



The Sunday EXPRESS

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LATE CITY 18+4 PAGES
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EYE THE SOCIAL ANATOMY OF A CHAIR

From thrones to reclining chairs of Kerala, tracing the politics, history, subversion of the seat

SCREEN
Director Anubhav Sinha on making of *Assi* and why confronting rape demands discomfort over easy answers



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

Shanti law in, US nuclear 'mission' on its way to tap new tie-ups

Series of meetings being lined up in New Delhi and Mumbai

Anil Sasi
New Delhi, May 2

E. EXPLAINED

Looking at future

The SHANTI law aims to transform the country's energy landscape. Private players will be allowed into operations and fuel management, accelerating capacity while breaking state monopoly. The focus on imported light water reactors and small modular reactors suggests a move towards next-generation technology that is simpler to finance and deploy.

Naidu, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel. Deliberations planned during the course of the delegation's five day schedule (May 17-21) include meetings with the

A HIGH-POWERED US nuclear 'executive mission' is headed to India later this month with a two-pronged agenda: Taking stock of India's nuclear energy landscape less than six months after a landmark legislation opened up this critical sector and to communicate the American industry's interest, as well as coordinate US government messaging, on the emergent opportunities in this field. Organised by the Washington DC-based Nuclear Energy Institute, a lobby group of America's commercial nuclear energy industry, and the US India Strategic Partnership Forum, the industry delegation's visit is expected to have meetings with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Union Power Minister Manohar Lal, besides likely meetings with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Passengers on board the Srinagar-Jammu Vande Bharat Express, which commenced its regular service, at the Jammu Tawi railway station on Saturday. The semi-high-speed train will cover a distance of around 272 km in 4 hours and 50 minutes. ANI

Aboard first Srinagar-Jammu train: Soldier expecting child, family that skipped the road

Naveed Iqbal
Srinagar, Jammu, May 2

JUST BEFORE 8 am, policemen stationed outside the Srinagar Railway Station began whistling for everyone to rush in. For the first time, a Vande Bharat train connecting Srinagar to Jammu was about to pull into the platform.

Inside the station, a quick bag scan, an escalator to the

other side of the platform and in six minutes, the train was in view. The smiles widened, the phones came out, and a queue began to form. As passengers boarded the train to Jammu, some for the first time ever, they were thrilled at the prospect of reaching their destination in less than five hours.

While Jammu has remained connected to railway networks across the country, the roughly

260-kilometre distance between Srinagar and Jammu has been marred by landslides and inclement weather. This train, as a result, has been a dream in the making for decades.

While the Srinagar-Katra line has been functional since June 2025, passengers on the Vande Bharat to Jammu said that having to board or deboard an hour away from Jammu presented its own logistical

challenges. "This is just wonderful," Gagan, a soldier on his way home to Rohtak in Haryana, said on Saturday. "My wife and I are expecting our first child to arrive tomorrow, and with this train, I will be able to reach home tonight."

Posted in Kashmir for the last two years, he said he has taken multiple modes of transport when he had to go home on

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

REPOLING ACROSS FALTA ON MAY 21

Poll results tomorrow, 1 Bengal seat to vote again



Voters at a polling station in South 24 Parganas district, where 15 booths of two Assembly seats saw repolling Saturday. PARTHA PAUL

SC declines TMC plea after EC flags circular on both Central, state staff for counting

Atri Mitra & Ananthakrishnan G
Kolkata, New Delhi, May 2

AS WEST Bengal braced for the counting of votes Monday in the high-stakes battle between the ruling TMC and the Opposition BJP for control of the state, the Election Commission of India Saturday ordered repolling across all 285 polling stations in the Falta Assembly constituency on May 21, and scheduled counting of votes on May 24.

This means that on Monday, results will be declared for 293 of the 294 seats in the state Assembly.

The ECI, in a release, said it was ordering fresh polls "in all the 285 polling stations, including auxiliary polling stations" of Falta constituency after considering reports of "severe electoral offences and subversion of democratic process during polling in a large number of polling stations" on April 29.

Also Saturday, repolling was held in 15 booths of two Assembly constituencies in South 24 Parganas district.

In New Delhi, the Supreme Court declined to pass any further order on a Calcutta High Court order that upheld the Election Commission's decision to deploy Central government and PSU employees as

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Happening today

● **NATIONAL TESTING** Agency will conduct the NEET (Undergraduate) exam for medical courses from 2 pm to 5 pm, across 552 cities in India and 14 cities abroad.

● **MALDIVES PRESIDENT** Mohamed Muizzu will start his state visit to Sri Lanka. Muizzu and President Anura Kumara Dissanayake are scheduled to sign several MoUs covering cooperation across multiple sectors.

● **ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR** Islands is set to attempt a world record for the 'tallest human stack underwater' in a bid to promote tourism.

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NATION PAGE 9



4 DRG PERSONNEL KILLED WHILE DEFUSING IED IN CHHATTISGARH

THE GOVERNMENT on Saturday sent a test notification in the form of a text message with a sharp beep sound to almost all citizens around 11:42 am, demonstrating its indigenously developed Cell Broadcast system for instant communication during critical situations such as natural disasters and man-

Govt tests new system for real-time alerts on disasters, emergencies

Unlike SMS, cell broadcast system uses one-to-many channel for alerts

Express News Service
New Delhi, May 2

made emergencies. A pop-up message flashed on mobile screens in English, Hindi and other languages with the headline 'Extremely Severe Alerts'. "India, launches Cell Broadcast using indigenously technology, for instant disaster alerting service for its citizens. Alert citizens, safe nation. No action is required by the public upon receipt of this message. This is a test message. - Government of India," it read.

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) said it is set to launch an advanced public alerting framework in coordination with key agencies including the National Disaster Management Authority. This is

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Top 500 companies' profits grew 30% post Covid, but no investments: CEA

Points to new Chinese, US laws, warns of restrictive external environment

Siddharth Upasani
New Delhi, May 2

INDIA'S TOP economist on Saturday criticised the private sector asking it to reflect why it has been reluctant to invest, which in itself might have contributed to demand uncertainty.

Addressing the second annual Isaac Centre for Public Policy Growth Conference organ-

ised by Ashoka University, Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said, "Post Covid, if you look at BSE 500 or NSE 500 companies, corporate profits grew at 30.8% per annum. But still, our overall capital formation rates from the private sector have been disappointing."

The CEA also warned about a more restrictive external en-



CEA V Anantha Nageswaran. FILE

vironment and said India needed its own "answer" to Chinese and American laws that secure their supply chains and inbound investments. He said global companies will find

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

'Canada-based Khalistani extremist': In first, Ottawa uses term to flag threat

Manraj Grewal Sharma
Chandigarh, May 2

USING THE term Canada-based Khalistani extremist (CBKE) for the first time in the public domain, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) has informed the country's Parliament that the continued involvement of CBKES in violent extremist activities posed a threat "to Canada and to Cana-

dian interests".

In its Public Report 2025, tabled in Parliament Friday, the CSIS said some extremists maintained links with Canadian citizens who "leverage Canadian institutions to promote their violent extremist agenda and collect funds from unsuspecting community members" that are allegedly diverted towards violent activities.

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GUJARAT PANCHAYAT POLLS

BJP candidate, father held for 'cutting off village water supply after poll loss'

Kamal Saiyed
Surat, May 2

THOUSANDS OF residents of a village in Gujarat's Bharuch district had their drinking water supply cut for nearly four days, allegedly following the panchayat election loss of a BJP candidate whose father heads the committee that controls the water supply.

The district police on Satur-

POLITICS PAGE 6



NITI AAYOG GETS 2 NEW FULL-TIME MEMBERS

PRASOON JOSHI NEW CHAIRMAN OF PRASAR BHARATI



Shakil Malek (right) with his father Khalid Malek. EXPRESS

day arrested Khalid Malek and his son Shakil Malek, a local BJP leader who was defeated in the Jambusar Taluka Panchayat election from Kavi-2 (Dehgam) seat. Both were later released on bail.

The water supply to Dehgam village, which has a population of nearly 10,000, was cut on April 28, the day the results of the April 26 elections to local

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

PUNE CONTRACTOR WINS COURT BATTLE FOR HIS MONEY SEIZED ON DECEMBER 1, 2016

Rs 2 lakh to 0 to Rs 2 lakh: A demonetisation story ends on happy note after a decade

Ankita Deshkar
Nagpur, May 2

THIS IS one demonetisation story that has a happy ending — though after a decade of waiting. Girish Rameshchandra Malani of Pune, who could not convert Rs 2 lakh in old notes of Rs 500 denomination as the money was seized on a charge that he was later dismissed, is now set to get an equivalent amount in the new currency.

PAGE 1 anchor

strengthened his faith in justice, but reinforced that it often comes too late. "It should not take these many years to get what is legally ours," says Malani. On December 1, 2016, the then 41-year-old, along with his sister Sonal Soni, was on his way to the Renuka Devi Temple in Mahur. He was carrying 400 notes of Rs 500 denomination, part of his business funds that he planned to deposit in his Akola bank account before the December 30 government deadline to exchange old currency. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced demonetisation, in a sudden move, on

November 8 that year. "I was carrying cash from Amravati and going to Pusad to drop my sister, when she suggested that we visit the Mahur temple that was nearby," he says. Their car was intercepted by a police patrol team at the Keroli Naka check-post, put up as part of security for the ongoing nagar panchayat elections in Nanded district. "They checked our vehicle, and found the cash. I tried to explain that I was going to deposit the money for exchange before the demonetisation deadline. But they said it was election time and this amount of cash could not be carried, and seized it," says Malani.



Girish Rameshchandra Malani had missed the deadline to deposit the notes as it was seized by police in view of local polls in Nanded

He was summoned by Income Tax officials to Nanded and asked to prove the source of the funds. Malani says he submitted his bank statements, audit papers, Income Tax returns and business documents, which showed that the cash

was from the legitimate infrastructure business he operated with his brother. Malani says he was "not very mature" at the time and subjected to many rounds of questioning. "It was the first time I had faced something like that, or been summoned by Income Tax officers for an inquiry. It was stressful." The officials were eventually convinced that there was no illegality, and Income Tax authorities communicated to Malani by December 28, 2016, that no further action was required. Paperwork took another three days, says Malani, with the notes reaching him finally on December 31,

2016 — missing by exactly one day the deadline to exchange the demonetised currency. Malani says he approached the Reserve Bank of India's Nagpur office in January 2017, as well as sent formal emails, hoping for relief due to his exceptional circumstances. However, the RBI refused to entertain his request. "Even they were correct at their end," says Malani. "If they had made an exception for me, they would have had to do so for everyone."

May 12, 2017, arguing that confiscated demonetised notes could only be accepted if the seizing authority had recorded the serial numbers at the time of seizure and if court directions specifically mentioned those details. But, the Mahur police had not documented each note's serial number, the RBI said. Malani decided to approach the Bombay High Court's Nagpur Bench, and filed a writ petition on September 25, 2017. His lawyer C N Deshpande argued that Malani had been unfairly deprived of his right to deposit legal cash solely because authorities retained it beyond the deadline.

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Nirav Modi, Vijay Mallya among 21 declared fugitive economic offenders

ED confiscates Rs 2,178 crore assets

Mahender Singh Manral
New Delhi, May 2

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate (ED) has declared 21 people, including businessmen Nirav Modi and Vijay Mallya, UK-based arms consultant Sanjay Bhandari, and Hajra Iqbal Memon (wife of the late Iqbal Mirchi, gangster Dawood Ibrahim's aide), as fugitive economic offenders (FEOs) over the past seven years, according to its annual report.

An FEO is an individual against whom a warrant for arrest in relation to a scheduled offence, where the total value involved in such offence or offences is Rs 100 crore or more, has been issued by any court in India, and who has left India to avoid criminal prosecution or being abroad, refuses to return to India to face criminal prosecution.

However, the report added, decisions to declare diamond trader Mehul Choksi, Islamic preacher Zakir Naik, and Mahadev app promoters Sourabh Chandrakar and Ravi Uppal as FEOs under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act (FEOA) remain sub judice in courts.

The central agency's annual report, released on Friday, states that proceedings under FEOA have been initiated against 54 individuals to date, with 21 declared FEOs and assets worth around Rs 2,178.34 crore confiscated.

"Out of these 21, nine individuals were declared FEOs in 2025-26 itself," the report noted.

According to the report, the ED's performance under FEOA in the past two financial years—2024-25 and 2025-26—shows significant asset recovery and a rising number of offenders declared as fugitives. "This reflects ED's commitment to swiftly act against those fleeing India to evade prosecution," it said.

Citing Bhandari as an example, the report noted that a special court (PMLA) declared him an FEO last year following ED's application on December 13, 2019, under FEOA.

A UK-based arms dealer, Bhandari fled to London after income tax raids in 2016. He escaped India via Nepal in 2016, and an Interpol Red Notice was issued against him in October 2017.

"Probes revealed undisclosed foreign income of Rs 655 crore and foreign assets exceeding Rs 100 crore. Between 2009 and 2016, he deposited huge sums into overseas shell companies and invested in properties in the UAE and UK. ED filed a Prosecution Complaint (PC) against him in 2020 and a supplementary PC in 2023. ED has now sought confiscation of his properties before the Special Court (PMLA), Rouse Avenue Court," the report said.

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Bengal

counting supervisors and assistants for the counting of votes Monday.

Dismissing a TMC appeal challenging the April 30 order of the HC, the bench of Justices PS Narasimha and Joyimalya Bagchi declined to pass any further order after EC counsel Senior Advocate D S Naidu described the TMC's apprehensions as "completely misplaced" and said the poll body was following its April 13 circular, which also provided for inclusion of state government employees in the counting process.

"No further orders are necessary...except to reiterate the statement of Senior Advocate D S Naidu that the circular dated April 13, 2026 will be implemented in true letter and spirit," the bench said.

Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the TMC, pointed out that as per the circular, which is part of the EChandbook, there had to be "random selection of state government and Central government employees" for counting duty, but only Central government employees were

being deployed.

Countering this, Naidu said, "The returning officer has the overarching power and is from the state government... And everything happens under his supervision. He picks up by way of randomisation, both the counting supervisor and the counting assistant. And we have alternated in such a way that if the first one is from Central government, the other is from state government and vice versa."

"Thereafter, each candidate will have his own agents. If there are 10 tables, there will be 10 agents. They will be just watching the proceedings...It's a completely misplaced apprehension," he said.

Both TMC and BJP interpreted the Supreme Court decision to each's advantage.

In a press release, the TMC said, "After hearing the parties, the Hon'ble Supreme Court directed that Clause 1 of the communication dated 13.04.2026, relating to the appointment of Counting Supervisors and Counting Assistants, must be read along with the salient feature contained in the second page of the said communication which provides for random selection of both State Govern-

ment and Central Government employees." "It is expected that the process of counting of votes shall be conducted in a fair, transparent, and balanced manner in accordance with the directions recorded by the Hon'ble Supreme Court," it said.

The TMC also sent a letter to the West Bengal CEO, saying "you are requested to ensure strict compliance with the said Notification dated 13.04.2026, as clarified and observed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in its order dated 02.05.2026 upon the undertaking given by Learned Senior Advocate appearing for the ECI. The requirement of appropriate representation of State and Central Government personnel in the counting process, through the prescribed mechanism of randomisation, must be scrupulously followed...."

The BJP said the SC decision not to pass any further order was a setback for the TMC and a validation of the electoral process.

BJP state chief Samik Bhattacharya said, "The state government is wasting taxpayer's money. TMC already lost in the election. After assuming power in West Bengal, we will publish the TMC government's expenditure on fighting cases in SC."

Alerts

aimed at enabling timely communication during critical situations. "This initiative reflects a continued commitment to building a more responsive and resilient communication ecosystem for citizens across the country," the DoT said in a post on social media platform X.

Currently, the government already issues disaster alerts through SMS by deploying the Integrated Alert System called SACHET, which is developed

by the Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT), the research and development centre of the DoT. This system, based on the Common Alerting Protocol recommended by the International Telecommunication Union, has been successfully operationalised by the National Disaster Management Authority.

But unlike SMS alerts (which is a one-to-one channel) which may be missed by many, the 'cell broadcast' technology used on Saturday is unmissable since its a one-to-many channel communication system. It mirrors

the technologies used in countries such as Japan (which issued tsunami alerts). It is a method where short messages with sound alerts can be sent to all mobile devices within a defined geographic area simultaneously almost in near real-time delivery.

The Cell Broadcast technology, also introduced by C-DOT, will further strengthen alert dissemination in time-critical situations, such as tsunamis, earthquakes, lightning strikes and man-made emergencies like gas leaks or chemical hazards, the government said.

ent the private sector "a good reason to invest", with the gap between the Indian rupee and Chinese yuan's real effective exchange rates (REER) closing, the CEA pointed out. This should make it relatively expensive to import from China and relatively inexpensive to export, everything else being equal, allowing the diversification of supply sources away from China.

The Indian rupee hit a new all-time low of 95.34-per-dollar on Thursday as the ongoing crisis in West Asia propelled crude oil prices to a four-year high. The rupee is now down more than 4% since the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28.

The FTAs signed by India also give companies access to foreign markets while also exposing them to more competition. However, it is important Indian companies make use of these FTAs, he said. "One of the problems is the FTA utilisation by India is very poor compared to others. So, the industry association and bodies have to do a much better job of talking about them."

Commenting more broadly on the manufacturing sector, the CEA argued it has been able to maintain its share in the country's GVA at 17-18% in real terms "in the face of unprecedented competition from China". "So, it is not therefore a story of failure. It's probably a story of stability or stagnation, depending on the eye of the beholder."

CEA

it "more and more difficult" to move out of China, and warned that India will have to "accept and be willing to work alongside" such a restrictive global environment.

According to the CEA, companies and second or third generation entrepreneurs "chose to accumulate those cash profits and probably set up family offices elsewhere rather than investing in real assets on the ground". This, he said, is something that warrants reflection from the private sector because even the regulatory environment has been improving at the margin at state and Central level.

The CEA said, "Corporates and the second or third generation entrepreneurs chose to accumulate those cash profits and probably set up family offices elsewhere rather than investing in real assets on the ground." Much of the nation building in developed countries happened not because of public policy alone, but also because the industry acted in national interest and found a fusion between their private interest and national interest, he said. "So, it's always easier to point a finger at the government but sometimes the gaze also has to be reversed on the part of the industry."

The current juncture pres-

done nothing wrong, so why should I quit?" Finally, Malani decided to document each demonetised note's serial number on his own. "I took down all the 400 serial numbers one by one."

On March 20, his legal team submitted an affidavit to the Bombay High Court listing the serial numbers.

On April 22, a Divisional Bench of Justices Urmila Joshi-Phalke and Nivedita P Mehta ruled in Malani's favour. They held that the rules should not be followed so strictly when it was the government's own actions that had led to the situation.

Accepting the March 2026 affidavit by Malani's side as sufficient compliance, the court di-

Train

leave but this direct train to Jammu is a "relief" for the time it saves.

As the train rolled out of Srinagar, for the most part, everyone stared out at the green expanse that is South Kashmir. The mountains still covered in snow, the vast fields and dense orchards. Until the train disappeared into the tunnels of the Jammu region, prompting a collective tilting of heads inward and conversations with strangers. "I didn't know I couldn't select a seat, I got mine much after booking the ticket yesterday," said a man heading home to Jammu. A card game began in another coach as travellers expressed surprise at the leg room and began comparing it to the tight seats on a plane.

Aakash and Deepti Goyal were travelling in Kashmir with their son for the last five days. Just yesterday, they heard about the direct train to Jammu and booked their tickets. "We were planning to travel to Jammu by car and then take a train home to Hindon, but this idea seemed better," Aakash said.

On Saturday, less than 50 per cent of the 20 coaches were occupied. Armed and unarmed security personnel walked the length of the train on the hour, and every few minutes, a cleaner swept the floor.

It isn't just the times saved that is on everyone's mind, it's the convenience and "luxury of certainty" as well. "Going to Jammu meant being covered in dust and grime and having a sore back. In this train, I know I will get home without exhaustion," said Sajad, a Kashmiri travel agent, adding that because of landslides on the road, "one could never say how long it would take."

The train made three stops before Jammu — Banihal, Katra (Vaishno Devi) and Udhampur. Jammu Tawi station arrived at 12:45 pm.

The train halted for about 30 minutes. The platform had students studying in different parts of the country. Army men returning to duty, and government employees set to return to Kashmir for the summer as the seat of government shifts to Srinagar Monday.

At 1:20 pm, it left for Srinagar. Among the passengers was Dharendra Singh, a Himachal Pradesh resident who has spent 16 years posted in the Armed Forces in J&K. "I have only a few days of leave at a time. A lot of that was spent getting to Jammu in convoys and then taking a bus home. Now I can get home quicker and also bring family to visit safely," he said.

Vinod Kumar, a J&K government employee, was going to join work at the secretariat. "When I was younger, a train to Srinagar seemed like a dream. We heard about plans, but I never thought I'd live to see a train cross the Pir Panjal and into Kashmir," he said.

At 6 pm, as stated on the ticket, the train arrived at Srinagar Railway Station in Nowgam, and the shawls and jackets came out as passengers made their way into the city.

The journey that was 10 hours one-way by car only a decade ago is now a 10-hour return trip with views to serve.

rected him to submit the notes to the RBI in a week, and told the Central bank to verify the serial numbers and pay him Rs 2 lakh in valid legal tender within eight weeks.

RBI data shows that more than 99% of the demonetised Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes, amounting to Rs 15,310 lakh crore, had made their way back into the system by August 9, 2018, leaving about Rs 10,720 crore that hadn't.

Malani says one of his first steps after getting the money will be a temple — marking a full circle from where the story began. "I will make a *chadava* (an offering) of Rs 5,000. It won't be in cash, but in the form of a food donation.

US nuclear 'mission'

Department of Atomic Energy top brass, NITI Aayog, other energy ministries and representatives of state-owned Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd (NPCIL) and NTPC Ltd.

The delegation would likely land in New Delhi on May 17 and stay until May 19, before heading to Mumbai on May 20 for a series of meetings spanning two days. US Ambassador Sergio Gor and the US Embassy staff are likely to set the agenda for the delegation's series of formal meetings that get underway on the morning of May 18.

The Mumbai leg is likely to include meetings with India's private sector energy players including Reliance Industries Ltd, the Adani Group, Tata Power Company Ltd, JSW Energy, Vedanta, Larsen & Toubro Ltd, Tata Consulting Engineers and Hindalco Industries.

Last December, Parliament had passed the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act, 2025, marking a major shift in how India's tightly-controlled nuclear power sector will be governed in the coming years. For the first time, the Act enabled private players to enter the operations side of this critical sector as well as areas such as fuel management, which had remained under tight public-sector control for decades.

Alongside the increased role for the private sector in nuclear plant operations, the deployment of imported Light Water Reactor-based projects, aided by foreign funding, are two outcomes in the wake of the passage of the new legislation, which opens up the possibility of more imported LWR-based nuclear projects of the kind that are being set up by the Russians in Kudankulam, Tamil Nadu. India is also keen to look at the possibility of the deployment of small modular reactors or SMRs.

Although India's civil nuclear programme has expertise

in manufacturing pressurised heavy water reactors — from 200MWe PHWRs to the new 700MWe reactors — an impediment of sorts for the country's nuclear establishment is its reactor technology. Based on heavy water and natural uranium, the PHWRs are a technology that India's nuclear establishment has a mastery over, but one that is increasingly out of sync with the LWRs that are now the most dominant reactor type across the world. The Americans, the Russians and the French are among the leaders in LWR technology. Also, India's dominant nuclear technology — its mainstay PHWRs — has scalability issues.

The government's move to look outwards for collaborations on nuclear is driven by two clear policy imperatives: the desperate need for base load alternatives to coal-fired capacity to tide over the limitations of renewables; and more importantly, the external outreach for nuclear collaborations is driven more by the need for capital than the need for technology, a top government official had indicated ahead of the passage of the nuclear amendments.

The SHANTI Act was passed amid Opposition's concern over allowing private players and changes in the liability regime, particularly the whittling down of provisions fixing responsibility on equipment suppliers in the event of a nuclear accident. This new Act replaced two earlier legislations — the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 (AE Act) and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010 (CLNDA) — and effectively redrew the rules that govern India's nuclear power sector.

From who can build and operate plants and how accident liability is capped, to the role of the safety regulator and the mechanisms for dispute resolution and compensation, all of these have been tweaked or changed.

Water supply cut off

self-government bodies in Gujarat were announced. The supply was restored after police intervention on Friday evening.

The elections saw the BJP winning a majority of the self-governing bodies across Gujarat, and in the 22-seat Jambusar taluka panchayat, the BJP returned to power by winning 14 seats. The Congress won six seats, while AAP and an Independent won one each.

Shakil contested the Kavi-2 seat, where the other candidates were Congress's Tanvir Malek and AAP's Sohail Shaikh — all residents of Dehgam. On April 28, when the election results were declared, AAP candidate Shaikh won with 2,100 votes, while Shakil got 1,098 votes and Tanvir got 1,300.

Following the defeat, Shakil and his father allegedly went around the village brandishing swords and threatening residents that they would not get drinking water. Videos of the incident went viral on social media. After verifying the videos, police lodged a case.

According to former sarpanch and gram panchayat member Ibrahim Malek, the village residents used to get water from a pond until around 30 years ago, when an NRI, through the Islahul Muslimeen Trust, donated funds and an underground water pipeline was laid, connecting the village with the Narmada river through the Jhanor pumping station.

"The water is delivered to the distribution centre from where it goes to different households. A five-member Dehgam Water Committee was formed, headed by a president, to run the water distribution network. For the operation and maintenance of the water distribution centre, and the salaries of two staff members, nominal fees are collected from individual house-

holds. Currently, Khalid Malek is the president of the water committee," Ibrahim Malek said.

According to village sarpanch Mohsin Malek, after the water supply was stopped on April 28, other members of the water committee appealed to Khalid to resume the supply, "but he and his son were firm on their decision".

In those four days without supply, residents resorted to taking water from a nearby well and borewells. One of the residents said they were "scared of the father-son duo and did not dare to confront them or lodge a police complaint".

Jambusar Taluka BJP president Kuldeep Singh Yadav said, "After learning about the incident, we reached the village and held a meeting with the villagers, including... Khalid Malek, his son Shakil Malek and police officials and restored the water supply. We told Khalid the water is given free of cost to the people by the Gujarat government and nobody should dare to stop it... We have informed our party's higher-ups about the actions taken by Shakil Malek and his father..."

Kavi police inspector K M Chaudhary said, "We first started the water supply after taking Khalid Malek into confinement and later arrested him and his son Shakil Malek from his home Saturday. They are out on bail. We suspect that due to the defeat of Shakil in the local body polls, both had made the decision to stop the supply of water to the households. We will take statements from the villagers, the sarpanch, and other individuals to know what drove both father and son to come out with swords in their hands."

The Maleks were booked under BNS section 223 (b) (disobedience to the order promulgated by a public servant).

"next level partnership" and put behind a bitter recent past, signed a "landmark deal for long-term uranium supply".

The two sides also signed a slew of pacts and agreed to conclude a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement by the end of the year. This marked a turnaround in ties which took a severe hit after Carney's predecessor Justin Trudeau, in September 2023, alleged Indian government agents were involved in the killing of Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar — a charge India rejected as "motivated".

Office of the Executive Engineer, PMGSY Division Jammu

Near DG(P) Residence Bikram Chowk, Jammu,

Fax No.: 0191-2439734

SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING TENDER

e-NIT No. EE/PMGSY/J/05 of 2026-27, Dated:- 30.04.2026.

Executive Engineer PMGSY Division Jammu for and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, UT J&K, e-tenders are invited on Percentage basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:-

S. No	Name of Work/Package No.	Advised Cost (₹ in lacs)	Cost of document (₹ in lacs)	Earnest Money (₹ in lacs)	Time Allowed for completion	Class of Contractor	Head of Account
1	Permanent Restoration of T01 to Talour road damaged during the heavy rainfalls of August-September 2025 under SASCI 2025-26, Package No. JK05-220, Block - Sumb, District - Samba, Adv. Cost including GST	11.97	600	0.24	01 Month	CLASS "B" CLASS "C" & CLASS "D"	Permanent Restoration under SASCI 2025-26
2	Permanent Restoration of Talour to Markoli road damaged during the heavy rainfalls of August-September 2025 under SASCI 2025-26, Package No. JK05-165, Block - Samba, District - Samba, Adv. Cost including GST	11.97	600	0.24	01 Month	CLASS "B" CLASS "C" & CLASS "D"	Permanent Restoration under SASCI 2025-26
3	Permanent Restoration of Rehian to Khanwal road damaged during the heavy rainfalls of August-September 2025 under SASCI 2025-26, Package No. JK05-88, Block - Samba, District - Samba, Adv. Cost including GST	7.95	300	0.16	01 Month	CLASS "C" & CLASS "D"	Permanent Restoration under SASCI 2025-26
4	Permanent Restoration of Rudwan to Kandral road damaged during the heavy rainfalls of August-September 2025 under SASCI 2025-26, Package No. JK21-3003, Block - Ramgarh, District - Samba, Adv. Cost including GST	7.93	300	0.16	01 Month	CLASS "C" & CLASS "D"	Permanent Restoration under SASCI 2025-26
5	Permanent Restoration of T01 to Dhalot via Talour road damaged during the heavy rainfalls of August-September 2025 under SASCI 2025-26, Package No. JK21-3004, Block - Sumb, District - Samba, Adv. Cost including GST	15.98	800	0.32	01 Month	CLASS "B" & CLASS "C"	Permanent Restoration under SASCI 2025-26
6	Permanent Restoration of Rakh Ambatali to Manohar Gopala road damaged during the heavy rainfalls of August-September 2025 under SASCI 2025-26, Package No. JK05-164, Block - Sumb, District - Samba, Adv. Cost including GST	11.97	600	0.24	01 Month	CLASS "B" CLASS "C" & CLASS "D"	Permanent Restoration under SASCI 2025-26
7	Permanent Restoration of Bharatgarh to Handulvian road damaged during the heavy rainfalls of August-September 2025 under SASCI 2025-26, Package No. JK05-163, Block - Nud, District - Samba, Adv. Cost including GST	24	800	0.48	01 Month	CLASS "B" & CLASS "C"	Permanent Restoration under SASCI 2025-26

Position of AAA: - Accorded.

Position of TS: - Accorded.

Position of Funds: - Demanded.

The Bidding documents Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website <http://pmgsytendersjk.gov.in> as per below schedule:-

1	Date of Publishing of Tender Notice	30.04.2026
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	From 30.04.2026 (06:55 PM) to 11.05.2026 (05:00PM)
3	Date of Pre - Bid Meeting	03.05.2026. (12:00 PM)
4	Bid submission Start Date	02.05.2026. (10:00 AM)
5	Bid Submission End Date	11.05.2026 (05:00 PM)
6	Date & time of opening of Technical Bids (Online)	12.05.2026 on or after 02:00 PM in the Office of Executive Engineer PMGSY Division Jammu
7	Date & time of opening of Financial Bids (Online)	To be notified after technical bid evaluation is completed.

- Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document and EMD paid Online while submission of bid as mentioned in the bid documents.
- The date and time of opening of bids shall be notified on Web Site www.pmgsytendersjk.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address.
- The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the Office of Executive Engineer PMGSY Division Jammu.
- The earnest money of the unsuccessful bidder shall be released online after Award of Contract.
- The electronic bidding system would not allow any late submission of bids after due date and time as per server time. Bidders may modify their bids by uploading their request for modification before the deadline for submission of bids. For this, the bidder need not make any additional payment towards the cost of tender document. For bid modification and consequential re-submission, the bidder is not required to withdraw his bid submitted earlier. The last modified bid submitted by the bidder within the bid submission time shall be considered as the bid. For this purpose, modification/withdrawal by other means will not be accepted. In online system of bid submission, the modification and consequential-submission of bids is allowed any number of times. The bidders may withdraw his bid by uploading their request before the deadline for submission of bids; however, if the bid is withdrawn, the re-submission of the bid is not allowed. No bid shall be modified or withdrawn after the deadline of submission of bids.
- The date and time of opening of Financial-Bids shall be notified on Web Site www.pmgsytendersjk.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The Financial-bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online in the Office of Executive Engineer PMGSY Division Jammu. The date for same shall be intimated separately.
- The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of Technical bids.
- The Earnest money shall be forfeited and the bidder shall be disqualified from bidding for any contract with this office for a period of 03 years from the date of notification, if:-**
 - Any bidder/tenderer withdraws his bid/tender during the period of bid validity or makes any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid.
 - Failure of Successful bidder to furnish the required performance security within specified time period after issue of letter of acceptance.
 - In case contractor fails to execute the agreement within 28 days after fixation of contract.

No.: EE/PMGSY/J/51-57

Dated: 30.04.2026

DIP/J-1458/26 - DATE 02 MAY 2026

Sd/-
Executive Engineer PMGSY
Division Jammu

Rs 2 lakh

Says Malani: "The mental struggle was immense. The case weighed heavily on me, and I would just focus on my work. But life had to move forward, and I told myself I couldn't keep crying over Rs 2 lakh forever."

At the same time, he admits he didn't expect the court case to last nearly a decade. "I thought justice would come quickly... I kept thinking, why should I suffer for no fault of mine."

At other moments he considered giving up. "I thought maybe I should just let it go because it was too much trouble. But then, I thought — I have

'Khalistani extremist'

"This past year marked the 40th anniversary of the bombing of Air India Flight 182, whose suspects were members of Canada-based Khalistani extremist groups. It remains to this day the deadliest terrorist attack in Canadian history, with 329 people killed, most of them Canadians," the report said, adding: "There were no CBKE-related attacks in Canada in 2025."

At the same time, the agency, in its report, said that support for

done nothing wrong, so why should I quit?" Finally, Malani decided to document each demonetised note's serial number on his own. "I took down all the 400 serial numbers one by one."

On March 20, his legal team submitted an affidavit to the Bombay High Court listing the serial numbers.

On April 22, a Divisional Bench of Justices Urmila Joshi-Phalke and Nivedita P Mehta ruled in Malani's favour. They held that the rules should not be followed so strictly when it was the government's own actions that had led to the situation.

Accepting the March 2026 affidavit by Malani's side as sufficient compliance, the court di-

included surveillance and coercive tactics aimed at suppressing criticism of the Indian government within Canada.

The report also placed foreign interference high on Canada's threat list, naming China, India, Russia, Iran and Pakistan among the principal states engaged in espionage and interference activities.

On India, the CSIS said New Delhi had "historically cultivated covert relationships with Canadian politicians, journalists, and members of the Indo-Canadian community" to advance its interests. It alleged this

Karkardooma judge, 30, found dead at home, suicide suspected

PCR call made by brother-in-law; wife also a judge

Pragnesh & Nirbhay Thakur
New Delhi, May 2

A 30-YEAR-OLD judge posted at the Karkardooma court was found dead at his Green Park house in South Delhi on Saturday evening, police said. After a preliminary investigation was conducted, it is suspected that



Judge Aman Kumar Sharma

he died by suicide, according to officers.

A PCR call was received at Safdarjung Enclave police sta-

tion at 1.45 pm. It was found that the Judicial Services official, identified as Aman Kumar Sharma, had died at his residence. He is suspected to have died by hanging.

Police said they entered the house by breaking down the door. The PCR call was made by his brother-in-law, according to the officers. "The call was made by Shivam, a resident of Defence Colony, who is Sharma's brother-in-law," an officer said.

The body has been sent for post-mortem. "No foul play has been established so far. How-

ever, all angles are being examined as part of inquest proceedings," a senior officer said. Statements of all people concerned are being recorded and further investigation is underway, said officers.

Sharma was posted as the Full-Time Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) at the Karkardooma court. As per the North East District Legal Service Authority website, Sharma joined the Delhi Judicial Services on June 19, 2021. He completed his BA LLB from Symbiosis Law School, Pune, in 2018. He dealt

with various criminal and civil matters while holding different jurisdictions as the Judicial Magistrate First Class and as a civil judge, it said.

With effect from October 18, 2025, Sharma had taken charge as the Full-Time Secretary of the DLSA at the Karkardooma court.

He is survived by two children, one of whom is less than nine months old, and his wife, also a judge.

A source in the court said, "He was a young judge. I had met him once. We didn't know him well..."

3 OF FAMILY DIED IN JABALPUR BOAT CAPSIZE ON APRIL 30

Son-in-law broke lock on cabinet with life jackets, staff didn't help: father of woman who drowned with child

Pragnesh
New Delhi, May 2

THE CEMETERY at Sector 19 in Dwarka was swamped on Saturday, mostly by friends and family members of Marina Mesi (38) and her four-year-old son Trishan, who drowned during a storm at Bargi Dam on Narmada river on Thursday while they were on a cruise.

The bodies were recovered from inside the submerged hull of the cruise boat -- operated by the Madhya Pradesh Tourism department -- sharing a single lifejacket.

At the cemetery, Marina's husband Prabhakar cut a dejected figure. He was on the cruise with five family members -- Marina, his two children, his father-in-law Julius Massey (65) and mother-in-law Madhur Massey (62).

Only Prabhakar, his daughter Siya (14) and Julius survived.

"I saw Marina and my son drown in front of my eyes. I am tired of thinking and speaking about it," Prabhakar said.

Julius said that till the very end, he held on to hope that his daughter and grandson would survive.

"We had attended a house warming party a day ago, and wanted to go on a cruise. We were all sitting on the upper deck of the vessel. When water started flooding in, I asked my wife and daughter to move downstairs. I didn't think straight -- that the lower deck would flood first. When tragedy strikes, you lose your ability to think clearly," he added.

Julius alleged that amid the panic, none of the staff members operating the cruise came to help.

"My son-in-law broke the



Marina's husband Prabhakar on Saturday. PTI

lock on the cabinet that contained life jackets. We started putting them on... When the boat capsized, I got pushed out as I was on the outer side. I managed to hold on to a tube and get out of the water," he said.

Julius said that soon he saw his wife's body being recovered. He still hoped that Marina was alive.

"When they brought her out of the water, she was wearing a life jacket... but she was lifeless. When they removed the life jacket, we found my grandson was wrapped in it too," he added.

Marina's brother Kuldeep said the family members were on the upper deck when weather conditions suddenly deteriorated. "My sister was on a video call with us, showing us the view and the water. Then suddenly everything changed. She kept crying, 'save me... save me...'" and after that the phone disconnected," he added.

Jacob, Marina's elder brother, was in Delhi when he received the news. "...My father said they received no help -- there were no divers, nothing. If not for the local villagers, I don't know what would have hap-

pened," he said.

A colleague of Prabhakar, Karan, remembered Marina as someone who would send food for him. "She would often ask what I wanted to eat, and would send it the next day in Prabhakar's lunch box."

On Thursday, a cruise vessel carrying 35 to 40 passengers capsized in the Bargi Dam area of Jabalpur, following a sudden storm that triggered strong winds and high waves on the Narmada river.

According to senior officials and rescue personnel, the sequence of events that led to the accident began even before the cruise started. A weather advisory warning of 40-50 kmph winds had been issued a day earlier. Despite this, the cruise began around 4.30 pm. By around 6 pm, when the boat reached near Khamaria island, weather conditions worsened sharply.

According to eyewitnesses present on the riverbank, they shouted and signalled to the operator to return. Survivors said those warnings were ignored.

By Saturday, 11 bodies had been found and 28 people rescued.

• Skywatch



Forecast: May 3, 2026

Partly cloudy sky becoming generally cloudy sky; light rain with thunderstorm, lightning and strong winds gusting to 50 kmph

MAX: 36-38

1.3°C below normal

MIN: 25-27

.3°C below normal

• Sunrise: 5:39 AM (May 4)

• Sunset: 6:58 PM (May 3)

• Moonrise: 8:42 PM (May 3)

• Moonset: 6:56 AM (May 4)

• AQI Tracker



Anand Vihar

Moderate

AQI: 171

Narela

Moderate

AQI: 156



ITO

Moderate

AQI: 116

Rohini

Moderate

AQI: 156

● Good (0-50)

● Satisfactory (51-100)

● Moderate (101-200)

● Poor (201-300)

● Very Poor (301-400)

● Severe (401-500)

EASING TRAFFIC CONGESTION ALSO HIGHLIGHT OF Rs 6,048-CRORE BUDGET

Boosting connectivity to Noida airport, firefighting infra focus in GNIDA Budget

Drishiti Jain

Greater Noida, May 2

A 15 km long road to connect Greater Noida to Ganga Expressway and a six-lane elevated road parallel to the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC), a 1,506-km, electrified railway line dedicated connecting Maharashtra to Dadri in Uttar Pradesh -- Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority's (GNIDA) nod to these two projects to boost connectivity to the Noida International Airport and neighbouring cities were among the key highlights as the nodal agency approved the 2026-27 Budget on Saturday. In the Rs 6,048 crore Budget, GNIDA has also allocated Rs 1.8 crore for UP Roadways to deploy 15 electric buses for an initial six months after the airport begins operating commercial flights from June 15.

Explaining the significance of a connecting road to Ganga Expressway, an official said, "A 15 km long road will be constructed to connect a 105 m stretch in Greater Noida to the



Noida airport is set to operate commercial flights from June 15. FILE

Ganga Expressway. This will reduce the travel time of people headed from Noida and Greater Noida to Ganga Expressway entry point from around 1 hour 35 minutes to 30-45 minutes."

The official also added that the six-lane road, once constructed, will ensure easy transit of goods to the cargo terminal of the Noida International Airport.

While the airport is expected to serve lakhs of passengers

from Delhi-NCR and Western UP, commute and last-mile connectivity have been among key concerns. Officials said that 15 EV buses will cover busy areas such as Pari Chowk, Char Murti Chowk and Surajpur in Greater Noida.

In its Budget, the nodal agency has also highlighted that it will commission a study to IIT Delhi to recommend solutions for easing traffic congestion at Pari Chowk, Knowledge Park, Expo Mart, P-3 roundabout and surrounding areas. "Pari Chowk is one of the busiest intersections of Greater Noida. Thousands of vehicles pass through the area daily. Solving the traffic problem here is the first priority of the authority," said another official.

In another important allocation, the nodal agency, responsible for development of Greater Noida City, has said that two hydraulic platforms of 102 meters to tackle fire incidents in high-rises will be purchased for Rs 100 crore.

This comes after a massive fire at Gaur Green Avenue in

Ghaziabad's Indirapuram earlier this week gutted several flats worth over Rs 3 crore and lapses were flagged in the rescue operation.

Meanwhile, the authority has also put up new allotment rates of assets for the financial year with an increase of 3.58% for all types of properties. Allotment rates refer to the prices set by the authority for giving land or property (plots, flats, commercial spaces) to individuals or organisations. "This increase has been made on the basis of the cost inflation index. Land will be allotted to government and semi-government departments at prevailing residential rates," said GNIDA CEO Ravi Kumar N G.

In the past few years, he said, investors have shown a greater inclination towards the industrial area.

"The authority is continuously making efforts to provide land to investors. In the 2026-27 Budget, an increased emphasis is being given on land acquisition and infrastructure," the GNIDA CEO said.



At a Jan Sunwayi meeting on Saturday. X/ @GUPTA_REKHA

Shalimar Bagh to be turned into model constituency, says CM

Express News Service
New Delhi, May 2

AS SHE heard out public grievances on Saturday during a Jan Sunwayi session, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced that Shalimar Bagh, which is her constituency, will be soon developed into a "model constituency". "The Delhi government aims to develop Shalimar Bagh into a model constituency where residents have access to high-quality essential services. Continuous monitoring and coordination is being ensured to meet this goal," she said.

Gupta, who also resides in Shalimar Bagh, contested the Assembly elections for the first time in 2025 from the constituency and won with a significant majority. Following the latest Jan Sunwayi session, which she has been holding since last year after assuming charge, Gupta also highlighted that several development works are being fast-tracked in Shalimar Bagh to strengthen basic infrastructure.

These include road upgrades, ensuring clean and uninterrupted water supply, setting up Atal Canteens, expanding Ayushman Jan Arogya Mandirs, installing water ATMs, modernising parks, and developing organised parking facilities.

The CM also instructed officials to expedite pending cases and provide timely relief to citizens.

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Land Ports Authority of India, MHA

(Appointment of Member (Planning & Development) on deputation basis)

LPAI had issued a vacancy circular dated 2nd March, 2026 for filling up the post of Member (Planning & Development) with the last date of submission of applications being 13-04-2026. Now the last date is being extended up to 23-05-2026. For more details, please visit the website of Ministry of Home Affairs at <http://mha.gov.in> and LPAI at <http://lpai.gov.in>.

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DELHI POLICE FILES 600-PAGE CHARGESHEET IN ONE OF CAPITAL'S BIGGEST DIGITAL ARREST SCAMS

NGO fronts, remote access: Inside Rs 14.85-cr digital arrest

Pragnesh
New Delhi, May 2

EIGHT BANK accounts, including two linked to NGOs, three hotels in two states, and two men who were not paid commissions for helping execute a cyber fraud — these are among the key findings of a more than 600-page chargesheet filed by the Delhi Police before a court in March in what investigators have described as one of the Capital's biggest "digital arrest" scams.

The case pertains to an elderly couple in Greater Kailash, who were allegedly duped of Rs 14.85 crore after being placed under "digital arrest", between December 24, 2025 and January 9, 2026.

According to the police, the

accused routed funds allegedly stolen from the couple through at least eight accounts, including NGO Shivanth Charitable Foundation (Rs 2.1 crore were routed through its account), NGO Floresta Foundation (Rs 4 crore), Refine Alpha Metals and Recycles Private Limited (Rs 2.05 crore), Metison Tour and Travel Limited (Rs 1.99 crore), Nature Bio Agri Chem Private Limited (Rs 50 lakh), Usha Tour & Travels (Rs 2.2 crore) and RN Recruiters Private Limited (Rs 2 crore).

Police said the NGO Shivanth Charitable Foundation's bank account was operated by one Arun Kumar Tiwari from Varanasi. "During questioning, Arun said that a Varanasi resident, Dr Brijesh Kumar, introduced him to one Praduman Tiwari, who claimed that he

would secure funding for his NGO from a company under the guise of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility)," said an officer.

Arun was allegedly instructed that once the funds were deposited into his NGO's account, they would keep 8% and return the remaining balance to the company.

"Last November, Arun met one Atul Mishra alias Bhupender, who asked him to arrange a corporate account to receive funds on which a 5% commission will be paid," the officer said.

Police said Arun, Praduman and Bhupender met at Hotel Gayatri in Lucknow on January 5, and Rs 2.1 crore of the cheated amount was transferred to the NGO's corporate account on January 6.



The couple was allegedly duped of Rs 14.85 crore.

According to the probe, another account that received a significant portion of the proceeds belonged to Floresta Foundation, an NGO registered in 2022 in the name of Patel Divyang.

"Divyang said that around two months ago (in November),

he came in contact with one Shitole Krutik. On the pretext of receiving 'legal NGO donations', Krutik persuaded him to provide the bank account details of his NGO. Despite his inquiries regarding the legality of the funds, Krutik assured him that the money was legitimate," the officer said.

On December 29, 2025, Divyang was allegedly taken to MD Hotel by Krutik, where he met one Neel Kailashbhai, a resident of Ahmedabad.

Neel, a BCom graduate, has told police he had previously worked with several banks between 2023 and 2025, handling credit cards, bank accounts, and Demat account sales. He allegedly roped in one Robin, who installed an APK file on Divyang's mobile phone at the hotel,

thereby gaining unauthorised remote access to the device.

"On December 30, 2025, they moved to Ambika Hotel, where Neel accessed Divyang's email and mobile banking to transfer cheated funds to secondary accounts," the officer said.

Around Rs 4 crore, in two transactions, was transferred into Divyang's account by a handler who was in touch with Robin through a Telegram account named 'Charli Yan'.

Divyang has allegedly claimed that he was misled by Krutik and Neel and was unaware that his NGO's account was being used as a mule account for siphoning cyber fraud proceeds.

Krutik, meanwhile, has told police that he witnessed Neel transferring money from the

NGO's account to multiple other accounts.

However, Krutik claimed that Neel did not pay him the promised 2.5% commission — Rs 10 lakh — and refused to return login credentials or provide documentation for the transactions. Robin has also alleged that he was promised a commission of 2.5% but the payment was withheld.

While Robin and Neel were arrested between January 19 and 21, Divyang and Krutik were arrested on January 15, police said.

"After Neel lost his job in November 2025, he began collaborating with agents involved in organised cyber fraud. He acted as a middleman, joining various WhatsApp groups dedicated to the trading of 'mule'

bank accounts, including KYC, ATM cards, and net banking credentials. He would forward these account details to higher-level agents who utilised APK files (Remote Access Trojans) to grant control to foreign-based entities located in China, Cambodia, Taiwan and Dubai," the officer said. These international syndicates would then remotely access the mobile devices and siphon funds via net banking, the officer added.

According to police, fraudsters posing as TRAI officials had told the elderly woman that her mobile number was linked to a money-laundering case. Over days, the couple was coerced into transferring money to multiple accounts under the guise of "verification" by authorities.

Delhi-NCR housing surges: 30% sales jump in Q1 2026, premium demand soars

Abhimanyu Hazarika
Gurgaon, May 2

THE NATIONAL Capital Region's residential real estate market is pivoting from volume-driven affordable housing to value-driven premium supply, as per a market assessment report released by real estate services firm JLL Thursday.

Delhi-NCR recorded a massive 30% year-on-year growth in housing sales during the first quarter of 2026. The robust growth is largely supported by new infrastructure initiatives and accumulated buyer demand, experts said.

The region, which encompasses Delhi, Gurgaon, Noida, Greater Noida, Ghaziabad, Faridabad, and Sohna, remains a dominant force in the national real estate landscape. Along with Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Pune, it helped account for approximately 77% of all housing sales across India's top seven cities in Q1 2026.

The numbers

■ **Sales:** In Q1 2026, housing sales in Delhi-NCR reached 10,740 units, a 30% increase from 8,290 units sold in Q1 2025.

■ **Launches:** New project



Mapsko Casabella at Sector 82 in Gurgaon.

launches saw an exceptional 64% year-on-year surge, with 13,631 units introduced to the market in Q1 2026 compared to Q4 2025's 12,055 units.

■ **Price appreciation:** Driven by this premiumisation and underlying demand, Delhi-NCR led the year-on-year property price growth, recording a substantial 12-15% annual growth in capital values.

Rahul Singla, Director of Mapsko Group, said, "JLL's latest update has indicated the impressive performance of India's residential real estate sector, with Delhi-NCR registering an exceptional rise in sale numbers of 30%, putting it in one of the best-performing locations. It signifies the sustained investor optimism and increasing inclina-

tion towards high-quality housing schemes. With a strong development pipeline and efficient absorption of demand, the market is in equilibrium, making Delhi-NCR a highly favoured destination."

Rs 1 crore+ segment

The divergence between launch and sales growth represents developers' strategic focus on medium-to-long-term demand projections, the report noted. Specifically, the market is witnessing a clear shift away from affordable housing. Nationally, the premium segment dominated Q1 2026, with apartments priced above Rs 1 crore accounting for 71% of total sales.

Pushpender Singh, Managing Director of JMS Group, noted: "The steady rise in housing sales across Delhi-NCR reflects a clear shift in buyer preference. Today's homebuyers are choosing larger homes and better communities. The Rs 1 crore-plus segment is seeing strong demand, especially in NCR. This is driven by higher incomes, lifestyle changes, and investment confidence."

Rajan Yadav, Director of Roots Developers, added, "The rising growth in housing sales

shows that the market is becoming more quality focused. Buyers want better quality and location advantages. The Rs 1 crore-plus segment is expanding beyond core city areas."

New micro-markets

The upward market trajectory is heavily intensified by enhanced infrastructure, such as expressways and Metro connectivity, which continue to open up micro-markets throughout the region, developers added. While Gurgaon and Noida have traditionally led the charge, new frontiers are rapidly emerging, they said.

Mohit Malhotra, Founder & CEO of NeoLiv, highlighted one such beneficiary: "After Gurgaon and Noida, Faridabad has emerged as a high-potential micro-market, driven by accelerated infrastructure development and improved connectivity across NCR. The opening of the Jewar Airport connecting Faridabad by the expressway, cutting travel time to just 30-45 minutes, along with the upcoming Metro extensions, and the nearly completed FNG Expressway, has repositioned the city on the region's realty map."



Op Sindoor anniversary

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta during the 'Shaurya Sandhya' event, ahead of the first anniversary of Operation Sindoor, at India Gate in New Delhi on Saturday. ANI

• BRIEFLY

'CITY-LEVEL EXPRESSION OF VIKSIT BHARAT'

Delhi govt eyes 'global tourism destination' tag for Capital

AIMING TO develop the Capital as a global tourist destination, the Delhi government on Saturday signed an MoU with travel portals Agoda, MakeMyTrip, the MakeMyTrip Foundation and the Sabhyata Foundation — a non-profit — at the Tourism Stakeholders Conference. "Delhi has always shaped culture, never followed it. Delhi is for all. Through this conference, and through structured partnerships and forward-looking policy, we are bringing Delhi closer to the world," Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said. "This is a city-level expression of Viksit Bharat, where public and private institutions move together toward a common goal," she added. ENS

NCR gets new ride-hailing app, NEMBharat

WORLD ECONOMIC Mobility Limited (WEML) on Friday launched 'NEMBharat', a ride-hailing platform operating on a zero-commission model for drivers and a fixed-fare structure for passengers. The platform officially began operations in Delhi-NCR on May 1. The company said drivers will retain the entirety of the fare for each trip and it will shift the cost to the commuter through a variable booking or convenience fee levied on each ride. ENS

No regular bail for Al Falah chairman

A court Saturday denied regular bail to Al-Falah University chairman Jawad Ahmad Siddiqui in a money laundering case, which has stemmed from two FIRs lodged by Delhi Police Crime Branch alleging that the university falsely claimed NAAC accreditation and UGC recognition. "...it is prima facie made out that the accused... generated proceeds of crime and laundered the same," said Additional Sessions Judge Sheetal Chaudhary Pradhan. ENS

Delhi gears up for SIR: Govt tells staff to verify names, details against previous electoral lists

Gayathri Mani
New Delhi, May 2

EVEN AS the schedule for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise in Delhi is yet to be announced, the preparatory work on the ground — like mapping of electors — has already been ongoing over the last two-three months, said officials. In a recent notice, following directions from the Chief Electoral Office, the Delhi government has asked its employees and staff of autonomous bodies to verify their names against the 2002 voter list.

In the first such order issued to the Heads of the Departments (HOD) ahead of SIR, it has been stated: "SIR of electoral rolls is being carried out throughout India. In NCT of Delhi also, preparatory exercises for the upcoming SIR are being carried out. As per the

Key highlights

- To ensure ease in searching details, a document of the 2002 electoral list has been uploaded on the website of CEO, Delhi.

- Mapping work has been ongoing for 2-3 months
- Delhi govt has over 5,000 employees

Names can be searched using Voter or EPIC ID

Election Commission's instructions, mapping of electoral roll-2025 is being done vis-à-vis electoral rolls of the last SIR i.e. 2002. For this purpose, BLOs (block level officers) are visiting houses in their allotted part for obtaining electors' details pertaining to the year 2002."

The Delhi government has over 5,000 employees, and over 400 bureaucrats. Besides, there are contractual employees and class 3 and 4 level staffs.

To ease out the process of searching names in the electro-

ral rolls, the 2002 voting list has been uploaded on the website of CEO, Delhi, said officials, adding that Voter ID or Electors Photo Identity Card (EPIC) number can be entered to match the details.

For those who settled in Delhi from other states after 2002, the order underlined, "They can obtain their details from the ECI website as appearing in the voter list of 2002/2003/2005 (year of last SIR held in that particular State, as the case may be)."

The employees have been asked to share this information with the BLO of their area during the ongoing house-to-house (H2H) verification process during pre-SIR period and also during distribution and collection of enumeration form during SIR period, said officials.

"...I am directed to get this information disseminated to all employees of GNCTD/ autonomous bodies through their HODs for checking their names in the electoral rolls-2002 and sharing the same with their BLOs visiting their homes," read the order by the Chief Electoral Office, Delhi.

An official said, "Once the mapping of electors is done, when the actual SIR is announced, further process will be easier because we will have some data. The electors can also get their problems solved and help the mapping process."

Express News Service
New Delhi, May 2

IT WAS a trip down memory lane for Delhi LG Taranjit Singh Sandhu on Saturday as he addressed the graduating class of 2026 at St Stephen's College, his alma mater.

Recalling his own years at the college, the LG spoke about the century-old legacy of the institution. "It has not only been a place of academic pursuit, but also a space where ideas were shaped, perspectives were challenged, and friendships were formed," he said.

Speaking at the college's Annual Dismissal Service, Sandhu urged students to carry forward the values of inquiry, humility and responsibility of the "distinctive institution".

Sandhu highlighted two enduring lessons from his time at the college. The first, he said,



LG Taranjit Singh Sandhu at St Stephen's College. X/@LTGOVDELHI

was intellectual curiosity. "You are encouraged not merely to learn, but to question." He added that the ability to engage in assumptions and engage critically with ideas remains essential across fields. The second was the balance between excellence and humility. "Achievement is not an end in itself, but a responsibility," he said, noting that navigating real-world chal-

lenges requires judgment and values alongside knowledge.

Addressing students on life that awaits them after college, Sandhu said the world ahead is "not always structured or predictable," but offers possibilities. "There will be moments when the path ahead seems unclear... rely on the habits you have developed here," he said, urging students to rely on inde-

pendent thinking and integrity, especially when faced with uncertainty.

"Success is not measured only by individual achievement, but also by the contribution you make to the communities you become part of," he said. "The world you are entering requires both competence and character," he said.

In a post on X, Sandhu said he was "delighted" to return to the college and extended congratulations to the graduating class.

"Walking through its familiar corridors brought back memories of enriching conversations, engaging classrooms, spirited debates, and lifelong friendships. Addressing the Class of 2026, I encouraged them to pursue excellence with humility and to serve the nation with both competence and character," he wrote.

THE SYSTEM DOES NOT REQUIRE A DEDICATED ROOM, SPECIALISED POWER SET-UP, OR NEED TO MOVE PATIENTS

Portable MRI at AIIMS: India's first bedside brain imaging system launched

Ankita Upadhyay
New Delhi, May 2

IN A first, AIIMS New Delhi has introduced India's first portable bedside MRI system, marking a significant step in critical care and neurodiagnostics. The ultra-low-field device can be wheeled directly to a patient's bedside, enabling rapid brain imaging for critically ill patients in ICUs, emergency settings, and neurosurgical care.

Unlike conventional MRI machines that require dedicated suites and patient transport, this system eliminates the risks associated with moving unstable

patients and allows imaging to be performed within the safety of the ICU environment.

Across the world, portable bedside MRI systems are being used in hospitals in the US, Canada, Australia, the UK, New Zealand, and various EU countries.

The system is already in use at the Center for Neurological Conditions under Dr Shailesh Gaikwad, and is expected to aid in the diagnosis and monitoring of stroke, trauma, pediatric neurological conditions, and post-operative neurosurgical cases. Clinicians say the technology will improve response

times in emergencies where conventional imaging may be delayed or unsafe.

Supported by Radiosurgery Global Ltd and introduced following regulatory approval in India, the development is also expected to expand access to brain imaging and strengthen research in point-of-care neurodiagnostics.

Explaining the technology, Dr Gaikwad emphasized that the portable MRI is not designed to replace conventional systems but to complement them in critical scenarios. "It is an ultra-low-field system with lower resolution compared to



The portable bedside MRI system. EXPRESS
Join Free Telegram Channel https://t.me/+pegW08Cwts0xMjcl
regular MRI machines," he said. "But it serves an impor-
tant purpose, we can see the brain well enough to make bed-

side decisions when time is critical." He added that while stable patients will continue to be taken to full-scale MRI machines, the portable unit is particularly useful when moving a patient could pose risks.

Highlighting its clinical importance, Dr Gaikwad noted, "This is meant for critically ill patients in the ICU. If a patient is unstable, there is no need to take them out of that environment, we can bring the MRI to them." He stressed that the focus should remain on its practical value rather than overstating its capabilities. "The idea is simple: for very

sick patients, bedside imaging is safer and faster," he said.

Dr Gaikwad said in cases such as stroke, traumatic brain injury, or other neurological emergencies, delays in obtaining imaging can slow diagnosis and treatment, directly affecting patient outcomes. Traditional high-field MRI machines depend on complex infrastructure, including shielded rooms and specialised setups, and typically require patients to be transported to the imaging suite. For those who are critically ill, such as patients in ICUs, emergency units, neonatal care, or neurosurgical wards,

this movement can be difficult, risky, or sometimes not possible at all. As a result, essential imaging is often postponed, limiting the speed and effectiveness of medical intervention.

Portable bedside MRI addresses this gap by taking imaging directly to the patient. It does not require a dedicated room, specialised power setup, or the need to move patients. Instead, clinicians can wheel the system to the bedside, whether in the ICU, trauma center, stroke unit, or neonatal ward, and capture brain images precisely when and where they are needed most.

“ SOUTHERN STAR AT 40: A Vision That Became a Lifeline ”



New Delhi: There are institutions that merely exist, and there are institutions that become part of people's lives. Southern Star Co-operative (Urban Thrift & Credit) Society Ltd. belongs to the latter. As it

celebrates its Ruby Jubilee, Southern Star is not simply marking the passage of forty years; it is honouring a journey of trust, service, and human solidarity that began on 21 April 1986 and grew into a source of strength for thousands. Its story is not just one of institutional success, but of a dream that found meaning in the lives of ordinary people.

At the centre of this remarkable journey stands Founder and President Shri P. R. Nair, whose vision gave Southern Star its character, its direction, and its soul. He did not merely establish a society; he sowed the idea of a dependable community institution that would stand by people when life became uncertain. His dream was shaped by a deep understanding of the anxieties, aspirations, and struggles of people trying to build secure lives away from their native roots. What he imagined was not a mere financial body, but a humane and trustworthy platform where cooperation would become confidence, and support would become dignity.

That is precisely what Southern Star has come to represent over the past four decades. It has grown because it has remained close to the people it serves. It has earned trust because it has chosen responsibility over display, commitment over convenience, and values over mere expansion. For countless members, Southern Star has not been just an office to visit or a service to use. It has been a steady presence in times of need, a reassuring hand in moments of difficulty, and a quiet force helping families move forward with greater confidence.

Its strength lies in this rare combination of growth and goodwill. Even as the society expanded in reach, infrastructure, and modernisation, it did not lose the cooperative

spirit on which it was founded. Its growing use of technology has made services more transparent, accessible, and member-friendly. At the same time, its emerging cluster-wise gatherings among members reflect a thoughtful effort to listen more closely, understand diverse needs better, and strengthen the sense of belonging that makes a cooperative feel like a family. In that balance between progress and personal touch lies the enduring strength of Southern Star.

Forty years on, Southern Star shines because its foundation was built on vision and its future is sustained by trust. The Ruby Jubilee, therefore, is more than a celebration. It is a tribute to the society's steady growth, its humane spirit, and its enduring commitment to the people who placed their faith in it. Southern Star has proved, over four decades, that when service is rooted in sincerity, an institution does more than succeed — it becomes a lifeline for generations.

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- Southern Star Co-operative Society, established in 1986, has built a trusted legacy of service based on cooperation, transparency, financial discipline, and member welfare.
- The Society today enjoys the confidence of more than 32,000 active members and has an annual turnover of over ₹150 crores, reflecting its strength, stability, and credibility.
- It is one of the leading urban thrift and credit cooperative societies in North India, known for steady growth and member confidence.
- Its Head Office is situated at a central location and is digitally connected with all 9 branches, ensuring efficient and convenient service to members.
- The Corporate Office, along with the majority of branch offices, functions from society-owned premises, reflecting institutional strength and long-term stability.
- The Society offers a wide range of member-oriented financial services, including ordinary loans, emergency loans, housing loans, property loans, gold loans, secured loans, soft loans, vehicle loans, and deposit-based loan facilities.
- Ordinary loans up to ₹10 lakhs and housing or property loans up to ₹25 lakhs are provided to help members meet important personal, family, and financial needs.
- Emergency loans up to ₹80,000 are available without any surety, giving timely support to members in urgent situations.
- Gold loans against gold ornaments are provided up to 80% of the gold value at highly competitive rates of interest.
- Secured loans up to ₹10 lakhs are available against eligible property documents, offering members additional borrowing support when required.
- Interest-free soft loans up to ₹2 lakhs are provided without sureties or guarantors, reflecting the Society's service-minded and welfare-oriented approach.
- The Society promotes a strong culture of thrift and financial security through compulsory deposits, savings deposits, fixed deposits, and recurring deposit schemes.
- Member service is made more convenient through extended working hours, including Sundays up to 4.00 p.m. and weekdays up to 7.30 p.m.
- Modern banking and payment facilities such as NEFT, RTGS, net banking, virtual account transfer, and UPI make transactions simple, quick, and transparent.
- The Society extends welfare support through member insurance benefits, including financial assistance up to ₹2 lakhs from the Welfare Fund to the spouse of a deceased member.
- Its sound recovery system and careful scrutiny of applications have helped maintain defaulters at less than 2%, which speaks of responsible governance and financial discipline.
- Free consultation is made available through the Legal Cell and the Investment or Tax Cell, enabling members to receive guidance beyond core financial services.
- Adequate insurance and security arrangements are maintained for cash and valuables, ensuring safety, confidence, and responsible institutional management.
- The Society is not merely a financial institution but a cooperative family that combines professional service with trust, personal guidance, and human concern.
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MoS External Affairs to attend migration forum at UN tomorrow



MoS Kirti Vardhan Singh will deliver India's statement at the plenary session. FILE

Divya A
New Delhi, May 2

MINISTER OF State (MoS) for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh will lead the Indian delegation at the second International Migration Review Forum being held under the UN General Assembly in New York from May 4-8, the MEA said Saturday.

The forum serves as the primary global platform to discuss progress on the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration and its intersection with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the MEA said. It will consist of four interactive multi-stakeholder round tables, a policy debate, and a plenary, followed by the adoption of a progress declaration. Held first in 2022, India had then participated in the migration forum.

Singh will deliver India's national statement at the plenary session. Besides, India will also host a side-event titled 'Leveraging Digital Innovation in Migration Governance: The e-Migrate Experience of India', on the margins of the forum. During his visit to the US, Singh is also expected to meet senior UN officials as well as ministers of other member states. The second edition of the forum will be hosted by the UN General Assembly President, Annalena Baerbock, who was in India recently.

The MEA has made several efforts recently to promote safe, legal, and orderly mobility through bilateral deals, the eMigrate portal, and pre-departure training. A new legislation is also in the works, to replace the 1983 Act and curb illegal recruitment.

DAYS AFTER SEVEN RAJYA SABHA MPs QUIT AAM AADMI PARTY

MP Sandeep Pathak booked, says BJP; Punjab Police silent on FIRs



Rajya Sabha MP Sandeep Pathak leaves his Delhi home, Saturday. PTI

Raakhi Jagga
Ludhiana, May 2

THE BJP on Saturday claimed that Punjab Police has booked Rajya Sabha MP Sandeep Pathak in two FIRs under non-bailable sections and accused the AAP government in state of indulging in "political vendetta". Punjab Police, however, remained tight-lipped, neither confirming nor denying the claim. There was no response from DGP Gaurav Yadav too despite phone calls and text messages. *The Sunday Express* tried to reach out to Pathak, but his phone remained switched off.

A Punjab Police team also reportedly reached Delhi but Pathak had already left his residence. In a video, Pathak was purportedly seen leaving his residence from a rear gate when some journalists approached him for his reaction. Pathak, a former professor at IIT-Delhi, along with the seven other Rajya Sabha members, including Trident Group emeritus chairman Rajinder Gupta and cricketer-turned-politician Harbhajan Singh, quit the AAP and joined the BJP on April 24. Rajya Sabha Chairman CPRadhakrishnan later officially accepted their merger with the BJP, reducing the AAP's strength in the Upper House of Parliament to three. While Punjab

Police withdrew the Y-category security cover Harbhajan Singh on April 25, the Punjab Pollution Control Board raided the Dhaura-based unit of Trident Group on April 30.

The BJP and the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) questioned the timing of the alleged FIRs. Punjab BJP chief Sunil Jakhar said the party was still awaiting full details of the FIRs, but claimed that initial information pointed to two separate cases — one related to alleged threats and the other to corruption.

"The party would respond legally. These FIRs are nothing but a political vendetta. It was expected of them. The BJP is not intimidated," Jakhar said, claiming the action was meant to divert attention from CM Bhagwant Mann's alleged conduct of arriving in the Assembly in an inebriated state on Friday, a charge denied by the ruling party.

He said those once considered loyal were being labelled negatively overnight after leaving the party. "This is an attempt to put pressure on the remaining AAP members and prevent further defections," he alleged. Jakhar said the BJP will meet Governor Gulab Chand Kataria on Sunday and raise the issues of Mann's conduct and the FIRs against Pathak.

Why he is the 'backstabber' Kejriwal didn't see coming

Jatin Anand
New Delhi, May 2

A WEEK ago, he was the ideal backroom boy, quiet and unassuming, in a party known to favour and reward such loyalists. On Saturday, as unconfirmed reports of two FIRs by the AAP government in Punjab against Sandeep Pathak swept across the state, to Delhi, it was clear that the 46-year-old was unlikely to escape the limelight anytime soon. It was also read as a sign by rivals of how deeply his defection had stung Arvind Kejriwal.

As it turns out, the sting is as fresh as it gets. The evening before seven AAP Rajya Sabha MPs, including Pathak, announced they were leaving the party and merging with the BJP, Kejriwal had been huddled with Pathak, conferring how to quash a rebellion that the party had heard was brewing. That meeting, to many, provided as clear — or as ambiguous — a picture of Pathak's role in the AAP as any: a seemingly apolitical man, an IITian like Kejriwal, who had risen quickly to the top, to the rare privilege in the AAP of having the supremo's ear.

It was quite a journey for the PhD from Cambridge University, whose area of research had been photovoltaic cells, who had taught as Assistant Professor at IIT-Delhi for a while, and who came to the AAP just about a decade ago. Kejriwal's star was at its peak, having swept to power in Delhi in 2015. A leader influential in



Sandeep Pathak is among the 7 AAP Rajya Sabha MPs who quit the party and recently joined BJP

the AAP at the time introduced Pathak to Kejriwal. And, the AAP chief took a quick liking to the bespectacled 46-year-old, with grey, unkempt hair, and a preference for white shirts, who spoke numbers and data, giving him a special place in a party with few resources to spread around. In time, Pathak would become the AAP's first general secretary (organisation).

Speaking about the April 23 meeting between Kejriwal and Pathak, an AAP insider explains: "Pathak's task as general secretary (Organisation) was to be in contact with leaders who were suspected to be talking to the other side." So that evening, the AAP chief called Pathak over to his then Ferozeshah Road residence, and for over two hours, they discussed how to stop the leaders, and identify others who may be thinking of jumping ship. Another AAP leader says: "A few Punjab MPs had called on Arvindji during the Special Session of House (over the women's quota amendment Bill) to convey they were facing immense pressure to join BJP. Some of them had their prem-

ises raided, while others claimed they had been warned of similar action from Central agencies."

The leader says Kejriwal told them he understands their problem, but they should not succumb to pressure. "He said they would be elevated to the Rajya Sabha again, but should not join the BJP," Pathak, as per the AAP source, came over to Kejriwal's with data sets, party organisation lists and contact details — all of which he, in fact, had put together as the AAP's numbers guy, doing surveys on bankable political issues and ticket aspirants, across polls. "Arvindji and Sandeep brainstormed. From the party's legislative strength across the country, to the identification of leaders who could be vulnerable and how they could be retained, is understood to have been discussed. In the end, Pathak was given the responsibility of ensuring that specific leaders from among the rebel Rajya Sabha MPs were convinced to stay," the source says.

Which is to say that Kejriwal was blindsided when Pathak emerged on a dais with Kejriwal's other former blue-eyed boy, Raghav Chadha, and Ashok Mittal, to announce that they were leaving the AAP. Others in the party claim to be not as surprised, pointing to Pathak's family's "political affiliations with the BJP" in Chhatisgarh, where he initially oversaw the AAP's affairs. On April 24, Kejriwal was shifting into his new home when the news of the rebellion came in.

FULL REPORT ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Prasoon Joshi appointed Prasar Bharati chairman

Amrita Nayak Dutta
New Delhi, May 2



Prasoon Joshi also serves as the chairperson of Central Board of Film Certification. FILE

NOTED LYRICIST and writer Prasoon Joshi has been appointed as the chairman of Prasar Bharati, India's public service broadcaster, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B) announced on Saturday. Joshi is also serving as the chairperson of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), Mumbai since August 2017.

This is possibly the first time that an individual has been appointed to both the offices by the I&B Ministry. Meanwhile, government sources said a new CBFC chairperson is set to be appointed soon. The position of Prasar Bharati chairman was lying vacant since December 2025, when former bureaucrat Navneet Sehgal resigned from the post. "Joshi, a distinguished creative professional with wide-ranging contributions across literature, advertising, cinema, and public communication, and known for his impactful writing and deep cultural sensibility, has played a significant role in shaping contemporary Indian media narratives," the statement said.

Congratulating Joshi on his appointment, Union I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, "Prasoon is a rare creative spirit celebrated across the world... yet his heart beats unmistakably for India. His words carry the fragrance of our soil, and his vision reflects the timeless essence of our culture. Under his

stewardship, Prasar Bharati will discover renewed energy, deeper purpose, and a fresh creative voice."

During his tenure at CBFC, Joshi also courted controversy. In 2019, the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) had sought his resignation over allegedly giving preferential treatment to the makers of a biopic on Prime Minister Narendra Modi. There have been corruption allegations against the CBFC, as well. Earlier, Joshi had also served as CEO, McCann World Group India, and chairman, McCann World Group Asia Pacific, which is a subsidiary of McCann Erickson. Joshi is also one of the Trustees of Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts since 2016.

Established under the Prasar Bharati Act, 1990, and operational since 1997, Prasar Bharati is India's statutory autonomous public service broadcaster. It comprises two major divisions, the All India Radio — one of the world's largest radio networks; and Doordarshan — India's national TV broadcaster.

Days after rejig, NITI Aayog gets two new full-time members

Express News Service
New Delhi, May 2



DAYS AFTER reconstituting the NITI Aayog, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday approved the appointment of Dr R Balasubramaniam and Dr Joram Aniya as full-time members of the think tank. With the two new additions, the total number of full-time members of NITI Aayog will now rise to seven.

While Balasubramaniam has served as a member of Capacity Building Commission and authored the book, 'Power Within: The Leadership Legacy of Narendra Modi'; Aniya is an academician and member of the Arunachal Pradesh Private Educational Regulatory Commission, with over 18 years of experience in teaching, research and public policy engagement. Calling Aniya's appointment "historic", an official of the NITI Aayog said she is the first woman from the Nyishi community to earn a PhD, and also the first doctorate in Hindi language in Arunachal Pradesh. She has also authored and edited many books on the Nyishi literature and culture, along with numerous research publications.

On April 24, the government appointed a new vice-

chairman and replaced four of the five full-time members of the premier policy think tank. Eminent economist Ashok Lahiri has replaced vice-chairman Suman Berry, who was serving in the post since April 2022. The other new members include Abhay Karandikar, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, and Dr M Srinivas, director, AIMS Delhi, a government notification said.

This is the first major revamp of the NITI Aayog since its inception in 2015, when it had replaced the Nehruvian Planning Commission.

'Severe electoral offences': EC orders repolling in all 285 stations for Bengal's Falta constituency on May 21

Atri Mitra
Kolkata, May 2



Voters outside a polling station in Magrahat Paschim Assembly constituency of South 24 Parganas on Saturday. PARTHA PAUL

AFTER WHAT it called a detailed probe of the polling process, the Election Commission (EC) has ordered a repoll in West Bengal's Falta Assembly constituency. Fresh polls will now be held at all 285 polling stations in Falta on May 21, and counting will be done on May 24, the EC announced in a statement Saturday, citing "severe electoral offences and subversion of democratic process".

The BJP had earlier alleged that during polling on April 29, the EVMs were manipulated at many polling booths in Falta using "black tape" to hide the party's symbol. Special observer Subrata Gupta was then sent to investigate the allegations. The polling body's decision comes after a detailed investigation report, submitted by him and the district election officer of South 24-Parganas,

found "tampering" in at least 60 of the 285 polling booths.

The EC said in an official release, "On consideration of severe electoral offences and subversion of democratic process during the polling in a large number of polling stations on April 29 in 144-Falta Assembly Constituency, West Bengal, EC directs that fresh poll shall be

conducted in all the 285 polling stations, including auxiliary polling stations." Bengal's chief electoral officer, Manoj Agarwal had earlier said that repoll would be ordered in the whole seat if several incidents of EVM tampering come to the fore. Earlier on Saturday, during a repoll at 15 booths in two other seats in the state, women protesters

blocked a section of the road in Falta, demanding a repoll.

ECI secretary Sujet Misra, in a letter to the Bengal CEO, said "sufficient grounds" were found to conclude that the poll process in several booths was "vitiated due to alleged application of black tape" on ballot buttons. It said earlier scrutiny was held "mechanically and hurriedly by relying mainly on official records without proper examination of video footage", adding that the footage revealed "serious procedural violations" in Falta. The letter stated that the 60 affected polling stations involved 53,967 electors, or 22.82% of the total electorate in the seat.

"Considering the history of violence and intimidation and the partial/non-availability of footage, there appeared to be deliberate interference with the poll process," it added. The special observer's report held that booth capturing had taken place in these polling

stations, adding similar incidents may have occurred in other booths. The counting of votes has been stopped here as per the EC's direction.

The letter added that polling buttons on the ballot units of the EVMs were found masked with black tape, preventing the voters from casting vote in favour of the said candidate. While remedial steps were taken after receiving complaints, a substantial percentage of polling had already taken place by then, it said.

The EC held, "This tampering with the EVMs had compromised the integrity of the votes recorded and made it impossible to ascertain the mandate of the electorate." The State Observer, West Bengal has issued the repoll directions under relevant sections of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

The counting for other Assembly seats in West Bengal will be held on May 4.

ED summons 2 TMC candidates again on May 6 in municipal recruitment scam

Tanusree Bose
Kolkata, May 2

TMC BIDHANNAGAR candidate and Bengal minister Sujit Bose has been summoned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), again on May 6, after being questioned for nine hours on Friday in connection with its probe into the alleged cash-for-municipal-job scam.

The party's Madhyamgram candidate, Rathin Ghosh, has also been summoned that day in the same case. According to ED sources, Bose has been verbally informed to appear on May 6, and to bring required documents since the questioning is not yet complete. On Friday, Bose was questioned in multiple rounds, and the state Fire Services minister had left the CGO Complex in Salt Lake, Kolkata, after nearly nine-and-a-half hours. He was accompanied by his son Somudro and lawyers.

DURING HIS CAMPAIGN FOR BJP IN BENGAL, ASSAM CM RAKED UP POLARISING ISSUES LIKE 'CROSS-BORDER INFILTRATION' & 'DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS' BESIDES BORDER SECURITY

As Dhaka summons Indian envoy to protest Himanta speech, a look at his poll pitch

Sweetie Kumari
Kolkata, May 2

THE BANGLADESH government has formally summoned India's Acting High Commissioner Pawan Badhe to lodge a protest against some recent remarks made by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. During a meeting at the Bangladesh's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) Thursday, Director General (South Asia Division) Ishrat Jahan conveyed Dhaka's displeasure, describing CM Sarma's statements as "disparaging" and "potentially damaging to bilateral relations".

The diplomatic friction comes amid Himanta's high-decibel campaigning in West Bengal for the just concluded Assembly polls, days after he led the BJP's campaign in his own state Assembly polls. During his

campaign for the BJP in Bengal, Himanta raked up polarising issues like "cross-border infiltration" and "demographic shifts" besides border security. After voting was completed in Assam on April 9, he was deployed by the BJP to participate in its campaigning in Bengal. He had since addressed several rallies and press conferences, frequently alleging "cross-border infiltration" into the state.

At a rally in North 24 Parganas district's Baguiati on April 25, Himanta issued a stern warning regarding undocumented migrants, linking the issue to historical grievances. "I will kick them out and drive them away because these people... the atrocities they committed against Hindus in Bangladesh, we haven't forgotten. We will never forget. That is why, after the BJP government

comes to power, I will kick these people out... From West Bengal, should the infiltrating Bangladeshi Muslims be thrown out or not?" Himanta told a crowd.

"Brothers and sisters, do not make a mistake this time... Do not fear the police. Do not fear the goons. On May 4 (when election results are announced), the BJP government will arrive. Goons will go to the police station, and the police will say, 'I don't even know you. Where did you come from?' Even the police will forget these goons. Then what will happen? The police will no longer provide protection to the goons. Then where will the goons go? First, the goons will go to Assam — I won't let them enter. Then where will they go? They'll go to Odisha — I won't let him enter there either. Then where? To Bihar — there is a BJP government there too, he won't



Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma at a poll rally in Bengal's Howrah last month. PTI FILE

be able to enter. Then where will these goons go? These people will go to Bangladesh... At the time of entry, I will put a lock on the door. The goons will not be able to return to West Bengal."

In his subsequent press conference in Kolkata, Himanta addressed criticisms regarding his presence in the Bengal campaign. He argued that the security of the entire Eastern region is interconnected, citing specific border data to underscore Bengal's role as the "primary gatekeeper". "TMC members often raise questions, asking, 'You are the CM of Assam, then why are you spending so much time in West Bengal? Why are people from outside coming to West Bengal?' and so on. Our biggest concern is the changing demography. This demographic shift connects four of our states. Five Indian states share a border with

Bangladesh. West Bengal shares 54% of the total border, while Tripura shares 21%, Meghalaya 11%, Mizoram 8%, and Assam 6%. This means that the demographic changes occurring in our country, particularly in West Bengal, cannot be seen in isolation from Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Mizoram."

He also alleged that Bengal has become a "safe corridor" for infiltrators due to "politics of appeasement". "If even one of these five states' borders remains open, it will impact the other states. If people enter through Malda or Murshidabad, the impact will not be limited to West Bengal alone; it will affect Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and all the North Eastern states."

"The point I am making to the TMC leadership and the people of West Bengal is this: Assam and West Bengal are not

separate in this struggle. If the 54% of the border that sits in West Bengal is not managed properly, or if there is a lack of political will to address infiltration there, the consequences aren't restricted to Kolkata or Malda. Because our borders are contiguous, any demographic shift in West Bengal creates a domino effect that reaches Assam, Meghalaya, and the entire North East. We must view the security and demography of the Eastern region as one single, unified concern. It is not just an 'Assam issue' or a 'Bengal issue' — it is a national security issue."

During his poll campaigning, Himanta frequently linked border security with regional demographic changes, and "appeasement politics" with "infiltration" in West Bengal. "...The demographic situation we are witnessing is not merely a local

phenomenon; it is a regional crisis with national implications."

Despite the "India out" sentiment occasionally embodied by student movements and hard-line factions in Bangladesh, economic interdependence remains the bedrock of the bilateral relationship. However, analysts warn that "identity politics" on both sides of the border could derail these gains. "India's North East is connected to the rest of the country by the Siliguri Corridor (Chicken's Neck), a hostile government in Dhaka could theoretically allow foreign powers or insurgent groups to threaten this chokepoint. Historically, Bangladesh's cooperation has been vital in flushing out insurgent groups that previously used Bangladeshi soil as a safe haven," said a deputy commissioner-ranked police official who has previously served in Siliguri.

'Purely social event': Mirwaiz shares stage with mainstream political leaders

He was attending a book launch event in Srinagar

Bashaarat Masood
Srinagar, May 2

IN WHAT'S a rare sight in Kashmir, Hurriyat leader and the valley's chief cleric, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq was seen sharing the stage with the mainstream political leaders from across parties,

including the National Conference, Peoples Democratic Party, BJP and Congress.

On Saturday, Mirwaiz attended the book release of noted neurologist Dr Sushil Razdan in Srinagar, where several mainstream leaders — including former J&K chief minister and NC president Farooq Abdullah, BJP leader Ashok Koul, former Union minister and Congress leader Saif-ud-din Soz, and former minister and PDP leader Naem

Akhtar — were also present. Notably, Mirwaiz shared his seat with Jammu and Kashmir Assembly Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather — the two leaders were seated on a sofa.

This is remarkably a rare instance since separatist and mainstream political leaders do not often share company in public, staying away from each other even at social gatherings.

Speaking to *The Indian Express* after the event,



Valley's chief cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq with J&K Assembly Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather, National Congress chief Farooq Abdullah and others in Srinagar on Saturday. SHUAIB MASOODI

Mirwaiz called it "purely literary and social". He said: "This was purely a literary and social event held to acknowledge and appreciate the life and humanitarian contributions of a respected Kashmiri doctor. Such occasions are above politics and serve to highlight values like service, compassion and shared humanity."

He added that participation in a social event attended by mainstream political leaders did not "affect or reflect one's political

ideology or approach".

Earlier, speaking at the book release, Mirwaiz praised Dr Razdan, who is a leading neurologist in the valley and also a Kashmiri Pandit.

"We have assembled here not just at the book release function but to celebrate a life that has made humanity, love and compassion as its mission."

"Dr sahib regarded the medical profession as worship...I would myself call him many times for the ap-

pointment of someone... After meeting him, they would say, the way Dr sahib talked to them with love, they felt better instantly. This is his quality," he said.

The event, organised at a hotel in Srinagar, marked the release of the book, 'Healer in Exile: The Untold Story of Dr Sushil Razdan', authored by Dr Razdan's son, Sachin Razdan.

Apart from politicians, many doctors and civil society members also remained present.

Bank fraud: Fugitive Parekh held after extradition from UAE

New Delhi: The CBI has arrested Kamlesh Parekh, a fugitive wanted in a 10-year-old Rs 2,672 crore bank fraud case, after his extradition from the UAE, officials said Saturday. Parekh, wanted in the bank fraud case filed against Shree Ganes Jewellery House (I) Ltd, Kolkata, was extradited from the UAE on Friday, they said. The CBI had registered the case in 2016 against the company and others for allegedly cheating a consortium of 25 banks to the tune of Rs 2,672 crore.

"The agency had chargesheeted Parekh, the promoter of the company who had been absconding since the probe began, on December 31, 2022," a CBI statement said. "A Red Corner Notice was issued through Interpol in 2024. The authorities in the UAE detained him...after which he was extradited to India," the statement said. PTI

निविदा सूचना

पीएम श्री केंद्रीय विद्यालय क्रमांक 1 दिल्ली छावनी विद्यालय भवन मरम्मत एवं सफेदी के कार्यों के लिए प्रतिष्ठित / पंजीकृत फर्मों से मुहरबंद प्रतियोगी निविदा आमंत्रित करता है। निविदा फार्म विद्यालय के कार्यालय से सभी कार्य दिवसों में प्रातः 11.00 बजे से दोपहर 02.00 बजे तक KV No.1 Shift 1 VVN Account के पक्ष रुपये 1000/- का डिमांड ड्राफ्ट / पे आर्डर देकर प्राप्त किए जा सकते हैं। सीलबंद निविदाएं इस सूचना के समाचार पत्र में प्रकाशन के 21 दिनों के भीतर इस कार्यालय में पहुंच जानी चाहिए।

प्राचार्य

TATA POWER RENEWABLE ENERGY						
Tata Power Renewable Energy Limited						
Corporate Centre, 34 Sant Tukaram Road, Carnac Bunder, Mumbai-400009						
Website: www.tatapower.com/renewables CIN : U40108MH2007PLC168314						
EXTRACT OF STANDALONE FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 2026						
Sr. No.	Particulars	Quarter ended			Year ended	
		31-Mar-26 (Audited)	31-Dec-25 (Unaudited)	31-Mar-25 (Audited)	31-Mar-26 (Audited)	31-Mar-25 (Audited)
a.	Total Income from Operations	2,898.63	3,091.89	3,675.29	11,748.38	11,273.77
b.	Profit / (Loss) Before Exceptional Items and tax	278.26	410.91	444.02	1,706.05	1,538.14
c.	Profit / (Loss) Before Tax	278.26	410.91	197.02	1,706.05	1,151.14
d.	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period / year	208.64	304.91	76.82	1,268.07	464.96
e.	Total Comprehensive Income	410.59	315.80	46.04	1,487.46	402.04
f.	Paid-up Equity Share Capital (Face Value: ₹ 10/- per share)	1,463.10	1,463.10	1,463.10	1,463.10	1,463.10
g.	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)	13,850.46	13,439.87	12,363.00	13,850.46	12,363.00
h.	Securities Premium Account	8,742.01	8,742.01	8,742.01	8,742.01	8,742.01
i.	Net worth	15,493.05	15,292.05	14,232.62	15,493.05	14,232.62
j.	Capital Redemption Reserve	11.25	11.25	11.25	11.25	11.25
k.	Debt Redemption Reserve	99.05	99.05	99.05	99.05	99.05
l.	Outstanding Debt	22,745.95	21,789.59	19,972.88	22,745.95	19,972.88
m.	Earnings Per Equity Share (of ₹ 10/- each) (In ₹)					
	(i) Basic Earning Per Share - (In ₹)*	1.43	2.08	0.53	8.67	3.18
	(ii) Diluted Earning Per Share - (In ₹)*	1.43	2.08	0.53	8.67	3.18
n.	Debt Equity Ratio (in times)	1.49	1.46	1.44	1.49	1.44
o.	Debt Service Coverage Ratio (in times)*	1.46	1.55	1.27	1.63	1.33
p.	Interest Service Coverage Ratio (in times)*	1.66	1.96	2.12	2.01	2.02
q.	Current Ratio (in times)	1.07	1.11	0.82	1.07	0.82
r.	Long Term Debt to Working Capital (in times)	10.35	7.58	29.54	10.35	29.54
s.	Current Liability ratio (in times)	0.22	0.22	0.30	0.22	0.30
t.	Total Debts to Total Assets (in times)	0.50	0.51	0.49	0.50	0.49
u.	Debtors' Turnover ratio (in number of days)*	104	113	106	103	150
v.	Inventory Turnover ratio (in number of days)*	37	45	42	37	51
w.	Bad debts to Accounts Receivable Ratio (%)*	0.14%	(0.88%)	(0.22%)	0.52%	1.28%
x.	Operating margin (%)	13.41%	18.90%	14.78%	19.24%	17.95%
y.	Net Profit Margin (%) including exceptional item	7.20%	9.86%	2.09%	10.79%	4.12%

Notes:

- The above financial results of Tata Power Renewable Energy Limited were reviewed by the Audit Committee and approved by the Board of Directors at its meeting held on 30th April, 2026.
- The above is an extract of the detailed format of quarter and annual Standalone Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchange under Regulation 52 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the said Financial Results is available on the Stock Exchange's website www.nseindia.com and on the Company's website www.tatapower.com/renewables.
- For other line items referred in Regulation 52(4) of SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, pertinent disclosures have been made to the National Stock Exchange of India Limited and can be accessed on URL www.nseindia.com.

* In case of quarterly numbers, ratios have not been annualised.

Place : Mumbai
Date : 30th April, 2026

For and on behalf of the Board of
TATA POWER RENEWABLE ENERGY LIMITED
Sanjay Banga
Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director
DIN 07785948

EXTRACT OF CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 2026

Sr. No.	Consolidated	Year Ended	
		31-Mar-26 (Audited)	31-Mar-25 (Audited)
a.	Total Income from Operations	15,027.59	9,876.27
b.	Profit / (Loss) before Exceptional Items and tax	2,597.56	1,621.90
c.	Profit / (Loss) before Tax	2,597.56	1,337.90
d.	Net Profit / (Loss) for the year	1,993.93	672.30
e.	Total Comprehensive Income	2,323.30	585.72
f.	Paid-up Equity Share Capital (Face Value: ₹ 10/- per share)	1,463.10	1,463.10
g.	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)	5,576.91	3,256.17
h.	Securities Premium Account	8,742.01	8,742.01
i.	Net worth	16,049.86	14,063.94
j.	Capital Redemption Reserve	11.25	11.24
k.	Debt Redemption Reserve	99.05	99.05
l.	Outstanding Debt	36,070.13	30,993.20
m.	Earnings Per Equity Share (of ₹ 10/- each)		
	Basic: (In ₹)	13.61	4.56
	Diluted: (In ₹)	13.61	4.56
n.	Debt Equity Ratio (in times)	2.28	2.30
o.	Debt Service Coverage Ratio (in times)	1.78	1.33
p.	Interest Service Coverage Ratio (in times)	1.97	1.71
q.	Current Ratio (in times)	1.07	0.69
r.	Long Term Debt to Working Capital (in times)	13.03	(109.07)
s.	Bad Debts to Account Receivable ratio (%)	0.61%	1.89%
t.	Current Liability ratio (in times)	0.20	0.29
u.	Total Debts to Total Assets (in times)	0.58	0.58
v.	Debtors' Turnover ratio (in number of days)	75	139
w.	Inventory Turnover ratio (in number of days)	96	172
x.	Operating margin (%)	28.89%	29.18%
y.	Net Profit Margin (%) including exceptional item	13.27%	6.81%

Notes:

- The above results were reviewed by the Audit Committee on 30th April, 2026 and approved by the Board of Directors at its meeting held on 30th April, 2026.
- The above is an extract of the detailed format of Consolidated Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 52 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Consolidated and Standalone Financial Results is available on the Stock Exchange website www.nseindia.com and on the Company's website www.tatapower.com/renewables.
- For the other line items referred in regulation 52(4) of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, pertinent disclosures have been made to the National Stock Exchange Limited and can be accessed on the URL - www.nseindia.com

For and on behalf of the Board of
TATA POWER RENEWABLE ENERGY LIMITED
Sanjay Banga
Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director
DIN 07785948

Place : Mumbai
Date : 30th April, 2026

OUR CENSUS OUR DEVELOPMENT

(First Phase of Census 2027)

Common queries on Self-Enumeration (SE) and their Answers (Part-1)

WHAT IS SELF-ENUMERATION?

Self-Enumeration is an online process in which you fill and submit your household details on the SE portal (se.census.gov.in) yourself, without waiting for an enumerator

- ❖ **Is Self-Enumeration mandatory?**
No, it is an additional facility. If you do not do it, an enumerator will collect data during field visit
- ❖ **Can I do Self-Enumeration in any language?**
This facility is available in Hindi, English and 14 Indian languages
- ❖ **Is internet required for Self-Enumeration?**
Yes, internet is required to access the portal
- ❖ **Is my information safe?**
Yes, all data is secure, encrypted and stored on government servers
- ❖ **What is SE ID and its use?**
After submission of information, you will receive a unique 11 digit SE ID (Also via SMS/email) which must be shown to the enumerator during her/his visit to your house
- ❖ **What if SE ID is forgotten?**
It can be retrieved using the registered mobile number on the portal
- ❖ **Will an enumerator visit after Self-Enumeration?**
Yes, the enumerator will visit your home and confirm your details using the SE ID
- ❖ **Do I need to upload any documents?**
No documents are required to be uploaded
- ❖ **Is help available on the portal?**
Portal has user guide, flowcharts, tutorial videos, FAQs and tooltips



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Delhi State Legal Services Authority

in Coordination With

Delhi Traffic Police

is organising



National Lok Adalat

at seven Court Complexes on 09.05.2026

Court Complexes



- Only compoundable Traffic challans/notices pending on Delhi Traffic Police Portal and forwarded to Virtual Court till 31.01.2026 will be taken up in this Lok Adalat.
- All the Notices/Challans are to be downloaded from Delhi Traffic Police Website i.e <https://traffic.delhipolice.gov.in/lokadalat> or by scanning the QR Code.
- It is mandatory to carry a print out of the Notices/Challans, as no printing facility will be available at the court complexes.



Scan QR Code 1:
To know Step by
step process



Scan QR Code 2:
downloading
Notices/ Challans

This link will be activated on 04.05.2026 at 10:00 am. A maximum of 50,000 Challans/Notices may be downloaded per day subject to an overall limit of 2,00,000 Challans/Notices.

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'He was assaulted, thrown': Kin of Bihar cleric found dead on Bareilly rail tracks

Manish Sahu
Lucknow, May 2

THE DEATH of a 30-year-old cleric from Bihar, whose body was found on the railway tracks in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly last week, has taken a fresh turn, with his family claiming to possess an audio clip in which he is allegedly heard saying he was being harassed inside the train.

Police, who initially suspected he accidentally fell from the train, said they are probing the case afresh.

The deceased, Maulana Tauseef Raza from Kishanganj district, was an imam at a mosque in Siwan. Police said the family is expected to arrive on Sunday to lodge a complaint. Raza's uncle, Rizwan Alam, alleged: "We suspect he was assaulted inside the train and then thrown from it." In the purported audio recording, the victim is heard telling his wife, Tabassum, that some people were harassing him inside the train and that he'd informed the police.

In a video circulating on social media, Tabassum alleged that her husband had called her, saying some people had caught him and were assaulting him on the train.

She said she urged him to seek help from fellow passengers, but he told her that they



Maulana Tauseef Raza from Kishanganj district was an imam at a mosque in Bihar's Siwan, say police. EXPRESS

were accusing him of being a thief. Tabassum, in the video, said her husband was travelling to Siwan from Bareilly.

She further claimed that police initially informed the family that he had slipped and fallen from the train, along with his luggage.

Superintendent of Police, Bareilly, Manush Pareek, said when the body was handed over to the family after the post-mortem, no suspicion of foul play was raised and they agreed with the police's preliminary conclusion that the cleric had died after accidentally falling from a moving train. "We are in contact with the deceased's family and will take appropriate action in the matter soon," said the SP.

4 Chhattisgarh cops killed while extracting explosives

Jayprakash S Naidu
Raipur, May 2

FOUR PERSONNEL of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district were killed on Saturday while they were engaged in extracting and defusing explosive material that had been dumped by Maoists, police said.

In a statement, Bastar police said, "With the assistance of the Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS), the team leader and other members were in the process of safely extracting the materials from the dump and preparing for their controlled disposal. During this process, an explosion is believed to have occurred, likely due to high temperatures and a chemical reaction in the firecracker powder."

Maoists have used improvised explosive devices (IEDs) extensively in the Bastar division which includes Kanker, but in recent months, following



Sukhrum Vatti



Krishna Komra



Parmanand Komra



Sanjay Gadhvale

intensified operations aimed at ending Left-wing extremism, security forces have been finding and defusing these explosives, sometimes with the help of inputs given by surrendered Maoists, police said.

On Saturday, a team from Kanker district's DRG launched an operation in the jungle area of Chhotethiya, which was earlier a Maoist stronghold and formed the entrance to Abujhmad from Kanker side.

Bastar police said the operation was "aimed at recovering materials previously dumped by Maoists".

"The first dump yielded items such as computers, monitors, and printers. Subsequently, another nearby dump was recovered, containing five sacks (15 kg each) of firecracker powder (gunpowder - Potassium Nitrate + Barium Nitrate) that had been earlier concealed by Maoists," the statement said.

After the explosion, Inspector Sukhrum Vatti, Constable Krishna Komra, and Constable Sanjay Gadhvale succumbed to their injuries on the spot, officials said. Constable Parmanand Komra was rushed to a medical facility with serious in-

juries and died later during treatment.

Inspector General of Police for Bastar range, Sundarraj Patelingam, said, "Under the leadership of Inspector Sukhrum Vatti, the same team had successfully recovered and safely neutralised several IEDs from Maoist hideouts in past."

"However, in this tragic accident, the force has lost four courageous commandos in the line of duty. The department remains forever indebted to the supreme sacrifice made by these brave personnel in service of the nation," the IG added.

GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN CONTROL OF 58 SCHOOLS

Takeover of 'Jamaat-linked' schools done in J&K, a look at what's at stake

Bashaarat Masood
Srinagar, May 2

AT THE Bemina, Srinagar, office of the Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education, a file is kept inside a locker. They call it File 104, which is essentially a watchlist of schools flagged by intelligence agencies. If a school finds its way in, government registration is off the table, without any formal response or a public notice.

One of the schools in the spotlight in recent days is Islamia High School in Baramulla, one of the 58 self-financed schools linked directly or indirectly to the Falah-e-Aam Trust (FAT) which the government has announced it will take over, as it sees them as "under patronage of the Trust or falling within its ideological orbit". The FAT is the educational affiliate of the banned Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI), J&K. Following the government order, the administrative control of all 58 schools has been given to principals of nearby government schools, including Islamia High School.

Registered as an independent institute with the state board since 1992, Islamia High School has around 1,500 students on its rolls, 700 of them girls. Spread over 13 kanals of land, it boasts among its alumni several senior police officers and doctors, with its most-famous student in recent times being rising cricket pacer Aqib Nabi. In Class 10 results this year, it had a pass percentage of 95%, with five students scoring 490 marks out of 500. Islamia High School's administrative control is now with Government High School, Buglowbagh, which, after the club-

Recognised by state board, the schools run by Fahal-E-Alam Trust in 2019 had over 80,000 students in the ranks

bing of seven more schools with it, has 170 students on its rolls.

A former student of Islamia High School says this is "ironical". "An administration that struggles to manage even 200 students has been given control of over 1,500 students." The takeover of the 58 schools last week completed an exercise that began in 2022, when the administrative control of the 22 original schools of FAT was taken over by the government, citing a 1990 crackdown on the trust. In August 2025, the government took over another 150 such schools.

"The takeover has effectively stripped us of our autonomy," says the principal of a formerly FAT school. "Our accounts are sealed and about every expense, whether the salary of teachers or other routine costs, we have to get the approval of the principal of the administrative school." However, the principal of a FAT school that was taken over last year says nothing much has changed for them. "Everything is the way it was. We have the same students, same teachers, we do the recruitment the way we used to do earlier... The difference is that students of Classes 9 and 10 are registered with the government school (that has administrative control over the FAT school now), and appear for exams under them."

Incidentally, the order of the Secretary, School Education, an-

nouncing the takeover of 200 FAT schools in August last year, had led to disagreement with the Omar Abdullah government. While the order said deputy commissioners would take over the management of the schools, Education Minister Sakeena Itoo claimed that the order — issued in "the interest of students" — had been "modified without her knowledge". According to her, the elected government had decided that these schools would be looked after by principals of nearby government schools. Eventually, an agreement had been reached on handing over the running of the schools to principals of neighbouring government schools.

The start

The Jamaat-e-Islami started with 22 schools in 1967, at a time when Kashmir's educational landscape was largely dominated by government-run institutions, apart from a handful of missionary schools in the private sphere. Across the semi-urban and rural areas of the Valley, viable educational options were even fewer. It went on to also open schools in Muslim-dominated areas of Jammu region. In 1975, the JeI, J&K, was banned by the Sheikh Abdullah National Conference government. It approached the CM over the fate of the schools, and it was he who offered a solution,

BRIEFLY



Andaman and Nicobar Police, Forest Department, Navy and Coast Guard personnel, and scuba divers deploy the Tricolour beneath the sea at Swaraj Dweep near Sri Vijaya Puram on Saturday. PTI

ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR

Andaman unfurls largest Tricolour underwater, sets Guinness record

THE ANDAMAN and Nicobar administration on Saturday set a new Guinness World Record by unfurling the world's largest underwater national flag at Radhanagar beach, officials said. The massive Tricolour, measuring nearly 60-40 metres, was deployed beneath the sea in an operation involving personnel from the Andaman and Nicobar Police, Forest Department, Navy and Coast Guard, as well as professional scuba divers at Swaraj Dweep (Havelock Island). Three school children — Fateh Jahaan Singh (16), Lavanya Eira (15) and Ranvijay Singh (14) — were the youngest participants among more than 200 divers. PTI

4 children found dead in UP, mother missing

FOUR CHILDREN were allegedly bludgeoned to death inside their house in Ambedkar Nagar district in UP, police said on Saturday. The deceased — identified as Shafiq (14), Saud (10), Umar (8) and Sadiya (7) — were the children of Niyaz (42), who has been working in Saudi Arabia for years. The children lived with their mother, Naziya Khatun (37), who has been missing. Police said a probe is underway to ascertain if she has been abducted or there is any other angle to her disappearance. PTI

4 teachers killed in Kullu as tree falls on vehicle

FOUR SCHOOL teachers were killed and three others were injured when a conifer tree fell on their vehicle during a severe storm in Himachal's Kullu district on Saturday, police said. Police said a Bolero vehicle was transporting seven people: six female teachers and one driver, who were reportedly returning from school when the incident occurred. The deceased, all women, were identified as Sneha Lata, Banti, Usha and Seema. Chief Minister Sukhinder Singh Sukhu expressed grief over the incident. ENS

JABALPUR CRUISE BOAT CAPSIZE Bodies of two children recovered, toll rises to 11

Express News Service
Bhopal, May 2

THE BODIES of two children were recovered from Bargi Dam in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur, where a cruise boat had capsized, taking the death toll to 11, officials said on Saturday.

Jabalpur Collector Raghendra Singh told The Indian Express, "One of the boys belonged to a family from Tamil Nadu and has been identified as Tamilventhan. The other boy has been identified as Viraj Soni." Soni's family wept outside the mortuary as his body was wheeled into an ambulance. This is the second death in the family after his mother, Neetu Soni, also died in the accident which took place on Thursday. Five-year-old Tamilventhan's body was flown to Tamil Nadu by the state authorities. The child's death comes as yet another blow to his

family after his mother, Karukuzhali, died in the accident. The boy's father, Kamaraj, and Kamaraj's nephew, Mayuram, are also missing.

Kamaraj, who was employed at an Ordnance factory, had been working in Jabalpur for several years. His relatives from Tiruppur district had come to visit him, and the family had gone on an outing on Thursday when tragedy struck.

Meanwhile, the captain of the cruise boat, Mahesh Patel, expressed regret over the incident, saying, "I haven't eaten or slept in three days. I only see those children." Patel is being investigated by a high-level committee set up to probe safety violations and other lapses that may have led to the deaths. The inquiry is focused on safety protocols followed aboard the cruise boat, including whether life jackets were provided to passengers.

Allahabad HC dismisses man's plea for namaz on private land

Bhupendra Pandey
Lucknow, May 2

DISMISSING A man's petition seeking directions to the Sambhal District Magistrate (DM) to allow him to offer namaz on his private land, the Allahabad High Court has observed that the right to practice religion is subject to public order and can't be exercised in a manner that interferes with the rights of others.

"The Constitution protects the right to practice religion, but it also makes it clear that this right is subject to public order, morality and health. It is not an unlimited right. It cannot be exercised in a way that affects others or disturbs the normal functioning of public life," a division bench of Justices Saril Vastava and Garima Prasad observed in its April 6 order, uploaded on April 30.

It further stated based on the material placed on record, "... this Court finds that the land in question is recorded as public land. Even otherwise, if the land

is assumed to be private, the petitioner is not entitled to the relief sought..."

The bench added, "When it comes to public land, the position is straightforward. Public land is meant for everyone and is controlled by law. No individual can claim a right to use it for regular religious gatherings," the bench added.

The court said "the record shows that he is not protecting an existing practice but seeking to introduce regular congregational gatherings, including persons from within and outside the village. It is admitted that namaz was earlier offered only on specific occasions such as Eid. This expansion beyond a limited private sphere falls outside the protected domain and is subject to regulation".

In these circumstances, the bench ordered, "... This court cannot grant relief on such a basis, particularly where the matter has implications for public order and social harmony. Accordingly, the writ petition is dis-

missed." The petitioner, Aseen, sought directions to the DM to provide security/protection and permission to pray at his private premises (measuring 82.80 sqm of gram sabha land) at Ikona village in Sambhal's Gunnaur.

Aseen's counsel cited four recent orders of the Allahabad High Court on separate petitions that sought similar relief. These orders, delivered between January and March this year, had stated that prayers can be conducted on private premises without requiring prior permission.

Replying to the petitioner, the bench said in these orders, the court protected bona fide prayer within private premises and held that such personal religious exercise cannot be arbitrarily interfered with.

The Standing Counsel appearing for the state also submitted that the land which the petitioner claimed is his private premises is meant for public use and he has no ownership rights over it.

WHEN KARGIL'S DEAD END UP IN PAKISTAN

Kargil families demand exchange point as rivers sweep bodies across the LoC

Bashaarat Masood
Srinagar, May 2

ON MARCH 20, a day after he celebrated his sixth birthday, Zulqarnain Ali and his cousin Ali Akbar (6) stepped out to play at Hundurman, the last village before the Line of Control (LoC) in Kargil. While playing, the boys slipped into the fast-flowing waters of the Shingo River.

Akbar's body was retrieved from the river in Hundurman a day later, but Zulqarnain couldn't be traced. On Friday evening, a WhatsApp call from across the border informed the family that the body had been retrieved and buried in Gangani village of Balistan, across the LoC.

"He (Zulqarnain) would never go towards the river," says his father Mohammad Hussain (38), a government school teacher. "They were three children. Zulqarnain, my sister's son and another boy, relatively

older. The older boy survived but these two drowned."

This is not the first such tragedy in Kargil. Javid Ali, who runs the Al Mehdi Scouts and helps search for bodies in the Shingo and Suru rivers, says, "There are at least 10 to 12 cases where we couldn't find the bodies, which are carried to Pakistan by strong currents. These are fast-flowing rivers, especially so in the summers."

"I personally remember many incidents over the last year; there was a car accident and five people drowned. We could retrieve only two while three bodies were swept across the border. It is often through social media that we come to know bodies have been found there," he says.

The Shingo River flows from Drass towards Kargil, and the Suru River descends from Zanskar to Kargil. The twin rivers meet near Hundurman, increas-

ing the flow and speed.

With a population of little over 200 as per the 2011 census, Hundurman is the last village on this side of the LoC. Across the border is Gangani, another small hamlet. Before 1971, Hundurman and Gangani were part of one village under Pakistan's control. In the 1971 war, India captured Hundurman. The two villages have people who are related. With no mechanism to send bodies home, the people of Kargil are demanding the opening of an exchange point at Hundurman.

Sajjad Hussain, a political leader and activist who is part of the Kargil Democratic Alliance, says, "For over 70 years, families divided between Ladakh and Balistan have been unable to reunite. This separation extends beyond life itself. Bodies of those who, due to accidents, are swept across the river are often never returned to their native land."

Requesting the External Affairs Minister and his Pakistani counterpart to intervene, he says, "A designated exchange point should be established to facilitate the dignified return of these bodies to their families."

Zulqarnain's body was recovered after 40 days, and his father says the family consented to their child being buried in Balistan. "Forty days had already passed, and they informed us it would be better to bury him there only," he says. "We agreed."

For Zulqarnain's father, the WhatsApp call on a neighbour's phone is only a partial closure. "We had sent the photos across and informed them about the clothes he was wearing that day. They have said they retrieved the body and buried it," he says. "But I have not seen any photos of the funeral yet. I am waiting for the pictures." Many families are still waiting for even this much of a closure.

65-year-old man held for 3-yr-old's rape-murder in Pune village

Express News Service
Pune, May 2

A 65-YEAR-OLD man allegedly sexually assaulted and murdered a three-and-a-half-year-old girl in a village in Pune on Friday, sparking massive outrage.

An angry mob blocked the Pune-Satara highway on Friday night, before senior police rushed to the spot.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis termed the incident "shocking" and said that the state will seek capital punishment for the accused.

SP Sandeep Singh Gill said the accused appears to be a serial offender, as he was earlier booked in two molestation cases in 1998 and 2015. In 2015 case, he was booked under POCOA Act but acquitted by a court in 2019, he said. The police arrested the accused and lodged an FIR against him. The court remanded the accused to police custody till May 7.

Government of Jharkhand Rural Works Department
JHARKHAND STATE RURAL ROADS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (JSRRDA)
 3rd Floor, F.F.P. Building, Dhurwa, Ranchi 834004
NOTICE INVITING TENDERS
 (National Competitive Bidding Through e-Procurement)
eTender No.- 10/ 2026-27- Ranchi, Dated: 30.04.2026

The undersigned on behalf of Government of Jharkhand invites item rate bids through e-Procurement from the eligible bidders registered* in appropriate class with any State/Central Government/State /Central Government Organization for construction and maintenance for five years of the works (List of schemes shall be displayed in the website pmsytendersjhr.gov.in) of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna PM-JANMAN (Batch-II & III, 2025-26).

Sl. No	District Name	Block Name	Package No.	Re-Package No.	Road Name / Bridge Name	Bridge Length (m)	Const. Cost (Rs. in Lakh)	Maint. Cost (Rs. in Lakh)	Total Cost (Rs. in Lakh)	Earnest Money (Rs. in Lakh)	Time period (in Months)
1	Garhwa	Bhawanathpur	JH07MTC0 46B	JH-07-PMJANMAN-III-BR-GAR-01 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over Local Nala at ch-2600m in PWD Road township to arsalai village	19.400m	143.28	1.21	360.39	8.00	18
	Garhwa	Bhawanathpur	JH07MTC0 52B		Construction of H.L. Bridge over phulwar Nala at ch-3620m in Pmsgy Road musaharawa tola to phulwa	38.760m	213.55	2.35			
2	Garhwa	Chinia	JH07MTC0 68	JH-07-PMJANMAN-III-BR-GAR-02 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over Local Nallah at ch-1690m in L023-Pmsgy Uday More To Parsukhar Road	19.400m	144.93	1.22	616.62	13.00	18
	Garhwa	Chinia	JH07MTC0 7B		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Pihaiya Nadi at ch-3680m in L024-Pmsgy Side To Pihaiya village Road	89.480m	463.73	6.74			
3	Garhwa	Chinia	JH07MTC5 B2	JH-07-PMJANMAN-III-BR-GAR-03 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over Khuri Nala at ch-1620m in L022-Pmsgy Khuri More To Khuri Road	67.120m	384.34	4.92	537.87	11.00	18
	Garhwa	Chinia	JH07MTC0 29B		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Local Nala at ch-1600m in Pmsgy Road to kundli atis dol village	19.400m	147.32	1.25			
4	Garhwa	Dhurki	JH07MTC0 48B	JH-07-PMJANMAN-III-BR-GAR-04 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over Local Nala at ch-430m in PWD Road to loiki village	19.400m	147.36	1.15	294.41	6.00	18
	Garhwa	Meral	JH07MTC0 32B		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Local Nala at ch-1870m in Pmsgy Road high school to gobardaha villa	19.400m	144.8	1.10			
5	Garhwa	Ramkanda	JH07MTC1 1B	JH-07-PMJANMAN-III-BR-GAR-05 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over Local Nallah at ch-450m in L021-Kuswar To Sarkahi Main Road	34.260m	198.78	2.05	344.66	7.00	18
	Garhwa	Bhandaria	JH07MTC3 B1		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Local Nallah at ch-3630m in L023-Madgar Road To Totki Road	19.400m	142.65	1.18			
6	Godda	Boarijore	JH09AECO 01B	JH-09-PMJANMAN-III-BR-GOD-01 (2025-26)	H.L. Bridge Over Local Nallah At Ch-1.690Km in L021-Ratanpur Barudhi Road to Rohra Village	51.370m	276.16	3.04	684.63	14.00	15
	Godda	Boarijore	JH09AECO 13B		H.L. Bridge Over Local Nallah At Ch-0.420km in L033-Mangra More to Maligoda	77.480m	401.25	4.18			
7	Godda	Poraihat	JH09XCL-010Br1	JH-09-PMJANMAN-III-BR-GOD-02 (2025-26)	Bridge across Local Nala At Ch. 0.905Km on Pareyhat to Rajdaha Bara Road	38.760m	255.62	2.87	528.17	11.00	15
	Godda	Poraihat	JH09XCL-021Br1		Bridge across Local Nala At Ch. 2.530Km on Kharbari to Korwatola Road	38.760m	266.45	3.23			
8	Godda	Sunderpahar	JH09XCL-17Br1	JH-09-PMJANMAN-III-BR-GOD-03 (2025-26)	Bridge across Local Nala At Ch. 1.940Km on Lacchu Tola to Masspara Road	44.760m	267.23	3.2	574.04	12.00	18
	Godda	Sunderpahar	JH09XCL-006Br1		Bridge across Local Nala At Ch. 0.440Km on Kathaldih to Pakrikhutta Road	58.123m	298.46	5.16			
9	Godda	Sunderpahar	JH09XCL-015Br1	JH-09-PMJANMAN-III-BR-GOD-04 (2025-26)	Bridge across Local Nala At Ch. 0.085Km on Sahapi to Sahapi Khotta Road	34.260m	234.56	2.58	512	11.00	15
	Godda	Sunderpahar	JH09XCL-15Br2		Bridge across Local Nala At Ch. 0.230Km on Sahapi to Sahapi khotta Road	38.760m	271.5	3.36			
10	Gumla	Bishnupur	JH10AEC 01B	JH-10-PMJANMAN-III-BR-GUM-01 (2025-26)	Bridge Over Local Nala At Ch-1.635km	58.120m	300.56	3.13	1095.14	22.00	18
	Gumla	Bishnupur	JH10AEC 07B		Bridge Over Local Nala At Ch-1.810km	38.760m	206.72	1.76			
	Gumla	Bishnupur	JH10MARS 101		CONSTRUCTION OF HL BRIDGE AT CH-350 ON Serka to jalim via Hanrup	15.110m	143.03	0.55			
	Gumla	Bishnupur	JH10MARS 102		CONSTRUCTION OF HL BRIDGE AT CH-3700 ON Serka to jalim via Hanrup	51.370m	256.9	1.70			
11	Gumla	Dumri	JH10MARS 104	JH-10-PMJANMAN-III-BR-GUM-02 (2025-26)	CONSTRUCTION OF HL BRIDGE AT CH-8155 ON Serka to jalim via Hanrup	31.460m	179.77	1.02	909.84	19.00	18
	Gumla	Dumri	JH10MARS 105		CONSTRUCTION OF HL BRIDGE AT CH-1200 ON Dina Mahuwatoli to Beltoli	15.110m	170.31	0.55			
	Gumla	Ghaghra	JH10MARS 110		CONSTRUCTION OF HL BRIDGE AT CH-3150 ON Dina Mahuwatoli to Beltoli	31.480m	190.95	1.02			
	Gumla	Ghaghra	JH10MARS 112		CONSTRUCTION OF HL BRIDGE AT CH-3625 ON Khukhradh to Bhelwadh	19.360m	170.96	0.67			
12	Jamtara	Kundhit	JH12AECO 3B	JH-12-PMJANMAN-III-BR-JAM-01 (2025-26)	LOCAL NALA AT CH-2.110Km (Dhansania (Batudih) to Amrasahri via Phulsahari Kaludih Road)	38.760m	194.56	1.93	196.49	4.00	12
	Latehar	Barwaidih	JH14MTC6 B1		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Chityahi Nadi at ch- 550m in L027-PMGSY road panwai to Panwai Road	77.480m	396.63	5.02			
13	Latehar	Barwaidih	JH14MTC6 B2	JH-14-PMJANMAN-III-BR-LAT-01 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over Bewahi Nadi at ch-1690m in L027-PMGSY road panwai to Panwai Road	77.480m	412.9	4.54	1273.02	26.00	18
	Latehar	Barwaidih	JH14MTC6 B3		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Dabgharwa Nadi at ch-3240m in L027-PMGSY road panwai to Panwai	89.480m	447.85	6.08			
	Latehar	Latehar Sadar	JH14MTC0 8B		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Tatha Nadi at ch-540m in L021-Marabar Jaram To Parhaiya Road	77.480m	395.27	11.63			
14	Latehar	Latehar Sadar	JH14MTC8 B1	JH-14-PMJANMAN-III-BR-LAT-02 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over Sukri Nadi at ch-60m in L021-Marabar Jaram To Parhaiya Road	111.84m	579.78	12.17	998.85	20.00	18
	Latehar	Barwaidih	JH14MTC0 1B		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Dumuhan Nadi at ch-08m in L023-Pmsgy Road chungru to Chungru Road	58.120m	310.52	4.34			
15	Latehar	Barwaidih	JH14MTC0 7B	JH-14-PMJANMAN-III-BR-LAT-03 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over Khar Nadi at ch-1260m in L028-PWD road Putuagharh to khar	44.760m	259.64	3.18	577.68	12.00	18
	Latehar	Latehar Sadar	JH14MTC9 B1		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Ghaghi Nadi at ch-750m in L022-REO Road Naresgharh harna chhapart	77.480m	406.6	11.73			
16	Latehar	Latehar Sadar	JH14MTC9 B2	JH-14-PMJANMAN-III-BR-LAT-04 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over Kurpani Nadi at ch-850m in L022-REO Road Naresgharh harna chhapart	58.120m	320.56	3.46	742.35	15.00	18
	Latehar	Latehar Sadar	JH14MTC9 B3		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Kurpani Nadi at ch-1710m in L022-REO Road Naresgharh harna chhapart	77.480m	415.46	4.85			
17	Latehar	Latehar Sadar	JH14MTC9 B4	JH-14-PMJANMAN-III-BR-LAT-05 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over Kurpani Nadi at ch-2000m in L022-REO Road Naresgharh harna chhapart	111.84m	577.12	11.93	1009.36	21.00	18
	Latehar	Mahuatand	JH14XCL-006Br1		Bridge across Local Nala At Ch. 350m on Mail REO Road to Injoykhar	44.760m	270.5	3.53			
18	Latehar	Mahuatand	JH14XCL-006Br2	JH-14-PMJANMAN-III-BR-LAT-06 (2025-26)	Bridge across Local Nala At Ch. 3675m on Mail REO Road to Injoykhar	30.260m	206.03	2.15	482.21	10.00	18
	Latehar	Mahuatand	JH14XCL-008Br1		Bridge across Local Nala At Ch. 650m on PWD Road to Sirsi	30.260m	210.54	2.48			
19	Latehar	Mahuatand	JH14XCL-008Br2	JH-14-PMJANMAN-III-BR-LAT-07 (2025-26)	Bridge across Local Nala At Ch. 4850m on PWD Road to Sirsi	44.760m	244.14	3.18	460.34	10.00	18
	Latehar	Manika	JH14MTC1 2B		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Oranga Nadi at ch-3160m in L023-Pmsgy road Lanka Kedirani to Heheg	201.28m	916.25	13.31			
20	Loharda ga	Kisko	JH15MARS 201	JH-15-PMJANMAN-III-BR-LOH-01 (2025-26)	CONSTRUCTION OF HL BRIDGE AT CH-250 ON Pwd Road Peshar to Dugu	15.110m	144.82	0.55	297.47	6.00	18
	Loharda ga	Kisko	JH15MARS 202		CONSTRUCTION OF HL BRIDGE AT CH-350 ON PWD Road to Kekrang	22.360m	151.34	0.76			
21	Pakur	Littipara	JH16TKE-034-B1	JH-16-PMJANMAN-III-BR-PAK-01 (2025-26)	HIGH LEVEL BRIDGE OVER LOCAL NALA AT CHAINAGE 0-545 IN SAKLA SCHOOL TO KESRIPAHADI ROAD.	17.150m	147.87	2.49	580.97	12.00	15
	Pakur	Littipara	JH16TKE-034-B2		HIGH LEVEL BRIDGE OVER LOCAL NALA AT CHAINAGE 1-020 IN SAKLA SCHOOL TO KESRIPAHADI ROAD.	25.400m	142.8	2.5			
22	Pakur	Littipara	JH16TKE-035-B1	JH-16-PMJANMAN-III-BR-PAK-02 (2025-26)	HIGH LEVEL BRIDGE OVER LOCAL NALA AT CHAINAGE 1-050 IN PIPARA ROAD TO GANDUPARTA ROAD.	66.960m	282.7	2.61	541.06	11.00	15
	Pakur	Littipara	JH16-HEM-005-B1		High Level Bridge over Local Nala in Reo road bara chakra to chhota ghagra road at chainage 1-750	77.480m	322.07	3.07			
23	Pakur	Littipara	JH16-HEM-006-B1	JH-16-PMJANMAN-III-BR-PAK-03 (2025-26)	High Level Bridge over Local Nala in PWD Main Road to Simal dabh behra road at chainage 0-075	33.260m	214.12	1.80	647.8	13.00	18
	Pakur	Littipara	JH16-HEM-012-B1		High Level Bridge over Local Nala in Chota Pokhariya - Reo Road, to fihada Pokhar road at chainage 0-9	19.400m	151.37	1.35			
24	Pakur	Littipara	JH16-HEM-031-B1	JH-16-PMJANMAN-III-BR-PAK-03 (2025-26)	High Level Bridge over Local Nala in Bara pokhariya to makhani pahar road at chainage 1-050	19.400m	145.52	1.35	647.8	13.00	18
	Pakur	Littipara	JH16-HEM-031-B2		High Level Bridge over Local Nala in Bara pokhariya to makhani pahar road at chainage 0-950	19.400m	145.19	1.35			
25	Pakur	Littipara	JH16-HEM-008-B1	JH-16-PMJANMAN-III-BR-PAK-04 (2025-26)	High Level Bridge over Local Nala in Reo-Road to Telu Tola Dumgo road at chainage 2-200	38.760m	199.75	1.93	253.27	6.00	12
	Pakur	Littipara	JH16-HEM-022-B1		High Level Bridge over Local Nala in Bara Edjo gram to bara malipura road at chainage 0-700	49.870m	251.06	2.21			
26	Pakur	Littipara	JH16-HEM-022-B1	JH-16-PMJANMAN-III-BR-PAK-05 (2025-26)	High Level Bridge over Local Nala in Reo Road Barakachua to Gagra tola road at chainage 0-450	130.31m	457.97	4.46	462.43	10.00	18

27	Palamu	Bishrampur	JH17MTC2 2B1	JH-17-PMJANMAN-III-BR-PAL-01 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over Barwahi Nala at ch-800m in L024-PMGSY Road Pandu Pathalbandhiwa To B	58.120m	319.8	3.94	686.61	14.00	18
	Palamu	Bishrampur	JH17MTC2 2B2		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Machawa Nala at ch-2250m in L024-PMGSY Road Pandu Pathalbandhiwa To	19.400m	142.3	1.21			
	Palamu	Bishrampur	JH17MTC2 2B3		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Machawa Nala at ch-2680m in L024-PMGSY Road Pandu Pathalbandhiwa To	34.260m	217.16	2.20			
28	Palamu	Chainpur	JH17MTC2 B1	JH-17-PMJANMAN-III-BR-PAL-02 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over Local Nallah at ch-4250m in L029-Kaachan To Teenkoniya Main Road	19.400m	146.2	1.19	362.28	8.00	15
	Palamu	Chainpur	JH17MTC2 B2		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Hathu Nala at ch-4800m in L029-Kaachan To Teenkoniya Main Road	38.760m	212.61	2.28			
29	Palamu	Chainpur	JH17MTC7 B2	JH-17-PMJANMAN-III-BR-PAL-03 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over Dumuhan Nala at ch-4960m in L033-Islamagar More To Dhananawa Main	89.450m	447.58	6.07	702.42	15.00	18
	Palamu	Chainpur	JH17MTC7 B3		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Margada Nala at ch-5780m in L033-Islamagar More To Dhananawa Main	44.760m	246.04	2.73			
30	Palamu	Chainpur	JH17MTC0 1B	JH-17-PMJANMAN-III-BR-PAL-04 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over River at ch-405m in L035-Chainpur barwadh pwd road to Margra	51.370m	329.93	4.14	679.24	14.00	15
	Palamu	Chainpur	JH17MTC0 3B		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Kahuwa Nala at ch- 1580m in L030-Mahaut Muriya To Khairahi via Data	38.800m	225.84	2.54			
	Palamu	Chainpur	JH17MTC0 6B		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Local Nallah at ch-4060m in L032-Nawa (Biyadohar) To Mahut Muriya	19.400m	115.46	1.33			
31	Palamu	Chattarpur	JH17MTC9 B1	JH-17-PMJANMAN-III-BR-PAL-05 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over Kuwakho Nala at ch-570m in L022-PWD Road Dunder Tardih To Dunder R	22.400m	141.49	1.38	587.07	12.00	15
	Palamu	Chattarpur	JH17MTC9 B2		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Sidhiyalewa Nala at ch-1740m in L022- PWD Road Dunder Tardih To Dunder	34.260m	203.06	2.07			
	Palamu	Chattarpur	JH17MTC9 B3		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Jhurua Nala at ch-2550m in L022-PWD Road Dunder Tardih To Dunder	44.800m	235.63	3.44			
32	Palamu	Chattarpur	JH17MTC9 B4	JH-17-PMJANMAN-III-BR-PAL-06 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over Kadhariya Nala at ch-3450m in L022- PWD Road Dunder Tardih To Dunder	34.260m	203.09	2.07	581.86	12.00	15
	Palamu	Chattarpur	JH17MTC9 B5		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Jagrahi Nala at ch-4390m in L022-PWD Road Dunder Tardih To Dunder	44.800m	247.14	2.45			
33	Palamu	Chattarpur	JH17MTC1 1B	JH-17-PMJANMAN-III-BR-PAL-07 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over Kroli Nala at ch-1230m in L023-NH -98 Kurauli Road To Kurauli Padr	19.400m	126.03	1.08	702.36	15.00	15
	Palamu	Manatu	JH17MTC1 7B2		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Pelwa Nala at ch-4180m in L022-Mitar Pmsgy Road To Jashpur chirkur	19.400m	139.85	1.15			
34	Palamu	Manatu	JH17MTC1 7B3	JH-17-PMJANMAN-III-BR-PAL-08 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over Golthi Nala at ch-4380m in L022-Mitar Pmsgy Road To Jashpur chirku	19.400m	138.74	1.14	502.4	11.00	15
	Palamu	Manatu	JH17MTC1 7B4		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Reda Nala at ch-4480m in L022-Mitar Pmsgy Road To Jashpur chirkur	19.400m	139.77	1.10			
35	Palamu	Manatu	JH17MTC1 7B5	JH-17-PMJANMAN-III-BR-PAL-09 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over Reda Nala at ch-5900m in L022-Mitar Pmsgy Road To Jashpur chirkur	19.400m	139.85	1.16	460.32	10.00	18
	Palamu	Manatu	JH17MTC0 17B1		Construction of H.L. Bridge over Pichari Nala at ch-3500m	19.400m	138.43	1.17			
36	Palamu	Manatu	JH17MTC1 7B6	JH-17-PMJANMAN-III-BR-PAL-10 (2025-26)	Construction of H.L. Bridge over Pana Nala at ch-6550m in L022-Mitar Pmsgy Road To Jashpur chirkur	38.760m	222.68	2.49	522.23		

Mitigating costs of start-stop war



ACROSS THE AISLE
BY P CHIDAMBARAM

THE US-ISRAEL war against Iran is not a distant war. It is in West Asia neighbouring the Indian sub-continent. Millions of Indians live and work in the region. Millions of Indian Shia Muslims have a strong bond with the people of Iran. India has traditionally claimed a long and historical relationship with Iran. Over the years, India has also claimed closer trade and economic relations with Iran — an example is the development of Chabahar port. Those claims have frayed under the BJP government. One of the reasons is the close friendship between the prime minister of Israel, Mr Benjamin Netanyahu, and the prime minister of India, Mr Narendra Modi.

No more wanted

In the good old days, India would have been the most sought-after peacemaker in the case of a conflict. This time, however, since the war started on February 28, 2026, both the US and Israel have studiously avoided India. It is Iran that has maintained a semblance of 'briefing' India from time to time. India has been partial to Israel —

the latest episode is the Indian veto of the BRICS countries' draft resolution critical of Israel. Nevertheless, the US-Israel axis has kept India 'out' and, instead, courted Pakistan as the intermediary.

India can no longer pretend that the West Asian war has not affected the country. It has damaged the economies of most countries of the world, especially those countries that have vital stakes in global trade, global supply chains and maritime interests. Let us look at some Indian economic indicators since February 28, 2026 when the war started (see table).

The world is familiar with President Trump's bluff and bluster. No one believed him when he boasted that Iran's Air Force and Navy had been obliterated; or there are no more Iranian military assets; or the 'regime' in Iran had changed (once or twice?); or the American draft proposals had been accepted by Iran; or there was (at different times) a ceasefire. Mr Trump stops the war, then starts it again, and then announces a pause. Meanwhile, Israel continues to attack Iran and Lebanon, and Iran retaliates. The world knows the war that was started on February 28 did not ever stop.

Not all is normal

The government claims that 'all is normal'. The RBI seems more aware of the costs and consequences of the war. In its April Bulletin, the RBI flagged the 'pressures on the global supply chains', 'CPI inflation driven by fuel and food', 'bond yields', 'slowdown in imports' and 'volatile FII flows', and warned that "If the conflict

	FEBRUARY 28, 2026	APRIL 28, 2026
BRENT crude oil	USD 67 / barrel	USD 110 / barrel
LPG cylinder (domestic)	Rs 853	Rs 913
LPG cylinder (commercial)	Rs 1,740	Rs 2,078
Inflation CPI (y-o-y)	3.21%	3.40%
Inflation WPI (y-o-y)	2.13%	3.88%
Foreign exchange reserves	USD 728 billion	USD 703 billion
Exchange rate (vs USD)	Rs 91.10	Rs 94.20
Sensex (BSE)	81,287	76,887
Nifty 50 (NSE)	25,179	23,996
Unemployment rate	4.9%	5.1%

The government claims that 'all is normal'. The RBI seems more aware of the costs and consequences of the war

persists and supply chains are not restored early, it may create challenges to the domestic economy... Except for maintaining the prices of petrol and diesel (presumably because of elections), the government has done precious little. It seems to be a bystander watching the events as they unfold with a silent prayer that they do not scald or scar the Indian economy.

The people of India are resilient and stoical. They know they can expect little help from the government. They are anxious to protect the jobs and incomes they have. Faced with the higher LPG price and unavailability of supply, homes and eateries have begun to use firewood. The average family has cut back on consumption and dipped into savings. On the surface, there is no disruption or despair but, traveling in the countryside, one can see the people are worried. The prime minister has been totally immersed in the four-state Assembly elections and the mischievous campaign to re-enact

the Bill for women's reservation that Parliament had passed in September 2023. He may return to governance after May 5.

Govt can do more

The government can do more to ease the living of the people and boost incomes:

- It can pay the arrears of wages under MGNREGA and re-start the works-programme that is in limbo since the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was repealed and purportedly re-enacted.
 - The rural roads programme (PMGSY) can be accelerated and the Rs 19,000 crore allotted in 2026-27 can be spent in 6-8 months (unlike the unspent Rs 6,871 crore in 2025-26), and more money can be allotted.
 - In 2025-26, the BE for the Drinking Water mission (*Jal Jeevan*) was Rs 67,000 crore but the RE was a miserable Rs 17,000 crore. The budgeted expenditure of Rs 67,670 crore for 2026-27 can be front-loaded and funds released to the state governments promptly.
 - Unlike the promise made during the Covid epidemic (and breached), the government should explicitly stipulate an amount of money for absorbing the losses in lending to MSMEs and direct the banks to disburse the loans quickly, and jump-start the sector that is still in the doldrums.
- Expenditure on provision of 'public goods', creation of jobs, and boosting incomes of the people are effective counter-measures to the costs and consequences of the Trump-Netanyahu war — certainly better than stunned passivity.

Hate speech cannot go unpunished



FIFTH COLUMN
BY TAVLEEN SINGH

WHEN IT comes to hate speech and religious fanaticism, I put the whole hateful bunch of haters and fanatics in the same basket. Whatever their genre, whatever their rationale, in my eyes they are all despicable. This is why it disappointed me profoundly that the Supreme Court last week let two BJP leaders off the hate speech hook. If the court had found reason to rule against them, it may have contributed vitally to calming the hate filled mood that has spread across India since the age of belligerent Hindutva and jihadist Islam began.

Whenever I have said this, and I have said it often, I have been reviled by Hindutva's social media warriors for not recognising that belligerent Hindutva is not as bad as radical Islam. I am fully aware of this. Hindutva has not produced the kind of horrible violence we saw in London last week against the Jewish community. It has not created suicide bombers who believe that Allah approves of killing innocent people simply because they are infidels and idol-worshippers. The kind of fanatics who came to that sunny meadow in Pahalgam just over a year ago and shot Hindu men in front of their families simply because they could not recite the 'kalima' have so far not been bred by any of the Indic religions. But fanaticism of a nasty kind has.

This is a recent development. In that older India in which I grew up, I cannot remember ever running into a Hindu or Muslim fanatic. There were casteist Hindus around who did not allow those of lower caste to come near them or enter their kitchens and pooja rooms. And mercifully, there are fewer of those around these days. At least in the cities. They have been replaced by haters who do not hesitate to direct their hatred at Muslims. It is the speeches of BJP leaders like the two who were absolved last week that inspire them.

The speeches made by Anurag Thakur and Parvash Verma came in response to Muslim opposition to the Citizens Amendment Act. Muslim fears were valid because for the first time in our proudly secular land, we were told that migrants to India of all faiths, other than the Islamic faith, would be put on a fast track to citizenship. This was justified on the grounds that our neighbours are nearly all Islamic and it is Hindus and Sikhs who face sickening brutality in these countries. Not true. Shias do not have such a good time in Pakistan nor do those of the Ahmadiya sect. It was a discriminatory amendment, and a deliberate attempt at showing Indian Muslims that they were lesser citizens.

Proof came in the speeches made by the two BJP leaders who the Supreme Court absolved last week. Anurag Thakur was a minister at the time which made it so much more unacceptable that he addressed public rallies at which with a smug grin on his face he yelled 'Desh ke gaddaron ko...' and smiled when the crowd responded with 'goli maaro saalon ko'. For those with limited Hindi, this translates as 'traitors to this country must be shot'. The 'traitors' meant Muslim protesters. It was Muslim women protesters in Shaheen Bagh that were targeted by Verma.

These were dangerous hate speeches. Hate speeches always are because the message they send every time to the semi-literate thugs who make up the violent hate mobs they inspire is that they must go forth and attack the community that is being targeted. We have seen too many incidents of this kind of violence happen in recent years and it must be said that because of them, ethnic hatred of one kind or another has become the norm.

There were communal tensions in those gentler, secular decades as well, but they never became the norm. The first time I heard people spitting venom against Muslims in the drawing rooms of Delhi was when L K Advani set off on that first 'rath yatra' to Ayodhya. One of his companions on that chariot was Narendra Modi and it was he who fulfilled the promise of building a magnificent temple on the ruins of the Babri Masjid.

Mission accomplished. Now it is time to stop talking about traitors and infiltrators just as it is time for our security forces and intelligence agencies to be better trained against jihadi terrorism. When those responsible for an incident like the one that happened in Pahalgam are killed in anonymity only after the event, many continue to disbelieve that the real culprits of some truly horrific hatred crime have been justly punished. One reason why the Prime Minister needed to send political delegations to the capital cities of the world was because Operation Sindoor did not get the support we expected to get from the international community. After the 26/11 attack in Mumbai, the world was on our side because there was proof in black and white and on reams of videos from CCTV footage that showed clearly who was responsible.

Terrorism on our sub-continent is nearly always inspired by religious fanaticism, and this is as bad as hate speech. From many months of covering Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale's crusade from the Golden Temple, I can report that I witnessed some of the hate speeches before some horrible crime was committed. Hate speech is always bad. When it is political leaders who are responsible, it is irresponsible and unforgivable.

When Speaker's role in defection cases was tested in 1993



INSIDE TRACK | BY COOM KAPOOR

FAIR-WEATHER MPS

IF SEVEN AAP Rajya Sabha MPs have quit the party, the blame cannot be attributed entirely to the BJP's ruthless tactics in mobilising enforcement agencies to intimidate AAP's MPs. Arvind Kejriwal erred by nominating individuals not on the basis of loyalty or legislative skills but on their monetary contributions. Of the seven defectors, one manufactures fertilisers, the other towels and a third runs a large private university in Punjab. One defector admitted on TV that he and others had met Amit Shah before the switch! Incidentally, around two million unfollowed Raghav Chadha on his Instagram account within three days of leaving AAP. His large social media presence was one of his strengths. Signs of his fair-weather followers drifting away was evident to Kejriwal in March 2024 when he was arrested for alleged involvement in the liquor scam. Chadha mysteriously left for the UK for dental treatment instead of joining the solidarity protests against his leader's arrest. The businessmen MPs, who had little to do with AAP all along, were also absent from rallies in support of Kejriwal. Incidentally, the BJP has its eye on breaking two other parties in the Rajya Sabha, Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena and Sharad Pawar's NCP. Tellingly, MP Sanjay Jadhav has been missing from recent party meetings with Uddhav Thackeray.

It is not as if traditional political parties have not awarded RS tickets on the basis of a candidate's financial standing, but earlier, such nominees did not change affiliations midstream because of anti-defection laws. The late pharmaceutical magnate, King Mahendra Prasad, a seven-time RS member from Bihar, for instance, was affiliated variously to the Congress, JD(U) and RJD, but in different Rajya Sabha terms.

NO STRANGER TO POLITICS

The recently appointed vice chairperson of NITI Aayog, Ashok Lahiri, kept a low profile even when he was a member of the West Bengal Assembly. A respected economist who has held many distinguished positions, including Chief Economic Advisor in both the Manmohan Singh and Vajpayee governments, Lahiri caught the attention of the Modi government in 2021 when he wrote a paper suggesting that BJP had a fighting chance in the West Bengal Assembly elections if it implemented certain steps. To his surprise, the BJP election managers got in touch and urged him to stand for elections. The BJP lost that election, but Lahiri won from Balurghat. In fact, this was not Lahiri's first brush with electoral politics. In the late 1970s, he partnered with Prannoy Roy, both freshly out of the Delhi School of Economics, to form the Policy Group, a pioneer in psephology in India. They based their election prediction analysis on both the swing in voter mood and the index of opposition unity. The Policy Group created waves by accurately forecasting Indira Gandhi's defeat in 1977, her victory in 1980 and Rajiv Gandhi's massive mandate in 1984. Roy then went on to build a television empire, Lahiri focused on a career in economics.

AIRBRUSHING REALITY, CURATED MOMENTS

Legendary lensman Raghu Rai's political photographs, which were back in the public eye after his death last week, captured an intimate slice of India's history. His iconic photos were because of his intuitive genius, but his additional advantage was that there was barely five feet between the photographer and his subject in those days. Today, the distance between news photographers and those in power has increased exponentially. Parliament House, Rashtrapati Bhavan, party meeting rooms, VIP aircraft, and government offices are out of bounds. The practice is for photographs of political bigwigs to be taken largely by the VIPs' own media team or select agencies. It is not just one way of erasing any embarrassing moments or comments but also photoshopping to convey the politically correct message.

RETAINING 24 AKBAR ROAD

The Congress is reluctant to vacate 24 Akbar Road in Delhi, its headquarters for nearly half a century till it moved reluctantly to its new multi-storey building on Kotla Marg. To retain the type VIII government bungalow, some suggest that it be allotted in the name of an MP, a manoeuvre the BJP adopted to hang on to its former Ashoka Road headquarters. The problem is that the only Congress MP presently entitled to be assigned the ministerial category bungalow is P Chidambaram, as a former cabinet minister. But Congress office bearers are too intimidated by the party's eminence grise to make the request. (Even Supreme Court lawyer Abhisek Singhvi, who has just won a record-breaking fifth consecutive Rajya Sabha term, qualifies only for a class VII bungalow. Singhvi, who loaned his government house to the party earlier, has decided to occupy his allotted bungalow this time.)

Kamal Nath and Ashok Gehlot as former chief ministers also qualify for the largest sized bungalows but are not currently MPs. They are reportedly flogging their eligibility for a type VIII bungalow to push for a Rajya Sabha nomination.



HISTORY HEADLINE
BY CHAKSHU ROY

IN MARCH 1993, a month into becoming Chief Justice of India, Justice M N Venkatchaliah faced a constitutional crisis. The apex court had ordered Dr H Borobabu Singh, the Speaker of the Manipur Legislative Assembly, to appear before it, and the Speaker repeatedly refused. The apex court and the Speaker were on a collision course.

In a 1964 face-off between the judiciary and the UP assembly, the legislature had ordered the arrest of Allahabad High Court judges. Justice Venkatchaliah must have wondered what he would do if the Speaker continued to defy the court's authority and dignity. The 1993 crisis stemmed from a case about the defection of seven Manipur MLAs.

The anti-defection law is back in the news with seven Rajya Sabha AAP members requesting the Rajya Sabha Chairman that they wish to merge with the BJP under the anti-defection law. The secretariat has updated the political party affiliations of these MPs on the Parliament website to the BJP. The defection law may also capture public attention in case there are any hung Houses in the four states, Assam, Kerala, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, whose election results are out on Monday, May 4.

Parliament inserted the Tenth Schedule into the Constitution (popularly known as the anti-defection law) to prevent MPs and MLAs from shifting their loyalty from one party to another. It specifies that the presiding officers of the legislature will decide defection cases, with their decisions being final. If the Speaker decides that an MP/MLA has defected, then the legislator loses their seat in the legislature. When Parliament made the law in 1985, it also barred courts from getting involved in these cases.

During the debate on the constitutional amendment, MPs cautioned against vesting presiding officers with the power of deciding defection cases. S Jaipal Reddy, a Lok Sabha



(Above) Justice (ret'd) M N Venkatchaliah; (left) Raghav Chadha with BJP leaders

Free Telegram Channel <https://t.me/+pegW08Cwts0xMjcl>

member, opposed this provision, reasoning that since a majority elects the Speaker, the individual would be at the command of the ruling party and its leadership. Prof Madhu Dandvate, a senior MP, was concerned that this power would involve the Speaker in unnecessary controversies.

With Speakers gaining the power to make and break governments, the non-partisan office came under tremendous political pressure. For example, during a trust vote, a Speaker disqualified MLAs on the House floor while the vote was underway.

In another case, a Speaker disqualified some MLAs, was himself removed, and the next Speaker reversed the decision. Another Speaker was elected as the Chief Minister after a government fell due to defecting MLAs. And in one case, a Speaker disqualified some MLAs one day and reinstated them the next day.

In July 1991, Dr Singh, the Manipur Assembly Speaker, disqualified seven Congress (I) MLAs on grounds of defection. His decision, along with those of the Speakers of the legislatures of Goa, Gujarat, Manipur, Meghalaya, Madhya Pradesh and Nagaland in defection cases, was taken up by a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court (the Kihoto Hollohan case).

This bench, of which Justice Venkatchaliah was a part, examined the constitutionality of the anti-defection law. The court held that the law was valid but struck down the provision that restricted judicial review of the Speaker's decisions. In November 1991, the court also quashed the Manipur Speaker's decision disqualifying the seven MLAs.

The Speaker resisted the implementation of the apex court's decision. When the secre-

tary of the legislative assembly tried to execute the court's order, the Speaker removed him from service. In a case filed by the secretary, the apex court asked Dr Singh to appear before it on multiple occasions. But the Speaker refused, stating that he enjoyed constitutional immunity from the court's orders. The court clarified that it was ordering Mr Singh's appearance not as the Speaker but as the administrative head of the legislature.

An entire year passed with the Speaker refusing to appear before the Supreme Court. Then, in February 1993, the court ordered the central government to take all necessary steps, including the use of "minimum force," to ensure the Speaker's presence.

The Centre then sent a BSF plane to Manipur to bring the Speaker to Delhi. The day the Speaker had to appear before the court was a tense time for the government. The MoS Law, H R Bharadwaj, remarked, "the government is very much concerned for the dignity of the Speaker as well as the dignity of the court and when there is some irritation between the institutions, it is a matter of anxiety for the entire nation."

The Manipur Speaker, Dr Singh, arrived at the Supreme Court at 2 pm. His presence in the court averted the constitutional crisis. He filed an affidavit stating that he had complied with all the court's orders, and the court dropped all proceedings against him. The court, legislature and the government were able to avoid this particular crisis. But three decades later, the anti-defection law continues to bring disrepute to the office of presiding officers and to place them in conflict with the courts.

The writer looks at issues through a legislative lens and works at PRS Legislative Research

Sip slow, savour life

IT'S A pity no one's talking about *Drops of God*, the subtly cerebral and highly entertaining Apple TV series centered around connoisseurs of wine. Expansive in scope, this lushly shot drama moves seamlessly between French, Japanese and English, encompassing the picturesque vineyards of Italy and the sleek architecture of Tokyo. For anyone seeking a break from the stressful present of war and scarcity, it's wonderful to be transported to the dreamy world of vintages, and the considerable charms and rituals involved in appreciating a good wine. *Drops of God* begins with the death of an influential French wine critic who leaves behind an 87,000-bottle cellar and a complicated will. His estranged daughter is pitted against his protegee. To stake a claim to his estate, they need to clear tests that range from identifying obscure heritage wines, to finding clues from a mysterious painting.

Whether the discoveries and pleasures of savouring alcohol are capable of deeper

meaning depends on our individual experiences. Anyone who has, on occasion, given in to the quiet manipulation of the senses brought on by spirits knows the value of being aroused to a relaxed state of convivial bonhomie. And, if this most reliable social lubricant, instead, brings on a measure of contemplation inaccessible otherwise, that's a pretty good outcome too. But *Drops of God* is no ode to frivolous boozing. Hovering between gravity and mockery, it hides under its layered storyline, a highly civilised philosophy of the grand human endeavour to lead a good life. It seems to say, surviving the serious business of living needs precious moments of levity; so why not embrace a flight of imagination and see the entire enterprise of wine making and tasting through a mildly intellectual and rose-tinted lens?

During the pandemic, there was a startling resurgence of interest in historical dramas. People found solace amid the unfolding crisis by losing themselves in lavish scenarios



ON THE LOOSE
BY LEHER KALA

of palaces, ball gowns and dukedoms. Somehow, a hark back to a genteel era, where nothing bad ostensibly happens, feels consoling whenever there's chaos. We read literature and watch shows for many reasons: to find ourselves, to see situations and lives we couldn't otherwise imagine and yes, occasionally, to escape our current reality. Does the kind of escape we choose matter? If, at a particular juncture, someone is nostalgic for an idealised past and a society that strictly adhered to conventional values, getting caught up in what's highbrow or lowbrow is pointless. When hostility and strife abound in the outer environment with no sign of abating, being entertained wins out over chasing superficial refinement.

In our imaginations, the world of wine conjures up images of haughty snobbery and pretension. By centering *Drops of God* around a contest, the protagonists feel deeply human, struggling, like the rest of us figuring out work futures and romantic possibilities. Scrubbed

clean of the inherent artifice associated with wine aficionadas, the show makes a (romantic) point by emphasising historical vintages be damned, the real value of cracking open a bottle is that it creates joy by bringing people together. If the powerful aroma of an old Burgundy or the divine, earthy fragrance of a fresh Chablis helps us connect with our fellow travellers on earth, what's left to say other than, cheers? It turns out, just watching somebody sipping an organic Chianti in a magical Tuscan setting triggers the slow-down effect. Our fast paced existence runs totally contrary to the tenets of wine appreciation — mainly, staying present while swirling, inhaling and sipping. There's no perfect formula for consistent happiness, but the multi-sensory experience triggered by popping the cork, unleashes the very pleasant sensation of being completely at ease, thinking, as the saying goes, wine flies when you're having fun.

The writer is director, Hutkay Films

Despite truce, Israel strikes Lebanon, kills 7

Bassem Mroue Beirut, May 2

ISRAELI AIRSTRIKES on southern Lebanon killed at least seven people and wounded others on Saturday despite a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, officials said.

Israel's military on Saturday issued a new warning for residents of nine southern villages to evacuate. Israel and Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group have kept up their attacks despite a ceasefire in place since April 17.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported an airstrike on a car in the village of Kfar Dajal killed two people, while another hit a home in the village of Lwaizeh, killing three. Two others were killed in a strike on the village of Shoukin, it said.

Israel's military Arabic-language spokeswoman, Lt. Col. Ella Waweya, posted on X that the Israeli air force carried out about 50 airstrikes over the past 24 hours targeting Hezbollah infrastructure and members.

Hezbollah said that it attacked with a drone Israeli troops who gathered inside a house in the coastal village of Bayed. The Israeli army has been attacking towns and villages near the Lebanese border. The military says it destroys buildings that were used as outposts by the Iran-backed group.

ANY KIND OF MONEY TRANSFER WON'T BE TOLERATED, U.S. AUTHORITIES HAVE WARNED

US warns shipping firms over paying Iran to transit the Strait

Sarah El Deeb & Adam Shreck Beirut, May 2

THE UNITED STATES is warning shipping companies they could face sanctions for making payments to Iran to safely pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

The US Office of Foreign Assets Control alert posted Friday adds pressure in the standoff between the US and Iran over control of the strait at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, where about a fifth of the world's trade in oil and natural gas typically passes.

Iran effectively closed the strait by attacking and threatening ships after the US and Israel launched a war on February 28. It later began offering some ships safe passage by detouring them through routes closer to its shore, charging fees at times.

That "tollbooth" effort is the focus of the US sanctions warning, which said payment demands could include transfers not only in cash but also "digital assets, offsets, informal swaps, or other in-kind payments," including charitable donations and payments at Iranian embassies.

The US responded to Iran's closure of the strait with a naval



A woman walks past an anti-US billboard depicting US President Donald Trump and the Strait of Hormuz, in Tehran on Saturday. REUTERS

blockade of Iranian ports on April 13, preventing Iranian tankers from leaving and depriving Tehran of oil revenue it needs to shore up its ailing economy.

The US Central Command has said 45 commercial ships have been told to turn around since the blockade began.

US President Donald Trump has rejected Iran's latest proposal to end the war.

"They want to make a deal, I'm not satisfied with it, so we'll see what happens," Trump said Friday. He didn't elaborate but expressed frustration with Iran's leadership, calling it "very disjointed".

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency said Tehran handed over its plan to mediators in Pakistan on Thursday night.

The shaky three-week ceasefire between the US and

Iran appears to be holding, though both countries have traded accusations of violations.

Negotiations continued by phone after Trump called off his envoys' trip to Pakistan last weekend, the president said. Trump this week floated a new plan to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Iran on Saturday said it hanged two men convicted of spying for Israel.

Iranian Nobel laureate in hospital as health worsens



Narges Mohammadi. AP

Beirut: Iran's imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi has been urgently transferred from prison to a hospital in northwestern Iran after a "catastrophic deterioration" of her health, her foundation said Friday.

The Narges Mohammadi Foundation described the condition of the rights lawyer as "very high risk," with fluctuating blood pressure and severe nausea.

But medical teams in Zanjan have requested her medical records before performing any treatment, while recommending that she be transferred to Tehran for treatment by her own doctors, the foundation said. AP

BRIEFLY



Japan's PM Sanae Takaichi with her Vietnamese counterpart Le Minh Hung during a welcoming ceremony in Hanoi on Saturday. REUTERS

VIETNAM

Japan, Vietnam seek deeper ties amid geopolitical risks

JAPANESE PRIME Minister Sanae Takaichi pledged on Saturday to deepen ties with Vietnam, highlighting energy and critical minerals in talks with Prime Minister Le Minh Hung, and later urged Southeast Asian nations to bolster regional supply chains. The two leaders discussed ways to deepen the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership established in 2023, focusing on energy, critical minerals, artificial intelligence, semiconductors and space. "The two sides identified economic security as a new priority area for bilateral cooperation," Takaichi told reporters after the meeting. Vietnam has been seeking support from Japan and other countries for oil supplies as conflict in the Middle East drives prices higher and disrupts supply chains. REUTERS

UAE

Air traffic back to normal, say authorities

THE UAE'S aviation authority said air traffic in the country has returned to normal, the state news agency reported on Saturday, after precautionary measures implemented on February 28 at the start of the Iran war were lifted. The decision followed a comprehensive assessment of operational and security conditions in coordination with relevant entities, the General Civil Aviation Authority added. REUTERS

AUSTRIA

Man arrested in poisoned baby food case

AUSTRIAN POLICE said on Saturday they have arrested a 39-year-old suspect in connection with a case in which rat poison was placed in jars of baby food in what their German manufacturer called an attempt to extort it. Five "manipulated" jars of the same kind of baby food made by German brand HiPP were safely recovered last month in Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, German police said. REUTERS

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

BANGLADESH

PM starts flood protection infra in Sylhet

PM TARIQUE Rahman on Saturday initiated a riverfront development project along the Surma River in Bangladesh's Sylhet district, according to a media report. The project focuses on constructing flood protection infrastructure and improving the river banks through beautification measures, state-owned news agency Bangladesh Sangbad Sangsthan (BSS) reported. PTI

NEPAL

Govt demolishes 2,000 illegal structures

CONTINUING ITS demolition drive, the Nepal government on Saturday razed hundreds of illegal structures along riverbanks in parts of Kathmandu Valley, while the opposition urged the authorities to be sensitive to the affected people. So far, 2,000 squatter settlements, including concrete buildings, built on riverbanks, public and government land have been demolished. PTI

PENTAGON ANNOUNCES WITHDRAWAL OF 5,000 TROOPS

US troop withdrawal should spur Europe, says Germany; top Republicans worried

Reuters Washington, May 2

A PLANNED drawdown of 5,000 US troops from Germany should spur Europe to strengthen its own defences, German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said on Saturday, but two top US Republican lawmakers expressed concern, saying the troops should not leave Europe.

The Pentagon announced the drawdown from Germany, its largest European base, on Friday, as a rift over the Iran war and tariff tensions place further strain on relations between the US and Europe. As part of the US decision, a Biden-era plan to deploy a US battalion with long-range Tomahawk missiles to Germany has also been dropped - a blow to Berlin, which had pushed for the move as a powerful deterrent against Russia.

Republican lawmakers Senator Roger Wicker and Representative Mike Rogers, the



Servicemen at the US Air Force Base in Ramstein, Germany. REUTERS

chairs of the Senate and House armed services committees, said they were "very concerned." They said the troops should not be moved from Europe, but moved east. "Prematurely reducing America's forward presence in Europe before those capabilities are fully realized risks undermining deterrence and sending the wrong signal to Vladimir Putin," they said.

Pistorius said the partial withdrawal was expected and

would affect a current US presence of almost 40,000 soldiers stationed in Germany.

"We Europeans must take on more responsibility for our own security," Pistorius said, adding, "Germany is on the right track" by expanding its armed forces, speeding up military procurement and building infrastructure. US President Donald Trump called for a reduced military presence in Germany as far back as his first term and has re-

E. EXPLAINED

Transatlantic tensions

THE US wants its forces in Germany to return home after the German Chancellor Friedrich Merz questioned US's Iran war strategy. Berlin has quickly urged Europe to bolster defences, while US lawmakers warn withdrawal weakens deterrence against Russia.

peatedly urged Europe to take responsibility for its defence. However, he stepped up the threat earlier this week after sparring with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who has questioned Washington's exit strategy in the Middle East.

The Pentagon said the troop withdrawal was expected to be completed in six to 12 months.

Starmer says there could be new powers to ban pro-Palestinian agitations in UK

Reuters London, May 2

UK PRIME British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the government could ban pro-Palestinian marches in some circumstances because of the "cumulative effect" the demonstrations had on the Jewish community after two Jewish men were stabbed in London on Wednesday.

Starmer told the BBC that he would always defend freedom of expression and peaceful protest, but chants like "Globalise the Intifada" during demonstrations were "completely off limits" and those voicing them should be prosecuted.

Pro-Palestinian marches have become a regular feature in London since the October 2023 attack by Hamas on Israel that triggered the Gaza war.

Critics say the demon-

strations have generated hostility and become a focus for antisemitism.

Protesters have argued they are exercising their democratic right to spotlight ongoing human rights and political issues related to the situation in Gaza.

Starmer said he was not denying there were "very strong legitimate views about the Middle East, about Gaza", but many people in the Jewish community had told him they were concerned about the repeat nature of the marches.

Asked if the tougher response should focus on chants and banners, or whether the protests should be stopped altogether, Starmer said: "I think certainly the first, and I think there are instances for the latter."

"I think it's time to look across the board at protests and the cumulative effect," he said.

Citing data-sharing concerns, Ghana rejects US health deal

Associated Press Accra (Ghana), May 2

GHANA HAS rejected a proposed health deal with the US over concerns about data privacy and is now seeking a new agreement, an official said Friday.

It was the latest African country to walk away from the deal over similar concerns. The deal included provisions that would have allowed US entities access

to Ghana's sensitive health data without necessary safeguards, according to Arnold Kavaarpuo, executive director of Ghana's Data Protection Commission.

A US State Department spokesperson said, "We continue to look for ways to strengthen the bilateral partnership between our two countries," the spokesperson added, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the matter.

Russian troops move towards key Ukrainian city

Reuters Kyiv, May 2

RUSSIAN TROOPS are inching towards the city of Kostiantynivka in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, trying to establish a foothold close to a heavily defended area, Ukraine's top army official said on Saturday.

Kostiantynivka, along with other cities, forms a so-called fortress belt in the country's east - an area well fortified by the Ukrainian military.



Firefighters arrive to the site of a fuel station in Kharkiv on Saturday. AP

"We are repelling the Russian occupiers' persistent attempts to gain a foothold in the

outskirts of Kostiantynivka using infiltration tactics. Counter-sabotage measures are going on in the city," Oleksandr Syrskyi, Ukraine's army chief, said on the Telegram app.

A Ukrainian battlefield mapping project called DeepState shows Russian troops control an area around only one kilometre from the city's southern outskirts. Small chunks of Kostiantynivka in the southeast are marked as a grey zone, meaning neither Ukraine nor Russia has

full control over them.

Russia's defence ministry said on Wednesday its forces had taken control of Novodmytrivka, just north of Kostiantynivka. Moscow's top general Valery Gerasimov said in April that troops were advancing in the north and south of the city.

Syrskyi said that Russian offensive attempts had risen noticeably in April. Since Monday, Russian troops have carried out 83 assaults in this sector using small infantry groups, he added.

TURKMEN OFFICIALS FRAME THEIR COUNTRY'S ISOLATION AS A RESPONSE TO ITS CHALLENGING GEOGRAPHY, CITING THE NEED TO PROTECT IT FROM ISLAMIST MILITANTS AND DRUG SMUGGLING FROM AFGHANISTAN

Once seen as reclusive, Turkmenistan shows signs of cautiously opening up

Felix Light Ashgabat, May 2

FROM A brightly lit, open-plan office Azat Seyitmurammedov runs an e-commerce startup, Wabrum, that he founded almost a decade ago.

In Berlin or San Francisco, this would be an everyday scene, but here in the capital of Turkmenistan, which is widely seen as one of the world's most isolated and secretive countries, his business appears pretty ground-breaking.

"This may sound normal in Europe or the United States, but for Turkmenistan this is new," said the 38-year-old father of six. "E-commerce here

is still in its very early stages, and we consider ourselves pioneers."

His company is part of a flowering of savvy, well-connected private businesses in Turkmenistan, a largely desert country in Central Asia bordering Iran and Afghanistan.

From an on-site warehouse, Seyitmurammedov's couriers fan out to customers across the former Soviet republic, delivering mostly Turkish-made clothes and shoes.

Granted rare access to Turkmenistan, Reuters was recently able to travel unescorted and to report freely on a country where technological innovations such as e-commerce are

increasingly being embraced. In politics, meanwhile, President Serdar Berdimukhamedov and his circle keep tight control.

After independence from Moscow in 1991, President Saparmurat Niyazov - "Turkmenbashi" or head of the Turkmen - declared Turkmenistan "permanently neutral" and shut its doors to most visitors, adopting one of the world's strictest visa regimes. It remains largely in place two decades after Niyazov's death.

Turkmen officials frame their country's isolation as a response to its challenging geography, citing the need to protect it from Islamist militants and



Social media influencer Enejan Velmuradova in Ashgabat. REUTERS

drug smuggling from neighbouring Afghanistan.

Under Niyazov, an elaborate cult of personality grew

around the president, while the capital city, Ashgabat, was rebuilt as a marble showcase, funded by Turkmenistan's

natural gas reserves, the world's fourth-largest. Under subsequent presidents, the system has largely remained unchanged.

But since 2022, when President Serdar Berdimukhamedov took over from his father, Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov, there have been signs of a modest thaw.

Turkmenistan, which state statistics say has about 7.7 million people, has said it wants to simplify its visa regime, join the World Trade Organization, and diversify the largely state-run economy. The new president has strengthened Turkmenistan's diplomatic ties, travelling abroad more often than his pre-

decessors did. Some foreign diplomats in Ashgabat told Reuters there is a sense of change, albeit slow, driven by generational change inside the ruling elite.

The international firms that do operate here are mostly Turkish. Linguistic affinity and a large diaspora in Turkey also mean that Turkish is widely spoken by younger Turkmen.

But away from politics, Turkmen society is changing, nowhere faster than online, though the country has a relatively low rate of internet usage. The internet in Turkmenistan is slow and heavily censored, which officials say is necessary to counteract mili-

tant Islamist ideas that have spread online in other Central Asian countries.

However, social media sites such as TikTok, still blocked but accessible via VPNs, have gained popularity. Social media influencer Enejan Velmuradova took up Instagram in 2020 to promote her travel agency, arranging holidays for wealthier Turkmen in Europe and Southeast Asia.

Velmuradova said she was glad that her country was opening up. "As a resident of Turkmenistan, I am also very happy that stereotypes are finally being broken, (the idea) that Turkmenistan is closed," she said. REUTERS

THE 100% LIMIT WILL ALSO APPLY TO INSURANCE INTERMEDIARIES

Centre notifies 100% foreign investment in insurance sector

ENS Economic Bureau
New Delhi, May 2

THE GOVERNMENT on Saturday notified 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) in the insurance sector under the automatic route, allowing greater participation from global investors and eliminating the need for an Indian joint venture partner to do insurance business in India.

Total foreign investment in Indian insurance companies, including by portfolio investors, is permitted up to 100% of the paid-up equity capital and is allowed under the automatic route, subject to approval and verification by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai), as per the gazette notification.

However, foreign investment in Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) will continue to remain capped at 20% under the automatic route, keeping the state-run insurer under a separate framework.

"Foreign investment in LIC shall be subject to compliance with the provisions of the Life Insurance Corporation Act, 1956 (31 of 1956), and such other provisions of the Insurance Act, 1938 (4 of 1938), as are applicable to LIC as per the provisions of section 43 of the Life Insurance Corporation Act, 1956 (31 of 1956)," the notification said.

The policy amendment aligns the foreign investment framework with the Sabka

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Any increase in foreign shareholding must comply with pricing guidelines prescribed by the RBI under FEMA regulations. FILE

Free Telegram Channel <https://t.me/+pegW08Cwts0xMjcl>

Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Act, 2025. Most provisions of the law, except Section 25, were already in force from February 5.

To ensure regulatory oversight and domestic control, insurance companies with foreign investment must appoint at least one resident Indian citizen as chairperson, managing director, or chief executive officer. Any increase in foreign shareholding must comply with pricing guidelines prescribed by the Reserve Bank of India under FEMA regulations.

Entities such as banks operating as insurance intermediaries will continue to follow foreign investment caps applicable to their primary sector, provided that more than 50% of their revenue comes from non-insurance activities. Further, major-ity foreign-owned intermediaries must be incorporated as limited companies under the Companies Act, 2013. The 100% limit will also apply to insurance intermediaries, including brokers, reinsurers, corporate agents, third-party administrators, surveyors and loss assessors, managing general agents, and insurance repositories, subject to IRDAI norms.

India had earlier opened full foreign ownership in insurance intermediaries in 2020 and allowed 20% FDI in LIC in 2022.

India's pension sector is also poised for a structural shift, with the FDI limit also raised to 100%, in line with the insurance sector. FDI limits in the pension sector are statutorily

• STRIKING BALANCE

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linked to those in insurance; the higher cap will automatically extend to pension fund management.

Parliament passed the Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Bill, 2025 in December, raising the FDI limit in the insurance sector to 100% from 74%. Despite the earlier cap of 74%, foreign ownership has not been fully utilised. Only four of the 19 life insurance companies have reached the 74% limit.

Recently, Germany's Allianz Group announced its reentry into Indian market with a 50:50 joint venture with Jio Financial Services to offer general and health insurance solutions, with plans to enter the life insurance segment under a similar partnership structure. FE

FDI eased for foreign cos with up to 10% Chinese stake

New Delhi: The Finance Ministry has notified a decision to allow overseas companies with Chinese shareholding of up to 10% to invest in India under the automatic route under FEMA, according to a notification.

In March, the Union Cabinet approved amendments in the press note (PN) 3 of 2020 of the DPIIT.

As per the amendments, foreign companies having a Chinese/Hong Kong shareholding of up to 10% will be eligible to invest in India in sectors where FDI is permitted under the automatic route subject to sectoral conditions.

However, these relaxed FDI rules will not apply to entities registered in China or Hong Kong or other countries sharing land borders with India.

Earlier, foreign firms with shareholders from these land border nations owning even a single share had to seek mandatory approval to invest in India in any sector. Now, these restrictions will apply only to beneficial owners. The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) notified it in March through a press note 2 (2026 series). PTI

LPG TANKER SARV SHAKTI CROSSES STRAIT OF HORMUZ

After a 2-week lull, an LPG carrier heads to India

Sukalp Sharma
New Delhi, May 2

A LIQUEFIED petroleum gas (LPG) tanker, Sarv Shakti, broadcasting India as its destination, crossed Strait of Hormuz on Saturday, according to ship tracking data.

The LPG carrier is the first major India-bound energy tanker to successfully transit the Strait of Hormuz after a two-week dry spell.

Crude oil tanker Dosh Garima had crossed the Strait on April 18 after Iran had announced free passage through the strait, only to announce its closure again shortly after.

Two Indian vessels had also come under Iranian fire on the same day, forcing them and other India-bound vessels to return to the Persian Gulf.

This incident, and subsequent similar ones with Iran and the US running their own blockades in the region, further hit already constrained vessel movements through the strait.

As per vessel tracking data, the Marshall Islands-flagged Sarv Shakti, estimated to be carrying about 45,000 tonnes of LPG, had crossed over to the east of the strait and into the Gulf of Oman as of Saturday evening. Earlier during the day, it had stopped transmitting its location for a couple of hours.

This act is called "going dark" in shipping parlance, and is usually done by vessels in a bid to avoid detection.

While the tanker itself is carrying half a day's worth of India's pre-West Asia war LPG consumption, its transit springs hope for more energy supplies making their way to India in the coming days.

So far, 10 India-flagged



Sarv Shakti, carrying about 45,000 tonnes of LPG, was on the verge of transiting to the east of the strait on Saturday. REUTERS

energy tankers—nine LPG carriers and one crude oil tanker—have crossed the Strait of Hormuz since early March. Additionally, a few foreign-flagged energy tankers had also arrived from the Persian Gulf after crossing the strait.

These transits took place every few days, but were badly hit after the April 18 incident in which Indian vessels were fired upon by Iranian forces.

There are now 14 Indian ships stuck in the Persian Gulf; several other foreign vessels that are bound for India are also stuck in the region.

Tanker took Iran-prescribed route

Data from ship tracking and maritime intelligence firm MarineTraffic shows that Sarv Shakti sailed close to Iran's Larak Island, taking a route that has been prescribed by Tehran for transiting the chokepoint, where vessel movements have reduced to a trickle amid the West Asia war.

The LPG tanker was broadcasting that it was headed to

India and had Indian crew on board. Such identity broadcasts have become a standard of sorts among vessels crossing the strait in coordination with Iranian authorities, which are regulating vessel movements. The tanker is estimated to have entered the Persian Gulf in February, where it had been stranded since the beginning of the West Asia war on February 28. Global shipping databases list Dubai-based Foresight Group Services as the tanker's commercial manager.

The closure of the strait has hit energy supplies to India, which depends on imports to meet a bulk of its energy needs. Around 40% of India's crude oil imports, over 50% of its LNG imports, and a whopping 90% of its LPG imports came from West Asia through the strait, making the chokepoint particularly critical for India's LPG supplies. That's the reason why India has prioritised the movement of its LPG tankers over its other vessels through the strait.

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

IMF paper: Digitalisation reforms improved MSME productivity in India

Press Trust of India
Washington, May 2

INDIA'S DIGITALISATION reforms in public administration have improved productivity in micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in states that have embraced such changes, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in a working paper.

The authors compared the productivity of unincorporated manufacturing firms in states that have undertaken more digitalisation reforms with those having fewer such changes in public administration.

"We find that states that undertake more public administration digitalisation experience higher productivity growth and lower productivity dispersion among firms," economists Somnath Sharma and Kenichi Ueda.

MSMEs contribute around 35% of manufacturing output in India, employ around 110 million workers and contribute about 45% of the overall exports from India.

Most MSMEs are not formally registered as companies

under India's Companies Act of 1956 and only a few studies have been done on the impact of the business environment reforms on these unincorporated enterprises.

The working paper said that the business environment reforms undertaken in India between 2010-11 and 2014-15 were mainly through digitalisation of business-related public administration.

It observed that the cost of dealing with bureaucratic hurdles is likely negligible for big firms, but may be sizeable for small firms.

"Thus, these reforms can be considered to help improve the productivities of firms, in particular, small-and micro-manufacturing enterprises," the economists said.

However, the working paper also found that microenterprises were unlikely to move or expand their businesses to other states that underwent more reforms.

"We can, thus, assume no direct spillover effects across different states, except for potential arbitrageurs if prices vary due to reforms," it said.

RBI Governor Malhotra flags rising global economic risks

ENS Economic Bureau
Mumbai, May 2

RESERVE BANK OF India (RBI) Governor Sanjay Malhotra has flagged rising global economic risks, warning that geo-economic fragmentation is reshaping supply chains and disrupting global capital and financial flows.

"Geo-economic fragmentation caused by tariffs, trade restrictions, and industrial policies are reshaping not only global supply chains, they are also affecting the free movement of capital and led to fragmentation of financial flows," he said.

Addressing the FIMMDA-PDAI Annual Conference in Amsterdam on Friday, Malhotra cautioned that stretched valuations in certain asset classes—particularly equities, including some technology stocks—could have spillover effects across markets and regions. Malhotra also identified artificial intelligence as a key source of uncertainty, noting that while it promises productivity gains, concerns persist over the viability of some business models, the pace and scale

of efficiency improvements, and potential job impacts.

He further highlighted the rapid growth of private credit markets as a source of opacity and systemic risk due to increasing linkages with regulated financial sectors.

Pointing to macroeconomic vulnerabilities, the governor warned that elevated public debt levels in major economies remain a concern, as continued fiscal expansion has hindered a return to post-pandemic consolidation paths.

At the same time, rising geopolitical tensions are driving higher defence spending, a shift he said could pose significant challenges to long-term fiscal sustainability.

He said the country's external sector position remains resilient, with foreign exchange reserves assessed as "comfortable," providing an import cover of about 11 months.

Malhotra said the current account deficit (CAD) remains within sustainable levels, though elevated global energy prices could exert upward pressure. However, recently concluded trade agreements are expected to partly offset this

impact, he said. On the capital account, Malhotra highlighted encouraging trends in gross foreign direct investment (FDI), projecting continued robustness amid a surge in greenfield investment announcements, particularly in the finance and technology sectors.

"With recent correction in financial asset valuations, we expect repatriations to moderate, improving the net capital account position going forward," he said.

"India's strong macro-economic and macro-financial fundamentals remain strong, supported by continued focus on policy certainty, price stability, financial stability, and trust on reforms, ease of doing business and inclusive growth," Malhotra said.

Growth impulses in the Indian economy have remained robust, he said. Domestic demand continues to be supported by strong consumption and public investment. The government's emphasis on capital expenditure has helped crowd-in private investment and improve productive capacity.

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Centre appoints Rohit Jain as RBI Deputy Governor

New Delhi: The government has appointed Rohit Jain as Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India for a three-year term. Jain is replacing T Rabi Sankar, whose extended tenure ended on Saturday.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved his appointment for a period of three years from the date of joining the post on or after May 3, sources said on Saturday. Jain is currently Executive Director at the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). According to the RBI Act, 1934, the central bank should have four deputy governors, "two from within the ranks, one commercial banker and an economist to head the monetary policy department."

The other three deputy governors are Swaminathan J, Poonam Gupta and S C Murmu. Rabi Sankar was first appointed Deputy Governor in September 2021 for three years and was given a one-year extension in 2024. PTI

• BRIEFLY

Thyssenkrupp, Jindal call off steel sale talks

Frankfurt: Thyssenkrupp has paused talks with Jindal Steel International about a possible sale of the German industrial group's steel unit, it said on Saturday, marking a setback for CEO Miguel Lopez's restructuring efforts. Lopez has made major progress in recent years with turning Thyssenkrupp into a holding company, most notably by separately listing its hydrogen and warship divisions, but long-standing plans to divest the volatile steel business have proved more difficult to achieve. While the companies did not provide a reason for why talks had ended, Lopez said in the statement that prospects for the steel business were "better than they have been in a long time", citing improved conditions across the continent. REUTERS

Kotak Mahindra Bank profit rises 10% in Q4FY26

Mumbai: Kotak Mahindra Bank on Saturday reported a 10% rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 5,423 crore for the fourth quarter of 2025-26, on the back of lower provisions and better net interest income. In the year-ago period, the profit stood at Rs 4,933 crore. On a standalone basis, it reported a 13% year-on-year rise in net profit to Rs 4,027 crore. Core net interest income of the bank increased 8% to Rs 7,876 crore from Rs 7,284 crore a year ago. Net interest margin (NIM) improved to 4.67% from 4.54% in the December quarter. Devang Gheewalla, group chief financial officer of the bank expects margins to remain rangebound going ahead. "It (NIM) will be range-bound. It will not be as sharp as the current year, but will be more gradual in the next year," Gheewalla said. PTI

DISPARITIES IN JOB OPPORTUNITIES & WAGES FOR INDIA'S YOUTH COULD ENDANGER THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND

India's two youths: From unemployed graduates to credit score chasers

Siddharth Upasani
New Delhi, May 2

"YOUR SALARY is the goal!" said one comment on a Reddit post complaining that even a net salary of almost Rs 6 lakh per month and a CIBIL score of over 800 was not enough to get a premium credit card.

"Bro, at that salary I wouldn't worry about getting any card," said another Redditor.

Such posters are among the 183 million Indians who self-monitor their credit scores, according to credit bureau TransUnion CIBIL.

Leading the charge are the Gen Z and millennials, making up 77% of the monitoring base. But keeping an eye on your creditworthiness is just the first step to spending more, with credit, two-wheeler, and other consumption loans all seeing a pick-up within three months of credit score monitoring.

Those under the age of 35 also make up more than half of

all first-time borrowers, said Bhavesh Jain, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of TransUnion CIBIL.

Demand disparities

The Indian Gen Z has emerged as "one of the most influential drivers of demand", with global staffing firm Gi Group Holding estimating that three out of every four persons in this class relying on EMIs or buy-now-pay-later schemes to buy consumer durable goods.

The use of financing, per Gi Group, has led to Indian households now spending an average of Rs 1.43 lakh every year on consumer durables.

At the other end of the spectrum are the millions of graduates who can't even find jobs, with Azim Premji University's State of Working India 2026 report revealing in March that less than 7% of male Indian graduates manage to find a permanent salaried job within a year. As a result, as many as 11 million out of 63 million grad-



India may have only 10-15 years before the demographic shift towards an ageing population takes place. FILE

uates in the 20-29 years age bracket were unemployed in 2023. In a sign of how difficult it is to get a job out of college, student and fresher hiring platform Unstop's 2026 Talent Report found that 85% of engin-

eering and 74% of business school graduates in the 2026 graduating class remain unemployed. This, it said, pointed to a "structural gap that goes beyond just market conditions".

Market conditions in India have indeed changed for new graduates.

According to Sanketh Chengappa, Director and Business Head of Professional Staffing at Adecco India, the 2014-2019 IT-driven campus hiring boom may have stabilised after the pandemic, but with a difference: companies have moved on from volume-led hiring to skills-filtered hiring, with the focus now on specialised, tech-enabled functions. With demand for cloud, AI, cybersecurity, and data engineering roles rising, the financial services sector too has moved away from bulk back-office roles and is hiring for analytics, digital banking, and risk functions, Chengappa said.

These are not positive signs for the overall Indian labour market, which is already grappling with immense inequalities that recently boiled over and led to workers' protests across the country, especially in manufacturing hubs.

Wage, skills gap

According to the government's latest Annual Survey for Industries, the average annual salary for workers in India in 2023-24 was Rs 2.2 lakh, less than a fifth of the Rs 14.1 lakh being made by supervisory and managerial staff.

Of course, experience does count when it comes to the paycheck. But pay disparities are increasing even at the top-end of entry-level white-collar jobs, thanks to the emergence of AI. "Salary growth in traditional IT services roles has remained relatively flat in recent years, while AI, data science, and cloud roles command a premium of Rs 5 lakh-Rs 10 lakh per year over standard entry-level roles. This has led to a bifurcated compensation structure, where high-demand digital skills drive outsized salary growth, while generic roles see slower increases," Chen-

gappa said. These disparities matter because today's youth shoulder the uneasy burden of driving the economy forward with their demographic dividend. And they, more than previous generations, must have the skills to respond to a rapidly changing work environment, according to new research by JustJobs Network and JPMorganChase. Why? Because today's youth will change occupations "multiple times in their lifetimes". As such, their skills need to be transferable.

The demographic dividend window

A high growth rate can, for some time, hide the failure to create a sufficient number of jobs or impart requisite skills.

But India currently has around 400 million people in the 15-29 years age bracket. And when these youngsters grow old, it will be a social and financial burden unlike any other. Even China, which grew at an unprecedented pace for the

better part of three decades, is now feeling the heat, with youth unemployment as high as 16.9% in March.

And with a rising number of Chinese workers having taken up gig work—despite its non-existent social security and lack of stability—the future with more and more AI in it does not bode well for the labour market. In India, the case is not dissimilar, but with a key difference: the population is growing; China's shrunk by more than 3 million in 2025. The need for meaningful employment and the gap between the demand for jobs and their availability are not new. But "considering that India has a rather short time-frame of about 10 to 15 years to leverage its distinctive youth bulge before the demographic shift towards an ageing population takes place, policymakers must urgently implement sufficient measures to address this pressing issue," think-tank People Research on India's Consumer Economy warned last year.

BRIDGE

Having two winners in a side suit, the tendency is to cash both the winners prior to a ruff. But this is not always a safe thing to do. A case in point was the problem posed to last week. Dealer: South Vulnerable: Both

NORTH		SOUTH	
♠ K J 6 3	♠ A Q 4	♠ A Q 4	♠ A Q 4
♥ 10 9 7 2	♥ Q J 6 3	♥ Q J 6 3	♥ Q J 6 3
♦ None	♦ A K 8 6	♦ A K 8 6	♦ A K 8 6
♣ A 10 7 6 5	♣ 8 3	♣ 8 3	♣ 8 3
SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1NT	pass	1♣	pass
2♥	pass	4♥	pass
pass	pass		

West leads the four of hearts to deuce, eight and queen. Plan the play. The first trick strongly suggests that hearts are 4-1. Thus, South must plan to ruff his losing diamonds in dummy, then play on spades to discard a club, losing three trump tricks but nothing else. The key move is to cash exactly one high diamond, then a diamond ruff, spade ace-queen diamond ruff, and a spade. Assuming the defense cannot ruff the first or second round of spades, South has no problems. Note that it would be dangerous to cash both high diamonds because (see diagram) the defender short in spades may discard on the third diamond.

THE WEST HAND

♠ 8 2 H ♥ A K 5 4 D ♦ Q 4 ♣ K J 9 4 2

THE EAST HAND

♠ 10 9 7 5 ♥ 8 D ♦ J 10 9 7 5 3 2 ♣ Q

It would also be wrong to cash no high diamonds. In this case, the defender with the hearts may discard diamonds on the spade trick and prevent declarer from scoring any diamond tricks at all, and South needs at least one high one to guarantee his contract. Dealer: South Vulnerable: Both

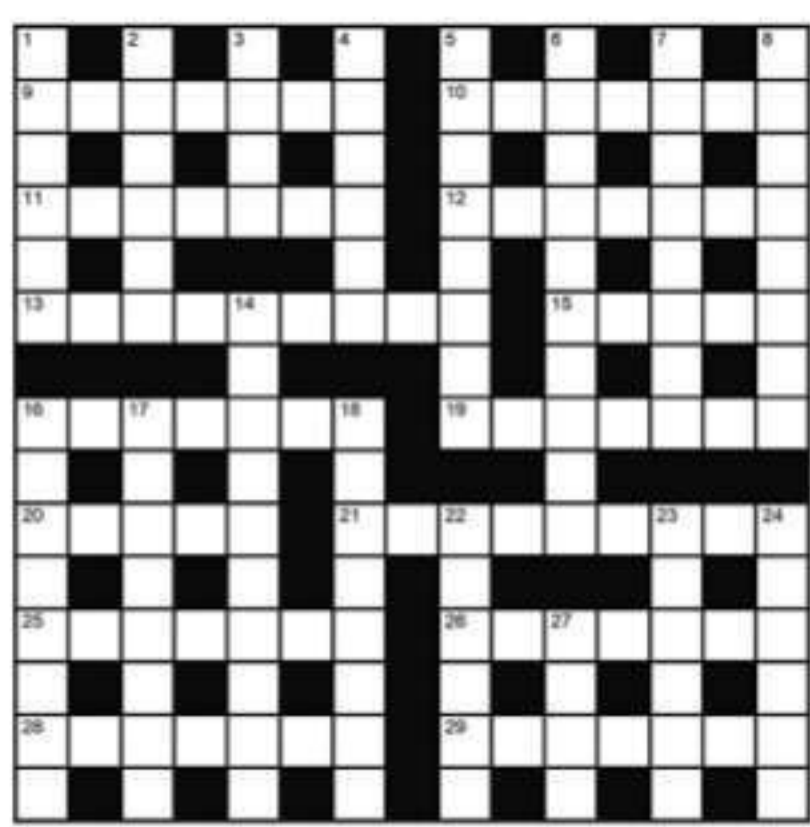
NORTH		SOUTH	
♠ 2	♠ A 10 9 6	♠ A 10 9 6	♠ A 10 9 6
♥ 8 5 4 3	♥ A K 6 2	♥ A K 6 2	♥ A K 6 2
♦ A 8 7	♦ 9	♦ 9	♦ 9
♣ K 7 6 4 2	♣ A 8 5 3	♣ A 8 5 3	♣ A 8 5 3
SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
4♣	pass	3♣	pass
3♥	pass	4♥	pass
pass	pass		

West leads the diamond king. Plan the play.

SUNDAY CROSSWORD

- QUICK CLUES**
ACROSS
 9. Sexual literature (7)
 10. Cherrylike fruit (7)
 11. Ribbon round head (7)
 12. Idiomatic (7)
 13. Deport a criminal (9)
 15. Boston's airport (5)
 16. Nascent company (7)
 19. Wi-fi zone (3,4)
 20. Bonnie Blue's dad (5)
 21. Perfume fixative (9)
 25. Middle Easterner (7)
 26. Recovered from? (3,4)
 28. Unfriendly (7)
 29. Heartfelt (7)

- DOWN**
 1. Small stone (6)
 2. Large wasp (6)
 3. Have a meal (4)
 4. Popular drama of Japan (6)
 5. Whence Jesus came (8)
 6. Parliamentarian (10)
 7. In the offing (6,2)
 8. Filbert (8)
 14. A direct opposition (10)
 16. ___ away: immediately? (8)
 17. Arterial dilatation (8)
 18. Biblical Jewish sect member (8)
 22. Asked for alms (6)
 23. Theatrical productions (6)



24. Pledge (6)
 27. Legal injury (4)
 19. Athletic exercise in closed top order (4-3)
 20. George Bernard was one of those knocked about a bit at sea (5)
 21. Indicates Seve's last ten irons (9)
 25. Takes back Ed's still (7)
 11. Dance round the money container cruelly ending romance (7)
 12. Tie up an unusually attractive plant (7)
 13. Unlikely character perhaps had some substance (3,6)
 15. Tree god venerated by Roman church (5)
 16. Tot, alias different in this old time place? (7)

SOLUTIONS TO 2579 QUICK CLUES ACROSS: 8 Gaur, 9 Chicken out, 10 Edison, 11 Symptoms, 12 Bali, 13 Matterhorn, 17 Agra, 18 Carla, 19 Peso, 20 Cannelloni, 22 Efts, 23 Long shot, 27 Aliens, 28 Stay-at-home, 29 Clef **DOWN:** 1 Cardialgia, 2 Cressida, 3 Economical, 4 Sirs, 5 Skim, 6 Snitch, 7 Culm, 14 Torso, 15 Eradicates, 16 Rose-tinted, 19 Precinct, 21 Nagoya, 24 Opts, 25 Hate, 26 Toot **CRYPTIC CLUES ACROSS:** 8 Farm, 9 Impenitent, 10 Postal, 11 Newspeak, 12 Gray, 13 Garden path, 17 Cult, 18 Sumac, 19 Isn't, 20 Heavy swell, 22 Dane, 23 In spades, 27 Tariff, 28 Sacre Coeur, 29 Cur **DOWN:** 1 Baton rouge, 2 Amethyst, 3 Biologists, 4 Spun, 5 Anew, 6 Step up, 7 Inga, 14 Ramie, 15 Escalators, 16 Tuning fork, 19 Indirect, 21 Vipers, 24 Noah, 25 Dace, 26 Seek

2580

IF IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY

SUNDAY MAY 3: This is the final year of a nine-year cycle for you, and it's time to let go of the people, places and things that have held you back.

MONDAY MAY 4: This is a year of new beginnings and adventures. Keep your eyes open for new opportunities. Prepare for leadership. What you do now will bring great benefit in the future.

TUESDAY MAY 5: This is a slower paced year. Take time to rejuvenate your energy and outlook. Focus on business and personal relationships and attract people who will respect your needs and bring you happiness.

WEDNESDAY MAY 6: This year your creativity, zest and desire for life are at a pinnacle! Enjoy socialising. Nurture your relationships and happiness. Loosen up a bit.

THURSDAY MAY 7: Simplicity is the key to life this year. It's time to build solid foundations, both externally and internally. Take charge of your health. Physical exercise will be important.

FRIDAY MAY 8: This year exciting changes will bring you increased personal freedom. Stay flexible. Let go of whatever impedes your progress. Seek out new opportunities. Expect to travel.

SATURDAY MAY 9: This is a year of service to family. Take care of yourself so you can be a resource for those who turn to you for guidance, comfort and courage. Is it time for an exciting makeover?

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

ARIES (MAR 21 - APR 20): Travel if possible or make travel plans. Though your travel plans might be interrupted today. This is also an excellent day to study, learn or make proposals related to higher education. You have ideas. This Week: You're in the game.

TAURUS (APR 21 - MAY 21): Today is an excellent day to make long-term, practical plans related to taxes, debt and shared property. It's also an excellent time to fine-tune issues related to wills and inheritances. This Week: Speak up.

GEMINI (MAY 22 - JUNE 21): Listen to the advice of someone older today; it might be helpful. A discussion with someone "different" might change your views about something related to politics, religion or racial issues. This Week: Romance and loving relationships.

CANCER (JUNE 22 - JULY 23): Your work routine will be interrupted. Give yourself extra time so you have wiggle room to deal with the unexpected. Discussions about your property and inheritances might be intense. Someone in authority will support your views. This Week: Relax.

LEO (JULY 24 - AUG 23): This is a playful day, but important issues might come up for discussion. A friend or a member of a group might surprise you. Controversial matters might come to a head. You make a great impression on everyone. This Week: Friendly romance. Travel.

VIRGO (AUG 24 - SEP 23): Your home routine might be interrupted today. A minor breakage could occur. Someone unexpected might appear at your door. Financial discussions related to shared property and inheritances are intense. Be careful. This Week: Flirtations and adventure.

LIBRA (SEP 24 - OCT 23): This is a mildly accident-prone day for you. Discussions with others might be serious. You might have to explain yourself or you might demand an explanation from someone else. This Week: Travel and learn.

SCORPIO (OCT 24 - NOV 23): Keep an eye on your possessions today because something unexpected could create theft or damage. It is a good day for financial planning. You might introduce improvements either to your job or health. This Week: Work-related romance.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV 24 - DEC 22): Today, someone will surprise you by saying or doing something you least expect. Whatever happens, you will express yourself with purpose. A mystery might be solved today. This Week: A winning, fun-loving week.

CAPRICORN (DEC 23 - JAN 20): Something behind the scenes might yield some surprises. This is a playful, social day. Look for ways to enjoy the company of others. Pet owners should be extra vigilant to avoid mishaps. This Week: Vacation flirtations and work-related romance.

AQUARIUS (JAN 21 - FEB 19): A discussion with a friend or a member of a group will be intense today. Someone might surprise you with a curveball. You're in a sociable mood; however, your primary focus is on home and family. This Week: Relax at home and entertain.

PISCES (FEB 20 - MAR 20): Tread carefully today, because parents, bosses and authority figures might do something that catches you off guard. People will notice you today. Respect your moneymaking ideas. This Week: Exciting new acquaintances.

JUMBLER WORDS

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

When we seek to discover ___ in others, we somehow bring out ___ in ourselves. - Stephen Nachmanovitch (3,4,...,3,4) (same words twice)

HLVEE EIMSHT

 FORST ADINTB

 SOLUTIONS: Helve, Frost/Forts, Theism, Bandit
 ANSWER: When we seek to discover the best in others, we somehow bring out the best in ourselves. - Stephen Nachmanovitch

DIFFICULTY LEVEL 5s
INSTRUCTIONS
 To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

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

SUDOKU 6307

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 6306

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

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
 See Section 82 Cr.P.C.
 Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused **Harjeet Singh Maan**, R/o: 54 (3rd Floor), Chand Nagar, Near Gurudwara Shri Singh Sabha, Khayala, New Delhi-110018 has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in Cr. case No. 7362/2021, U/s 138 NI Act, P.S.: Pahar Ganj, New Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Harjeet Singh Maan** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Harjeet Singh Maan** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).
 Proclamation is hereby made that the said **Harjeet Singh Maan** accused of Cr. case No. 7362/2021, U/s 138 NI Act, P.S.: Pahar Ganj, New Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **02.06.2026**.
 By Order
 Aradhana
 Judicial Magistrate First Class (NI Act) -09
 Room No. 208, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi
 DP/5783/CD/2026 (Court Matter)

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
 See Section 84 BNSS
 Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused **Arjun @ Gopu S/o Rajender R/o C-101, Lal Bagh, Azadpur, Adarsh Nagar, Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case registered vide FIR No. 52/2025 U/S 304(2)/3(5) BNSS, PS Civil Lines, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Arjun @ Gopu** can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Arjun @ Gopu** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).
 Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Arjun @ Gopu** of FIR No. 52/2025 U/S 304(2)/3(5) BNSS, PS Civil Lines, Delhi is required to appear before this court (or before me) to answer the complaint on or before the day of **12.06.2026**.
 By Order,
 Sh. Kartik Taparia
 Judicial Magistrate First Class -06
 Central District, Room No. 247
 Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi
 DP/5317/N/2026(Court Matter)

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
 See Section 82 Cr.P.C.
 Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused **Mamta**, R/o: H. No. 62, Gandhi Sadan Mandir Marg, New Delhi-110001 has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case CC No. 12803/19, U/s 138 NI Act, P.S.: Darya Ganj, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Mamta** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Mamta** has absconded (or is concealing herself to avoid the service of the said warrant).
 Proclamation is hereby made that the said **Mamta** accused of offence in case CC No. 12803/19, U/s 138 NI Act, P.S.: Darya Ganj, Delhi and is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **30.06.2026**.
 By Order
 Ms. Urvi Gupta
 Judicial Magistrate First Class (NI Act-01), Central
 Room No. 201, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi
 DP/5607/CD/2026 (Court Matter)

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY (Commercial Branch)
 No.: C/BPL/PNU/NDPM/E-Auction/2026-01 Date: 30/04/2026
 President of India, through Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager West Central Railway Bhopal Division, has invited E-Auction for awarding contracts of pay and use toilets. Catalogues are available on IREPS Portal (www.ireps.gov.in) Details of catalogues are as follows.

Sr. No.	Catalogue Number	Type of Contract	Lot No./Bid No.	Contract Period	Date and time of close of e-auction
01	C-BPL-PNU-NDPM	Pay & Use	PnJ-U-BPL-NDPM-101-25-26-1 (Pay and use Toilets)	3 Years (1096 day)	15-05-2026 12:30

All other details, Standard Condition of Contract and Special Condition of Contract are available on www.ireps.gov.in. Participants can visit the portal for details.
 For Divisional Railway Manager (C) West Central Railway, Bhopal
 Any Food Related Complaint, Please Call Toll Free Helpline 1800111321

BENGALURU CENTRAL CITY CORPORATION
 Office of the Executive Engineer,
 Gandhinagar Division, 2nd Floor, BBMP Complex,
 Dhanvantri Road, Bengaluru - 560009.
 No: EE/GNR/TEND/KPPP/001/2026-27 Date: 02-05-2026
CORRIGENDUM-01
 Sub: Postponement of Tender.
 Ref.: 1) Tender Notification No: EE/GNR/TEND/KPPP/001/2026-27, Dated: 04-04-2026.
 Due to Technical reasons the above Tender has been Postponed.
 Revised Calendar of Events: 1) Last Date and Time for Receipt of Tenders is 13-05-2026 upto 4.00 PM. 2) Date of Opening of Tender: 15-05-2026 at 12.30 PM. All other conditions remain same.
 Sd/- Executive Engineer
 Gandhinagar Division, BCCC.

GOVERNMENT OF (U.T) JAMMU & KASHMIR
 Office Of The Executive Engineer Jal Shakti (PHE) Deptt. Ground Water Division Srinagar
 Baghi-Ali-Mardan, Nowshara Srinagar
 E-mail:- suresh05.gupta@jk.gov.in | Tel./FaxNo:-0194-2411285

Extension Notice 1st
 Subject: Construction of 329 No. of 125 mm dia Machine Drilled Hand Pump Wells in 47 Constituencies of Kashmir Province.
 Reference: This office Fresh e.NIT No: 08/JS-PHE/GWDS/Mech. 2026-27, issued vide endorsement No: JS-PHE/GWDS/26-27/Camp/613-22, dated: 24-04-2026 bearing Tender ID No: 2026_PHE_308667_1.
 Due to "Administrative Reasons" for the above mentioned work advertised vide e-NIT No. and Tender ID No under reference. Which was scheduled to be downloaded till 01-05-2026 Up-to 03:00 PM are extended as per the details given below: -

S. No.	Item	Fresh Date
1.	Last date & Time of submission of bids	05-05-2026 Up-to 02:00 PM
2.	Date & Time of opening of tenders	06-05-2026 11.00 AM

NOTE:- All other terms and conditions shall remain same as laid down in the aforesaid e-NIT issued vide above referred endst: nos.
 Sd/-
 Executive Engineer
 Jal Shakti (PHE) Deptt.
 Ground Water Division, Srinagar.
 No: JS-PHE/GWDS/26-27/Camp/854-63, (On behalf of) Chief Engineer,
 Dated: 30-04-2026 Kashmir Jal Shakti (PHE)
 DIPK-974/26 - DATE 02 MAY 2026 Department, Srinagar.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
 See Section 82 Cr. P.C.
 Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Person(s) **Naveen Talwar S/o Khem Singh**, R/o: C-82/4 Gali No.7 Mohan puri Maujpur Jafarbad North East Delhi, has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in FIR No. 149/23, U/s: 498A/406/34 IPC, PS: GTB Enclave, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused person(s) **Naveen Talwar** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused person(s) **Naveen Talwar** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused person (s) **Naveen Talwar** of FIR No. 149/23, U/s: 498A/406/34 IPC, PS: GTB Enclave, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **07.08.2026**.
 By Order
 Shipra Dhankar
 Judicial Magistrate First Class, Mahila Court
 Room No. 55 Second floor Shahdara District
 Karkardooma Court, New Delhi
 DP/5574/SHD/2026 (Court Matter)

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
 See Section 84 BNSS
 Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused **Rijvan S/o Mehraj R/o House No. C-80/4, Gali No-11/7, Chauhan Bangar, Zafrabad, Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case registered vide FIR No. 310/2018 U/S 25 Arms Act, PS Welcome, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Rijvan** can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Rijvan** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).
 Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Rijvan** of FIR No. 310/2018 U/S 25 Arms Act, PS Welcome, Delhi is required to appear before this court (or before me) to answer the complaint on or before the day of **03.06.2026**.
 By Order,
 Ms. Deepakshi Rana
 Judicial Magistrate First Class- 03
 Room No. 19, First Floor, Shahdara District
 Karkardooma Courts, Delhi
 DP/5381/NE/2026(Court Matter)

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
 See Section 84 Bhartiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023
 Whereas complaint has been made before me that the accused person **Sonu @ Sonty S/o Raju R/o H. No. -333 Phase-IV Sector-26 Rohini Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 42032/19 U/S 379/411/34 IPC PS: Shahbad Dairy Delhi, and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Sonu @ Sonty** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Sonu @ Sonty** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).
 Proclamation is hereby made that the said **Sonu @ Sonty** accused of FIR No. 42032/19 U/S 379/411/34 IPC PS: Shahbad Dairy Delhi, is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **04.06.2026**.
 By Order
 Ms. Bharti Beniwal
 JMFC-05, Room No. 114
 Rohini Courts, New Delhi
 DP/5797/ON/2026 (Court Matter)

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED
 (See Section 84 Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS))
 Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Amit S/o Dharmender**, R/o H.No. D-Block, Jagdamba Market, Sultanpuri, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 625/2024, U/S 304(2)/3(5) Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita at P.S. Paschim Vihar, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrants of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Amit** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Amit** have absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Amit**, FIR No. 625/2024, U/S 304(2)/3(5) Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita of P.S. Paschim Vihar, Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before **08.06.2026**.
 By order
 Moksha Bains
 Judicial Magistrate First Class-11 (West)
 Room No. 31,
 Tis Hazari Court, Delhi
 DP/5729/OD/2026

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
 See Section 82(2) (ii) Cr. P.C./84 Bhartiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita
 Whereas a complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Raju S/o Brijpal R/o Vill. Tiglapur**, PS: Musa Bazar, Distt: Badau, UP, have committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence under FIR No. 758/2021 U/s 33 DE. Act., has been registered at P.S. Bawana, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said, **Raju** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said, **Raju** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).
 Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused, **Raju** of under FIR No. 758/2021 U/s 33 DE. Act., Registerd P.S. Bawana, Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before **04.06.2026**.
 By Order
 Sh. Sarthak Panwar
 Ld. MM-05, Room No. 114
 Rohini Court, Delhi
 DP/5788/ON/2026 (Court Notice)

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
 See Section 82 Cr.P.C.
 Whereas complaint has been made before me that the accused person **Deepak Aryan S/o Chandrika Prasad R/o H. No. 27A, Amar Colony, PH-II, Kamruddin Nagar, Nangloi, Delhi**, has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 53/2020 U/s 33/38 Delhi Ex. Act PS: Nihal Vihar, Delhi, and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Deepak Aryan** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Deepak Aryan** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).
 Proclamation is hereby made that the said **Deepak Aryan** accused of ted (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 53/2020 U/s 33/38 Delhi Ex. Act PS: Nihal Vihar, Delhi, is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **27.07.2026**.
 By Order
 Ms. Komal Garg
 JMFC-03, Room No.292
 Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi
 DP/5701/OD/2026 (Court Matter)

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Mumbai Indians stutter again, play-off hopes all but over

Ruturaj Gaikwad's unbeaten 67 and Kartik Sharma's maiden fifty helps CSK chase down 160 with ease

SYNOPSIS: Gaikwad and Kartik steady the ship as CSK beat stuttering Mumbai to keep play-off hopes alive

Venkata Krishna B
Chennai, May 2

CHENNAI SUPER Kings beat Mumbai Indians by eight wickets to revive their play-off push. Ruturaj Gaikwad's unbeaten 67 and Kartik Sharma's maiden fifty did the bulk of the work, chasing down 160 with 11 balls to spare. For Mumbai, another evening of squandered opportunity — 159 all but sealed their fate in a season that has consistently promised more than it has delivered.

Mumbai stutter again

It was a night where Mumbai had themselves to blame.

Winning the toss on a dry, Chepauk surface, they lost Will Jacks in the second over without scoring. Ryan Rickelton and Naman Dhir steadied things, threatening a total in excess of 180. In the powerplay, Rickelton hit five sixes — three of them off a single Prashant Veer over — but strip those away and he made only seven off his remaining 19 deliveries. The platform was being laid, not built upon.

CSK stayed patient, chasing wickets, fully aware that Mumbai's brittle middle order could combust at any moment. It duly did. The slide began in the most frustrating fashion. Shivam Dube, already a perplexing selection ahead of being used as an Impact Substitute, dropped a simple chance at short third man off Noor Ahmad to re-prise Rickelton. One delivery later, Noor fired one flat at the left-hander. The sweep is Rickelton's bread and butter, but the trajectory was too flat to get underneath — he flat-batted it straight to deep square leg for 37. The moment Mumbai

started unravelling.

Suryakumar Yadav arrived and briefly shifted the mood, racing to 21 off 11 before finding Dewald Brevis at deep cover off Ramakrishna Ghosh — the youngster's maiden IPL wicket. Noor then ended Tilak Varma's tentative stay. In the middle overs — balls 7 through 16 — Mumbai managed only 67 runs with 22 dots, puncturing any hope of acceleration. Having hit seven sixes in the powerplay, they managed only three in the remaining 14 overs. Hardik Pandya, under constant scrutiny, contributed 18 off 23. Mumbai finished at 159/7. On a surface where runs were available, it was an innings of chronic underachievement.

The Dube selection summed up CSK's evening too. Dropping two catches, he had nowhere to hide. Not bowling either, his presence in the XI baffled — one fan in the stands captured the mood perfectly, shouting to Gaikwad amid pin-drop silence after the Dhir reprieve: "Rutu, please place Dube as Impact Sub."

If there was a Mumbai player who could hold his head up, it was Naman Dhir. Arriving at No. 3 with the score at 1, he carried the innings with a measured 57 off 37 — four fours and three sixes — providing the spine around which others came and went. He picked his moments carefully, finding the gaps when the field set and clearing the ropes when the length invited it. His dismissal in the 17th over, caught at deep midwicket off Jamie Overton, effectively ended Mumbai's hopes of posting anything threatening. Without him, 159 would have looked considerably worse.

Gaikwad steps up
The weight of captaincy has sat heavily on Ruturaj Gaikwad this season. A confidence-inducing fifty in the previous game had steadied him somewhat, but one box remained



CSK captain Ruturaj Gaikwad (67 not out) steered his team past the finish line against MI. CREIMAS

IPL table

Teams	M	W	L	PTS
PBKS	8	6	1	13
RCB	9	6	3	12
SRH	9	6	3	12
RR	10	6	4	12
GT	9	5	4	10
CSK	9	4	5	8
DC	9	4	5	8
KKR	8	2	5	5
MI	9	2	7	4
LSG	8	2	6	4

M: MATCH; W: WIN; L: LOSS; PTS: POINTS

Number Plate

6

Number of times CSK have defeated MI in the last seven meetings since 2023.

breezy 24 off 12 ended just as it was getting interesting. Ghazanfar finding the stumps. Gaikwad had a job to do, with Kartik Sharma — bought for Rs 14.2 crore and still searching for his footing — for company.

Kartik delivered his maiden IPL fifty with a performance that showed he can bat in different tempos. The gun celebration — channelling Sahibzada Farhan — announced his arrival emphatically. But the innings that anchored the chase was Gaikwad's.

Typically conservative in powerplays, he found two boundaries and a six off Boult after Samson's dismissal to set

the tone early. When Kartik arrived, Gaikwad shifted gears — calculative, unhurried, ice-cold. For three overs in the middle, CSK didn't manage a boundary. The panic was nowhere visible. He finished 67 not out off 48, steering Chennai home with 11 balls to spare.

Needing five wins from six remaining games, two of which come against Lucknow — another side in the bottom half of the table — Chennai will feel this is the timely boost their season needed. Consistency has repeatedly eluded them, and this win came despite perplexing selection calls. Whether it is the start of a genuine run or another false dawn, only time will tell. What Saturday was, unambiguously, was the night Gaikwad led from the front when it mattered most.

BRIEF SCORES: MI 159/7 in 20 overs (Naman Dhir 57; Anshul Kamboj 3/32) lost to CSK 160/2 in 18.1 overs (Ruturaj Gaikwad 67 not out, Kartik Sharma 54 not out) by 8 wickets

MI have the best names, but not the best T20 team

Venkata Krishna B
Chennai, May 2

THE QUESTION Mumbai Indians can no longer avoid is not about form. It is about design.

Suryakumar Yadav, Tilak Varma, Hardik Pandya, Rohit Sharma — three of them T20 World Cup winners. On paper, a batting lineup as strong as any in the tournament. And yet on Saturday, Surya found Dewald Brevis at deep cover just as he was finding his touch. Tilak, whose hundred a few games ago felt like a turning point, slogged Noor Ahmad against the turn and top-edged to cover — a dismissal that summed up his campaign in one stroke. Pandya lasted 23 deliveries of thick edges, inside edges, swing and miss before he holed out at the deep. Three star names. Collective contribution: insufficient. But the form of individuals is not the real problem. The real problem is structural.

In three IPL seasons, the defining shift in T20 batting has been the emergence of what might be called the new-age T20 baby — young, fearless, powerplay-oriented batsmen who don't just score quickly but score at a pace that resets the game before the opposition can adjust. Abhishek Sharma, Priyansh Arya, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi. Punjab Kings and Rajasthan Royals identified this wave early, invested at auction, and are now reaping the reward at the top of the table. It is no coincidence that the four teams with the highest powerplay strike rates this season occupy the top four spots in the standings. The powerplay is no longer a passage of play. It is where IPL seasons are won and lost. Mumbai haven't found their version. Danish Malewar and Robin Minz are capable cricketers. They are not that.

For years, MI were the franchise that spotted gems and



In MI's star-studded batting line-up, it was Naman Dhir who made an impact vs CSK. CREIMAS

made them superstars. That reputation now belongs to others. Chennai Super Kings recognised the same problem last season and went about fixing it methodically — identifying the gap, targeting the right profiles at auction, and building around them quickly. Mumbai, at the mini-auction, showed few signs of understanding what needed fixing at all. Until that changes at a strategic level, not just a selection one, the problem will persist beyond this season.

What they have instead is Rohit Sharma, an opener trying to keep pace with a format that has moved on — and currently out injured. Ryan Rickelton, Quinton de Kock and Will Jacks are reputable overseas names, but reputations don't win powerplays in 2026. The teams that are winning them have batsmen who cause a different kind of problem — not experience, not technique, but the hunger and fearlessness of someone who has nothing to

For years, MI were the franchise that spotted gems and made them superstars. That reputation now belongs to others.

lose and every reason to swing.

Some will argue the bowling has been equally culpable. On flat Wankhede decks, MI have posted totals in excess of 200 and still lost. There is truth in that. But it sidesteps the larger point. The reason Punjab Kings and SRH dismantle totals that once seemed competitive is precisely because their top orders don't just chase — they suffocate. They turn asking rates into irrelevances before the opposition bowling attack can settle. You cannot bowl a side out of a game when their powerplay has already taken it away from you.

Mumbai can put 200 on the board on flat decks. They did it on Saturday. It wasn't enough. When Punjab and SRH come at you with their top orders, 200 is a conversation starter, not a total. The names on Mumbai's teamsheet are impressive. The T20 team they add up to, right now, is not.

SIX-HITTING LEAGUE

Big score, bigger chases: Ruthless batting season

Lalith Kalidas
New Delhi, May 2

OVER 800 sixes struck, a maximum flying every 12 balls, an unprecedented run surge on increasingly uniform pitches. Even as 200-plus scores have casually emerged every alternate innings, the ball-striking in the IPL has grown significantly for a fourth consecutive season. But never before was the template so unabashedly pressed against the bowling think tanks. With over 60 per cent of the league phase completed, the 2026 season stands as the most ruthless batting exhibition in IPL history.

In 43 completed games, teams have soared past the 200-run mark 37 times. The pressure of a tall chase has also been expertly stripped from the collective batting mindset.

A 200-plus score has been gunned down 10 times — one more than the entire list of such instances in Australia's Big Bash League across 15 years. Seven of those 10 chases involve 220-plus scores, including a world-record 265-run pursuit — two more than the combined total across the previous 18 IPL seasons. Not only has the scoring spiked by startling margins, but the consistency has meant bowlers are conceding wickets at exorbitant rates, giving away over 29 runs each time.

Five-time champions Mumbai Indians are among the few teams that illustrate the scramble to stay relevant in the IPL's Impact Sub era. In the last three weeks, their home fortress, Wankhede Stadium, has shown how much has changed since the previous decade, when they dominated the field.

Mumbai were the undisputed sixer kings between 2013 and 2020, winning five titles in eight years — 891 maximums, a big hit every 16.6 deliveries. Earlier this month, the relatively high-scoring Wankhede witnessed a 240-plus score for the first time when Royal Challengers Bengaluru decimated the MI attack. The hosts fell short by 18 runs but responded with their highest score at the venue.

A 243-run total was once a jackpot. Last Wednesday, it was scarcely enough to stop Sunrisers Hyderabad, who have been at the forefront of a revolution that has pushed even the mighty MI to middling ground.

The striking at Wankhede has been unprecedented this season — 10.3 runs flowing every over, a sharp uptick from the previous best of 9.59 in 2023. A six has flown every 9.5 deliveries in the five matches at the ground so far this year.

This fever has spread to nearly every venue, save for a few that still offer slow turn and tacky surfaces. At the end of 44 games, six of the traditional home venues possess a 150-plus strike rate — at least nine runs per over in over 73 percent of games, making sky-high totals likely almost every evening. Eight of the 16 total 250-plus scores in IPL history emerged in the 2024 season. The mark has already been breached five times this year.

The collective batting strike rate surpassed 140 for the first time in 2023, the first season involving the Impact Sub. The



Shreyas Iyer's Punjab Kings have the best strike-rate in powerplay.

Wankhede Stadium is witnessing a six-hitting boom, but for Mumbai Indians, the run-fest carries an irony

Batting SR by season

VENUE	2024 (MTS)	2025 (MTS)	2026 (MTS)
Mumbai	149.56 (7)	142.3 (7)	171.83 (5)
Delhi	179.39 (5)	157.48 (7)	163.34 (4)
Bengaluru	154.9 (7)	147.85 (5)	161.57 (5)
Chennai	133.33 (9)	130.7 (6)	147.55 (4)
Ahmedabad	147.9 (8)	160.22 (9)	145.69 (4)
Jaipur	148.82 (5)	159.1 (7)	184.36 (2)
Lucknow	140.71 (7)	155.99 (8)	123.11 (4)
Mullanpur	133.97 (5)	143.7 (7)	169.19 (4)
Kolkata	162.83 (7)	155.54 (6)	143.23 (4)
Hyderabad	166.52 (6)	163.09 (6)	150.05 (4)

Impact of Impact Sub

IPL SINCE IMPACT SUB	MATCHES	RUNS PER OVER	SIXES	BALLS PER SIX
2023	74	8.5	1124	15.33
2024	72	9.03	1260	12.99
2025	73	9.14	1291	12.76
2026	44	9.32	807	12.11

Powerplay batting in IPL 2026 (after Match 44)

TEAM	M	SR	6S
Punjab Kings	7	197.62	36
Rajasthan Royals	10	185.83	46
Sunrisers Hyderabad	9	182.72	41
Royal Challengers Bengaluru	9	162.96	21
Gujarat Titans	9	157.72	22
Chennai Super Kings	9	155.86	19
Mumbai Indians	9	148.15	32
Delhi Capitals	9	136.73	19
Kolkata Knight Riders	8	133.94	17
Lucknow Super Giants	8	124.65	16

extra batter raised scoring rates exponentially in 2024, when the tournament strike rate crossed 150 across 72 matches — 1,260 sixes, a big hit every 13 deliveries. Last year, 1,291 sixes were struck across 73 games at a strike rate of 152.39. If current energies hold for another month, the batting strike rate is likely to extend for a third successive year.

Powerplay Carnage
The catalyst has been the Powerplay — the 36-ball passage that has turned on manic scoring rates and reshaped how teams approach the entire innings. The only four teams holding a sub-150 Powerplay strike rate this season occupy the bottom four spots in the standings. Meanwhile, Powerplay leaders Punjab Kings (197.62), Rajasthan Royals

(185.63), SRH (182.72) and RCB (162.96) occupy the top four qualifying spots.

Armed with middle orders that relay the blitzkrieg through the remaining overs, the notion of safe scores has vanished from the dugouts entirely. Even venues that have resisted change are unravelling. The spin cauldron of the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai has opened to quicker scoring, the strike rate moving from 133 to 150 in two years. Punjab's Mullanpur venue has seen gains of 36 runs per innings, up to 169 from 133 in 2024.

The feeling that has left champions and top bowlers scrambling for alternatives is fast becoming the defining reality of IPL cricket. A 243-run total is no longer a fortress. It is merely a starting point.

TRUMP CARD

Captain Cummins effect kicks in as Sunrisers Hyderabad hit their stride

Tanishq Vaddi
Hyderabad, May 2

PAT CUMMINS has never thought of himself as a leader.

"I think for most of my life I've always been the youngest person in the room. I never really felt like a leader at all," he told Elizabeth Day on her podcast How to Fail.

Then Australia asked him to captain the Test side in November 2021. Then he won the World Test Championship. Then the 2023 ODI World Cup. Then SRH handed him their IPL franchise and he turned them into one of the most watchable teams in the tournament's history, liberating a batting order that had forgotten it

was allowed to swing.

Abhishek Sharma, the main beneficiary of what followed, put it plainly on the YouTube show Breakfast with Champions: "Marte hue out hona chahiye, darte hue nahi. I am fine with the team being 100 all out, but I don't want safe scores of 160 or 170."

That was Cummins speaking through Sharma. The captain who didn't seek the role, expressing it through the batter who most completely understood it.

He came back to SRH this season after his last competitive game — the third Ashes Test in Adelaide — and walked straight into a team that had been finding its shape without

him. Stand-in captain Ishan Kishan was getting used to the role. The bowling was firing. Things were falling into place. The question by the press pack, late at night after a thumping win over Delhi Capitals, was no longer whether Cummins was available but where exactly he fit. SRH bowling coach Varun Aron didn't hesitate.

"Pat is world-class, one of the top bowlers in the world. So he would walk into any team, irrespective of whether somebody was doing well or not doing well."

SRH had a difficult 2025 campaign. This season, things have looked different.

On April 25, against Rajasthan Royals in Jaipur, Cum-



Australia pacer Pat Cummins (L) joined Sunrisers Hyderabad last week and took over the captaincy from Ishan Kishan. CREIMAS

mins returned as captain. He took 1 for 27 from four overs and his captaincy looked as shrewd as ever. The Orange Army, entering the important phase of the tournament, had their man back.

Accepting the captaincy of Australia had not been simple. "Just seen the previous few captains really go through the wringer. There are parts of the role that are obviously appealing — the esteem of captaining

Pat is world-class. So he would walk into any team, irrespective of whether somebody was doing well or not doing well."

VARUN ARON
SRH BOWLING COACH

Australia — but parts of it that didn't really appeal to me too much. So, in the end, I decided to go for it. But if it wasn't to be and if it didn't work out, I was very comfortable," he told Day. Leadership came to him anyway, as easily as bowling

quickly. But the cricket is only part of it. His mother, Maria, died of breast cancer in 2023. His son Albie was born two and a half years ago.

"We were barely home ever since becoming a father. So I think that's the one I'm always jostling with," he said on How to Fail.

After his mother died, the jostling became clearer.

"I'm so crystal clear now on the family's priority. I want to spend as much time as I can with my family. And you just can't keep kicking things down the road. I think a lot of sports people, but maybe me in particular, think — okay, I'll play cricket till I'm 35 or 36, Albie will be seven or six years old, and

then life will start, and then we can start hanging out as a family. I've definitely changed my mindset now. It's like, no, I'm going to live life."

"I'm going to say a big emphatic yes to things that we really want to do as a family. When we're on tour, let's make sure we have the time of our lives. We don't just want to watch the clock tick by."

He never really felt like a leader. Then he became one of the finest captains of his generation. He never thought much about time management. Then he lost his mother and his son learned to walk and he became, as he says himself, crystal clear.

The cricket, it turns out, is the easy part.

Hair-pulling trend in PL continues as Ballard sent off for Sunderland



Dan Ballard (C) arguing with referee after his red card. REUTERS

Associated Press
Wolverhampton, May 2

RED CARDS for hair-pulling have never been so frequent in the Premier League. The latest came Saturday when Sunderland defender Dan Ballard was sent off for yanking the hair of Wolverhampton striker Tolu Arokodare as they competed for the ball in the first half of the teams' meeting at Molineux.

In January, Arokodare was the recipient of a hair tug by Everton defender Michael Keane, who also was shown a straight red card in a match that finished 1-1 in January.

Last month, Manchester United defender Lisandro Martinez was sent off for pulling the hair of Leeds striker Dominic Calvert-Lewin in their match at Old Trafford.

That decision, given after a VAR check, was described as "shocking" by United manager Michael Carrick but wasn't overturned.

Pulling an opponent's hair is deemed violent conduct and earns a three-match ban.

There have been instances of red cards for hair-pulling outside the Premier League, too, over the past year.

In the second-tier Championship, Ipswich left back Leif Davis was given a retrospective ban in March after being found have pulled the hair of Leicester player Caleb Okoli.

At the Club World Cup last summer, Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Joao Neves was sent off for pulling down Marc Cucurella by his hair toward the end of Chelsea's 3-0 victory in the final. At last year's Women's European Championship, the VAR spotted Germany midfielder Kathrin Hendrich yanking the ponytail of France captain Griedge Mbock at a free kick and a red card was issued.

Last month, Chelsea coach Sonia Bompastor whipped out her cell phone in a post-match interview and replayed footage of a hair-pulling incident missed by match officials in the Women's Champions League game against Arsenal.

And in the semifinals, Bayern Munich's Franziska Kett was sent off for pulling the hair of an opponent in a 1-1 draw with Barcelona in the first leg last Saturday.

Pulling an opponent's hair is deemed violent conduct and earns a three-match ban.

THOMAS CUP 2026

Ambush and farewell: France outplays India's present & past

Popov exposes Shetty's vulnerability as Lanier's power game overwhelms Srikanth's fading artistry in semis

Shivani Naik
Mumbai, May 2

FRANCE MAXIMIZED their advantage of three players in the men's singles Top 17, including two in Top 10, to defeat India 3-0 and make the Thomas Cup final on Saturday.

In the absence of Lakshya Sen, rested due to an elbow impact injury, Ayush Shetty played first singles — and got ambushed by Christo Popov. Satwik and Chirag were resigned to wait, men's doubles only possible as the fifth rubber given the Popov brothers play singles too.

Ayush gets ambushed

When India went down 0-1 with World No 4 Christo Popov on a rampage, the good news was that Ayush's manner of being dominated was a known vulnerability. The bad news was it has been the same issue costing him matches for six months — against Lakshya Sen, Brian Yang, Alwi Farhan, Christo himself and Shi Yuqi in the BAC final at Ningbo, inflicting the same damage each time. It is a pattern now, not an aberration.

There's a higher gear, a higher tempo, that most players can deploy against him to rush Ayush. Christo brought the whole ambush drill — no supreme artistry required, no deep deception, just very accurate shots at blitzing speed, forcing a thinking overdrive on the tall shuttler and scrambling his movements. Christo crowded Ayush and clouded his decision-making, as the Indian failed to make the shots he otherwise would.

Christo ushers in the new European upgrade — the physicality that Alex Lanier's game brought into play a couple of seasons ago, now refined and sharpened. Speed and power over skill and net intricacy. Slam bang. Where the

But the accuracy has long left Srikanth — precision on the lines, precision in the fast exchanges, highly undependable now.

Smashes going wide, pushes in the net, terrible judgments on the backline — Ayush went from 6-11 down at the break to 11-21. Christo fiercely moving ahead.

At 6'4", fast court movements take time to get going, and attacking clears were Ayush's best hope to not cede the initiative. But his accuracy to the backlines was poor on the day — perhaps down to five matches in a week, his tournament fitness not quite up to scratch as Christo's fast parallels kept him well away from the net. Very few points offered him the initiative to dictate a rally. He remained nonplussed as Christo hammered away.

In the second, Ayush lapsed to 2-9 and couldn't escape the single digits. At 5-14, another poor lift was an open invitation — the thwack duly arrived. A 21-9 scoreline was an ominous sign of how the 15-point format will punish his vulnerabilities, as all of Ayush's strengths got negated by pace.

Christo ushers in the new European upgrade — the physicality that Alex Lanier's game brought into play a couple of seasons ago, now refined and sharpened. Speed and power over skill and net intricacy. Slam bang. Where the



Ayush Shetty lost the first rubber against World no 4 Christo Popov in straight games. FILE

French men's singles is acing the style is in bringing the doubles elements of parallel play — staying consistent, no countenance for flair. The hockey astroturfification of badminton, if you will. Wielding his left-handed strokes like an axe, Christo took the net out of the equation entirely with mid-court parallels. The World Tour Finals winner from 2025 made the arena resound with the power on his hits. Ayush acknowledged the damage afterwards. "His pace was really high which put pressure on me. He dominated the net. He out-classed me today."

Srikanth wilts away
Kidambi Srikanth had never played Alex Lanier, and he brought out vintage snap-

shots of how artistry can compete against the acceleration the Frenchman blithely threw at him. But the accuracy has long left Srikanth — precision on the lines, precision in the fast exchanges, highly undependable now. That the 32-year-old remains competitive at this level, injury-free and still hunting the angles, says something about the competitor he has always been. But competing and winning are increasingly different propositions.

He had more variety in his winners during the 21-16, 21-18 loss — perhaps his last Thomas Cup game. But all Lanier had to do was keep things simple: attack with power out of Srikanth's reach, refuse to engage in the rallying battles. When the Frenchman did engage, Srikanth had a look-in — a glorious smash with a net follow-up of yore, myriad ways to move the shuttle about. But errors outnumbered winners 3:2. Though he briefly controlled the tempo at 15-18 in the first, and even 16-17 in the second, Lanier was always just two Srikanth errors away from taking off.

The final point had all of Srikanth's frustrations scrunched into one moment. Desperate at 18-20 to ward off the dying of the light, he got pumped up and embroiled in a fast flat midcourt exchange — seemed in control of the rally — and smashed into the net. The grimace. His face in his hands.

HS Prannoy fell in the third singles 21-19, 21-16, completing France's sweep. India's story told.

Kuldeep breaks pole vault national record



Kuldeep Kumar recorded a mark of 5.41m on Saturday. AFI

Express News Service
New Delhi, May 2

INDIAN POLE vaulter Kuldeep Kumar rewrote the men's national record on Saturday after recording 5.41m mark at the inaugural Indian Indoor Open Combined Events and Pole Vault Competition in Bhubaneswar on Saturday.

He cleared the mark of 5.41m in his first attempt and decided to go for 5.46m but failed to cross that mark. He broke the national record of 5.40m set last year by Dev Kumar Meena and also improved the national indoor record of 5.30m set earlier in March by Reegan G of Tamil Nadu.

This was first time that Kuldeep has participated in an indoor Pole Vault competition. "It was a good day for me. It was a good experience today," said Kuldeep Kumar after making the national record.

Dev, the former record holder and one of the best pole vaulters in the country, struggled to get his rhythm going and settled for a bronze medal this time with a mark of 5.20m. He tried thrice at the 5.35m but failed. Meanwhile, former Indoor NR holder, Reegan G finished at the second place with the best mark of 5.25m.

The pre-event favourite and former national record holder Dev Kumar Meena says it wasn't his day. But was excited that the bar was raised to 5.41m. "It is always good to aim for new goals," says Dev Kumar Meena of the national record set by Kuldeep Kumar.

Both Dev Kumar Meena and Kuldeep Kumar practice at the same venue in Madhya Pradesh and have been training together for more than two years. Dev equalled his national record earlier this year in Taiwan, when he jumped 5.40m at Sun Moon Lake International Pole Vault Competition in March and he created the previous national record at World University Games last year.

In the men's heptathlon, the race for first two spots got exciting with just 16 points separating the top two athletes. N Thowfeeq of NCOE Trivandrum was the leader on Day One with 2943 points. Odisha's Jashbir Nayak was close behind at second place with 2927 points.

RESULTS: Men: Pole vault: Kuldeep Kumar (Madhya Pradesh) 5.41m (NR), Reegan G (Tamil Nadu) 5.25m, Dev Kumar Meena (Madhya Pradesh) 5.20m. **Men: U20:** Pole vault: Kavinraja S (Tamil Nadu) 4.90m, R Vishal (Tamil Nadu) 4.70m, Saurabh Yadav (Uttar Pradesh) 4.20m.

India needs reforms if it wants to host 2036 Oly: ITA head

Express News Service
Mumbai, May 2

THE HEAD of the International Testing Agency (ITA), which oversees anti-doping programmes at the Olympic Games and other major global events, has raised concerns about the high number of doping cases in India, including reports that athletes receive "advance notice prior to testing" and avoid providing samples.

ITA Director General Benjamin Cohen said in a report that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has conveyed that if India aims to host the 2036 Olympics, it must undertake "a lot of governance and structural reforms".

"We're concerned in general with the state of doping in India and we're hearing a lot of things happening on the ground," Cohen was quoted as saying by The Athletic, a sports publica-

tion of The New York Times. "We also hear stories of athletes running away when there is a doping control, and we hear of advance notice (given to athletes prior to testing)."

In addition to managing anti-doping testing for the IOC, the Lausanne-based ITA also runs programmes for around 50 international sports federations. Cohen said he met officials from the New Delhi-based National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) and the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) during the recent Winter Olympics in Milano Cortina, Italy, and was encouraged by their apparent willingness to "team up with the ITA".

However, he acknowledged that closer collaboration may not come easily, as it could be perceived in India as an admission that its anti-doping system is failing.

"I'm going to be frank: there



Ahmedabad is pushing for 2036 Olympics hosting rights. FILE

is still some resistance to engage with the ITA, as there can be a perception in India that this is almost an admission of failure of the system, or that they're not going to be seen as competent enough to deal with their own problems, so they have to join forces with an independent international organ-

isation. There's a bit of scepticism as to how it's going to be perceived in the Indian community. But I think they (India) are on the right track in that it is now known that the IOA and the Ministry of Sports want to do something; they want to invest. They have the resources, so I think it's just a matter of time," he said.

The ITA works with a growing number of National Anti-Doping Organisations (NADOs) worldwide to share intelligence, coordinate testing strategies, and collaborate on specific cases, including areas like sample collection and education. India has topped the World Anti-Doping Agency's (WADA) list of doping offenders for three consecutive years, recording the highest positivity rate among major nations.

The country is set to host the 2030 Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad and is also bidding

to stage the 2036 Olympic Games in the Gujarat city. Doha, the capital of Qatar, is another contender for the 2036 Olympics, with the host city expected to be announced before the 2028 Games in Los Angeles.

Last month, WADA President Witold Banka said on the sidelines of the Global Anti-Doping Intelligence and Investigations Network (GAIIN) conference in New Delhi that "nobody is blind" to India's serious doping issue, though he acknowledged "sincere efforts" to address it.

He also stated that India is the world's largest producer of performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) and steroids.

The ITA was established in 2018 as a non-profit foundation under the supervision of WADA and the IOC to promote independence, expertise, and transparency in the global fight against doping.

Yastika in, Amanjot, Uma left out of T20 WC

Express News Service
New Delhi, May 2

NANDNI SHARMA has been named in the Indian women's squad for the Women's T20 World Cup later this year while Anushka Sharma, Uma Chetry and Kashvee Gautam have been left out. Also missing from the India squad are Harleen Deol and Amanjot Kaur.

Nandni was the breakthrough star from last season's Women's Premier League, where playing for Delhi Capitals in her maiden season in the league, she ended up as the top wicket-taker with 17 wickets, same as the Purple Cap winner Sophie Devine. Nandni was named as the Emerging Player of the Season in WPL 2026.

Talking about Amanjot Kaur missing out, Harmanpreet Kaur said at the press conference: "She is a key player. She's not available. She's away from cricket for the next four-five months. It was very hard to find a replacement for her. In place of her, we're trying Bharti."

Meanwhile, wicketkeeper-batter Yastika Bhatia and all-rounder Radha Yadav are back in the side for the T20 World Cup. Harmanpreet Kaur will be leading India for the fifth time at the tournament, while Smriti Mandhana is her deputy.

"I will definitely rate this team (as the favorites). I believe we can go ahead and do this. We have no pressure, or extra burden on ourselves," said Harmanpreet Kaur.

The Women's T20 World Cup, to be held in England and Wales from June 12 to July 5 later this year, is an expanded tournament that will feature 12 teams, which makes it the largest field ever in a Women's T20 World Cup. There will be 33 matches played over 24 days.

SQUAD: Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Smriti Mandhana (vc), Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Fulmali, Deepti Sharma, Bharti Ghosh, Sree Charani, Yastika Bhatia, Nandni Sharma, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Thakur, Kranti Gaud, Shreyanka Patil, Radha Yadav

• NEW ADDITION TO WOMEN IN BLUE

A father's belief, daughter's dream: Nandni's rise to Indian team

Nitin Sharma
Chandigarh, May 2

SHYAM SUNDAR Sharma still remembers the time when his daughter, Nandni Sharma, constantly urged him to enrol her at a cricket academy. The year was 2011, and Nandni was in fourth standard.

It wasn't the first time she'd made this request — she would plead nearly every evening when Sharma returned from his spare parts shop in the Industrial Area of Chandigarh. On Monday, Sharma had just returned home from his workplace when Nandni greeted him and broke the news: the 24-year-old pacer was named in the 15-member India squad for the Women's T20 World Cup.

"When Nandni was very young, her only demand from me was to get her enrolled in a cricket academy. She had made up her mind to play cricket. Like any parent, we wanted her to do whatever she wanted and did not even think for a moment to not enrol her," Sharma told *The Indian Express*. "I used to play

cricket in my younger days, but to see her play always made me emotional. Now to see her being selected for India for the T20 World Cup is one of the biggest rewards for us and for Nandni's hard work and passion for cricket."

Nandni, too, reminisced about the time she dreamt of playing in a World Cup for India. "I am still nervous as well as excited. It has not sunk in yet. I got injured after the India A-UAE A match in the Rising Stars Tournament in Thailand. But the last few months have seen me working on my bowling with my brothers, Akash Vats and Shubham Vats, who have played for Punjab. They helped me regain my rhythm. Bowling in England will be a challenge, but I am ready for it," Nandni told this paper.

While the youngster trained at her school, followed by a stint at the LIC Cricket Academy in Chandigarh's Sector 26 — the brainchild of present PCA curator Deepinder Singh — she would soon make her way into the Punjab junior teams.



Nandni Sharma (R) with Indian skipper Harmanpreet Kaur. INSTAGRAM

Nandni attended the U-19 NCA camp and played for the Punjab U16 and U19 teams before she played for Chandigarh. She initially trained under coaches Jatin, Rajesh Patha and Deepak before training under Sukhwinder Bawa, the former coach of Yuvraj Singh and father of U-19 World Cup winner Raj

Angad Bawa. Singh remembers a young Nandni impressing the coaches at his academy with her pace. "Nandni was about ten years old when she joined our academy. I remember she used to bowl at a good pace, even at that age, with other girls and boys watching with surprise. Later, as she grew,

Last year, Nandni was picked up by the Delhi Capitals for Rs 20 lakh for the 2026 WPL. Before that, Nandni had served as a net bowler for RCB in the WPL.

she worked on her yorkers. She always wanted to bowl on proper pitches, and we also hope that someday she will play in Indian colours at Mullanpur Stadium," shares Singh.

Net bowler

Last year, Nandni was picked up by the Delhi Capitals for Rs 20 lakh for the 2026 WPL. Before that, Nandni had served as a net bowler for the Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the third edition of the WPL. Sharma got her chance in the Delhi Capitals XI after Australian Annabel Sutherland withdrew from the tournament. Over the WPL, Sharma picked

up 17 wickets, a feat only matched by Gujarat Giants' Sophie Devine. Sharma also became only the second Indian to take a WPL hat-trick and the first uncapped player to take a five-for, with her five-wicket spell against Gujarat Giants.

"When she came to train under me, we worked on slow bouncers as well as variations, and she was also good with the bat. I was hoping to see her getting a chance to bat too in the WPL. The way she bowled in the WPL was something that gave her a lot of confidence," said Bawa.

Nandni, too, recalls the WPL experience as well as the learnings. "The WPL taught me to perform under pressure, as well as bowl against some of the most experienced players. Our captain, Jemimah Rodrigues, backed me a lot, and I would also discuss bowling with Shafali Verma as well as Marizanne Kapp. I have been a fan of the way Bhuvneshwar Kumar bowls, and hopefully I can bowl like him in England," said Nandni.

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'Perpetrators aren't aliens'

Director Anubhav Sinha on the making of *Assi* and why confronting rape demands discomfort over easy answers

Chef Sahil Mehta on French elegance



PANTON CHAIR
A symbol of Danish excellence, this chair with its cantilever form is popular the world over

PLANTER'S CHAIR
This ubiquitous leisure chair was a British favourite for those who took their repose seriously

EAMES LOUNGE CHAIR
What was born out of necessity during WWII is a luxury icon with its 'fits like a glove' seating comfort

CHANDIGARH CHAIR
An administrator's chair, made when a new Capital for Punjab was being built, is now a collector's item

The Social Anatomy of a Chair

From powerful royal thrones to the reclining chairs of Kerala, tracing the politics, history and subversion of the seat in India

Shiny Varghese

WHAT A king, a pope and an artist say with their chairs is as distinct as it is silent. For emperor Shah Jahan, the Peacock Throne, with its elaborate ornamentation, was a way to tell his subjects that his divine right brings him closer to heaven than earth while Pope Francis replaced the opulent papal throne with a wooden chair to hint at his pastoral duties to the faithful. Ghana artist Ibrahim Mahama's installation *Parliament of Ghosts* (showcased at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2026), that used jute bags and repurposed chairs, told stories of continuity and resistance. In popular culture, the Iron Throne in the *Game of Thrones* series is a cue of how power can be a burden and hold a violent past. Each of these examples unpack stories of ourselves, values, norms and conventions. The act of sitting itself has been universal and timeless since man walked the earth. And yet the intent of the seat is different for people across regions and cultures. Communication is embedded in the material, height and appearance of a seat but often the hidden layers surface only when we look for it beyond forensic data.

In her book *From the Frugal to the Ornate: Stories of the Seat in India* (Godrej & Boyce, 2022), Bengaluru-based designer and researcher Sarita Sundar writes about her grandfather's *charukassera* (reclining chair) in Kerala: "It was the dignity and loftiness with which my grandfather assumed his seat that drew me — and most of the village — to his side... It was a station of vantage and power... his reputation for astute advice saw villagers seeking his counsel often. They were afforded positions, determined by their social standing... benches with backs, benches with stools or none at all."

Her research for the book brought her to serendipitous discoveries that *kassera*, the Malayalam word for chair, takes its inspiration from the Portuguese *cadeira* and that *naalkaalige*, the Telugu or Tamil word for chair, also means 'four-legged one'.

The politics, history and subversion of the seat have, in recent times, seen exhibitions, symposiums and books dedicated to it. There can never be a single narrative or lens to view these ideas and to understand them, we need to go back to the evolution of sitting itself.

Rising From the Floor

Jay Thakkar, professor, CEPT University, Ahmedabad, says, "The story of sitting in the subcontinent begins at floor level and slowly rises, layer by layer, into the world of benches, stools and chairs. To follow how people sat is to follow how they understand the body, the divine, the community and their social hierarchy."

It's not uncommon in stone reliefs or Company Style paintings (from the 18th and 19th centuries) to see how seating signalled posture and function. For instance, while a worker may be squatting on the floor as he weaves a textile or shapes an object, the client or the owner is usually seen on a raised stool or *mooda*. If one were to begin with the rituals of prayer, in a puja,

the worshipper is often sitting cross-legged on a mat or cloth, as a conscious act of being in sync with the earth. Thakkar observes that the deity, however, is almost never placed on the floor. There will be a low wooden or ornate table to reinforce the sense of honour.

Low seating is ubiquitous across India, its variations depend entirely on region, climate and function. Be it a low seat (*paatlo* or *palakka*), a bench (*paat* or *bankdo*), a *charpai* or a *baithak*. From palaces to modern-day homes, their uses are multiple and quite often, they are easy to move around. "These pieces are not just objects but instruments of social choreography. Who sits on the floor, who on a *paatlo*, who on the low stool with a backrest — each decision quietly arranges relationships of deference, care and authority within the domestic space," says Thakkar, who has co-authored *Sahaj: Vernacular Furniture of Gujarat* (CEPT University, 2018).

Low seating with backrests have been associated with gurus and merchants for many years. At the Hastashilpa Heritage Village Museum in Manipal-Udupi, Karnataka, which preserves the architectural heritage of traditional homes from different parts of India, one can see a trader's home from the 1800s. With large windows to pay daily wages to porters, the house has

several low-seating arrangements for ease of transaction. While the traders sat upright on the wooden squares with backrests, workers were on carpets or outside. "The hierarchy is subtle but clear: The back-supported body is one of authority, the unsupported body listens," says Thakkar. It's not hard to imagine a courtyard house in north India, where the *charpai* takes centre stage, with the matriarch seated cross-legged or with one leg on the floor, *hookah* in hand, watching the helps and daughters-in-law potter about.

While the *paatlo* or the *palakaa* consolidates the individual, the *paat* or *patta* (large raised wooden platform) is about the collective. During his field visits to Rajasthan, Thakkar would see men gather around at a *chowk*, seated on a *paat*, to play cards, hear speeches, hold informal panchayat meetings or nap in the afternoon. This seat, by its function blurred the lines, becoming both a living room and a community space for the village. Sometimes, several *paats* would be brought together for a wedding, transforming these benches into a single continuous surface on which an entire village could sit, eat, watch and participate.

Many households would also have gender and age diversification when it came to seating. The eldest family member usually got the *charpai*, while the next in line got a chair with a lower back, while the youngest was usually given a *dhurrie*. Thakkar calls it the diagram of age and seniority rendered in wood, rope and cloth.

The Modern Chair

Then came the modern chair with the British and the Portuguese, one with an aspiration tag. It was seen in offices, restaurants, clubs and elite homes by the early 1900s. "One sat on a *kursi* not simply to be comfortable but to show that one is next in line after the person on the *charpai*," ob-



COURTESY: HASHIM BADANI/HOUSE OF MAHENDRA DOSHI

TAKE A SEAT
(Above) Acquired by the House of Mahendra Doshi in the later 1970s from an estate in Rajkot, Gujarat, these are restored Indo-Saracenic his and her chairs, seen here in Mumbai

serves Thakkar.

The Planter's Chair, seen as a mode of leisure, was a British favourite, which came with flexible fabric or cane. Cane chairs were an antidote to brave the humid Indian climate while the armchair and the dining chairs made their appearance felt in high-end restaurants across Bombay. But even there, one saw differences in the use of wood. Dutch and Portuguese designs towards Goa and beyond used rosewood while the British couldn't get enough of Burma teak and mahogany. Abigail McGowan, professor, University of Vermont, USA, in her essay 'Unsettling Chairs' in Sundar's book writes, "Even as dining chairs brought men and women to the table together side by side, armchairs tended to isolate male bodies from the demands of work and family alike."

Advertisements from the late 1950s, from a foam company in a magazine, shows a man leisurely seated on a cushioned armchair, reading a newspaper, with his dog at

his feet, while another ad for an air-conditioner that says 'Secret for better homes', has the man sitting comfortably in an armchair reading a book, while the woman is seated upright, looking at a book together with their child by her side. "Armchairs therefore offered particular refuge to only specific bodies, enshrining the power dynamics within the household," writes McGowan. The world at the time was also seeing a shift in approaches to design. Elaborate carving and padded armrests were making way for the Art Deco movement of the 1930s with their narrow seats and wooden arms. Designer seating such as the Eames and Barcelona chairs were on the bucket list of the wealthy. As India became independent and materials were available, companies such as Godrej & Boyce and Army and Navy stores in Bombay began producing standard furniture lines for homes and offices.

"Factory manufacturing made furniture available and inexpensive for the larger population. That's the context in which Godrej was set up. And while industrial, assembly line furniture can potentially cut through the hierarchy of traditional seating, today you can even order a chief executive's chair which is in some way different; it has a higher back or softer cushioning. So, in some ways, modern seating still continues to facilitate hierarchy," says Sundar. Designers began experimenting with materials from tubular frames to lightweight polypropylene chairs, otherwise called the Monobloc chair, those that could be stacked and mass produced. Haven't we all seen them, at weddings, exhibitions, public gatherings of every sort? We would be lying if we say we don't have at least one of them in our homes, for the sheer moveability and ease of comfort they provide. They are available the world over in varying designs and styles.

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The History of Indian Chairs

However, besides the Chandigarh Chair, designed in the 1950s by Pierre

Jeanneret and his team who built government institutions and offices across Punjab's new Capital, India has little to boast about in its furniture design, which has little or no recall value internationally.

That's why when Mumbai-based Chiki Doshi and Anand Gandhi managing directors, of the House of Mahendra Doshi, purveyors of antiques and period furniture since 1974, exhibited their restored pieces in an exhibition called 'A History of India through Chairs' last month, they wanted to testify to Indian craftsmanship and the possibilities in material. "Large manufacturers are not investing in good designers, we have a huge legacy of exemplary work down the ages. In our exhibition, we showcased pieces from the early 19th century and onward, which were designs by the Dutch, the Portuguese, the French and the British, each of them acquired from different parts of India. But we will never know the provenance, the name of the carpenter or the designer. And today, with development in wood and technology, there is a huge scope in tapping the international market," says Doshi, who has been with the company for more than three decades. "Nowadays, people in their 30s are taking a keen interest in period furniture. They are house proud and are willing to make a conscious investment in furniture of a particular era," he says, adding that many of his clients are from Delhi and north India.

"Good design is not unaffordable; rather it can bring value and quality to a space," says Mumbai-based designer Ajay Shah. But he cautions that in India, we need to move beyond craft and make design development integral to our work. "The creation of making something iconic is a lengthy process. It involves a company's vision, the passion of its founder, committing to design, seeking new materials and technologies and a sustained effort over a long period of time," says Shah. His furniture line under Industrial Playground has a specific aesthetic. The forms, materials and colour propose a lifestyle that's less formal and conventional, bringing flexibility and lightness to spaces.

As a nation, we seem to have come full circle, from customising how our furniture should look to where we place them. The evolution of sitting in India, however, is not linear. Shabnam Gupta, principal designer, Orange Lane Studio, affirms that furniture is a keeper of space in a home. It determines comfort, function and direction. "At the entrance, it's not uncommon for a client to want statement chairs. These are not very comfortable but they afford visual value. In the TV room, they expect to have sunken sofas or massage chairs. The living room is usually more formal. Sometimes, clients ask for a chair to face a particular direction as per Vaastu to help their decision making," she says.

But then to subvert all these notions of being civilised and sophisticated, Mahatma Gandhi's way of sitting in his ashrams was a disruption. He would choose to sit on the floor, be it to receive heads of state or important dignitaries, making them very uncomfortable in the process. It was another weapon to undermine British authority, as did his war against foreign goods and violence, observes Sundar.

On May 9, the International Design History Society will hold a symposium on 'Crafting Furniture in the Global South' where among other researchers, Sundar and academic Rachel Lee from TU Delft will talk about the craft and production of the Planter's Chair.

Known as the *charukassera* in Kerala and the *aramkursi* in Bengal, it has connotations of colonial leisure. But even today, it is not uncommon to visualise one's grandfather on such a chair, looking out of the window or receiving guests at the verandah.

So when we say we ought to have a 'seat at the table' or that we want the 'best seat in town', let's remember, every chair we sit on comes loaded with the history, politics and stories of its time.

Common Ground

In Indonesia: The Beautiful Archipelago, retired diplomat Aftab Seth interprets Indian interests through the prism of the host country without being didactic

Mani Shankar Aiyar

THERE ARE two schools of diplomacy in the Indian Foreign Service. In the first category are those who look upon their assignments through narrow Indian perspectives, believing that their prioritisation must be the promotion of Indian views on issues of the moment with little regard for the setting in which they preach.

The second category of diplomat comprises those who immerse themselves in the local scene, wanting first to empathetically understand the country of their assignment, its interests, its constraints, its history, its language(s) and its culture(s). The plural is important for countries like Indonesia whose infinite diversity matches ours in terms of ethnic diversity, linguistic pluralism, cultural manifestations and, above all, religious orientation. In my view — a view that our many transactional diplomats might not share — it is the second category that contributes the most to the subtle promotion of Indian interests, particularly in difficult assignments, for it interprets these Indian interests through the prism of the host country, without didactically lecturing the resident citizens about the imperatives of the Indian view.

Unfortunately, those who do take an interest in their countries of assignment are in a pitiful minority. The majority of our diplomats are born pontificators with scarcely hidden contempt for their interlocutors. This accounts for our growing failures of diplomacy, particularly the satisfying notion that we are a kind of *vishwaguru* who know better than others what is good for them and for the world.

Ambassador Aftab Seth belongs to the eclectic second category. Indeed, I would rate him the exemplar for the second category, especially as he has an unusual ear for languages and manages before his term ends to master Bhasa Indonesia with the ease with which he speaks passable Vietnamese and outdoes many a Japanese in his enunciation of their language, so very different to ours. I particularly cherish his succeeding me at one remove as consul-general in Karachi where we both made innumerable friends and were absorbed into all echelons of a different but eerily similar ethos to our own.

His lavishly illustrated book on Indonesia is a tribute as much to 'the beautiful archipelago' that is Indonesia as it is proof of what can be achieved by prioritising understanding of the host country over pompously propagating the 'Indian' view — the preferred mode of diplomacy of most of my former colleagues. It is this self-identification with the scenic and man-made wonders of the Indonesian archipelago that accounts for the loving detail in which the archipelago's natural bounties and human-engineered miracles are both described and illustrated.

For, the photographs and drawings bring Indonesia alive for those like me who have not had much of an opportunity of visiting the vast and spread-out islands that it is made up of. Before you put the book down, Aftab acquaints you with its history from ancient times to the present, its civilisational challenges and responses, the manner in which this 90 per cent Muslim nation (the most populous Islamic nation in the world) has celebrated communal harmony, the oneness of humankind, the lessons each can learn from the other, and the mosaic that celebrates, and does not denigrate, the infinite variety of spiritual belief.

Of course, there is the downside of death and destruction but that has more to do with forced regime change than with cultural and civic attitudes to religious harmony. As Aftab leads you by the finger, as it were, from a gay, sophisticated, fun-loving people to grave dungeons of death by massacre but never missing a beat in being at one with the people of his diplomatic remit, many of whom constitute the political, literary and cultural elite but most of whom are ordinary folk, always ready with a smile and heartwarming hospitality in the bosom of one of nature's wonders, Aftab exemplifies what a dedicated diplomat can do, without prejudice to his official duties as an envoy of his country, to project Indian interests as similar, if not the same, as those of his host country.

The writer is a former Union minister.



A Pahari painting depicting Krishna performing *raas* with *gopis*, as Radha sulks in the corner

IN WHICH WAY LIES LIGHT?

In *The Lady Who Carried the Monk Across the River*, Pavan K Varma explores the tension between the worldly and the spiritual with a lightness of touch

Karan Singh

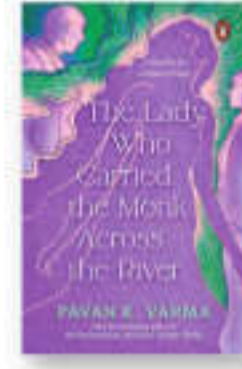
PAVAN K VARMA'S new book, *The Lady Who Carried the Monk Across the River*, is a gem. The title reverses the well-established story that could, perhaps, astonish readers unless they realise that the river in the title is that which runs between, the life of worldly pleasures and the life of the spiritual aspirant.

The book consists of the dialogue between the great Guru Acharya Brihaspati and his student Kevala. They have a fascinating discussion for five days in which Brihaspati quotes scriptures and verse to proclaim that the *sanyasi's* life is superior to the worldly life, while Kevala refutes this with sharp arguments. Both sides of the debate are so well presented as to be an education in themselves. The eternal conflict between the two different lifestyles is well brought out in this novel, as also the role of women, including some fairly explicit descriptions of sexual intercourse.

The teachings of Vedanta, as contained in the Upanishads, are presented by Brihas-

pati. He also quotes later texts regarding how those taking the spiritual path should completely reject all worldly pleasures, particularly any contact with women. The fact that Kevala actually carries an unknown girl across the river was reported to the guru as being a grave infringement of a student's discipline, important though it may have been in helping the girl who was eager to get to the other bank. The whole dialogue revolves around the clash of this rigid tradition. As the novel develops, the girl turns up again and ultimately, it is she who convinces Kevala to cross the river, as it were, and renounce his vows as a monk. She brings out the sovereign power of love that overcomes all lesser emotions and finally triumphs.

Refuting Brihaspati's contention that the *sanyasi's* life necessarily involves a complete recusal of sexual life, Kevala quotes the famous passage from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad: "Just as a man, closely embraced by his loving wife, knows nothing without, nothing within, so does this person, closely embraced by the self that consists of wisdom, knows nothing without, nothing within". He also asked whether there is nothing physical



THE LADY WHO CARRIED THE MONK ACROSS THE RIVER

PAVAN K VARMA
Penguin India
160 pages
₹499

in the desire between Shiva and Parvati or Lakshmi and Vishnu or Krishna and Radha. To this, Brihaspati responds rather weakly, claiming that such depictions are allegories in mythology. To illustrate the larger truth of the 'interfaith' between the Atman and Brahman, Kevala responds very sharply, "And, if we admit of desire, would that nullify that metaphysical truth? Why does it always have to be one or the other, as if the acceptance of the validity of desire is antithetical to spiritual liberation? Krishna could be performing the *raas* with the *gopis* with desire at one level, and be transcendent of it at another."

When Brihaspati tells Kevala to distinguish between momentary joy and eternal bliss, Kevala responds, "True, master. But cannot momentary joy be a window to eternal bliss? It may be passing, fleeting but for the duration it lasts, does it not provide a glimpse, a peek into the plenitude of that eternal ecstasy? After all, joy is a seamless whole. The difference between the momentary and the eternal does not diminish what is common to both." Surprisingly, although Kevala is just a novice and Brihaspati, one of the great masters of his time, it is Kevala who

seems to emerge on top during this fascinating dialogue.

Varma is well known as a serious commentator on culture, history and has also authored an important book on India's greatest philosopher, Adi Shankaracharya. This little novel presents the basic teachings of Hinduism in a most attractive manner without in any way rejecting worldly life. He deserves compliments for this new book, which is a short but enlightening read.

The conflict between the inner and the outer life, as portrayed between the *sanyasi* and the *grahasthi* is a common one. To my mind, the solution is not an either/or one, rather it highlights the importance of maintaining a powerful spiritual life along with outer activities. In the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna does not advise Arjuna to become a *sanyasi* but rather to fulfill his duties as a dedication to the divinity that pervades the universe. This little novel represents both arguments effectively and will be welcomed not only for the story but for the teachings that we can absorb while reading it.

The writer is a former Union minister



TATYASAHEB: THE STORY OF A BOMBAY ENTREPRENEUR
TEJASWINI APTE-RAHM
Westland Business
273 pages
₹700

SHELF LIFE

Under a city's skin

A FEW industries are inextricably linked to Mumbai's history, identity and its current status as the financial capital of the country, not the least of which are textiles, films and sugar. One man — native to the city, born in 1875 to parents who moved there 16 years after the inauguration of the first train — grew from a clerk to a mogul in the textile industry, went on to fund some of the first films made in India and

set up one of the earliest sugar factories in Maharashtra: Vaman Sridhar Apte. His story, in many ways, is the story of Bombay. Tejaswini Apte-Rahm's *Tatyasaheb: The Story of a Bombay Entrepreneur*, in trying to piece together the former, paints a rich picture of the latter, too.

The motivation to write her great-grandfather's biography though came from a much simpler instinct: wanting to know where she came from. Who amongst us has not wondered about those who came before us? Apte-Rahm's *Tatyasaheb* is an attempt at precisely that — an exercise in understanding one's heritage. With extensive research, Apte sets out to explore her ancestry, going back roughly five generations. Tracing the roots of her family tree from a small village on the Konkan coast all the way to pockets of Maharashtra and Gujarat, Apte-Rahm has created a

snapshot of a time, a family and a city.

In her exploration, there are pieces of history that fall into place in the larger puzzle of India's story. In records of wills of Apte's relative, in decisions her family made, readers get an intimate glance at how family finances worked for many of a similar background at the time — and of how gender influenced choices, especially financial. They can glean from Tatyasaheb's interactions and business decisions how the city and its people worked and moved — how deals were struck, relationships negotiated and the economic ladder climbed.

One of the most interesting pieces of the puzzle that Apte-Rahm uncovers, though, is the relationship her great-grandfather, a man in the textile industry, shared with a promising director by the name of Dadasaheb Phalke, today known

as the "father of Indian cinema". In 1917, Tatya became one of the first people to invest in Phalke's work. He set up the Hindustan Film Company, which made over 100 films. Despite their strained working relationship, Phalke and Tatya ended up working on over 40 films together.

Apte-Rahm's book is a treasure trove of nuggets like these. A "decade-long, intensely personal" project, the book is a biography of Tatya, a rich documentation of a family line but it is also much more. The curiosity and wonder Apte-Rahm has with her history and with Tatya's life story, shine through. In the end, whether she found answers to the larger philosophical questions she set out to explore, one cannot know. But in the process, for herself and her readers, she has created a rewarding work.

SUKHMANI MALIK

The Mountain Whisperers

Voices in the Wind travels across the Himalaya to bring stories that are as diverse as the region but are infused with a common spirit

Devyani Onial

A CLEVER little white-eye bird that outwitted a crafty tomcat, a Manipuri cat with yellow-green eyes. A little girl in Kumaon who transforms into a bird to escape her mother's unjust beatings and whose plaintive cries protesting her innocence still reverberate across the hills. A beautiful waterfall in the Khasi Hills called the Leap of Ka Likai after a young mother, whose daughter was killed, jumped off the precipice.

For a long, long while, the Himalaya have nestled stories and fables of people, animals and spirits within its formidable folds. Stories that have floated on the mountain breeze, flowed down its sparkling streams and echoed among its rugged ridges. Stretching over 2,900 km, the youngest mountains in the world have preserved old stories and ancient traditions that are as diverse as the region it spans. The stories may vary but common themes and images thread and connect the mountain range, infusing them with a familiar spirit. The folk tales from these mountains are dotted with trees and flowers, rivers and ridges, birds and animals. Some have a

moral, others carry a message, each is imbued with wisdom.

The oral tradition has ensured that the stories are passed on from generation to generation and in each retelling, some things change while others remain the same. What endures though is that community remains at the centre of these tales. From the people who make up a community to the spirits that connect the past to the present, the collection of stories that make up *Voices in the Wind: Folk tales, folklore and spirit stories from the Himalaya*, is almost an informal map to the mountains, its stories their signpost. Edited by author Namita Gokhale, whose works include Himalayan studies and mythologies, and Malashri Lal, a retired professor of English at Delhi University, the collection has contributions from over thirty-five storytellers and scholars. Original woodcut prints by the artist Nalinakshya Talukdar liven the collection.

The stories are distributed over four sections: The Western Himalaya that includes Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh; Central Himalaya that spreads over Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand; Central-Eastern Himalaya, from Bhutan, Sikkim



VOICES IN THE WIND
EDITED BY NAMITA GOKHALE, MALASHRI LAL
Penguin India
336 pages
₹999



ABODE OF TALES

The Himalaya have, for long, nestled stories and fables of people, animals and spirits

and North Bengal; North-Eastern Himalaya, expanding from Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya to Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura.

Some of the stories from *Voices in the Wind* may be familiar to some, while others are not so well known outside their region — tales of the Balti community are a case in point. Partition in 1947 and the War in 1971 left families divided, the scars of which

were imprinted on the community's identity, culture and language. Stories in this collection, including *Amo-Dalmo Ju: The Story of an Ibex Mother*, capture the vibrancy of the culture of Baltistan.

Occasionally folk tales may appear simplistic with their uncomplicated plot lines and the usual tropes of a creature turning into a prince but the message they enunciate isn't. It's the promise and power of

transformation that lies at its core. So, in the spectacular isolated reaches of Ladakh, the land of high passes that stands at a crossroads of cultural and religious exchange, the story of the *Snake Prince of Ladakh* is recounted by parents to their children, gathered together on cold, winter nights made warm by the transformative power of love and hope.

From Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand in the Central Himalaya come riveting tales where the natural and the supernatural meet and part. Women form an integral part of these stories, either in their human form or in the form of spirits.

As old folk lores acquire new layers and meaning with the years, so does the present rework the past. Fittingly, this collection presents a version for our times — an AI one — using ChatGPT-3 to present *The Wonder Child*, a folk story. That perhaps just goes to show that even in this rushed and hurried era, there will always be time for a story. As reels and slides on Instagram and social media take old folklores to new mediums and audiences, the shapeshifting creatures of our folk tales may change form yet again, but they are in no hurry to leave our storied world.

'Perpetrators aren't aliens. They're one of us'

Director Anubhav Sinha on the making of *Assi*, and why confronting rape demands discomfort over easy answers

Anas Arif

IT HAS been nearly a decade since the world saw a different side of Anubhav Sinha with his courtroom drama *Mulk* (2018), which took on entrenched communalism head-on. Since then, he has gone on to make films such as *Article 15* (2019), *Thappad* (2020), *Anek* (2022) and *Bheed* (2023), each engaging with the social and political anxieties of our times. Across these years of balancing a cinema of conscience, he may have arrived at a creative equilibrium with his latest, *Assi*. A courtroom drama of sorts, the film deals with the subject of rape with a starkness that is unsettling, heavy-handed and urgent.

In an exclusive interview with SCREEN, Sinha talks about artistic integrity, the film's box-office reception and whether it stands as his most purest work to date. Excerpts:

The scene exploring the psyche of the accused's parents is a conversation between Supriya Pathak and Manoj Pahwa. Her line — about building the house brick by brick and protecting her son despite being unhappy in the marriage — was deeply nuanced.

It's the same logic of a good husband in *Thappad*. The idea was that you cannot otherwise 'them', they're one of us. The moment you treat the perpetrators as aliens, you shrug off your own responsibility. So the idea was to see them as one of the families we know. That's where that boy came from. And it's a woman who builds the house brick by brick. After a point, it ceases to matter whether she is in love or not. It becomes a possession, a responsibility. That's the sole anchor she has, the home she has built. And that won't crumble, even if the cost is this high. That was the idea of the scene.

Like always, you've assembled a solid ensemble with Naseeruddin Shah, Seema Pahwa and Supriya Pathak for a few scenes. What's the trick you use to get them to say 'yes'?

Naseer *bhai* was cast before we started shooting but Seema *ji* and Supriya *ji* were cast five days before the scene was to be shot. Gaurav Solanki (screenwriter) is with me on set almost 100 per cent of the days. We keep talking about the scenes coming up, if we want to do something with the dialogue, how the film has been shot so far and whether we need to tweak it. We were working on this scene, and initially we were going to cast somebody else. But we kept tweaking it, and it became denser than we had envisaged.



That's when we asked, 'Who do we get?'

I don't know how, but Supriya *ji*'s face came into my head. I just called her. We were in Delhi and she was in Bombay. She said, 'When do we have to do it?' I said, 'In three days later.' In half an hour, she called back and said, 'Done, I'll be there.' So she came, shot the scene during the day and left that same night. They allow me the audacity to go and ask them to do a scene. And I'm grateful. So there is no trick.

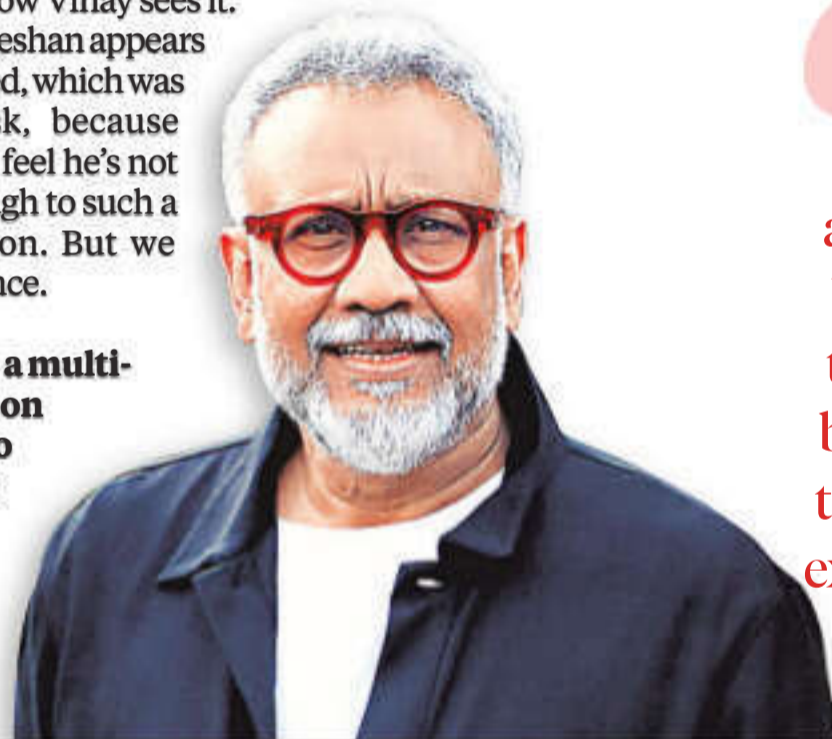
It's refreshing to see a deeply empathetic man like Vinay (Zeeshan Ayyub) on screen, so present and giving as a partner, and responding to the trauma with real maturity.

The chat Zeeshan and I had was that his character has already dealt with the tragedy in his head. The moment when he gets the call saying his wife was found and in the hospital isn't in the film but it has happened. He put the phone down, imagining the worst.

The direction to Zeeshan was: 'What would you do if your wife met with an accident and lost her left leg? But she's still the same person you love, are married to, share a child with and will spend your life with. That's how Vinay sees it.'

That's why Zeeshan appears so unperturbed, which was always a risk, because people might feel he's not reacting enough to such a grave situation. But we took that chance.

The film has a multi-faceted take on rape and also investigates the idea of vigilante justice through



THE BURDEN OF TRUTH
A still from *Assi*; (below) Anubhav Sinha

Kumud Mishra's character, something our films tend to perpetuate.

When we were writing the film, we spoke to a lot of people, casually, in offices, among students. We asked: What should be done with these rapists? And without blinking an eye, people said they should be killed. That's exactly the idea the film does not want to subscribe to. But you can't avoid dealing with it. You need to recognise that this is not a solution. That's why that character was created.

We knew we were treading a difficult path, that people might feel he is an outsider to the story. But we felt we had to include him to confront this instinctive response. So we wrote him carefully, minimally. Also, in our minds, this was not a film about Parima (Kani Kusruti); it was a film about rape. We were trying to present a 360-degree view of the issue.

The film can feel heavy-handed at times, even preachy. Were you concerned about the tonal balance?

I've been accused of that before but you have to understand that I live in India and it's probably the most diverse country, in

When we were writing the film, we spoke to a lot of people, casually, in offices, among students. We asked: What should be done with these rapists? And without blinking an eye, people said they should be killed. That's exactly the idea the film does not want to subscribe to

terms of literacy levels, responses levels and understanding. So from a purist standpoint, it can feel a little heavy-handed. It's difficult for an Indian filmmaker to make a film like this with artistic integrity while also trying to reach a wider audience. That's where these fault lines show up. But at this point in my career, I would rather talk to more people than just the converted. If I were making a film purely for the converted, I wouldn't just remove certain threads from this film to make it more palatable, I would make a fundamentally different film, which I'll make in times to come.

You once popularly spoke about adding 'cheese' to your storytelling to make it more palatable, but this feels like your most uncompromised film.

I think so too. It has the least 'cheese,' so to say (laughs).

This year saw two female-led films on crimes against women, *Mardaani 3* and *Assi*. Both had lukewarm commercial receptions. Though they are different films, do you feel the space for such stories is shrinking?

It's unfair to look at it like that. *Mardaani 3* is a film with Rani Mukerji, who has a legacy of 25-28 years of being loved. And the film itself is more palatable in nature; it has a hero. *Assi* doesn't. And Taapsee doesn't yet have that kind of legacy. But if you look at it from the brighter side, around 10 to 12 lakh people have gone to see the film in theatres. To give you perspective: a packed IPL stadium has about 50,000 people. So we're talking about an audience equivalent to 20 such matches going to watch the film in theatres.

But today, when we talk about box office, you have films like *Dhurandhar*. Ten crore people went to watch it. So the perspective is naturally skewed, and rightfully so. But I think it's time trade analysts, journalists and even audiences start looking at films differently. I was never aiming for Rs 60 crores. I didn't even expect *Article 15* to do Rs 65 crores. That was a surprise. In that sense, it's actually quite calming to know that 12 lakh people came to theatres to watch a film that is so dark and depressing.

In another scene, Vinay tells his son, playing with a toy gun, that it can take lives. In the end, the child witnesses a public shooting. It feels like a powerful bookend.

The popular hero worldwide, in cinema and in life, is often the one who fires the most bullets, the one we stand up and applaud. We admire the guns, the spectacle. When conflicts like the Iran war break out, we start talking about the specifics of ammunition. But we have stopped talking about the dead. So when we choose our heroes, we should also look at what they did and how they did it. That's why Gandhi remains a hero even after 80 years, because even when it seemed completely impractical, he kept speaking about non-violence, and he still became the hero. So I look at heroes differently. And yes, that ending is about the cycle of violence, and hence the vigilante in the film.

The Onscreen Glow-Up

As VFX increasingly becomes indispensable in Indian cinema, experts weigh in on the changing face of filmmaking, navigating budget constraints and finding the real in the unreal



Alia Bhatt in Vasana Bala's *Jigra*

Anas Arif

EARLIER, YOU could almost discount VFX and still have a complete film. But now, it has become a fundamental part of storytelling," says Arpan Gaglani, founder and managing director of one of the industry's prominent VFX and animation studios, philmCGI. They have worked on several major films and series, most recently on both parts of Aditya Dhar's *Dhurandhar* (2025). Explaining the job of a VFX supervisor, he says, "We create elements that aren't visible on set, that don't even exist in the real world. We create them, enabling the director's vision, helping them to build new worlds — from Pandora in *Avatar* (2009), or recreating a specific era like we did in *Jubilee* (2023)."

Even as visual effects have transformed filmmaking over the past few years, budget constraints remain a challenge; the reason why Indian films struggle to match the scale of Western productions. "Low budget is a standard reality in our industry. But what really makes a difference is when we have complete involvement from the beginning. When the VFX supervisor, art director, director and director of photography come together early on, everybody knows what we have to work with," says Anand Bhanushali, founder and managing director at philmCGI. "It then becomes a coordinated effort. For instance, we might decide not to build an entire set physically and instead extend it through VFX," he adds.

Gaglani recalls that an efficient coordination between departments helped them "create an entire 'make-believe' Singapore" for Alia Bhatt-starrer *Jigra*, instead of shooting in the country, which would have cost much more. Gaglani recalls, "We needed a location large enough for cars to move and for us to build sets. We scouted across Mumbai and found a suitable location in Kandivali. That became the base where we could construct the township."

AMERICAN COMPANIES HAVE A STRONG DISCIPLINE IN PLACE, WITH STORYBOARDING & PRE-PRODUCTION. THE GROUNDWORK IS DONE BEFORE THE FILM GOES ON THE FLOOR. IF THAT IS FOLLOWED HERE, WE CAN MAKE THAT KIND OF CINEMA IN INDIA

Large-scale action set pieces, however, come with the risks of being hazardous. Blast intensities, for instance, have to be controlled and timing, direction, positions have to be planned well in advance. "In the *Dhurandhar* trailer, Ranveer Singh walks with a blast behind him. Those are small, controlled real blasts. The idea is not to create the full effect on set, but to capture some basic interaction, like how the light from the blast falls and how it feels visually. Even this is done within strict safety parameters, ensuring there's no risk to anyone."

With growing chatter around VFX, especially amid the rise of AI, both Gaglani and Bhanushali view it as a tool that can streamline workflows, but never replace creativity. Pushing back against the perception that everything today is shot against green or blue screens, Gaglani says, "People who aren't familiar with filmmaking often don't realise that good filmmakers will always prefer to work with real elements wherever possible. It's not just about the director, the actors also benefit from it, as it gives them an authentic experience to perform with. That said, there are sequences that require shooting on a chroma (green screen) floor, simply because what's needed either doesn't exist or isn't feasible."

He adds, "I strongly prefer to retain a majority of real, live-action elements. For example, in *Jubilee*, I avoided anything that was fully CG. My approach is usually to keep around 60-70 per cent live-action and then enhance the rest through VFX."

Addressing the elephant in the room about why, despite significant spending and effort, Indian films often struggle to match the visual scale of Hollywood tentpoles like *Avatar* or the Marvel Studios slate, Gaglani points to process as much as capability. "We often collaborate with American companies, where there's a strong discipline in place, especially when it comes to storyboarding and pre-production. A lot of groundwork is done before the film even goes on floors. If that level of discipline is followed, where the process is structured, thorough and precise, I believe we can make that kind of cinema here as well."

Passing on the feline magic

Resident director Matt Krzan and musical supervisor Peter McCarthy on carrying forward the magic of *Cats*

Alaka Sahani

SINCE IT first opened in London in 1981, Andrew Lloyd Webber's much-loved production *Cats* continues to travel across continents, finding new audiences. Ahead of its Mumbai run, scheduled for June 17 to 28 at the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre (NMACC), resident director Matt Krzan and musical supervisor Peter McCarthy, who are leading the team entrusted with carrying this legacy forward, share that their responsibilities are as much about preservation of the original production as it is about reinvention.

Cats, which is based on the 1939 poetry collection, *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* by TS Eliot, is a sung-through musical, with music by Webber. The story unfolds over one extraordinary night when the Jellicle Cats — a tribe of fictional cats — gather for their annual ball. Under the watchful eye of their wise leader Old Deuteronomy, one cat is chosen to ascend to the Heaviside Layer, which is the feline version of heaven, and be reborn into a new life. Among the tribe are the mischievous Rum Tum Tugger, the conjuring Mr Mistofelees, the scheming Macavity, and Grizabella, the once-glamorous cat who longs for acceptance.

For Krzan, the current production of *Cats* is deeply personal. Over the last two decades, the London-based theatre artiste has per-

formed in 10 different contracts of *Cats* around the world. Krzan, whose first job after he left college 22 years ago was with the production of *Cats*, recalls, "I was originally a swing, which means you cover many parts and go on stage when people are sick or injured. I played Macavity during the Italian tour and Munkustrap at the London Palladium. Then, I became dance captain on the UK and international tour and resident director on the South Korean tour."

Similarly, McCarthy's association with *Cats* started long ago when he worked on the original London production at what was then the New London Theatre. In 2018, it was renamed as the Gillian Lynne Theatre in honour of Lynne, who choreographed *Cats* and many other global hits.

The current responsibility gives Krzan an opportunity to pass on his knowledge and experience to a brand-new cast of *Cats*. "The musical is so popular across generations. The immersive nature of the show and the transportation into a new world is appealing to children. The athleticism of the choreography and the incredible singing throughout the show makes it very popular with all ages. The overall message of the show of acceptance and forgiveness is universal," he says.

As the show's musical supervisor, McCarthy's job is to ensure the highest musical standards and safeguard Webber's score. "We are



SPREADING THEIR WHISKERS
(Clockwise from above) A scene from *Cats*; musical supervisor Peter McCarthy; resident director Matt Krzan



never trying to merely create a carbon copy of what has gone before. Each new cast brings something of themselves to the show, and styles and tastes change over the years. So, as a creative team we are trying to bring out the best in our current cast while honouring what the original creators of the show wanted. Even as the show evolves, we retain its original magic," he says.

Talking about how Krzan has worked with the cast and choreographer, he says, "We worked really hard to teach the cast the entire show. This means teaching the intricate choreography, with every single step having a meaning. We did a lot of work on finding the cat within the performers."

Krzan is fascinated with the show's ability to transport the audience into a different world, to make them believe that the performers are cats. "The Jellicle ball is 14 minutes of pure dance. The opening number of the show, *Jellicle Songs for Jellicle Cats*, is the best opening number in a musical ever and the hardest for an actor to perform."

McCarthy, too, finds *Jellicle Songs for Jellicle Cats*, where the audience is introduced to all the members of the cast, most fascinating. "It's demanding on every possible level — musically, it's difficult to sing with a lot of complicated harmonies. That part, its amazing choreography demands stamina. Yet, the whole thing must also look effortless. When stamina builds and harmonies soar, it's also enormously exciting," McCarthy says.

The biggest challenge with a show that has such a long history and is so loved, believes McCarthy, is to find a way of keeping the new production fresh while still being the show that was created 45 years ago. "While we have an energetic and talented cast, it's a real joy to find that new fresh version of the show," he says.



AGAINST THE CLOCK
A still from *The Devil Wears Prada 2*

The Devil Wears Boundaries

With the release of The Devil Wears Prada 2, a look at how young professionals challenge the culture of overwork, pushing for flexibility and a life beyond the office

Anusree KC

THE WORK culture at *Runway* magazine set up early on in *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006) says everything about a certain kind of work culture. Andy Sachs, fresh-faced and hopelessly underdressed for the magazine, picks up a ringing phone at midnight. Her boyfriend's birthday dinner barely over, she scrambles across Manhattan to retrieve a manuscript from Miranda Priestly's townhouse. She doesn't ask why. She doesn't say no. She just goes.

With *The Devil Wears Prada 2* now in cinemas, the sequel catches up with Andy Sachs 20 years on — no longer the hapless assistant scrambling across Manhattan at midnight but an editor navigating a workplace that has, quietly and completely, changed the rules. As she steps back into *Runway*, she sees the changes first hand, when Miranda is struggling to put her coat in the closet. Andy is surprised and amused. Her own assistant, Jin Chao at one point, in the middle of a crisis, slips out to get something to eat. "What is happening with this generation?" Andy mutters to Nigel Kipling. It gets a laugh. It is also, depending on which side of 30 you are on, either a genuine question or a very obvious answer.

Take for instance, Goa-based Yash Day, 23, a technical executive in design at a manufacturing plant. He was barely three months into this job and he has a before-and-after story. Earlier, he worked as an apprentice at a production company, where he rotated across three factory shifts with barely a Sunday to rest. "Work-life balance was zero," he says. With his previous job, he had lost weight, his hair was falling out, he had acidity because of erratic shifts and meal times. Did he push back? "Who would listen to us? We were just apprentices," says Yash.

Sound familiar? It should. Andy, circa 2006, also had no time to breathe. The difference is that, for a while, she convinced herself it was worth it. Yash did not. He left.

At his current job, the managers themselves are Gen Z. Yash reveals there is no chasing emails after work hours. He adds, "Once you punch out for the day, you just leave. If there's extra work, there's compensatory time off."

Azaan Khan, 22, was an HR trainee in the hospitality industry. He says, "My official hours were 9 am to 6 pm, but most days it stretched till 9 pm." What made it harder was the lack of recognition. "There was no overtime, no extra pay, even when we worked," says Goa-based Azaan. What he says is more nuanced than simple refusal, "Gen Z is willing to work hard and make sacrifices but only if the work is valid and worth it."

Shania Rodrigues, 24, a marketing executive working in the publishing and retail industry in Goa, has been there for eight months and has already developed what she calls a fairly clear philosophy. "Work is replaceable — but your time, energy, and life outside of it are not," she says, "I genuinely believe work should only be one part of life, not the majority of it." Her current work situation is also not ideal by her own standards. Even though it's a 9-6 job, some days end at 9.30 pm without any overtime. There have also been WhatsApp messages from colleagues at 9 pm, well into her personal time, which she considers sacrosanct. She adds, "I've started setting boundaries, by not responding unless it's urgent and waiting until the next workday." What she wants, is not special treatment. It is fairness.

Ajayan*, 22, spent 10 months as a reporter for a digital media in Chennai before taking a step back. He stumbled into the field out of curiosity rather than calling. But what burned him out was not the work in itself but everything surrounding it — arriving in a new city with no support system, to find his own space, friends with a different schedule than his own whom he could only meet once a month. There were no editorial restrictions or hierarchy that he faced at his workplace, none of the Miranda Priestly theatrics. Yet he found himself coming in, on off days, not because he was told to, but because that's what he believed good work required. "I didn't take my breaks when I should have... I was wiped out by the end of three months." He adds that this is more a conditioning and systemic issue. "I think we are conditioned to not see breaks as a necessity... When you get to work, you realise, your breaks are whenever an authority figure decides your break is."

Savio Vaz, 30, a senior project engineer in Hyderabad, in the oil and gas industry who works closely with more than 20 Gen Z colleagues, is on the other end of the desk. "They are generally quicker to log off and prioritise fitness, mental well-being, and social life, which is a positive shift. It reflects a healthier mindset, recognising that personal well-being is just as important as professional commitments," he says. Some of his colleagues don't even have work apps on their personal phones.

He finds this, mostly, refreshing. However, there is only one smaller complication, he admits, "They often question or bypass standard procedures if they find them inefficient. But I do believe as they gain more experience in handling team dynamics and real-world pressures, their impact will only become stronger." It is, as far as assessments go, fair. That's the thing about this shift. It isn't really about Gen Z, not entirely. It's about what offices are being asked to become: places where people work, and then go home. Where "that's all" means the meeting is over and out.

*Name changed on request

Heena Khandelwal

THERE IS a gym where the professional kitchen was first set up when Paris My Love launched from his home in Shivalik, near Panchsheel Park in Delhi, just before the pandemic. This tells you something about Sahil Mehta — the pastry chef you may know from social media, patiently trying to teach you how to pronounce croissant and mille-feuille correctly before we must "celebrate the refinement of French delicacies" and "respect the elegance of language with every syllable".

The owner of one of Delhi's leading patisseries, with clientele ranging from top industrialists to politicians to actors, is equally invested in fitness and dessert, which sounds like a contradiction until you spend an afternoon with him. Four mornings a week of weight training, twice a week of Muay Thai, an hour each session with a personal trainer and five slipped discs from years of heavy training have not slowed him. "If I don't work out," he says, "I get very cranky."

Although he feeds us his signature almond croissants, a silken, mousse-like basque cheesecake, mille-feuille and a pistachio tart, what he decides to cook for himself — and for this piece — is something that's miles away from this dessert spread: 100 grams of steamed rice, 200 grams of marinated chicken breast, with veggies like edamame, snow peas and bell peppers.

"I can't live without sugar," he says, as if confessing. "The only reason I train so intensely is because I need two cups of coffee every day and with that, something sweet — a pastry, a cookie." He follows intermittent fasting, 18 to 20 hours daily, eating within a four- to six-hour window. This is his main meal for the day, day.

Growing up in Delhi

Mehta grew up in Delhi until he was 13, at which point his parents divorced, his mother remarried and moved to Paris. His father stayed. The arrangement was clear: every summer and winter vacation, he came back to visit. And so he grew up between two cities, two kitchens, two entirely different ideas of what eating could mean.

In Delhi, his school canteen sold samosas and also patty burgers. In Paris, lunch had the structure of a seven-course meal — salad, entree, main, cheese, yoghurt, dessert and a break for chocolate or coffee. "It was a big, big change. That's where my liking for food really developed." His mother, a businesswoman, would host regularly — food nights, ghazal nights, folk nights. There was also a steady rhythm of Delhi's Indian diplomatic community gathering and eating in Paris. Mehta would manage the bar, set the tables and, most importantly, observe.

When school ended, he saw a notice about culinary training and signed up. At the back of his mind was Bollywood. He had grown up watching Hindi films and he harboured a quiet dream that there was some acting in him. But he never had the courage to say so. So he joined Santos Dumont, a culinary school in France instead, arriving on the first day in a brown leather jacket, torn jeans, long hair, a stud in his ear. His dean looked at him and was surprised he had gotten through. "I told him that I am going to India to meet my father and he said when you return, make sure that the hair is shorter, the earrings are off and we wear trousers here, not jeans," laughs Mehta.

He became, unexpectedly in his own words, an excellent student. The internships

CHEF AT HOME: SAHIL MEHTA

The Adventure of Being Me

Meet Sahil Mehta, who once dreamed of acting and now helms Paris My Love, in Delhi, with top industrialists, politicians and actors as his clients



PHOTOS: GAJENDRA YADAV

that followed were at Le Bristol, the Ritz, Hotel Baltimore, UNESCO, the Travellers Club at the Champs-Élysées, where members included Jean Paul Gaultier and Dior designers and government ministers. French culinary training in that era, he shares, was unsparing. "Internships were hard. We would be asked to do push-ups for messing up a recipe, not 10 or 15 but till our chest or arms would hurt. Sometimes chefs would literally box us. We would be quizzed, and if we got an answer wrong, a knife might come flying our way or they would kick us with their steel-toe shoes. But I'm glad it happened, that's what made me," he says.

Four years later, in the year 2000, when he graduated, his mother was ready to send him to Cornell or Lausanne for a master's in hospitality. Instead, he told her he wanted to go to Mumbai to be an actor. Her response, delivered before she walked out of the room, was: "If your *nana* were alive, he would have shot you."

A bad French cake that changed his course

He came anyway, on vacation, in 2000. A photographer spotted him in South Extension, offered a photoshoot, and within weeks he had ads for Atlas Cycles, Kama Sutra's capsule range and Femina. "I thought my life was set, I am the next Shah Rukh Khan." He refused to go back when the vacation ended.



MANY HATS, MANY PLACES
Sahil Mehta at home in Delhi where he lays out almond croissants, a mousse-like basque cheesecake, mille-feuille and a pistachio tart

He did an acting course, a Doordarshan series and a Zee TV serial. "Then I started losing my hair, which wasn't quite the trend." He never made it to Mumbai.

Instead, he opened a small takeaway kitchen in GK2 in 2003 called Sahil's Kitchen, which served Indian food, which he admits he knew little about. It did well for a year-and-a-half, then plateaued. He tried exports. Lost money in the recession.

The turn came in 2007. He went to a five-star hotel in Delhi to buy a birthday cake for his then girlfriend; the hotel had just launched a French patisserie. He bought what they called a French cake, but when he tasted it, it was a disappointment. "That moment changed everything. I realised something was missing in the city."

He decided to go back to Paris to study at Lenôtre School of Culinary Arts. His mother was baffled, his stepfather asked him to give them one good reason to support him. Mehta spent three months visiting every bakery in Delhi and then called his mother and stepfather: "You have been diplomats here, over a hundred embassies, where are the croissants? You get a bread roll in the name of a croissant." That argument worked. In 2008, he went back to France and completed a crash master's at Lenôtre, which he describes as the Harvard of bakery schools.

He returned, found French investors wanting to open a tiffin, and redirected them toward a bakery. "That became



RECIPE FOR SAHIL MEHTA'S HEALTHY LUNCH

Ingredients: 200 g chicken breast; Greek yogurt - 30 g; Tikka masala - ½ tsp; garlic - 4 cloves; ginger - a quarter of an inch; edamame - 50 g; red and yellow bell peppers - 100 g; snow peas - 50 g; steamed rice - 100 g; butter; black pepper to taste

METHOD

MARINATE the chicken with Greek yogurt, tikka masala, and finely chopped ginger-garlic paste. Let it rest overnight.

THE NEXT day, cook the chicken in a pan in about 15 g butter with garlic and black pepper for 8-10 minutes, until fully cooked.

AT THE same time, grease another pan with butter, add one clove of finely chopped garlic and sauté the edamame, snow peas, and bell peppers for 2-3 minutes, keeping them slightly crunchy.

FINALLY, MIX the rice with the cooked chicken and vegetables.

L'Opéra. I joined as project manager, was promoted, and left after almost two years." A partnership followed, then solo consulting — the Oberoi, The Imperial, the Hyatt, Bikarnavala, Hot Breads & More. Dessert tables for the Ambanis, the Bachchans, the Reddys, Nagarjuna. "We would create full displays — macaron tarts, sculpted breads, hot chocolate stations. Very French. Very new for India in 2010-11."

In 2019, his wife Surbhi Mehta suggested turning a spare room into a bakery. He agreed, on one condition — the best equipment, the best ingredients. Then COVID hit. The team went home. He slipped into routine until his mother nudged him back. "We started small — croissants, quiches, cookies, cakes under Paris My Love, which we had already registered. Word of mouth spread." Soon, they moved into a 2,200 sq ft facility in Saidulajab, Saket.

It's about 2 pm at his home in Shivalik, near Panchsheel Park, and Mehta needs to finish eating his food in the four-hour window. Back in the kitchen, he measures everything. Fifteen grams of butter, precisely. The chicken, marinated overnight in Greek yoghurt, tikka masala, and ginger-garlic, is cooked for 10 minutes. In another pan, very little butter, one clove of garlic, the vegetables sautéed and kept deliberately crunchy. The rice goes in last.

He eats in the living room, surrounded by antique paintings and sculpture his mother has collected over years. The conversation turns to quality — French essence, Valrhona chocolate, Mahabaleshwar strawberries, vanilla beans from Madagascar, Irani pistachio, etc.

He pours his second coffee. A few minutes later, cuts himself a slice of basque cheesecake. A smile crosses his face. It is for this, perhaps, that he trains so hard: so that the croissant or the slice of cake, when it comes, is entirely earned.

Carrying Home Across Continents

Five contemporary artists take the idea of home to the Venice Biennale, translating India's history through material and mythology

Vandana Kalra

INSIDE A medieval warehouse at the historic Arsenal — located along the Venetian lagoon — one of the walls holds an oval form of earth and resin with cracked surfaces that appear fragile and primordial. The fissured terrain emerges from artist Alwar Balasubramaniam's lived environment, away from the urban bustle, in Tamil Nadu's Tirunelveli. The intricate patterns themselves are the result of an intensive process that evolved over four-five months under his vigilance and reflects his preoccupation with the relationship between man and nature. At the Arsenal, it also appears to establish a dialogue between the historic warehouse, elemental materiality and the notion of home as it represents India at its National Pavilion for the 61st edition of the Venice Biennale, which opens on May 9.

Presented by the Ministry of Culture and curated by Amin Jaffer, curator and director of Al Thani Collection, the pavilion marks India's third official participation in the over 130-year biennale history, and its first since 2019. It brings together five contemporary artists from across the country, working with diverse mediums and artistic approaches, all uniting under Jaffer's evocative theme, "Geographies of Distance: Remembering Home" that ponders the very idea of home. "The pavilion explores home not as a fixed physical location but as an emotional space carried within the self, a repository of culture, personal mythology and emotion. Using materials associated closely with Indian civilisation, the chosen artists create a singular meditation on the fragile nature of home, which is both personal and universal, quiet and resolute," states Jaffer. He notes how the project also responds to the biennale's larger theme this year, "In Minor Keys" conceived by the late



ALWAR BALASUBRAMANIAM AND TALWAR GALLERY, NEW YORK | NEW DELHI

curator Koyo Kouoh.

So if Balasubramaniam has worked with natural elements for his two works, *Drift* and *Not Just For Us*, artist Asim Waqif has used bamboo, a material he has engaged with for over three decades. Winner of the National Award at Lalit Kala Akademi's 64th National Exhibition, Skarma Sonam Tashi will be presenting an installation that is informed by the landscape and cultural ecology of Ladakh, and uses materials such as clay, cardboard and papier-mâché to reflect on themes of fragility, impermanence and transformation in contemporary times.

In Sumakshi Singh's installation, she takes forward her earlier work *33 Link Road*, where she had recreated her grandparents' now demolished Delhi home in delicate thread and embroidery that gave the structure fluidity often not associated with rigid concrete structures. Deeply embedded within Indian civilisational history, the materiality also moves beyond the personal into the historical, intertwining memory,

BEYOND THE FOUR WALLS

Works by (above left) Alwar Balasubramaniam; Ranjani Shettar at the Venice Biennale that opens on May 9



RANJANI SHETTAR AND TALWAR GALLERY, NEW YORK | NEW DELHI

architecture and cultural inheritance. Balasubramaniam notes how the very idea of home expands through his works. "The earth from my studio represents a direct contact with me, but it has potential to make viewers to see and reflect or remember their home," he states.

Ranjani Shettar's work, titled *Under the Same Sky*, develops from her long engagement with natural materials and organic forms. Referencing varied topographies, the dense installation in handwoven cotton fabric, lacquer and steel is composed of more than 50 suspended elements that respond not only to shifting light and shadow, but also the movement of viewers who can walk through the immersive environment. "There is a visual harmony. It's like a piece of music where the eyes can trace the ups and downs," says Shettar, describing how the final composition has evolved through improvisation and subtle adjustments. Home, she adds, is also a state of mind, where one feels a sense of belonging and ease.

AT VENICE, BEYOND THE INDIA PAVILION

THE CENTRAL exhibition "In Minor Keys" includes works by Sohrab Hura and artist duo Hylzoic/Desires (Himali Singh Soian and David Soian Tappeser).

KNMA will present Nalini Malani's "Of Woman Born" at Magazzini del Sale. The 67-channel animation and soundscape will transform the venue into a constantly shifting "thought chamber" on women, myth and global conflict.

ARCHIVIO DI STATO is showing Dayanita Singh's "Archivio". Curated by Andrea Anastasio, the exhibition is a tribute to both the Italian archives she has photographed over the past decade and her own archive of images made in Italy over the last 25 years.

PINAULT COLLECTION is presenting Amar Kanwar's "Co-Travellers" at Palazzo Grassi. Curated by Palazzo Grassi, it features two key multimedia installations: *The Torn First Pages* and *The Peacock's Graveyard*.

PARESH MAITY will be exhibiting his sculpture *Equilibrium* at Marinaressa Gardens. Presented by Art Alive Gallery, the geometric brass structure embodies both strength and refinement.

POOJA SINGHAL, founder of atelier Pichvai Tradition & Beyond, will present "From India, to Venice" at Palazzo Barbato. The exhibition will include temple maps and works that draw from Venetian painter Giovanni Antonio Canal.