	38	21	65
4	Atletico Madrid	33	18	6	9	56	37	19	60
5	Real Betis	33	12	14	7	49	41	8	50
6	Getafe	33	13	5	15	28	34	-6	44
7	Celta Vigo	33	11	11	11	45	43	2	44
8	Real Sociedad	33	11	10	12	52	52	0	43
9	Osasuna	33	11	9	13	39	40	-1	42
10	Athletic Club	33	12	5	16	36	48	-12	41
11	Rayo Vallecano	33	9	12	13	33	41	-8	39
12	Valencia	33	10	9	14	37	48	-11	39
13	Espanyol	33	10	9	14	37	49	-12	39
14	Elche	33	9	11	13	44	50	-6	38
15	Girona	33	9	11	13	36	50	-14	38
16	Alaves	33	9	9	15	38	49	-11	36
17	Real Mallorca	33	9	8	16	41	51	-10	35
18	Sevilla	33	9	7	17	40	55	-15	34
19	Levante	33	8	9	16	37	50	-13	33
20	Real Oviedo	33	6	10	17	26	51	-25	28



Test Batting

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Joe Root	880	932
2	Harry Brook	857	898
3	Travis Head	853	884
4	Steve Smith	831	947
5	Kane Williamson	822	919
6	Marco Jansen	781	784
7	Temba Bavuma	775	806
8	Yashasvi Jaiswal	750	858
9	Saud Shakeel	734	787
10	Shubman Gill	730	807

Test Bowling

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Jasprit Bumrah	879	908
2	Noman Ali	843	853
3	Mitchell Starc	838	852
4	Matt Henry	836	853
5	Pat Cummins	832	914
6	Marco Jansen	825	825
7	Scott Boland	820	820
8	Kagiso Rabada	807	902
9	Josh Hazlewood	775	864
10	Nathan Lyon	753	812

Top Indians

Sumit Nagal Rank 277 ▲ 15 spots	Karan Singh Rank 420 ▲ 14 spots

WTA Women's Top 15

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Aryna Sabalenka	27	10,895	19
2	Elena Rybakina	26	8,500	23
3	Coco Gauff	22	7,279	19
4	Iga Swiatek	24	7,273	19
5	Jessica Pegula	32	6,136	21
6	Amanda Anisimova	24	5,995	20
7	Elina Svitolina	31	3,910	15
8	Mirra Andreeva	18	3,746	21
9	Jasmine Paolini	30	3,722	20
10	Victoria Mboko	19	3,531	21
11	Karolina Muchova	29	3,318	17
12	Belinda Bencic	29	3,090	19
13	Linda Noskova	21	2,849	23
14	Ekaterina Alexandrova	31	2,789	26
15	Naomi Osaka	28	2,324	21

Top Indians

Vaishnavi Adkar Rank 385 ▲ No change	Sahaja Yamalapalli Rank 386 ▲ No change

German Bundesliga Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Bayern	31	26	4	1	113	32	81	82
2	Dortmund	31	20	7	4	65	31	34	67
3	RB Leipzig	31	19	5	7	62	38	24	62
4	Stuttgart	31	17	6	8	63	43	20	57
5	Hoffenheim	31	17	6	8	61	45	16	57
6	Leverkusen	31	16	7	8	62	42	20	55
7	Eintracht	31	11	10	10	56	58	-2	43
8	SC Freiburg	31	12	7	12	44	52	-8	43
9	FC Augsburg	31	10	7	14	39	55	-16	37
10	Mainz	31	8	10	13	39	49	-10	34
11	M'gladbach	31	7	11	13	36	50	-14	32
12	Werder	31	8	8	15	36	54	-18	32
13	Union Berlin	31	8	8	15	35	55	-20	32
14	Cologne	31	7	10	14	45	53	-8	31
15	Hamburg	31	7	10	14	34	50	-16	31
16	St Pauli	31	6	8	17	26	52	-27	26
17	Wolfsburg	31	6	7	18	41	66	-25	25
18	Heidenheim	31	5	7	19	35	66	-31	22

ODI Batting

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Daryl Mitchell	815	840
2	Virat Kohli	791	908
3	Ibrahim Zadran	756	756
4	Rohit Sharma	748	879
5	Shubman Gill	716	841
6	Babar Azam	684	894
7	Shai Hope	679	782
8	Harry Tector	679	730
9	K.L. Rahul	664	676
10	Salman Agha	664	664

ODI Bowling

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Rashid Khan	705	775
2	Jofra Archer	649	682
3	Keshav Maharaj	645	737
4	Adil Rashid	629	671
5	Josh Hazlewood	626	725
6	Maheesh Theekshana	624	680
7	Kuldeep Yadav	624	757
8	Mehidy Hasan	621	722
9	Mitchell Santner	599	656
10	Adam Zampa	599	696

T20I Batting



Sawe's 5km splits: breaking down the Kenyan's run

	Time	Split
5km	14:14	14:14
10km	28:35:00	14:21
15km	43:10:00	14:35
20km	57:21:00	14:11
25km	1:11:41	14:20
30km	1:26:03	14:22
35km	1:39:57	13:54
40km	1:53:39	13:42
42.195km	1:59:30	5:51

SOURCE: OLYMPICS.COM



When I started dealing with Sabastian, I immediately realised this is not just one of the best Kenyan guys. At least for my experiences, he is a different human being. An outlier

CLAUDIO BERARDELLI
Sawe's coach

sabet, Nandi County, with a strong group of athletes who push him, has contributed significantly to his progress. In London, Berardelli said his athlete had been even fitter than in Berlin in September when the late-summer heat had spoiled his previous assault on the world record.

"In the last six weeks he was averaging 200km and above a week, while the peak was 241km," said Berardelli. "I knew he was super-good for Berlin, but he couldn't express himself because of the conditions. But when I started to see him running the way he ran before London, I was like, hey, something special might come out."

While a large part of Sawe's success is a consequence of his talent and its careful nurturing, there is no doubt that he has benefited from the developments in nutrition and – to a greater degree – the technological arms race launched by shoe companies a decade ago, when they began using carbon-fibre plates and other materials to make shoes lighter and springier.

"We are in the new era of marathon running because of the shoe and proper fuelling," Berardelli said. According to the BBC, Sawe reportedly worked with a research team from a sports nutrition brand which specialises in hydrogels. He trained to absorb 90-120 grams of carbohydrates per hour during the race without feeling distress. This tops the glycogen levels up, allowing the body to use carbohydrates, rather than slower-burning fat reserves, as fuel.

The newly developed Adidas shoes Sawe wore to navigate the streets of London were the lightest in history, the first 'super shoe' to weigh under 100g. They clearly made a difference – second-placed Kejelcha was wearing them too.

The combination of thick foam in the sole, shaped with a 'drop' from heel to forefoot to keep runners 'forward' in their stride cycle, and stiff carbon in the midsoles, which store and return energy, reportedly acts as a lever and spring system.

The result is better running economy – in 'super shoes', athletes burn less energy at a given pace than in regular running shoes. There has been criticism of 'super shoes', the argument being that using them is akin to mechanical doping. World Athletics has tried to regulate the revolution, but there is no doubt that it has played a major role in the lowering of times.

Sawe's achievement will inevitably be viewed against the backdrop of an appalling series of doping cases among Kenyan athletes in the last few years. But, in a bid to allay such suspicions about his own performances, he has voluntarily subjected himself to extra drug testing. Adidas provided \$50,000 to the Athletics Integrity Unit to frequently test Sawe over a 12-month period.

That began with a reported 25 out-of-competition tests in the lead-up to Berlin in September, continuing at a similar rate as he prepared for London.

Next up: Mission 1:59?

The obvious question is whether Sawe can run even faster. Berardelli believes that his athlete could breach 1:59 on a quicker course such as Berlin or Chicago. "Sabastian hasn't reached his maximum potential. It was only his fourth marathon, if we think of long-term adaptations, which is a process requiring time, I believe Sabastian has not reached this yet," said Berardelli.

"When I started dealing with Sabastian, I immediately realised this is not just one of the best Kenyan guys. At least for my experiences, he is a different human being. An outlier."

Talent, training, fuel, shoes: behind Sawe's historic London sub-2

The 31-year-old Kenyan became the first man to take less than two hours to run a marathon in race conditions. What went into the shattering of a once-unapproachable barrier? And just how much faster can Sawe go?

Associated Press
Agence France-Presse

What do you eat before running the fastest marathon in history? Sabastian Sawe chose a pre-race breakfast of two slices of bread with honey, washed down with a cup of tea – a modest meal, but one that experts say fuelled him with easily digestible, fast-acting carbohydrates and sugar, hydration and a caffeine boost.

The 31-year-old Kenyan, who on Sunday became the first man to take less than two hours to run a marathon in race conditions, is assured of immortality. His feat is a first-ballot candidate for any sporting hall of fame; his breakfast has a strong case for entering the culinary wing.

Cultural significance

Sawe's shattering of the long-unapproachable two-hour barrier in London ranks alongside Roger Bannister's first sub-four-minute mile at Oxford in 1954 in terms of cultural significance. Both achievements have expanded the perception of what was thought humanly possible. For context, the first sub-2:30 marathon came in 1925 and the



I have shown that nothing is not possible. I had courage to push even when the pace was so fast. I was not bothered because I was ready for it

SABASTIAN SAWE

2:15 barrier was broken 38 years after that; at the turn of the century, the world's best time was 2:05:42, set in 1999.

Sawe's time of 1hr 59min 30 sec was an astonishing 65 seconds inside the previous best of 2:00:35 set in Chicago in 2023 by Kelvin Kiptum, whose death in a car crash in 2024 plunged Kenya into mourning. Two years later, Sawe gave his country reason to rejoice.

Incredibly, 11 seconds after the unthinkable happened, it happened again. The marathon had its second sub-two runner. Ethiopia's Yomif Kejelcha, 28, finished second in 1:59:41 on his marathon debut. (Kenyan great Eliud Kipchoge did run a marathon in under two hours in 2019, but his 1:59:40 did not make the record books, as it was a specially tailored event in favourable conditions, not a competitive race.)

Sawe's statistics were dizzying. He completed the London Marathon – on a relatively flat course on a mostly sunny day (15 degrees Celsius), ideal for running – with a negative split. The second half of his race was faster than the first. With the assistance of pacemakers in the initial kilometres, he did the first half in 60:29 and then sped up, clocking a remarkable 59:01 for the second. He av-

eraged 21.2 km per hour, or 2 minutes 49.9 seconds per kilometre. "I have shown that nothing is not possible," said Sawe. "I had courage to push even when the pace was so fast. I was not bothered because I was ready for it."

Running 42.195 kilometres – a distance that has been around since ancient times – in less than 120 minutes was once treated as a natural physiological ceiling. A marathon tests a human being's energy supply (accessing and burning 'fuel' without dropping pace), aerobic limit (maximal oxygen uptake), and biomechanical precision (running form and cadence).

Punishing intensity

So how did Sawe ace this test? The Kenyan, born in the Rift Valley Province to a father who worked as a maize farmer and raised by his grandmother in a mud-walled house, is extraordinarily talented and trains with punishing intensity.

"Definitely physiologically, Sabastian has to be a good one," said Claudio Berardelli, the Italian coach who recognised Sawe's potential and has since guided him on the path to greatness. "But all the pieces come together perfectly because of his attitude, because of his character. In 22 years I've been coaching in Kenya I thought I'd seen pretty much everything, but then Sabastian started to show me something which I thought was almost impossible."

Sawe's high-volume training at altitude in Kap-

GAME THEORY

Still chasing Marita Koch: the four-decade wait

Marita Koch's mark in the 400m, set in 1985, is the second-longest-standing individual world record in athletics. It has been the subject of some debate because Koch competed in an era when East Germany was known to be systematically doping its athletes. Koch never failed a drugs test, however, and has maintained she did nothing wrong. Last year, four decades after Koch's benchmark run, two athletes, Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone and Marileidy Paulino, went under 48 seconds. Are those performances an indication that Koch's record might finally be under threat? And could 2026 be the year?

400M (WOMEN): FASTEST TIMES

Mark	Competitor	Venue	Date
47.60	Marita Koch	Canberra	06 Oct 1985
47.78	Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone	Tokyo	18 Sep 2025
47.98	Marileidy Paulino	Tokyo	18 Sep 2025
47.99	Jarmila Kratochvilova	Helsinki	10 Aug 1983
48.14	Salwa Eid Naser	Doha	03 Oct 2019
48.16	Marita Koch	Athina	08 Sep 1982
48.16	Marita Koch	Praha	16 Aug 1984
48.17	Marileidy Paulino	Paris	09 Aug 2024
48.19	Salwa Eid Naser	Tokyo	18 Sep 2025
48.22	Marita Koch	Stuttgart	28 Aug 1986
48.25	Marie-Jose Perec	Atlanta	29 Jul 1996
48.26	Marita Koch	Dresden	27 Jul 1984
48.27	Olga Bryzgina	Canberra	06 Oct 1985
48.29	Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone	Tokyo	16 Sep 2025
48.36	Shaunae Miller-Uibo	Tokyo	06 Aug 2021
48.37	Shaunae Miller-Uibo	Doha	03 Oct 2019
48.45	Jarmila Kratochvilova	Praha	23 Jul 1983
48.53	Salwa Eid Naser	Paris	09 Aug 2024
48.57	Nickisha Pryce	London	20 Jul 2024
48.59	Tatana Kocembova	Helsinki	10 Aug 1983



MARITA KOCH



SYDNEY MCLAUGHLIN-LEVRONE



MARILEIDY PAULINO

SOURCE: WORLD ATHLETICS

PICTURE THIS



GETTY IMAGES

In a bind

This photograph captures action from the women's open weight class at the 41st Empress Cup All Japan Women's Judo Championship in Yokohama. Japanese judoka consider the event one of the sport's three major competitions, along

with the Olympic Games and the World Championships.

Judo, created in 1882 by Kano Jigoro, is an unarmed Japanese martial art, with an emphasis on 'randori' (free sparring) rather than 'kata' (pre-determined forms).

A foundational principle of judo (Japanese for the 'gentle

way') is maximum efficient use of energy. The three basic techniques, when it is taught as a martial art or a form of self-defence, involve throwing, grappling and striking.

Striking, however, is not allowed in competitive judo, where the objective is to throw an opponent forcefully onto

their backs, immobilise them with a pin, or force them to submit with a joint lock or a choke. The sport's international governing body is the International Judo Federation (IJF), with professional judoka competing on the IJF circuit. Judo was first contested at the Olympics in 1964.

TACTICAL TALK

'Wanted to keep Dube and Brevis for the middle phase against GT'



B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

We've been experimenting a little bit. We'd like to be stable now and then use the Impact Player towards the end of an innings. In the last match [against GT], our idea was to have Brevis and Dube come in the middle phase. And that's why Sarfaraz came in after those two early wickets — CSK batting coach Hussey.

FITNESS CHECK

Let's see how Rohit feels and what the medical team tells us: MI coach



FILE PHOTO: VIJAY SONEJI

Rohit Sharma is progressing well. We are assessing him on a daily basis with the medical team. We'll see how he feels and pulls up. We'll make a decision tomorrow (Saturday). Let's see how he feels and what the medical team tells us — MI head coach Mahela Jayawardene on Rohit's participation against CSK.

LATEST ADDITION

Sunrisers name teen all-rounder Ambrish as a replacement for Mavi



FILE PHOTO

Sunrisers Hyderabad on Friday picked R.S. Ambrish as an injury replacement for Shivam Mavi for the remainder of IPL 2026. The 18-year-old was part of the triumphant India under-19 squad at the World Cup earlier this year. Ambrish, who is a right-arm medium pacer and a left-handed batter, will join SRH for ₹30 lakh.

MATURE RESPONSE

My score and innings don't matter if we lose: Royals skipper Parag



SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

We could've bowled way better in the middle phase. We conceded a lot of boundaries in a single over, and that repeated. Hopefully, my injury is not too serious. I don't think I need to answer any critics. At the end of the day, my job is to get two points. My score and innings don't matter if we lose — RR captain Riyan Parag.

Lakshya, Ayush power India into the semifinals

Satwiksairaj-Chirag duo pulls off a crucial win in the commanding show against Taiwan; the 2022 champion is now assured of a medal



Never-say-die attitude: Lakshya saved two match points to prevail over Chou. GETTY IMAGES

THOMAS CUP

Press Trust of India
HORSENS (DENMARK)

Lakshya Sen saved two match points to beat World No. 6 Chou Tien Chen, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty added a gritty doubles win, before Ayush Shetty delivered the final blow as India registered a 3-0 victory over Taiwan to storm into the semifinals of the Thomas Cup on Friday.

Lakshya, who was trailing for the better part of the contest, showed remarkable resilience to script an 18-21, 22-20, 21-17 victory in a marathon clash.

World No. 4 Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty defeated Chiu

Hsiang Chieh and Wang Chi-Lin 23-21, 19-21, 21-12 to put India 2-0 ahead.

The onus then was on Ayush, and the youngster delivered.

The 20-year-old, who recently reached the final of the Badminton Asia Championships, produced a breathtaking display.

He registered a 21-16, 21-17 win over World No. 8 and reigning All England champion Lin Chun-Yi in the second singles match to seal the contest.

India, the 2022 champion, will face either France or Japan in the semifinals. The victory also assured India a medal in the prestigious event.

Earlier, with the head-to-head locked at 4-4, Lakshya and Chou engaged in another absor-

ing duel marked by long rallies and intense momentum swings.

Chou displayed his experience in the opening game, recovering from 10-15 down and overturning a late deficit to take the lead.

Lakshya, however, responded under pressure. Trailing 13-17, the Indian reeled off four straight points to draw level.

Chou earned two match points, but Lakshya held his nerve, saving both before closing out the game to force a decider.

The results:
Quarterfinal: India bt Taiwan 3-0 (Lakshya Sen bt Chou Tien Chen 18-21, 22-20, 21-17; Satwiksairaj Rankireddy & Chirag Shetty bt Chiu Hsiang Chieh and Wang Chi-Lin 23-21, 19-21, 21-12; Ayush Shetty bt Lin Chun-Yi 21-16, 21-17).

Rahul, Nissanka keep DC's hopes alive

IPL-19

P.K. Ajith Kumar
JAIPUR

Delhi Capitals has experienced cricket's much celebrated glorious uncertainties.

Axar Patel's men scored more than 260, and still managed to lose. In the very next match, they were dismissed for 75.

Capitals chased down a target of 226 without fuss, on Friday night against Rajasthan Royals at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium, posting a badly-needed win — with seven wickets and five balls to spare — to stay in contention in IPL 2026.

An opening-wicket stand of 110 off 57 balls between K.L. Rahul and Pathum Nissanka ensured Capitals' chase was on the right track. An unbroken fourth-wicket stand of 49 between Tristan Stubbs and Ashutosh Sharma finished off the job for Capitals.

The tone was set by Nissanka as the Sri Lankan justified the faith put in him by his team. A one-bounce boundary over mid-on was followed right up by a lovely wristy flick for six against Jofra Archer in the opening over.

Rahul (75, 40b, 6x4, 5x6) also produced some delectable sixes. The partnership came to an end when Nissanka (62, 33b, 6x4, 3x6) was trapped in front, while reverse-sweeping Ravindra Jadeja.

Earlier, Riyan Parag (90, 50b, 8x4, 5x6) played a captain's knock, after Royals lost both their in-form openers Yashasvi Jaiswal and Vaibhav Suryavanshi within the first two overs. Suryavanshi was yorked by Kyle Jamieson, who appeared to have gi-



Highlights: Rahul and Nissanka added 110 for the opening wicket after Starc scalped three in his first match of the season to restrict Royals to 225 for six. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

ven his much shorter victim something of a stare.

The Kiwi could do well to remember how the wunderkind replied to Sunrisers Hyderabad's Pra-

ful Hinge. Before that, Mitchell Starc, playing his first game of the season, removed Jaiswal, who was undone by the pace of a full toss and skied a return

catch. The stage was set for Parag, whose previous best from nine innings this season was 29.

And he came to this match a day after being

SCOREBOARD

RAJASTHAN ROYALS
Yashasvi Jaiswal c & b Starc 6 (3b, 1x6), Vaibhav Suryavanshi b Jamieson 4 (2b, 1x4), Dhruv Jurel c Stubbs b Axar 42 (30b, 4x4, 1x6), Riyan Parag c Axar b Starc 90 (50b, 8x4, 5x6), Ravindra Jadeja c Ashutosh b Starc 20 (14b, 1x4, 1x6), Donovan Ferreira (not out) 47 (14b, 2x4, 6x6), Shubham Dubey c Ashutosh b Natarajan 6 (6b, 1x4), Jofra Archer (not out) 1 (1b); Extras (lb-3, w-6): 9; Total (for six wkts. in 20 overs): 225.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-6 (Jaiswal, 0.3 overs), 2-12 (Suryavanshi, 1.5), 3-114 (Jurel, 11.4), 4-167 (Jadeja, 16.2), 5-168 (Parag, 16.4), 6-208 (Shubham, 19.1).

CAPITALS BOWLING
Starc 4-0-40-3, Jamieson 4-0-48-1, Axar 4-0-39-1, Kuldeep 4-0-41-0, Natarajan 4-0-54-1.

DELHI CAPITALS
Pathum Nissanka lbw b Jadeja 62 (33b, 6x4, 3x6), K.L. Rahul c Ferreira b Archer 75 (40b, 6x4, 5x6), Nitish Rana c Jurel b Deshpande 33 (17b, 3x4, 2x6), Tristan Stubbs (not out) 18 (11b, 1x4, 1x6), Ashutosh Sharma (not out) 25 (15b, 4x4); Extras (b-4, lb-1, nb-1, w-7): 13; Total (for three wkts. in 19.1 overs): 226.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-110 (Nissanka, 9.3), 2-171 (Nitish, 14.3), 3-177 (Rahul, 15.2).

ROYALS BOWLING
Archer 4-0-46-1, Burger 3-0-41-0, Deshpande (Impact Player for Shubham) 4-0-38-1, Brijesh 3.1-0-35-0, Bishnoi 2-0-28-0, Jadeja 3-0-33-1.

Toss: Royals; **PoM:** Rahul. Capitals won by seven wickets with five balls to spare.

Next assignment

DC: May 5 vs. CSK
Delhi, 7.30 p.m.
RR: May 9 vs. GT
Jaipur, 7.30 p.m.

finned for vaping inside the dressing room.

He showed courage under fire, but it still wasn't his night. Even Donovan Ferreira's unbeaten 47 (14b, 2x4, 6x6) would not help.

CSK and MI in desperate need of a victory

S. Dipak Ragav
CHENNAI

Whenever two of IPL's most successful sides clash, there is a sense of anticipation and buzz unlike any other contest. It is not for nothing that a Chennai Super Kings-Mumbai Indians clash is called the 'El Clasico' of IPL.

They have won five titles each and dished out some of the finest games in the league's history.

Yet, when these two franchises meet here in the reverse fixture at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium on Saturday, the conversation is more about how the mighty have fallen.

Sailing in the same boat
After eight matches, CSK and MI are in the bottom half of the table, with the Super Kings in a slightly better position, having three wins compared to just two for Hardik Pandya's men.



Anxious faces: Suryakumar has failed to get going this season while Samson has blown hot and cold. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Chennai and Mumbai come into this fixture on the back of chastening losses to Gujarat Titans and Sunrisers Hyderabad, respectively.

The root of their struggle has been the inability to nail the right playing combination, as evidenced by the fact that Mumbai has fielded 22 players while CSK has used 19 so far.

In their previous meeting at the Wankhede Stadium, Sanju Samson's century and Akeal Hosein's brilliant spell in the Power-Play helped CSK hand MI its biggest defeat by runs (103) in history. The Kerala batter will once again hold the key to propping up a misfiring batting unit that struggled against GT's pace attack at Chepauk.

Points table

	M	W	L	NR	PTS	NRR
Punjab Kings	8	6	1	1	13	1.043
Royal Challengers	9	6	3	0	12	1.420
Sunrisers Hyderabad	9	6	3	0	12	0.832
Rajasthan Royals	10	6	4	0	12	0.510
Gujarat Titans	9	5	4	0	10	-0.192
Delhi Capitals	9	4	5	0	8	-0.895
Chennai Super Kings	8	3	5	0	6	-0.121
Kolkata Knight Riders	2	2	5	1	5	-0.751
Mumbai Indians	8	2	6	0	4	-0.784
Lucknow Super Giants	8	2	6	0	4	-1.106

Today's match

Chennai, 7.30 p.m.
HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played: 40
CSK 19 | MI 21
PREVIOUS MEETING
CSK won by 103 runs, 2026
LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 & JIHOTSTAR

Meanwhile, for MI, it is a question of whether it can recover from the shellac-

ing at the hands of Travis Head and Heinrich Klaasen, who made mincemeat of a 244-run target a couple of nights ago.

The visitor will hope the setback fires up the likes of Suryakumar Yadav and Jasprit Bumrah, who have had a quiet tournament.

Considering another loss could pretty much bring down the curtain on their campaign, CSK and MI fans would expect a hard-fought game befitting the storied rivalry.

'Dhoni will return once he is confident about his calf'

Sankar Narayanan E.H.
CHENNAI

That he would be asked to give an update on M.S. Dhoni's availability was clear in Michael Hussey's mind.

The Chennai Super Kings batting coach came prepared for the query, explaining that the team was "being guided" by Dhoni.

"Hopefully, he'll be back as soon as possible. I don't know if it's tomorrow [Saturday] or the match after that. I know he's been upping his running speeds, and that was the sticking point," Hussey said at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium on Friday, on the eve of CSK's IPL 2026 fixture against Mumbai Indians.

"We're very confident from a skill perspective [batting and wicketkeeping], but it was just about making sure that he could maintain good running



Dhoni... the suspense continues. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

power. So as soon as he's got the confidence in his calf, I'm sure he'll give it the tick to be ready to go. And so we're kind of being guided by him... we're waiting," Hussey said.

On Dhoni not travelling to the stadium on match-days, Hussey added:

"Yeah, he hasn't been coming. He always wants what's best for the team, and he was worried that if he came, there'd be a bit too much of a distraction. Whether that's right or wrong, that's not my decision. But that's the thinking behind Dhoni not wanting to come to the matches."

MI head coach Mahela Jayawardene gave an honest assessment of the season so far (four points in eight games).

"It's not about pointing fingers at the batting or bowling group. It's just a combination of us not being able to play consistent cricket... I don't think anyone is shying away from the challenge, but execution sometimes fails them. It's not on purpose; it just happens in sport. I'm not giving excuses, and we need to be better," he explained.

