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## Suwendu aide killing: fake numbers used for vehicles

**Shrabana Chatterjee**  
KOLKATA

Vehicles with fake number plates were used to target and kill Chandranath Rath, personal assistant to Suwendu Adhikari, the outgoing Leader of the Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, late on Wednesday night, according to the West Bengal police. A Special Investigation Team has been formed to probe the attack, and forensic experts have visited the scene of the crime in North 24 Parganas district. Alleging that Rath was killed in a targeted attack by hired assassins who had receded the location for a week before carrying out the murder, Mr. Adhikari, who visited the aide's family on Thursday, called for the death penalty for the killers.

**FULL REPORT ON**  
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## Cong. high command to choose Kerala CM



AICC observers Ajay Maken and Mukul Wasnik arrive for the meeting with Congress MLAs-elect in Thiruvananthapuram on Thursday. PTI

**S.R. Praveen**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

MLAs-elect of the Congress in Kerala, who met in Thiruvananthapuram on Thursday, passed a resolution authorising the party high command to choose the next Chief Minister, even as the three leaders in contention were involved in hectic parleys to shore up support.

While All India Congress Committee (AICC) observers Mukul Wasnik and Ajay Maken, and the party's Kerala in-charge Deepa

Dasmunsi, held one-on-one meetings with the 63 MLAs-elect, a majority of the United Democratic Front (UDF) allies are understood to be favouring outgoing Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan.

The report of the meetings will be handed over to the high command and a decision will be arrived at soon, the observers told media after the meeting.

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**PINARAYI'S PROMISE**  
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## DMK explores backing rival AIADMK in hung T.N. House

Left parties and Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi hold the key in government formation; Governor tells Vijay that his TVK, the single largest party with 107 MLAs-elect, has not established a majority

**B. Kolappan**  
CHENNAI

The post-election political climate in Tamil Nadu turned upside down on Thursday after the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) leadership began toying with the idea of extending outside support to its arch-rival, the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) – a prospect unthinkable even a few days ago.

Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar invited Tamilaga Vetti Kazhagam (TVK) president C. Joseph Vijay on Thursday and "explained that the requisite majority support in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, essential for forming the government, has not been established", the Lok Bhavan said.



Outgoing Tamil Nadu CM M.K. Stalin (third from right) at a meet of the DMK's MLAs-elect in Chennai on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A meeting of the MLAs-elect of the DMK here empowered party president and outgoing Chief Minister M.K. Stalin to take an appropriate decision in light of the fractured electoral verdict, which failed to give any single party a majority.

"As the State is not ready for another election, our objective is to ensure a

stable government. At the same time, we are under compulsion to prevent communal forces that could disturb Dravidian ideals from gaining a foothold," a resolution adopted at the meeting said.

While Mr. Vijay and senior party leaders have reached out to the DMK's allies – the Communist Party of India, the Commu-

## Priority for formation of a stable govt.

**NEW DELHI**  
The Tamil Nadu Governor's insistence that the TVK must prove majority is based on the principle that a Governor's priority is formation of a stable government, lest there is a breakdown of constitutional machinery. » PAGE 15

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## IN BRIEF



## 'You fought well': Akhilesh calls on Mamata Banerjee

**KOLKATA**  
Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav called on Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee at her Kallighat residence in Kolkata on Thursday. "You fought very well," he told the former Chief Minister. » Page 15

## Govt. considers barrage revamp to tackle froth

**NEW DELHI**  
The Delhi government is considering a revamp of the Kalindi Kunj barrage to minimise froth in the Yamuna river, the office of Water Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh said on Thursday. » Page 2

## Push for count



Advertisements for Census 2027 displayed on vans in New Delhi on Thursday. More than 92 lakh households across 23 States and Union Territories have used the self-enumeration facility during the ongoing first phase of the exercise so far, officials said on Thursday. ANI

## BJP, AAP trade charges over twin blasts in Punjab

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHANDIGARH

The Opposition BJP on Thursday sought action against Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann over "baseless" statements regarding Tuesday's twin blasts, even as the Aam Aadmi Party doubled down on its allegation that the attacks were part of the BJP's plan to win next year's Assembly poll.

On Tuesday, two low-intensity explosions were reported from Amritsar and Jalandhar.

**DETAILS ON**  
» PAGE 3

## HC upholds acquittal of 10 accused in Naxal attack that left 76 security personnel dead

**Shubhomoy Sikdar**  
RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh High Court has upheld the acquittal of the 10 accused in the 2010 Tadmetla encounter – the deadliest attack by Naxals on security forces in which 76 security personnel lost their lives – even as it noted that the investigation in the case "appeared flawed".

On April 6, 2010, a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) contingent from the 62nd Battalion returning from an area domination operation in the forests of Chintalnar was attacked by Maoists in the Tadmetla region of Sukma district. They opened indiscriminate fire and triggered explosives, killing 75 CRPF personnel and a policeman, and looting wea-

**The court dismissed govt's appeal against acquittal order due to the lack of direct evidence and lapses in probe, among other reasons**

pons of those slain. Of the 10 accused, two have died.

### May 5 order

In its order on May 5, the court said it was dismissing the government's acquittal appeal against a trial court order due to a lack of direct evidence, incomplete circumstantial proof, procedural lapses in investigation, and failure to establish guilt beyond reasonable doubt, despite the gravity of the offence.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Ramesh Sinha

and Justice Ravindra Kumar Agrawal said it was "distressed" to observe that a case of such a serious magnitude, involving mass casualties and grave consequences to national security, had ultimately been dealt with in a manner where "no legally admissible and reliable evidence" could be produced against the accused persons.

"The prosecuting agencies have not been able to establish the identity of the real perpetrators of the crime or bring them to justice for such a barbaric act," remarked the court.

The accused were charged under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code, the Arms Act and the Explosive Substances Act. However, the trial court acquitted the ac-

cused in 2013 after finding insufficient evidence, prompting the State to challenge the verdict before the High Court in 2014.

Upholding the acquittal, the High Court highlighted critical lapses in the investigation. It noted that none of the 43 witnesses identified the accused as the perpetrators and that no test identification parade was conducted to link the accused to the crime scene.

Although the police claimed to have recovered tiffin bombs and grenades, no forensic science laboratory report was produced to certify the materials as explosives.

The government also failed to place on record the mandatory prosecution sanction, noted the two-judge Bench.

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L-G calls for innovation to address rapid urbanisation

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) Taranjit Singh Sandhu on Thursday said the challenge of rapid urbanisation of cities needs to be addressed with commitment and requires technical competence, innovation and ethical clarity.

He was speaking at an event organised by the Delhi Development Authority for its newly appointed officers and staff. "We are living in an era of profound transformation. This occasion is not merely about administrative appointments, it represents a broader shift in governance across our nation," the L-G said.

Congratulating the new appointees, he said, "You are not only joining a public organisation but also becoming custodians for the development and future of the national capital." He said Delhi holds a unique position where the expectations from the governance system are high and diverse. "Therefore, your role extends beyond individual assignments and becomes part of a larger framework of urban and national transformation," Mr. Sandhu said.

# Govt. plans to redesign Kalindi Kunj barrage to tackle Yamuna froth

Plans afoot to relocate dhobi ghats, stricter enforcement of norms at dyeing units to reduce pollution; govt. also mulling to build a new Chhath Ghat near the barrage at an estimated cost of ₹100 crore

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government is looking at a possible revamp of the Kalindi Kunj barrage slope to solve the problem of froth in Yamuna river in the area, Water Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh's office said on Thursday.

The Minister recently visited the barrage along with experts from Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee and officials of the Delhi Jal Board (DJB).

The Minister said the slope at the barrage is one of the major reasons for the froth formation and a study will be carried out by IIT Roorkee to find a solution to this and whether the slope can be redesigned to reduce its height.

The government also plans to relocate the dhobi ghats in the area and stricter enforcement of norms at dyeing units in the area to reduce the pollution load in the river.



People walking along the polluted Yamuna. For the past many years, DJB workers on boats spray de-foaming agent on the froth floating on the river to suppress it. FILE PHOTO

Every year during Chhath Puja, the pollution of the river returns to the headlines with national and international media publishing images of devotees standing in the pollut-

ed river covered with toxic froth at Kalindi Kunj.

For the past many years, DJB workers on boats spray de-foaming agent on the froth floating on the river to suppress it.

Froth is formed mainly due of the presence of surfactants such as phosphates in the effluents flowing into the river and when the surfactant-contaminated water falls from the barrage, it produces froth, the Minister's office said.

The Delhi government also plans to build a new Chhath Ghat near the barrage at an estimated cost of ₹100 crore, as per the Minister's office.

## ₹7,000-cr. fund

Delhi, meanwhile, is also expected to receive Central funds to the tune of ₹7,000 crore in the current fiscal for works in priority areas, including road and infrastructure development, and Yamuna cleaning, officials said. Proposals worth ₹1,000 crore - especially for Public Works Department and DJB projects - have been sent for the Centre's approval, they said.

(With inputs from PTI)

# Waiting for pay, Noida workers unsure of promised wage hike

Shrimansi Kaushik  
NEW DELHI

Waiting for their salaries amid heavy police deployment across Noida on Thursday, workers at a Motherson Group facility, which was at the centre of the labour unrest in mid-April, appeared unsure about the promised hike.

Following the unrest over wage demands, with protests turning violent on April 13, the Uttar Pradesh government had announced a hike in minimum wages for unskilled workers by as much as 21%, effective from April 1. Those in municipalities will receive a 15% raise while workers in other areas will see a 9% increase.

On Thursday, when companies such as Motherson were expected to disburse salaries, workers said they neither received their payslips nor saw the revised wages credited to their accounts till evening.

They said delay in salary payments by over a week was a common practice, with most companies, including Motherson, beginning disbursements only after the 7th of every month. Following the protests, the State had mandated that salaries must be paid by the 10th of every month, along with overtime wages calcu-



Police personnel standing guard outside a Motherson facility in Noida. FILE PHOTO

lated on an hourly basis at double rates.

The company did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Kavita (name changed), a contractual worker employed at Motherson for the past eight years, said she was yet to get her payslip. "Nor was my salary credited to my bank account," she said. A migrant from Bihar, she is the sole breadwinner in her family.

## Working conditions

"While the HR person has assured us that we will be paid the revised wages, workers are not convinced," she added.

Unskilled workers in Uttar Pradesh have been earning a minimum of ₹11,313 per month. As per the revised rates, for those employed in Noida (Gautam Buddha Nagar) and Ghaziabad, the amount is now ₹13,690.

According to the Motherson worker, very little has changed since the protests in terms of working conditions. "While a stiff competition tests our abilities and decides whether we receive incentives or promotions, copies of payslips are not given to us. We can only view them at the company office. We were also promised a remuneration of ₹1,500 for full attendance but were never paid," she said.

Several others said there was no documentary evidence guaranteeing most of these promises. They were also told they would be allowed to work overtime on an hourly basis. But workers said currently they could either opt for a full 8-hour shift with overtime provisions or no overtime at all.

Sunil (name changed), who was recruited last month, said, "The company claimed to provide double payment for overtime. However, it is unclear whether they will actually comply with it."

Vibhuti (name changed), a recent recruit, said he had not been given any joining letter mentioning his salary or any document proving his employment. "I was told I'll get ₹20,000, but after deductions under various heads, I will get only ₹16,000," he said.

# Residents of Yamuna Bazar get eviction notices; DDMA cites 'potential disaster risk'

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Residents of as many as 310 dwelling units of the Yamuna Bazar residential cluster along the floodplains were on Thursday asked to vacate the area within 15 days by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA).

Issuing eviction notices, the DDMA termed the residential cluster an "illegal encroachment", which

gets inundated during Yamuna floods every year, posing a "serious threat to loss of human lives, cattle and property". The residents have been directed to vacate the encroached land, remove their belongings and any structure, immediately or within 15 days from the date of issuance of the notice.

"Failure to comply with this order shall invite action, including demolition of unauthorised structures

and eviction to be carried out by the authorities concerned without further notice," it read.

The order noted that the cluster existing within the wall along the Yamuna in the O-zone constitutes "potential disaster risk". Recurring flooding necessitates emergency response, including temporary relocation and rehabilitation, "resulting in strain on public resources and public exchequer", read the order.



A resident showing a copy of the eviction notice at Yamuna Bazar on Thursday. PTI

# ₹806-cr. medical college, hostel complex project approved to boost health care: CM

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said on Thursday that a modern medical college and a hostel complex will be built in Dwarka at an estimated cost of ₹805.99 crore to strengthen health care services and address the increasing demand for doctors in the Capital.

Ms. Gupta said the state-of-the-art medical college and hostel facilities will be



CM Rekha Gupta inaugurating the renovated Nehru Place post office on Thursday. ANI

developed in accordance with National Medical Commission standards

and are targeted for completion by 2028. "This medical college will be a major step towards strengthening health care services and medical education in Delhi," she said.

In the initial phase, the college will admit 150 students, which will later be expanded to 250 MBBS seats, she said, adding that separate hostels for male and female students, faculty housing and a modern academic block will also be

built as part of the project. Calling the project a long-term investment in Delhi's health care future, Ms. Gupta said the government plans to turn the Capital into a "hub of medical education".

Separately, Ms. Gupta and Union Minister for Communications and Development of Northeastern Region Jyotiraditya Scindia inaugurated the renovated 'Jan Seva Connect' Nehru Place post office.



# TRAFFIC ADVISORY

## IPL T20 CRICKET MATCH

### DELHI CAPITALS VS KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS

on 08-05-2026

7:00PM TO 11:30PM




**ARUN JAITLEY STADIUM, FERROZ SHAH KOTLA GROUND, NEW DELHI**



**LEGEND**

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

★ USE METRO OR PUBLIC TRANSPORT TO REACH THE STADIUM

**Nearest Metro Station:**  
Delhi Gate, (Gate No. 4 & 5) ITO (Gate No. 3, 4 & 5)

**DIVERSION / RESTRICTION ON NEED BASIS**

On need basis, there will be traffic diversions / restrictions on Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg and JLN Marg on 08.05.2026 from 05:00 PM to 01:00 AM. No heavy or commercial vehicles will be allowed on the roads from (1) Daryaganj to Delhi Gate Chowk on BSZ Marg (2) Delhi Gate Chowk towards Guru Nanak Chowk on JLN Marg and (3) ITO to Delhi Gate Chowk on BSZ Marg. Commuters are requested to avoid the following roads from 05:00 PM to 01:00 AM on the day of match when the spectators would be coming to the stadium and congestion is expected:

- J.L.N. Marg from Rajghat to Delhi Gate up to R/A Kamla Market (Both Carriageways)
- Asaf Ali Road from Turkman Gate to Delhi Gate
- BSZ Marg from Delhi Gate to Ramcharan Aggarwal Chowk / ITO Chowk (Both Carriageways)

**ENTRY TO THE STADIUM**

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

**FREE PARK & RIDE**

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

**PARKING**

**Labelled Vehicles**

Limited parking is available for labelled vehicles in the proximity of the Stadium. Display of car parking label on windscreen is mandatory. Vehicle number must be written on the parking label. Those who do not display parking label with vehicle number will not be allowed in the proximity of the stadium.

Car parking label holders are advised to take Ring Road, J.L.N. Marg, Asaf Ali Road or Bahadurshah Zafar Marg. 'U' turn at Delhi Gate is allowed. Entry to parking lots P1, P2, P3, VIP and VVIP shall be from Bahadurshah Zafar Marg only from near the Vikram Nagar Cut, Shaheed Park.

**General Vehicles**

No vehicle shall be allowed to be parked on Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, Jawaharalal Nehru Marg & Ring Road from Rajghat to I.P. Flyover (both the carriageways) on the match day. Vehicles parked on these roads shall be towed away and prosecuted as per law.

All the spectators coming in their vehicles shall reach these Park & Ride sites, and avail 'Park & Ride' facility or walk down to reach stadium.

**RIDE METRO/FREE SHUTTLE BUS FOR HASSLE FREE JOURNEY**

**Free Shuttle bus service provided by DELHI CAPITALS**

**Free Parking : 1. Mata Sundari Road 2. Rajghat Power House Road 3. Velodrome Road 4. Service Road of Rajghat & Shantivan Both Sides**

**SECURITY INSTRUCTIONS:** Spectators visiting the stadium are requested not to bring the following prohibited items:



**24 Hours Traffic Helpline: 011-25844444 / 1095**

**BUS** All Buses will Start Their Services 2 Hours Before The Start of The Match And Will Continue Till 12:30 AM

**TAXI** Spectators using app based taxi and other taxis should use the service lane on Ring Road between I.P. Flyover & Rajghat crossing for drop & pickup.

# Counterfeit medicines worth ₹6 cr. seized; 4 held for running racket

Ashna Butani  
NEW DELHI

Drugs worth ₹6 crore have been seized and four persons were taken into custody for running an inter-State racket involved in the sale of counterfeit medicines, including life-saving drugs, in north Delhi's Mukherjee Nagar, the police said on Thursday.

The accused allegedly procured medicines from government hospitals in Uttar Pradesh, repackaged them and even illegally manufactured some drugs before supplying them across Delhi-NCR, parts of the Northeast, and Myanmar, they said. Delhi Police's Crime Branch constituted a team following a tip-off and the arrests were made between April 23-29, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Pankaj Kumar Singh said.

The officer said an investigation is under way to ascertain where the raw materials used for packaging and sealing were procured from, who the counterfeit medicines were sold to, and whether more people were involved in the network. Mr. Singh said some medicines, including anti-rabies vaccines and anti-venom drugs, require strict temperature-con-



The repackaging unit in Mukherjee Nagar. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

trolled storage. By the time these drugs reached consumers, the cold chain would have been broken, making them expired and dangerous. These medicines were being sold to medical stores and appeared no different from genuine drugs, the officer said.

The counterfeit medicines seized from the manufacturing and repackaging unit included drugs used for the treatment of asthma, allergies, urinary tract infections, respiratory infections, snakebite poisoning, rabies, and liver and kidney cancers, among others. Investigation revealed that kingpin Manoj Kumar Jain, 56, procured medicines meant exclusively for government hospitals and dispensaries with the help of associates.

### Constable lynched over molestation allegation

**Satyasundar Barik**  
BHUBANESWAR

A Government Railway Police (GRP) constable was lynched by a mob in Balia on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar on Thursday after he and another youth were accused of molesting two women.

According to the police, two women were riding on a scooter near Bingsharpur under the Balia police limits when two youths on a motorcycle overtook them, causing them to fall. The youths then allegedly tried to molest the women.

Locals and passers-by rushed to the spot and intervened. Tension escalated after the accused allegedly denied the allegations and argued with the crowd. One of them, identified as Soumya Ranjan Swain, a constable attached with the GRP in Cuttack, was tied up and assaulted by the mob.

Police personnel rushed to the spot after receiving an alert, but the situation had already spiralled out of control. The constable was taken to Capital Hospital, where doctors declared him dead on arrival.

# Twin blasts: Jakhar accuses CM of 'sedition'; BJP plotting unrest: AAP

Sunil Jakhar-led BJP delegation meets DGP, seeks probe into Mann's remarks on explosions, accuses CM of giving 'clean chit' to Pakistan; Sanjay Singh claims attacks were part of BJP's 'Mission Punjab' to 'spread hatred' ahead of 2027 election

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHANDIGARH

The Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Thursday sought action against Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann over "baseless" statements regarding Tuesday's twin blasts, even as the ruling AAP doubled down on its allegation that the attacks were part of the BJP's plan to win next year's Assembly election.

On Tuesday, two low-intensity explosions were reported within a span of a few hours near military areas in Amritsar and Jalandhar. While Mr. Mann claimed the BJP was behind the "small blasts", Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav attributed the explosions to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

**'Investigate conspiracy'**  
On Thursday, a BJP delegation, led by State unit chief Sunil Jakhar, visited the police chief's office to press for a probe into the



**Crime scene:** Low-intensity explosions were reported near military areas in Amritsar and Jalandhar on May 5. PTI

"conspiracy" behind the CM's allegation. The Opposition party leaders told the police to arrest them if evidence emerges of their involvement. Otherwise, action should be initiated against Mr. Mann and AAP leaders for levelling baseless allegations.

Mr. Jakhar said the CM's statement was not only dangerous for communal

harmony but also "seditious." "Whenever India raises the issue of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism at international forums, Pakistan could now use the Chief Minister's video statement in its defence."

He added, "The Chief Minister's remarks have damaged India's image internationally. While Punjab's DGP claims Pakistan's

ISI is behind the blasts, the Chief Minister is effectively giving Pakistan a clean chit, and therefore, a sedition case should be registered against him."

The Punjab BJP president said the ruling party's intention is to incite communal tension in the State for political gain. "The fact that multiple AAP leaders are making similar statements proves this is part of a choreographed and coordinated strategy by the party leadership to sow hatred in Punjab," he said.

Mr. Jakhar said they would press for a National Investigation Agency (NIA) probe into the CM's statements, adding that the BJP will employ all democratic means to preserve communal harmony.

**'Anti-Punjab mindset'**

In response, the CM said the BJP's "anti-Punjab" mindset had been "exposed repeatedly". Addressing a gathering at Raiya in Amritsar, he said, "The BJP thrives on hatred and divisive politics."

Senior AAP leader and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh said the twin explosions were part of the BJP's strategy for the 2027 election under "Mission Punjab".

**2017 'precedent'**

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters in Delhi, Mr. Singh said, "Ahead of the 2017 Punjab election, when the Akali Dal-BJP alliance was in power, a similar blast occurred in Maur, and to date, no clarity has emerged regarding that incident."

He said right after the West Bengal election, the BJP announced that Punjab was next on its agenda. "The BJP wants to carry out blasts, disturb peace, spread hatred, and incite conflict in the State," he alleged.

Mr. Singh said Punjab would not tolerate attempts to disturb peace and that voters would give the BJP a fitting response, ensuring the forfeiture of BJP candidates' deposits next year.

### Adityanath flags off Census 2027 in U.P., urges participation

**The Hindu Bureau**  
LUCKNOW



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday flagged off the first phase of Census 2027 under the theme 'Hamari Janaganana, Hamara Vikas', formally beginning the House Listing and Housing Operations at a programme held at his official residence in Lucknow.

The first phase, which ends on May 21, will allow citizens to self-enumerate online before enumerators begin door-to-door verification.

**Strong foundation**

Mr. Adityanath said the census was "not merely a count of population, but a strong foundation for holistic, inclusive and well-planned development".

He said accurate census data would help improve the implementation of welfare schemes related to infrastructure, education, health care and social security, among other sectors. He added that forest villages would also be covered in the Census for the first time.

CM Yogi Adityanath said forest villages would also be covered in the Census for the first time.

**Drive across 18 divisions**

The first phase of the Census will be conducted across Uttar Pradesh's 18 divisions, 75 districts, 350 tehsils, 17 municipal corporations, 745 urban local bodies, 21 cantonment boards, 57,694 gram panchayats and nearly 1.04 lakh villages.

He urged residents to participate actively, describing the Census as a national responsibility.

### Cong. protests as police give 'clean chit' to rape accused

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Congress workers on Thursday staged protests across Uttarakhand over the alleged gang rape of a 16-year-old Class 10 student

in Champawat after the police said there was a conspiracy to frame those named in the case.

The Congress accused the BJP government of failing to ensure women's safety and alleged links between

the accused and the ruling party. In Dehradun, Congress spokesperson Garima Dasauni led the protest at Yamuna Colony.

The Opposition party cited earlier cases involving BJP functionaries. However,

the ruling party couldn't be reached for a comment.

Earlier in the day, Champawat Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Rekha Yadav held a press conference and said that a probe by the Special Investigation

Team found evidence of a conspiracy to frame those named as suspects in the case. "The medical examination found no clear external or internal injuries, signs of struggle or evidence of force," she said.

### 13 children rescued from bonded labour

**Press Trust of India**  
KABIRDHAM

Thirteen children from the Baiga community, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group, were rescued from bonded labour in Chhattis-

garh's Kabirdham district on Wednesday. The police have arrested eight persons in the case. The children, aged between eight and 15 years, were allegedly forced to graze cattle and tend to livestock for

months without wages. Their parents were paid ₹1,000-2,000 a month.

A case has been registered under sections related to trafficking, bonded labour, child labour and the Juvenile Justice Act.

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## IN BRIEF



## Gehlot questions CM's 'silence' over Kota hospital deaths

Congress leader and ex-Chief Minister of Rajasthan Ashok Gehlot on Thursday criticised the BJP government over the deaths of two women within 48 hours after Caesarean deliveries at New Medical College and Hospital, terming the deaths "unpardonable". In a post on X, Mr. Gehlot questioned the "complete silence" of Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma and asked the government to punish those responsible for medical negligence. Around 12-13 pregnant women underwent C-section surgeries at the government hospital on May 4. But after 8-12 hours of the surgery, the condition of six women deteriorated, and they were referred to the nephrology department on the same day. PTI

## Rajasthan boat capsizes: body retrieved, search on for minor

The body of a 21-year-old man was recovered on Thursday, who went missing along with a minor after a boat capsized in the Mahi river in Rajasthan's Banswara, police said. The incident took place on Tuesday near Bhainsau village when the boat, carrying 10 to 11 people, overturned nearly 200 metres from the riverbank, they said. Eight to nine men managed to swim back to safety, while Jayesh and Manav went missing. SHO Vinod Meena said, "Jayesh's body has been recovered, while efforts are on to find eight-year-old Manav." The SDRF team recovered the body from the riverbed, the SHO said. PTI

## Linguistic groups to protest until Hindi exam rule for govt. employees scrapped

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit  
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government's decision on Wednesday to put on hold a Hindi exam for its employees has temporarily avoided another flashpoint, but linguistic groups said a day later that they will persist till the rule made 50 years ago regarding the conduct of such exams is scrapped.

As per a government notification issued last month, a Hindi exam was announced to be held on June 28 for the government's gazetted officers and non-gazetted employees. The notification asked the candidates to submit applications by May 20. "We have suspended the exam till further decision. We will review the rule made in 1976 about

## The Maharashtra govt. on Wednesday put on hold the Hindi exam for its employees in view of the protests

this Hindi exam under the three-language policy. The situation has changed in the last 50 years. Officers and employees give different exams. We will see if the rule is still relevant or not," Maharashtra Minister Uday Samant told *The Hindu* on Thursday.

Under this rule, all gazetted officers and non-gazetted employees who did not study Hindi till Grade 10 have to compulsorily appear for a Hindi exam within three years of joining service. If they fail to do so, their salary increments are withheld. "In a State like Maharashtra, what is the

## DMK's allies urge Governor to invite Vijay to form govt.

Enough time should be given to the leader of the single-largest party, TVK, to prove its majority; Arlekar should respect the Constitution and act accordingly, says CPI leader M. Veerapandian

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

Several allies of the DMK on Thursday said Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar should invite Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) president C. Joseph Vijay to form the government, as his party has emerged as the single-largest in the recent Assembly election.

In a statement, CPI State secretary M. Veerapandian said since there was no majority for any single party or alliance, and the TVK had emerged as the single-largest party by winning 108 seats, Mr. Vijay had met the Governor, staking claim to form a government. "It was unfair to ask him to prove his majority immediately," he said, adding that Mr. Vijay should be given adequate time to do so on the floor of the House.

Mr. Veerapandian also said the Supreme Court had, in *S.R. Bommai vs Union of India* and many other cases, said enough time should be given to the leader of the single-largest party to prove its majority. The Governor should respect the Constitution and



In one voice: CPI State secretary M. Veerapandian, VCK president Thol. Thirumavalavan; and MNM chief Kamal Haasan

act accordingly, he added.

P. Shanmugam, State secretary of the CPI(M), said the Governor should invite Mr. Vijay to form the government, as no other political party had staked a claim. In a statement, he said the people of Tamil Nadu had not granted a majority to any alliance in the election, but had elected the TVK as the single-largest party. "Mr. Vijay alone has staked a claim to form the government. But the BJP is using the Governor and taking a stand against the Constitution," he alleged.

Meanwhile, MDMK general secretary Vaiko said DMK president M.K. Stalin's stand that the DMK would not block the TVK from forming the government was "most excellent, laudable and timely, and demonstrates his

statesmanship".

MNM president Kamal Haasan said the verdict was unprecedented. "My brother, Mr. Stalin, has said that we will function as a responsible Opposition. I respect his political maturity. Now, those holding constitutional responsibility must also fulfil their duty," he said.

"Not inviting Mr. Vijay to form the government would amount to disrespecting the mandate of the people of Tamil Nadu," he said.

## TNCC to protest

Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president K. Selva-perunthagai announced a Statewide protest at all the district headquarters on Friday. In a letter to the district presidents of the party, Mr. Selva-perunthagai said the TVK had emerged

as the single-largest party in the Assembly. The Governor, instead of inviting it to form the government, had been acting as the "puppet of the BJP government at the Centre", he added.

Earlier, TVK leaders reached out to the VCK and the two Communist parties, seeking their support. "Mr. Vijay called me and sought our party's support," said VCK leader Thol. Thirumavalavan, adding that the actor-politician had also sent a formal letter. "We have to discuss the issue with the frontline leaders of the party. We are also continuously discussing it with the leaders of the Communist parties. We will take a decision together," he said.

Mr. Veerapandian said TVK general secretary 'Bussy' Anand met him and sought his party's support for government formation. Aadhav Arjuna, another TVK leader, was also in touch with Mr. Veerapandian. "However, in a Communist party, individuals cannot take decisions on political issues. We have convened a meeting of our State council on May 8 to take a decision on the matter," he said.

## EPS saddened over Stalin's defeat, says AIADMK leader

The Hindu Bureau  
PUDUCHERRY

AIADMK Puducherry unit secretary and MLA-elect A. Anbalagan on Thursday said party general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami was "saddened" over the defeat of former Chief Minister M.K. Stalin in the Kolathur constituency in the Assembly election.

"Why should anyone think of even ditching such a leader like Mr. Palaniswami, who is so big-hearted that he even felt sad over the defeat of Mr. Stalin? When I met Mr. Palaniswami in Chennai, he was talking to me about the defeat of Mr. Stalin in Kolathur. Mr. Palaniswami said he (Mr. Stalin) had been in public service for decades, and the people could have been kind to him," Mr. Anbalagan said, while addressing the media.

Confirming that some newly-elected legislators of the AIADMK from Tamil Nadu were being accommodated in a resort in Puducherry on the 'directions' of Mr. Palaniswami, Mr. Anbalagan said all the legislators were united under the leadership of the party general secretary. "There is no faction. All elected MLAs are here on the directions of Mr. Pala-



AIADMK leader Edappadi K. Palaniswami arriving at a resort in Puducherry to meet newly elected party MLAs on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

niswami. They are here not because of any direction given by some other leader. The elected members will follow whatever decision our leader takes," he said.

When asked why the elected representatives were staying in a resort in Puducherry, Mr. Anbalagan said the climate was better in Puducherry than in Chennai. "It is more cool here," he said.

According to police sources, there are around 30 elected legislators staying at RKN Beach Resort in Pudukuppam.

Later in the day, Mr. Palaniswami arrived at the resort to meet the legislators. He would interact with them and also have dinner at the resort, a party functionary said.

## Assam to get a new govt. on May 12

Press Trust of India  
GUWAHATI

The swearing-in ceremony of the newly elected Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led NDA government in Assam will be held on May 12, Chief Secretary Ravi Kota said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, several Union Ministers, Chief Ministers and Deputy CMs of BJP-ruled States, and representatives from industries are expected to attend the function.

"Chaired a comprehensive review meeting with the DGP, Assam, today to assess preparedness for the upcoming visit of the Prime Minister to attend the swearing-in ceremony of the newly elected Council of Ministers," Mr. Kota posted on X on Wednesday night.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma tendered his resignation to Governor

## Nadda, Saini have been appointed the observer, co-observer for the election of the BJP's Legislature Party leader

Lakshman Prasad Acharya, who asked him to continue as the head of the caretaker government.

Union Minister J.P. Nadda and Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini have been appointed the observer and co-observer, respectively, for the election of the BJP's Legislature Party leader, which is likely to be held on May 10.

The NDA returned to power for the third successive term, securing 102 of the 126 Assembly seats with the BJP winning 82 constituencies and its allies, the Bodoland People's Front and the Asom Gana Parishad, bagging 10 each.

## Rajasthan ACB arrests former Minister Mahesh Joshi in Jal Jeevan Mission tender 'scam'

The Hindu Bureau  
JAIPUR

Rajasthan's Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Thursday arrested Congress leader and former Minister Mahesh Joshi in connection with the alleged Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) scam involving irregularities amounting to ₹960 crore in its tender process. The arrest was made nearly a month after retired IAS officer Subodh Agarwal was apprehended in the case.

Mr. Joshi, who served as the Public Health Engineering Minister in the previous Congress government, was arrested from his residence in early morning. He was produced before the Special Court (Anti-Corruption), which remanded him to the ACB's custody till May 11.



Former Minister Mahesh Joshi being arrested by the Rajasthan ACB in Jaipur on Thursday. PTI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had earlier arrested Mr. Joshi in a money laundering case linked to the alleged JJM scam on April 24, 2025. He was in jail for more than seven months until he was granted bail by the Supreme Court in December 2025.

The ACB has accused Mr. Joshi of misusing his position as a Minister and accepting bribes in exchange for tenders. Along with Mr. Agarwal, who was Additional Chief Secretary

in his department, Mr. Joshi "conspired" with the contractors, engineers and private individuals to award tenders in a fraudulent manner and caused huge financial losses to the State exchequer, according to the ACB.

The ACB registered an FIR against Mr. Joshi and others in late 2024.

While being taken to the courtroom, Mr. Joshi told journalists that the ACB had arrested him out of "political vendetta".

## Facing resistance over power privatisation bid, Ladakh Chief Secy. reaches out to locals

Peerzada Ashiq  
SRINAGAR

With local outfits up in arms against a bid to privatise the electricity sector in Ladakh, the Union Territory administration on Thursday said local stakeholders will be on board on any decision to set up a power corporation in the region and assured there were no plans to set up any solar power plant in the ecologically sensitive area of Changtang.

"It's unfortunate that baseless rumours about privatisation of the Electricity Department are being spread in the region bordered by China and Pakistan. We believe in dialogue and democratic pro-



Ladakh Chief Secretary Ashiq Kundra. FILE PHOTO

cess. Any move will be made in a transparent manner and stakeholders will be on board," said Ashiq Kundra, Chief Secretary of Ladakh.

The statement came in the wake of "resentment" shown by the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance, amalgams of sociopolitical and religious groups, over the proposed formation of a

joint venture between the Ladakh Power Development Department (LPDD) (49%) and the Rural Electrification Corporation (51%) for the power sector in Ladakh.

Mr. Kundra, however, clarified that setting up a corporation was a requirement under the Electricity Act, 2003. "It has been done in J&K already. We need to see if we can set up corporations with companies already working in Ladakh such as the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation Limited (NHPC) or REC Power Development and Consultancy Limited, and are ready to invest," he said.

Mr. Kundra added that Ladakh was buying elec-

tricity from J&K at ₹10 per unit, highest in the country. "At present, the fee collected by the Electricity Department goes to the Centre. However, with a corporation, it will stay in Ladakh for the region's future," he added.

He also clarified that the current employees of the department will remain as government employees and only the future recruitments will be of the corporation. "Any new employment generation will be filled 90% by locals," he added.

On setting up solar plants, Mr. Kundra said there was no plan to disturb the Changtang region, which is home to *pashmina* goat herders.

## Ally Congress seeks better coordination on 'crucial public issues' with ruling NC in J&amp;K

The Hindu Bureau  
SRINAGAR

The Congress, which fought the 2024 Assembly election in alliance with National Conference (NC) in J&K, on Thursday sought "better coordination over crucial public issues" in the Union Territory.

"Mutual understanding and cooperation among coalition partners are non-negotiable for smooth governance and effective public welfare. The NC cannot afford to ignore the voice of its alliance partner," said senior Congress leader and legislator Ghulam Ahmad Mir.

lam Ahmad Mir.

The statement came days after NC president Farooq Abdullah accused the Congress of "not doing enough" to restore Statehood. Earlier, the J&K Congress had decided not to join the Cabinet of the Omar Abdullah-led government "till Statehood is restored".

Mr. Mir, however, said concerns and aspirations of the party "must be respected wholeheartedly for the coalition to remain relevant and functional."

In the 90-member Assembly, the NC won 42 seats and Congress six in the 2024 election.

Around the time of the Rajya Sabha election last year, J&K Pradesh Congress Committee president Tariq Hameed Karra had also mentioned about "growing unhappiness over governance, public and administrative issues" between the allies.

## 'Gupkar Declaration'

Incidentally, the Opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on Wednesday accused the ruling NC of "disintegrating" the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration, an amalgam of parties in J&K formed after the Centre ended its special status in 2019.

## 5 kids, 1 adult drown as boat capsizes in Yamuna in U.P.

Press Trust of India  
HAMIRPUR (U.P.)

Five children and a woman drowned after a boat capsized in the Yamuna river in Hamirpur district, police said on Friday.

Their bodies were recovered by teams of the National Disaster Response Force and State Disaster Response Force, they said.

The incident took place on Wednesday evening when nine people and the boatman were returning from an island. According to the police, the boat lost balance in the middle of the river and capsized at 7 p.m.



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First	269.01	12.49	₹49,000	₹16,000	₹9,51,000	₹13,20,907	₹11,60,453	₹9,28,363	₹2,32,091
First	215.8	10.02	₹49,000	₹16,000	₹9,51,000	₹8,56,725	₹9,28,363	₹7,42,690	₹1,85,673

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## Pinarayi promises to listen to people, make corrections

The Hindu Bureau  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Breaking his silence after the Left Democratic Front (LDF) suffered a debilitating blow in the Assembly elections, Communist Party of India (Marxist) Polit Bureau member Pinarayi Vijayan wrote on social media on Thursday that the “unexpected” verdict marked a new beginning for the Left’s continued political work, not an end.

The alliance, he said, was committed to restoring the people’s faith in it and marching ahead with renewed vigour. Constant vigil was needed to ensure that the development projects and welfare schemes implemented in the past 10 years, which had brought sweeping changes in society, did not halt and were taken forward.

The Left, he said, would make no bones about an open examination of the election results and would listen seriously to criticisms and concerns raised by the public, Left supporters and members, and act upon them.

### Reasons for defeat

He attributed the results to an environment created by forces that opposed the Left, such as the UDF, the BJP and a section of the media, besides “false campaigns unleashed by certain anarchic and apolitical centres” which gave some people some misgivings. Serious efforts would be made to sensitise them to the facts, he said.

The Left, he added,



Pinarayi Vijayan

would not be set back by lies and PR-driven false campaigns.

However, it would democratically examine the lapses in its own policies and interventions and carry out necessary corrections before marching ahead with greater confidence and clarity.

As the Opposition, he said, the front would ensure that the Left’s vision for a Nava Keralam – conceived through a knowledge economy, employment for youth, social justice, public health and education – was taken forward. The new government would be pressured into implementing the policies initiated by the LDF government for extreme poverty eradication and women empowerment.

The Left would be a responsible Opposition, supporting the new government’s actions to better the standard of living of the people while opposing its anti-people policies, he added.

He thanked the voters who reposed their faith in the Left and congratulated the UDF on its win.

## Kerala Congress drives hard bargain after electoral revival

Party has staked claim for two ministerial berths and the post of Chief Whip in the incoming UDF Cabinet; leaders cite party’s strong base among Christian community, Church’s support for alliance

The Hindu Bureau  
KOTTAYAM

Riding high on its 2026 election performance, the Kerala Congress under P.J. Joseph has entered the post-poll negotiation table with firm demands for Cabinet representation. The party has staked claim for two ministerial berths and the post of Chief Whip in the incoming United Democratic Front Cabinet.

After nearly a decade on the margins of power since 2016, the Kerala Congress has staged a decisive return, contesting eight seats and securing seven in Kerala. Meeting at the party



The Kerala Congress, under chairperson P.J. Joseph, centre, said it deserves ‘fair representation’ in the Cabinet. FILE PHOTO

chairman’s residence in Thodupuzha, the newly elected legislators decided that the party would press for two key ministerial portfolios.

“As the third largest partner in the front, we are entitled to two ministerial

posts. We have seven members in the House and a strong mandate. Naturally, we deserve fair representation in the Cabinet,” said Apu John Joseph, who won from Thodupuzha. Senior leader Mons Joseph was elected parliamentary par-

ty leader in the Assembly.

With the Indian Union Muslim League expected to secure five ministerial berths, Kerala Congress leaders insist that their party, with its strong base among the Christian community, was entitled to at least two. “If the League gets five posts, the Kerala Congress should get two. We represent a significant section of the Christian community, and the Church extended strong support to the UDF in this election,” a senior leader noted. In the previous UDF Ministry as well, the Kerala Congress had held two ministerial posts along with the Chief Whip position.

## KC(M) faces turmoil ahead of steering committee meet

The Hindu Bureau  
KOTTAYAM

The post-poll phase of Kerala Congress(M) in Kerala, following an electoral rout, appears to be moving quickly from reflection to rupture, with internal dissent and electoral disappointment setting the tone for a meeting of the party steering committee on Saturday.

The crisis has deepened after the regional party failed to win even a single

seat out of the 12 it contested under the Left Democratic Front (LDF) banner.

The contrast with the Kerala Congress faction led by P.J. Joseph, which secured seven seats, has only left the party red-faced. A growing section of leaders is admitting that the results have inflicted serious damage on cadre morale, while also triggering a wider debate on the party’s political identity. Many argue the KC(M) has steadily diluted its independent space after

aligning with the LDF and that a crucial opportunity to reconsider its alignment ahead of the polls, reportedly at the instance of Roshy Augustine, was lost.

It is in this charged atmosphere that the intervention of State committee member Jayakrishnan Puthiyedath has acquired significance. Mr. Puthiyedath, who accused Roshy Augustine of blocking a potential shift back to the UDF, was expelled from the party.

## Police case against two IUML workers

The Hindu Bureau  
MALAPPURAM

The police have registered a case against two Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) workers for publicly displaying a severed goat’s head during victory celebrations following the defeat of Left Democratic Front (LDF) candidate and former Minister K.T. Jaleel at Thavanur in Malappuram district of Kerala. The act, widely shared on social media, drew criticism.

## Urban clean-up



Restoring glory: Desilting work is under way at Ulsoor Lake in Bengaluru on Thursday, as part of a ₹107-crore rejuvenation project for the 106-acre water body, one of the few in central Bengaluru. SUDHAKARA JAIN

## BJP cadre ransack BRS MLA’s camp office over ‘derogatory remarks’

The Hindu Bureau  
KARIMNAGAR

Tension erupted in Karimnagar town in Telangana after BJP cadre vandalised the camp office of Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) MLA Gangula Kamalakar, and made a vain bid to attack BRS MLA from Huzurabad P. Kaushik Reddy in the town on Thursday.

The furious BJP cadre, armed with sticks, stormed the camp office to protest against what they termed as “unwarranted and derogatory remarks” by Mr. Reddy against Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sajay during a press conference held at the camp office earlier in the day.

Mr. Reddy had accused



BRS leaders filing a police complaint over the attack by BJP cadre in Karimnagar on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Mr. Sanjay of using tobacco mixed with drugs and dared him to undergo a drug test. The remarks triggered a violent protest by the BJP workers, who went berserk, ransacking the office furniture and smashing the window panes of

Mr. Reddy’s car. The angry BJP cadre also attempted to attack Mr. Reddy, who was inside the conference hall of the camp office, where he addressed a press conference earlier in the day. Even as the police

locked the main entrance gate of the camp office, the protesters tried to scale the gate. As tension mounted, the police dispersed the agitators by resorting to mild lathicharge.

A video of the incident went viral on social media, triggering a war of words between the leaders of the BRS and the BJP over the issue. The local BRS leaders filed a police complaint against several BJP workers, including two municipal corporators, seeking stringent action against them for allegedly vandalising the Karimnagar MLA’s office.

Meanwhile, the BRS town committee has called a Karimnagar bandh on May 9 in protest against the “violent mob attack”.

## Entertaining petitions on religious practices can have far-reaching consequences, says SC

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday said a deluge of petitions complaining about religious practices and religion would follow if the courts start interfering in matters of faith.

“If everybody starts questioning religious practices or matters of religion before a constitutional court, then what will happen to this civilisation where religion is so intimately connected with the Indian society. There will be hundreds of petitions questioning this right, that right, opening of temple, closure of the temple,” Jus-

tice B.V. Nagarathna observed during a nine-judge Bench hearing of the Sabarimala review case.

Justice Nagarathna said India’s uniqueness lay in the fact that it was a “civilisation” in which the intimate relationship between people and religion has been a constant, despite pluralities and diversities.

### ‘Can’t break ties’

The judge asked whether the courts were the right forum to question, examine and intervene in this relationship. “We nine judges, what we lay down is for a civilisation, that is India. India must progress. Despite all its develop-



Justice Nagarathna asked whether courts were the right forum to intervene in the relationship between people and religion.

ment, economy, everything, there is a constant in us, we cannot break that constant. That is what is troubling us,” Justice Nagarathna said.

Justice M.M. Sundresh, on the Bench headed by

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, said entertaining petitions challenging religious practices and beliefs for violation of fundamental rights may open the flood gates with far-reaching consequences.

“Every religion will break, every constitutional court will have to be closed,” the judge remarked.

### ‘Governed by law’

Senior advocate Raju Ramchandran, for petitioners challenging the practice of excommunication in the Dawoodi Bohra community, pointed out that India was indeed a civilisation, but a civilisation governed by a Constitution.

“Therefore, nothing that goes against the grain of our Constitution can be countenanced in a civilised society governed by the Constitution,” Mr. Ramchandran said.

## A.P. has regained confidence of investors, witnessing one MoU a day: CM to Collectors

G.V.R. Subba Rao  
VIJAYAWADA

Projecting Andhra Pradesh as a State on the rebound after years of “financial ruin and administrative collapse”, Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday called for faster, innovation-led governance to position the State as a “national benchmark” in development, investments and service delivery.

Addressing Collectors and senior officials at the 7th Collectors’ Conference at the Secretariat, he delivered a strong political and administrative message,



N. Chandrababu Naidu at the 7th Collectors’ Conference.

asserting that his government had pulled Andhra Pradesh out of an unprecedented crisis inherited from the previous regime. Highlighting the State’s re-

newed investor appeal, Mr. Naidu said Andhra Pradesh had unveiled 26 new policies that rebuilt confidence among industries and global investors. The government, he said, had already secured investment commitments worth ₹23 lakh crore with the potential to create nearly 24 lakh jobs. “Today, Andhra Pradesh is witnessing one MoU [Memorandum of Understanding] every day and one groundbreaking ceremony every week,” Mr. Naidu said. “Without development there is no wealth, and without wealth there is no welfare,” he added.



Sohrabuddin Sheikh and his wife Kausar Bi were killed in separate encounters in 2005. FILE PHOTO

## Sohrabuddin case: HC dismisses appeals against acquittal of 22 policemen

Chinmay Gaikwad  
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Thursday dismissed appeals challenging a special court’s judgment that acquitted 22 policemen in the “fake” encounters of gangster Sohrabuddin Sheikh, his wife Kausar Bi and associate Tulsiram Prajapati.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Shree Chandrashekhar and Justice Gautam Anhad pronounced the order in open court. A detailed copy of the order is awaited.

The case dates back to November 2005, when Sohrabuddin was killed by Gujarat and Rajasthan Police personnel in an encounter. His wife was allegedly abducted and killed days later. The gangster’s associate was shot dead in December 2006. The petitioners – Sohrabuddin’s brothers Rubabuddin and Nayabuddin Sheikh – claimed the encounters were staged.

In 2010, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) took over the investigation and named several police officers and a former Gujarat Home Minister in its chargesheet. In 2018, a special court acquitted all the accused.

Sohrabuddin’s brothers challenged the acquittals in the Bombay High Court in 2019, leading to the current appeals.

The probe agency had told the Bench in November last year that it accepted the special court’s judgment acquitting all 22 policemen. Of the 38 accused in the case, 16 were discharged earlier.

The case saw 92 prosecution witnesses out of a total of 210 turn hostile. Some witnesses, including the mother of Tulsiram Prajapati and a brother of Sohrabuddin, chose not to depose before the court. They said they had no trust in the court and the prosecution as several accused had been discharged.

**कार्यालय परियोजना प्रबन्धक, युनिट-7, कन्स्ट्रक्शन एण्ड डिजाइन सर्विसेज, उत्तर प्रदेश जल निगम (नगरीय), (उ०प्र० सरकार का उपक्रम), काठवा: ए-212, ब्लाक-ए, वेदव्यासपुरी मेरठ-250005**

निविदा सूचना No.: 1754 / E-Tender / 159 दिनांक 07.05.2026

**ई-निविदा सूचना**

उत्तर प्रदेश जल निगम की ओर से CONSTRUCTION OF COMPUTER LAB AT KASTURBA GANDHI AWASIYA BALIKA VIDYALAYA, AT SOHRABGATE, DISTT.-MEERUT (U.P.) के निर्माण अनुमानित लागत रु० 16.12 लाख (जी०एस०टी० सहित एवं लेबर सेस सहित) हेतु सी०एण्ड० डी०एण्ड० में यथोचित श्रेणी में नवन कार्य हेतु पंजीकृत उमेदवारों से निम्न 15.05.2026 के अपरान्ह 15:00 बजे तक ई-निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती है। उक्त कार्य हेतु ई-निविदा प्रपत्र दिनांक 07.05.2026 से दिनांक 15.05.2026 के मध्य उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार की e-procurement वेबसाइट <https://etender.up.nic.in> से डाउनलोड किया जा सकता है तथा ई-निविदा दिनांक 15.05.2026 को अपरान्ह 16:30 बजे सी०एण्ड० डी०एण्ड०, युनिट-07, उ०प्र० जल निगम, मेरठ में निविदा खोली जायेगी। ई-निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य रु० 2,000.00+GST (18%) अतिरिक्त देय होगा।

निविदा से सम्बन्धित विस्तृत विवरण विभाग की वेबसाइट [www.cdsupin.org](http://www.cdsupin.org) एवं प्रोक्योरमेंट पोर्टल <https://etender.up.nic.in> पर उपलब्ध है। समस्त शुद्धि पत्र (Corrigendum) <https://etender.up.nic.in> पर ही उपलब्ध किये जायेंगे। इनका पृथक से कोई प्रकाशन नहीं किया जायेगा। निविदादाताओं को सलाह दी जाती है कि वे उक्त वेबसाइट का समय-समय पर अलोकन करते रहें।

**कार्यालय परियोजना प्रबन्धक, युनिट-7, कन्स्ट्रक्शन एण्ड डिजाइन सर्विसेज, उत्तर प्रदेश जल निगम (नगरीय), (उ०प्र० सरकार का उपक्रम), काठवा: ए-212, ब्लाक-ए, वेदव्यासपुरी मेरठ-250005**

निविदा सूचना No.: 1755 / E-Tender / 160 दिनांक 07.05.2026

**ई-निविदा सूचना**

उत्तर प्रदेश जल निगम की ओर से CONSTRUCTION OF COMPUTER LAB AT KASTURBA GANDHI AWASIYA BALIKA VIDYALAYA, AT SARURPUR, DISTT.-MEERUT (U.P.) के निर्माण अनुमानित लागत रु० 16.12 लाख (जी०एस०टी० सहित एवं लेबर सेस सहित) हेतु सी०एण्ड० डी०एण्ड० में यथोचित श्रेणी में नवन कार्य हेतु पंजीकृत उमेदवारों से निम्न 15.05.2026 के अपरान्ह 15:00 बजे तक ई-निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती है। उक्त कार्य हेतु ई-निविदा प्रपत्र दिनांक 07.05.2026 से दिनांक 15.05.2026 के मध्य उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार की e-procurement वेबसाइट <https://etender.up.nic.in> से डाउनलोड किया जा सकता है तथा ई-निविदा दिनांक 15.05.2026 को अपरान्ह 16:30 बजे सी०एण्ड० डी०एण्ड०, युनिट-07, उ०प्र० जल निगम, मेरठ में निविदा खोली जायेगी। ई-निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य रु० 2,000.00+GST (18%) अतिरिक्त देय होगा।

निविदा से सम्बन्धित विस्तृत विवरण विभाग की वेबसाइट [www.cdsupin.org](http://www.cdsupin.org) एवं प्रोक्योरमेंट पोर्टल <https://etender.up.nic.in> पर उपलब्ध है। समस्त शुद्धि पत्र (Corrigendum) <https://etender.up.nic.in> पर ही उपलब्ध किये जायेंगे। इनका पृथक से कोई प्रकाशन नहीं किया जायेगा। निविदादाताओं को सलाह दी जाती है कि वे उक्त वेबसाइट का समय-समय पर अलोकन करते रहें।

**EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY**

**OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE**

(ENGINEERING BRIDGE DEPT.)  
The Dy. CE/BRL, E.C.Railway, Hajipur is inviting online (E-Tendering) Open Tender for and on behalf of the President of India from reputed contractor with experience, financial capability including those registered/working with Railway/Irrigation/CPWD/MES or any other public sector undertaking for the following work:  
**1. Tender Notice No. BRL-DNR-26-01**  
**Name of work:** Replacement of corroded/perforated members in UP & DN line, regirding of all 4 shore span of Br. No.200 'A'UP & DN Line (2 x 12.2m + 28 x 45.76m) at KM 577/21 579/2 between Bihta & Kailwar stations under SSE/BR/DNR of Danapur division.  
**Approx. Cost (Rs):** 7,61,26,533.30/-  
**Earnest Money to be deposited (Rs):**15,22,500.00/-  
**2. Tender Notice No. BRL-DNR-26-02**  
**Name of work:** Provision of top chord inspection pathway and access ladder in O/WG bridges of Bridge No.48, 57, 65, 83, 92, 77'A in BEIS-DHW section, Bridge No.20 & 46 in IPR-NES section and provision of men refuse in Bridge No.20 & 46 in IPR-NE Section under SSE/BR/DNR. **Approx. Cost (Rs):** 1,90,31,758.88/-  
**Earnest Money to be deposited (Rs):**3,80,600.00/-  
**3. Tender Notice No. BRL-DNR-26-03**  
**Name of work:** Annual maintenance charges for Secur monitoring System installed at four (04) bridges (Br.No.-7 in PPTA-PHLG section, 7 DB in RDUM-BJU section, 37 in PNBE DJU section and 152 in PNBE-JAU section) for 3 years under Dy. CE/BRL/HJP. **Approx. Cost (Rs):** 14,03,121.24/-  
**Earnest Money to be deposited (Rs):**28,100.00/-  
**4. Tender Notice No. BRL-DNR-26-04**  
**Name of work:** Provision of Bearing inspection platform at Br. No. 152, 708, 717 in MKA-JAU section and Br. No. 5 DB in MKA-BJU section under SSE/BR/MKA in Danapur Division. **Approx. Cost (Rs):** 1,10,18,811.08/-  
**Earnest Money to be deposited (Rs):**2,20,400.00/-  
**5. Tender Notice No. BRL-DNR-26-05**  
**Name of work:** Provision of Side Pathway of shore span No. 01, 02, 3 & 04 at Km 4/2-4/7 & 5/41-6/2 and balance work of hand railing of span No. 06 to 14 and man refuse at span No. 09 to 14. Inspection ladder over end racker & inspection platform (Pathway) on top chord in all spans (1 x 14 x 121 m) of Br. No. 7 DB (3 x 18.3 m + 2 x 30.5 m + 2 x 30.5 m) & bearing inspection platform around pier no. 01 to 17 & abutment No. 01 & 02 of Br. No. 7 DB Span (3 x 18.3 m + 2 x 30.5 m + 3 x 18.3 m) under SSE/BR/MKA. **Approx. Cost (Rs.):** 13,21,00,451.33/-  
**Earnest Money to be deposited (Rs.):**26,42,000.00/-  
**Date & Time for submission of tender and opening of tender:** The tender uploaded on 04.05.2026 online on [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) and the date of tender opening is 28.05.2026 and will be opened on the same day after 13:00 hrs. **Website particulars, notice board location where complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office from where the tender form can be purchased etc.:** Detailed tender notice, eligibility criteria & tender documents can be seen from the CRIS website: <http://www.ireps.gov.in> & full details of notice can be seen on notice board. All corrigendum will be uploaded on website if required.  
**Executive Engineer/ Bridge/Line East Central Railway, Danapur PR/0180/DNR/ENG/1726-27/96**

**EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY**

**E-TENDER NOTICE**

(Baragopal Yard remodeling work for removal of operational constraints at BAGL station.)  
**2. Approx. cost of the works:** Rs 63,48,945/-  
**3. Earnest Money to be deposited:** Rs 1,27,000/-  
**4. Date & time for submission of e-tender and opening of e-tender:** Opening of e-tenders: on 29.05.2026 at 12.00 Hrs. in the office of the Sr. Divl. Electrical Engineer (TRD), DRM Office, E.C. Railway, Sonpur.  
**5. Website particulars and notice board location where complete details of e-tender can be seen:** Website: <http://www.ireps.gov.in>  
**Notice Board:** DRM Office Campus, E. C. Railway, Sonpur.  
**Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/TRD East Central Railway/Sonpur PR/0185/SEE/TRD/T/26-27/28**

**EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY**

**E-TENDER NOTICE**

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/TRS, East Central Railway, Barauni on behalf of the President of India invites "Open" E-Tender from the eligible and experienced agencies or contractors for E-Tender No. BJU-ELS-TRS-2026-2027-01. Particulars are as under:  
**1. Name of the work with its location:** Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Air Conditioners with and without trough with provision of thermal insulation on Electric Locomotives of ELS/BU for a period of 02 years.  
**2. Approx. Cost of the work:** Rs. 1,55,67,431.60 (One crore fifty five Lakh sixty seven Thousand four hundred thirty one rupees and sixteen paise only)  
**3. Earnest Money:** Rs. 3,11,400.00/-  
**4. Date & time of start of bid:** 15/05/2026  
**5. Last Date & Time for submission of bid:** 29/05/2026, 15:00 Hrs  
**6. Website particulars where Tender document is available:** <https://www.ireps.gov.in>  
**Website particulars where Tender document is available:** <https://www.ireps.gov.in>  
**Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/TRS East Central Railway, Barauni PR/0183/ELS/BU/ELECT/1726-27/36**

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**FRIDAY, MAY. 08**  
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RISE 00:02 SET 10:28

**SATURDAY, MAY. 09**  
RISE 05:35 SET 19:01  
RISE 00:40 SET 11:26

**SUNDAY, MAY. 10**  
RISE 05:34 SET 19:02  
RISE 01:15 SET 12:24

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37°C The weather will be dry. Day will be very warm and uneasy with moderate winds. Night will be pleasant.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
38°C The weather will be dry. Day will be slight hot and uneasy. Night will be pleasant.

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**NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY**

**TENDER NOTICE No.: AGC-ELG-T-04-2026-27 Date: 07.05.2026**

**E-TENDER NOTICE**

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (General) N. C. Railway, Agra for and on behalf of President of India invites "Open Tender" through on line way (E-Tendering) for the following works.

**Tender No.:** AGC-ELG-T-04-2026-27

**Name of work with its location & Completion Period:** Miscellaneous works under SSE/P/Dholpur for 02 years. **Completion period:** 24 months

**Approx. Cost of the work:** Rs. 2778640.08/- (including GST)

For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). Tenders can only be submitted through web portal [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) up to 15:00 hrs. on 29.05.2026. **1021/26 (ADM)**

North central railways [www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in) @ C/PRNCR

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4th Floor, JLN Stadium Metro Station, Kaloor, Ernakulam-682017  
Ph: 0484-2846700

**E-TENDER**

**E-Tender cum Building for Property Development and Lease of part of Building at Edappally Metro Station**

Tender ID 2026\_KMRL\_048855\_1  
Bid submission end date: 16.05.2026

Tender documents can be downloaded from [www.etenders.kerala.gov.in](http://www.etenders.kerala.gov.in) / [www.kochimetro.org](http://www.kochimetro.org)  
Further corrigendum & addendum will be published only on website

**DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

6th Floor, 2nd Stage, M.S. Building, Ambedkar Veedhi, Bangalore-560 001.

No. ED/12/KVV/2026 Date: 06.05.2026

**PUBLIC NOTIFICATION**

**Selection to the Post of Vice-Chancellor of Kannada University, Hampi**

Invitation of application for the post of Vice-Chancellor of Kannada University, Hampi

The Department of Higher Education, Govt of Karnataka invites Applications from eligible Professors/Educationists for the post of Vice-Chancellor of Kannada University, Hampi in accordance with the provisions of Section 13(2) of the Kannada University Act, 1991. Applications should be submitted within 20 days from the date of this notification to "The Secretary to Government, Dept of Higher Education, 6th Floor, Multi-Storeyed Building, Bengaluru-560001". Email: [kannadaunivc2026@gmail.com](mailto:kannadaunivc2026@gmail.com). The detailed application form and other details are available on Higher Education Department website <https://hed.karnataka.gov.in>.

**Sd/-**  
**Secretary to Government**  
**Department of Higher Education**

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**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Our clients Ronit Borah So Shri Pulin Chandra Borah R/o Anoop Nagar, Uttar Nagar, New 110059 (India) and Afrina Akter Sumi D/o Md. Avaid Sikder alias Awlad Sikder R/o Manikganj Bangladesh got married on 17th May 2025 at Dhaka Bangladesh Under their Special Marriage Act III of 1872 in the presence of three credible witness and Registrar Mrs. Chandana Dey Tapadar of Marriage Registration Certificate Reg No. 65 from Page No. 129-129, Vol no. 15, HARRINDER SINGH BANGA (ADVOCATE)

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given that the following original property documents have been lost/misplaced: Sale Deed No. 4450 dated 25.03.2008, Sale Deed No. 1134 dated 22.06.2007 Pertaining to property situated at Village & Tehsil Naraingarh, District Ambala, comprising Khewat No. 37, Khatuni No. 42, Reet No. 19, Killa No. 13, measuring 8 Kanal. The aforesaid documents were last seen on 10.03.2026 at Pilampura, Delhi and are believed to be lost despite best efforts. An FIR / Lost Report No. 260647/2026 dated 27.04.2026 has been lodged at P.S. Rani Bagh, Delhi. Any person having finding the aforesaid documents is requested to contact the undersigned immediately. Sd/- Aggarwal Packers and Logistics Pvt. Ltd Archana Tiwari Legal Head Address: Pilampura, Delhi Mobile: 9313630211

**TENDERS**

**E- AUCTION NOTICE**

E-Auction forms are invited from interested buyers for offered materials/salvage strictly on "As Is Where Is" basis, for **Category 1:** Disposal of Fire Affected Plant & Machinery (Iron) Approx 10,000 Kg, **Category 2:** Disposal of Fire Affected Plant & Machinery (Plastic) Approx 200 Kg and **Category 3:** Disposal of Fire Affected Stock of Lead Acid Batteries Approx 20,000Kg of M/s Techbec Global Solutions Private Limited, lying at: Tehsil Rai Distt. Sonapat, Mundarja Khewat No 707 and 781, Mundarja Musti At Revenue Estate Village Bazidpur Saboli, Kunli, Sonapat, Haryana 131029. The offered goods can be inspected between 08/05/2026 to 19/05/2026 (10:00am to 05:00pm), after taking prior appointment with Mr. Mallik Singh; +91-8278824498. For the participation in above E-Auction to be held on 20/05/2026 (04:00pm to 05:00pm), please contact Mr. Ram Raghav Tyagi at Ph: +91-9873038677.

**Think Salvage Services LLP, (Auctioneers)**

at 18 Ankur Apartments 7,I.P Extension, Patpur Ganj, Delhi-110092, or email: [contact@think.salvage.com](mailto:contact@think.salvage.com). Last date for submission of E-auction form is 19/05/2026 before 05:00pm.

**EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY**

**OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE**

DANAPUR DIVISION (ENGINEERING DEPT.)

The Divisional Railway Manager, E.C. Railway, Danapur is inviting online (E-Tendering) Open Tender for and on behalf of the President of India from reputed contractor with experience, financial capability including those registered/working with Railway/Irrigation/CPWD/MES or any other public sector undertaking for the following work:-

**Tender Notice No. : W7/Etender/02/ Open/DNR/2026-27**

**1. Name of work with its location:** Provision of Rubberised Road surface pad at different Level Crossing under Jurisdiction of ADEN/Line/DNR. **Approx. Cost of Work:** Rs 4,78,83,908.69/- **Bid Security:** Rs 9,57,700/-

**2. Name of work with its location:** Provision of Rubberised Road surface pad at different Level Crossing under Jurisdiction of ADEN/BXR. **Approx. Cost of Work:** Rs 7,79,68,771.13/- **Bid Security:** Rs 15,59,400/-

**3. Name of work with its location:** Provision of Rubberised Road surface pad at Level crossing under Sr.DEN/2/DNR. **Approx. Cost of Work:** Rs 6,71,84,801.08/- **Bid Security:** Rs 13,43,700/-

**4. Name of work with its location:** Provision of Rubberised Road surface pad at different LC's under Sr.DEN/2/DNR. **Approx. Cost of Work:** Rs 2,50,51,540.48/- **Bid Security:** Rs 5,01,000/-

**5. Name of work with its location:** Provision of Rubberised Road Surface pad at different LC under ADEN/JHD & ADEN/RGD. **Approx. Cost of Work:** Rs 3,20,62,905.78/- **Bid Security:** Rs 6,41,300/-

**6. Name of work with its location:** Flash Butt Welding of 60 Kg /52 Kg /90R rails at sites using road cum rail mobile flash butt welding plant at different locations under section of Sr. DEN/2/DNR. **Approx. Cost of Work:** Rs 1,96,72,886.60/- **Bid Security:** Rs 3,93,500/-

**7. Name of work with its location:** Execution of Alumino-Thermit (SKV) Welding work of rail joints, including supply of welding portions 60 Kg/60 EI-R260 & 60 Kg, 52 Kg 90 UTS and labour, tools & Plants, Consumables, Supervision and all ancillary activities under the jurisdiction of Sr.DEN/2/DNR. **Approx. Cost of Work:** Rs 1,74,69,299.47/- **Bid Security:** Rs 3,49,400/-

**8. Name of work with its location:** Transporting, cutting & stacking of P. Way materials from any store to works site or any place to PWI store under SSE/P/Way/TD/DNR of Danapur Division. **Approx. Cost of Work:** Rs 3,11,18,230.00/- **Bid Security:** Rs 6,22,400/- **Date & Time for submission of tender and opening of Tender:** The tender have to be submitted online on [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) up to 12.00 hrs. on the date of opening i.e. 29.05.2026 and will be opened on the same day after 12.00 hrs. **Website particulars, notice board location where complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office from where the tender form can be purchased etc.:** Detailed tender notice, eligibility criteria & tender documents can be seen from the CRIS website: <http://www.ireps.gov.in> & full details of notice can be seen on notice board. Amendments/modifications, if any shall not be published in news papers, but the same shall be uploaded in the website. In case of any dispute in the English & Hindi version, modification/publication in IREPS will be acceptable. It is tenders responsibility to view website for amendments / modifications and submit this tender accordingly.

**Divnl. Railway Manager (Engg./E.C. Railway, Danapur PR/0182/DNRI/ENG/1726-27/108**

**TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT**

**Mr. N SELVA KUMAR**

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**EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY**

**E-TENDER NOTICE**

(1) Name of work with its location: Chakia-Kathar-Modification of OHE due to ABSSS work in Sonpur Division (2) Approx. cost of the works (Rs.) Rs. 1,19,74,545/- (3) Earnest Money to be deposited (Rs.) Rs. 2,39,500/- (4) Date & time for submission of e-tender and opening of e-tender: Opening of e-tenders: on 29.05.2026 at 12.00 Hrs. in the office of the Sr. Divl. Electrical Engineer (TRD), DRM Office, E.C. Railway, Sonpur. (5) Website particulars and notice board location where complete details of e-tender can be seen. **WEBSITE:** <http://www.ireps.gov.in> **NOTICE BOARD:** DRM Office Campus, E.C. Railway, Sonpur.

**Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/TRD East Central Railway/Sonpur PR/0187/SEE/TRD/T/26-27/24**

**ADVERTISEMENT**

Applications are invited from the eligible candidates to fill up 49 posts of Clerk on fixed salary of Rs.25,500/- P.M. purely on ad-hoc basis against the vacant posts of Clerk for a period of six months or till the regular appointments are made by the Hon'ble High Court of Punjab and Haryana, Chandigarh, whichever is earlier.

**QUALIFICATION**

No candidate for direct recruitment shall be eligible to apply for the post of Clerk unless he holds a degree of Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science or equivalent thereto from a recognized University and has passed matriculation examination with Hindi as one of the subject.

**AGE LIMIT**

No person shall be recruited to the service if he/she is less than 18 years or is more than 42 years of age as on 1.1.2026. However, age relaxation for reserved posts shall be applicable as per reservation policies framed by the Government of Haryana from time to time and adopted by the Hon'ble High Court of Punjab and Haryana, Chandigarh.

**RESERVATION**

The reservation of above mentioned 49 posts of Clerk on adhoc basis is as under:-

Name of post (ad-hoc)	Genl.	Persons with Benchmark Disabilities	EWS	SC of Haryana	BC (A)	BC (B)	Ex-Servicemen of Haryana	Eligible Sports Person of Haryana					
Cat (ad-hoc)	Cat (LV)	Cat (B) HH	Cat (C) OA, BA, OL, BL, OAL, LC, Dv AAV	DSC	OSC	Genl.	SC-OSC	BC-A	BC-B				
49	9	1	1	6	5	4	6	4	4	2	2	2	2

**Abbreviations:-**

DSC	-Deprived Scheduled Caste	HH	- Hard of Hearing
OSC	-Other Scheduled Caste	OA	- One Arm
BC-A	-Backward Class (Block-A)	BA	- Both Arms
BC-B	-Backward Class (Block-B)	OL	- One leg
ESM (Gen.)	-Ex-Serviceman (General)	BL	- Both legs.
ESM (SC-OSC)	-Ex-Serviceman (Other Scheduled Caste)	OB	- One Arm and one leg.
ESM (BC-A)	-Ex-Serviceman(Backward Class (Block-A))	LC	- Leprosy Cured
ESM (BC-B)	-Ex-Serviceman(Backward Class (Block-B))	Dw	- Dwarfism
EWS	-Economically Weaker Section	AAV	- Acid Attack victim.
LV	-Low Vision		

**Note:**

(i) Reservation will only be applicable to the candidates of Haryana State having Haryana domicile and the candidates of reserved category of other states/ UT will be considered as candidates of General category. Reservation policy as enforced at the time of selection will be considered and applicable, provided that in case of non availability of suitable candidate of reserved category for the post of Clerk, the reserved post shall be filled up by the suitable candidate(s) of General Category.

(ii) With regard to the PwBD category posts, in case, a particular suitable PwBD candidate as per the advertisement is not available, then the other suitable PwBD candidate will be accommodated, if permitted by the selection Committee, as per the instructions applicable.

The selection for the aforesaid posts shall be made strictly in accordance with the provisions of Rule 7 of the Haryana Subordinate Courts Establishment (Recruitment and General Conditions of Service), Rules, 1997.

**MODE OF SELECTION**

The candidates shall have to take a written examination in the following subjects:-

Sr.No.	Duration	Subject	Type of Exam	Maximum
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## SPOTLIGHT

Rinku Chauhan, whose family was socially ostracised 26 years ago, now fights for justice in the court of law in Pali, Rajasthan.  
SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Extrajudicial panchayats in Rajasthan use the age-old tool of social ostracisation combined with extortionary fines to control communities. **Sreeparna Chakrabarty** reports on how the Rajasthan High Court has taken note of this parallel justice system within each caste, the victims' plight, and lack of a law that targets the social evil

# Caste-iron control

**R**inku Chauhan was four and her sister Jayashree all of two months when they were married to two brothers in their village of Sukarlai in Rohat tehsil of Rajasthan by their grandmother and the elders of the caste. Rinku's parents, who were not present at the ceremony, refused to accept the wedding. They decided to take on the panch, a body of elderly men within a caste, which takes decisions on a range of matters.

This rebellion led to the caste leaders announcing a social boycott (*hooka-pani band*, or the stopping of shared resources). It has now been 26 years. The social boycott means that no member of their caste, including distant and close relatives, is allowed to interact with the family. The family has not been invited to weddings or death ceremonies all these years. No one in the village has any economic association with them.

This rebellion led to the caste leaders announcing a social boycott (*hooka-pani band*, or the stopping of shared resources). It has now been 26 years. The social boycott means that no member of their caste, including distant and close relatives, are allowed to interact with the family. The family has not been invited for weddings or death ceremonies all these years. No one in the village has any economic association with them. Intermittently, the family was asked to pay penalties ranging from ₹5,000 to ₹2 lakh, for which they eventually had to pawn their mother's jewellery. They were also forced to organise feasts for meetings of the panch leaders. These meetings were held to decide how much longer the ostracisation would extend. Rinku's father was routinely called for these meetings and allegedly humiliated by being made to stand apart from the rest of the gathering.

Rinku, now 30, grew up to become a lawyer, and about three years ago, she filed a criminal case against the panch. She is now fighting it in the Pali district court, where she is an advocate. "Through life, my family would keep me home because they didn't want any more trouble because of me. Now, though, my fellow lawyers are standing with me," she says. Across Rajasthan, in districts like Jodhpur Rural, Barmer, Jaisalmer, Jalore, Nagaur, Pali, and Banswara, caste panchayats rule with an iron grip, running extrajudicial courts. In March 2025, the judiciary stepped in after they saw a number of cases detailing instances of social ostracisation by panch groups. The Jodhpur Bench of the Rajasthan High Court ordered the formation of a commission of advocates and civil society members to probe the matter. The commission submitted its report in April 2026, following which the High Court ruled that social boycotts and diktats by caste panchayats are unconstitutional, violating fundamental rights under Articles 14, 15, 19, and 21.

## Those who sit in judgment

In her chamber in the Pali district court, Rinku says her family had to leave their ancestral village, where they owned land, and move to Pali, about 20 kilometres away. Here, her father had to take up work as a factory labourer to sustain the family of six. "When my grandmother died, no one in the extended family turned up for the rituals," she says. Rinku remembers attending a panch meeting once, where she spoke against the practice of social ostracisation. "I was fined ₹5,000 for speaking, as women are not allowed to," she says. Over

Investigative agencies face significant difficulty in determining the appropriate legal provision under which to register and investigate such complaints  
**SHOBHA PRABHAKAR**  
Advocate



the years, following police complaints, two of the caste leaders were arrested, but, she says, "They were let off soon. Within the court premises, they mocked me, saying I would never be accepted by society."

Caste panchayats in India, also called *khap* or *jatiya* panchayats, *panch patels*, or *bhang jade* (those who resolve disputes), are informal bodies mostly prevalent in parts of Rajasthan, Haryana, and western Uttar Pradesh. They differ from the constitutional Gram Panchayats created under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment (1992), which are elected, democratic bodies serving all villagers, with statutory powers over local governance, development, and minor disputes.

Panch leaders enforce traditional norms by imposing social boycotts, heavy fines, and other coercive measures against those who deviate from the community's self-prescribed rules. Eventually, the victim is ousted from their community and sometimes, from the family. Reasons for ostracisation can range from marital discord and marrying outside the caste or sub-caste to land disputes and even standing in support of someone who has been ostracised.

Take the case of Tulsiram, a former municipal councillor in the city of Pali, roughly 100 km from Jodhpur. A former trade union leader, Tulsiram stood by the daughter of a family friend who had a long-standing marital dispute with her husband. "I thought of her as my daughter, especially since she had lost her father. However, the caste leaders, who were siding with her husband's family, announced a social boycott of my entire family," says the former mill worker, sitting in his single-storey house, which he shares with his son's family.

He says the caste panchayat initially imposed a fine, which they call a *dand* (punishment) of ₹1,500 and then asked for ₹2-3 lakh as expenses in organising their meetings, which saw the participation of some 400-500 leaders from the caste. He says the boycott was even extended to his daughter's family, who lived in another village. "They were made to pay a penalty of ₹2.5 lakh for

re-entry into the *samaj* (community) and ending their social boycott," he adds.

## The men who put themselves in charge

Traditionally, a *khap* had 84 villages under it. However, with the reorganisation of villages, now each *khap* lords over 10 or more villages. Most of these tightly-knit organisations are organised on familial or hereditary lines. If a certain caste leader passes away, then the most likely choice to replace him is his son or the next male heir. "Whoever is rich and powerful can become a *khap* leader," says Sanjeev Chowdhary, from Megharda village, in Beawar district, who has been socially excluded from his community after he filed a police complaint following a land dispute.

Chowdhary, who has a granite polishing business, says the total penalty imposed on him by the caste panchayat has now climbed to ₹84 lakh. Despite many FIRs and counter-FIRs and approaching senior political leaders, he says no inroad has been made and his family remains socially ostracised. "We were not even invited to the wedding of our elder sister-in-law," he says.

There are designated buildings where meetings of these caste panchayats are held, and some of these organisations even own substantial amounts of land. The money collected from people is meant to be given to a victim, but it is allegedly split among the *khap* leaders. The diktats of social boycott and penalties imposed by these organisations are often written orders listing out the "crimes" committed and "punishments" thereof. Some of these are on notarised affidavits.

However, since the recent spate of FIRs filed and after the court stepped in, there has been a tweak in the way they are written. "Punishments" are now called "honours". "This has been done to evade immediate police action," explains Chowdhary, displaying such an order. The panch allegedly also misuses certain community norms. For instance, under the *noyta* system, villagers are compelled to contribute '*noyta* (money)' for community functions or to collectively fight a village-level problem.

But Bhanwari Devi (Bano), from Hapat village of

Pali district, whose family was socially ostracised for refusing to accept the child marriage of her two daughters, says she was asked to organise feasts "serving mutton and liquor" to all caste leaders. "I don't have enough to feed my family. How can I pay for food for all these gatherings?" Bano says.

## The need for a targeted law

Ramlal Prajapati has a similar story of social boycott to tell. His daughter got married about five years ago within their community, but when she gave birth to a girl child, her in-laws allegedly physically and mentally abused her. "She came back to us, but soon her in-laws began to put pressure on her to go back without her child. This was done through the community leaders," he says. When she refused, the community elders announced a social boycott. The penalty for an entry back into the community was fixed at ₹5 lakh. The frail Prajapati, who has a small portion of land which he tills, does not have the money.

The report of the commission notes that despite its devastating impact, there exists no central legislation in India that criminalises and punishes the concept of social boycott as an offence. "In the absence of a specific law that explicitly recognises social boycott as a punishable offence, investigative agencies face significant difficulty in determining the appropriate legal provision under which to register and investigate such complaints," says advocate Shobha Prabhakar, who is fighting numerous such cases on behalf of the victims, and who was on the commission that submitted its report recently.

The practice prevails irrespective of religion. Sheru Khan lives in Bambara village of Jaisalmer district. Khan's adult daughter married a man from the same caste as her own, but since the two had chosen to get married to each other, rather than have their parents arrange the marriage, through traditional family negotiations, the panch was unhappy. The chief '*khalifa* (headman)' imposed the traditional social boycott known as *haath band* (handcuffed) on Khan and his family. In his April order, based on the commission's report, Justice Farjand Ali ordered the Rajasthan government to formulate a policy with standard operating procedures to curb these actions. He suggested a law similar to Maharashtra's. The Maharashtra Protection of People from Social Boycott (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2016, (enforced in 2017) criminalises social boycott by caste groups, making it the first such law in India. It punishes offenders with up to 7 years in jail, ₹5 lakh fine, or both.

Advocate Prabhakar has now begun a 'Rajasthan Social Boycott Prevention Campaign' on social media. "The campaign aims to compel the government into enacting a specific law that criminalises social boycott. The law should also include provisions for compensation and rehabilitation of the victims," she says. The campaign addresses the establishment of a robust support mechanism for victims, including a helpline, fast-track courts, psychological counselling, and financial assistance. "Investigations should be completed within 90 days and a senior officer of Additional SP rank as Nodal Officer should monitor all pending cases of social boycott," she adds. Victims should be provided security to protect them from community pressure, the campaign demands. No panch was willing to speak for this story.



Bhanwari Devi (Bano), whose family has been systematically socially ostracised in Pali, Rajasthan. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP



**Shivan & Narresh's new collection**  
Springlie reinterprets artist Hilma af Klint's colour energy through contemporary resortwear

Geetika Sachdev

For designers Shivan Bhatiya and Narresh Kukreja of Delhi-based brand Shivan & Narresh, resortwear has long been positioned as more than holiday dressing. Since launching their label in 2010, the duo has framed the category as clothing shaped by travel, leisure and celebration – garments designed to move easily between settings. Their latest collection, Springlie, continues that exploration while drawing from the abstract visual language of Swedish painter Hilma af Klint, whose work is recognised for symbolic motifs, fluid geometry and bold colour compositions. “The visions of Hilma af Klint feel remarkably



**Sun's out** The resortwear collection moves away from the usual pastel colours and includes shades such as cobalt blue and high-contrast graphic motifs. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



explains. “From there, those ideas evolve into prints, colour palettes and silhouettes that echo her sense of movement.” The collection also moves away from the delicate hues typically associated with spring fashion. Instead, shades such as cobalt blue and high-contrast graphic motifs dominate. “Spring is often imagined through pastels, but for us the season also carries a sense of awakening,” says Narresh. “With Springlie, we wanted to capture that expressive side of the season.”

## A Swedish spring in India

contemporary despite being created over a century ago,” says Shivan. “What drew us most was her ability to merge spirituality with abstraction, creating a visual language that explores energy and balance.” Across the collection, spiralling forms, graphic lines and layered colour blocks create a sense of movement. The womenswear line includes swimsuits and ready-to-wear pieces – in lightweight fabrics like silk and organza – such as rompers, jumpsuits, palazzos, dresses, kaftans and tops,

alongside occasion wear like tiered skirts, embellished lehengas and draped gowns. Menswear ranges from polos and shirts to printed denim trousers and kurta sets. For Narresh, the starting point was not simply the visual vocabulary of the paintings but the ideas behind them. “We begin by studying the philosophy and emotional energy within her work rather than simply adapting the imagery,” he



**Ease and structure** Movement remains central to the label's design language, and the silhouettes in Springlie reflect what the designers describe as “fluid strength”. “We explored elongated forms and relaxed tailoring while still holding a sense of structure,” says Shivan. Flowing silks,

lightweight fabrics like cotton, organza and tulle, and sculptural swimwear create garments that respond to the body's movement, while textured jacquards add visual depth. The designers say fabric experimentation plays a key role in translating the collection's artistic references into wearable pieces. “Fabric becomes the medium through which colour, print and craftsmanship come together,” Narresh adds.

When Shivan & Narresh first introduced luxury resortwear in India, the category itself was relatively unfamiliar in the domestic market. Over the past decade, however, the context for such clothing has broadened. Destination weddings, honeymoons and milestone celebrations have expanded the occasions where resort-inspired silhouettes are worn. As a result, versatility has become an increasingly important consideration in the design process. “We focussed on silhouettes that feel effortless yet refined, allowing them to transition easily from day to evening,” explains Narresh.

Accessories appear as an extension of the collection's visual language. Pieces such as the Olly tote bag, artisanal visors and leather slides echo the colours and graphic motifs seen in the garments, carrying the abstract references into smaller design elements. “For us, accessories are never just finishing touches,” says Shivan. “They are independent design statements that complement the wardrobe while also standing on their own.” In translating the symbolic geometry and colour energy of Hilma af Klint into garments designed for movement, Springlie reflects how art continues to find new interpretations within fashion.

Upwards of ₹15,950 at Shivan and Narresh stores and on shivanandnarresh.com

## An Americano to match your bag

At luxury brand Tory Burch's Delhi takeover, coffee sipping meets styling

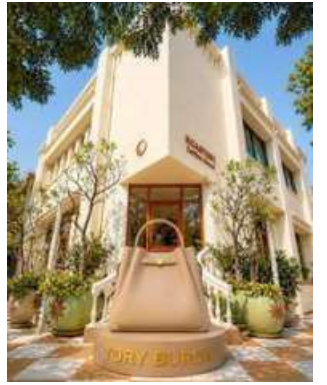
Prabalika M Borah  
prabalika.m@thehindu.co.in

We have heard of bar takeovers by mixologists and kitchen takeovers by chefs. But the ongoing takeover at Roastery Coffee House is by American luxury brand Tory Burch. Titled The Romy Café, this experience is inspired by Tory Burch's Romy collection that ranges from ₹35,000 to ₹75,000, depending on the size, material, and style. These bags, including the Romy tote, Romy bucket bag, and Romy shoulder bag, are exhibited at the café.

The outlet translates the Romy bag into a series of functional, collectible elements. A sculptural Romy installation welcomes guests at the entrance. Inside, the café is detailed with elements that reflect the brand's design language: custom table settings, branded coffee cups and sleeves, bespoke dessert packaging, and a specially created café menu by Roastery Coffee House.

It features the outlet's best-selling coffees – cranberry coffee, latte and Americano. The food menu comprises Romy cupcake, croissants, choux pastries and vol au vents.

Anshi Saxena, co-founder, Roastery Coffee House, says, “The collaboration with Tory Burch felt personal. Our work

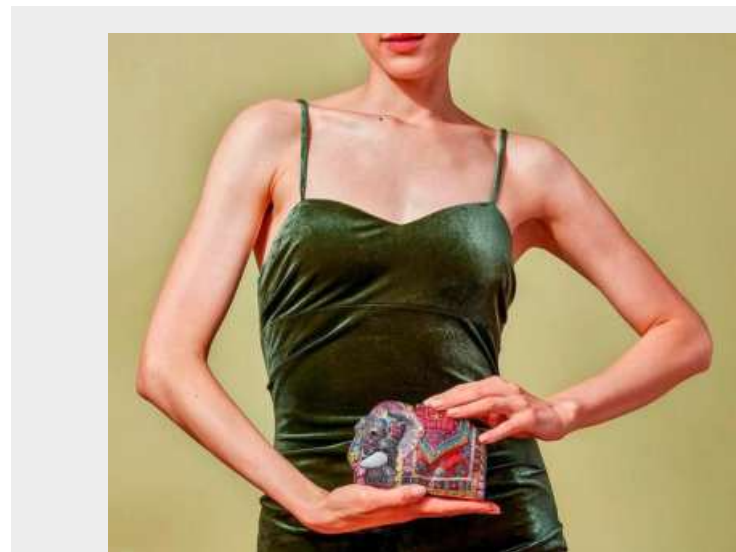


**Arm candy** (Above) Roastery Coffee House reimagined as The Romy Café by Tory Burch; (below) customised latte art at the takeover. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

has always been about representing Indian speciality coffee in its truest form – celebrating coffees grown on our soil, along with Indian aesthetics, craftsmanship, and hospitality that feels natural.” She also said that it was interesting creating this vibe where style and coffee sat together effortlessly.

A statement from Tory Burch says: “Roastery Coffee House was a deliberate choice, grounded in a shared commitment to craftsmanship, community, and considered experiences. The collaboration was also intentionally anchored in partnering with a woman entrepreneur.”

On till May 10 at Sarvodaya Enclave.



## Clutch with a whimsical touch

With crystal-studded minaudières shaped like parrots, cakes and curios, Judith Leiber brings its fun, maximalist bags to Delhi

**Carry-on** (Left) The Elephant Majestic minaudière by Judith Leiber; (inset) Parrot Bali minaudière. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

compact store of 192 square feet – “like stepping into a jewel box,” as Chandni describes it – features a curated edit of signature silhouettes, including bow top handle bags and crystal-studded minaudières. The compact space, she says, was intentionally designed, as one in which customers can engage closely with the craftsmanship on each piece.

The sparkling minaudières take the form of French fries, cupcakes, London's red phone booths, crowns, tiaras, espresso martinis and butterflies. There are also designs tailored for the Indian market, such as the Parrot Scarlet, Elephant Majestic, famously carried by Guneet Monga at the Academy Awards for *The Elephant Whisperers*, and the Ganesh Shri minaudières.

The curation reflects the Indian luxury consumer: someone who styles for both contemporary evenings and grand weddings, where traditional craftsmanship and overall styling come together.

Chandni believes the brand's aesthetic aligns naturally with Indian sensibilities, especially among younger buyers. “We love ornamentation. While earlier generations leaned towards logos, Gen Z is driven by storytelling and versatility.”

Alongside the current selection, the store will see seasonal drops and India-exclusive pieces. “We'll also evolve the curation, while working with the brand on more India-specific designs,” Chandni adds.

Judith Leiber Couture is now at The Chanakya, Delhi. Prices upwards of ₹1.25 lakh.



S Poorvaja

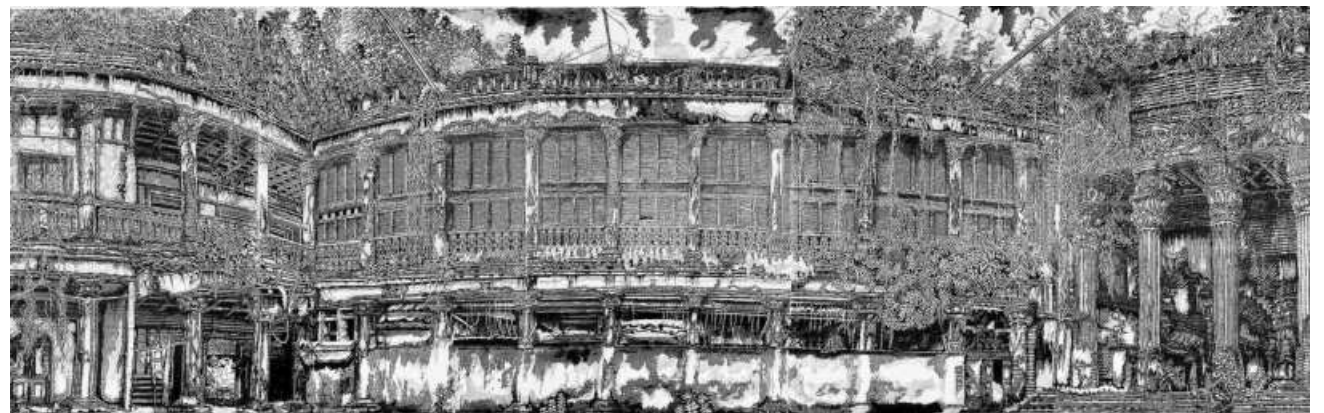
poorvaja.sundar@thehindu.co.in

Spanning a 70-year legacy, Judith Leiber Couture's bags, clutches and miniatures have been red carpet staples that bring crystal-studded whimsy to any evening. Its famed minaudières, small bags sculpted into quirky, artistic forms, have long been considered objets d'art, cementing their status as coveted collectibles.

Closer home, the brand has re-entered India's luxury retail space with a brick-and-mortar store at The Chanakya in Delhi. The brand's first foray into the Indian market was over a decade ago, with the Marigold Group which opened a flagship store at DLF Emporio in New Delhi.

The choice of Delhi felt natural, says Chandni Agarwal, chairman, managing director

and founder, Sparsh India Couture, the retail arm of Sparsh Industries leading the India launch now. “Delhi has always been the heartbeat of India's luxury landscape. It has evolved from consumption to curated appreciation; everyone here wants the best,” she says. With the Indian luxury market projected to touch nearly \$14 billion by 2026, Chandni, who is also the India spokesperson for Judith Leiber Couture, notes that Delhi continues to hold the largest share. “With new luxury malls and evolving retail spaces, there's little comparison with any other city right now,” she adds. At The Chanakya, the intimate,



## Through light and time

From the ghats of Varanasi to the stepwells of Rajasthan, Nature and architecture have a dialogue in the drawings of French artist Thomas Henriot

Shailaja Tripathi

At The Weight of Light, currently on view at the Art Centrix Space gallery, French artist Thomas Henriot brings together years of observation, travel, and engagement with architecture in India. The eight tapestries and 14 drawings on display are not just sketches of places; they feel like time spent with them.

Henriot's process is simple but demanding. He works with Korean bamboo paper and Chinese ink, using a traditional ink-and-wash technique. There are no preliminary sketches. “I work directly with brush and ink on the paper; you can't correct,” explains Henriot.

He sits on the ground, often for long stretches, working from morning to evening. “I have been doing this for almost 25 years.”

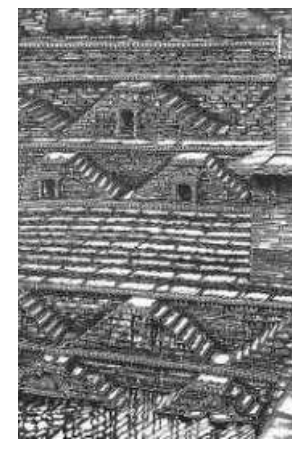
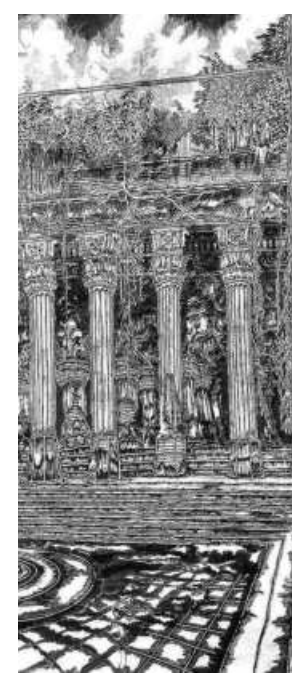
What he is really doing in that time is observing. He understood it as a meditative process when he came to India and starting working on the ghats of Banaras. “I realised that this is yoga.” This approach becomes especially visible in the works he has created across India. Whether it is the ghats of

Varanasi, the deep stepwells of Jaisalmer, or the regal and expansive Mehrangarh Fort, Henriot spends hours within these spaces before drawing them. His works capture a succession of moments.

Light plays an important role in his art. Monica Jain of Art Centrix Space, who has also curated the show, remarks, “Thomas treats light like a living entity; he captures it shifting and as he does that, everything comes alive.” At the centre of the exhibition is the Basu Bati Palace, a structure Henriot has returned to again and again over the years. Basu Bati is an iconic structure that is loaded with history and culture; drawings were created on-site during Henriot's residency with the Basu Foundation for the Arts. “I could observe over the course of more than a decade the evolution of the old palace. Sadly, it's not being restored, so Nature has taken on the architecture.”

The palace, now in a state of visible decay, becomes a powerful subject. Paint peels, walls crack, and plants begin to take over.

Interestingly, his process reflects this idea. He begins by drawing Nature first and only later places the



**Ink and brush** (Clockwise from above) Vignettes of Basu Bati Palace, Calcutta; and stepwell in Jodhpur. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

architecture behind it. The result is work that feels layered and alive and not rigid or fixed. What makes this body of work even more striking is how it has moved beyond paper. Henriot has collaborated with Brochier Soeries, a silk manufacturer established in 1890 in Lyon, France, to translate his drawings into large-scale textiles using the jacquard weaving technique.

At the centre is a monumental tapestry of the Basu Bati Palace. It is woven with 20,000 threads in silk, cotton and gold. The gold threads do not decorate the image; they add meaning to highlight how the structure lives on in people's memories. For Henriot, this shift into textiles was intentional. “I wanted it to live in a different way,” he says.

The exhibition is on at Art Centrix Space, Jain Farm, Vasant Kunj, till May 12.



## Unwinnable war

The U.S. should pursue a deal with Iran, and not take a maximalist stand

When Donald Trump announced 'Operation Project Freedom', aimed at "guiding" stranded merchant vessels out of the Strait of Hormuz, he warned that any interference from Iran would be dealt with "forcefully". Over the previous weeks, Mr. Trump had issued several ultimatums to Tehran to reopen the waterway, which it closed after the U.S. and Israel launched the war on February 28. As Iran refused to budge, Mr. Trump launched the operation to militarily reopen the strait. But it lasted barely 50 hours. Iran responded by firing at two American destroyers in the strait and attacking a UAE tanker off Oman's coast. The UAE, a close strategic partner of both the U.S. and Israel, also said it was attacked twice. With the ceasefire coming under strain amid hostilities, Mr. Trump, on Wednesday, said he was pausing the operation "at the request of Pakistan". While Mr. Trump continues to make sweeping claims about winning the war, the fact that the Strait of Hormuz remains closed – and that the operation to reopen it did not last even three days – points to a very different reality on the ground. The U.S. not only failed to achieve any of its declared objectives during the 40 days of war, but is now grappling with a crisis created by the war itself – the closure of the strait.

Unlike Mr. Trump, who has made several self-contradictory statements since the war began, Iran has remained consistent in its demands. Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei said last week that Iran would "protect" its missile and nuclear capabilities and continue to exercise control over the Strait of Hormuz. Tehran appears convinced that the war has strengthened its hand and that time is on its side. Mr. Trump has made a series of miscalculations. In the first week of the war, he said he would accept nothing short of Iran's "unconditional surrender". But as the conflict dragged on, he started demanding a deal. Both sides agreed to a ceasefire on April 8, but the U.S., which imposed a blockade on Iranian ports on April 12, failed to exact any meaningful concession from Iran. Contrary to his rhetoric, he holds few strong cards in this war of attrition. If the crisis persists, it will inflict lasting damage on the U.S. and the global economy, potentially endangering Mr. Trump's presidency. If he resumes the war, Tehran will retaliate by targeting Gulf kingdoms, which would be catastrophic for the global economy. America is not winning this war. No amount of social media threats or military posturing is going to alter that reality. Washington should recognise this and pursue a deal with Iran based on accommodating mutual demands and reciprocal concessions if it wants to avoid pushing the world economy towards the precipice.

## Building hazards

India needs to do more to both prevent and fight fires

Each major fire accident in cities that ends up claiming human lives fleshes out different sets of causative and exacerbating factors. The recent one in Shahdara in East Delhi highlighted a lack of sufficient attention to planning for evacuating buildings in the case of emergencies, mainly fire. Nine people were killed and some 15 were rescued with grievous injuries in that accident. The residential building – still plus four floors comprising eight houses – had security enhancing features that turned out to be deadly: electronic locks on doors that could not be opened; a terrace that was not easily accessible; and metallic grills around the building including on balconies that had to be cut for access by fire service personnel seeking to rescue the victims. A fire in March in Palam, in which nine of an extended family died, highlighted access problems that fire services face in Delhi. The mixed-use building had few of the recommended firefighting facilities required in such buildings. Eyewitnesses complained that the hydraulic lifts used by fire services personnel to access higher floors were malfunctioning. Though the fire services insist they reached the Shahdara accident spot on time, response times have been longer in the capital city at other times. In a fire in Dwarka in 2025, fire engines could not enter the residential society because the name board of the society was blocking them.

While there is certainly a case for reviewing the fire preparedness and fire-fighting capabilities of Delhi, what often goes unaddressed are electrical problems that cause these fires across Indian cities. As summer sets in, air-conditioning blasts are often casually cited as in the Shahdara fire. What often happens is overloading of equipment such as the air conditioner during hot summer days. The wires that are not designed to handle such loads burn due to heat and the circuit breakers that should have tripped the equipment as protection do not do so. In India, the hierarchy of loads and circuit breakers is often not observed as residences are packed with high load equipment beyond what the system can safely carry. The intent is often to keep the equipment running under all conditions whereas tripping of overloaded equipment is a necessary safety feature. City authorities talk of drones and robots to fight fires when even the basic preventive measures are not in place.

# Seeking a new paradigm for Dravidian exceptionalism

The victory of cinema superstar C. Joseph Vijay in the recent State Assembly election marks a watershed moment for politics in Tamil Nadu.

Breaking with nearly 60 years of voting for one of only two major Dravidian parties is not just a signal of dissatisfaction but also an abiding quest for enlightened State leadership that recognises the contours of Tamil exceptionalism, and delivers the quality of governance required to meet that imperative.

At the heart of Mr. Vijay's emphatic win, which resulted in his party, the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), cornering 108 out of the 234 seats in the Assembly, lies a disenchantment with the smug complacency of rule by both the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and, for a decade until 2021, the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK). Between them, the DMK and the AIADMK have alternated periodically in occupying power in Chennai to deliver on the promises of their Dravidian forebears C.N. Annadurai and Periyar E.V. Ramaswamy, which includes values such as state autonomy, freedom from Hindi imposition and other diktats of a distant New Delhi, and welfare policies including the noon-meal scheme and direct transfers to vulnerable groups.

It would be remiss not to mention that this noble project of upliftment of the common man in the State was built on the dubious substructure of a shadow economy encompassing institutionalised corruption and grand larceny on an eye-watering scale. That a former late Chief Minister of the State owned sprawling properties in central London, and that even top global corporations seeking industrial permits admit to being asked for sizeable cash bribes to speed up their licence issues, reveals the institutionalised nature of this rent-seeking model.

Would it then be improper to suggest that the TVK's surprise win was the result of an electorate growing weary of this Faustian bargain struck with the ruling powers, where they gave with one hand and took with the other?

Yet, there is more to be explained. Why at this moment in time has the public rejected the proven track records of two parties that, in the nearly six decades since they overthrew the Congress and dominated the State, have by and large managed to keep Tamil Nadu on a steady growth path while working towards fulfilling the Dravidian political vision?

### Dissecting the victory

There could be several possible factors that might explain the expectation-defying 34.92% vote share that the TVK garnered across virtually every region of the State and likely across most



Narayan Lakshman

At the heart of Mr. Vijay's emphatic win, lies a disenchantment with the smug complacency of rule by both the DMK and, for a decade until 2021, the AIADMK

demographic cohorts, especially among the youth, and women of all ages and backgrounds.

Firstly, Mr. Vijay presented the over 56 million electors of Tamil Nadu with a unique campaign style, modelled on viral social media marketing strategies. In doing so, he broke with the convention of old-school "offline" campaigning techniques including but not limited to widespread rallies across the State. Mr. Vijay appeared to eschew such public interactions in favour of online messaging on social media platforms such as Instagram, to the point where he courted controversy when, during one of his last campaign speeches, he exhorted young children to compel their parents to vote for the TVK's 'whistle' symbol.

Second, an air of vulnerability and an unspoken sense of victimhood appeared to build up around Mr. Vijay as he pleaded innocence for the deadly stampede at the TVK rally in Karur in September 2025, in which at least 41 people died and many more were injured. This is despite the fact that the actor remained silent for three days following the incident, emerging later from his isolation without an apology for mismanaging a major public event organised by his party, and instead making veiled references to a conspiracy by the DMK-led government. The delay in the release of his film *Jana Nayagan* was similarly attributed to sinister forces seeking to sabotage Mr. Vijay's commercial prospects and thus undermine his public persona. Such developments appeared to have created momentum for a burgeoning sense of sympathy and outright anger that an outsider to the Dravidian movement framework could be so viciously attacked by incumbent powers.

While these developments certainly give credence to the view that the TVK surge in the election was rooted in a savvy, Gen-Z-driven, social media virality strategy and a strong sentiment of righting an injustice meted out to a political newcomer, it is also important to look at the broader context of tectonic shifts in the political and economic spheres that resulted in the disenchantment with the Dravidian model.

### Disillusionment and doubt

The first key factor that might have resulted in voters rejecting the solutions presented by the DMK and the AIADMK for the unprecedented flux in the job market due to technological and economic shocks is hubris. Towards the last few years of each of their terms in office, the public would not have been wrong to be frustrated with the unspoken but implied government view that no other model besides that old combination of mass welfare policies and moderate economic growth driven by a reasonably efficient

bureaucracy, with the State exchequers looted by political rent-seekers, was the only path forward for progress.

Combine this with the fact that the DMK appeared to be getting ever more deeply mired in dynastic nepotism, with resentment building around the handover of the reins of power to former Chief Minister M.K. Stalin's son, Udhayanidhi, and the AIADMK chief Edappadi K. Palaniswami's continued struggle to keep factional infighting from attenuating the cohesive core of his party's cadre.

A second critical concern of the electors of the State is that the gradual inroads made by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) into Tamil Nadu may be transforming the balance of power therein and eroding the State's rich tradition of rationalism, anti-ritualism, rejection of upper caste dominance, and opposition to any single religion enjoying disproportionate support from the government. The results for the alliance between the AIADMK and the BJP placed it in third position overall with respectively 47 and one seat for the two parties. This indicates a split in voter preferences on the overall acceptability of the BJP in the State. In this context, the surge towards the TVK might also reflect frustration with the Dravidian majors as they have been unable to come up with a robust strategy to halt the march of the BJP and its ground-level support base, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

Finally, we may be witnessing the dawn of a new era for Dravidian politics as a historical social movement, as the younger generations of voters are likely one step removed from the traditional founding values and ideals of Periyar and Annadurai. Instead, they are by turn gig workers, nomadic factory floor contract operators, apprentices in micro, small and medium enterprises, and entry-level service sector representatives seeking to build a career at a complex moment in Tamil Nadu's economic evolution. They respond more to a sharply witty Instagram post than a party manifesto published on the official website.

For these voters, and for those swamped by doubts on the capacity of the DMK and the AIADMK to continue to deliver good governance in an era of fundamental socio-economic transformation, Mr. Vijay's TVK spells promise. Now it remains to be seen whether they will manage to muster the numbers to actually form a government, and if they do, whether the Cabinet that Mr. Vijay assembles and the bureaucratic machinery that has historically excelled in rolling out essential policies for the people will help him make good on the many promises he made.

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# Openness, not isolation, is the bedrock of the West

Recent statements from Washington show how global politics is being increasingly framed along civilisational terms. The U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has referred to the idea of a shared "Western civilisation," describing the U.S. and Europe as bound by common history, cultural heritage, and institutional traditions. At the same time, U.S. President Donald Trump has amplified comments about countries such as India, China, and Iran in the context of migration and geopolitical competition that reinforce a tendency to interpret global politics in civilisational terms. Taken together, these statements point to a broader shift: global affairs are being interpreted not only through the language of power and interest, but also through civilisational identities.

The appeal of such framing is understandable. It offers a sense of clarity in an era of rapid technological disruption, demographic change, and geopolitical uncertainty. But apparent clarity is not the same as analytical accuracy. Moreover, it is not an entirely new framing either. As early as the 1990s, political scientist Samuel Huntington had argued that global politics would evolve into a "clash of civilisations," where cultural and religious identities would become the principal fault lines of international relations.

Civilisational explanations can obscure more than they reveal, particularly when they imply that cultural cohesion, rather than institutional adaptability, is the primary source of national strength. A historical record of the modern West suggests otherwise.

### A look at history

Much of the West's post-Cold War dynamism has rested not on homogeneity, but on openness – to talent, ideas, capital, and global competitive pressures. Its advantage has been institutional:



Milinda Moragoda

Former Sri Lankan Cabinet Minister, diplomat and the Founder of the Pathfinder Foundation, a strategic affairs think tank

The West's advantage lies not only in military alliances or economic scale, but in institutional resilience and its capacity to attract, integrate, and retain talent

the capacity to absorb diversity and convert it into innovation within rules-based systems.

Nowhere is this more evident than in today's innovation economy. AI, in particular, has become the defining frontier of global competition, shaped by deeply international talent flows and research ecosystems. Companies such as Microsoft, OpenAI, and NVIDIA exemplify systems in which breakthroughs depend on globally sourced expertise, cross-border collaboration, and the ability to attract the most capable minds regardless of origin.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored this complementary reality: innovation now operates through globally distributed production systems. Rapid vaccine development and distribution, by firms such as Moderna and AstraZeneca, depended on international research networks and global manufacturing ecosystems. In the case of AstraZeneca, large-scale production through partnerships such as that with the Serum Institute of India illustrated how innovation and industrial capacity now operate across borders.

This is not an argument against immigration control. Immigration must be governed effectively, and civic norms must be upheld. But managing diversity is fundamentally different from retreating from it.

In an era of intensifying geopolitical competition, openness remains a critical strategic asset. The West's advantage lies not only in military alliances or economic scale, but in institutional resilience and its capacity to attract, integrate, and retain talent. Civilisational framing, by contrast, risks misdiagnosing this advantage – privileging identity over capability and boundaries over performance. Demographic realities reinforce this point. Many advanced economies face ageing populations. In this context, immigration is not simply a cultural or political issue, but an economic necessity.

Without sustained inflows of skilled labour and human capital, growth slows, fiscal pressures increase, and innovation ecosystems weaken.

### Openness as an advantage

The defining challenges of the 21st century – including AI governance and climate change – further highlight the limits of civilisational thinking. These are problems that cannot be addressed within cultural silos. Against this backdrop, framing global politics in terms of civilisational hierarchy carries risks. It encourages a narrowing of identity at precisely the moment when cooperation and adaptability are essential.

The question, therefore, is not whether identity matters. It clearly does. Societies require shared norms, institutional trust, and continuity. The more important question is whether democracies can manage change without losing confidence in the openness that has sustained their development. The strength of the West has historically rested on its ability to combine stability with adaptation – to absorb new influences while preserving core principles such as the rule of law, individual liberty, and accountable governance.

Therefore, the policy challenge ahead is not to retreat into notions of cultural purity, but to govern openness with clarity and purpose. This requires strengthening integration frameworks and reinforcing institutional trust. It also requires recognising that engagement with other civilisational spaces is not a concession, but a necessity in a globally interconnected world.

In a world of intensifying geopolitical rivalry, it may be tempting to define strength in narrower terms. But doing so risks undermining one of the West's most important strategic assets. Openness – disciplined, governed, and anchored in strong institutions – is not a vulnerability. It is a source of sustained advantage.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Floor test

People were under the impression that Mr. Vijay's TVK party, which emerged as the single largest party in the recently held Tamil Nadu Assembly election, would be called by the Governor to form the government. To the surprise of all, the Governor has insisted that Mr. Vijay produce formal letters of support from enough MLAs before the swearing-in process can move forward.

It is questionable whether the Governor has such powers. The convention is that the Governor has to call the single largest party to form the Government which, in this case, is Mr. Vijay's party and subject him to the floor test to prove his majority within the shortest possible time. The Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in the *Bommai* case made it clear that the floor test is the only reliable test by which a

government can prove its majority. Such being the position, the Governor was not right in not inviting Mr. Vijay to form the government.

The Governor has not followed constitutional precedents and has assumed a power which he does not have. It is not out of place to suggest that the Governor's actions are unconstitutional.

N.G.R. Prasad  
Chennai

### Challenge for Congress

The Congress led UDF's return to power with a mandate of 102 seats is a rejection of the LDF's overbearing leadership. While the previous administration made strides in infrastructure, it collapsed under the weight of internal nepotism and a disconnect from the grassroots. For the UDF, the immediate challenge is to pivot from a campaign team into a cohesive governing

body. The unseemly lust for the Chief Ministerial post displayed by senior leaders has been an embarrassment. The new government also faces a daunting fiscal battle exacerbated by a perceived lack of support from the Central government. There is a growing and justifiable sentiment in Kerala that the Centre is failing to provide the State its due, particularly regarding the 16th FC's tax devolution.

Delivering on the five guarantees amidst such a strained treasury will require exceptional administrative competence.

S. Padmanabhan  
Kochi



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# Should the abortion law be amended for minor rape victims?



**Dipika Jain**

Executive dean & professor of law, director, Centre for Justice, Law and Society, Jindal Global Law School

**PARLEY**

**W**hy are so many pregnant persons approaching the courts for terminations? Do we need to remove time limits on abortions? Do abortion laws need to be delinked from criminal laws? How can access to safe abortions for all be improved? Dipika Jain and Alka Barua discuss in a conversation moderated by Zubeda Hamid. Edited excerpts.

**Can we start with an overview of abortion laws in India?**

**Dipika Jain:** There are two sets of laws that regulate abortion in India. Sections 88 to 94 of the BNS and the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971. Abortion is criminalised under Section 88 of the BNS, which means that a woman who terminates her pregnancy with her consent and the doctor who terminates her pregnancy with her consent can be criminalised. In 1979, there was an exception created via the MTP Act, which created a framework for conditional rights. Abortion is legal in India based on certain circumstances and conditions. The 2022 Supreme Court judgement also elaborates on abortion rights as fundamental rights. There are three components: unmarried women are entitled to seek termination; transgender persons are also included within the legal framework; and the right to terminate a pregnancy in India is part of [the] decisional autonomy of a woman or a pregnant person.

**Alka Barua:** The law looks fairly liberal, but there isn't broad and progressive interpretation at the ground level. And there are reasons for it. One, the law places decision-making authority primarily with the doctors. So this gives scope for refusal based on personal beliefs or misunderstanding or unawareness of law. The law's implementation doesn't take into account the fact that we have a shortage of certified providers and adequately equipped facilities. And this is particularly more so now when the gestational limit has been increased and later gestational terminations are more complex and require greater skills, better facilities. As long as abortion remains linked to a criminal law, it is socially stigmatised. And many women delay care or seek unsafe pathways in such situations.

**Is there a case to be made for the Supreme Court's asking for the removal of time limit**



**On paper:** The Supreme Court, in 2022, has said that it recognises reproductive decisional autonomy as a fundamental right. GETTY IMAGES

**on terminations of unwanted pregnancies in the case of minor rape victims?**

**DJ:** The MTP Act sets out general outer limits of 24 weeks, with only two exceptions. One is substantial foetal anomalies, which has to be certified by a medical board, and the other is to save the life of the pregnant woman. In the past, the Supreme Court has, on multiple occasions, allowed termination up to 33 weeks of pregnancy in cases of foetal anomalies. [This] exposes a gap between legal categories that are rigid and real life, medical and social situations. So if it is safe, and it is with the consent of the pregnant person, and the termination is allowed in cases of foetal anomalies, why can't terminations be allowed in other cases where late-term termination becomes important? For example, sexual assault, rape, drastic life challenges, mental health crises. In my opinion, anyone whose pregnancy is safe to terminate should be allowed to terminate it.

**AB:** The law has not taken into account ground-level reality. There is no need for such rigid gestational limits for terminations, particularly in cases of sexual assault survivors, minors, or adolescents, etc. One reason is, they tend to come late: because of the trauma, the stigma, the lack of awareness about their entitlements under the MTP Act; in case of minors and adolescents, they often do not even know that they have conceived till late pregnancy. Then, most do not have access to resources; they have restricted mobility. Delayed access is not out of choice but because institutions, family structures, violence prevent them from timely access. We believe that risk should be assessed clinically. If it can be safely provided based on clinical judgment, then why this inflexible statutory cut-off? The intent of the

law has to be interpreted more broadly rather than using it as a barrier to provide services.

**Do healthcare providers feel they may be at risk of criminal proceedings if they proceed with abortions?**

**DJ:** Abortion is criminalised under law. But there is also an exception, which if followed, on the basis of certain conditions, termination can be offered. However, because it is conditional and the burden of proof is on the doctor, complications arise. This is not a rights-based framework. It is a conditional, qualified framework and sets out very strict conditions. If you fail in any of these conditions, there can be chances of prosecution. We know that in 2021, a doctor in Meghalaya was put behind bars for a month on a termination he didn't even do. There are also other laws that complicate the criminal framework and liability, for example, the PCPNDT [and] POCSO. Why can't we move from a criminal framework to a rights-based reproductive justice healthcare framework?

**AB:** The reason for this is not only lack of awareness about what their obligations are, what the service seekers' entitlements are, but also lack of awareness among those who are enforcing the law at the ground level. Most service providers are worried about police involvement in cases of rape and minors. They are confused about documentation requirements. Then there are concerns about the uncertainty around pregnancies near the stipulated gestational limits. There are no clear protocols in place. All this, in addition to the fact that there is a social pressure, let's not forget that doctors belong to the same society as [that of] service-seekers. All this leads to a chilling effect. They don't want to provide services in such cases, particularly the later gestation cases.

**Are there other countries that allow for abortion on a demand basis rather than on a conditional basis? Is that what a reproductive health rights framework looks like?**

**DJ:** The Supreme Court in 2022 has said that it recognises reproductive decisional autonomy as a fundamental right. It means that the decision to terminate a pregnancy ultimately belongs to the pregnant person, not the doctor or the State. That's what the law is saying. Now, should that not also be the practice? If a pregnant person decides to terminate, why should the State impose so many conditions? Why can't it be

based on decisional autonomy and on demand? There are many countries that have at least early-term abortion on demand or on request, and that's exactly how our law should be.

**AB:** Irrespective of what the law is, our experience is [that] when a woman decides to terminate a pregnancy, she does get it terminated. If restrictions are there, you are literally pushing her towards unsafe service providers. The MTP Act came into existence to prevent unsafe abortions and maternal deaths because of that. And if that very law, because of the conditions it has included in it, is leading service seekers towards unsafe practices, then the point is lost. I [also] just wanted to distinguish between refusal on any grounds, be it ethical or professional, skill level, and denial of access. An individual service provider may decline to perform a procedure to which they have objections personally. The law says nothing against it right now. But then they should be made to refer the case, or ask someone else in the facility to provide the services.

**Would a law that lifts all conditions and allows for abortion on request be in conflict with the POCSO law where the State has to look into sexual assault?**

**DJ:** When the POCSO law was drafted, the focus was on child sexual abuse. Section 19 of the POCSO Act allows for mandatory reporting. What happens when it interacts with the MTP Act? In the MTP Act, when an adolescent or minor gets pregnant, they can seek termination. But when the adolescent walks into the hospital, the doctor has to report her mandatorily to the police. Now, what happens is, in case of a 16-year-old in a relationship with a 17-year-old boy, this 16-year-old girl will not go ahead and seek termination because she knows that the mandatory reporting will mean that the boy will be held for statutory rape. This is the problem. In 2022, the Supreme Court harmonised POCSO with the MTP Act. The court ruled that minors can access abortion services without their identities being disclosed. So to some extent, this has been addressed. However, it's not something that is working on the ground.



To listen to the full interview Scan the code or go to the link [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com)

**NOTEBOOK**

## Off the script on Bengal elections

Polls come and go but close encounters with marginalised people stick with a reporter forever and their unanswered questions continue to echo

Shrabana Chatterjee

**S**tanding inside the oldest coal mine of India in Raniganj, West Bengal, amid black dust, I could feel a song reach my ears. The women singing in a synchronised voice as they continued to dig for coal. It was solace, one that lingers on. Like Bertolt Brecht once wrote: In the dark times, will there also be singing? Yes, there will also be singing. About the dark times.

The song was often disrupted by an explosion for mining and the synchrony in the air was replaced with thick black smoke. As a lone reporter with no photographer accompanying, it was intimidating for me to navigate the coal belts and talk to the villagers in the area which has suffered from land subsidence due to mining.

The road led up to abandoned homes, broken walls, and soft soil where over 160 families still live, refusing to let the government stuff them into pigeon-holed one-room flats as part of their rehabilitation programme. "What about our land? Who will compensate us for our uprooted lives?" — these are the prominent questions in their minds.

As the State election wave recedes and campaigning parties go back, a common refrain in these parts is 'they didn't deliver on poll promises'. From the coal mines of Raniganj to the forests of Jhargram to the deleted voters of Murshidabad to the violence-hit people of Malda, anger over failed promises echoed from people.

Beyond Raniganj, though the landscape shifts, the disgruntlement is the same in Murshidabad too. In a district where some of the richest contest elections to represent the poorest electorate, the distance between political wealth and everyday poverty is massively wide.

These Muslim-dominated areas have been some of the worst-affected in the special intensive revision (SIR) process. The people say political parties sought their votes but did not restore their names in the electoral rolls. In Samsgeranj constituency, over 74,000 voters have been deleted, one of the highest in the State. The polls are over but their feeling of betrayal continues to simmer.

In these parts, it is a life of uncertainty for many. Parts of their homes have been

lost to Ganga erosion; what remains stands precariously, yet continues to be inhabited. Several residents say their names no longer appear on voter lists. Between the loss of land and the absence of documentation, their security and identity remain unsettled.

On the other side of the river lies Malda. Though constituencies change, river erosion, lack of jobs, and deletion of voters remain a common crisis. The tension in the lanes of Malda's Mothabari constituency was palpable, with local people largely tight-lipped. Many have been arrested for laying a siege to seven judicial officers in protest against the SIR process. Now, they spend sleepless nights fearing harassment and arrest by the National Investigation Agency. No amount of assurance seems to make them speak to reporters.

When access becomes uncertain in such volatile situations, sometimes silences are read as responses.

Many districts away, in Purba Bardhaman's Kalna area, hundreds of potato farmers have sustained massive losses due to over-production and crashing market prices. "What good will all this talk do? You cannot bring back the person I have lost. Have some water and leave," a grieving son of a potato farmer who died by suicide told me. Political parties gave assurances, but that was all.

Parties have made lofty promises of upliftment for the marginalised in Jhargram too. But people say polls come and go but their lives have not changed.

Across communities and districts, the complaints are not against any one political party or government. The frustration of having been failed by the system run deeper, sometimes generational.

Sometimes, such encounters in villages go off the script, where a reporter's presence makes them feel like some help will follow, with many bringing documents and asking if their names can be restored to the electoral rolls and some asking if a compensation can be arranged for the loss of crops or their homes. Many even ask if they will be detained or deported if their names do not feature in the electoral rolls. You sit in silence. The questions do not stop, even though clarity may not follow.

(shrabana.chatterjee@thehindu.co.in)

**PICTURE OF THE WEEK**

### Statement of a statesman



**Emotional encounter:** DMK President M.K. Stalin who lost from the Kolathur Assembly constituency in Chennai in the recent Tamil Nadu Assembly election visited the constituency on May 5 to thank people who voted for him. Party leader P.K. Sekarbabu is in tears as Mr. Stalin waves at supporters. PTI

**FROM THE ARCHIVES**



**FIFTY YEARS AGO** MAY 8, 1976

### Vigil over smuggling of antiquities

Madras, May 7: The Central Government has started enforcing a scheme to keep a strict vigil over smuggling of antiquities and to prevent illegal trade in the priceless art treasures. Steps have been taken by the Archaeological Survey of India to implement an Act that has been passed in 1972.

The Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972

has come into force all over India since early April, 1976. According to this, those who possess antiquities such as stone sculptures, bronzes, wood carvings, ivory carvings, coins, palm leaves, manuscripts and books, of more than 75 years old, are to be registered with an officer of the State Archaeological Department. The possessor has to obtain an application form from the concerned officer and submit the details back to him, with four photographs of each object. After scrutiny, the officer will issue a certificate to the owner, who will keep a register of the antiques with him. Those interested in carrying on business of antiquities should obtain a licence.

**A HUNDRED YEARS AGO** MAY 8, 1926

### No extension of strike

Rugby, May 7: Reports from all quarters indicate that no further extension of the general strike has occurred. Although in isolated instances strikers have resumed work, there is, on the whole, little change in the general situation. The strike of miners and railwaymen continues to be practically solid. In some Westmoreland pits mine workers are reported to have returned to duty and in other instances railway staffs have been reinforced by the return of a few men. No attempt is being made to reopen mines with volunteer labour, but railways, trams and omnibus systems are being increasingly operated by skilled and unskilled volunteers.

# Text & Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

**Children hospitalised after having mid-day meals in Bihar school**

**150** + Children fell ill after allegedly consuming mid-day meals at a government school in Bihar's Saharsa district, with over 100 admitted to the district hospital and others shifted to a local health centre. Family members of some children claimed that a snake was found in the meal, but the authorities have not made any comment on it yet. PTI

**Value of narcotic tablets seized near Nepal border in U.P.**

**1** in ₹ crores. Uttar Pradesh Police arrested three alleged interstate smugglers and seized banned narcotic tablets worth around ₹1 crore near the India-Nepal border in Maharajganj district during an anti-narcotics operation. The police said the trio had been active in the region for the past three months and used hired vehicles to transport the banned tablets. PTI

**Ex-Rajasthan minister arrested in Jal Jeevan Mission scam probe**

**960** in ₹ crores. Rajasthan's Anti-Corruption Bureau arrested former minister Mahesh Joshi in connection with the alleged ₹960-crore Jal Jeevan Mission scam involving fraudulent tenders and forged completion certificates, with multiple officials and contractors already under investigation. PTI

**Number of passengers handled by Kochi airport during 2025-26**

**1.14** in crores. Cochin International Airport handled more than 1.14 crore passengers during 2025-26, marking the fourth consecutive financial year in which it crossed the 10 million passenger milestone despite disruptions linked to airline operations and tensions in West Asia. The airport also recorded over 73,000 aircraft movements during the period. PTI

**Suspected mastermind arrested in fake firms and hawala racket**

**3,200** in ₹ crore. The Uttar Pradesh Police arrested a man accused of masterminding a network of fake firms, forged documents and suspected 'hawala' transactions worth more than ₹ 3,200 crore, with investigators probing links to GST fraud and possible terror funding. PTI

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## Scope of legal fiction in party mergers

Henry Maine called legal fiction an agency by which law adapts to changing societies. In the Indian context, a 1955 ruling delineating the scope of legal fiction, reaffirmed by the Supreme Court in March, sets limits that the law on defections has yet to absorb.

## LETTER AND SPIRIT

V. Venkatesan

The law has a long-standing habit of pretending: that an adopted child is the natural child of the adoptive parents, that a registered company is a person capable of suing and being sued. Sir Henry Maine, in *Ancient Law* (1861), called the legal fiction one of three great agencies, alongside equity and legislation, by which law adapts to changing societies.

The device has not been universally welcomed; historically, jurists worried that fictions allowed judges to make law in disguise. Lon Fuller, in his Stanford monograph *Legal Fictions* (1967), laid down the modern test: a fiction is honest only when its falsity is openly acknowledged; once it is "taken seriously", once people begin to treat the pretence as fact, it loses its utility and becomes dangerous. A fiction is a tool, fashioned for a defined end, and works only within that end.

## On legal fiction in India

In Indian constitutional law, the leading authority on this discipline is *Bengal Immunity Co. Ltd. vs State of Bihar* (1955), decided by a seven-judge Constitution Bench. The case concerned a Calcutta-based company that manufactured vaccines and sera and sold them to buyers in Bihar; Bihar sought to tax those sales by relying on a deeming clause then attached to Article 286(1) of the Constitution, which treated a sale as having taken place in the State where the goods were delivered for consumption. The Court rejected Bihar's argument, holding that the deeming clause served only to fix the location of a sale for one purpose and could not be stretched to override the separate constitutional bar on State taxation of inter-State trade. Acting Chief Justice S.R. Das laid down the formulation that has since governed: a legal fiction is created for a definite



In April, the Rajya Sabha Chairman accepted the merger of seven AAP MPs with BJP. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

purpose, must be limited to that purpose, and must not be extended beyond its legitimate field.

A complementary discipline came from Lord Asquith of the House of Lords in *East End Dwellings Co. Ltd. vs Finsbury Borough Council* (1952): one must imagine the necessary consequences of the fiction, but must not let imagination "boggle" beyond them. The Indian Supreme Court adopted that formulation in *J.K. Cotton Spinning and Weaving Mills Ltd. vs Union of India* (1987), confining a deeming fiction in the Central Excise Rules to its stated purpose.

That this discipline remains current was reaffirmed on March 10, 2026, in *Registrar Cane Cooperative Societies vs Gurdeep Singh Narwal* by the Supreme Court. The case concerned two sugarcane growers' cooperative societies, Bajpur and Gadarpur, whose villages had fallen partly in Uttar Pradesh and partly in Uttarakhand after the new State was carved out of Uttar Pradesh in 2000. Years later, a member of the Bajpur society argued that his society had automatically become a "Multi-State"

cooperative society on the date of bifurcation by virtue of a deeming clause in Section 103 of the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002. Justices P.S. Narasimha and Alok Aradhe rejected the argument. The deeming fiction in Section 103 had a defined purpose: to govern societies whose stated objects extended to more than one State. It could not be extended to undo a completed reorganisation of societies whose objects were confined to a single State. The case was about cooperative societies; the principle it applied governs every deeming clause in every statute.

## The merger of political parties

Among the deeming clauses of political consequence is paragraph 4(2) of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution (on disqualification for defection). Paragraph 4 protects legislators when their original political party merges with another and two-thirds of the legislature party agree to it.

The merger of the original party is the substantive condition; the legislative threshold is the verifying count.

Paragraph 4(2) provides that a merger "shall be deemed to have taken place if, and only if" the two-thirds is met. Read against the *Bengal Immunity* case, these words tell the adjudicator how to verify a merger that has happened in the original political party, not that the legislators' assent is itself the merger.

That distinction was settled, on a parallel clause, by a 2007 Constitution Bench in *Rajendra Singh Rana vs Swami Prasad Maurya*. The argument that a legislature-party threshold could itself satisfy the substantive event in the original party would, the Court said, render one limb of the clause redundant. The Court rejected it, holding further that the Speaker has no independent power under the Tenth Schedule to recognise either a split or a merger. The Punjab and Haryana High Court applied this in *Speaker, Haryana Vidhan Sabha vs Kuldeep Bishnoi* (2011): legislators alone cannot effect a merger; the original political party itself must take the substantive decision.

Recent practice, however, has allowed distortions. The Bombay High Court (Goa Bench) has twice upheld merger orders based solely on a two-thirds resolution of legislators, in 2022 and January 2025; the latter is under challenge before the Supreme Court. In April, the Rajya Sabha Chairman accepted, by administrative decision, the merger of seven Aam Aadmi Party MPs with the BJP on the same reading. A disqualification petition by the AAP has been filed. *Bengal Immunity* and *Rana*, read together, would have arrived at the opposite conclusion.

The reason is doctrinal. A deeming clause read as constitutive ceases to be a fiction. It becomes a substantive grant of power: the power of a faction of legislators to declare a merger that the parent political party has not authorised. That is the danger Fuller named and acting Chief Justice Das addressed when he confined legal fictions to their definite purpose.

(V. Venkatesan is a journalist and legal researcher.)

## THE GIST

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## How does Kerala plan to tackle oil spill hazards?

What prompted the drafting of the Oil Spill Contingency Plan? How will it help protect Kerala's coastline?

G. Krishnakumar

## The story so far:

Kerala had witnessed two shipwrecks off its coast involving two separate vessels - MSC Elsa 3 and MV Wan Hai 503 - on May 25, 2025 and June 9, 2025 respectively. The incidents had raised a serious threat to the State's marine ecosystem and coastal environment. The container ship MSC Elsa 3 went down with 640 containers, including 13 with hazardous cargo and 12 with calcium carbide. A large quantity of pellets, also called nurdles, had washed ashore on the southern coast following the incident. It prompted the authorities to step up efforts to formulate an Oil Spill Contingency Plan (OSCP). The Kerala State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB), which was entrusted by the government to initiate the required measures, had

awarded the work to a Bangalore-based firm. The agency submitted a report dated April 20, 2026 before the National Green Tribunal stating that the draft OSCP is ready.

Kerala has a coastal line of 590 km, and the entire coast is prone to oil spill disasters as one of the international oil transportation routes is adjacent to the State's coastal line. As per the terms of reference for preparing the OSCP, oil tankers and other ships visiting ports in the State pose a risk to the coastline areas, when they are involved in accidents. The proposal to prepare an OSCP was initiated in 2016 as part of a governmental review of the preparedness of major accident hazard units to handle chemical accidents. However, it got delayed due to various technical and financial hurdles. The scope of work included marine oil spills that occur within 12 nautical miles (24 km) of Kerala's coastline and riverine

systems extending 40 km inland or till tidal effect is evident, whichever is greater.

## What are the highlights of the OSCP?

It includes mapping the Environmental Sensitive Index of oil spills along the coast of Kerala and preparing response-focussed contingency plans. The framework will elaborate on the oil spill contingency planning guidelines, wildlife response plans, ship board pollution emergency plans and tactical oil spill booming/site response plans. It will also include guidelines for crisis management and marine emergency response plans. The OSCP will highlight mitigation measures to be initiated in the wake of an emergency, the responsibilities of various departments, oil spill risks and protection priorities, shoreline response operations, and administrative action for clean-up. It will

identify areas involving operation of fishing boats and ships, and map environmentally vulnerable areas along the State's coast.

The OSCP will recommend a detailed response plan with chain of command, duties and responsibilities. It will have the contact details, list of all available resources to be pressed into service in an emergency, and the database of available machinery or equipment for clean-up operations. The Plan will highlight the steps to be taken before initiating the shoreline clean-up, including assessment of shoreline oil characteristics, on-site conditions, methods to be adopted and the scope of work required in each area as per the priorities. The KSPCB has stated that the OSCP will be prepared in accordance with the guidelines of the National Oil Disaster Contingency Plan (NOS-DCP) of 2015, 2018 and 2024.

## What steps precede the final OSCP?

As per the KSPCB, the draft OSCP includes various aspects related to hydrodynamic, oil spill modelling, marine sensitivity index mapping and net environmental benefit analysis. It will be vetted by a committee of experts. The draft Plan will be submitted to the Indian Coast Guard - the central coordinating agency for combating oil pollution in the coastal and marine environment. The final OSCP will be published after receiving the required clearances.

## THE GIST

Kerala had witnessed two shipwrecks off its coast last year, raising serious threats to the State's marine ecosystem and coastal environment. It prompted the authorities to step up efforts to formulate an Oil Spill Contingency Plan.

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IN THE LIMELIGHT

# How Attenborough's imagery hid a history of colonial harm

David Attenborough's legacy of bringing nature's beauty to millions is unparalleled. However, his choice of aesthetics over politics sustained colonial myths and obscured the violent realities of modern conservation

Vasudevan Mukunth

The British natural historian David Attenborough turns 100 today. It is likely no one has done more to make the non-human world more legible and loveable to mass audiences. Attenborough's career as a host, starting with *Zoo Quest* in 1954, spans seven decades and nine documentary series. His influence on how several generations of people worldwide perceive ecology and conservation is unparalleled. Yet that is also what has made his work and his efforts to communicate it so troublesome.

**Moving animals out**

*Zoo Quest* made Attenborough famous, especially his genuine curiosity, but it also showed colonialism-like extractivism in action. The BBC filmed in exotic locations around the world, where wild animals would be captured and transported to the London zoo. While Attenborough has since said the show's attitude would not be acceptable today, he also stopped short of acknowledging the post-war infrastructure of British cultural imperialism it benefited from.

The BBC and London Zoo were producing *Zoo Quest* for the metropolitan British public, using tropical countries as theatres of spectacle. What the show represented also mattered to the BBC's history as its attitudes were baked into the broadcaster's Natural History Unit and subsequent productions.

Attenborough's own (professional) longevity has exacerbated his flaws. Among others, the English journalist George Mombiot has criticised Attenborough for saying almost nothing about the ecological catastrophe intensifying around him for decades. At various points in his career, Attenborough was feted for showcasing the beauty of the natural world – but which he often framed in a way to make it seem pristine, untouched by the difficult realities of ecological decline and the human hand in it. For reasons including the BBC's longstanding aversion to advocacy and his personal temperament, Attenborough chose aesthetics over the politics of harm. He told *The Guardian* in 2019 that he made "natural history programs not because I was a rampaging proselytizer preaching about conservation" but because he liked "looking at animals and seeing what they do". But the thing with being the voice of the planet, so to speak, is that what you do not talk about can become what does not merit being talked about, and eventually what is not real.

**Of people and tigers**

The BBC Natural History Unit for a long time presented the natural world as a space apart from the one humans lived in and shaped. This idea is closely related to fortress conservation – a conservation paradigm that, in India and elsewhere, has been inhumane to Indigenous peoples and communities that depend on forests for their survival.

Among other 'features', fortress conservation holds that natural parks and sanctuaries must be free of human presence. However, researchers, scholars, activists, and members of forest-dependent communities have



David Attenborough stands with a floral sculpture of himself at Kew Gardens in London. AP

repeatedly proved that this requirement is a myth. These communities have played an important role throughout history by protecting these forests. Yet governments and forest departments have been fond of fortress conservation because it confers the ability to conserve with the instruments of bureaucratic authority and territorial control, with guns if needed.

The idea also has a parallel in some western models of conservation, which believe the wilderness must be 'defended' against, even violently, by the people who live there – and in the case of shows like *Zoo Quest*, these people were often Africans and Asians. It does not brook the possibility, indeed reality, that national parks in Europe often have working farms and towns, partly because Attenborough's documentaries poured enormous ideological work, even if they did not intend to, into sustaining the myth of the pristine natural. As the anthropologist Zoe Todd has said, Attenborough has been guilty of presenting the Anthropocene as a world shorn of the violence against Indigenous peoples.

In one show, *Seven Worlds, One Planet*, Attenborough said India's tigers have it harder than ever to raise families. This is partly true and that makes his statement doubly irksome. Independent India did not massacre tens of thousands of tigers and push them to the brink of extinction – but the British Raj did. Today, India's tiger populations face fragmented habitats, poaching, dwindling prey, disease, conflicts with humans, and the

ravenous appetite of crony capitalism for natural resources. But India has also been striving to conserve the animal, with tiger populations expanding considerably since independence. Attenborough painted an incomplete picture, giving the impression that what he was showing people was all of it. Just like that, the supposedly clueless people in India were to blame for the tiger's plight rather than the forebears of his viewers back home.

In fact, many Indigenous peoples today also want to use land in non-traditional ways, and the overall tigers-versus-tribals debate is much less straightforward today.

**Problem focus**

Attenborough has also patronised the U.K.-based Population Matters charity for years and in many of his documentaries has emphasised population growth as an important, or even the principal, driver of ecological distress. The focus on population remains disturbingly vital to this day, particularly among conservation philanthropists. Many neo-Malthusian assumptions among environmental NGOs and government agencies are also being deepened by climate migration and human demographic pressure on agricultural land. But despite repeated exhortations to the contrary, the world's population growth rate has been dropping since the early 1960s, shortly after Attenborough launched his career.

On the other hand, a recent report from Oxfam and the Stockholm Environment Institute found that in the 25

years from 1990, the world's richest 1% emitted twice as much carbon dioxide as the poorest 50%. Which should rank consumption patterns and the habits of industrialised societies far higher than population growth on the list of contributions to climate change. Yet Attenborough has not clarified this.

Such ideologies often stem from the notion that the populations of Commonwealth countries are growing 'too fast' today, thus moving blame away from the colonists. But as before, when Attenborough said "humans have overrun the world", he furthered a deleterious idea and amplified it to millions of people without the proper context, and it did even more harm as it entered an information landscape primed by the anxieties of far-right ecological nationalism.

To be sure, Attenborough is not an ecofascist – only that he has seemed to be unaware of the great effects of what he was and was not saying at any time. He has never professed any political views even though environmentalism is deeply political. He told *The Guardian* in the same interview that he wouldn't risk getting banned from the BBC. But when your voice is the most trusted on the subject of the natural universe, and when you decline to name colonialism as a historical cause of biodiversity loss, you implicitly exonerate it. When you insist on speaking to an undifferentiated humanity – rather than one aware that a farmer in the Congo has done much less to harm the earth than an investment banker in the U.S. – your false equivalence only serves power.

Public backlash against fortress conservation is gaining an increasingly risible momentum and is bound to prevail, especially in Africa and South Asia, where the lines between conservation and land-grabbing are becoming clearer.

**Stopping at wonder**

To be fair, these criticisms are not exclusive to Attenborough: they have become the pathologies of conservation practices that have only just begun to interrogate themselves in good faith. Even in 2021, 50 countries came together to commit to the '30 x 30' initiative, to protect 30% of land and the oceans by 2030. It drew enthusiastic support from Attenborough but vehement criticism from Indigenous rights organisations for paving the way for a new wave of dispossession in the name of conservation.

Protected areas around the world, rather than in the Global South alone, are what they are today thanks to millennia of human stewardship as well, in particular that of Indigenous peoples. Mistreating these peoples leads to biodiversity loss. It is that simple, yet many mainstream conservation circles still think this a radical position and instead prefer Attenborough's sanitised aesthetics.

None of this diminishes Attenborough's other achievements. It is impossible to overstate the importance of his bringing the wild into the living rooms of people who may otherwise have never imagined a coelacanth swimming through an indigo sea or the mesmerising dance of birds against a twilight sky. Even the grief he voiced in the latter part of his career about what the world had lost in his own lifetime seemed sincere and meaningful.

Many wildlife biologists and ecologists have anecdotes about how they were inspired to get into their fields after watching Attenborough's documentaries. And they may have gone on to ask the questions that he never did. However, there is no reason to believe the vast majority of Attenborough's viewers were prodded in the same direction. *The author is grateful to conservation biologist Neha Sinha for her feedback.*



FROM THE ARCHIVES

## Know your English

S. Upendran

**What is the meaning and origin of the idiom "skeleton in the cupboard"?** (Sashidhara Nimbargi, Mysore)

The idiom, I understand, was popularised by the English novelist William Thackeray. The idiom itself is based on an earlier legend of a King trying to find someone who had no worries in the world. The story goes that a King wanted to find someone in his kingdom who was very happy; someone who didn't have problems of any kind. He sent many people from his court to find such a person. After a lot of searching, they found a lady who seemed to fit the description. When she was informed that she had been chosen as the one person in the entire kingdom who didn't have any problems, she took the men upstairs and opened a cupboard. Inside, there was a skeleton. She informed the men that the skeleton was that of her lover's. He had been killed by her husband in a duel. "I try", she says, "to keep my trouble to myself, but every night my husband compels me to kiss that skeleton."

When you say that you have a "skeleton in the cupboard" (or "closet", as the Americans call it), it means that something happened in the past which you and your family is trying to keep a secret. You and your family members are keeping the matter hidden because it is a great source of shame. Here is an example

The local politician assured us there were no skeletons in the cupboard.

**Is the following sentence correct? "...it should be the prerogative of the Government to decide from which branch the Secretary should come from.?"** (C. Selvamani, Bangalore)

The word "from" has been used twice, it should have been used only once. You could either say: ...from which branch the Secretary should come, or ...which branch the Secretary should come from.

**What is the leather patch that is put around the eyes of a horse called?** (K. S. Natrajan, Madurai)

The leather patches are called "blinkers". When these patches are fixed beside the horse's eyes, the animal is forced to look straight ahead; it cannot see what is happening at the sides. When you say that an individual wears blinkers, it means he has a limited view of something. He doesn't completely understand or know all aspects of a situation. Here are a few examples.

Satish prefers not to know about his friend's drug problems. He wears blinkers when it comes to that.

Mohan has blinkers on when it comes to politics.

**Why do we call the front room of a house the "drawing room"?** (Cedric Charles, Coimbatore)

In the old days, when guests were invited to dinner, the host and the guests had dinner in the dining room. Once dinner was over, the men remained in this room to have cigars and drinks. The ladies, on the other hand, withdrew to another room. The room that they went to was called the "withdrawing room". This was later shortened to "drawing room". So, the drawing room was actually a place which ladies retired to, so that men could smoke, drink, and presumably crack dirty jokes. *Published in The Hindu on July 25, 2000*

THE DAILY QUIZ

On May 7, 2025, cardinals gathered for the conclave that elected Pope Leo XIV, reviving global fascination with one of the world's oldest and most secretive electoral traditions.

Please send in your answers to [dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in](mailto:dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in)

Prathmesh Kher

**QUESTION 1**  
In which famous Vatican chapel is the conclave held?

**QUESTION 2**  
What colour smoke signals that a new pope has been elected?

**QUESTION 3**  
What title is given to the period when the papal throne is vacant?

**QUESTION 4**  
What famous Latin announcement declares the election of a new pope?

**QUESTION 5**  
What is the official residence where cardinals stay during a conclave?



**Visual question:** The present papal coat of arms bears the Latin motto "In illo uno unum". What does this expression mean in English? PUBLIC DOMAIN

**Questions and answers to the previous day's daily quiz:**

- The first inauguration of \_\_\_\_\_ as President of the largest country in the world (as per land area) took place on this day in 2000. **Ans: Vladimir Putin**
- The birthday of an Indian polymath who wrote and composed the national anthems of two countries, possibly influenced a third as well. **Ans: Rabindranath Thakur**
- Started as a radio repair business, this modest firm went on to pioneer major innovations in consumer electronics. Today, it is a multinational conglomerate involved in films, robotics, video games, finance and much more. Name the iconic Japanese company established in 1946. **Ans: Sony**
- On May 7, 1954, French forces were defeated by Vietnamese troops at Dien Bien Phu. The battle was part of this war. **Ans: First Indochina War**
- This famous composer premiered his Ninth Symphony in Vienna on May 7, 1824. The performance was conducted by Michael Umlauf because of concerns about the composer's severe hearing loss. **Ans: Ludwig van Beethoven**

- Nazi Germany signed an unconditional surrender on May 8, 1945, bringing the Second World War in Europe to an end. However, an earlier surrender document signed the previous day was rejected by the Soviet Union for this reason. **Ans: Because it was signed by a relatively low-ranking German officer and took place in France. The Soviets wanted a formal signing by a leading German general in capital Berlin**
- On May 7, 1999, the U.S.-led NATO accidentally bombed the embassy of this country in Belgrade during the Kosovo conflict. **Ans: China**
- This parliamentary confrontation beginning May 7, 1940, directly led to Winston Churchill replacing Neville Chamberlain as Britain Prime Minister. **Ans: The Norway debate**
- Visual: Heads of key neutralist nations of the Non-Aligned Movement at a meeting in 1960. Identify the leader on the far right, who was born on May 7, 1892. **Ans: Josip Broz Tito**
- Early birds: Sudhir Thapa | Pulkit Sathe | Dodo Jayaditya | Prem Nath Tiwari | Sonali Das

Word of the day

**Palpable:**  
so intense as to be almost touched or felt

**Synonym:** tangible

**Usage:** *The grief in the village was palpable after the tragedy.*

**Pronunciation:** newsth.live/ScdNO2/palpable

**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /pælpəbəl/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to [letters@thehindu.co.in](mailto:letters@thehindu.co.in) with the subject 'Text & Context'

# In Pulwama and Poonch, two schools bear the cost of conflict

Peerzada Ashiq  
SRINAGAR

A year on, two schools in Jammu and Kashmir, which bore the brunt of the four-day conflict between India and Pakistan in May last year, stand testimony to the cost of war, tragedy, and trauma.

With Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) on the other side of the nearby hills, the Christ High School in Poonch is finding it hard to bury the memories of the war. "Who would want a war that leaves children dead? In pursuit of justice for the Pahalgam victims, there was addition to the list of civilian deaths. War exposes the vulnerabilities of human beings," Father

Shijo, principal of the school, told *The Hindu*.

**Three students killed**  
Three students - Zain Ali and Urwa Fatima, twins who were in Class 5, and Vihaan Bhargav of Class 8 - were killed in Pakistani shelling when they were trying to move to safer locations between May 7 and 11. They were among 21 civilians, including five children, who died on this side of the border during Operation Sindoor, launched against Pakistan following a dastardly terror attack that left 26 civilians, including 25 tourists, dead in Pahalgam.

"Parents of two Class 5 students were evacuating them out of their native vil-

lage when a shell hit them. The third student was on the way to Jammu in a vehicle when splinters from a shell exploded and hit him," said Father Shijo, as he recalled how the town was hit by shelling for at least two days.

On the first anniversary of Operation Sindoor on Thursday, the staff members of the school, with 1,500 students, held silent prayers for the dead and visited the two families for a remembrance meeting, but avoided any ceremonial function on the campus.

"We did not engage students in any remembrance because it would have recreated the scenes. It took students more than four



Children at Madrasa Taleem ul Quran in Wuyan, Pulwama, which was affected during Operation Sindoor. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

months to come out of the trauma. We had to arrange local NGOs for counselling with students to comfort them. We also invited the parents last year, many of whom broke down while sharing their ordeal, to make them unburdened

emotionally," he said. The school had to club classes and shut the rooms where the students, who lost their lives, studied. "Students were not willing to study in the same classroom, especially bench-mates of the deceased. At

every sound of a cracker, students would get frightened. They lived in fear for many months," he said.

The school saw a major power shutdown during the war and relied on its borewell for water. Besides, the shelling shattered the windowpanes and damaged the roof. "We have rebuilt. In fact, we have an underground space in place, but it can accommodate only 200 people," he added.

**Awaiting compensation**  
Around 141 km away from the Poonch school, another school in Pulwama district tells a story of loss. The school was damaged in a blast, but since the nature of the explosion is still

unknown, it does not fall in the compensation list of those who suffered damage and were provided relief money. A two-storey building of the high school, Madrasa Taleem ul Quran, in Wuyan was hit by an unidentified aerial object before sunrise on May 7.

"I heard in the morning of May 7, the school was hit. I rushed to check the damage but was stopped by the security forces. Later, I saw the computer lab was completely damaged. We acquired a children safety certificate from the education department only after dismantling the building first. It was not safe. However, no compensation was provided," Shabir Ahmad Sheikh, coordi-

nator of the school, told *The Hindu*. Last June, the school sought financial assistance in the wake of ₹23 lakh loss incurred. "Revenue Department officials visited the school and had promised to provide the financial assistance once provided with the estimation of the school building damages," read the letter.

Mr. Sheikh said all expansion plans for the school, with 350 students, failed to take off because of the damage. Local legislator Waheed-ur-Rehman Parra too wrote to the government for compensation but to no avail.

With the nature of the blast yet to be established, the school awaits compensation.

## From Page One

### DMK explores backing AIADMK in hung House

Mr. Stalin, who had initially rejected the proposal, reportedly yielded to pressure from second-line party leaders and invited CPI(M) State secretary P. Shanmugam, CPI State secretary M. Veerapandian, and VCK leader Thol. Thirumavalavan to his house for discussions on Thursday. The DMK will not join the government, but the allies are free to take a decision, he reportedly told them.

The three parties hold the key to any further churn in Tamil Nadu politics. In fact, their combined support is crucial for both the TVK and the AIADMK to form a government. "A new situation has arisen after the election and we have to decide what should be the position of the Left parties. But it has never been part of our agenda that we would support the AIADMK," a senior communist leader said.

Currently, the TVK, with the support of the five elected candidates of the Congress, effectively has 112 seats in the 234-member House after accounting for the legal mandate for Mr. Vijay to resign from one of his two seats.

Should the AIADMK aspire to form a government without the support of the BJP's lone representative, it would require the support of its other allies Pattali Makkal Katchi (four seats) and Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (one), in addition to that of the DMK (59), the Indian Union Muslim League (two), and the six seats of the CPI, CPI(M), and VCK. It would give the alliance 120 seats.

While the two Communist parties sought time, stating their State committee meetings scheduled for Friday would take a final decision, Mr. Thirumavalavan indicated that he would follow the Communists' stand.

#### Growth trajectory

The resolution adopted by the DMK's MLAs-elect on Thursday further said that Tamil Nadu's growth trajectory could be sustained only if the welfare schemes implemented by the DMK government over the past five years continued without interruption. "The meeting unanimously empowers the party leader to take an emergency decision, taking into consideration the prevailing political and administrative situation," the resolution added.

Another resolution sharply criticised the Congress, the DMK's former ally, accusing it of betrayal after it quit the alliance and extended support to the TVK. "Congress was allotted a Rajya Sabha seat and 28 Assembly seats in the alliance. Yet, within three days of results being declared, it paved the mandate earned through the hard work of alliance partners to the rival camp. Even during seat-sharing talks, the Congress failed to condemn remarks made against the alliance," the resolution alleged.

The legislators' meeting referred to developments in Puducherry, where Congress candidates reportedly contested seats allotted to the DMK. "The rival candidates even met their party leader and sought his blessings. The Congress did not conduct itself sincerely even during the election campaign," another resolution said.

### Cong. high command to choose Kerala CM

Congress MLAs-elect who walked out after the meeting with the AICC members at the Indra Bhavan, the headquarters of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC), remained tight-lipped about their choices for the coveted post. After the Congress-led UDF's victory in the Assembly elections, a three-way fight had begun for the Chief Minister's post, with Mr. Satheesan, AICC general secretary (organisation) and Alappuzha MP K.C. Venugopal, and senior leader Ramesh Chennithala in contention. Congress workers held protests in support of Mr. Satheesan in Nettoor in Ernakulam district and at Peravoor in Kannur, the constituency of KPCC president Sunny Joseph.

P.K. Kunhalikutty, general secretary of key UDF ally Indian Union Muslim League, said that the party has conveyed its Chief Minister choice to AICC the observers.

## 'Operation Sindoor was a fitting response to terror'

To mark the first anniversary, PM lauds the armed forces for their bravery and dedication in attacking terrorist camps and military infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

To mark the first anniversary of Operation Sindoor, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday lauded the armed forces for their bravery and dedication in attacking terrorist camps and military infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

In a post on X, Mr. Modi said that a year ago, India's armed forces displayed "unparalleled courage, precision and resolve" during Operation Sindoor and gave a fitting response to those responsible for the Pahalgam terror attack.

He said the entire nation saluted the forces for their bravery and dedication. Mr. Modi added that Oper-



PM Narendra Modi highlighted the professionalism and preparedness of the armed forces during the operation. FILE PHOTO

ation Sindoor reflected India's uncompromising stand against terrorism and reaffirmed the country's commitment to national security.

Mr. Modi also highlighted the professionalism, preparedness and growing jointness among the armed forces during the operation. He said the mis-

sion underlined the strength India had achieved through self-reliance in the defence sector under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

Late on the night of May 6 and into the early hours of May 7, 2025, India launched Operation Sindoor - a coordinated military offensive involving the

Army, Air Force, and the Navy.

Mr. Modi changed his display picture across social media platforms to honour the courage and valour of the Indian armed forces.

The Prime Minister also urged citizens to change their profile pictures on social media as a tribute to the forces and the success of the operation.

#### Exclusive footage

Marking the occasion, the Indian Air Force released exclusive footage of Operation Sindoor at 1.05 a.m on Thursday. The 88-second video showcased precision strikes, coordinated military action and operational preparedness during the high-intensity counter-terror operation.

## Learnt several important lessons during conflict with Pakistan: military officials

Saurabh Trivedi  
NEW DELHI

On the first anniversary of Operation Sindoor, senior military officials asserted that India's response to cross-border terrorism had fundamentally altered the security landscape, with Lieutenant-General Rajiv Ghai declaring that no terror sanctuary inside Pakistan remains safe anymore.

Addressing a joint press conference in Jaipur with senior officers from the Indian Army, Air Force and Navy, Lieutenant-General Ghai, who served as the Director-General of Military Operations during Operation Sindoor, said the operation was "not an end, but just the beginning".

He stated that the operation continues in terms of preparedness and strategic planning. "We have imbibed several lessons during Operation Sindoor and accordingly, changes are



Lt. Gen. Rajiv Ghai

being made. The operation will remain in progress for as long as required," he said.

Detailing the scale of the military action, Air Marshal Awadhesh Kumar Bharti said the Indian Air Force destroyed nine terrorist camps on May 7 and later struck 11 Pakistani airfields. "We destroyed 13 of their aircraft, either on the ground or in the air, including one high-value airborne asset at a record distance of over 300 kilometres," he said, ad-

ding that evidence of the strikes was available for the world to see.

Vice-Admiral A.N. Pramod said Operation Sindoor exposed the limitations of Pakistan's nuclear deterrence narrative. He stated that India's use of long-range precision weapons demonstrated its ability to strike deep inside hostile territory while maintaining calibrated escalation.

He also highlighted the growing importance of uncrewed and autonomous systems in modern warfare and stressed the need for accelerated integration of such technologies into India's operational framework.

The External Affairs Ministry affirmed that India's position on the Indus Waters Treaty was consistent. The IWT was kept in abeyance in response to Pakistan's continued sponsorship of terrorism.

## Was a 'proper debate' held in Parliament on CEC and ECs appointment law, asks SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday asked if there had been a "proper debate" in Parliament about the "ethos" of its 2023 judgment that took the appointment of members of the Election Commission out of the exclusive hands of the political executive, namely, "the party which not unnaturally has an interest in perpetuating itself in power".

In a 2023 judgment in *Anoop Baranwal versus Union of India*, a Constitution Bench of the court had replaced the mechanism of the President appointing the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs) on the sole advice of the Prime Minister with a more participatory appointment process involving a three-member selection committee of the Prime Minister,



the Opposition Leader in the Lok Sabha, and the Chief Justice of India. The court had said the committee would be in place till Parliament brought in a law to replace it.

The Union government had brought in a law which reverted to the dominant role of the executive in the appointments of the CEC and ECs. Under the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service, and Term of Office) Act of 2023, the CJI was replaced in the

selection committee by a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.

"But was there a proper debate in Parliament about the *Anoop Baranwal* judgment? Is the ethos voiced in the judgment reflected in the Parliamentary debates... That is not clear," said Justice Dipankar Datta, heading a Bench comprising himself and Justice Satish Chandra Sharma.

Senior advocate Shadan Farasat, appearing for an intervenor, said the passing of the law had been preceded by an *en masse* suspension of Opposition MPs. "There was no proper debate in the Parliament," he said.

"A majority of the Opposition was suspended. [AIMIM MP Asaduddin] Owaisi was the sole objector," advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for Association for Democratic Reforms, submitted.

## Nida Khan, accused in TCS case, arrested

The Hindu Bureau  
MUMBAI

Over 40 days after a first information report was registered against her in a rape and sexual exploitation case, suspended TCS employee Nida Khan was ta-

ken into police custody in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar late on Thursday night.

The arrest was made in a joint operation by the Nashik SIT, the Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar Crime Branch and the Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar Police

Commissioner. "Ms. Khan has been taken into custody from Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar. We are in the process of completing the legal action now," said Assistant Commissioner of Police Sandip Mitke, who heads the Nashik Police

SIT. She would be produced in court thereafter.

Recently, a Nashik court had refused Ms. Khan's anticipatory bail application after the prosecution claimed that she had links in Malaysia and in Malegaon.

**APPEAL**  
Mr. Samartha, Mazumdar Shaw Medical Center, MRN No.10020001859257, 13 years is diagnosed with Aplastic Anemia. The only curative treatment is Bone Marrow Transplant. We are planning an Allogeneic Bone Marrow Transplant using the sibling as the stem cell donor for the patient. The Approximate cost for the transplant is Rs.23,50,000/-  
Please send donation however small by Cheque/D.D./M.O Fav. Save Poor Lives A/c Samartha, Our A/c Details: S/B A/c No. 20000913487, S.B.I. R.A.Puram, IFSC CODE:SBIN001855. Please Donate by G-pay No.984607377. UPIID: savepoorlives@okxsi. Donations are exempted under 80G of I.T.ACT.  
SAVE POOR LIVES, Flat No. A1, Ceebros Garden, Door No.14/76, Kamarajar Salai, Raja Annamalaiapuram, Chennai-600028. Ph. No. 044 42044165 / 984607377. Email: savepoorlives@gmail.com. Our website: www.savepoorlives.com

'T.N. Governor should invite Vijay, ask for a floor test'

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The correct course of action for the Tamil Nadu Governor would be to invite C. Joseph Vijay-led Tamila-ga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) to form the government and prove his majority on the floor of the State Assembly, former Union Law Minister Ashwani Kumar said on Thursday.

Reacting to the evolving political situation in Tamil Nadu, Mr. Kumar said constitutional conventions and judicial precedents make it clear that when a party stakes claim, the appropriate constitutional process is to allow it an opportunity to demonstrate majority support through a floor test in the Assembly.

"The due process argument attributed in the media to the Governor of Tamil Nadu is seen as a graceless stratagem on the part of the Governor to delay Vijay's swearing-in despite a deafening popular mandate in his favour. It is obvious that under the present circumstances, none other can or does command legislative majority," Mr. Kumar said in a statement.

"Constitutional conscience owes no apology to technicalities. Delaying the swearing-in of Vijay is a political outrage and a constitutional heresy," he further said.

# Governor must ensure formation of a stable government in a State

The Governor should prevent complete breakdown of constitutional machinery leading to President's Rule in a State; it will be a failure of constitutional machinery if no party or group is able to command a majority to form a popular government

## NEWS ANALYSIS

Krishnadas Rajagopal  
NEW DELHI

The insistence that Tamila-ga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) president C. Joseph Vijay must prove majority support in the Legislative Assembly is based on a time-tested legal principle that a Governor's first priority is the formation of a stable government to prevent the State from slipping into a situation of complete breakdown of constitutional machinery, leading to President's Rule.

Supreme Court precedents have said a Governor cannot refuse to allow the formation of a government once the majority is established. The only exception could be where the Governor is of the view that a stable government may not be formed by the claimants. On the other hand, the court has noted that a Governor is not expected to wait indefinitely, and in the process, encourage defections or adoption of other objectionable activities.

The apex court and the Sarkaria Commission have highlighted the importance of giving Governors



TVK chief Vijay meets Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Arlekar in Chennai on Wednesday to stake claim to form a government. ANI

reasonable time to "explore alternatives with political parties, groups and Independent MLAs" to form a stable government. The phrase "reasonable time" is not defined in the Constitution.

The "alternatives" before the Governor in a hung Assembly will be to invite a pre-poll alliance of parties with the largest number of seats to form the government first. The single largest party will be the second option if it could show majority support. A post-poll alliance or coalition is the last option before the Governor.

A nine-judge Bench in the 1994 S.R. Bommai judg-

ment, while endorsing this hierarchy of preference, liberally added that the Governor could either go for the single largest party or "group". It did not matter whether the "group" was formed before or after the election. It would be a case of failure of constitutional machinery if these alternatives fail, and no party or group is able to command a majority to form a popular government.

"Suppose after general elections, no political party or coalition of parties or groups is able to secure absolute majority in the Legislative Assembly and despite the Governor's exploring the alternatives,

the situation has arisen in which no political party is able to form stable government, it would be a case of completely demonstrable inability of any political party to form a stable government commanding the confidence of the majority members of the legislature. It would be a case of failure of constitutional machinery," the court observed in the Bommai judgment.

### Partisan politics

However, the Supreme Court, in its seven-judge Bench judgment in *Rameshwar Prasad versus Union of India*, has also cautioned against Governors misusing their office for partisan politics.

"Whether it is a case of an existing government losing majority support or of installation of a new government after fresh elections, the act of the Governor in recommending dissolution of Assembly should be only with the sole object of preservation of the Constitution and not promotion of political interests of one or the other party," the court said.

The Rameshwar Prasad case flagged the criticism recorded in the Sarkaria Commission that Governors have, more often than

not, used their powers to recommend President's Rule under Article 356 to "promote the political interests of the party in power at the Centre".

"It is seen that one day a person is in active politics in as much as he holds the office of the Chief Minister or Minister or a party post and almost on the following day or, in any case, soon thereafter, the same person is appointed as the Governor in another State with hardly any cooling period. Ordinarily, it is difficult to expect detachment from party politics from such a person while performing the constitutional functions as Governor," the court had highlighted the need for a "cooling-off period".

Supreme Court judgments have acknowledged that coalition governments have become the norm rather than a rarity.

"Coalition governments are in place in several States and in fact at the Centre. There is nothing wrong in post-poll adjustments, and when ideological similarity weighs with any political party to support another political party though there was no pre-poll alliance... There is nothing wrong in it," the court has observed.

# T.N. govt. formation: CPI(M), CPI chiefs denounce Arlekar

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI



M.A. Baby

The CPI(M) and CPI on Thursday denounced Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar's decision not to call Tamila-ga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) chief C. Joseph Vijay to form the government, calling it "undemocratic" and an "insult" to the mandate given by the State's voters.

CPI(M) general secretary M.A. Baby cited the example of the 13-day BJP-led government of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the Centre in 1996. "Everyone knew that Vajpayee did not have the numbers. Still, he was allowed to form a government and a Parliament session was convened for him to show his strength," Mr. Baby said, while arguing that by virtue of being the single largest party in the Tamil Nadu Assembly, TVK should be called to form the government.

"No one has staked claim to form government, it is highly objectionable and undemocratic to ignore the verdict given by the people," Mr. Baby said.

CPI general secretary D. Raja said the strength of a government has to be tested on the floor of the Assembly and not in the Governor's house. "The mandate is in favour of TVK. This should be recog-

nised. The Governor should call upon the single largest party to form the government... Governors should act in accordance with practices and conventions of a multi-party democracy," he said.

Both the general secretaries did not clarify whether the Left parties will extend support for TVK or not. "We fought as part of Secular Progressive Alliance to stall BJP... BJP should not be allowed unethical tricks to create trouble for people," Mr. Raja added.

In the results to the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly, the TVK emerged as the single largest party with 108 seats while the ruling DMK came down to 59 seats and the AIADMK secured 47 seats in the 234-member House.

Since the verdict threw up a hung Assembly, the TVK has been working to gather support from other parties to form a government in Tamil Nadu.

# Akhilesh Yadav calls on Mamata Banerjee, says Trinamool fought well

Shiv Sahay Singh  
KOLKATA

Samajwadi Party (SP) leader Akhilesh Yadav called on Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee and her nephew Abhishek Banerjee in Kolkata on Thursday.

Mr. Yadav reached the Kalighat residence of the former Chief Minister. "You fought very well," he said to Mr. Banerjee, who received the SP leader.

"We have lost," Ms. Banerjee told him.

"No, no, you have not lost," Mr. Yadav replied.

Speaking to media persons after the meeting, Mr. Yadav alleged that the votes for the West Bengal Assembly election had been stolen by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Election Commission of India (EC), and other agencies. "We are in this battle with *Didi* [Mamata Banerjee] because we have to save democracy and the Constitution. If the right to vote is taken away, then what remains of democracy?" he said.

"*Didi* is not a person to be disappointed. She is a



Show of support: Akhilesh Yadav meets Mamata Banerjee at her residence in Kalighat, Kolkata, on Thursday. PTI

person of struggle. The BJP is patriarchal and feudal. That is why *Didi* has been targeted, because she is a woman," he said.

The meeting between the leaders of the two Opposition parties assumed political significance amid efforts by the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc to recalibrate its strategies after the elections in several States.

The Trinamool chairperson, in her first media interaction after the loss, said she would work to strengthen the INDIA bloc.

After the meeting, the Trinamool, from its official

X handle, shared photographs of the leaders to say, "Some bonds transcend politics and time, growing stronger through every season."

Following the Trinamool's loss in the recently concluded West Bengal election, several leaders of the INDIA bloc, including Sonia Gandhi, reached out to Ms. Banerjee. Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Yadav, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Arvind Kejriwal, and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) chief and Chief Minister of Jharkhand Hemant Soren had campaigned for the Trinamool Congress.

# Nitish's son among 32 Ministers inducted into new Bihar Cabinet

Amarnath Tewary  
PATNA

Thirty-two Ministers, including Nishant Kumar, son of former Chief Minister and Janata Dal(U) chief Nitish Kumar, took oath at Patna's historic Gandhi Maidan on Thursday as the Cabinet of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government in Bihar led by Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary was expanded.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Union Ministers Rajnath Singh and J.P. Nadda, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Nitin Nabin, Mr. Nitish Kumar, and a host of other senior NDA leaders were present.

The sons of three erstwhile Bihar Chief Ministers are Ministers in the new Cabinet - apart from Mr. Nishant Kumar, Nitish Mishra, son of former Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra, and Santosh Kumar Suman, aka Santosh Manjhi, son of former Chief Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi were sworn-in.

The new Cabinet retains most faces from the previous Cabinet under Mr. Nitish Kumar, with some new faces, including Mr.



Sharing stage: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Nitish Kumar at the Bihar Cabinet swearing-in ceremony in Patna on Thursday. ANI

Nishant Kumar, Shweta Gupta and Shailesh Kumar, aka Bulu Mandal from the JD(U); and Mithlesh Tiwari from the BJP. Senior Bihar BJP leader and Minister Mangal Pandey, along with two other party leaders, Surendra Mehta and Narayan Prasad, were dropped from the Cabinet amid speculation that Mr. Pandey, who had been a Minister for several terms, would soon be given a major role in the party's organisation in view of the Assembly election in other States.

Apart from Mr. Choudhary from the BJP, and the two Deputy Chief Ministers from the JD(U), Vijay Kumar Choudhary and Bijendra Prasad Yadav, the NDA

Ministry has 15 members from the BJP, 13 from the JD(U), two from the Lok Janshakti Party-Ram Vilas (LJP-RV), and one each from the Hindustani Awam Morcha-Secular (HAM-S) and Rashtriya Lok Morcha (RLM).

The Chief Minister and two Deputy Chief Ministers took oath on April 15 at Lok Bhavan in the State capital, after Mr. Nitish Kumar took oath as a Rajya Sabha member on April 10.

The new Cabinet reflects a combination of castes, communities, and gender, with a focus on representation of Other Backward Classes, Extremely Backward Classes, the upper castes, Scheduled Castes, and women.

Of the women Ministers, Lesi Singh, Shweta Gupta and Sheila Mandal are from the JD(U), while Shreyasi Singh and Rama Nishad are from the BJP.

The NDA Cabinet in Bihar now has 35 members.

The 243-member Legislative Assembly can have a maximum of 36 Ministers.

The highlight of the ceremony was the induction of Mr. Nishant Kumar, 44, who earlier expressed reluctance to be sworn in as a Deputy Chief Minister, and said he wanted to strengthen the party's organisation first. He set off on a "Sadbhav (goodwill) Yatra" on May 3 from Bagaha in West Champaran district, where party leaders were seen congratulating him on not joining the Cabinet as Mr. Choudhary's deputy.

The JD(U)'s working president Sanjay Kumar Jha, and Munger MP and Union Minister of Panchayati Raj Rajeev Ranjan Singh, alias Lalan Singh, both considered close confidants of Mr. Nitish Kumar, are said to have convinced Mr. Nishant Kumar to join the new Cabinet. Mr. Nishant Kumar was seen touching the feet of his father and Mr. Shah on the dais.

# EC lifts model code in States where polls concluded

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Thursday announced the lifting of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) following the declaration of results of Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and the Union Territory of Puducherry, and bye-elections in the Assembly constituencies in Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Nagaland, and Tripura.

The MCC would, however, remain operational in Falta of West Bengal, where a fresh poll has been ordered by the panel.

"Now that the results in respect of general election to the Legislative Assemblies of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and U.T. of Puducherry, 2026 and by-elections in constituencies of Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Nagaland, and Tripura have been declared by the concerned Returning Officers... the Model Code of Conduct has ceased to be in operation with immediate effect," the EC said in a letter to the chief secretaries and Chief Electoral Officers of these States.

# 'Canada must act against anti-India extremist elements'

Press Trust of India  
NEW DELHI

India on Thursday called upon Canada to act against "anti-India extremist elements" operating from Canadian soil against the backdrop of a Canadian intelligence report highlighting the national security threat posed by Khalistani elements.

The annual report for 2025 by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), released last week,

said the involvement of Canada-based Khalistani extremists in "violent extremist activities" continued to pose a national security threat to Canada.

"India has repeatedly urged the Canadian government to take effective action against anti-India extremist elements operating from its soil. This includes addressing the issue of glorification of violence, threats against Indian leaders and diplomats, vandalism of places of worship,



Randhir Jaiswal

and attempts to promote secessionism through so-called 'referendums'," Ministry of External Affairs

spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing.

He said India had consistently spoken out about concerns regarding the use of Canadian territory as a "safe haven" by extremist elements. "The CSIS assessment acknowledges the presence of supporters of the Khalistan separatist movement and notes that Canada-based Khalistani extremist (CBKE) groups continue to pose a national security threat not only to

India but also to Canada."

To a separate question on the CSIS report mentioning India, alongside China, Russia, Iran and Pakistan, among the "main perpetrators of foreign interference and espionage against Canada", Mr. Jaiswal said New Delhi had consistently rejected such "baseless imputations".

"India is a democracy that adheres to international norms and respects the sovereignty of other nations..."

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**Rama Devi Women's University,**  
Vidya Vihar, Bhubaneswar, Odisha-751022.

Ph.no-0674-2542644, E-mail-[registrar@rdwu.ac.in](mailto:registrar@rdwu.ac.in), Website-<https://rdwu.ac.in>

No. 4152 / Dt. 30.04.2026

**RECRUITMENT NOTICE**

Applications are invited from eligible candidates as per UGC eligibility criteria (UGC Notification 18th July 2018 and subsequent amendments) to fill up various regular faculty positions (including backlog vacancy) in the Departments of Botany, Business Administration, Chemistry, Commerce, Computer Science, Economics, Education, English, Gender Studies, Hindi, History, Home Science, Journalism & Mass Communication, Life Science, Mathematics, Music, Odia, Philosophy, Physics, Political Science, Psychology, Sanskrit, Sociology, Statistics and Zoology of Rama Devi Women's University. Please refer website: <https://rdwu.ac.in/> for vacancy details notification wise.

**Positions:**

a) Professors (Notification No. 4149, dt. 30.04.2026)  
b) Associate Professors (Notification No. 4150, dt. 30.04.2026)  
c) Assistant Professors (Notification No. 4151, dt. 30.04.2026)

The filled application must be submitted online through the HRMS Portal (<https://hms.odisha.gov.in/>), which will be available from 07.05.2026 onwards. Candidates are required to complete the application in all respects and upload all necessary supporting documents on or before 10.06.2026.

In addition, a hard copy of the downloaded submitted application along with all relevant documents, must be sent only via Speed Post to the Registrar, Rama Devi Women's University, Vidya Vihar, P.O.-Bhoi Nagar, Bhubaneswar-751022, District-Khorda, (Odisha) so as to reach on or before 20.06.2026.

For detailed information, please visit University website <https://rdwu.ac.in/>

By Order of the Vice Chancellor  
Registrar

11001/37/2627

OIPR-11001/11031/11/26-27/0003

## INBRIEF



## HC issues notice to NDTV over Anil Ambani's complaint

The Delhi High Court issued notice to NDTV on Thursday over a defamation suit filed by businessman Anil Ambani over the channel's reportage concerning cases registered by the CBI and the Enforcement Directorate against companies linked to him. Counsel appearing for Mr. Ambani submitted that there had been 72 "targeted publications" against him over the past eight months. It was argued that despite Mr. Ambani being distinct from the entities under investigation, his name was repeatedly highlighted whenever action was initiated against any of the companies. The court has listed the matter for further hearing in July.

## SC appoints former CJ as mediator in Kapur estate row

The Supreme Court on Thursday appointed former Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud as mediator to facilitate a settlement in the bitter inheritance dispute within the family of late businessman Sanjay Kapur, after the contesting factions agreed to attempt an amicable resolution. A Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Ujjal Bhuyan also advised members of the Kapur family against making public statements or posting on social media about the dispute for the "entertainment of others". "It is a family dispute. Let it be confined to the family only. It should not be a source of entertainment", the Bench observed.

## Myanmar's Kuki ultras attack Nagas in Manipur

Rahul Karmakar  
GUWAHATI

Myanmar-based Kuki extremists allegedly carried out a pre-dawn attack on Naga villages in the ethnic conflict-hit Manipur's Kamjong district, bordering Myanmar on Thursday.

According to an apex body of the Tangkhul Nagas, at least 100 heavily armed men attacked three villages located close to the international border, fired indiscriminately, and set 18 houses ablaze.

Two civilians sustained bullet injuries while several others were rounded up at gunpoint and tortured by the armed men, the Working Committee of the Tangkhul Naga Long (TNL) said in a statement.

The TNL alleged that the Kuki National Army-Burma, backed by the People's Defence Force (an anti-junta Myanmar armed group), carried out the coordinated attacks on the three villages.

"The civilian settlements were heavily bombed with drones, and rocket launchers, destroying several houses while some were razed to the ground," the TNL stated. "The incident occurred just about 200 metres from the II Assam Rifles company station."

# Vehicles with fake plates used in Bengal shooting

The police recover car, two-wheeler used by assailants who shot dead aide of Suwendu; BJP leader alleges it is a targeted assassination and demands death penalty for the killers; SIT begins probe

Shrabana Chatterjee  
KOLKATA

Vehicles bearing fake number plates have emerged as a key link in the killing of Chandranath Rath, personal assistant to Suwendu Adhikari, the outgoing Leader of the Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, late on Wednesday night, according to the West Bengal police.

A Special Investigation Team has been formed to probe the attack, and forensic experts have visited the scene of the crime in Madhyamgram in North 24 Parganas district.

Rath, 41, was in a white car when he was shot three times at point-blank range and sustained severe injuries. He was declared dead at a private hospital. A silver car used by the attackers was abandoned near the crime spot, and the culprits reportedly fled on two-wheelers. The police have seized the four-wheeler.

"The number plate of the car was tampered with because the original registration number is from Siliguri. This was a fake number plate. We have



A crowd gathers at the Barasat Medical College and Hospital, where an autopsy was done on Rath's body. SHRABANA CHATTERJEE

collected evidence from the spot. We are conducting further investigation," Director-General of Police Siddhi Nath Gupta said in the early hours of Thursday. One of the motorcycles used to flee the crime scene has also been recovered, and is also reported to have used a fake number plate.

"If he was not my aide or I did not defeat [outgoing Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee] in Bhabanipur, maybe they would not have targeted Rath. His crime was being my personal assistant," Mr. Adhikari said, after visiting his aide's family at the Barasat Medical College and Hospital,

where a post-mortem examination was conducted.

Alleging that this was a targeted attack by hired assassins who had reced the location for a week before carrying out the murder, the BJP leader called for the killers to face the death penalty.

Rath, fondly remembered as Chandra, was a pilot by profession, but had quit and held a private job for some time before he started working for Mr. Adhikari eight years ago. He had a residence in Madhyamgram's Doharia area which is where he was heading on Wednesday.

"I heard gunshots and ran to the place. The car

## Harassed by group of men during flight, alleges Moitra

Press Trust of India  
NEW DELHI

Trinamool Congress Lok Sabha member Mahua Moitra on Thursday alleged that she had faced harassment from a group of men on board an IndiGo flight while travelling to Delhi to attend a meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence.

In a post on the social media platform X, the Trinamool MP said: "...Was on seat 1F on 6E 719. 4-6 men boarded in a group & leered at me & went to back of plane," Ms. Moitra wrote, sharing a video.

She alleged that after the flight landed and before the aircraft doors opened, the men heckled her and filmed the episode. "This is no 'citizen anger'. This is harassment & violates my safety in an aircraft. No way that these louts can get away with this," she said.

Ms. Moitra tagged IndiGo and Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu Kinjarapu. "Find your crew report, name & shame them & put on no-fly list," read her post.

Ms. Moitra said she would send a complaint to the airline. There was no immediate response from IndiGo or the Ministry.

## Govt. rolls out plan for free health checks for workers

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Union Labour Ministry on Thursday launched a scheme for free health check-ups for all workers above 40 years of age across the country every year.

Inaugurating the scheme, Union Minister of Labour Mansukh Mandaviya said it will be a major milestone in strengthening occupational healthcare and social security coverage for India's workforce.

He said the government is committed to strengthening social security coverage for all workers.

"The Employees State Insurance Corporation coverage has increased from around seven crore beneficiaries a decade ago to nearly 15 crore beneficiaries today," he said.

## Webinar to explore trends, opportunities in visual media careers

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

VIT Chennai, in collaboration with *The Hindu Education Plus*, will organise a webinar on 'Visual media careers: where to start and how to succeed' as part of its career counselling series.

The visual industry offers diverse career opportunities with the rapid expansion of digital platforms, content creation and social media storytelling. The webinar aims to help students, aspiring creators, and young professionals with practical insights into emerging trends, career pathways, higher education opportunities, industry expectations and portfolio building.

The resource persons include Padmanabhan T.,



Associate Professor, School of Media Arts and Technology, VIT Chennai; C. Pichandy, Eminent Professor - Media and Communication, PSG College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore; and Suresh Chandra Menon, actor, writer, and director.

The session, scheduled for 11.30 a.m. on May 10, will be moderated by journalist Soma Basu.

Those interested may register at [newsth.live/THVITVE](https://newsth.live/THVITVE)

# Census enumerators not allowed into Gurugram's apartment buildings

Vijaita Singh  
NEW DELHI

In one of the first such instances, the Haryana administration has recommended the registration of a first information report (FIR) against two government school staffers for alleged negligence in Census-related work and for obstructing government duties. The Census Act allows for up to three years' imprisonment for such offences.

The criminal action comes even as Census enumerators, mostly government school teachers, complained of hostile behaviour and denial of entry by residents of high-rise apartment buildings and residents welfare associations (RWAs).

On Thursday, Gurugram



Mritunjay K. Narayan flags off mobile vans for Census 2027 at Jangana Bhawan, New Delhi.

Municipal Corporation Joint Commissioner and Census Nodal Officer Punit Kumar said that Census enumerators had been denied entry to several housing societies despite showing their identity cards. He said he has informed all RWAs and managements of housing societies

that the government has deputed officers and enumerators for Census work and directed that they be allowed to carry out their work.

**Awareness campaigns**  
Registrar General of India Mritunjay Kumar Narayan flagged off six awareness vans on Thursday as part of the Census 2027 public outreach campaign in Delhi for the ongoing first phase, the Houselisting and Housing Census (HLO). These vans will travel across Delhi, carrying messages on Census participation, the self-enumeration facility, key features of Census 2027, and the importance of public cooperation with enumerators during field visits, a government statement said.

## Delhi urges Dhaka to expedite verification of 2,800 illegal immigrants

Kallol Bhattacharjee  
Suhasini Haider  
NEW DELHI

The repatriation of Bangladeshi citizens who are illegally staying in India is a "core issue" in the Delhi-Dhaka relationship, the External Affairs Ministry said on Thursday.

Responding to comments from Bangladesh's new government about possible "push-ins" from the Indian side, Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal sought Dhaka's cooperation on expediting the repatriation of at least 2,862 identified illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

"These comments must be seen in the context of the core issue of repatriation of illegal Bangladeshis from India. This requires cooperation from Bangladesh. Over 2,862 cases of

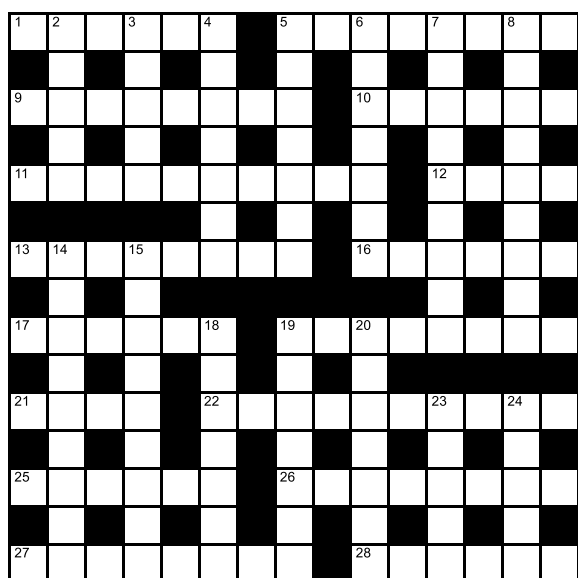
nationality verification are pending with Bangladesh, some for over five years," Mr. Jaiswal said.

India expects Bangladesh to "expedite nationality verification" of these identified individuals so that "repatriation of illegal immigrants can take place in a smooth manner," he said. "Our policy is that all illegal foreign nationals staying in India must be repatriated as per our laws, procedure and established bilateral arrangements," Mr. Jaiswal added.

The Indian response came days after Bangladesh Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman and Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said Dhaka would take "appropriate measures" if attempts are made to "push-in" individuals from India across the border.

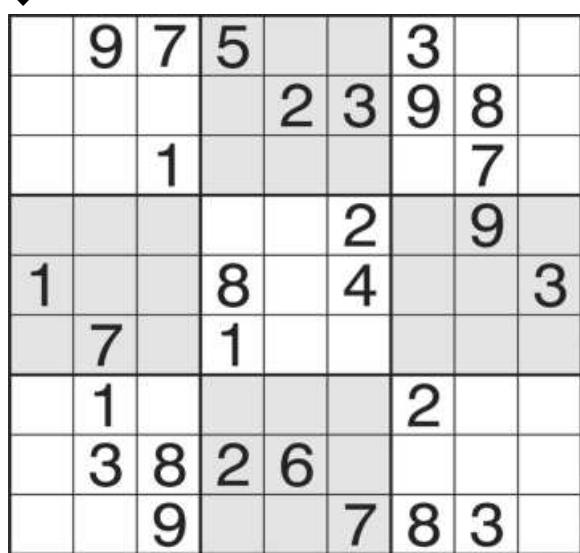
## THE CROSSWORD+ 14788

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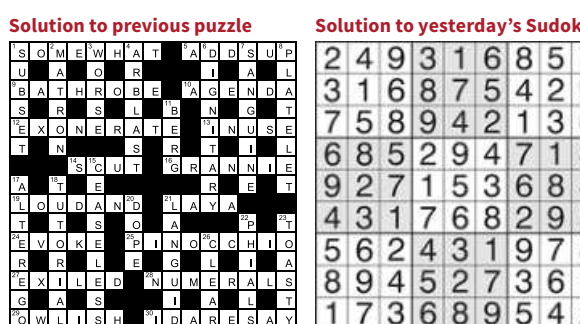


- Across**
- Remove new individual entering party (6)
  - Before church work, Louisiana doctor gets a small cut of meat (4,4)
  - In all likelihood, expert will get bowled cleverly (8)
  - Uncover study collecting funds frequently by extortion primarily (6)
  - Fine clothing for lawyer who's given to looting (10)
  - One's getting married at morning with religious leader (4)
  - Case for reconstructing casino after one crack in the front (8)
  - Residents of Borneo condemn a Tory, perhaps (6)
  - Greek essentially follows specialist in main course (6)
  - Dangerous tide came to devastate (8)
  - Son to sleep at break (4)
  - Innocent publican set free by rifleman essentially (10)
  - Claire cycled back to get pastry (6)
  - Say Man, settles to cover for a patterned fabric (8)
  - Mutinuous mean lad obstructs rule to become a municipal officer (8)
  - Insect can have family (6)
- Down**
- Say, a drier is lighter, foot's short (5)
  - A doctor's half dead at plant (5)
  - A composer in Hawaii gets a brazier (7)
  - State that lady won somehow (3,4)
  - Mohammad is only confining to US state capital (7)
  - Type of writing made of numeric characters (9)
  - Even woman in counter can be an anomaly? (3,3,3)
  - Can California arrest one falling short? Primarily is it accepted by law? (9)
  - A new parolee fled on a flier (9)
  - Witty remark on two animals found behind creek essentially (7)
  - Zero power used in a sport (7)
  - Metal collected outside college/institute/university (7)
  - Townhall eyewitness checked in backstreet (5)
  - Behold, setback is constant (5)

## SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★



## FAITH

### Five sacred Shiva temples

Smt. Desa Mangaiyarkarasi elaborated in a discourse that the Pancha Bhootha Sthalams are five sacred Shiva temples in south India, each representing one of the five fundamental elements of nature - Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Space. Together, they symbolise the deep connection between the divine and the natural world, guiding devotees toward spiritual understanding and liberation. The Earth element (*Prithvi*) is represented by the Ekambareswarar Temple in Kanchipuram, one of India's seven sacred sites of liberation. According to legend, Goddess Parvati performed penance here by creating a Shiva Lingam out of sand. When Lord Shiva tested her devotion by causing a flood, she embraced the Lingam to protect it.

The Water element (*Apu*) is embodied at the Jambukeswarar Temple in Thiruvanaikaval near Tiruchi, where the Lingam is constantly surrounded by water. The Fire element (*Agni*) is represented by the Annamalayar Temple in Thiruvannamalai. Here, Shiva manifested as an infinite pillar of fire, humbling Brahma and Vishnu. The Air element (*Vayu*) is associated with the Srikalahasteswara Temple in Andhra Pradesh. The temple's name comes from a spider, a serpent, and an elephant who attained moksha here. A unique feature is the constantly flickering lamp in the sanctum, even in the absence of wind, symbolising the Vayu Lingam's presence. Finally, the Space element (*Akasa*) is represented by the Natarajar Temple in Chidambaram, where Lord Shiva performs the cosmic dance of bliss, the Ananda Tandava. Here, the divine is worshipped in a formless aspect known as the "Chidambara Rahasyam," symbolising boundless nature of space.



## WASHINGTON

## Lebanon, Israel to hold new talks in Washington on May 14-15: U.S.



Lebanon and Israel will hold a new round of peace talks on May 14-15 in Washington, a U.S. official said on Thursday, despite a new Israeli strike in the heart of Beirut. Next week's talks will be the third between Israel and Lebanon, which had not spoken directly for decades and have no diplomatic relations. AFP

## TEHRAN

## Iran's President Pezeshkian says he met Supreme Leader Khamenei



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Thursday he had met with the country's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, who has not been seen in public since his appointment in early March. "What struck me most was the vision and the humble and sincere approach of the Supreme Leader," the President said. AFP

## ROME

## Rubio meets Pope in a bid to ease tensions over Trump remarks



The top U.S. diplomat, Marco Rubio, went to the Vatican on Thursday for talks with the first U.S. Pope, Leo XIV, against the backdrop of sharp tensions between the White House and the Vatican. The U.S. secretary of state's visit comes after Donald Trump's extraordinary criticism of Pope over his anti-war stance. AFP

## YANGON

## Myanmar junta claims recapture of trade artery towards China



Myanmar's military claimed on Thursday to have recaptured a key northern transport corridor towards China after a 15-month battle, touting a counter-blow to rebels in the civil war. The military said it crushed "terrorist insurgent groups" along a route linking the central city of Mandalay to the northern hub of Myitkyina. AFP

## Labour challenged from all sides in U.K. elections

Over 5,000 seats in 136 councils in England were up for grabs, with Labour defending 2,566 seats and the Conservatives 1,364; PM Starmer has struggled to keep the centrist and left flank of his party together over immigration and welfare policies; he has also suffered reputational damage over the appointment of Peter Mandelson, the U.K.'s former envoy to the U.S. who had close links to Epstein

Sriram Lakshman  
LONDON

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and his Labour party were faced with the prospect of serious political damage as voting got under way in council elections in England and Assembly elections in Scotland and Wales on Thursday.

More than 5,000 seats in 136 councils in England were up for grabs, with Labour defending 2,566 seats and the Conservatives, 1,364 seats. The last elections for these seats were in 2022, when the nativist Reform UK had won just two seats. Last year, Reform had won 667 seats - the largest number - that were up for elections.

Mr. Starmer has struggled to keep the centrist and left flank of his party together over policies around attempts to tighten

immigration and welfare spending. He has also suffered reputational damage - including in his own party - over the appointment of Peter Mandelson, the U.K.'s former envoy to the U.S. who had close links to the convicted paedophile and financier, Jeffrey Epstein. Labour is faced with the prospect of losing votes to both Reform on the right and the Greens on the left. Some, such as the University of Oxford's Stephen Fischer, project Labour to lose as much as 1,900 seats, or three quarters of its current tally.

"Those outcomes are so bad that the specifics don't matter," said Tim Bale, a political scientist of Queen Mary University of London, when asked how bad Labour's performance would need to be for it to end Mr. Starmer's premiership.

"And in any case the decision as to whether or not

to oust Starmer depends less on how bad the results are ... more on whether they think anyone capable of challenging the PM can really improve the government's ratings," Mr. Bale told *The Hindu*.

Labour is fighting the Greens in inner London boroughs and the Greens and Liberal Democrats in the Northern metros such as Leeds and Sheffield. It is fighting Reform UK in other northern metros like Sunderland and Barnsley.

The Conservatives, who suffered big losses in the 2024 general election, could lose 1,010 seats according to Mr. Fisher. They are defending their seats in rural counties and the outer boroughs of London.

"I did not vote this year," said Sam Arora, a 39-year old British Indian businessman, from Wembley, a London area that is home to many South Asians.

"I find politics in this



Keir Starmer and his wife Victoria Starmer leave after casting their votes at a polling station in central London on Thursday. AFP

country has really sort of taken a turn," he added. Mr. Arora, who runs a business engaged in international trade used to vote for the Conservatives but feels the party is "becoming a bit too far right".

In both Scotland and Wales, Labour was projected to come in third - trailing behind Reform.

In Scotland, all 129 places in the Scottish Assembly at Holyrood were contest-

independence, promising a referendum on secession from the U.K., as early as 2028. A 2022 Supreme Court ruling had given the U.K. Parliament the sole power to call such a referendum, the last of which was in 2014.

First Minister John Swinney had said in recent weeks that the SNP getting a majority in Holyrood would be a solid argument for Westminster to give Holyrood the power to call a referendum.

## Reforming NHS

However, a YouGov poll released on Wednesday, projected the SNP to win 62 seats, with Reform coming in second with 19 seats and Scottish Labour following closely behind in third place with 17 seats. The Greens were projected to get 16 seats, twice as many as they won in 2021.

Reforming the National Health Service (NHS), Bri-

tain's healthcare system, has been at the top of the list for Scottish Labour's leader, Anas Sarwar, a former dentist. Mr. Sarwar had urged voters to "save the NHS" which was "not safe" with the SNP and its leader.

In Wales, the Senedd (Assembly) is also being expanded from a strength of 60 members to 96, with every seat being contested. The same three issues - cost of living, healthcare and immigration ranked on top of Welsh voters concerns in another Savanta poll of 2086 Welsh adults.

Labour has run the devolved (partly autonomous) government in Wales ever since the Senedd was formed in 1999. Polls published at the end of April and in early May have generally projected centre-left nationalist party Plaid Cymru coming in first, closely followed by Reform and Labour com-

ing in third.

Plaid leader Rhun Iwan Iwerth, launching his manifesto in April had called a vote for Reform "a proxy vote for the politics of Trump", referring to the U.S. President. The party appears to have tamped down its approach to an independence referendum, saying instead in its manifesto that it would prepare a report on whether Wales should be independent from the U.K.

Support for Welsh Labour had been declining before Labour formed the U.K. government in 2024, according to Jac Larner, a professor of political behaviour at Cardiff University. But Mr. Starmer has not helped, he said. "In essence, Labour are paying a double cost of governing here - paying the price for an unpopular Welsh Government and an unpopular UK Government," Mr. Larner said.

## Iran denies attacking ship as Trump warns of renewed bombing

Agence France-Presse  
WASHINGTON

Iran denied on Thursday attacking a South Korean cargo ship in the Strait of Hormuz this week, as U.S. President Donald Trump said a deal to end the war was "very possible" but warned Washington would resume bombing if talks failed.

Tehran's embassy in Seoul said it "firmly rejects and categorically denies" allegations that its armed forces were behind a blast aboard the Panama-flagged *HMM Namu*, which caught fire on Monday while transiting the strateg-

ic waterway with 24 crew members on board.

Mr. Trump later claimed Iran had "taken some shots" at the vessel and urged South Korea to join U.S.-led efforts to restore shipping through the strait.

Meanwhile, a shipping data company reported on Thursday that Iran has created a government agency to vet and tax vessels seeking passage through the crucial Strait of Hormuz as Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said that the United States' proposal remained "under review".

## Those who remain



A general view of a beach known as 'the airport', a departure point used by migrants trying to reach Europe through the Atlantic route, in Mbour, Senegal. Over 4,000 migrants died or went missing on the Atlantic route from Senegal to the Canary Islands in 2025. AFP

## China sentences two ex-Defence Ministers to death with reprieve

Associated Press  
BEIJING

A Chinese military court gave suspended death sentences on Thursday to two former Defence Ministers who were accused of bribery, according to the official *Xinhua News Agency*.

The court said Wei Fenghe was guilty of accepting bribes and sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve. It said Li Shangfu was guilty of accepting and offering bribes, and handed him the same sentence.

Suspended death sentences are often commuted to life in prison in Chi-



Wei Fenghe

na. The sentences are the latest in Chinese President Xi Jinping's campaign of purging senior officials.

Mr. Xi started an anti-corruption drive more than a decade ago and his drive has continued unabated.

## Israeli strike kills top Hamas official's son in Gaza, say a hospital and Hamas

Agence France-Presse  
GAZA CITY

A Gaza hospital and Hamas on Thursday said the son of the Palestinian Islamist movement's chief negotiator had died from wounds sustained in an Israeli strike a day earlier.

Azzam Khalil al-Hayya, 23, the son of top Hamas official Khalil al-Hayya, "was martyred after succumbing to wounds sustained in an Israeli air strike targeting him yesterday," Gaza City's Al-Shifa hospital said in a statement.

The city's Al-Ahli hospital and a security source



Women and children watch from a window the funeral of Azzam Khalil al-Hayya, in Gaza City on Thursday. AFP

said on Wednesday that a strike on the Al-Daraj neighbourhood of Gaza City in the evening killed one person and wounded 10 others, including Azzam Khalil al-Hayya.

Azzam Khalil al-Hayya is the fourth of Khalil al-Hayya's seven sons to be killed in Israeli attacks, according to a Hamas source. Two of those were killed before the Gaza war erupted in

October 2023.

The third, Hammam, was killed in an Israeli strike targeting Hamas leaders in Doha in September, which killed six persons.

Khalil al-Hayya is the head of Hamas in Gaza despite living in exile in Qatar. He is currently vying for the leadership of the movement. He survived the strike on Doha.

In a statement, Hamas said that the killing of Azzam Khalil al-Hayya "came within the framework of attempts to exert pressure on the resistance leadership and its negotiating delegation".

## 'Ukraine launched major drone attack after Moscow shunned ceasefire offer'

Associated Press  
KYIV

Russian air defences shot down 347 Ukrainian drones overnight, Russia's Defence Ministry said on Thursday, in what appeared to be a major attack after Moscow spurned Kyiv's ceasefire and tension mounted over safety at Russia's upcoming Victory Day celebrations.

Incoming drones were destroyed over 20 Russian regions, including Moscow, according to the Defence Ministry, in Ukraine's second-biggest aerial attack since Russia's all-out invasion more than four



Special service vehicles parked near Red Square decorated for the Victory Day celebrations in Moscow, Russia, on Thursday. AP

years ago. The largest was last March when it launched 389 drones.

Dozens more Ukrainian drones were launched during daylight hours on Thursday, the Ministry

said, including some heading again toward Moscow. Nearly 100 flights in and out of the Russian capital's three main airports - Shevchenko, Domodedovo and Vnukovo - were de-

layed or cancelled by midday, the *Moskva* news agency reported.

The attacks came ahead of Russia's most important secular holiday, Victory Day, which marks the anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany in the Second World War. Russian authorities have declared a unilateral ceasefire in Ukraine for Friday and Saturday.

Ukraine had responded to that with its own suspension of hostilities from midnight Tuesday. But Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Moscow disregarded the goodwill gesture and launched fresh attacks.

**STAY ONE STEP AHEAD**

**Adding variety to your bowling arsenal is a must, reckons Krunal**



K. MURALI KUMAR

Today, power-hitting is constantly evolving. The new-age batters coming in have an insane ability to clear the ropes with ease. As a bowler, I have realised that you have to add variety to your bowling arsenal. You must stay one step ahead of the batter. That is how bouncers and yorkers came into the process — Krunal Pandya.

**CLINICAL SHOW**

**Cummins pleased with SRH's bowling effort against PBKS**



NAGARA GOPAL

Punjab (Kings) are a really good side, they were number one coming into this. I thought the batters to get up to what we did was sensational. Then to close it out, no matter what the score is, bowling second against a side like that is always tough, but I thought we were quite clinical — SRH skipper Pat Cummins.

**AREA OF CONCERN**

**Skipper Shreyas rues dropped catches after loss to Sunrisers**



NAGARA GOPAL

It (target) was a bit too much because we dropped catches at the start. The wicket kept getting slower. They (Sunrisers Hyderabad) showed us how to win. I feel we got a fairytale start in the tournament. If we are going to continue with the same form, that's not going to help us — Punjab Kings captain Shreyas Iyer.

**EXEMPTION**

**Australian players to stay back in IPL despite Pakistan ODI series**



NAGARA GOPAL

Cricket Australia confirmed that its players will be allowed to fulfil their IPL 2026 commitments, granting them exemption from the three-match ODI series against Pakistan beginning May 30. The IPL league phase will end on May 24, and the final is scheduled for May 31. The Australians are scheduled to arrive in Islamabad on May 23.

# Marsh, Prince excel as Super Giants end losing run

The opener slams 111 off just 56 balls as the home side ends up with 209 for three in a game reduced to 19 overs a side; the pacer claims three as RCB falls short in pursuit of a revised target of 213

**IPL-19**

**Aditya Padinjat**  
LUCKNOW

Lucknow Super Giants kept its IPL 2026 playoff hopes alive with a thrilling nine-run win over Royal Challengers Bengaluru at the Ekana Stadium here on Thursday.

The victory was set up by a brutal century from Mitchell Marsh, who scored his second IPL ton off just 49 deliveries, as well as Prince Yadav's inspired spell.

**Rain breaks**

After LSG was put in, play was interrupted by the first of three showers just nine balls in. That window was enough for Marsh (111, 56b, 9x4, 9x6) to announce himself with a towering six over long-off against Josh Hazlewood, and he lost no rhythm thereafter.

**Cashing in**

The Ekana Stadium has been bowler-friendly but Thursday's track was more placid. The powerful Australian cashed in, taking toll of the fuller lengths and width provided by the RCB bowlers to particularly devastating effect



Star turn: Marsh put the RCB bowlers to the sword en route his second IPL ton before Prince struck vital blows, including the big wicket of Kohli. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

through the offside.

After Marsh's pyrotechnics had come to a close, Nicholas Pooran and Rishabh Pant brought the in-

nings to a close on 209 for three in 19 overs with a flurry of boundaries.

RCB, chasing a revised target of 213, started poor-

ly, thanks to Prince, who went from zero to hero. Four deliveries into the opening over, he fumbled a regulation take at deep



third, but recovered spectacularly to hold onto a swirling miscue off Jacob Bethell's bat next ball.

Taking the new ball

from the other end, he then ended Virat Kohli's stay after just two balls with a peach that pitched outside off before nipping

**SCOREBOARD**

**LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS**  
Mitchell Marsh c Bethell b Hazlewood 111 (56b, 9x4, 9x6), Arshin Kulkarni c Patidar b Krunal 17 (24b, 1x4), Nicholas Pooran c Krunal b Rasikh 38 (23b, 4x4, 1x6), Rishabh Pant (not out) 32 (10b, 4x4, 2x6), Aiden Markram (not out) 1 (1b); Extras (lb-5, w-5): 10; Total for three wkts. in 19 overs: 209.

**FALL OF WICKETS**

1-95 (Arshin, 9.2 overs), 2-165 (Marsh, 16.1), 3-194 (Pooran, 18.2).

**RCB BOWLING**

Bhuvneshwar 4-0-34-0, Hazlewood 4-0-49-1, Krunal 4-0-31-1, Rasikh 4-0-53-1, Suyash 2-0-21-0, Shepherd 1-0-16-0.

**ROYAL CHALLENGERS (Target 213)**

Jacob Bethell c Prince b Shami 4 (5b, 1x4), Virat Kohli b Prince 0 (2b), Devdutt Padikkal c & b Prince 34 (25b, 3x4, 1x6), Rajat Patidar c Markram b Shahbaz 61 (31b, 3x4, 6x6), Jitesh Sharma c Pant b Prince 1 (3b), Tim David

(Impact Player for Suyash) c Digvesh b Shahbaz 40 (17b, 4x4, 3x6), Krunal Pandya (not out) 28 (16b, 2x4, 2x6), Romario Shepherd (not out) 23 (15b, 3x4, 1x6); Extras (lb-4, w-8): 12; Total (for six wkts. in 19 overs): 203.

**FALL OF WICKETS**

1-9 (Bethell, 0.5), 2-9 (Kohli, 1.2), 3-104 (Padikkal, 10.1), 4-106 (Jitesh, 10.5), 5-112 (Patidar, 11.3), 6-158 (David, 15.3).

**SUPER GIANTS BOWLING**

Shami 4-0-33-1, Prince 4-0-33-3, Mayank (Impact Player for Himmat) 4-0-50-0, Digvesh 4-0-50-0, Shahbaz 3-0-33-2.

**Toss: Royal Challengers.**

**Player-of-the-Match:** Marsh. Super Giants won by nine runs (DLS method).

**Next assignment**

**LSG:** May 10 vs. CSK Chennai, 3.30 p.m.  
**RCB:** May 10 vs. MI Raipur, 7.30 p.m.

## Capitals and Knight Riders in must-win territory

**Vivek Krishnan**  
NEW DELHI

In theory, Delhi Capitals and Kolkata Knight Riders are still in the race to qualify for the playoffs of IPL-19. But for mathematical possibilities to translate into concrete reality, a flawless streak will have to be strung together until the very end of the league phase. With the two beleaguered units facing off at the Arun Jaitley Stadium, only one of them will be in control of its destiny at the conclusion of Friday's battle.

This is nearly do-or-die territory, with DC languishing at seventh spot with eight points in 10 matches and KKR, which has played a game fewer, at eighth with seven points. The Knights have already won three games at a stretch, but their abominable run at the start of the competition is to blame for their current predicament.

Much of how the contest pans out, of course, will depend on the nature of the surface. While the turf at the Kotla has lent itself to high-scoring affairs in recent years, the 2026 edition has required a more nuanced reading. The pitches have exhibited divergent characteristics, resulting in DC being just as



Seeking inspiration: Axar will hope Rizvi steps up to the plate as DC battles to keep its season alive. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

**Today's match**

DELHI CAPITALS vs. KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS  
Delhi, 7.30 p.m.  
HEAD-TO-HEAD  
Played: 34  
DC 15 | KKR 19  
PREVIOUS MEETING  
KKR won by 14 runs, 2025  
LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 & JIHOTSTAR

responsibility as the opposition of what to expect from the 22-year strip.  
For Capitals, K.L. Rahul will have to shoulder the

responsibility at this critical stage. On a difficult deck against Chennai Super Kings, the 34-year-old let himself down with an injudicious stroke off Akeal Hosein. With the ball, the scrutiny will be on left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav, whose seven wickets at an economy of 10.36 are well below his usual standards. Axar Patel, too, has to step up as skipper and all-rounder.

In the KKR camp, Rinku Singh and Sunil Narine have been a cut above the rest. For the three-time champion to stay afloat, a few more will have to find their A-game.

## Just waiting for my opportunity: Miller ahead of milestone

**Vivek Krishnan**  
NEW DELHI

In the midst of his 15th season in the IPL, David Miller is one game shy of 150 appearances. It may take the South African batter some time to reach that mark, given that the 36-year-old hasn't featured in Delhi Capitals' last two matches.

With the team management moving towards two overseas quicks, Miller has had to make way. "Not being able to play is frustrating as a player. You always want to play every game, but such is the structure of the IPL with only four overseas players. The combination becomes really important for the team," Miller acknowledged on the eve of the clash against Kolkata Knight Riders at the Arun Jaitley Stadium.

"I've been around, this is not my first IPL. To give feedback to the rest of the squad, always be positive and give what I can towards the team remain really important for me. And then just waiting for my opportunity to come again. If it does come, I just want to remain ready and prepare really well," the southpaw stated.

For Miller as well as the



Miller... one short of 150 games. FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

franchise, the 19th edition has been a mixed bag.

"When we've batted, we've lost wickets in clusters. It puts us into positions where we've got to rebuild. Then, there are moments where we've dropped a couple of catches that potentially could have changed the outcome.

"We've spoken that it's all of us together. Win or lose, we're together. There's no pointing any fingers at all with what we've done," Miller said.

## Nitish — the all-round glue holding SRH together

**Anirudh Velamuri**  
HYDERABAD

What binds Sunrisers Hyderabad's explosive batting engine and a bowling attack that has stubbornly held its own on unforgiving surfaces? Nitish Kumar.

Perhaps the only player who truly straddles both worlds. His absence against Kolkata Knight Riders showed how vital he is to SRH's balance.

So when the 22-year-old returned from illness against Punjab Kings, the relief within the camp was palpable.

SRH's top-order has understandably grabbed the spotlight. Abhishek Sharma, Travis Head, Ishan Kishan and Heinrich Klaasen have piled up a combined 1,739 runs. On the bowling front, Eshan Malunga leads the chart with 12 wickets, followed by Sakib Hussain (10).

And then there is Nitish — quietly occupying the space between those departments, yet central to both. His 222 runs have come at 166.91, while his seven wickets have arrived at an economy of 10.39 in a tournament where bowlers have been sent on leather hunts.

Against Kings, he once again underlined his value. A 13-ball 29 provided SRH



Key player: Nitish has been central to SRH's fortunes. NAGARA GOPAL

**Points table**

	M	W	L	NR	PTS	NRR
Sunrisers Hyderabad	11	7	4	0	14	0.737
Punjab Kings	10	6	3	1	13	0.571
Royal Challengers	10	6	4	0	12	1.234
Rajasthan Royals	10	6	4	0	12	0.510
Gujarat Titans	10	6	4	0	12	-0.147
Chennai Super Kings	10	5	5	0	10	0.151
Delhi Capitals	10	4	6	0	8	-0.949
Kolkata Knight Riders	9	3	5	1	7	-0.539
Mumbai Indians	10	3	7	0	6	-0.649
Lucknow Super Giants	10	3	7	0	6	-0.934

added momentum before he returned to dismiss the seemingly unstoppable Prabhsimran Singh. He ended the night with impressive figures of 2-0-11-1.

For all the debate around the Impact Player rule sounding the death knell for genuine all-rounders, Nitish has become a compelling counter-argu-

ment. SRH's title ambitions will rest on several pillars, but few may prove as crucial as him.

Nitish is the thread that quietly binds together a side built on explosive batting and relentless intent.

In a team filled with stars, Nitish has emerged as the balance it cannot afford to lose.

## IN BRIEF



## Sinner demands 'respect' from the Grand Slams

Jannik Sinner called on Thursday for Grand Slam tournaments to show tennis players respect in a row over prize money, but stopped short of calling for a boycott of the sport's major events. "It's more about respect. Because I think we give much more than we are getting back. It's not only for the top players; it's for all of us players. So I do understand players talking about boycott because it's somewhere we also need to start. Now it has been a very long time with this. Then we see in the future," said the World No.1.

## IOC lifts ban on Belarusians competing in the Olympics

The IOC on Thursday lifted restrictions on Belarusian athletes competing in the Olympics, although restrictions on Russian athletes remain in place. Competitors from Russia and Belarus had been banned from international competition after Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, although some were permitted to compete as neutrals.

## Former India u-19 player Amanpreet dies at 36

Former India u-19 and Punjab medium-pacer Amanpreet Singh Gill died aged 36 in Chandigarh on Wednesday. Amanpreet, who was Virat Kohli's u-19 teammate, featured in six First Class matches for Punjab, claiming 11 wickets. He was part of Kings XI Punjab in the inaugural IPL season, and later served as member of Punjab State side's senior selection committee. He played five youth ODIs and one youth Test in 2007. He, however, did not make the Kohli-led India u-19 side that won the 2008 World Cup.

## LIVE TELECAST

**Bangladesh vs Pakistan:** 1st Test, day 1, FanCode, 9.30 a.m.  
**ISL:** Sony Sports Ten 2 & FanCode, 5 p.m.,  
**IPL:** Sony Sports Ten 5 & LIV, 6.30 p.m.  
**IPL:** Star Sports Ten 1 & JioHotstar, 7.30 p.m.  
**Bundesliga:** Sony Sports Ten 2 & LIV, 12 a.m. (Saturday).



**Unstoppable:** Dembele, right, caps off a sweeping counter-attack with the opening goal. AP

## Dembele's early strike helps PSG edge Bayern

The holder largely succeeds in subduing the German giant's attacking threat, despite Kane's stoppage-time equaliser; the host loses cool over some first-half refereeing decisions

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Agence France-Presse  
MUNICH

**H**older Paris Saint-Germain set up a Champions League final against Arsenal after a 1-1 second-leg draw at Bayern Munich secured a 6-5 aggregate victory on Wednesday.

PSG exploded on the counter less than three minutes in and Ballon d'Or winner Ousmane Dembele put Luis Enrique's visitors ahead on the night and two goals up in the tie.

PSG largely succeeded in subduing Bayern's attacking threat, despite Harry Kane's stoppage-time goal.

On its return to Munich's Allianz Arena, the scene of its greatest triumph against Inter Milan in last year's final, PSG once again emphasised its excellence in a competition it coveted without success for so long.

## PSG's bull run

Enrique's side continues its march to the top with another stellar show

**1** Paris Saint-Germain is the first French club to make successive Champions League (CL) finals. It is also the first Ligue 1 team to advance to three European Cup/CL title deciders

**1** PSG is the first reigning champion to reach the summit clash since Real Madrid in 2017-18

**3** The French powerhouse has entered the final for the third time since 2019-20

**7** Kvaratskhelia has now scored or assisted in seven consecutive CL knockout fixtures

**7** Bayern striker Kane's equaliser helped him extend his scoring streak in the elite club competition to seven matches

**44** PSG's tally of goals during this CL campaign (16 matches), one short of the record set by Barcelona (1999-2000)

The French giant will be the favourites to lift the trophy for a second successive season when it faces Premier League leader Arsenal on May 30 in Budapest.

The French giant is hoping to become only the second back-to-back winners since 1990, after Real Madrid.

Bayern was angered by some first-half refereeing

decisions but was largely toothless in attack.

The six-time European champions has still not reached the final since beating PSG in the 2020 showpiece in Lisbon.

Both sides were playing their 52nd match of the season in all competitions — not even counting last summer's Club World Cup — but only the hosts looked weary.

So dangerous in the first leg, Bayern was surprisingly stodgy in attack, with Michael Olise in particular having an off night.

In the midst of a record-breaking season, Bayern's fourth defeat in all competitions will sting for a club set to wonder what might have been.

Both teams only made one change to their starting XIs compared to last week's spectacle in Paris. Only PSG's was forced, with Fabian Ruiz in for the injured Achraf Hakimi.

Ruiz, starting his first European match since January, set Khvicha Kvaratskhelia down the left flank with an excellent through ball.

The Georgian latched onto the pass, blazed past his marker before cutting back for the perfectly placed Dembele to slam home.

**The result (semifinal, second leg):**

Bayern Munich 1 (Kane 90+4) drew with PSG 1 (Dembele 3) (PSG wins 6-5 on aggregate).

## Win over Sindarov and draw against So keeps Gukesh in the hunt

## CHESS

Press Trust of India  
WARSAW

D. Gukesh made quite an impact, signalling that his preparations for the World Championship are on track by first defeating his title challenger, Javokhir Sindarov, in the fifth round and then holding American Grandmaster Wesley So to a draw in the Super Rapid and Blitz event on the Grand Chess Tour.

After defeating Uzbekistan's Sindarov, Gukesh played out a quick draw with So to move to six points with three rounds



Gukesh. FLICKR/GRANDCHESSTOUR

still to go in the Rapid event. The win against Sindarov earned the Indian two points, while the draw fetched him one.

So is the joint leader on nine points alongside Fel-

low American Hans Niemann.

The duo is followed by Vladimir Fedoseev, who is a point behind, while Gukesh is tied on six points with Fabiano Caruana, Jan-Krzysztof Duda and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave as he looks to climb further up the standings in the remaining rounds.

**The results (round six):**

Wesley So (USA, 9) drew with D. Gukesh (6); Alireza Firouzja (Fra, 4) lost to Hans Moke Niemann (USA, 9).  
Fabiano Caruana (USA, 6) drew with Jan Krzysztof Duda (Pol, 6); Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo, 8) bt Radoslaw Wojtaszek (Pol, 3).  
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 6) bt Javokhir Sindarov (Uzb, 4).

## Hockey India announces u-18 men's, women's squad for Australia series

Press Trust of India  
BHOPAL

Hockey India on Thursday announced the 24-member Indian under-18 men's and women's squads for the upcoming home series against Australia from May 15 to 20.

The four-match series, to be played at SAI Bhopal, is a critical part of the teams' preparations for the men's and women's u-18 Asia Cup to be held at Kamigahara, Japan, from May 29 to June 6.

The squad members were selected after a week of rigorous evaluation during the national coaching



**Hard at work:** The men's under-18 squad at a training session in Bhopal. X@HOCKEYINDIA

camp, where the initial group of 42 players was narrowed down based on match fitness and tactical adaptability.

Forward Ketan Kushwaha has been named captain of the men's team, while the women's side

will be led by Sweetie Kujur.

**The squads: Men:**

**Goalkeepers:** Sawan Kumar, Ayush Rajak, Vishal Bada.  
**Defenders:** Ansh Bahutra, Ashish Tani Puri, Arman Soreng, Deepakprakash Toppo, Karan Gautam, Karan Dhanuk.  
**Midfielders:** Premchand Soy,



**Glory beckons:** Arteta is eyeing a first-ever CL title for Arsenal while Enrique hopes to guide PSG to a second straight triumph. AP, AFP

## Master tacticians Arteta and Enrique lift Arsenal, PSG

Natalia Hannah Rice  
CHENNAI

Mikel Arteta and Luis Enrique, two Spanish tacticians who have been on the rise, have set up a mouth-watering Champions League final contest. It's another reward for their grind over the years.

When Arteta arrived at Arsenal in 2019, the club looked directionless. Its football lacked structure, recruitment appeared reactive, and performance fluctuated wildly. His rival Enrique, in 2023, inherited a different problem at Paris Saint-Germain (PSG), a side that was stacked with individual brilliance but was often accused of lacking collective identity.

Years later, both managers have reshaped their teams with distinct philosophies.

Arsenal has become one of Europe's most tactically disciplined sides. Built on aggressive pressing, positional rotations and controlled possession, Arsenal plays with a clarity that mirrors its head coach's personality. Players are recruited not only for their talent, but because they are tactically compatible.

Enrique's task at PSG

has been equally tough. For years, the French club's project revolved around superstar forwards and individual efforts. But Enrique has attempted to move away from that dependence, prioritising intensity, balance and collective belief. Since the 55-year-old's takeover, PSG has been attacking quicker and defending with greater organisation than in the seasons that preceded.

What could make the CL title decider compelling is not merely the quality on the pitch but the ideological imprint both bosses have left on their clubs so far.

In Arteta and Enrique, Arsenal and PSG have found managers willing to demand patience, discipline and long-term commitment. The final, therefore, is also likely to be a clash of identities. It could be a reflection of the coaches who have spent years reshaping institutions until the football finally began to resemble their vision.

Their previous meeting ended in a 3-1 semifinal aggregate victory for PSG in 2024-25. Will Enrique outclass Arteta once again, or will the latter script history with Arsenal?

## Indian women stun Korea, in recurve final

## ARCHERY

Sports Bureau

The Indian recurve women's team, consisting of Olympians Ankita Bhakat and Deepika Kumari and rookie Kumkum Mohod, toppled a formidable Korean side on its way to enter the final and assure the country of a medal at the Archery World Cup Stage-2 in Shanghai on Thursday.

The Indian trio defeated Uzbekistan 6-2 and Vietnam 5-4 before toppling top-ranked Korea, including Tokyo Olympics and multiple World championships team gold medalist Kang Chaeyoung and rela-

tively less experienced Oh Yejin and Lee Yunji, 5-1 in the semifinals.

India will meet host China in the final on Sunday.

**The results: Recurve: Team: Men:** India (B. Dhiraj, Tarundeep Rai, Yashdeep Bhoge) got a bye (first round), bt Vietnam 6-2 (second round).

**Women:** India (Ankita Bhakat, Kumkum Mohod, Deepika Kumari) bt Uzbekistan 6-2 (first round), bt Vietnam 5-4 (shoot-off: 28-25) (quarterfinal), bt Korea 5-1 (semifinal). **Mixed:** India (Ankita Bhakat, B. Dhiraj) got a bye (first round), lost to Brazil 4-5 (shoot-off: 19-19, shot closer to centre) (second round).

**Compound: Mixed team:** India (Aditi Swami, Ojas Deotale) got a bye (first round), bt Hong Kong China 159-150 (second round), lost to USA 156-157 (quarterfinal).



**Terrific trio:** Ankita, Deepika and Kumkum rose to the occasion. WORLD ARCHERY

## Vinesh's return from retirement doubtful

Y.B. Sarangi  
KOLKATA

Vinesh Phogat's return to competitive wrestling at the upcoming Senior Open Ranking tournament in Nandini Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, looks doubtful as the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) has raised doubts over her eligibility on the basis of a United World Wrestling (UWW) regulation on retired athletes.

The 31-year-old, who retired following her disqualification from the 2024 Paris Olympics and gave birth to a baby boy in July last, reversed her decision on December 12, 2025.

The two-time Worlds



Vinesh. FILE PHOTO

medallist Vinesh got a notice from the International Testing Agency (ITA) for missing an out-of-competition dope test on December 18, 2025.

"Any retired wrestler who wishes to return to

competition shall announce it to UWW at least six months before and be available for doping tests during this period (article 5.6.2 of the Anti-doping Rules 2021)," says a UWW rule.

It's learnt that Vinesh has been tested after her whereabouts failure in December.

"We've written to UWW asking about her eligibility," WFI president Sanjay Singh told *The Hindu*.

**Trials on May 30, 31**

Meanwhile, "in accordance with" its selection policy for the Asian Games released in February, the WFI will hold the trials on

May 30 and 31 in Delhi (women) and Lucknow (men) respectively.

Medal winners of the 2025 National championships and the 2026 Federation Cup and the National under-20 championships are eligible to participate in the event.

The pre-mentioned National under-23 championships, which is yet to be held, and the Open Ranking tournament fall outside the ambit of trials.

**Need to act fast**

"Since the deadline to submit Asiad entries to the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) is June 4, we must act fast," said a WFI official.



## HEALTH

# Why are fathers missing in reproductive health interventions

A father's lifestyle, diet, exercise, exposure to stress and other factors, can programme the next generation, influencing traits in their children; yet, men are barely involved in reproductive health programmes in India; under the RMNCH+A program, male involvement remains limited to the supplementation of iron tablets to adolescent boys

C. Aravinda

India's Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A) programme has steadily reduced maternal mortality, neonatal deaths, and childhood mortality over the past three decades. Success is undeniable, when measured by survival. Yet, a quieter concern is surfacing in clinics and epidemiological data. Many children appear more vulnerable to recurrent infections, metabolic disturbances, and reduced physical robustness. The question is no longer about survival alone, but also about the biological quality of that survival. Increasingly, scientists are beginning to suspect that something fundamental may be missing in how we understand the inheritance of traits from parents.

## Missing fathers

Reproductive health within the health system has traditionally focused almost exclusively on mothers. Antenatal care, maternal nutrition, and institutional deliveries form the core of national programmes. Fathers, in contrast, have largely remained outside the biological narrative. Emerging scientific evidence now suggests that this omission may not be trivial. A father's diet, lifestyle, exposure to toxins, stress and environment – long before conception – may influence the biology of the child in ways we are only beginning to understand. This shifts the conversation we need to have from a mother-centric model to a more inclusive, bi-parental understanding of health transmission.

The traditional model of reproduction is straightforward. The ovum contributes maternal genetic material, and the sperm delivers the paternal genome. The fusion of these two forms is a zygote, which develops under the guidance of DNA. In this framework, the father's role is limited to the transmission of DNA. His lifestyle choices (including whether he exercised, smoked, or lived in polluted surroundings) were believed to have no bearing on what was passed on. For over a century, this model was reinforced by August Weismann's idea of the blood-testis barrier, which held that environmental influences cannot affect germ (sperm and egg) cells. According to this view, a man's lifestyle, whether healthy or harmful, would not influence the sperm in a way that could be passed on to the next generation. The sperm was seen as a passive carrier of DNA, insulated from the external environment.

This assumption began to weaken in the early 2010s, when studies demonstrated that paternal exposures such as poor diet, alcohol consumption, and environmental toxins could influence offspring traits. These traits were not encoded in DNA changes, but appeared to be transmitted through epigenetic mechanisms. Small molecules, particularly RNA fragments in sperm, were identified as carriers of such



**New findings:** In India, there is no structured focus on paternal preconception health, no systematic screening for lifestyle risks among prospective fathers, and minimal emphasis on environmental exposures that may affect sperm quality. GETTY IMAGES

information. These molecules could regulate gene expression in early embryos, effectively transmitting information about the father's environment without altering the genetic code itself. This discovery marked a shift in biology, suggesting that inheritance is more dynamic than previously believed. However, one key question remained unanswered: how exactly are these signals transmitted, and how do they shape the child's biology?

## New evidence

A recent study published in *Cell Metabolism* by Chinese researchers adds an important layer to this evolving story. In this study, male mice that underwent structured treadmill exercise for eight weeks produced offspring with significantly improved endurance and metabolic profiles. Quantitatively, these offspring ran longer and covered greater distances in treadmill tests, with statistically significant differences often exceeding 30% - 40% compared to offspring of sedentary fathers. Oxygen consumption measurements showed higher VO2 levels across light and dark cycles, indicating enhanced metabolic efficiency. Muscle analysis revealed a shift towards oxidative fibre types, with a notable increase in type I and type IIa fibres and a reduction in glycolytic fibres.

The most compelling contribution of the study lies in its proposed mechanism. The researchers demonstrate that paternal exercise alters the profile of sperm microRNAs, a class of small non-coding RNAs. These microRNAs are delivered to the oocyte at fertilisation and interact with early embryonic transcripts. The study suggests that microRNAs suppress nuclear receptor corepressor 1, a molecule that normally inhibits PGC-1 $\alpha$ , a master regulator of mitochondrial

function. By relieving this inhibition, the embryo is programmed towards enhanced oxidative metabolism and mitochondrial development. The study further strengthens this causal pathway by injecting sperm-derived small RNAs from exercised fathers into normal embryos, which then reproduced similar metabolic and endurance phenotypes in offspring. It suggests that these RNA molecules are not merely markers, but active agents of inheritance.

One of the most intriguing implications concerns how these molecular signals bypass the classical Weismann barrier. The study suggests that systemic physiological states, such as increased muscular PGC-1 $\alpha$  activity during exercise, can influence the composition of small RNAs in sperm. While the exact transport mechanism remains unclear, it is hypothesised that circulating RNA fragments or vesicle-mediated transport systems may allow signals from somatic tissues to influence germ cells. In effect, the barrier is not absolute but selectively permeable to regulatory molecules, particularly small RNAs that can re-programme gene expression without altering DNA.

During fertilisation, the sperm does more than deliver DNA. It contributes a complex molecular cargo, including proteins and RNA fragments. These molecules interact with the oocyte cytoplasm and influence the earliest stages of embryonic development.

The study highlights that sperm microRNAs can act immediately after fertilisation, modifying transcriptional networks before the embryo begins its own gene expression. This early window appears critical, as small changes in gene regulation at this stage can lead to lasting physiological differences in the offspring. Several uncertainties persist. The

precise fate of these microRNAs after fertilisation is not fully understood. It remains unclear how long they persist, which genes they consistently target, and whether their effects extend beyond the first generation. Furthermore, the findings are based entirely on animal models, and extrapolation to humans must be done cautiously. Human reproductive biology is more complex, and environmental exposures are far more variable. There is also a limited understanding of dose-response relationships, that is, how much lifestyle change is required to produce measurable effects in offspring.

## What needs to be done

Even though we still don't fully understand how a father's lifestyle influences his child's biology, what is increasingly clear is that it does. This understanding however, is yet to translate into policy action.

In India, under the RMNCH+A program, male involvement remains limited to the supplementation of iron tablets to adolescent boys. There is no structured focus on paternal preconception health, no systematic screening for lifestyle risks among prospective fathers, and minimal emphasis on environmental exposures that may affect sperm quality.

Addressing lifestyle factors such as physical activity, substance use, and environmental exposures among men of reproductive age may offer a low-cost, high-impact strategy to improve population health across generations. If these findings hold true in humans, the implications are profound.

(Dr. C. Aravinda is an academic and public health physician. The views expressed are personal. aravindaaiimsjr10@hotmail.com)

## THE GIST

Reproductive health within the health system has traditionally focused almost exclusively on mothers. Fathers, in contrast, have largely remained outside the biological narrative. Emerging scientific evidence now suggests that this omission may not be trivial

A recent study published in *Cell Metabolism* by Chinese researchers showed that male mice that underwent structured treadmill exercise for eight weeks produced offspring with significantly improved endurance and metabolic profiles

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# Wastewater surveillance revealed hidden COVID surges in Bengaluru

Afshan Yasmeen

Wastewater surveillance in Bengaluru closely tracked COVID-19 trends during the first Omicron wave, but later emerged as an important tool in identifying hidden surges that were not fully captured through routine clinical testing, according to researchers studying the city's sewage-based monitoring network.

A study published in *PLOS Global Public Health* by researchers from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), International Centre for Theoretical Sciences (ICTS) which is a part of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) and Tata Institute for Genetics and Society (TIGS) found that wastewater surveillance mirrored the rise in COVID-19 cases during the Omicron wave, though it did not provide an early warning of the surge. Researchers said viral loads detected in sewage and reported infections rose almost simultaneously during that phase, limiting its usefulness as a predictive tool. However, subsequent wastewater monitoring indicated that as clinical testing declined in later phases of the pandemic, sewage surveillance became

increasingly valuable in identifying fresh waves of infection that may otherwise have gone unreported.

## Four COVID-19 surges

Farah Ishtiaq, a researcher from TIGS who is one of the authors of the *PLOS* study, told *The Hindu* that Bengaluru experienced four distinct COVID-19 surges between December 2021 and April 2024. These included the BA.2.10 wave, followed by a mixed BA.2 lineage surge involving BA.4, BA.5 and BA.2.75 variants, then the XBB wave, and most recently the JN.1 surge.

"During the early phase, from December 2021 to June 2022, wastewater signals and reported clinical cases were closely aligned. That showed both surveillance systems were functioning effectively and capturing the spread of infection in the community," Dr. Ishtiaq said.

She said the situation changed from July 2022 to November 2023, when routine clinical testing declined substantially. Testing, she said, was often stepped up only after infections had already begun to rise. "That points to a reactive rather than proactive surveillance model. Wastewater monitoring, on the other hand, continued consistently and



**Close study:** Wastewater monitoring can become a dependable indicator of community transmission. FILE PHOTO

therefore became a more dependable indicator of community transmission," she said.

## Reflection of trends

According to Dr. Ishtiaq, these trends were also reflected in a separate study in *The Lancet*, which analysed weekly wastewater monitoring data from Bengaluru. The study found that during the early phase of the Omicron period, virus levels in sewage closely matched reported

clinical cases, but later diverged as testing levels dropped. Researchers said sewage data clearly detected a major surge associated with the XBB variant in April 2023, followed by another rise linked to the JN.1 variant beginning in late December 2023. Both these waves were visible in wastewater trends but were not proportionately reflected in clinical case reporting or genomic surveillance data.

The findings, they said, underline

the importance of maintaining multiple surveillance systems, especially once public testing intensity declines after major pandemic waves. Bengaluru was among the early Indian cities to establish systematic wastewater surveillance, beginning citywide monitoring in August 2021. Samples were collected from 26 sewage treatment plants (STPs), which together process a large share of the city's wastewater.

For the *PLOS* study, researchers mapped wastewater catchment areas to 198 administrative wards under the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike, allowing comparison of viral load data from individual STPs with ward-level case counts. The analysis focused on November 15, 2021, to January 31, 2022, covering the first Omicron wave. Using statistical tools such as Pearson correlation and change-point analysis, researchers found strong correlation – often above 0.8 – between wastewater viral loads and case counts across most treatment plants, indicating that sewage surveillance can reliably track infection trends in real time. However, the study found no robust lead time that would allow

authorities to anticipate outbreaks significantly before clinical cases increased. Apparent short leads were attributed to interpolation of weekly wastewater data rather than genuine advance warning signals.

## Complementary tool

Dr. Ishtiaq said wastewater surveillance should be viewed as a complementary public health tool rather than a replacement for clinical surveillance. "By the time a strong signal appears in wastewater, it often means that a substantial number of people in the community are already infected. That is why routine clinical testing at sentinel locations remains essential for early detection and timely response," she said. She added that maintaining consistent surveillance even between waves would help cities respond earlier, prepare hospitals and reduce the impact of future outbreaks. The findings underline that while wastewater monitoring cannot substitute clinical case detection, it offers a crucial window into community transmission – particularly when routine testing systems weaken or public participation in testing declines. (yasmeen.afshan@thehindu.co.in)