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INSIDE



Cabinet approves four more judges for top court

NEW DELHI
The Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved an increase in the number of judges of the Supreme Court from 34, including the Chief Justice, to 38. A Bill would be brought in the next session of Parliament to raise the strength. » PAGE 4



China urges U.S. to end 'illegal' Cuba sanctions

HONG KONG
China on Tuesday urged the U.S. to immediately end its embargo and sanctions on Cuba, saying the expanded measures were "illegal" and violated norms of international relations. » PAGE 14

Congress offers support to TVK but with a condition

TNCC says TVK, which emerged as the single-largest party, should not seek support from BJP or its alliance partners; CPI(M) to take a call on backing Vijay, who is likely to call on the Governor today

N. Sai Charan
CHENNAI

The Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), led by actor-turned-politician C. Joseph Vijay, on Tuesday reached out to the Congress and the CPI(M) — constituents of the DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance — seeking support to form the government in Tamil Nadu, after the party emerged as the single largest in the Assembly with 108 seats, short of a simple majority in the 234-member House.

The Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC), after an online meeting with office-bearers, said it would extend support to the TVK subject to the condition that it should not seek the support of the lone BJP MLA-designate or any other alliance partners of the BJP. The Congress won five seats in the election.

In New Delhi, All India Congress Committee general secretary K.C. Venugopal confirmed that the TVK



TVK chief Vijay pays tribute to the party's ideological leaders ahead of a meeting at the party headquarters in Chennai. PTI

had formally sought the Congress's backing.

"The Congress is clear that the mandate in Tamil Nadu is for a secular government, committed to protecting the Constitution in letter and spirit. The Congress is determined not to have the BJP or its proxies run the Tamil Nadu government. Accordingly, the party leadership has directed the TNCC to take a final decision on Mr. Vijay's request, keeping in view the sentiments of the State reflected in the electoral verdict," he said.

Mr. Venugopal said this after a meeting on the political situation in Tamil Nadu with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, AICC in-charge for Tamil Nadu Girish Chodankar, and other leaders.

However, it is not clear whether the Congress will extend outside support or will be part of the government.

Since Mr. Vijay has to resign from one of the two constituencies (Perambur and Tiruchi East) he was

elected from, effectively, the TVK would have 107 MLAs. This would bring down the strength of the House to 233. Thus, even if the Congress decides to support the TVK, the party would need the support of five more MLAs to cross the halfway mark.

The TVK approached the CPI(M), which won two seats, for support through party MP Su. Venkatesan. "TVK strategist Jhon Arokiasamy approached Mr. Venkatesan on Tuesday. But only our party's State committee can take a decision," said CPI(M) State secretary P. Shanmugam. The party's State committee meeting is scheduled to be held on Friday.

According to sources, Mr. Vijay and senior leaders of the party have sought an appointment to meet Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar on Wednesday. (With inputs from B. Kolappan and Udhav Naig)

GRASSROOTS BASE
» PAGE 2

Won't resign as we did not lose, it is a forcible attempt to defeat us, says Mamata

Shiv Sahay Singh, Shrabana Chatterjee
KOLKATA

A day after her party suffered a massive setback in the Assembly election in West Bengal, Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee said on Tuesday she would not resign as Chief Minister as "we did not lose the election".

"The question does not arise. We did not lose the election. It is their forcible attempt to defeat us. Officially, through the Election Commission, they may defeat us. But morally, I am telling you, we won the election," she said.

Addressing a press conference at her residence, her first media interaction after the electoral setback, Ms. Banerjee repeatedly targeted the Election Commission, saying the real contest was not with the BJP but with the poll body. "They have forcibly captured the State," she said.

The BJP won 207 of the 293 Assembly seats counted on Monday, while the Trinamool was reduced to 80 seats. Ms. Banerjee lost the Bhabanipur constituency to BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari.

Ms. Banerjee was sworn in as Chief Minister for a third term on May 5, 2021, and her five-year term expired on Tuesday night. Sources at the Lok Bhavan in Kolkata said there was no hindrance to the formation of a government and that it was just a custom for the outgoing Chief Minister to tender resignation.

Experts say it makes little difference whether a Chief Minister formally resigns or not. "Once the government and this term expire, everything is null and void. None of these positions, including the CM or the Ministers, holds any value even if they don't resign," Jawhar Sircar, former Chief Electoral Officer of West Bengal, said.

Former KPCC president Mullapally Ramachandran said the party was profoundly divided over the sensitive question of the CLP leader.

CPI(M) LAUNCHES REVIEW
» PAGE 3

RELATED REPORTS ON
» PAGE 5



Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee addresses a press conference in Kolkata on Tuesday. AP

BJP gears up to pick Bengal CM; Suwendu Adhikari front runner

Shiv Sahay Singh, Shrabana Chatterjee
KOLKATA

A day after scripting a historic victory in West Bengal, the BJP on Tuesday appointed Union Home Minister Amit Shah as the central observer for the election of the leader of the Legislature Party. Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has been named the co-observer.

Mr. Shah and Mr. Majhi are likely to arrive in the State in the coming days. The BJP is set to form a government in the State for the first time after ending the 15-year rule of the Trinamool Congress. The party won 207 seats, reducing the Trinamool to just 80.

BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari, who defeated Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee from Bhabanipur, is considered the front runner for the post of Chief Minister.

Mr. Adhikari defected from the Trinamool to the BJP in December 2020 and has since risen to prominence within the party.

On Tuesday, BJP supporters surrounded his vehicle at several places, as he travelled to Kolkata, raising slogans in his support.



Suwendu Adhikari is considered the front runner for CM post.

Vandalism and violence reported

KOLKATA
Post-poll violence and vandalism has been reported from multiple parts of West Bengal even as the top leadership of the BJP asked its workers not to engage in any form of violence. » PAGE 5

Sources in the West Bengal BJP said the swearing-in of the new Cabinet is likely to take place on May 9, the birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. The ceremony is likely to be held at the Brigade Parade Grounds, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi expected to attend.

Congress in a huddle over Kerala CM-designate

G. Anand
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Raging speculation about the Congress's next Chief Minister seemed to consume the party in Kerala on Tuesday, even as the party high command comprising Rahul Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge, and All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary K.C. Venugopal, was reportedly poised to commence preliminary discussions in New Delhi to settle the nagging question.

Before leaving for the national capital, Mr. Venugopal told reporters that the high command's decision on the party's Chief Ministerial candidate was "imminent".



Congress workers give a rousing reception to V.D. Satheesan, one of the contenders for the CM post, on Tuesday. THULASI KAKKAT

Meanwhile, party veteran A.K. Antony signalled that the names of Mr. Venugopal, Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan, and senior leader Ramesh Chennithala were in play for the Chief Minister's

post. "All three leaders are equally talented and highly qualified to be Chief Minister. Hence, I do not want to single out any one leader for the post. The point is Kerala needs a capable Chief Minister who would

forgo populist measures to save the State from financial ruin," he told reporters in Thiruvananthapuram.

Focus on IUML's stand
Furthermore, conversations about which leader among the three would have the most supporters among elected MLAs, and whether allies, chiefly the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), would play the role of kingmaker, pre-occupied the Congress rank and file in Kerala.

A party insider said discussions revolved around whether the high command's choice of the next Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader would trigger a by-election and whether the party would look out of

touch with voters, who had given the alliance an overwhelming mandate.

Party general secretary Mukul Wasnik and treasurer Ajay Maken, who have been appointed central observers, will meet the newly elected MLAs before the CLP leader is elected.

At the same time, more flex boards appeared across Kerala, anonymously showcasing workers' competing choices for the post.

Former KPCC president Mullapally Ramachandran said the party was profoundly divided over the sensitive question of the CLP leader.

CPI(M) LAUNCHES REVIEW
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Assam Assembly may not have a Leader of Opposition

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The 126-member Assam Assembly may not have an officially recognised Leader of the Opposition.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its two regional allies bagged 102 seats, while the Opposition alliance managed 21. The Congress won 19 of these and the Rajgor Dal two.

Of the remaining three seats, the minority-based All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) and the Trinamool Congress won two and one, respectively. They are not part of the



Himanta Biswa Sarma with party supporters, in Guwahati, on Monday. ANI

Congress-led front. On February 26, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma claimed that for a party to seek the Leader of the Opposition post, it must secure at least 24

seats on its own symbol.

However, according to the rules, an Opposition party must possess at least one-sixth of the total strength of the House for one of its MLAs to be formally recognised as the Leader of the Opposition. The minimum number in the Assam Assembly, thus, works out to 21.

"The rules are very clear," Mr. Sarma said after the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance swept the polls with an unprecedented tally.

'BLUE BLOOD REJECTED'
» PAGE 5

Truce with Iran holds despite fresh attacks: U.S.

Associated Press
DUBAI

U.S. military leaders said on Tuesday that a ceasefire with Iran remains in effect, a day after Tehran was blamed for new attacks in the Strait of Hormuz and against the UAE.

The fragile truce, reached nearly a month ago, appeared to be holding as U.S. forces pressed ahead with efforts to reopen the vital waterway for global energy. On Monday, the U.S. said it sank six small Iranian boats that had threatened commercial ships. So far, only two merchant ships are known to have passed through a new U.S.-guarded route,



Rising defiance: A woman waves an Iranian flag in front of an anti-U.S. billboard at Valiasr Square in Tehran, on Tuesday. AFP

with hundreds more bottled up in the Persian Gulf.

The UAE, a key American ally, said it came under attack by Iranian missiles and drones for a second straight day on Tuesday. At least three people were

wounded in attacks the day before, and a drone sparked a fire at a key oil facility in Fujairah.

U.S. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth and Gen. Dan Caine, the U.S. military's top officer, told a news

conference on Tuesday that Iran's renewed aggression hadn't reached the threshold of what Gen. Caine called "major combat operations". He said Tuesday marked a "quieter" day in the Strait. "No, the ceasefire is not over," Mr. Hegseth said.

Iran has said the new effort does violate the ceasefire. Iran's Parliament Speaker and chief negotiator, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, accused the U.S. of undermining regional security. In a post on X, he signalled that Iran has yet to fully respond to the U.S. attempt to reopen the waterway. "We know full well that the continuation of the status quo is intolerable for America; while we have not even begun yet," he said.

Disputing Washington's claim of sinking six boats, an Iranian military commander said two small civilian cargo boats were hit on Monday, killing five civilians, state TV reported.

"Since the ceasefire was announced, Iran has fired at commercial vessels nine times and seized two container ships, and they've attacked U.S. forces more than 10 times — all below the threshold of restarting major combat operations at this point," Gen. Caine said.

MODI CONDEMNS ATTACKS
» PAGE 4

IN BRIEF



M.P. court orders filing of FIR in Jabalpur boat tragedy case

A court in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur on Tuesday took cognisance of the cruise boat tragedy that claimed the lives of 13 people in the district's Bargi Dam reservoir last week, and directed the police to register an FIR. Judicial Magistrate D.P. Sutrakar said the "failure" of the cruise boat driver and other crew members to make any effort to rescue the drowning passengers constitutes an attempt to commit culpable homicide. The court directed the Bargi police station to register the FIR within two days. The boat, operated by the State tourism department, capsized on April 30, killing 13 persons, including women and children. PTI

Declare Raja Shivaji tax-free in Maharashtra, says Danve

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Ambadas Danve on Monday demanded that the just released movie *Raja Shivaji*, based on the life of the 17th century Maratha warrior-king, be made tax-free in Maharashtra so as to make it accessible to a larger audience. Mr. Danve made the demand in a letter written to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. The movie is co-written and directed by actor Riteish Deshmukh. Mr. Dave, former Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council, said the film shows the work and contribution of the Maratha empire founder and will serve as an inspiration for the new generation. PTI

Rangasamy set for fifth term as CM as NDA moves towards forming govt. in Puducherry

Rajesh B Nair
PUDUCHERRY

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Puducherry has moved towards the next stage of government formation in the Union Territory after the front secured a clear mandate in the 2026 Assembly election.

After the results of the election were declared on Monday, the major partner in the NDA, the All India N. R Congress headed by incumbent Chief Minister N. Rangasamy and its ally Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) held separate meetings to elect their respective legislature party leaders.

The AINRC had secured 12 seats, BJP four and one seat each by the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and Latchiya Jananayaka Katchi placing the NDA in a comfortable



AINRC headed by CM N. Rangasamy and its ally BJP held separate meetings to elect their respective legislature party leaders.

position in the 30-member Puducherry Assembly to form the government.

Union Minister present
At the meetings, the newly elected legislators of AINRC elected Mr. Rangasamy as their leader while BJP members elected A. Namassivayam as their party floor leader. The meeting of newly elected BJP legislators held at the party office was attended by Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya and

party's U.T. in-charge Nirmal Kumar Surana.

Besides BJP leaders and new MLAs, the party meeting was attended by the newly elected legislator of LJK representing Kamaraj Nagar constituency Jose Charles Martin. Independent legislator V. Vigneswaran representing reserved Nedungadu constituency was also present when the members elected Mr. Namassivayam as BJP's legislature party leader.

HC to appoint *amici curiae* for Kejriwal, others in excise caseThe Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday said it will appoint three senior advocates as *amici curiae* to represent Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia and Durgesh Pathak in the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) case against their discharge in the excise policy case. The AAP leaders have chosen not to appear or send any lawyer on their behalf to contest the CBI's case after Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma refused to recuse herself on their pleas alleging conflict of interest and apprehension of bias.

Justice Sharma deferred the hearing on the CBI's pe-

tion challenging the trial court decision until May 8, observing that it would be appropriate to proceed with the matter once someone is appointed to represent them. "I will appoint an *amicus*. I will appoint three seniors in this case," Justice Sharma said.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the CBI, asked if the court was making the appointment for Mr. Kejriwal and others, who were unrepresented in the proceedings, the judge replied in the affirmative.

On February 27, the trial court had discharged Kejriwal, Sisodia and 21 others in the liquor case. On March 9, Justice Sharma's Bench stayed the trial court's recommendation.

Draft strict rules to deny parole to persons convicted of sexual offences, says Fadnavis

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Tuesday sought the drafting of stringent rules to ensure that parole is not granted to persons convicted of sexual offences.

The directive, which was given during a Cabinet meeting held in Mumbai during the day, comes amid the case of a 65-year-old man with a criminal record who allegedly sexually assaulted and murdered a four-year-old girl at Narapur in Borh tehsil of Pune district on May 1.

Mr. Fadnavis noted that the accused in the case had committed similar offences twice earlier and highlighted the need to prevent repeat offenders from mis-



Police at the spot where a four-year-old girl was allegedly sexually assaulted and murdered in Pune district. ANI

using parole. The accused was booked on charges of sexual harassment in 1998 and 2015 and later acquitted in both cases, according to the police.

The Chief Minister directed officials in the Law and Judiciary Department to make changes to the jail

manual to include rules to deny parole to persons convicted of sexual offences. "A similar rule was brought by our government in 2017-18, but was struck down by the court. It has been seen that 80% of such crimes are committed by repeat offenders.

Mr. Ashutosh, who describes himself as president of Mathura-based Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi Mukti Nirman Trust (registered), has also sought removal of his name from the police surveillance register.

He is one of the litigants in the Shahi Idgah-Krishna Janmabhoomi title dispute pending before the High Court. In his plea, Mr. Ashu-

The Hindu Bureau
DELHI

Ashutosh Brahmachari, an informant in the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act case against the Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath, Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati, has approached the Allahabad High Court to challenge the 13-year-old history-sheet opened against him by the Uttar Pradesh Police.

Mr. Ashutosh, who describes himself as president of Mathura-based Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi Mukti Nirman Trust (registered), has also sought removal of his name from the police surveillance register.

He is one of the litigants in the Shahi Idgah-Krishna Janmabhoomi title dispute pending before the High Court.

In his plea, Mr. Ashu-

Informant in POCSO case moves HC against police history-sheet

tosh stated that the history-sheet was opened at Kandhla police station in Shamli district in 2013 and that either he got acquitted or the trial remained stayed in most of the criminal and civil cases filed against him.

A Division Bench of Justices J.J. Munir and Tarun Saxena, hearing the matter on April 28, issued notice to the Uttar Pradesh government and granted two weeks to file a counter-affidavit. The case has been listed for further hearing on May 13.

Mr. Ashutosh came into limelight after he approached a court in Allahabad in February seeking registration of a first information report (FIR) against the Shankaracharya, alleging that he molested two minors in his Ashram. An FIR was registered on the orders of the special court.

N. Sai Charan
CHENNAI

The transition from a celebrated cinematic star to the top contender in Tamil Nadu politics was not an overnight phenomenon for actor-turned-politician and Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam president C. Joseph Vijay.

Rather, it is a result of years of calibrated public outreach that blended cinema-driven popularity with carefully structured social and political interventions. Before officially launching the TVK in February 2024, Mr. Vijay, a top hero in Kollywood, had engaged in extensive grassroots outreach and intervention over a span of 15 years.

Mr. Vijay, who was introduced to the world of cinema by his director-father S.A. Chandrasekhar, gradually cultivated his fan base by acting in commercial entertainer movies with a focus on family subjects. His father played an instrumental role in carefully cultivating an image



Building a profile: Before launching the TVK, Vijay had engaged in extensive grassroots outreach over a span of 15 years. R. RAGU

for Mr. Vijay.

As his fan base swelled, Mr. Vijay formally launched Vijay Makkal Iyakkam (VMI) in 2009 to engage with them and to carry out welfare initiatives. More than 80,000 fan club units were set up under VMI.

Over the years, Mr. Vijay, through VMI, has implemented several welfare measures, including free canteens, study centres, distribution of computers,

and blood donation camps. The organisation also carried out disaster relief operations during Cyclone Thane in 2011, the Chennai floods in 2015, and Cyclone Gaja in 2018.

and blood donation camps.

The organisation also carried out disaster relief operations during Cyclone Thane in 2011, the Chennai floods in 2015, and Cyclone Gaja in 2018.

How Vijay formed a grassroots base even before launching TVK

Actor-turned-politician implemented several welfare measures in Tamil Nadu, including free canteens, distribution of computers, study centres, blood donation camps, and extended support to regional, national political causes over the years

Apart from welfare initiatives, Mr. Vijay extended support to regional and national political causes. In 2009, Mr. Vijay, along with his fans, observed a fast in Chennai to express solidarity with Sri Lankan Tamils.

In 2011, he organised a massive hunger strike in Nagapattinam, demanding the Centre's intervention against repeated mid-sea arrests of, and attacks on, Tamil Nadu fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy.

In January 2017, Mr. Vijay extended support to massive protests against the ban on Jallikattu, the traditional bull-taming sport of the State. He visited the protest site at Marina beach in Chennai, incognito at night, with his face covered by a handkerchief, to sit in silent solidarity.

Later that year, Mr. Vijay met the family members of S. Anitha, a topper in the Class XII examination, who ended her life after she failed to clear the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET). He met them at their doorstep

in Ariyalur, and consoled the grieving family.

In 2018, following the police firing during the anti-Sterlite protests in Thoothukudi that killed 14 people, Mr. Vijay visited the family members of some of the victims at their doorstep. He rode pillion on a two-wheeler to avoid the media limelight.

On various occasions, Mr. Vijay had met national political leaders and activists. He met Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in 2009, social activist Anna Hazare in 2011, and BJP leader and then Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi before the 2014 Lok Sabha polls.

Felicitation events

Mr. Vijay has also hosted felicitation events for Class X and Class XII toppers from across Tamil Nadu in recent years.

VMI was the launchpad for Mr. Vijay in electoral politics.

Many members of VMI contested as independents in the 2021 local body polls, and over 100 of them emerged victorious.



M.K. Stalin

DMK's vote share shows people's faith in party: Stalin

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

DMK president and outgoing Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Tuesday said the TVK had secured only 17.43 lakh more votes than his party – a margin of just 3.52 percentage points. "As far as I am concerned, the faith reposed by the people of Tamil Nadu in our party is very strong," he said in a message. He said the DMK-led alliance had secured 1,54,82,782 votes, and thanked the people who had voted for the alliance. Mr. Stalin said it was the duty of the DMK to meet the voters and thank them personally, and he urged the party's candidates to do so.

Meanwhile, State Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar on Tuesday accepted Mr. Stalin's resignation as the Chief Minister.

After coming third in election, AIADMK to focus on post-poll landscape, counter Vijay's TVK

T. Ramakrishnan
CHENNAI

As the AIADMK plans to hold the first meeting of its newly elected MLAs on Wednesday, its strategies will be in the limelight. These plans focus on tackling the post-election landscape after the party finished third in the Assembly election; countering the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) in the immediate term; and rebuilding the party in the medium term.

For the time being, the party will not extend support to a government that is likely to be formed by the TVK. Making this clear, former Finance Minister C. Ponnaiyan told *The Hindu* on Tuesday, "We are an ally of the BJP. How does the question of my party supporting the TVK or taking support from the TVK arise?". His observation as-



Edappadi K. Palaniswami

sumes importance in the context of the fledgling party repeatedly calling the BJP its "ideological adversary". Furthermore, Mr. Ponnaiyan contends that a deeper look at the TVK's victory reveals that the party commands support "only in a limited number of districts".

Analysing the results, former Health Minister S. Semmalai, who represented Salem in the Lok Sabha during 2009-14, said his party had succeeded in "removing the anti-people DMK" from power, though it could

not win. Along with its allies, the party had "retained its core base" by bagging 27.22% of the votes polled and 1.33 crore votes, he said. He added that the party's organisation required to be strengthened further.

Promote youngsters

A couple of other office-bearers of the party were of the view that the party should promote youngsters, as the TVK's success lies in making itself appealing to Gen Z. A functionary recalled that after the Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK) was formed in 2005, former Chief Minister Jayalalitha sensed that sections of the youth and the Scheduled Castes had started moving towards the DMDK. To prevent any erosion of the party's base, she formed an exclusive wing for the youth, the functionary said.

U.P. man jailed over 'I Love Muhammad' post secures bail

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Allahabad High Court has granted bail to a man who was arrested by the Uttar Pradesh police last year for allegedly putting up a post on Instagram with the phrase "I Love Muhammad".

Justice Rajiv Lochan Shukla observed on Monday while granting bail to the accused, Nadeem, that the "applicant does not have any criminal antecedents" and the post "does not name any particular caste or community".

The accused, who was jailed on October 7 last year, had moved the court seeking bail in connection with an FIR registered at a

police station in Muzaffarnagar. His counsel argued that he was falsely implicated in the case and the trial was unlikely to conclude in the near future.

Opposing the bail plea, the government counsel claimed that the applicant made "insensitive comments" in the post and such statements led to riots in Bareilly. Anti-social elements were incited by such slogans, the counsel said.

Bareilly witnessed clashes on September 26, 2025 between the police and people protesting the police action against those who carried "I Love Muhammad" posters during an Ide-Milad-un-Nabi procession in Kanpur on September 4 that year.

Vizag-based South Coast Railway Zone to come into effect in June

V. Kamalakara Rao
VISAKHAPATNAM

The Ministry of Railways have announced the creation of South Coast Railway (SCoR), India's 18th railway zone, headquartered in Visakhapatnam, which will be fully operational on June 1.

The announcement made through a Gazette notification issued on Monday, realises a demand that Andhra Pradesh has been pressing for more than four decades and a statutory commitment made to the State under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014.

The new zone will integrate the Guntakal, Guntur, and Vijayawada divisions, with the new 410-km Visakhapatnam division. The project is part of a ₹1.06 lakh crore railway infrastructure push in Andhra Pradesh, which includes 100% electrification and the redevelopment of 74 stations across the State.

The strategic importance of the SCoR is underscored by its freight numbers. The zone has transported 286 million tonnes in the 2025-26 financial year, accounting for 17% of India's total railway loading.

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu described the creation of the SCoR zone as a "promise kept" by the NDA government at both State and the Centre to address a long-cherished demand of the people of the State.

CPI(M) launches internal review to probe causes of LDF rout in election

The defeat, with losses in party strongholds, has raised questions over campaign strategy, organisational cohesion, candidate selection; CPI(M) will assess its future role as the main Opposition, including who will be the next Leader of the Opposition

G. Anand
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has reportedly commenced an intra-party exercise to examine, reportedly with a fine-tooth comb, the granular-level reasons for the Left Democratic Front (LDF)'s political bloodbath in the 2026 Assembly election, as realisation seemed to dawn on the leadership that there is no magic bullet for resolving the issues that led to the historic defeat.

The debilitating rout, especially in the party's strongholds in Thiruvananthapuram, Kannur, Kasaragod, and Alappuzha, among other districts, has thrown up some big



On the way out: Pinarayi Vijayan at the Thiruvananthapuram airport as he arrived from Kannur on Tuesday. NIRMAL HARINDRAN

questions regarding the CPI(M)'s campaign strategy, organisational cohesiveness, candidate finalisation, and efficacy of its political operations, including whether "misplaced confidence" of an "inevitable" third consecu-

tive term in power had imbued the party's electioneering with complacency from the booth level and upwards.

A party insider said the CPI(M) would also examine at the grassroots level whether it had taken its

support base among working-class voters and marginalised sections of society for granted, despite "delivering" promised welfare and development.

The Assembly polls, which swept the Congress-led United Democratic Front to power with an overwhelming 102 seats, saw the LDF reduced to its smallest majority since 2001.

The LDF's losses have also thrown a harsh spotlight on the CPI(M) leadership, including Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and party secretary M.V. Govindan.

Anonymous posters condemning the party leadership for the defeat in CPI(M) strongholds, especially in Kannur, have raised the threat of copycat

lamprooning against top apparatchiks in other regions.

Furthermore, the victory of estranged communist veterans, namely G. Sudhakaran, in Ambalappuzha in Alappuzha, V. Kunnikrishnan and T.K. Govindan, in Payyannur and Taliparamba in Kannur, has reportedly come as a wake-up call for the CPI(M) and underscored the need to woo back its base through hopeful political repositionings.

The CPI(M) would also seek to determine its future role as the main Opposition party, including who would be the next Leader of the Opposition. Mr Vijayan reached Thiruvananthapuram from Kannur on Tuesday.



Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann calling on President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Tuesday. ANI

Cancel membership of seven RS MPs, says Punjab Chief Minister

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann met President Droupadi Murmu in New Delhi on Tuesday and sought the cancellation of membership of the seven Rajya Sabha MPs who defected from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and merged with the BJP last month.

His visit came after Raghav Chadha, one of the seven MPs who defected, met Ms. Murmu and submitted a representation alleging that the ruling party in Punjab is resorting to "vendetta politics" following their exit from the AAP. On April 24, AAP suffered a setback when seven of its 10 Rajya Sabha members - Mr. Chadha, Ashok Mittal, Sandeep Pathak, Harbhajan Singh, Rajinder Gupta, Vikramjit Singh Sahney, and Swati Maliwal - quit the party.

While Ms. Maliwal is an MP from Delhi, the remaining six are lawmakers from Punjab.

Mr. Mann, who reached the national capital along with a delegation of legislators from Punjab, met the

President alone at Rashtrapati Bhavan and submitted a memorandum.

Talking to mediapersons after the meeting, the Chief Minister said the seven lawmakers "switched their loyalty unconstitutionally, thereby making a mockery of democracy".

He said the seven MPs were "not elected but selected" and termed their switch "a betrayal of Punjab rather than a political choice". He also challenged them to resign and seek a fresh mandate.

'Vendetta politics'

Earlier, Mr. Chadha, along with three other MPs who merged with the BJP, met Ms. Murmu. He alleged that the AAP government in Punjab is "misusing State machinery" and resorting to "vendetta politics" to target them after they left the AAP.

"The party that once cried vendetta is now practising its most toxic form. We take strength from the President's assurance that Constitutional rights and democratic choices must be respected," said Mr. Chadha.

Poll outcome puts future of minor parties in doubt

G. Ragesh
KOCHI

The Kerala Assembly election verdict, marked by a strong United Democratic Front (UDF) surge, has raised questions over the survival of several minor political parties, many of which have been wiped off the State's electoral map.

Smaller constituents of the Left Democratic Front (LDF), including Kerala Congress(B), Revolutionary Socialist Party (Leninist) [RSP(L)] and Congress

(S) drew a blank, despite having pockets of influence. The three parties, which used to send one member each to the Assembly in the recent past, have been decimated, casting a shadow over their immediate future.

The defeat of K.B. Ganesh Kumar in Pathanapuram marked a historic setback for the Kerala Congress(B), leaving the party without representation for the first time since its formation. Mr. Kumar, who had held the seat for

25 consecutive years since 2001, lost to Congress's Jyothikumar Chamakkala, whose sustained grassroots presence helped him emerge as a strong alternative.

The Congress(S) is also facing an existential crisis after its leader Kadannappally Ramachandran suffered a heavy defeat in Kannur. Having narrowly won the seat in 2016 and 2021, he was this time defeated by the Congress's T.O. Mohanan by a margin of 18,551 votes, raising un-

certainty over the party's future.

In Kollam's Kunnathur, RSP(L) founder Kovoov Kunjumon, a five-time MLA since 2001, suffered a crushing defeat by 25,314 votes to Ullas Kovoov of the RSP. He was elected on RSP ticket for the first three terms when the party was with the LDF. In 2016, he formed his breakaway faction and stood with the LDF after his parent party quit the alliance.

Meanwhile, the Kizhakkambalam-based Twen-

ty20's alliance with the BJP has also come under scrutiny after it failed to make an impact. Even in its Ernakulam strongholds such as Kunnathunad and Perumbavoor, its candidates polled fewer votes than what the Twenty20 and the BJP had secured separately in 2021.

Twenty20 chief Sabu M. Jacob attributed the poor performance to the broader anti-incumbency wave against the Pinarayi Vijayan government that favoured the UDF.

INBRIEF



Driver's timely action saves lives as RTC bus catches fire

A Karnataka RTC bus was gutted after it caught fire in Ranebennur taluk of Haveri district on Tuesday. Fortunately, none of the 15 passengers was hurt due to timely action by the driver. The fire broke out on the bus near Devaragudda when it was proceeding towards Gadag from Bengaluru. According to sources, the driver noticed smoke emanating from one of the tyres. He stopped the bus and quickly deboarded the passengers. Within minutes of the passengers alighting from the bus, one of the tyres exploded and the bus caught fire.

Clash over play at University of Hyderabad turns violent

A confrontation between student groups at the University of Hyderabad turned violent on Monday after members of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad objected to the staging of *Holi*, a play by Marathi writer Mahesh Elkunchwar, alleging that its contents were offensive to religious beliefs. As per a section of students, slogan-shouting near the venue of the play escalated into physical violence, resulting in minor injuries. The Students' Federation of India, one of the organisers of the play, condemned the attack on "academic freedom".

10 with links to global cricket betting racket held in A.P.

The Andhra Pradesh Police have arrested 10 persons linked to a cricket betting racket, allegedly operating from the Philippines, and seized ₹19.70 lakh after a raid at Kalyandurg, Superintendent of Police P. Jagadeesh said on Tuesday. Another ₹18.20 lakh in 49 bank accounts across nine banks were frozen. Two accused are absconding. Mr. Jagadeesh said the racket recruited members from across India to obtain mule bank accounts and SIM cards, which were sent abroad for the online activities.

Sringeri recount: Karnataka CM alleges criminal conspiracy by BJP

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Accusing the Bharatiya Janata Party of indulging in "criminal conspiracy" to tamper with postal ballots and stealing votes in the Sringeri Assembly constituency, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday said the result announced after re-counting would be challenged.

"This is vote dacoity. The BJP does not believe in fair and impartial elections. In the past too, it had tried to tamper with the voter list through an organisation called Chilume. In Aland, efforts were made to drop genuine voters from the list. They do not hesitate to tamper with the electoral process," the



CM Siddaramaiah speaking to the media in Bengaluru on Tuesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Chief Minister said, adding it was the first such case of criminal conspiracy in the country.

Mr. Siddaramaiah said 255 postal ballot votes of Congress legislator T.D. Raje Gowda that had been declared as valid in 2023 had now been declared in-

valid owing to an additional mark found on the ballot paper. "All 170 ballot paper votes cast in favour of Mr. Gowda have been declared invalid in the third round of counting of postal ballots. Why did the then polling agents of all parties sign on the documents (of

counting process)? Why did they not complain then? The Returning Officer in 2023 had declared them as valid. If it is invalid now, why was it not invalid then? This is *vote chori*."

Following the March 2026 direction of the Karnataka High Court to conduct re-counting of postal ballots in the Sringeri constituency, incumbent Congress legislator Mr. Raje Gowda has lost to BJP's D.N. Jeevaraj, who filed the election petition after his defeat in 2023. While Mr. Gowda had been declared the winner by a margin of 201 votes in 2023, the margin flipped to favour Mr. Jeevaraj, who, after the counting of postal ballots, has emerged the winner by a margin of 52 votes.

HC stays FIR against Jeevaraj over postal ballot tampering

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka on Tuesday stayed the investigation into the FIR registered against the BJP's D.N. Jeevaraj, the newly declared Sringeri MLA, for allegedly tampering with postal ballot papers and documents related to counting of votes.

A Vacation Bench of Justice V. Srisananda passed the interim order on the petition filed by Mr. Jeevaraj, who had challenged the FIR registered by the Chikkamagaluru Town Police against him, former Deputy Commissioner K.N. Ramesh, former Returning Officer Vedamurthy, and others on the charge of

tampering with postal ballot papers, among other offences. The case was filed on Sunday, hours after Mr. Jeevaraj was declared the winner following the re-verification and recount of postal ballots.

HC direction

Acting on High Court directions, postal ballots were re-verified and recounted after it partly allowed Mr. Jeevaraj's plea challenging the Assembly election of Congress candidate T.D. Raje Gowda. The dispute arose from the May 2023 polls, where Mr. Gowda won by 201 votes amid the rejection of 279 postal ballots, prompting Jeevaraj to move the High Court in June 2023.

Top court judge says PIL has become 'paisa interest litigation'

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court judge Justice B.V. Nagarathna on Tuesday said public interest litigation (PIL), a unique mechanism initiated by the Indian judiciary post-Emergency to "bring social justice within the reach of the common man", has lately metamorphosed into "private interest litigation", "publicity interest litigation" and even "paisa" and "political" interest litigation.

The judge, who is part of a nine-judge Bench hearing the Sabarimala review petitions, said articles are being published in newspapers merely for the sake of filing PIL pleas.

Justice Nagarathna's oral observations follow

submissions made by the Centre in the Sabarimala case to do away with PIL jurisdiction. "The time has come not merely to recalibrate PIL, but to remove it," the Centre had submitted through Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta.

One of the arguments raised by the Centre was about the locus standi of the original writ petitioner, Indian Young Lawyers Association. The NGO was the first to challenge the prohibition on women aged 10 to 50 from entering the Sabarimala temple.

The legal challenge, which dated back to 2006, culminated in a five-judge Bench upholding the right of women of all ages to enter and worship at the tem-



The Indian Young Lawyers Association first challenged the ban on women aged 10 to 50 from entering the temple. FILE PHOTO

ple. The September 2018 judgment, delivered by a Bench headed by then Chief Justice Dipak Misra (now retired), had compared the bar on women to the practice of untouchability.

However, on Tuesday, Chief Justice of India Surya Kant asked the NGO's lawyer, advocate Ravi Pra-

kash Gupta, what "business" his client had to question the temple prohibition.

Mr. Gupta submitted that the petition was triggered by news articles on a sex scandal involving a priest of the Sabarimala temple.

Chief Justice Kant asked how the question

of the prohibition on women of a certain age at the temple was in any way connected to the scandal involving the priest. The CJ said the apex court could instead have done better by taking *suo motu* cognisance of the allegations against the priest, ordering a day-to-day trial and ensuring that he was brought to justice if found guilty. The CJ said the Supreme Court should have thrown the association's writ petition into the "dustbin".

At one point, Chief Justice Kant asked whether the NGO had considered itself "the chief priest of the country". The CJ said there was a real difference between a meddler and a bona fide PIL petitioner. Mr. Gupta submitted

that PILs were not considered adversarial.

Rejecting the need for a review of the 2018 judgment, Mr. Gupta questioned the very reason given for the existence of the prohibition - that the presence of young women was anathema to the Sabarimala deity.

"They say the deity does not like the presence of young ladies... Is that said as an expression of regard towards the deity, or is it meant as an insult to the deity? Are they putting words in the mouth of Lord Ayyappa?" Mr. Gupta asked.

Justice B.V. Nagarathna interjected sharply, querying, "How are you concerned with all this, tell us? Is it in any way your business?"



Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw speaks during a Cabinet briefing, in New Delhi on Tuesday. ANI

Cabinet clears three railway projects worth ₹23,437 crore

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Tuesday approved three multitracking projects of the Railway Ministry with a total cost of ₹23,437 crore. These projects will be implemented in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, increasing the existing railway network by about 901 km. The projects that include Nagda-Mathura 3rd and 4th Line, Guntakal-Wadi 3rd and 4th Line as well as Burhwal-Sitapur 3rd and 4th Line will be completed up to 2030-31.

“The increased line capacity will significantly enhance mobility, resulting in improved operational efficiency and service reliability for the Railways. These multi-tracking proposals are poised to streamline operations and alleviate congestion,” says a press release by the Railway Ministry.

The multi-tracking project will enhance connectivity to approximately 4,161 villages, having a population of about 83 lakhs.

The proposed capacity enhancement will boost rail connectivity to several prominent tourist destinations across India, including Mahakaleshwar, Ranthambore National Park, Kuno National Park, etc.

PM ‘strongly’ condemns attacks on oil hub in UAE

External Affairs Ministry calls Iran’s strikes ‘unacceptable’, says ‘targeting of civilian infrastructure and innocent civilians’ must end; three Indians injured in the attacks; Modi to visit UAE on May 15

Subhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

In one of his toughest statements amidst the war in West Asia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi “strongly condemned” the drone and missile attacks by Iran on oil installations in Fujairah where three Indians were injured, and affirmed “solidarity” with the UAE.

Mr. Modi’s words, issued in a social media post, come days ahead of his visit to Abu Dhabi, where he is expected to strengthen ties with the UAE in talks with President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Earlier on Tuesday, the External Affairs Ministry issued a statement calling the attack “unacceptable”, and said the “targeting of civilian infrastructure and innocent civilians” must end. Both statements demanded an end to the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, where the U.S. attempted on Monday to forcibly open up shipping channels by sinking a number of Iranian boats, action that is believed to have triggered the Iranian attack.



A screen grab from a video shows smoke billowing from Fujairah oil industry zone following a drone attack on May 4. REUTERS

“[I] strongly condemn the attacks on the UAE that resulted in injuries to three Indian nationals. Targeting civilians and infrastructure is unacceptable,” Mr. Modi said in his post. “India stands in firm solidarity with the UAE and reiterates its support for the peaceful resolution of all issues through dialogue and diplomacy.”

The Ministry statement called for “free and unimpeded navigation and commerce through the Strait of Hormuz in keeping with international law”. “India stands ready to support all efforts for a peaceful resolution of issues,” it added.

The attacks by the U.S. and Iran on Monday were the first serious outbreak of violence since the April 8 ceasefire that was agreed to in talks in Pakistan between the two countries. The incidents on Monday led to fears of resumption of the war in West Asia that has already caused widespread losses across the world.

The government’s response is believed to be aimed at sending a message of support to the UAE that has borne the brunt of Iran’s attacks in an ‘asymmetric’ response to the strikes initiated by the U.S. and Israel on February 28

this year. Thus far, India has not named either the U.S. and Israel or Iran directly in criticising attacks during the war in West Asia. However, the government has sent envoys to the Gulf, including External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval who visited the UAE separately in April, and Prime Minister Modi’s visit to Abu Dhabi, expected on May 15 on his way to a four-nation European tour, is expected to reinforce that message.

The Ministry has repeatedly expressed its concerns for Indians, estimated to be 10 million, living in the worst-hit areas of the Gulf region, especially the UAE, where Iranian drones and missiles set fire to oil facilities. The largest number of Indians, about 4.3 million, live and work in the UAE, making them about a third of the total population, as well as the biggest expatriate community. Remittances from the Gulf to India amount to more than \$40 billion a year, with the UAE the top earner, accounting for more than half.

Cabinet approves four more judges for Supreme Court

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved an increase in the number of judges of the Supreme Court from 34, which includes the Chief Justice of India, to a total of 38.

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the top court currently has a sanctioned strength of 33 judges and the Chief Justice of India (CJI). A Bill would be brought in the next session of Parliament to raise this strength by four.

The Cabinet approval is a step towards tiding over the continuing crisis of pendency plaguing the court for years now, especially after the pandemic, when the facility of e-filing increased the inflow. The current backlog is 92,385 cases, and threatening to reach six figures even as the court is going into summer recess or “partial working days” in June.

The government’s approval for more judges on the Supreme Court is after a six-year hiatus. Parliament last amended Section 2 of the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956 in 2019, raising the sanctioned strength from

The move is a step towards tiding over the continuing crisis of pendency plaguing the court for years

31 to 33 (excluding the Chief Justice of India).

The Cabinet approval would be followed by an amendment to the 1956 Act. Article 124(i) gives Parliament the sole authority of increasing the sanctioned strength of the Supreme Court. Once the amended law comes into force, the Supreme Court Collegium would recommend judges to the government for appointment to the top court.

At present, there are two judicial vacancies in the Supreme Court. These are of the current Chief Justice of India Surya Kant’s immediate predecessor, Justice B.R. Gavai, who retired in November 2025, and Justice Rajesh Bindal, who completed office in April 2026. Three more judges are scheduled to retire in 2026.

Justices J.K. Maheshwari and Pankaj Mithal will complete their tenure in June, and Justice Sanjay Karol in August 2026.

Search on for two missing as boat capsizes in Rajasthan

The Hindu Bureau
JAIPUR

Civil defence teams were searching for two persons, including an eight-year-old boy, who went missing after a boat capsized in the Mahi River in Rajasthan’s Banswara district on Tuesday, the police said.

The boat, carrying about a dozen persons, overturned and sank after going out of control near Bhaisau village. Most of the people aboard the boat swam to safety, while Jayesh, 21, and Manav, 8, went missing. Preliminary investigation suggested that overloading might have caused the accident. All of those on board were residents of Bhano Ka Pada village who were visiting the Sangameshwar Mahadev temple and went boating afterwards. The boat was being operated by a local and the occupants – all men – reportedly had no life jackets.

Congress slams govt. over ‘slack’ private investment, cites CEA’s recent remarks

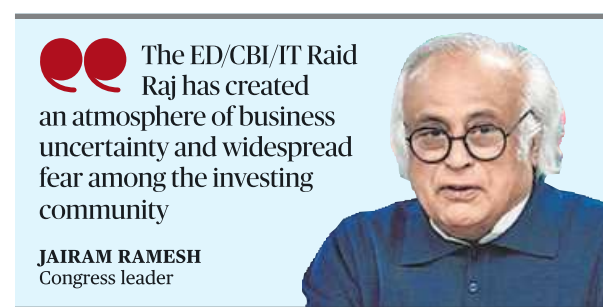
The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday criticised the Union government over “persistent sluggishness” in private corporate investment, attributing it to weak consumer demand, stagnant real wages, and an alleged climate of fear generated by investigative agencies.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh said the party had repeatedly flagged a structural constraint holding back higher real GDP growth.

“Tax rates have been slashed, and the ease of doing business has allegedly improved substantially. But the intended consequence of these moves – a boost in private investment – has refused to materialise,” he said.

Mr. Ramesh cited recent remarks by Chief Econom-



The ED/CBI/IT Raid Raj has created an atmosphere of business uncertainty and widespread fear among the investing community

ic Adviser (CEA) V. Anantha Nageswaran, who pointed to robust profit growth among large firms without a commensurate rise in investment. According to Mr. Nageswaran, corporate profits among top-listed companies grew at an annual rate of over 30% in the post-COVID period, even as private capital formation remained “disappointing”.

The Congress leader argued that the reluctance to invest stemmed primarily from subdued consumer demand, which he linked to a “stagnant real wages crisis”.

“The ED/CBI/IT Raid Raj has created an atmosphere of business uncertainty and widespread fear among the investing community,” Mr. Ramesh alleged.

Slamming ‘crony capitalism’, he said companies had little reason to undertake independent risk when profits could be secured through proximity to political power, invoking the phrase “Chanda Lo, Dhandha Do” to underscore the charge.

Court allows confiscation of assets in Bhandari case

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Tuesday allowed the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to confiscate certain assets linked to fugitive arms dealer Sanjay Bhandari, who is accused of tax evasion and money laundering.

Special Judge Sanjay Jindal of Rouse Avenue Court considered the ED’s application seeking attachment of Bhandari’s properties—divided into List A and List B—in India and abroad.

Confiscation has been permitted in respect of some properties, while the assets placed under List B will be taken up for further hearing on July 18. The detailed order has not yet been made public. The ED had submitted that confiscation of assets linked to him was necessary to prevent the accused from frustrating the legal process by remaining outside the country.

Manipur’s Zomi leaders to take MLA’s body to Delhi, protest outside BJP office

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Members of the Zomi community in Manipur are planning to bring the body of the late Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Vungzagim Valte to the national capital to stage a protest outside the BJP headquarters.

Valte had been physically assaulted by a mob in Imphal on May 4, 2023, resulting in paralysis, and died on February 21, 2026, in a hospital in Haryana’s Gurugram. His body is being preserved at the mortuary of the Churachandpur district hospital in Manipur.

Key demands
Before allowing his last rites to be performed, Valte’s family and the leaders of the Zomi tribe want certain conditions to be fulfilled, including the arrest of those who had at-



The mortal remains of Vungzagim Valte being brought to his residence at Churachandpur in Manipur on February 24. PTI

tacked Valte in 2023.

Muan Zomi, spokesperson of the Zomi Coordination Committee, said that in a week’s time, Zomi leaders plan to travel by road to Aizawl with the body, and subsequently take a flight to Delhi. “We would place the body in front of the BJP headquarters in Delhi to demand justice for our MLA,” Mr. Zomi said.

A key demand is to ho-

nour the commitments made during the MLA’s tenure before his final rites. “This includes the implementation of the Gazette notifications issued for re-drawing the boundaries for administrative convenience and the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed in 2017, both of which remain unfulfilled and have not materialised on the ground,” he said.

‘In organisations that encourage learning, failure not a bad word’

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Organisations that create opportunities for employees to improve and excel through upskilling or reskilling often reap the benefits in the long run. Such learning organisations create an ecosystem where employees are incentivised for efforts to learn new skills and apply at work, speakers at a panel discussion said on Tuesday.

The discussion was part of Future Career Conversations series organised jointly by the SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST) and *The Hindu* under the title “The Future Reimagined - Discover, Decide, Define Your Career.”

“A learning organisation is one where failure is not a



Panelists at the session titled ‘The Rejigged Employee’, organised in Chennai on Tuesday. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

bad word,” said Amardeep Devadasan, Senior Vice-President, RR Donnelley & Williams Lea. Abhishek Paul, Culture Shepherd, Kissflow, said, “A learning organisation has a lot of courageous people who are not afraid to seek failure.”

Bijumon Jacob, Head-India Operations, Human Resources, Ejada, Dubai, said organisations that invest in technology and upgrading

the skills of employees were indeed learning organisations.

A. Vinay Kumar, Pro-Vice Chancellor, SRMIST, said as organisations grow, “people who built these structures become leaders and their reluctance to understand change or actually change themselves leads to problems.”

‘Gen Z entrepreneurs are quick, should focus on deep learning’

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

While Gen Z and Gen Alpha are often blamed for their lack of patience, playing to their strengths could provide them with a purpose to pursue their careers and objectives, speakers at a panel discussion said on Tuesday. The discussion was part of Future Career Conversations series

organised jointly by the SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST) and *The Hindu* under the title *The Future Reimagined - Discover, Decide, Define Your Career*.

Puru Gupta, Co-founder and CEO, True Elements,



Panelists at the session titled ‘The Learning Entrepreneur’, organised in Chennai on Tuesday. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

and Founder, Proteus Partners, said, “They are more rational; their left brain works better.” However, he said, in his experience, members of these generations resigned from his organisation for ‘not having enough me time’.

Balaji Sampath, Founder of AhaGuru, said, “If you give them reasonably good purpose, they can spend time to do it. You have to focus on making it

meaningful and purposeful.” N. Bhalaji, Additional Director, Innovation, Incubation & Entrepreneurship - Medicine, Science, and Law, SRMIST, said members of these generations were adept at information acquisition and felt that there was an opportunity to synthesise the knowledge. “Their strength is speed; they can improve in acquiring deeper knowledge,” he added.

MoD inks ₹1,476-cr. contract with BEL

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Defence on Tuesday signed a ₹1,476-crore contract with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Hyderabad, for the procurement of five Ground-Based Mobile Electronic Systems for the Army.

The deal, inked under the Buy (Indian-Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured) category, was formalised in the presence of Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh in New Delhi.

According to the Ministry, the systems, with indigenous content of 72%, are expected to enhance the operational capabilities of Army units while advancing India’s self-reliance in defence manufacturing. The contract is seen as a

major step towards strengthening the domestic defence ecosystem and aligns with government’s flagship initiatives such as Aatmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India, it added.

In March, the Ministry had signed a ₹1,950-crore capital acquisition contract with BEL for the procurement of two Mountain Radars for the Air Force.

At the forefront
BEL has been at the forefront of supplying radar, communication and electronic warfare systems to the armed forces. The latest contract is expected to further boost domestic manufacturing capabilities, while supporting ancillary industries and MSMEs involved in the defence supply chain.

Vandalism, post-poll violence reported in parts of Bengal

Reports emerge of arson, stone throwing, along with videos of bloodied workers; Mamata accuses the BJP of selectively attacking Trinamool Congress workers; top brass of the victorious party call for calm; end the cycle of violence, says PM

Shrabana Chatterjee
Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Post-poll violence and vandalism have been reported from multiple parts of West Bengal even as the top leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the winner of the Assembly election, asked its workers not to engage in any form of violence.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday accused the BJP of selectively targeting and attacking Trinamool Congress workers.

After the BJP's sweeping victory was declared on Monday, visuals of chaos and violence started surfacing from across the State, where multiple Trinamool party offices were vandalised and party workers harassed and attacked.

"They have started torturing all our people. From south Bengal to north Bengal, they have started atrocities, the BJP along with goons," Ms. Banerjee said, adding that a number of party offices have been captured.

She has set up a committee of 10 party leaders to visit violence-affected areas. When the Trinamool came to power in 2011, she claimed, it had only wanted change, not revenge, and did not engage in any violence or attacks.

After the BJP's triumph



Poll aftermath: An office of the Trinamool Congress in Ansol damaged in violence on Tuesday. Arson and vandalism have been reported across the State. PTI

Mamata has set up a committee of 10 party leaders to visit violence-affected areas in the State

On Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had also said that the party would not engage in the politics of revenge, but would rather focus only on "poriborton (change)".

PM's comments

"This is the first time that not a single citizen lost their lives due to violence during the polls," Mr. Modi said from the BJP's head office in Delhi after the party claimed victory in Bengal.

The Prime Minister called for a halt to the endless cycle of violence, and said that going forward, BJP workers and leaders should not focus on who voted for them but focus only on serving the people of Bengal.

Of the 2,400 companies of Central forces that were brought into the State during the polls, 700 were set to stay back to control any post-poll violence.

However, starting from Monday afternoon, Trinamool party offices have been vandalised in multiple places, including Tollygunge, Kasba, Baruipur, Kamarhati, Murshidabad, Baranagar, Howrah, Baharampur, Falta, and Siliguri.

Arson was also reported from some places, and stones were thrown on many party offices, while some were painted saffron overnight.

'Videos of attacks'

Trinamool Rajya Sabha member Sagarika Ghose shared the video of a worker allegedly killed in the post-poll violence in Nandoo of Birbhum. Another Trinamool worker died under mysterious circumstances in Belegkata, and his body, with injuries, was discovered near his house. His family has alleged that he was abused by a group of people and killed.

Trinamool Manikta candidate Shreya Pande

shared a video showing a party's block president soaked in blood. Such attacks were also reported from Alipurduar.

The party also claimed that its Udaynarayanpur candidate Samir Panja came under attack on Monday night, sharing a video of him facing a baton charge with his clothes ripped.

"If there is any political violence with BJP flags and any Trinamool offices are attacked, we will remove them from the party," said BJP State president Samik Bhattacharya. He also warned that anyone who abuses Ms. Banerjee or her family would be thrown out of the party.

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh State general secretary Jishnu Basu also asked RSS *karyakartas* (workers) not to engage in any violence, pointing out that doing so would only send the State back to the "jungle raj" of the Trinamool. "If you do wrong, you will get punishment for your wrongdoings," he warned.

Meanwhile, BJP spokesperson Debjit Sarkar alleged that in many places, it is BJP workers who have been attacked by Trinamool workers. He said that attempts are being made to blame the BJP for internal conflicts within the Trinamool and some deliberate attempts are being made to tarnish its image.

BJP landslide win sparks celebrations; Secretariat to return to Writers' Building

Shrabana Chatterjee
Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Bharatiya Janata Party workers, leaders, and supporters celebrated across West Bengal on Tuesday after the party crafted a historic landslide victory in State elections. There were celebrations across government offices too.

Motorbikes and cars decked in saffron and bearing BJP flags took part in rallies across the State. BJP supporters raised *Jai Shri Ram* slogans outside the homes of Mamata Banerjee and Abhishek Banerjee in the Kalighat area. A massive crowd of BJP workers gathered outside Mr. Banerjee's office on Monday.

From fireworks to biriyani, and saffron *gula* (colour), the celebrations had many faces in the State. Overnight, many autorickshaw unions in the State switched loyalties from the Trinamool Congress to the BJP. As the saffron wave took over, government office workers in the State Secretariat in Nabanna were seen celebrating and chanting *Jai Shri Ram*. Similar celebrations were reported from other State government offices.

"With the new government coming to power, we have brought an end to the 15 years of abuse by the previous government. Punishment postings, transfers, and denial of dearness allowance will



Sweet win: A BJP supporter offering sweets to passengers at the Howrah railway station to celebrate the party's victory. PTI

now hopefully come to an end. This is an organic outpouring of happiness," a BJP supporter inside Nabanna told presspersons.

Many said that they had been living and working in fear and were now freed of that feeling.

Revellers were also seen at the BJP's Salt Lake office where Suvendu Adhikari, who defeated Mamata Banerjee in her home bastion of Bhabanipur, was feted by party workers. Many other BJP winners also joined Mr. Adhikari in celebrations and chanting *Jai Shri Ram*. Dilip Ghosh, who won from Kharagpur Sadar, State president Samik Bhattacharya, and Sukanta Majumdar, MP, joined the festivities.

A change

The BJP will be shifting the State Secretariat back to the historic Writers' Building which was abandoned by the Trinamool Congress government under Mama-

ta Banerjee in 2013, two years after she assumed power.

Ms. Banerjee shifted her administration to Nabanna, a building in Hooghly outside Kolkata.

BJP State president Samik Bhattacharya said the party had always wanted to run the government from the Writers' Building. The Writers' Building has historically served as the administrative building for many State governments.

The massive red-brick British structure in the heart of central Kolkata's Dalhousie area has seen the rise and fall of many administrations and was near empty for 13 years, citing maintenance.

The Public Works Department has been roped in to restore the Writers' Building. According to reports, at least 28 rooms will be refurbished for the new Chief Minister and other Cabinet Ministers.

Will analyse election results and learn important lessons, says Cong. Assam unit chief

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The Assam Congress has convened a meeting with its MLAs-elect and poll candidates to analyse its defeat in the Assembly election. State party chief Gaurav Gogoi, who lost the Jorhat seat, told presspersons on Tuesday that his party will learn "important lessons" from the poll outcome to return as a stronger political force.

"I was the captain of the party as we headed into the elections. I take moral responsibility for our defeat," he said and congratulated the winners.

Mr. Gogoi, however, suspected the neutrality of the Election Commission, and



Gaurav Gogoi

said his party was finding it difficult to accept the results, given the support it received from the people during the campaign.

"We came to know that the people could not believe the margins of defeat in many constituencies. Contrary to their and our expectations, we did not see neck-to-neck contests

in those seats," he said.

"We will analyse the results with the State leadership on Saturday, and consequently, we will do it in the districts," he said.

He said the EC had not answered several questions Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had raised regarding the fairness, transparency, and accuracy of the electoral process.

"My only concern is that the BJP leadership does not believe in a neutral and fair electoral process. They believe in one India, one party. The only way to weaken or finish off other parties is by completely destabilising the electoral process. That is leading India into a dangerous path," he said.

Rahul backs Mamata, says BJP's victories in Bengal and Assam were theft of mandate

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday described the Bharatiya Janata Party's victory in the West Bengal and Assam Assembly elections as "theft" of the popular mandate.

He alleged that it marked a significant step in the party's purported attempt to "destroy" Indian democracy.

'Destroy democracy'

In a post on X, Mr. Gandhi expressed support for the Trinamool Congress, which was unseated by the BJP in West Bengal, and cautioned against political schadenfreude over the



Rahul Gandhi

party's defeat. "Some in the Congress, and others, are gloating about the Trinamool's loss. They need

to understand this clearly — the theft of Assam and Bengal's mandate is a big step forward by the BJP in its mission to destroy Indian democracy," the Congress leader said.

Urging the political parties to rise above partisan considerations, Mr. Gandhi added, "Put petty politics aside. This is not about one party or another. This is about India."

"We agree with Mamata ji. More than 100 seats were stolen in Bengal. We have seen this playbook before in Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Maharashtra, Lok Sabha 2024 etc," Mr. Gandhi said.

He had spoken to Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee on Monday.

Mamata says she will work to strengthen Opposition INDIA bloc

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

A day after her party suffered a humiliating defeat in the West Bengal Assembly polls, Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday said that several leaders of the INDIA bloc, including Sonia Gandhi, reached out to her and added that she will work to "strengthen" the Opposition alliance.

"Thankful to all INDIA [Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance] bloc leaders. Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh (Yadav), Hemant Soren, Tejaswi (Yadav), leaders called me. Akhilesh will come to meet me tomorrow. Now my target is clear. I am a free bird, I had

made it clear what will I do with other INDIA bloc leaders. I will strengthen the INDIA bloc," she said at a press conference.

During the election campaign for the recently concluded polls, Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejaswi Yadav, Aam Aadmi Party leader Arvind Kejriwal and Chief Minister of Jharkhand Hemant Soren had campaigned for the Trinamool.

Ms. Banerjee's remarks on strengthening the bloc are significant as these come after her defeat.

Asked whether she will return to the State Assembly, the Trinamool chairperson said, "I am not going there. I do not care about the chair. I only care about the people."

Bihar Cabinet expansion tomorrow, Modi, Shah and Nabin to attend event

Amarnath Tewary
PATNA

The Bihar Cabinet will be expanded on Thursday in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Bharatiya Janata Party president Nitin Nabin at the Gandhi Maidan here, the party's State chief Sanjay Sarangi said.

Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary and his two deputies, Vijay Kumar Choudhary and Bijendra Prasad Yadav, had taken oath on April 15.

Sources said most Ministers from the Nitish Kumar-led National Democratic Alliance government are likely to be retained, and a few fresh faces will be in-



Gearing up: Labourers laying bricks at the Gandhi Maidan in Patna on Tuesday as part of preparations for the Cabinet expansion. ANI

roduced to fill all the 36 Cabinet berths. Mr. Choudhary had recently visited Delhi and met several top party leaders.

Sources added that the BJP wants to make the Cabinet expansion a "gala

event", preparations for which have begun at the Gandhi Maidan.

NDA ally Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), which has 19 MLAs, had two Ministers - Sanjay Singh and Sanjay Paswan - in the pre-

vious Cabinet, while Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) and Rashtriya Lok Morcha had one Minister each. "In Mr. Choudhary's Cabinet, they are likely to be repeated," a source said.

New faces

Sources said the Cabinet may have some new faces and more women Ministers.

"Both the BJP and the JD (U) have agreed to have 16 Ministers each from their parties, including the Chief Minister and two Deputy Chief Ministers, and four Ministers from smaller alliance partners. This will take the number of Ministers to the maximum possible 36," said a JD(U) leader.

Assam election verdict is a rejection of blue-blood politics, says Himanta

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The Congress rout in Assam was partly a rejection of the politics of "blue blood", Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said after the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance scripted a hat-trick of electoral victories by winning 102 of the 126 Assembly seats in the State on Monday.

He referred to the defeats of the sons of three former Chief Ministers, Gaurav Gogoi, Debabrata Saikia, and Diganta Barman, who are the sons of Tarun Gogoi, Hiteswar Saikia, and Bhumidhar Barman, respectively.



Himanta Biswa Sarma

cially that of the son of Hiteswar Saikia, is nothing to feel good about, but the results were a rejection of the politics of blue blood. They won elections because of the aura of their fathers, but could not create their own identities over time," Mr. Sarma said.

Mr. Hiteswar, a two-time Chief Minister, is considered Mr. Sarma's political mentor.

Mr. Gaurav, the State Congress president and MP, lost the Jorhat seat to the BJP's Hitendra Nath Goswami by 23,182 votes. Mr. Debabrata lost Nazira, the seat his family held since 1972, barring a seven-year gap, to the BJP's Mayur Borgohain by 46,701 votes. Mr. Diganta lost Barkhetri to the BJP's Narayan Deka by 28,844 votes.

After his parents, Mr. Debabrata held the Nazira seat since 2011. He has been the Leader of the Opposition since the BJP first came to power in Assam in 2016.

The sons of two other Congress stalwarts, Dhubri MP Rakibul Hussain and former Union Minister Pawan Singh Dhanowar, had mixed fortunes. While the former's son, Tanzil Hussain, won the Samaguri seat, the latter's son, Pranjal Ghatowar, lost the Chabua-Lahowal constituency to the BJP's Binod Hazarika by 50,914 votes.

Seven women elected

Seven women who contested the elections were elected. The figure is one more than in 2021, but one less than in 2016.

Of the 722 candidates who contested the 126 seats, 59 were women. The success rate of women candidates is 11.86%.

IN BRIEF



Vietnamese President To Lam visits Gaya Ji in Bihar

Vietnamese President To Lam, who is on a three-day tour of India, meditated under the sacred Bodhi Tree in Gaya, Bihar and prayed at the Mahabodhi Temple on Tuesday, officials said. Mr. Lam was received at the airport here by Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary and other senior officials. "The spiritual, cultural, and heritage city of Gaya Ji warmly honours the arrival of the esteemed President of Vietnam. This historic arrival will undoubtedly take already deep India-Vietnam relations to new heights," the Chief Minister said in a post on X. Mr. Lam is scheduled to leave for New Delhi to hold wide-ranging discussions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday, and also meet President Droupadi Murmu, the officials said. This is Lam's first visit to India after being elected. PTI

Raghav Das Gaiha wins Malcolm Adiseshiah Award

Raghav Das Gaiha, a visiting scholar at PARC, University of Pennsylvania, U.S., has been named the recipient of the Malcolm Adiseshiah Award, 2026. Prof. Gaiha is a former Professor of Public Policy in the Faculty of Management Studies, University of Delhi. Additionally, Kanika Mahajan, Associate Professor of Economics at Ashoka University, Sonapat, has been selected for the Elizabeth Adiseshiah Award, 2026. Presented by the Malcolm and Elizabeth Adiseshiah Trust, the awards recognise social scientists for their outstanding contributions to development studies. Both honours will be presented at an event to be held in Chennai.

Govt. hikes sugarcane FRP by ₹10 per quintal

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Tuesday increased the Fair and Remunerative Price of sugarcane for the sugar season 2026-27 by ₹10 a quintal from the last crop year. The new price will be ₹365 a quintal for a basic sugar recovery rate of 10.25%.

There will not be any deduction in case of sugar mills where recovery is below 9.5%. "Such farmers will get ₹338.3 per quintal," a press release stated.

The Cabinet also approved ₹5,659.22 crore for "Mission for Cotton Productivity" (2026-27 to 2030-31) to address bottlenecks, declining growth, and quality concerns in the cotton sector.

'Allow doctor booked for posts on Modi to fly to U.K.'

Chinmay Gaikwad
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday asked the Maharashtra government to modify a lookout circular (LOC) against Sangram Patil, a U.K.-based doctor and YouTuber, so that he can fly back to his home country by May 11.

Dr. Patil, a British national of Indian origin, was stopped from returning to the U.K. after immigration authorities cited the LOC. He is named in an FIR at a police station in Mumbai for posts alleged to be against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other BJP leaders.

Justice Ashwin Bhojhe took on record affidavits-cum-undertakings filed by Dr. Patil and his parents, who assured the court of his cooperation with the prosecution when required. The court heard senior advocate Rajiv Shaktiher for Dr. Patil and Advocate General Milind Sathe for the State government.

The judge ordered the State to modify the LOC by May 11. The interim petition was disposed of, while the main petition seeking the FIR to be quashed has been listed after the summer vacation. In January, the court had issued notice to the State on Dr. Patil's plea challenging the FIR.

Cabinet gives nod to make insult to Vande Mataram an offence

The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 will have to be amended to bring the move into effect and add clauses on punishment

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Tuesday gave the go-ahead to amend the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 to make any insult or obstruction to the singing of National Song *Vande Mataram* a punishable offence, a government source told *The Hindu*.

At present, insults to the National Anthem *Jana Gana Mana*, the National Flag and the Constitution is mentioned in the 1971 Act and is punishable by imprisonment of up to three years or a fine or both.

The Cabinet decision comes a day after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secured a landslide victory in West Bengal winning 207 out of 293 contested Assembly seats and was all set to form the government for the first time in the State.

Vande Mataram, the salutation of India imagined as a mother, was written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and published with his novel *Anandamath* in the early 1880s.

In 1937, leaders of the Congress, which was lead-



On February 6, the Union Home Ministry directed the States to play *Vande Mataram* at all official events. FILE PHOTO

ing the national movement, decided to use the first two stanzas at its gatherings, and the Constitution of the modern Republic of India accorded it the status of the National Song.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has accused the Congress of truncating the song to appease the Muslim League during the British rule.

Set of instructions

On February 6, the Union Home Ministry, in a set of instructions to States and government bodies, said that all the six stanzas of *Vande Mataram*, that

comes to a little over three minutes long, should be sung or played at official events. It said that the National Song should be given precedence before the National Anthem, written and composed by Rabindranath Tagore, when both the songs are played at an event.

The Ministry guidelines on *Vande Mataram* are advisory in nature and did not have a statutory backing.

The Cabinet's decision to amend the 1971 Act would make any insult to the national song a punishable offence.

Attacks against Christians rising in Odisha, say activists

The Hindu Bureau
BHUBANESWAR

People's Tribunal, a forum of activists and intellectuals, on Tuesday alleged that Christian communities were increasingly being targeted in Odisha.

Addressing a press conference after touring different parts of the State to investigate the growing incidents of anti-Christian discrimination and violence, the members said, "the testimonies that we heard from all the people in the course of travels in Odisha are extremely harrowing and worrying".

"From the accounts, it is beyond doubt that the Odisha government is doing little to prevent the brazen and continuous violations of the fundamental rights of its Christian, mostly Adivasi and Dalit citizens," they said.

People's Tribunal represented by intellectuals John Dayal, Aakar Patel, Vidya Dinker and Harsh Mander had met around 300 women and men.

"There are organised formations reportedly closely affiliated to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and its ideological mentor, the Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh," the activists said.

Attacks have been reported on Christian places of worship, including cha-

The activists elaborated on the attacks in a letter addressed to Odisha Chief Secretary

pels and house churches, on pastors and priests, forcible disruption and closure of prayer meetings and collective worship, and instituting false charges of unlawful religious conversion on the clergy and their confinement in police stations and jails, the tribunal mentioned in a letter addressed to the Odisha Chief Secretary.

Boycotting Christians

"A worrying pattern that we heard about from almost all the districts was social and economic boycott of people of Christian belief and faith and on some occasions even their enforced expulsion from their village. We heard of fines being imposed on non-Christian residents who interacted in any way with the boycotted Christians," it further said.

In some of the districts, the violence has crossed red lines and taken the form of physical assaults as well as instances of sexual assault and attempts to burn alive which were halted only at the last minute, the tribunal said.

30 banks integrated with UDGM portal to help legal heirs trace funds

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) told the Supreme Court on Tuesday that 30 banks have been integrated into its centralised web portal, UDGM (Unclaimed Deposits - Gateway to Access Information), to enable legal heirs to trace funds belonging to deceased account holders.

A three-judge Bench headed by Justice Vikram Nath was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) petition filed by journalist Sucheta Dalal, contending that funds lying in dormant or inoperative accounts were increasingly being transferred to government-managed pools.

The petitioner sought directions for the creation of a centralised platform to

provide information on financial assets held by deceased persons.

Senior advocate Ranjit Kumar, appearing for the RBI, submitted that the UDGM portal had already been operationalised to address the petitioner's concerns. "The UDGM portal is an interactive platform. There are around 20 lakh registered users who have carried out around 44 lakh searches on the portal as of April 1," he said.

Mr. Kumar added that the 30 banks integrated into the portal account for nearly 90% of the funds held in the Depositors' Education and Awareness Fund (DEAF), a corpus set up by the RBI in 2014 to house unclaimed deposits from commercial and co-operative banks.

The RBI clarified that



30 banks integrated into the portal account for nearly 90% of the funds held in DEAF.

the UDGM portal that enables individuals to look up unclaimed deposits and accounts, but does not function as a claims settlement mechanism. "The object of the portal is to facilitate the identification and tracing of unclaimed deposits, so that the concerned depositor or claimant may approach the respective bank for settlement of the claim

in accordance with the applicable procedure," it said.

Challenges for heirs

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the petitioner pointed out that deposits held in post offices, provident funds, and insurance schemes had not yet been integrated into the portal, thereby posing challenges for legal heirs seeking to claim such assets.

Taking note of the submissions, the Bench granted one week to the Centre and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to place on record the relevant circulars and outline the steps taken to enable the return of unclaimed funds of deceased persons held with banks and financial institutions.

Medical negligence claims can be pursued against a dead doctor's heirs, says SC

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has held that compensation claims in medical negligence cases may be pursued against a deceased doctor's legal heirs, with liability confined to the estate inherited by them.

A Bench of Justices J.K. Maheshwari and A.S. Chandurkar observed that while claims relating to personal injury do not survive the death of a party, those involving pecuniary liability may nonetheless continue against the estate left behind.

"...We conclude that upon the death of the alleged medically negligent doctor, his or her legal heirs can be impleaded

The court ruled that claims involving pecuniary liability may continue against the estate left behind

and brought on record," the Bench said in its May 4 judgment.

The ruling arose from a complaint filed in 1997 alleging medical negligence after a woman lost vision in her right eye following a surgery in 1990. She had sought compensation.

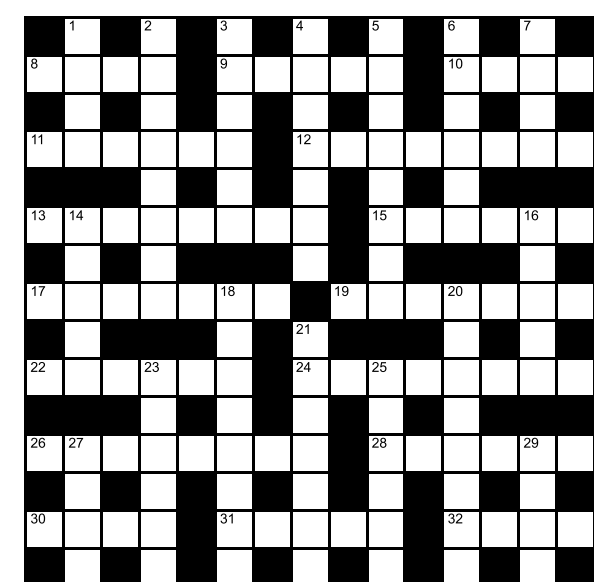
In 2003, the District Consumer Forum in Munger held the doctor negligent and awarded compensation of ₹2.60 lakh. The State Commission, however, set aside the order in 2005. The complainant

then approached the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC). The doctor died in 2009, following which his legal heirs were impleaded.

Before the Supreme Court, the heirs contended that the claim, being one of personal injury, did not survive the doctor's death. The Bench rejected this argument, holding that while legal heirs cannot be saddled with personal liability, they cannot evade proceedings where the claim is tied to the estate inherited from the deceased.

However, the court cautioned that the nature and extent of claims that may be enforced against the estate would require careful scrutiny by the NCDRC.

THE CROSSWORD+ 14786 Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at <https://thehindu.com/crosswords>

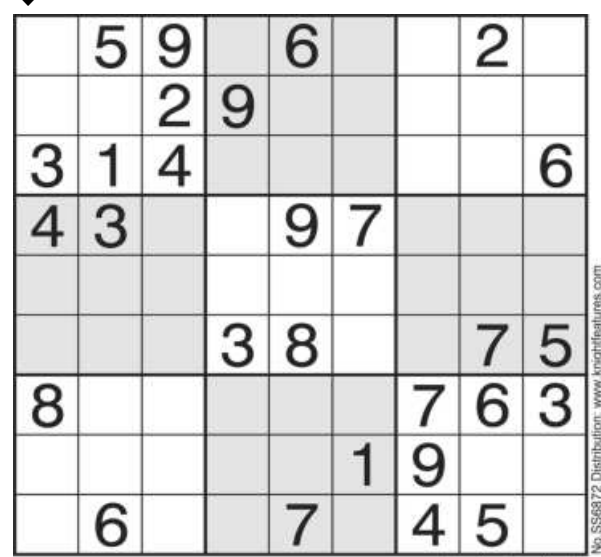


- 15 Complete International Law (6)
17 Elongate time (7)
19/25 A railway guard, for example — he may spill the beans (7,6)
22 Dr Bali travelling for marriage ritual (6)
24 Walking around Malta, bun is cut into pieces (8)
26 Permit giver modifying silencer (8)
28 Father crushed almond (3,3)
30 Removing asp from topsail is hard work (4)
31 Sharp mountain ridge in Delaware territory (5)
32 Mad sociopath giving up chops? It's a very small quantity... (4)

- Down**
1 Wager on a Greek letter (4)
2 Criminal near river produces soup (8)
3 A bund constructed on East River (6)
4 Penny replaced model in gymnast's dress and spotted animal (7)
5 Threateningly wave seed covering on plate, for example (8)
6 Sum up: "Animal in city" (6)
7 Animal from Sriakulam area (4)
14/21 Say, Gunga Din or Aquarius? (5,7)
16 Two spots, one below the other, in part of intestine (5)
18 Huge deficit in lignite, for example (8)
20 Dressing a boy covered in earth (5,3)
21 See 14
23 Lives and starts to dig sumps around source of water (6)
25 See 19 Across
27 Metal found in Adirondack (4)
29 Bet mountain can be upside down (4)

- Across**
8 Brave warrior and biblical king gives away diamonds (4)
9 7 confused about eastern ruler (5)
10 But a hill may be covering a state (4)
11 Space agency covering southern university in Caribbean city (6)
12 Father stole and got uncontrollable anxiety (8)
13 We swarm excitedly around one in Bikini, for example (8)

SUDOKU



Solution to previous puzzle

C	R	O	S	S	S	S	S	S
F	A	R	E	P	R	O	T	R
R	E	F	E	R	A	N	T	I
L	E	A	R	N	T	O	P	O
A	P	P	O	S	I	T	E	R
E	T	T	E	R	T	R	A	D
C	R	O	S	S	S	S	S	S
D	R	O	S	S	S	S	S	S
M	U	S	A	T	A	S	C	E
S	P	H	E	T	I	C	S	G
O	L	L	A	S	E	H	A	M
A	R	G	O	M	B	A	S	E
Y	N	D	S	W	A	S		

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Embodiment of kindness

Abhirami Bhattar describes Goddess Abhirami as a creeper in verse 22 of Abhirami Andadi. He addresses Her as *kodiye* (*kodi* – creeper), explained M.A. Manickavelu in a discourse. The Goddess is often referred to as a flower bearing creeper, because of Her gentleness and kindness to Her devotees. In verse 17 of Abhirami Andadi, Bhattar refers to the Goddess as Sundaravalli. In verse 22, Bhattar also calls out to her as *ila vanji kombe*. The *vanji* creeper is known for its coolness and its softness. Just as a cool creeper offers us respite from heat, Ambal offers us comfort in times of trouble. In Thiruvachagam, Manickavachagar also refers to Ambal as *vanji kombu*. Bhattar uses the words *vambe pazhutha padiye*. Trees bear fruits only in the proper season and it takes time for a fruit to ripen. In the same way, we become recipients of Ambal's grace only when we are ready to receive it. But Abhirama Bhattar says that in his case, Ambal has broken this rule. She has showered him with Her blessings even when he has not become refined enough to receive Her grace. A similar idea is expressed by Manickavachagar in Thiruvachagam.

In fact, Manickavachagar also uses the words *vambena pazhuthu*. Bhattar praises Ambal as *maraiyin parimalam* – the fragrance of the Vedas. Bhattar then refers to Her avatara as Parvathi and says *pani maal imayam*, reminding us of how Parvathi, as the daughter of Himavan, roamed the snow-covered Himalayas, and is called Hyma, Girija, Parvatavardhini and Malaimagal. In his Meenakshi Pillai Tamizh, Kumaraguruparar uses the word *piti* (female elephant) for Meenakshi. Bhattar says the Goddess is the Mother of Brahma. Bhattar prays to Her for liberation.

Scientists build metamaterial that can 'learn' to change shape

All life must adapt over time to changing conditions or they could go extinct; on the other hand, most non-living materials do not actively adjust their internal structure in response to conditions once they are made, but in a new study researchers from Europe have challenged this difference

Vasudevan Mukunth

When you exercise, your muscles become stronger. When you sow a plant, its stem will bend so that its leaves get more sunlight. Both these changes are examples of adaptation – when a biological material senses its environment, then reorganises its internal structure to survive better. All life must adapt over time to changing conditions. Populations that don't could become extinct.

However, most non-living materials do not actively adjust their internal structure in response to new conditions after they are made. When a metalsmith forges a bar of steel, its internal structure is mostly fixed from that point on, though it can still change due to heat, stress, etc. If you want a new bar with different properties, you need to engineer it anew.

However, in a new study in *Nature Physics*, researchers from Europe have challenged this difference. The team has reportedly built a synthetic material that can learn physically, by actively changing their internal mechanical properties based on external conditions.

Chain of units

The team used metamaterials for this work. These are special materials whose properties are not determined by their chemical composition alone but also by the structure, or the way in which they're physically arranged. As a result, they often have properties that natural materials don't.

In the last decade or so, scientists have used metamaterials to bend light in counterintuitive ways, shield buildings from earthquakes, and hide objects from radar, among other feats.

In the new study, the team built a robotic metamaterial consisting of a chain of connected units. Each unit had a small motor, an angle sensor, and a microcontroller.

Using these components, a unit could send and receive data to/from its adjacent units and change how much it bent in response. This way, the whole metamaterial could be as rigid as a metal spring or as flexible as a rubber band, or something else in between, based on how each unit responded to feedback from the two units attached to it. The researchers used a method called contrastive learning to 'teach' the metamaterial a particular shape.

While contrastive learning exists in machine-learning as an algorithm, the researchers implemented it here using only a hardware-based system.

Four steps to learn

First, the researchers kept the metamaterial chain in a straight line and set starting values for the stiffness of each unit. The stiffer a unit, the lesser it would bend in response to feedback.

Second, they applied an input: bending one unit in the chain by a fixed angle. This would change the rest of the chain into a particular shape, called the free state. Then, they would hold the input fixed and manually turn the other units so that the chain formed a new shape, like a 'U' or an 'L'. This was called the clamped state.

Finally, the microcontroller in each unit would compare its angle in the free state to that in the clamped state, and use the difference to adjust its stiffness using the motor. When the researchers repeated these four steps again and again, the metamaterial chain went from the free state to the clamped state in fewer steps. This is called contrastive learning because each unit 'learns' by contrasting the free and clamped states to figure out what it should do.

Thus, as the researchers explained in their paper, "Unlike traditional materials that are designed once and for all, our metamaterials have the ability to forget and learn new shape changes in sequence, to learn several shape changes that break reciprocity, and to learn multistable shape changes, which in turn allows them to perform reflex gripping actions and locomotion."

"Our findings establish metamaterials as an exciting platform for physical learning, which in turn opens avenues for the use of physical learning to design adaptive materials and robots."

The researchers reported that in one test, a chain of six units eventually 'learnt' to form a U-shape in a single step from a straight line.

Another 11-unit chain also 'learnt' to spell each letter of the word 'LEARN' in sequence, at each step 'forgetting' one shape and 'learning' the next one.



Top, A robotic metamaterial spells the word 'LEARN'. A metamaterial is a special material whose properties are not determined by its chemical composition alone but also by its structure, giving rise to unusual properties. COULAIS LAB/UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

The researchers likened this ability (with some qualifications) to the adaptability of simple organisms.

Talking to each other

A usual question that arises after researchers report a successful finding in a lab is whether they would find the same thing at a larger scale or in the real world. The authors of the study addressed this question using only simulations, where they ran computer models of metamaterial chains with thousands of units. These models were not very complicated, however, as each unit had only the three components and 'learnt' only based on two inputs – the units on either side.

However, the models showed that as the chains became longer, the metamaterial 'learnt' at a slower pace. This was because the amount of deformation passing through the chain decayed over a particular length. Put differently, a 'signal' arising from one unit weakened significantly by the time it reached a distant unit.

The researchers found a simple fix: they allowed each unit to 'talk' to the nearest unit as well as the next-nearest unit, i.e. the units one and two steps away. With this rule, each unit's microcontroller received data about the angle of the unit two steps away, and used it with the 'knowledge' that the angle was X two steps away, not one. This allowed the inputs to propagate further along the chain than before. The researchers were able to have a 48-unit chain morph into the outline of a cat using just three inputs as a result.

The way the chain works is an example of local decision-making. It is unlike, say, the human body, where the brain receives inputs from multiple senses and makes many decisions, which the nervous system finally relays to different parts. Machine-learning models also use techniques like backpropagation, where the output generated near the end of a model is used to 'teach' computers near the beginning.

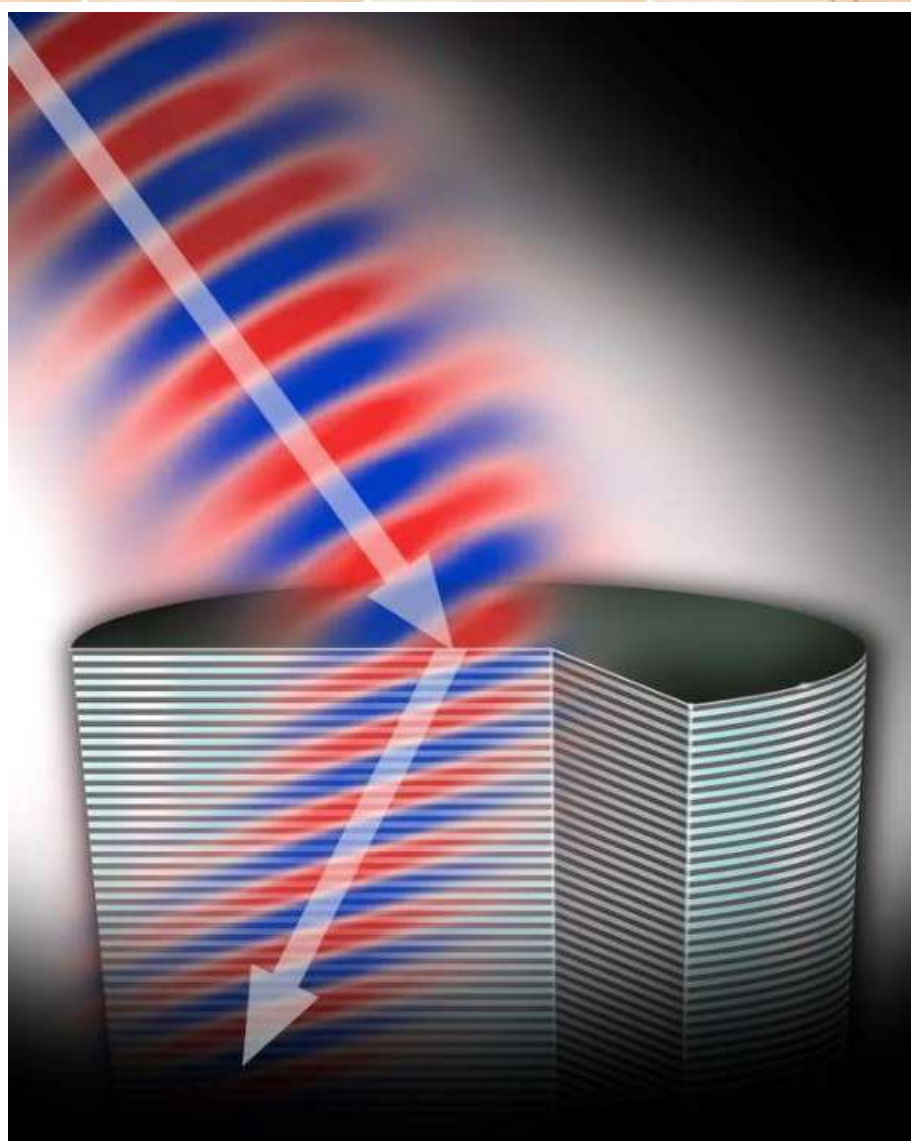
The metamaterial chain, however, made no such effort. Its 'learning' was based on the units before and after (or the next-nearest). This is useful in technological applications because it removes the need for complex networks to transfer data.

Taking a walk

The researchers also found that the chain responded differently depending on which side it was nudged. When they nudged one six-unit chain from the left end, the right end bent one way. But when they pushed it from the right end, the left end bent in a different way. This non-reciprocity, the researchers argued, allowed the metamaterial to 'learn' different ways to attain a final shape without requiring separate training.

In a commentary accompanying the paper, Karen Alim, of the Technical University of Munich, Germany, who wasn't associated with the study, wrote that such non-reciprocity tests scientists' understanding of 'intelligence' in materials beyond the bounds of traditional physics.

For example, physics dictates that



An artist's rendition of a metamaterial that refracts light the 'wrong' way when it enters the material. KEITH DRAKE



The programmable metamaterial wire presented by [the team] is a brilliant reduction in complexity that is key to disentangling the essential physics concepts that enable learning and constrain the space of learnable states

KAREN ALIM
Researcher at Technical University of Munich, Germany

when you push a spring, it will push back. This is because the spring wants to settle into its lowest energy state: where it is not compressed.

In this context, the spring can be said to 'learn' by finding the valley in its energy landscape. That is, if you take the spring to a different point in this landscape, by compressing or extending it by some amount, it will respond by making a beeline for just one spot: the valley.

However, per Dr. Lim, the chain metamaterial is non-reciprocal, so it doesn't have a simple energy landscape. In non-reciprocal systems, the energy required to move from point A to point B depends on the path the object takes – since there is more than one option. In these cases, it becomes a question of how much physical effort each path takes.

So while the spring 'learns' by minimising energy, the metamaterial chain 'learnt' by minimising work – in this case the work done by the motors. As a result, the chain was able to 'learn' different paths to a final shape the way a spring never can.

"Breaking down the complexity of learning in artificial intelligence systems and the brain into physical concepts

appears to be an insurmountable task. The programmable metamaterial wire presented by [the team] is a brilliant reduction in complexity that is key to disentangling the essential physics concepts that enable learning and constrain the space of learnable states," Dr. Lim wrote.

Like a switch

The researchers also unexpectedly found bistable units – meaning they could act like switches. For example, when a moving object came in contact with a six-unit chain, the chain coiled itself around the object and gripped it. To release the object, the researchers only had to nudge one particular unit, which uncoiled the rest of the chain. (This unit was bistable.)

This is also why Dr. Lim wrote that the metamaterial chain should thus be seen as a dynamical system, i.e. something capable of adapting. According to her, the chain was able to perform life-like actions, like gripping an object, because it could 'navigate' through different stable states by minimising the work along specific paths.

Indeed, while the chains in the team's experiments illustrated what a few controllable parameters were capable of, they are also not ready for real-world use. The team needed an air table and impractically large components to make them work. But if these requirements are eased, such metamaterial chains could in future be used as advanced prosthetic limbs and in soft robots that need to respond agilely to obstacles.

Overall, they concluded, their "work paves the way for the design of adaptive metamaterials as well as soft and distributed robotics".
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Scientists examine a specialised refrigerator for cooling quantum computing chips at the Google Quantum AI lab in California, U.S. in 2024. REUTERS

A radiation 'glitch' limits quantum computing

Vasudevan Mukunth

What is the world's next great frontier in technology? There are multiple contenders: artificial general intelligence, programmable biology, sustainable energy, metamaterials, human-machine interfaces, and quantum computing. The future could in fact be more wondrous but also more difficult to predict because of how some of these technologies can work together. But there is still a long way to go – and quantum computing of late has illustrated that well.

Quantum computers are a new type of computer that promises to solve calculations significantly faster than today's 'traditional' computers. The problem is that these machines are also very fragile. They operate in temperatures lower than outer space and the slightest vibration or heat can cause them to stop working.

On May 4, researchers from Google Quantum AI published a paper in *Physical Review X* reporting that they had found a new ghost in the machine that poses another major threat to these computers – called correlated phase error bursts.

Scientists are working on a technology called quantum error correction – a safety net to allow a quantum computer to keep working even if a few qubits fail

High-energy particles from outer space and trace elements in the earth's crust both emit ionising radiation. When even a small dose of it strikes the silicon substrate of a quantum chip, it creates a splash of vibrations that ripple across the chip. These vibrations break apart the pairs of electrons that allow a superconductor to work. Many quantum computing chips are based on superconductors. The break-ups create a swarm of quasiparticles. It's like a cloud of electronic debris has flooded the chip.

A conventional chip is made of many semiconductors. A quantum chip is made of many qubits. Scientists were worried that the quasiparticles would interfere with sensitive parts of the qubits, causing a crash. So they developed a hardware design where a component acts like a fence that prevents the quasiparticles from jumping into sensitive parts of the qubit.

The solution worked too – until the current study revealed the new problem. Its authors found that even if the quasiparticles couldn't jump the fence, their mere presence near a qubit caused its frequency to shift. This is like some soldiers walking at a different pace than others in a march-past, falling out of sync and breaking up the parade.

A single dose of radiation could shift the frequencies of many qubits together by as much as 3 megahertz for 1 millisecond – an eternity in quantum computing. Because these shifts happen to many qubits at once, they hit the computer like a sudden loss of coordination.

Scientists are working on a technology called quantum error correction – a safety net to allow a quantum computer to keep working even if a few qubits fail. Among others, it depends on the assumption that errors in different qubits are independent of each other. The correlated burst nullifies this assumption. In fact, the authors of the study have said correlated phase error bursts could set an upper limit on how reliable current quantum computers can be.

Gianluigi Catelani, a scientist at the Jülich Research Centre, Germany, wrote in *Physics* that researchers already have at least two solutions in the works: 'traps' that absorb the static before it hits the qubits and technologies to dampen the splash.

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to science@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Daily page'



Building bridges

Battery storage capacity must keep pace with solar energy generation

India scaled a record peak demand of 256.1 GW on April 25 with solar plants supplying 21.5% of the afternoon load – an all-time high, and the clearest signal yet that the country's installed solar fleet can do real work when the sun is overhead. But the same day's full 24-hour ledger told a more sobering story. When there was accounting for the whole day of April 25, solar contributed only about 10.8% of daily generation, and just 0.1% of the evening's needs after sunset. Solar's share of India's installed electric capacity has nearly doubled from about 15% in 2022 to nearly 28% in early 2026. However, solar accounted for roughly 5.6% of generation on India's peak-demand day in 2022 and only increased to the 10.8% of April – a clear indication of the yawning gap that remains between the realities of the present and what is possible. The bottleneck is not panels, land or ambition but the inability to use the vast stores of generated electrons through batteries. In fact, such is the paucity of battery storage that States which are prolific producers of solar power are being asked to halt their supply, lest it compromise the stability of India's electric grid. In 2025, India had to curtail 2.3 terawatt hours of solar generation between late May and December, equivalent to 18% of average monthly solar output, with 0.9 TWh (terra-watt hours) wasted in October alone. Given that producers of such electricity must be compensated, this ends up being a cost to the public exchequer which pays for power that was never delivered. The India Meteorological Department's forecast of a below-normal monsoon at 92% of the Long Period Average – the first such warning in 11 years – only sharpens the argument: a hotter, drier summer means greater daytime demand, which is precisely when solar should be doing the heavy lifting.

The encouraging news is battery economics. Standalone two-hour battery storage tariffs fell from around ₹2.21 lakh per MW per month in early 2025 to ₹1.48 lakh by year-end. The challenge is execution. Only 0.7 GWh of battery storage was operational in India by end-2025, with another 2 GWh expected by December 2026. The Centre and States must now focus less on tendering and more on commissioning – pairing every fresh solar auction with mandatory co-located storage and resolving the financing wall facing aggressively bid low-tariff projects. Solar capacity without storage is a half-built bridge.

At sea

The expansion of high-end frigate fleet must be in step with perceived threats

The Indian Navy's Project 17A is a ₹45,000-crore programme to build seven 'Nilgiri'-class frigates, with anti-air, anti-surface, and anti-submarine capabilities, as an advanced complement to the 'Shivalik' frigates and a precursor to Project 17B. The Project delivered the *INS Mahendragiri* on April 30, completing six deliveries in 17 months, but had previously faced multiple delays. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has flagged hundreds of design changes in previous warship classes during construction. Deliveries had been delayed even though ships were nominally complete because they lacked critical components such as engines and sensors, allowing the projects to meet commissioning dates on paper while leaving the hull unprepared for combat. A 2025 CAG report found that the Navy was inducting platforms without building the supporting infrastructure. While Project 17A used 75% indigenous components by value, many critical parts were sourced from abroad, and without them the vessels' final integration was withheld. Currently, India can build most of each ship but exercises limited control over timelines.

The Indian Ocean carries most of India's energy imports as well as Chinese naval deployments, but the nature of these challenges alone does not resolve the kind and scale of response they merit. India built the Chain of Static Sensors after the 2008 Mumbai attacks, with radar hardware involving imported parts. The Chain has been extended to Mauritius, Sri Lanka, and the Seychelles, and together with naval platforms forms a detect-decide-respond system. But while naval satellites and underwater sensor networks provide the 'detect' aspect, the frigates' radars and sonars remain the most imported – and thus most delayed – components, limiting the vessels' ability to function as mobile sensors. Adding more surface combatants is like adding receivers to a network still transmitting a fuzzy picture. Granted, securing sea lanes and addressing non-traditional threats such as Houthi drone and missile activity justify some number of multi-role frigates. However, these platforms are also overkill for countering piracy and smuggling. Heightened surveillance and the Indian Coast Guard also address the 26/11 scenario. And while the People's Liberation Army Navy has been increasing its submarine presence in the region, an Indian hull lacking the premium sensors required to find these vessels is effectively not responding to China's presence. What then is the purpose of expanding the high-end frigate fleet? One possibility is to sustain domestic shipyards and absorb new technologies, but this risks allowing industry interests to supersede the demands of the threat environment. In sum, India has a response fleet facing delays, a sensor grid with incomplete coverage and overdue upgrades, a domestic industrial ecosystem that still depends on imports, and, ultimately, investments that are out of step with the threats they are meant to address.

Silencing academia, weakening democratic space

According to the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute 2026 report, India is still classified as an "electoral autocracy", ranking in the lower half globally. The report notes a steady decline in democratic freedoms, especially in free expression, media independence, and civil society, placing India among the "worst autocratizers". This signals a growing dismantling of institutions and norms that support accountability and pluralism, drawing increasing international scrutiny.

The Scholars at Risk Free to Think 2024 report classifies India as having "completely restricted" academic freedom. It cites declining university autonomy linked to rising political interference, and pressure on institutions. Notably, it emphasises the systematic enforcement of a Hindu nationalist agenda within higher education, with changes to curricula, limited scholarly exploration and reduced space for intellectual dissent.

This classification is not an isolated judgment. It aligns with a broader pattern of democratic erosion documented by global indices, from V-Dem to Freedom House. For Indian universities – once celebrated as arenas of critical thought and pluralistic debate – the message is unequivocal: the freedom to teach, to learn, and to question is no longer guaranteed.

What is less discussed is how shrinking academic freedom weakens democracy itself. Beyond elections, voting rights and laws, a healthy and functioning democracy depends on a strong civil society, open access to evidence-based information, and space for genuine public debate – areas now under growing pressure, especially in academia.

These freedoms are under direct strain, most visibly in academia. Universities – meant to foster inquiry and debate – face funding cuts, regulatory pressure, and growing self-censorship, eroding their autonomy. The Vixit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill proposes to further centralise control, prioritising conformity over academic freedom. As these spaces shrink, so does society's ability to think critically and sustain a pluralistic democracy.

A disturbing pattern

According to *The Wire*, 62 academics faced punitive action (2014-26) for their opinions or political stances. Freedom of expression is penalised on campuses using service rules that define faculty as "government servants". In *Nature* (April 2024), Yamini Aiyar cites an India Academic Freedom Network report that documents a series of disrupted events, arrests of faculty and students, and visa hurdles for foreign researchers.

The contrast with British scientist J.B.S. Haldane who became a citizen of India in the early 1960s and who openly criticised the government while working in India is striking. It highlights how space for dissent in academia has



C.P. Rajendran

Geoscientist and a communicator on science, politics, environment, and education

sharply narrowed. Data from 2024-26 show a broad assault on academic freedom, targeting students, researchers, and faculty. Driven by political pressure, institutional failures, and social biases, these trends signal that certain topics are off-limits, certain voices are dangerous, and the pursuit of knowledge must bow to political convenience.

A consistent and disturbing pattern emerges: institutions are accused of failing to act against perpetrators. Internal complaints committees, mandated to provide oversight and justice, are described by critics as "ornamental", existing more for formal compliance than for substantive accountability. When the very bodies designed to protect students and faculty become complicit through silence or inaction, the chilling effect deepens. Trust erodes, fear takes root, and the message is unmistakable: power will be protected, and voices that challenge it will find no refuge within the walls meant to nurture free inquiry.

A worrying erosion

These actions undermine the ability of civil society and academic institutions to hold leaders accountable, eroding the very basis of a knowledge sector essential to Indian democracy. When violence goes unpunished, when caste and religious prejudice are replicated rather than challenged, when sexual predators are protected, and when dissent is criminalised, the message is unmistakable: the pursuit of knowledge must not disturb power.

India's stance on political rights is reflected in its refusal to sign the First Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Although a party to the ICCPR treaty since 1979, it does not accept the UN complaint mechanism, meaning citizens cannot seek international redress for rights violations after exhausting domestic remedies.

The contrast is striking. India's Constitution, through Articles 14, 19, and 21, guarantees many of the same rights enshrined in the ICCPR. The Supreme Court of India has often drawn upon international human rights norms to interpret and expand fundamental rights. Yet, the government remains unwilling to subject itself to the international complaint mechanism that would allow its own citizens – particularly those from marginalised communities who face disproportionate human rights violations – to seek justice beyond domestic courts when those courts fail them.

This issue is highlighted in an insightful article by Ravi Nair, "The Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam case: An international campaign within the realm of possibility" (*The Leaflet*, January 7, 2026). The young academic scholars, Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, have been in jail as undertrials for the last five years. On January 6, the Supreme Court rejected their bail application and barred them from applying for bail for a year, stunning many legal experts.

Academic suppression and shrinking dissent signal a deep democratic decline in India

The Iran conflict and the future of Shia identity

The Iran war is not merely a geopolitical conflict; it is a crucible for the future of Shia identity. For nearly half a century, Shiism has been shaped by the Iranian revolutionary model – an assertive fusion of clerical authority, state power, and transnational political ambition. This conflict could disrupt, reinforce, or redesign that synthesis. The war may fragment Shia identity, pulling it back toward national forms. But it may equally consolidate and radicalise it, deepening a shared narrative of oppression and reviving its most powerful theological motifs – martyrdom, sacrifice, and resistance.

Simultaneous trajectories

These two trajectories are unfolding simultaneously, in tension with one another, across different Shia societies. The first points toward fragmentation. Since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Shia identity has been closely tied to the idea of "political Shiism" – a model in which religious authority is enshrined as the supreme decision maker within a state and projected outward through networks of religious and political influence. Iran positioned itself as the guardian and leader of Shia communities worldwide, building alliances with groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and various militias and political factions in Iraq.

The current war places this model under severe strain. With Iran immeasurably weakened – militarily and economically – its ability to sustain this transnational network is considerably diminished. This could lead to what might be called the "nationalization" of Shia identity. Shiism will not be seen as a vehicle for geopolitical struggle but a religious tradition that coexists with multiple political arrangements.

Yet, this is only one side of the story. Wars do not merely fragment identities; they also forge them. The same conflict that has weakened institutional structures can intensify emotional



Mohammed Ayoob

University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Michigan State University, and author of 'The Many Faces of Political Islam' (2020)

and symbolic bonds. The alternative trajectory is one of consolidation and radicalisation. If the war is framed – and experienced – by Shia communities as an assault not just on Iran but on Shia identity itself, it could reinforce a shared sense of collective victimhood.

For centuries, Shia consciousness has been shaped by the memory of oppression under Sunni-dominated empires. The Islamic Republic successfully tapped into this historical narrative, recasting contemporary conflicts as continuations of a long struggle against injustice. The current war adds a further dimension: the perception of being targeted not only by regional Sunni oppressors such as the House of Saud but also by powerful external actors, particularly Israel and the United States. In such a context, differences of nationality or political orientation may recede in importance, overshadowed by a shared narrative of existential threat.

What Karbala represents

At the heart of this consolidating and radicalising narrative lies the Battle of Karbala in 680 CE, in which Imam Hussain and his small band of followers were martyred by the forces of the Umayyad caliph Yazid. This is the foundational event of Shia identity. It is not merely a historical episode but a living symbol, reenacted annually in rituals of mourning and remembrance. Karbala represents the triumph of moral truth over brute power, the willingness to make the supreme sacrifice in the face of injustice. If Shia communities perceive themselves as under siege, Karbala provides a ready-made narrative through which to interpret their experience.

This consolidation and radicalisation would also reinvigorate the concept of "resistance". This war and especially the near total devastation of South Lebanon, which is predominantly Shia, and the uprooting of its population by Israeli invaders could deepen this orientation. Resistance would no longer be simply a strategic

choice; it would be an expression of identity itself. The juxtaposition of these two trajectories captures the uncertainty of the present moment. These dynamics are not evenly distributed. In countries such as Iraq, where the Shia are a demographic majority and deeply invested in state institutions, the pull toward nationalisation may be stronger especially if Grand Ayatollah Sistani and the Najaf religious establishment throw their weight behind it. In Lebanon and Bahrain, where identity is more closely tied to perceptions of oppression, consolidation may prove more compelling. In Iran the suffering inflicted by the United States-Israeli attacks, seen by Iranians of all political hues as unprovoked and unjustified, is likely to reinforce the Karbala syndrome and, therefore, aid consolidation as well as radicalisation.

The cost of homogenisation

Why does a self-proclaimed "Mother of Democracy" prefer homogenisation of thought rather than freedom of thought? Higher education institutions have always been refuges for those who challenge orthodox thinking and work toward generating new ideas.

This is not a bug but a feature of university life. Democracies are revitalised by such encounters, even when they mean questioning majority opinion.

History offers sobering evidence: authoritarianism does not always arrive with a crash. More often, it emerges from within democracies – slowly, quietly, and with the acquiescence of those it will eventually silence. It springs not from sudden rupture, but from the gradual conditioning of publics through manufactured victimhood, cultivated fear, and the steady erosion of norms that once seemed unshakeable. In this process, citizens and institutions can become complicit in the dismantling of their own freedoms, unaware that the protections being stripped away were the very foundations of the democracy they took for granted.

The decline documented in the Academic Freedom Index is not an abstract metric. It is a measure of the health of Indian democracy itself. When scholars, activists and students are silenced, when dissent is criminalised, and when political interests capture academic institutions, the foundation upon which democratic accountability rests is systematically dismantled – brick by brick, case by case, silence by silence.

The numbers tell a story. However, the true story is developing on our campuses, where voices once raised in inquiry now whisper; in our courtrooms, where justice is increasingly influenced by power; and in the silence of those who once dared to speak, a silence that grows louder each day, while the state itself becomes more bureaucratic, punitive, and regulatory.

The key question is whether institutions will continue down this path or reclaim their original purpose. For society, it is whether we choose to protect the spaces that allow critical thinking, challenge power, and help young people engage meaningfully with issues of justice and governance.

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Looking ahead

The outcome will depend not only on the course of the war but on how it is interpreted. For in Shiism, as in all living traditions, identity is not merely inherited; it is continually reconstructed through the interplay of history, memory, and experience.

While on the surface it appears like a toss up between the two trajectories, given the transnational nature of Shia suffering, it is more than likely that consolidation as well as radicalisation may prevail over fragmentation or at the very least inspire a significant section of the Shia population into action across national boundaries.

If the latter prediction holds true, the war against Iran may end up spawning a Shia variant of al-Qaeda that, like the original version, could make the U.S. its primary target. Lebanon, a failing state, could provide the breeding ground and sanctuary for such an organisation as the failed Afghan state did for the original al-Qaeda.

The law of unintended consequences works in unpredictable ways.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A new chapter

Actor-turned-politician C. Joseph Vijay has secured an astounding electoral victory in Tamil Nadu. Analysts view it as a significant achievement, noting his self-belief and also the strong support from youth and women voters under

the age of 30. Despite intense political criticism and the impact of the Karur tragedy, his campaign drew large crowds. His on-screen image as a "virtuous hero" is seen to have helped him connect with voters. But as the saying goes, winning is one thing; governing is

another. Mr. Vijay's real test begins now, as expectations are high for a transparent, inclusive and corruption-free administration. As he often said during his campaign, the public will now watch whether "Vijay" truly translates into "Vijayam" for

the State of Tamil Nadu. **'Kalaimamani' Appa Ramesh,** Chennai

An undemocratic stance
The West Bengal election has delivered a historic verdict, yet Trinamool Congress Mamata Banerjee's refusal to resign

is a disgraceful defiance of democracy. Despite her party's decimation and her defeat, she remains obstinate. Blaming the Election Commission of India for this loss is a hollow and desperate excuse. A mandate is the ultimate expression of the people's

will; to reject it as a "conspiracy" is to insult the electorate. True leaders must learn the basic tenets of democracy.

N. Sadhasiva Reddy, Bengaluru

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

How 'bulldozer justice' undermines the law

The sight of a five-year-old gifting a toy to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on March 27 at Gorakhpur made for a tender photo moment. The Chief Minister returned the gift and asked the child to focus on her studies.



Sandeep Phukan

A child showing her admiration for a political leader is nothing out of the ordinary, as leaders are meant to be role models for the younger generation. But the five-year-old's choice of toy – a replica of a bulldozer – raises uncomfortable questions. The episode not only shows public approval for "bulldozer justice", it also reflects the normalisation of extrajudicial action by the state. What is arguably a problematic political symbol is now part of our everyday consciousness and holds the potential to influence impressionable minds.

The much-hailed "bulldozer justice" model isn't just a negation of the concept of due process but a direct challenge to it.

Not the first time

Though "bulldozer justice" is now part of India's political lexicon, the concept of bulldozers being used as an instrument of state policy is not new. Instances of bulldozers being used to clear encroachments and demolish unauthorised houses in Old Delhi's Turkman Gate area in 1976 – when the country was under the Emergency imposed by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi – have been well chronicled.

However, there is a key difference in how such actions have been perceived over time. From being examined as part of the excesses of the Emergency by a judicial commission, bulldozer action is now being amplified as a symbol of the state's firmness in dealing with those who break the law. It is premised on the fact that judicial processes are cumbersome and come in the way of delivering instant retributive justice. In an era of 10-minute deliveries, government authorities

The image of swift destruction creates an impression of decisive leadership, but it also normalises the idea that executive authority can override legal safeguards

are not immune to the same pressure. And since the judicial process does not follow a fixed timeline, some argue that this pressure is multiplied.

The drive for 'instant' justice

The backlog of cases across all courts in India has crossed 5.5 crore, with the figure in the Supreme Court alone accounting for over 90,000 cases. The India Justice Report 2025 noted that there are only 15 judges for every million Indians, as against a 1987 Law Commission of India recommendation of 50 judges per one million. In 22 of the 25 States, the same report noted, cases pending for over three years in subordinate courts amount to 25% of all pending cases. And across 25 High Courts, the number of cases which are pending for over five years account for 51%.

The burden of proof and the long road to litigation often act as a deterrent and, therefore, common citizens prefer quick justice. And when government authorities are under constant scrutiny and quick feedback, the pressure of "instant delivery of justice" is quite high.

But what an individual prefers, even a majority of them, cannot be the state's choice. In a state governed by the rule of law, there is no place for majoritarian populism. The tenets of criminal jurisprudence consider any crime against an individual as one against society. And the state can dispense justice only in accordance with the law.

The problem with bulldozer justice lies precisely in the fact that it substitutes spectacle for procedure. Demolitions carried out immediately after an alleged offence, often before investigations are completed, blur the distinction between punishment and an extrajudicial action carried out by the state. In such cases, the state assumes the role of investigator, judge and executioner at once. This dissolution of power between the organs of the state undermines the

very principles that underpin a constitutional democracy.

There is another aspect that is often overlooked. If the demolitions of the homes of the accused are for purported violations of land or municipal laws, it begs the question: why did the government allow such a structure in the first place? Is it an admission that a corrupt system allowed such a home to be built right before the gaze of law enforcers? But if the demolitions are meant to convey a message of zero tolerance towards crime, then it runs foul of the law. The state cannot reduce itself to the level of vigilante groups, whose main purpose of existence is to hand out "instant justice".

The image of swift destruction creates an impression of decisive leadership, but it also normalises the idea that executive authority can override legal safeguards whenever public anger demands immediate retribution. Over time, this risks weakening institutional credibility and erodes citizens' trust in lawful processes.

Strengthen institutions

The real solution to public frustration with the justice system lies not in bypassing it, but in strengthening it. Expanding judicial capacity, filling vacancies, modernising court infrastructure and improving investigative processes would address the underlying causes of delay far more effectively than theatrical displays of coercive powers. Cases involving heinous crimes must be mandatorily assigned to fast-track courts that are focused on speedy disposals with frequent hearings.

However, a constitutional state derives its legitimacy not from the speed of punishment but from its unimpeachable principles and the fairness of its processes. "Bulldozer justice" may satisfy a demand for instant retribution, but it erodes the foundations of the rule of law and risks reducing the state to a vigilante group.

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A shifting political arithmetic in Punjab

The BJP intends to ride solo in the State polls next year

STATE OF PLAY

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Buoyed by electoral victories in West Bengal, Assam, and Puducherry, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) seems eager to carry that momentum into Punjab, treating it as the next domino in a long line waiting to fall. In a bold move, it is readying itself to go solo for the Assembly polls in Punjab, due in 2027.

The BJP has been present in Punjab since the country's independence. People know what it stands for, what it has done and what it has not done. Before 1992, when the BJP (earlier known as the Bharatiya Jana Sangh) was fighting alone, it secured, on average, 6%-7% of the vote share during the Assembly elections. Later, when the BJP entered into an alliance with the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) in 1997, its vote share went up a tad to around 8%, according to the book *Electoral Politics in Punjab*. In 2022, the BJP contested the Assembly elections in alliance with the Punjab Lok Congress and got 6.6% of the vote.

In Punjab, the BJP and the SAD have been alliance partners since 1996, and have long contested Assembly elections together, with the SAD fielding candidates in 94 seats and the BJP in 23. The BJP contested these electoral battles as a 'junior partner' in the alliance, which many in the party's State unit believed restricted the BJP's growth. However, after the SAD chose to sever ties with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) over the contentious farm laws in 2020, the BJP has been pushing for its expansion across the State. To achieve its solo ambitions, in March this year, Union Mi-

nister Amit Shah sounded the party's poll bugle at the 'Badlav rally' in Moga, declaring that the party would be contesting the Assembly elections alone in Punjab.

A changing political pulse

Nevertheless, the political arithmetic keeps changing. The century-old party, the SAD, has weakened, even though it saw a modest resurgence in last year's rural body polls. The ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which swept into power on a wave of anti-establishment energy, now appears to be running well below its earlier strength after the exit of seven AAP Rajya Sabha MPs, six of them from Punjab, on April 24.

The timing of the AAP MPs leaving the party is seen to be as damaging as the defection itself. With Assembly elections due early next year, the party has been going to the public, and presenting its accomplishments and projecting confidence about forming the next government. Against this backdrop, the exit of sitting MPs sends out a contradictory message, implying that those who knew the party best chose to walk away. The defections could also crack open factional feuds and internal power struggles. The allegation that Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann appeared in a "drunk state" during the State Assembly proceedings on May 1, has handed the Opposition

ready ammunition. The BJP has been quick to capitalise off it.

Meanwhile, the Congress, which is the State's principal Opposition and has been positioning itself as the primary challenger to the ruling AAP, appears to be struggling with internal discord. In January this year, Congress leader and former Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi called for "greater Dalit representation" in the party, pointing out that Dalits were not getting due representation, bringing the discord within the party into public view. In February, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, during his visit to Punjab, gave a stern message to the State unit of the party, asking them to work as a "team".

The BJP seems to believe it can expand into this fractured space. While Punjab presents a distinct political landscape where religion, region and caste-based coalitions remain central to the State's electoral arithmetic, the party has already been reaching out to Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Dalits in a bid to pull-off another case of 'social engineering' in order to get a foothold in the State. The Scheduled Castes account for 31.91% of the population in Punjab, while the OBCs account for around 25%-30%. Simultaneously, the party has also been working to project its pro-Sikh image by propagating the Central government's steps taken in the interest of Sikhs since 2014.

With the BJP buoyed by renewed confidence, the AAP weakened from within, and the Congress consumed by its own internal discord, Punjab's electoral space is shaping up to be unusually crowded. In such a multi-cornered contest, the possibility of a clear mandate could be remote.

RE meets global electricity demand for the first time

Despite rapid renewable capacity growth globally, geopolitical shocks expose India's dependence on fossil fuel imports from West Asia

DATA POINT

Areena Arora

In 2025, global electricity generation increased by roughly 850 terawatt-hours (TWh), according to data from the Ember Energy Institute. This increase was supplied almost entirely by solar and wind energy, contributing 636 TWh and 204 TWh respectively. Other renewables added another 23 TWh. Coal generation and oil meanwhile fell by 67 TWh and 12 TWh respectively. This is the first year in which expanded electricity demand did not require an increase in fossil fuels.

Over the past decade, the cost of solar and wind energy has dropped steeply, and battery storage and grid integration capacities have improved drastically, supporting an uptick in reliance on renewable energy sources. In 2025, coal's share of global electricity production fell by just over 1% and solar energy increased by nearly 2%. The dependence on oil also went down.

Major superpowers are embracing the change. China, for instance, saw its fossil fuel generation fall for the first time since 2015. The country saw a strong 5% growth in electricity demand and a 15% growth in clean energy generation, met largely by solar and wind energy. Solar energy in China grew by 40% compared to 2024 and wind energy increased by 14%. Solar energy alone met two-thirds of the increase in the country's electricity demand in 2025, according to a report by Ember Energy.

Fossil fuel demand fell in India as well. Together, the fall in demand in India and China has pushed global fossil fuel generation to stagnation, according to the report. Fossil fuel generation fell in both India (down 3.3%) and China (down 0.9%), driven by clean power usage and demand growth.

How is this different from the

earlier years? For two decades, even as renewable electricity capacity grew at double-digit rates, fossil fuel generation remained relevant and kept climbing because absolute electricity demand was rising faster than what renewables could cover. The rising consumption relied on coal and gas-fuelled energy. Even as renewable energy gained market share, it could not displace fossil fuels in absolute terms. However, that pattern reversed in 2025.

Globally, coal's share in electricity production declined from 36% in 2015 to 33% in 2024 (Chart 1). Coal generation fell in absolute terms for the first time last year, as renewables outpaced demand growth. Natural gas also saw a modest 45 TWh increase, entirely offset by renewable gains.

The effect of war

India's crude oil imports fell by 17% year-over-year in March 2026 to 18.9 million tonnes, compared with 22.8 million tonnes in March 2025 (Chart 2). The decline comes amid the closure of the Strait of Hormuz starting March 1 due to the U.S.-Israel conflict with Iran. This narrow waterway handles a significant share of global oil and gas shipments. India imports 89% of its crude oil from mostly Qatar, the UAE and Saudi Arabia. The Indian basket crude (simplify) price averaged \$113.49 per barrel in March 2026, compared with \$72.47 in March 2025, a 56% increase year-over-year.

India's primary energy supply consists of coal, followed by oil, natural gas and then renewables (Chart 3).

India's natural gas consumption rose in March 2026 despite supply disruptions. Natural gas available for consumption went up by 7% from March 2025. This increase came despite a 4.9% decline in domestic production. The gap was filled by LNG imports, which jumped by 20.5% by March this year. India's LNG imports reached 27 million metric tonnes (mmt) in

2024-25, the highest on record and double the 13.5 mmt imported in 2011-12. India's LPG imports also surged with expanded household access. The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana increased LPG connections from 62% of households in 2016 to nearly 100% by 2025, driving imports to 18 mmt in 2025-26 from 16.48 mmt in 2020-21.

Crude oil, LNG, and LPG are all imported heavily from West Asian suppliers. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz disrupted all three simultaneously. India's response included accelerating renewable approvals, maximising refinery output, and paying ₹30,000 crore to oil marketing companies in FY 2025-26 to cushion LPG losses. LPG prices rose by ₹60 per cylinder after the conflict began.

On the flip side, India's renewable capacity grew by over 210% in the past decade. In FY 2024-25, renewable energy accounted for 89% of India's new capacity additions. Yet absolute energy dependence on imports has also deepened. India imports 89% of crude oil, 47% of natural gas, and 26% of coal despite being the world's third-largest coal producer. The renewable buildout has not yet reduced India's reliance on imported fossil fuels.

Renewable capacity takes years to translate into reliable, usable power and geopolitical shocks affect energy supply in the instant short-term. When the Strait of Hormuz closed in early March, India could not wait for wind farms to reach completion or battery capacity to scale. It responded by maximising output from existing coal and gas infrastructure, instructing domestic suppliers to prioritise domestic users and accelerating imports of LNG and LPG from alternative suppliers.

The global energy transition advanced significantly in 2025. India's renewable capacity is growing at the fastest rate globally. However, import dependence on a conflict zone exists alongside clean energy progress in India.



Towards sustainability: Solar panels being placed at the CNNC Tianwan tidal flat photovoltaic power plant in Lianyungang, in China's eastern Jiangsu province, on April 19.

Chart 1: The shift towards renewables for global electricity generation, with an uptick in solar and wind energy (Figures in %)

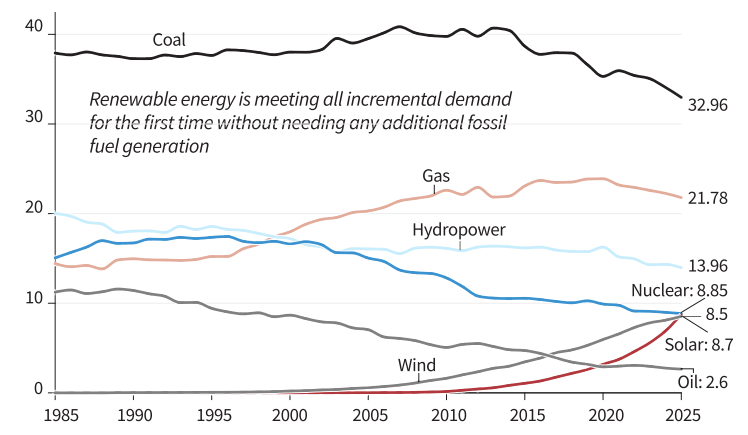
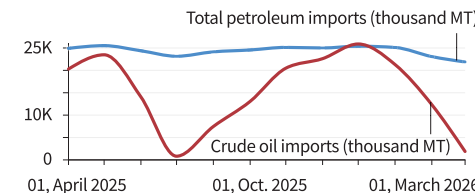
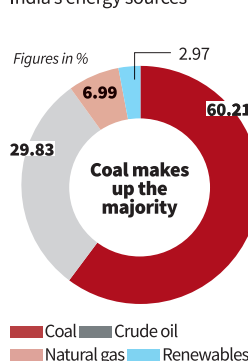


Chart 2: The fall in India's crude oil imports in March



Data for the charts were sourced from Ember (2026), Energy Institute- Statistical Review of World Energy (2025) - with major processing by Our World in Data; Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell; Energy Statistics India 2025 report by the Ministry of Statistics and Planning Implementation

Chart 3: The makeup of India's energy sources



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 6, 1976

Supreme Court defines life imprisonment

New Delhi, May 5: The notion that life imprisonment implies imprisonment for 20 or 14 years is wrong. Life imprisonment means "imprisonment for the entire life of the prisoner" unless the Government chooses to remit the same earlier, the Supreme Court to-day ruled.

A sentence of life imprisonment did not automatically come to an end after 20 years. After serving a jail term of 20 years, including remissions, a life convict could not ask to be released as a matter of right, the Court held.

Under Section 401 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, it was the "undoubted discretion" of the "appropriate Government" to "remit or refuse to remit" the sentence and where the State Government refused to remit the sentence, a High Court could not issue a writ under Article 226 of the Constitution directing the Government to release the prisoner, the Court ruled.

One Rattan Singh was convicted by the Sessions Judge Bhind (Madhya Pradesh) on charges of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment on October 16, 1957. He appealed for a transfer to Amritsar in Punjab. The same was granted.

On May 7, 1971, the prisoner made a representation to the Government seeking release.

The Punjab Government forwarded the representation to the Madhya Pradesh Government and the latter, rejected it.

The prisoner then filed a writ petition under Article 226 of the Constitution before the Punjab and Haryana High Court on the ground that having already served sentence of more than 20 years, he was entitled to be released "as a matter of course" under the provisions of the Jail Manual and the Prison Act.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 6, 1926

The British Gazette

London, May 4: The Government is publishing a penny newspaper called "The British Gazette". The first issue to-morrow will be distributed in the whole of London area.

The "British Gazette" is being distributed at Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and the surrounding districts by air.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Growth recorded by Hong Kong in the first three months of 2026

5.9 in per cent. Hong Kong's economy grew by 5.9% in the first three months of 2026, the government said on Tuesday while also warning of "downside risks" from the West Asia crisis. The figure was the strongest since the 7.6% growth recorded in the second quarter of 2021. Hong Kong has set an annual growth target of 2.5 to 3.5 percent for 2026. AFP

Percentage increase in India's coffee exports in January-April 2026

26.6 in per cent. India's coffee exports rose 26.6 per cent to 1.74 lakh tonnes in the January-April period of 2026, mainly driven by higher shipments of robusta and instant coffee, government data showed. The country had exported 1.37 lakh tonnes of coffee in the year-ago period. India ships arabica and robusta varieties, as well as instant coffee. PTI

Sub-sectors identified for faster clearance of FDI proposals by India

40 Rare earth magnets and printed circuit boards are among 40 sub-sectors identified by the government for clearance within 60 days of FDI proposals from China and other countries sharing land borders with India. The government has also laid out guidelines for FDI proposals from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and Afghanistan. PTI

Amount approved by the M.P. cabinet for various departments

38,555 in ₹ crore. The Madhya Pradesh cabinet on Tuesday approved funds of ₹ 38,555 crore for various departments. The cabinet earmarked ₹32,405 crore for road infrastructure and maintenance of government housing for 2026-2031, ₹2,442.04 crore for the "Self-Reliance in Pulses Mission". PTI

Villages dependent on tankers for water supply in Marathwada

92 With rising summer heat, 92 villages across three districts of Maharashtra's Marathwada region are now dependent on tankers for the supply of water, a report has said. As of Tuesday, 156 tankers are supplying water to 92 villages and 36 settlements in the districts of Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, Jalna, Latur and Hingoli. PTI
COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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India's energy security amid conflicts

The conflict in West Asia has shown how geopolitical shocks can transmit to India's domestic economy, given that the country imports over 85% of its crude needs. In a fragmented energy market, India's edge lies not in self-sufficiency but in optionality.

EXPLAINER

Deepanshu Mohan
Aditi Lazarus

The conflict in West Asia has demonstrated the speed with which geopolitical shocks have been transmitted to India's domestic economy. The head of the International Energy Agency has described the current geoeconomic crisis as more severe than the combined shocks of 1973, 1979 and 2022.

The price of Brent crude oil rose to \$109.03 per barrel after hitting highs of around \$120 during the conflict. At a domestic level, India is projected to see its economy slow from 7.4% growth in FY26 to 6.5% in FY27 with a projected increase in inflation from 2.3% to 4.4% due to the impact of disruptions observed in the energy supply chains.

Energy security can no longer be defined solely as purchasing fuel at the lowest possible price. It now rests on resilience, diversification, and protection of macroeconomic stability.

Breakdown of the old energy market order

The Russia-Ukraine War was the first major warning to the pre-existing energy market order. It exposed the perils of energy dependence overnight.

Europe once relied on Russia for 45% of its gas imports. By 2025, that had fallen to 12%. Europe did not respond by chasing efficiency, it did so by buying insurance. Gas consumption by European Union (EU) countries fell by 20% between 2021 and 2024, while the combined imports of gas and liquified natural gas (LNG) declined by 18%.

Even when average LNG terminal utilisation was only 52% in the first half of 2025, Europe accepted spare capacity as the price of security.

While the war in Ukraine revealed the reliance on pipeline-based supplies, the conflict in West Asia demonstrated the reliance on sea transportation.

The Strait of Hormuz, through which approximately 25% of the world's crude oil is transported, has once again become an extremely important chokepoint, transmitting price shocks rapidly across global markets.

Other powers have adapted differently. China has locked in nearly 25 million metric tons of LNG per year through contracts, South Korea has secured 273 million barrels of crude oil that will transit from outside the Strait of Hormuz, while Japan has stockpiled 470 million barrels, which is equivalent to 254 days of consumption.

Gulf shore exporters have regained much of their bargaining power due to spare capacity. The International Energy Agency (IEA) forecasts a contraction of 80 kb/d in the global demand for oil on average in 2026, with a decrease of 236 kb/d for OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and 254 kb/d for Middle East, while non-OECD demand still rises 152 kb/d. In this weaker market, India's demand growth becomes strategically valuable.

How India gained more room to manoeuvre

The potential threat of disruption of the Indian oil imports is real and immediate, since the country imports over 85% of its crude needs, with roughly 45% of its imports transiting through the Strait of Hormuz.



Navigating the crisis: An Indian-flagged tanker carrying crude oil that transited through the Strait of Hormuz, is seen docked in Mumbai. AFP

THE GIST

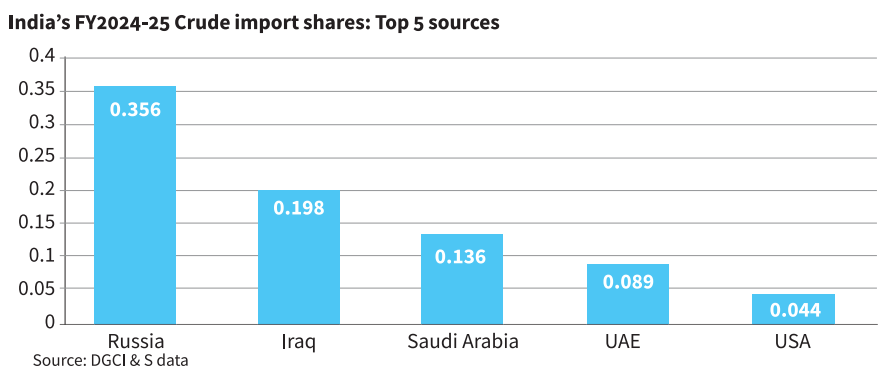
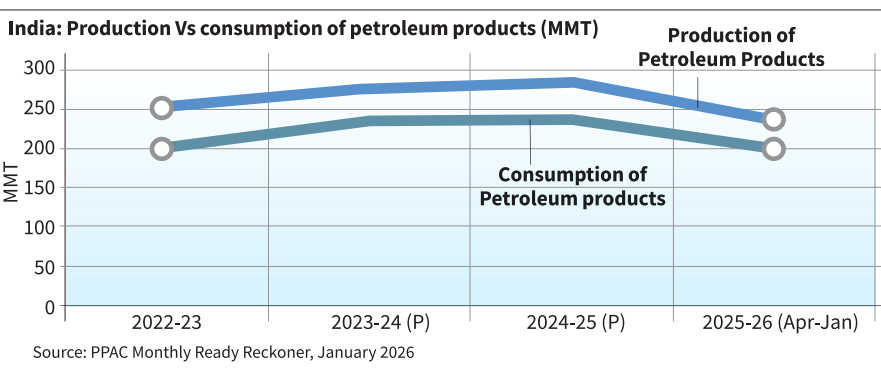
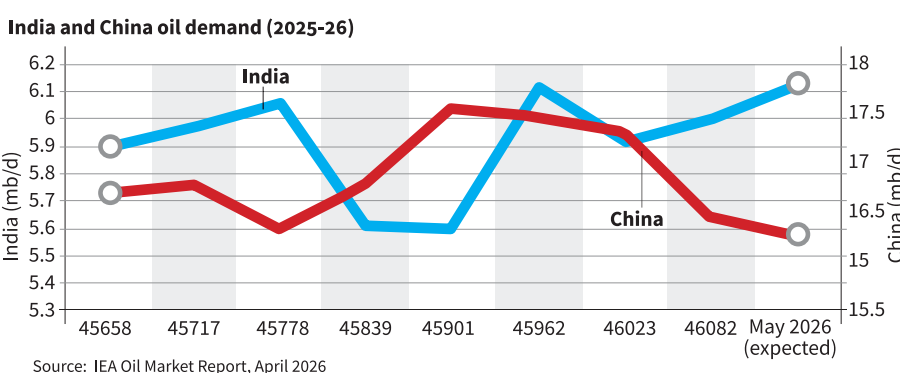
India has long relied on crude oil imports but has handled repeated geoeconomic shocks better than many comparable importers.

Its import basket—spanning Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Russia, and the United States, remains geographically diversified.

While expansion into solar, batteries, and EVs may reduce oil use over time, reliance on lithium, cobalt, nickel, copper, and rare earths may increase in the future.

Energy requirements

India is now the world's third-largest oil consumer, with high dependence on crude imports. As a result, fluctuations in crude oil prices, freight rates, and currency exchange rates remain a concern, especially during geoeconomic conflicts



For years, India has depended heavily on imports. But the country has handled repeated shocks better than many comparable importers. It is now the world's third-largest oil consumer.

According to OPEC's forecast, India's consumption is expected to reach 5.74 million barrels per day (mb/d) in 2025 and 5.99 mb/d in 2026, while the IEA projects that Indian crude demand will rise approximately 130 kb/d, compared with 80 kb/d for China.

As Chinese demand becomes flatter

and more cyclical, India has become one of the few large engines of incremental oil demand.

Before 2022, Russia supplied barely 2% of India's crude imports, however, by FY2024-25, that figure was around 36%, making Russia India's largest supplier. Flows from Russia picked up again as Gulf disruptions thinned.

Now, India's import basket also includes countries such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and the United States, while remaining geographically diversified. In a

fragmented energy market, India's edge lies not in self-sufficiency, but in optionality.

Tactical gains and structural risks

India has managed successive shocks well. First, India's crude oil dependence is extremely high, reaching 89.4% in FY2024-25. During that period, India produced only 28.7 million metric tons of crude oil domestically. As a result, fluctuations in crude oil prices, freight rates, and currency exchange rates continue to be a concern.

Second, geography still constrains strategy. Significant reductions in flows along Gulf sea lanes occurred due to tensions in 2026, and Indian LPG carriers, carrying a combined cargo of 97,000 metric tonnes required naval escort under Operation Sankalp. Diversification cannot bypass chokepoints.

Third, the energy transition creates fresh vulnerabilities. India's expansion into solar, batteries, electric vehicles (EV), and storage may reduce oil use over time. However, the reliance on lithium, cobalt, nickel, copper, and rare earths may increase in the future.

The way forward

India's dependence on critical minerals is tied to processing networks dominated elsewhere, especially by China, which controls over 91% of global rare-earth production, while India currently processes less than 5% of its projected 2035 battery-grade mineral requirements domestically. While India has adapted to the new oil order with considerable agility, having such tactical flexibility does not provide security in the long-term.

The next phase must focus on increasing larger strategic reserves, reducing the oil intensity in transport, strengthening maritime resilience, and ensuring security for supply chains of critical minerals. The real question is no longer whether India can switch suppliers during crises, but whether future crises will carry lower economic costs when they occur.

(Deepanshu Mohan is professor and dean, O.P. Jindal Global University. He is a visiting professor at LSE and a visiting academic fellow at University of Oxford. Srisoniya Subramoniam contributed to this column. Srisoniya and Aditi Lazarus are both research analysts with Centre for New Economics Studies, O.P. Jindal Global University)

CACHE



GETTY IMAGES

Industrial heat pumps and the case for cleaning industrial heat

Industry accounted for nearly half of India's final energy consumption in 2025, much of it still tied to fossil fuels. Cleaning up industrial heat is therefore not just a climate issue, but also one of air quality, competitiveness, energy security, and worker health.

Srinivas Ethiraj

Industrial decarbonisation is often framed through solutions that promise deep emissions reductions (e.g. green hydrogen and carbon capture). These pathways are essential, particularly for hard-to-abate sectors, but are still several years away from large-scale adoption.

Even so, a significant share of manufacturing functions under very different operating conditions: one defined not by extreme temperatures but by the widespread demand for low-to-medium temperature process heat. Across sectors such as textiles, food processing, chemicals, pharmaceuticals and paper and pulp, this heat forms the backbone of production and continues to be largely met through combustion.

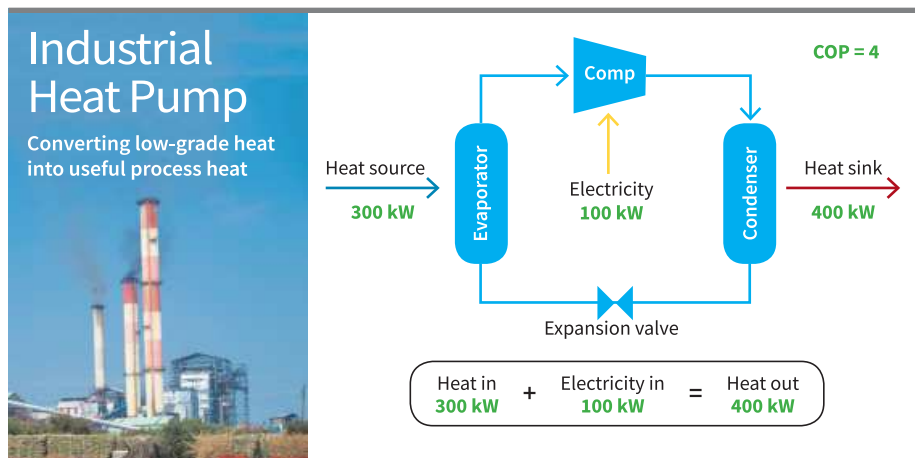
Industry accounted for nearly half of India's final energy consumption in 2025, much of it still tied to fossil fuels. The story becomes even sharper when we look at process steam. Industrial process steam alone is estimated to have generated 182 million metric tonnes of CO2 annually in India, along with 595 kilotonnes of SO2, 520 kilotonnes of particulate matter, and 516 kilotonnes of NOx.

This is why cleaning up industrial heat is not just a climate question. It is also an air quality, competitiveness, energy security, and worker-health question.

The opportunity is especially important for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in India. Spread across millions of units, MSMEs form the backbone of the country's manufacturing economy. Although they account for a smaller share of total industrial emissions (around 17%), their emissions are more fragmented and concentrated in sectors such as textiles, food processing, and paper. These are the sectors where coal, firewood, biomass, gas and furnace oil continue to run the conventional thermal systems such as boilers, thermic fluid heaters, dryers, evaporators and hot-water systems, etc.

Heat pumps as a solution

Heat pumps enter this conversation as one of the most practical technologies for this specific frontier of industrial heat. Unlike boilers, heat pumps do not create



heat by burning fuel. They move and upgrade heat from one stream to another, using electricity. This is why they can deliver more useful heat than the electricity they consume. Industrial heat pumps often have a coefficient of performance of 3 to 5, meaning they can provide three to five units of heat for every unit of electricity consumed. Even at higher output temperatures, where performance falls, they can remain more efficient than simple electric resistance-based heating. This efficiency is the core of their decarbonisation value. It reduces the amount of electricity needed to electrify heat and improves the economics of switching away from combustion. If renewable electricity is available at competitive rates, the effective cost of heat from a heat pump becomes attractive even against conventional fuels.

What makes this transition compelling is the way industrial heat is currently produced and used. In a medium-sized textile finishing unit studied in Surat, around 92 percent of energy load was thermal, delivered through steam and industrial heat using a mix of Indonesian coal and lignite. The unit consumed roughly 0.42 kg of Indonesian coal per meter of processed fabric, illustrating the material intensity of fuel use embedded in routine operations. Despite this, steam is often used indirectly for generating hot water, maintaining vessel temperature, or heating surfaces rather than directly heating the product. This reflects a central inefficiency. Conventional industrial thermal systems

in such factories are often designed around the highest heat requirement, with boilers sized to meet peak demand. But many loads require lower-quality heat. In such cases, steam is generated at higher temperature and pressure, then reduced or diverted for lower-temperature applications. However, industrial heat pumps require a different engineering mindset: start with the lowest-temperature heat demand, then boost heat only where needed. This reverses the legacy boiler approach and can reduce overall energy use by 40-60 percent in suitable applications.

This right-sizing logic is particularly relevant in brownfield MSME clusters. Many boilers are old, oversized, manually operated in such settings, and run below optimal capacity. Replacing every boiler with a single large electric system is often not practical. But heat pumps can be modular. They can first serve specific loads: pre-heating boiler feedwater, supplying hot water, supporting dyeing and washing processes, recovering waste heat from effluents, or reducing steam demand in evaporators and drying streams.

Their role becomes even more interesting when heating and cooling are considered together. Industrial heat pumps can simultaneously generate hot water, steam, or hot air while producing cooling or dehumidified air as a by-product. In food processing and digital textile printing, where process heat is required alongside controlled cooling for process stability and equipment performance, heat pumps can

simultaneously supply useful heat while reducing chiller or air-conditioner loads.

Health, safety and emission control

Beyond system efficiency, heat pumps can also improve worker health and safety. Workplace heat exposure is emerging as a serious occupational health risk, especially in labor-intensive factory environments where internal process heat compounds rising ambient temperatures. Globally, over 2.4 billion workers are exposed to excessive heat at work, with the highest exposure rates in Asia and the Pacific. Prolonged workplace heat is linked to heat exhaustion, heart stroke, cardiovascular strain, kidney disease, accident risk, and reduced cognitive performance.

In parallel, combustion-based process heat contributes to emission of harmful air pollutants exacerbating respiratory and cardiovascular health risks. The public health dimension is significant: fossil-fuel-driven air pollution caused an estimated 1.72 million premature deaths in India in 2022, with industrial heat systems being a key source of these emissions. In this context, increasing the use of electrified heating systems such as industrial heat pump technologies, particularly within the temperature ranges in which they are technically feasible can significantly improve air quality, mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and reduce health harms associated with both air pollution and climate change. By displacing on-site combustion and enabling the integration of heating and cooling, heat pumps can create opportunities for spot and space cooling to improve thermal comfort on factory floors.

What emerges, then, is not just a technology shift but a systems transition. Scaling industrial heat pumps will depend on how well they are embedded into existing industrial ecosystems through better process integration, reliable access to low-cost electricity, and financing models that work for industries, especially MSMEs. Done right, it can unlock not just emissions reduction, but a more resilient, efficient, and safer model of industrial growth.

(Srinivas Ethiraj is assistant manager, Energy Transition, at the Vasudha Foundation.)

THE DAILY QUIZ

Actor-turned-politician Vijay's TVK emerged as the single largest party in Tamil Nadu. Vijay has played several socially conscious roles. Here is a quiz on some of them:

Radhika Santhanam

QUESTION 1:

TVK candidate Seenivasa Sethupathy defeated DMK leader K.R. Periyakaruppan in the Tiruppattur Assembly seat by one vote in the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. Which Vijay movie directed by A.R. Murugadoss popularised the power of a single vote?

QUESTION 2:

This man directed Vijay's first film in a leading role and also gave him the title of 'Ilaya Thalapatthy (young commander)'. Name him.

QUESTION 3:

Vijay played triple roles in a film directed by Atlee. Name it.

QUESTION 4:

The film Thamizhan launched the career of a famous Bollywood actor. In it, Vijay's character spreads awareness about the law to the common man. Name the Bollywood actor and name Vijay's character, which is also the name of another Tamil actor.

QUESTION 5:

This film's tagline annoyed former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa. What was the name of the film and what was the tagline?



Visual question: This is a poster of a Vijay film that remains unreleased. Name the film which was stalled due to intense CBFC disputes. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Questions and answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1.

The Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) party was formed as a vehicle for the _____ family after it lost control of its previous party. **Ans: Rajapaksa**

2. The firebrand South African politician who, after being expelled from the African National Congress, formed a communist, black nationalist party that in its first electoral outing won 25 seats. **Ans: Julius Malema**

3. Barely a year old and led by billionaire Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, the X party contested the 2019 elections in Thailand while banking on progressive platform. Name X. **Ans: Future Forward**

4. Name of the movement that comedian Beppe Grillo launched that made its national debut in the 2013 general election in Italy. **Ans: Five Star Movement**

5. The _____ was formed in 1977 after several opposition parties merged together specifically to defeat then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. **Ans: Janata Party**

Visual: Name the founder the Israeli party Kadima, who was also called the 'Butcher of Beirut'. **Ans: Ariel Sharon**
Early birds: C Saravanan | K.N. Viswanathan | Arun Kumar Singh | Sukdev Shet | Piyali Tuli



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

Why do we say "love all" in tennis? (A. Umar, Kadayanallur).

You have been watching the matches on TV., haven't you? "Love," I understand, comes from the French "l'oeuf," which means "an egg." The egg, has for a long time symbolised "zero." So, when the umpire says "love all," what he means is that the score is "zero-zero." No one has scored a point as yet. This is one of the explanations. Some others have suggested that "love" comes from the phrase "for the love of the game." In the old days, people played because they enjoyed the game. They didn't play for money. Things have really changed since then, haven't they? Nowadays the first thing that most sportsmen say is, "Show me the money!"

What is the meaning of "to take a dig at"? (Vivek Srinivasan, Kerala).

This is a slang expression which is commonly used in American English. When you "take a dig at someone," you deliberately insult or annoy someone. It is also possible to say "to take a jab at someone." Here are a few examples:

In his speech, the Vice-Chancellor took several digs at the academic staff.

Mala loves to take jabs at people she doesn't like.

What is a "hen party"? (Abdul Jabbar, Vikarabad, A.P.).

A "hen party" is a party to which only ladies are invited; the men are strictly kept out. Before a wedding, for example, the bride and her female friends usually get together and have a good time. This would be called a hen party. Know what the opposite of a "hen party" is? A "stag party." It is a party to which only men are invited. Here is an example:

There was too much commotion at the hen party last night.

Should the word "government" be followed by a singular or a plural verb? (M. Muralisankar, Virudhnagar).

It can be followed by either a singular or a plural verb. For example, we can say:

The Government have decided to call off the meeting with the terrorists.

The Government has decided to call off the meeting with the terrorists.

Both sentences are grammatically acceptable. The meaning however is slightly different. In the second sentence – the one with the singular verb – you are thinking of the Government as a single entity. In other words, the various departments of the government form one big unit. In the first sentence, on the other hand, you are thinking of the government as consisting of distinct individual units. In this case, you don't see the various departments coming together to form a single entity. They all exist independently. So, whether you use a singular or a plural verb depends on you. It depends on the meaning that you wish to convey.

Here are some more nouns which can be followed by either a singular or plural verb: committee, jury, or staff.

Does one "eat" or "drink" soup? (C. Jayaraman, Secunderabad).

It depends on the soup. If it is thin soup, then you "drink" it. If, on the other hand, it is thick – it contains vegetables or large chunks of meat – then you definitely eat it. So it is O.K. to say "Eat your soup." Published in *The Hindu* on July 11, 2000

Word of the day

Astute:

marked by practical hardheaded intelligence

Synonyms: sharp, shrewd

Usage: The minister's astute handling of the crisis helped avert further unrest.

Pronunciation: newsth.live/ydo2E8/astute

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ə'stju:t/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to letters@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Text & Context'

IN BRIEF



Rupee depreciates as FPIs sell ₹5,000 crore in equities

The Indian rupee depreciated for two consecutive days hitting record ₹95/USD after foreign institutional investors (FPIs) sold more than ₹5,052 crore of Indian equities. The Indian currency lost more than 20 paise on May 4 closing at over ₹95. It further slipped to ₹95.23 a dollar on May 5, 2026. The West Asia crisis continues to loom over the global economy with oil prices still elevated, with Brent Crude Futures at \$110 a bbl. Further, the lack of confidence among FIIs in the earnings of corporate India, and the relatively expensive stock markets continue to feed the outflow. As of May 5 2026, FIIs pulled ₹1.97 lakh crore from the Indian stock markets, making it the largest outflow ever. Continuous capital outflow, fears of a widening balance of payment deficit and still-high oil prices continues to keep the rupee depreciating and this is expected to continue said experts.

Biocon's Kiran Mazumdar names niece Claire to succeed

Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, founder of Biocon, has indicated that she was preparing for a gradual leadership transition over the next five years. Her niece, Claire Mazumdar, is expected to eventually take over as chairperson of Biocon. Ms. Claire currently serves as the CEO of Bicara Therapeutics, a U.S.-based biotechnology company, where she has been leading the business since 2020. Bicara Therapeutics is a publicly-traded clinical-stage biotechnology company, primarily owned by institutional investors, with significant backing from its founder, Biocon Ltd., as per market sources. However, in an X post Mazumdar-Shaw said she was not stepping away anytime soon and was only making it clear who would be leading the firm in the future. She also said she wanted Claire to succeed her through a phased transition.

'Fraudulent financial ads on Meta evading SEBI guidelines'

Large portion of ads targeted at Indian users may be fraudulent, Bard College researchers say; Meta says distinction between ads crucial

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

Despite an advisory by Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) that advertising of investment and financial products must be done only by SEBI-registered firms, more than 97% of financial ads sampled in a study turned out to be from unregistered entities, showed a new report by researchers from New York-based Bard College, the Forum for Developing Communities and consumer watchdog group Ekō.

The report, *Money from Misery*, shared with *The Hindu*, said there was no sign Meta was doing even little vetting of such ads on Facebook and Instagram, allowing proliferation of fraudulent ads that could cheat targets of money.

Only checkbox

Many ads had telltale signs of being from unregistered or even fraudulent advertisers but all Meta did was provide a checkbox at the time of ad creation, allowing advertisers to self-disclose if registered by SEBI.

SEBI did not respond to questions on the system. The regulator indicated in a February 2026 circular the aim of its social media norms was to "distinguish content related to securities market uploaded/post-



No action: The report said that there was no sign Meta was doing even little vetting of such ads on Facebook and Instagram. REUTERS

ed by the persons regulated by the Board and their agents on social media platforms from those uploaded/posted by other unregistered persons."

A Meta spokesperson told *The Hindu* the checkbox was part of a "voluntary commitment" the firm "proactively partnered with SEBI" to enable SEBI-regulated firms to comply.

"Meta combines advertiser self-declaration with automated systems to proactively identify and enforce against violating ads, even when advertisers do not self-declare," the firm told *The Hindu*.

The firm sought to put distance between the ads surfaced by the researchers and the kind, it says, the SEBI advisory and Meta's checkbox cover. "It is important to distinguish

securities and investment ads from the broader universe of financial services advertising in India, which encompasses categories governed by other regulators," it said.

97% ads undeclared

"97% of financial advertisers avoided all verification steps by simply failing to make the declaration," researcher Hamza Farooqui and Bard College Human Rights Project's associate director Inayat Sabhikhi wrote. "We found over 400 scam ads still active on Meta platforms months if not years after they had been reported in the media."

The researchers examined two batches of over 3,000 ads associated with over 1,300 pages on two days in 2025 and 2026. Only 2.5% to 2.7% were registered with SEBI, they said.

Govt. sets 12-week limit to process FDI applications

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

To expedite and bring transparency to foreign direct investments (FDI) coming into India, the Ministry of Commerce issued an updated Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) document laying out the timeline and norms for processing foreign firms' investment applications.

Apart from specifying heightened scrutiny by mandating approvals from the Ministry of Home Affairs on investments in sensitive sectors and from particular countries, the document sets a maximum limit of 12 weeks for the processing of applications. Large investments would first have to be cleared by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs.

The previous 2017 SOP laid out a maximum period of 10 weeks.

"This SOP aims to make the FDI application filing process completely paperless," the document said. "Therefore, the applicant will not be required to file physical copies of any documents required to process FDI proposals."

As per the rules, all applications for foreign investment into India will have to be filed on the Foreign Investment Facilitation or National Single Window System portals.

Once a proposal is made, the Department for Promotion of Industry & Internal Trade (DPIIT) will have two days to identify



FDI rules have been eased.

the concerned administrative Ministry or department and assign the proposal to them, along with sharing it with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

Two-week scrutiny

These bodies will have two weeks for the initial scrutiny of the proposal and to seek any relevant additional information or documents from the applicant. The DPIIT will have a maximum of two additional weeks to submit any clarification on the FDI policy.

The MHA, MEA and other Ministries or departments, sector regulator, or stakeholders, will have an additional four weeks for comments.

"In case comments are not received within the prescribed time, it shall be presumed that they have no comments to offer," the SOP said. After this, the competent authority will have four weeks to decide on the applications taking the total processing time to 12 weeks.

Govt. brings external hard drives under registration regime

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

The Union government added "standalone hard disk drives" to a compulsory registration regime following concerns of used and sub-standard storage devices being sold in retail.

A senior official told *The Hindu* the move was aimed at stemming flow of such dodgy hard drives from being imported and sold here. Hard drives are generally imported in India.

While hard drives have seen a twofold spike in prices on ongoing memory and storage crisis due to AI hyperscaler-based demand, the official said talks with the industry had long been on to bring about this move, which will be applicable from November.

The Compulsory Registration Scheme allows the government to require certain goods to be tested by Indian labs and registered with the Bureau of Indian Standards. Most high value consumer electronics, like phones, laptops and TVs fall under the CRS, for electrical safety compliance.

On the top of substandard/used drives, the move may impact spurious devices being peddled on e-commerce platforms. Since earlier this year, many e-com platforms started listings for drives with unrealistically high capacities at low prices. This is a software-based scam where the drive signals to computers it supports more data storage than is the case.

Govt. approves fifth edition of credit guarantee scheme

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

In response to the crisis in West Asia, the Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved the fifth edition of its Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme, under which it will provide additional credit guarantees to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and non-MSMEs, including airline

companies.

The total outlay of the scheme is expected to be ₹18,100 crore and it is expected to generate additional credit flows worth ₹2.25 lakh crore, the government said.

"The scheme aims to enable businesses to tide over the challenges arising from the West Asia conflict," the government said in a release.

April auto retail sales rise 13% to over 26.11 lakh units

Lalendu Mishra
MUMBAI

The Indian auto retail industry in April sold a total of 26,11,317 units up 12.94% year-on-year (YoY) as per data released by the Federation of Automobile Dealers Association (FADA).

"This is the highest-ever April (in terms of delivery) in our records," said Sai Giridhar, VP, FADA.

While two-wheeler sales grew 13.01%, three-wheelers segment was up 7.19%,

Dealers attributed performance to better rural liquidity, extended marriage season, GST 2.0

passenger vehicles sales grew 12.21%, commercial vehicles climbed 15.02%, tractors up 23.22% but construction equipment contracted 2.25%.

"This clearly underlines that the structural demand momentum which defined

the second half of FY26 carried into the new financial year," he said.

Two-wheeler retail sales touched 19,16,258 units.

"The demand engine was broad-based with urban markets growing 14.07% and rural markets 12.3%. Dealers attributed performance to improved rural liquidity on healthy rabi season, extended marriage-season tailwind and affordability gains carried over from GST 2.0 framework," he said.

'Qatar supply may resume 3-4 weeks after conflict ends'

Saptaparno Ghosh
NEW DELHI

Petronet LNG expects supplies from Qatar to resume within three to four weeks after the conflict in West Asia comes to an end, Saurov Mitra, head of finance, told analysts on Tuesday.

The firm's natural gas imports from Qatar have been affected since the onset of the escalating tensions in West Asia.

Cabinet okays Micro LED plant, OSAT facility in Gujarat

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet okayed support worth ₹3,936 crore in total in support for two semiconductor plants by Crystal Matrix Ltd. and Suchi Semicon Pvt. Ltd.

These are the final projects to be approved under the first phase of the India Semiconductor Mission. Crystal Matrix Ltd's

Dholera, Gujarat-based plant will produce display panels and "GaN wafers for Mini and Micro LED display modules" for large displays, studio production, "ruggedised displays for defence" with 1,600 direct jobs created, IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said.

The Suchi Semicon Pvt Ltd. plant near Surat which will produce "lead frame and wirebond packaging semiconductors," he said.

U.S. NRO awards contract to Pixxel

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Bengaluru space startup Pixxel has been awarded a contract by the U.S.'s National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) for advanced commercial remote sensing capabilities.

The contract has been awarded by NRO's Commercial Systems Program Office under the Strategic Commercial Enhancements Commercial Solutions Opening.

Pixxel said the award supports the U.S. government's effort to evaluate and integrate emerging commercial hyperspectral data sources into the agency's expanding remote sensing architecture.

Leveraging its on-orbit Firefly constellation, Pixxel would demonstrate hyperspectral imagery can provide spectral insight that conventional imaging cannot show.



Mahindra Group CEO-MD Anish Shah, ED and CEO, Auto and Farm Sector, Rajesh Jejurikar (left) and Group CFO Amarjyoti Barua. PTI

M&M Q4 net rises 42% to ₹4,668 crore

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. (M&M) for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2026 reported consolidated profit after tax (PAT) of ₹4,668 crore, up 42% year-on-year. Revenue at ₹54,982 crore grew 29%.

For the full year (FY26), the company reported consolidated PAT of ₹17,099 crore, up 32%. Consolidated revenue for the year at ₹1,98,639 crore

grew 25%. The board announced a dividend of ₹33 per share, up 30%.

The company said it delivered solid results across multiple businesses in FY26 on the back of strong growth, execution and capital allocation discipline. Auto and Farm maintain market leadership in key segments with 27% revenue growth and profits up 25%. Financial services AUM grew at 12%. TechM secured key new deal wins across verticals.

Work on AGI's aluminium beverage can unit begins

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Packaging products company AGI Greenpac has commenced construction of its ₹1,000 crore aluminium beverage can manufacturing facility in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh.

Spread across 34 acre, the greenfield plant is being developed as a manufacturing hub with advanced, high-speed production capabilities. It is expected to commence operations in the first half of 2027, with an initial production capacity of 1.6 billion cans per year, scalable to over 2 billion cans.

The initial output is targeted at 1.3 billion cans annually. A wide range of aluminium beverage cans, catering to segments such as carbonated soft drinks, beer, energy drinks, and ready-to-drink beverages, are to be manufactured, the company said.

India-U.K. FTA: JLR reduces Range Rover CBU models by up to ₹75 lakh

Lalendu Mishra
MUMBAI

Ahead of the implementation of the India-U.K. Free Trade Agreement (FTA), Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) India has announced priced reduction by as much as ₹75 lakh for Range Rover CBU models imported from the U.K.

The key models benefiting from the FTA are Range Rover SV and Range Rover Sport SV.

The Range Rover SV has been repriced from ₹4.25 crore ex-showroom to ₹3.5 crore.

"The Range Rover SV value proposition is significantly elevated with the addition of SV Ultra Metallic paints in Gloss and Satin finishes, now offered as standard for the first time," the company said in a statement.

The Range Rover Sport



Easy on purse: The key models benefiting from the FTA are Range Rover SV and Range Rover Sport SV. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SV has been repriced from ₹2.75 crore to ₹2.35 crore, significantly strengthening its market positioning.

New duty structure

"The revised prices reflect the new duty structure enabled by the FTA and will be effective immediately," the company said.

Rajan Amba, managing director, JLR India, said: "In anticipation of the India-U.K. FTA being imple-

mented, we are extending its benefits to our clients. The updated pricing of Range Rover SV and Range Rover Sport SV underscores our customer-first approach."

"We're confident that this FTA will allow more clients to experience the highly desirable and aspirational SV portfolio, and further strengthen the JLR India growth story," he said.

L&T Q4 net dips 3%, to pay dividend at ₹38 per share

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Larsen & Toubro Ltd (L&T) for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2026 reported 3% Year on Year (YoY) decline in consolidated profit after tax (PAT) to ₹5,326 crore even though the West Asia conflict had no impact on the company's operations and revenue during the quarter.

"The year-on-year decline in consolidated PAT is primarily attributable to an exceptional gain (net of tax & NCI) of ₹475 crore in the previous year," R. Shankar Raman, President, Whole-time Director and Group CFO, L&T said.

The Board has recommended a final dividend of ₹38 per equity share.

For the fourth quarter, the company reported consolidated revenue of ₹82,762 crore, reflecting a YoY growth of 11%, according to the company.

'Tesla faces EU skepticism on automated driving tech'



Charged up: Tesla EV is charged at a Tesla Supercharger battery charging station in Spain. REUTERS

Reuters

Tesla CEO Elon Musk has projected confidence that the European Union will soon green-light the carmaker's "Full Self-Driving" (FSD) system, but emails from some European regulators show marked skepticism toward the technology and its stated safety benefits. Tesla's "FSD (Supervised)" technology got the nod from Dutch road regulator RDW in April. RDW is now seeking EU approval for FSD. "We expect to be approved in a lot of other countries," Musk told analysts on an April 22 conference call, adding that Tesla would then seek approval for driverless robotaxis in Europe. Tesla has a lot riding on FSD approval in Europe, where it is trying to regain market share it has lost over the last two years.

Monthly subscription

The EV maker charges a monthly subscription for FSD, which can drive itself under certain circumstances but requires the driver to be fully attentive at all times.

But in previously unreported email correspondence, regulators in the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Norway - who could prove critical to Musk's approval push - have raised a number of concerns over the technology.

Those include the system's tendency to speed, whether it is safe to use on icy roads and drivers' ability to circumvent features designed to prevent cell-phone use, according to the emails, which were seen by Reuters through public records requests.

They also expressed frustration with Tesla's strategy of publicly encouraging vehicle owners to pressure regulators to approve FSD.

The EU committee will hear from Dutch officials about why they approved Tesla's FSD and why other EU member states should follow suit.

Tesla did not respond to requests for comment.

For FSD to be approved, committee members representing 55% of EU member states and 65% of the bloc's population must vote "yes." There is no vote scheduled on FSD this week. The next committee meetings are expected in July and October.

Await documentation

The emails reviewed by Reuters showed a Tesla policy manager lobbying Swedish authorities to approve FSD just four days after the Netherlands announced its decision on April 10, before regulators had reviewed any documentation on the technology.

Tesla also approached Estonia and Finland and asked the countries to recognise the Dutch approval, the countries said and the emails showed.

Regulators for Sweden, Finland and Estonia told Reuters they would review the material presented the committee meeting before making any decisions. Some Wall Street analysts have projected a widespread roll-out of FSD across Europe within months.

Use of Gilead's HIV prevention shot rises, but U.S. insurance gaps remain

Insurance coverage gaps limit Yeztugo access for some American patients; number of Yeztugo prescriptions is increasing but total PrEP prescriptions are not rising; telehealth services are popular sources of mail-order PrEP pills; Gilead says over 90% of insurers cover Yeztugo but insurers rebut

NEWS ANALYSIS

REUTERS

Use of Gilead Sciences' Yeztugo, a twice-yearly injection to prevent HIV infection, has climbed since its June launch, but U.S. health providers say not all patients are interested in the new option and those who want to try it can face insurance coverage gaps.

Hurdles include health plans that impose patient cost-sharing for the pricey medication, the appeal of a daily pill over twice-yearly in-office shots, and the potential for small nodules occurring at the injection site, according to interviews with four providers, a major tele-health firm and two AIDS activists.

"We have close to 75 people who are on Yeztugo right now, which is not as many as we expected or hoped," said Dr. Barry Zingman, medical director of the Montefiore AIDS Center in New York, which has around 700 patients taking pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP, medication.

Effective drug

U.S. regulators approved Yeztugo for at-risk adults and adolescents after it was shown to be nearly 100% effective at preventing HIV infection. Daily pills - Gilead's Descovy and



In focus: Gilead Sciences Inc pharmaceutical company at Oceanside, California. U.S. REUTERS

generic versions of older drug Truvada - also block the deadly virus when taken diligently. Viiv Healthcare's Apretude is aPrEP injection given every two months.

Over 9,000 prescriptions were written for Yeztugo injections in the first quarter of this year, compared with around 4,61,000 for Descovy, 32,000 for Apretude and 4,400 for Truvada, according to prescription data collector IQVIA. The overall number of weekly PrEP prescriptions has not increased.

Analysts estimate Yeztugo sales will rise to over \$5 billion a year by 2032, according to LSEG data. Gilead, which has forecast 2026 Yeztugo sales of \$800 million, reports first-quarter



The twice-yearly shots have a U.S. list price of over \$14,000 each. Daily generic pills, the lowest-cost alternative, cost about \$350 a year

ter results on Thursday.

The company said it is "excited by the strong uptake of Yeztugo," pointing to minimal out-of-pocket costs for most insured patients.

Reaching new patients

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that about 6,00,000 of the 2.2 million Americans who could benefit from PrEP are on

such a medication.

Reaching those not yet on PrEP and shifting existing patients to the new injection is a sizeable task as a growing number of patients get pills delivered by mail from sites touting "no awkward doctor visits, no needles, no paperwork."

In 2024, around 19% of U.S. PrEP prescriptions were filled by tele-health service MISTR, up from 2% in 2020, according to a study published in JAMA.

MISTR has seven U.S. storefronts where patients could receive Yeztugo, but said it will not offer the drug until a "critical mass" of insurers agree to reimburse for pharmacy administration.

"The last thing we want to do is introduce Yeztugo and then have 9 out of 10

people get rejected for it based on insurance," said MISTR CEO Tristan Schukraft.

Gilead has said more than 90% of insurers cover Yeztugo but insurers say it is often treated as a medical benefit, which requires the provider to purchase the drug and can be subject to patient co-payments or deductibles.

The twice-yearly shots have a U.S. list price of over \$14,000 each. Daily generic pills, the lowest-cost alternative, cost about \$350 a year.

Interest vs. cover

Dr. Rachel Presti, a physician at Washington University's HIV clinic in St. Louis, said the clinic has seen "a lot of interest in Yeztugo," and has an onsite pharmacy experienced at working to secure coverage for the drug.

Still, "if your insurance doesn't cover a pharmacy benefit, we can't give it," she said.

Zingman said most PrEP patients at Montefiore take daily Descovy pills or low-cost generic Truvada, which studies have shown to be effective when used on demand.

"Many people just don't want something in their body for weeks or months on end," he said. "For a fair number of people that fits their lifestyle and their risk profile better."

Dr. Howard Grossman,

medical director at Spectrum Medical Center in Phoenix, in early April said about 200 of their over 1,000 PrEP patients had switched to Yeztugo. He expects those numbers to keep rising.

Spectrum, as a non-profit, is charged a discounted per-dose price of \$10,100, Grossman said. But United Healthcare, the largest U.S. health insurer, is only reimbursing providers \$6,000 or \$7,000 under some plans. United Healthcare declined to comment.

Eligible patients can get help from Gilead or other programmes to bridge those kinds of gaps.

Meanwhile, standardized coverage is on hold. The U.S. panel that decides access to free preventive care in 2023 recommended people at high risk be treated with drugs to prevent HIV, but that has not been updated to include Yeztugo.

As a result, patient costs for Yeztugo are set by individual plans, United Healthcare said via email, adding that its commercial plans cover older HIV prevention drugs at zero cost to patients.

CVS Health, which runs the largest U.S. pharmacy benefit manager, said in an email that its employer and union clients can set plan terms that prioritise use of drugs that are clinically similar to Yeztugo but less expensive.

China's carmakers try 'Yaris moment' for Europe

Reuters

BEIJING

China's carmakers are hunting for their own "Yaris moment" - the kind of locally tailored breakthrough that helped Toyota conquer Europe - as they race to turn booming exports into lasting overseas growth.

After early attempts that largely involved exporting China-designed cars with minor tweaks, automakers are now re-engineering vehicles from the ground up for foreign buyers, driven as much by fierce margin pressure at home as by opportunity abroad.

Bruising price war

China's overcrowded domestic market has been locked in a bruising price war for years, leaving ma-



Focus Europe: Newly-presented Chinese electric cars at the Beijing International Automotive Exhibition in China. REUTERS

ny manufacturers struggling to make money. Overseas markets, by contrast, offer room to grow - and to charge more - if Chinese brands can persuade consumers they understand local tastes.

Major carmakers including BYD, Chery, Changan, SAIC's MG brand and

FAW's premium Hongqi all have models in the pipeline designed specifically for export markets - from small hatchbacks for Europe to pickup trucks for Australia and Mexico.

At home, Chinese automakers cram cars with technology and sell them cheaply to compete. In

Western markets such as Europe, they can often sell at double the price and still undercut established brands.

At the Beijing Auto Show in late April, Hongqi unveiled a small "global SUV" targeted for sale in 80 countries. But the vehicle was primarily designed for urban European buyers, design chief Giles Taylor told Reuters.

"That's the reason why that car exists," Taylor said.

Focus on hatchbacks

BYD's Dolphin G hatchback was designed specifically for Europe and will launch in June. Stella Li, the electric vehicle maker's No. 2 executive, said the model was critical because hatchbacks account for more than 40% of new car

sales in parts of southern Europe - a segment that barely exists in China.

"If we don't have the right car in this sector, we lose," Li told Reuters.

Survival strategy

For many Chinese carmakers, exports are a matter of survival as analysts predict consolidation will thin an industry crowded with more than 100 manufacturers. Vehicle sales in China are expected to remain flat or decline.

That excess capacity has already helped make China the world's largest vehicle exporter, overtaking Japan in 2024.

Gartner analyst Pedro Pacheco described the push to design cars for export as Chinese automakers' "Yaris moment", referring to Toyota's Yaris

hatchback, designed in Europe for European buyers and credited with helping the Japanese carmaker gain a foothold on the continent after its 1999 launch.

Dan Hearsch, global co-leader for automotive at consultancy AlixPartners, said globally relevant models are "the Holy Grail for automakers," because scale lifts margins.

Double U.K. share

In Britain, Chinese brands doubled market share in the first quarter to 14.2%. Across Europe, they nearly doubled their share last year to 6% from 3.5% in 2024, according to consultancy Inovev.

Chinese automakers' rapid export growth risks stalling if it remains heavily reliant on vehicles designed for Chinese tastes.

Asia battles rising, uneven toll of energy crisis caused by war

NEWS ANALYSIS

Reuters

SINGAPORE

Governments in Asia, the top oil importing region, are scrambling to find alternatives and insulate their economies from the worst of the energy crisis triggered by the Iran war, but the pain is getting increasingly costly.

The disruption spurred the Asian Development Bank to cut its growth forecast for developing Asia and the Pacific to 4.7% this year and 4.8% in 2027, down from 5.1% for both years previously, and lifted its inflation outlook to 5.2% for this year.

Overall oil imports to Asia, which takes 85% of

Gulf crude shipments, plunged 30% in April on the year, to their lowest since October 2015, Kpler data shows, after two months of the near-closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a key chokepoint for fifth of global oil and gas supplies.

Fiscal strain mounts

Fiscal strains are mounting across the region, particularly South Asia, as governments spend billions of dollars on subsidies and import duty waivers to compensate.

"The first line of defence ... is that the governments decided to absorb the initial shock by either providing subsidies or cutting excise duties on fuel products," said Hanna Luchnikava-Schorsch of S&P Global Market



Oil war: Vessels in the Strait of Hormuz near Bandar Abbas, Iran. REUTERS

Intelligence.

India's state-dominated refining sector has kept fuel prices steady despite surging crude costs, losing about ₹100 (\$1.06) a litre on diesel and 20 rupees on gasoline, but some analysts

forecast price hikes after state polls ended in April.

Many regional governments have moved to limit fuel use or clamp down on hoarding, while several have curbed exports and many, including Australia,

have espoused diplomatic efforts to ensure access.

China, the world's biggest oil importer, has shielded itself with sizeable reserves, a diverse energy supply chain and export curbs on fuel and

fertilizer, although Beijing is making exceptions for some regional buyers, from Australia to Myanmar.

Even as governments tap fiscal resources, forex reserves and oil inventories, the war's economic impact on Asia has not been as bad as feared, Goldman Sachs said.

Nevertheless, it trimmed 2026 growth forecasts for Japan and some Southeast Asian countries and slightly lifted inflation expectations, while warning of a key unresolved question.

"How much of the resilience thus far reflects structural factors versus unsustainable declines in buffer stocks?" its analysts wrote in a note. Asia's emerging market

currencies have fallen furthest and to lower lows against the dollar, compared with global peers and the region's bigger currencies, with the peso, rupee and rupiah all making record lows.

Since the war started at the end of February, the Philippine peso has dropped more than 5%, the Thai baht and rupee more than 3% each and the rupiah more than 2.5%.

By contrast China's yuan is the region's top performer, up 0.8% against the dollar, while Japan has intervened to push up the yen, to stand 0.4% higher than pre-war levels. South Korea's won is down about 1.1%.

The South Asian economies of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are the

most vulnerable to the burdens triggered by the crunch, S&P Global Market Intelligence said.

Pakistan, for example, recently issued its first tenders since 2023 to buy liquefied natural gas.

It is looking to replace supply it is unable to source from Qatar, paying \$18.88 per million British thermal unit for one cargo, or roughly \$30 million more than market prices before the war, according to Reuters calculations.

"These countries use more of their resources on subsidising domestic public energy enterprises and basically shielding the final consumers from the energy price shock," added Luchnikava-Schorsch, the S&P unit's head of Asia-Pacific Economics.

WASHINGTON

Officers shot man who opened fire near White House: Secret Service



A man was shot by law enforcement on Monday after he opened fire on them near the Washington Monument, the U.S. Secret Service said. The suspect was taken to the hospital. The incident comes more than a week after a gunman tried to break through security at a Washington hotel event attended by President Donald Trump. AP

NAIROBI

Ethiopia, Sudan trade barbs over territorial integrity, insurgency



Ethiopia and Sudan traded accusations on Tuesday that each had violated the other's territory. Sudan said it would recall its envoy following drone strikes launched from Ethiopia in collaboration with the UAE. Ethiopia accused Sudan's Army of supporting "mercenaries" with the Tigray People's Liberation Front. AFP

BANGKOK

Thailand scraps treaty on energy, maritime territory with Cambodia



Thailand cancelled a 25-year-old agreement with neighbour Cambodia on overlapping maritime claims and energy exploration on Tuesday, the Thai Prime Minister said, drawing a sharp rebuke from Phnom Penh. He said the move was not related to border clashes that killed dozens of people last year. AFP

WASHINGTON

Two killed in U.S. strike on alleged drug trafficking boat in Caribbean



The U.S. military says it killed two people in a strike on an alleged drug trafficking boat in the Caribbean, bringing the death toll from the contentious campaign to at least 187. President Donald Trump's administration insists it is at war with "narco-terrorists" operating in Latin America, but it has provided no definitive evidence. AFP

Zelensky slams Russia as strikes kill 22 in Ukraine ahead of brief truces

Ukraine's Naftogaz gas production facilities and three cities were targeted after both Moscow, Kyiv said they would enforce separate ceasefires; Kyiv says its long-range cruise missiles and drones struck an oil refinery and defence plant inside Russia

Associated Press
KYIV

Russian drone and missile strikes carried out overnight and later on Tuesday killed at least 22 people and wounded more than 80 others, Ukrainian authorities said, hours before Kyiv was due to enact a ceasefire and three days before Moscow promised its own pause in hostilities.

On Tuesday afternoon, powerful Russian glide bombs smashed into cities of Kramatorsk, Zaporizhzhia and Chernihiv, killing at least 17 civilians and wounding 45 others, officials said. Attacks the previous night killed five peo-



On the front line: A Ukrainian rescuer works to extinguish a fire in Zaporizhzhia, following a Russian air attack on Tuesday. AFP

ple and wounded 39, according to authorities.

'Utter cynicism'

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy rebuked Moscow for what he said was its "utter cynicism" in launching

at any moment, and this would stop the war and our responses," Mr. Zelenskyy said in a post on X. "Peace is needed, and real steps are needed to achieve it. Ukraine will act in kind."

Russian forces fired 11 Iskander-M ballistic missiles and 164 strike drones at Ukraine overnight, including a Shahed drone variant, the Ukrainian Air Force said. It hit natural gas production facilities in Ukraine's Poltava and Kharkiv regions, state energy company Naftogaz Group said.

Ukraine said it launched its F-5 Flamingo cruise missiles at targets, including military-industrial com-

plex facilities in Cheboksary. Ukrainian drones also attacked the Kirishi oil refinery in Leningrad.

The Russian Defence Ministry declared a unilateral ceasefire in Ukraine for Friday and Saturday, but said that it would strike back at the country, if it tries to disrupt the festivities on Victory Day, which Russia marks annually on May 9.

Mr. Zelenskyy replied that Ukraine would observe a ceasefire beginning at the end of Tuesday and would respond in kind to Russia's actions from that moment on. Mr. Zelenskyy was in Bahrain on Tuesday, proposing a bilateral drone defence partnership amid the Iran war.

Widening U.S. sanctions on Cuba 'illegal', says China

Reuters
HONG KONG

China urged Washington on Tuesday to immediately end its embargo and sanctions on Cuba, saying the expanded measures were "illegal" and "seriously violated" the norms of international relations.

U.S. President Donald Trump, seeking to put more pressure on Havana after ousting Venezuela's leader Nicolas Maduro, a close ally of Cuba, signed an executive order on Friday broadening U.S. sanctions against the Cuban government, two White House officials said.

Daily life for many Cubans has come to a standstill as a U.S. energy blockade triggers severe power outages and fuel shortages. Beijing has voiced sup-



Reeling under blockade: A man fill containers with potable water during a blackout in capital Havana. AP

port for the socialist island after tension flared in January between the United States and Cuba after the U.S. captured Mr. Maduro.

"The U.S. has intensified its illegal unilateral sanctions against Cuba," China's Foreign Ministry said, criticising the move as "seriously violating" the basic norms of international relations.

"China ... urges the U.S. to immediately end the embargo and sanctions against Cuba," it added in a statement, saying they violated the Cuban people's right to existence and development. China backs Cuba's efforts to safeguard national sovereignty and resolutely opposes interference in its internal affairs, the Ministry added.

Rubio expects 'frank' talks with Pope Leo amid Trump tensions

Reuters
VATICAN CITY

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio expects a "frank" meeting with Pope Leo during a visit to the Vatican on Thursday, the U.S. Ambassador said, after President Donald Trump took a fresh pot-shot at the pope for criticising the U.S.-Israeli war in Iran.

"Nations have disagreements, and I think one of the ways that you work through those is ... through fraternity and authentic dialogue," Brian Burch, the U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, said on Tuesday.

"I think the Secretary is coming here in that spirit," Mr. Burch said. "To have a frank conversation about

U.S. policy, to engage in dialogue."

Mr. Trump has repeatedly disparaged the first U.S.-born pope in recent weeks, drawing backlash from Christian leaders.

In his latest comments, Mr. Trump said "the Pope would rather talk about the fact that it's okay for Iran to have a nuclear weapon, and I don't think that's very good."

Pope Leo never said Iran should have nuclear weapons, but has opposed the war. Mr. Rubio and Vice President J.D. Vance had met Pope Leo a year ago after attending his inaugural mass, the Trump administration's only previous known cabinet-level meetings with the pope.

Fatal fireworks



Rescuers working on site after an explosion at a fireworks plant in Guandu Town of Liuyang, central China's Hunan province, killed 21 people and injured 61, prompting a call from President Xi Jinping for a thorough investigation, state media reported on Tuesday. China is known for its massive fireworks industry which exported \$1.14 billion worth goods last year—over two-thirds of the world's supply. AP

Counter-terror probe into arson attack at ex-synagogue in U.K.

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

U.K. police said on Tuesday they were investigating a new arson incident targeting London's Jewish community, as Prime Minister Keir Starmer held talks on responding to a spate of antisemitic attacks.

The issue is dominating the run-up to local elections later this week, with Mr. Starmer's embattled Labour party accusing some candidates from the insurgent left-wing Greens of having made antisemitic comments.

Mr. Starmer held a meeting with community groups, government Ministers and police chiefs on a

response to what he called a "crisis" following several antisemitic attacks in Britain's capital in recent weeks.

In the latest incident, firefighters were called to a former synagogue in east London early on Tuesday, where a blaze caused minor damage, the capital's Metropolitan Police said in a statement.

"Given the nature of the incident and the location being a former synagogue, the incident is being investigated by Counter Terrorism Policing London," said the statement.

Mr. Starmer told Tuesday's meeting that he would rush through new legislation to tackle "malicious threats".

Israel court extends Gaza flotilla activists' detention by six days

Agence France-Presse
ASHKELON

An Israeli court on Tuesday extended the detention of two foreign activists taken from a Gaza-bound flotilla by six days, a lawyer representing them said.

Spanish national Saif Abu Keshek and Brazilian Thiago Avila appeared before a court in the southern city of Ashkelon for their second hearing, after being brought to Israel for questioning last week.

The two, held in a prison in Ashkelon, were among dozens of activists aboard a Gaza-bound flotilla intercepted by Israeli

forces in international waters off the coast of Greece early on Thursday. The other detained activists were taken to the Greek island of Crete and released.

Hadeel Abu Salih, a lawyer with Israeli rights group Adalah, which represents the activists, has accused Israeli authorities of abusing the two men, who have been on hunger strike for the past six days.

The flotilla's vessels had set sail from France, Spain and Italy with the aim of breaking Israel's blockade of Gaza and delivering humanitarian aid to the war-ravaged Palestinian territory.

Consider Teesta water sharing agreement under 'current circumstances', says Bangladesh Minister

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

In the wake of the Bharatiya Janata Party's victory in the West Bengal Assembly election, Bangladesh has issued an urgent call to consider the long-pending Teesta water sharing agreement under the "current circumstances."

Outgoing Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has long been seen as a hurdle in efforts to resolve the dispute between India and Bangladesh.

In Dhaka's first-high level response to the poll results, Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman on Tuesday reiterated Bangladesh's demand for a great



Khalilur Rahman

ter share of the Teesta's waters.

In case of any further "push in" from the Indian side, he said, Bangladesh will take "whatever measures are necessary".

India and Bangladesh had reached an in-princi-

ple agreement to seal the deal on the Teesta's waters in 2011 during the Manmohan Singh-era, but the matter remained unresolved for several reasons including an alleged lack of coordination between the Central government and the Trinamool government in West Bengal led by Ms. Banerjee.

Referring to the 2011 agreement, Mr. Rahman said, "We hope that the agreement reached at that time can be 'considered' again under the current circumstances."

Talks with Beijing
Mr. Rahman was speaking to journalists in Dhaka before leaving for Beijing,

where he is expected to meet his counterpart Wang Yi. He indicated that, during his meetings there, he would discuss the Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project that China has been campaigning for.

"Of course, Teesta will be discussed, absolutely. This is a matter of life and death for the people of that region."

Earlier on Monday, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaid had described the election in West Bengal as a "domestic development" of India. This was followed by Bangladesh Nationalist Party's Media Cell member Syrul Kabir Khan, who had ex-

pressed hope for positive developments in Dhaka-Delhi relations as both the Central and State governments will now be headed by the BJP.

Concerns remain
Meanwhile, commentators in Dhaka have expressed concern about the role played by the BJP's Suvendu Adhikari, who has complained about illegal immigrants from Bangladesh in West Bengal.

Mr. Adhikari had earlier supported ousted Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, saying she had received a death sentence in October 2025 due to influence of Pakistan in Bangladesh.

Israeli strikes kill three, including child, in Gaza

Reuters
CAIRO/GAZA

Israeli strikes killed at least three Palestinians, including a child, and wounded several others in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, health officials said.

Medics said a Palestinian was killed and two others were wounded by an Israeli airstrike near the Sheikh Radwan neighbourhood, while another was killed by Israeli tank shelling near the central area of the enclave.

An Israeli strike targeted a police station in northern Gaza, killing a 15-year-old child, medics said.



North Korea's latest Jindallae mobile phones seen at the Pyongyang Spring International Trade Fair on Monday. AFP

Pyongyang calling: N. Korea shows off local smartphones

Agence France-Presse
SEOUL

North Korea has welcomed foreign visitors and firms to a trade fair this week, showcasing home-grown products including the latest model of its sleek Jindallae smartphone.

Diplomatically isolated and under biting sanctions over its nuclear and weapons programmes, North Korea has an ageing manufacturing base which analysts doubt has the ability to make high-quality consumer technology.

Still, Pyongyang has touted Jindallae – *azalea* in Korean – as a convenient way for citizens to stay connected, albeit through a strictly controlled domestic network.

The devices, which come in a range of colours and feature a large circular camera module with multiple lenses, have been on display at the Pyongyang Spring International Trade Fair, the country's largest.

Images showed visitors browsing stalls at the event on Monday, with state media saying "more than 290 enterprises and companies" from North Korea, Russia, China, Mongolia, Switzerland, and Thailand were represented. There was no information on how many people attended or where they had come from.

Jindallae was first unveiled in 2017, and the latest model appeared to be similar to the version released last year, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency, citing a pro-Pyongyang newspaper in Japan. Pyongyang has released few details of how the devices are produced. Beyond Jindallae, other local brands include Arirang and Phurunhanal. South Korean authorities said last month that they believe the North's long-moribund economy is recovering thanks partly to strengthening ties with Russia.

Reform UK sets sights on Scotland and Wales as it prepares for general election

The party led by populist leader Farage is riding high in national polls with a strong lead over the traditional British parties before a general election due by 2029; driven by English support in its post-Brexit rise, the party is making inroads in Scotland and Wales ahead of this week's local elections

Reuters
PETERHEAD

James Buchan, a former fisherman in the Scottish port of Peterhead, has swallowed his hostility towards Nigel Farage.

The 38-year-old's long-standing distrust of the populist Reform UK leader and Brexit campaigner has been eclipsed by his fears for the local economy, which he said had been hollowed out by decades of ruinous British government policy.

On Thursday, he plans to vote for Reform for the first time, seeing the party's pledges to maximise oil and gas production in the North Sea and restrict the access of European fishing boats as the best chance of reviving the town's fortunes.

"Some of the areas around here are starting to look like slums," Mr. Buchan says. "We need to find a way to get money circulating back through our economy."

Voters like Mr. Buchan are set to drive a surge of support for Reform this week in elections to the Scottish and Welsh parliaments, as well as local councils across England.

Reform is riding high in national polls with a strong lead over governing Labour and the Opposition Conservatives before a general election due by 2029. The party, whose post-Brexit rise has been



Political crossroads: The Reform UK's populist messages for a crackdown on immigration and a focus on local issues have found takers in Scotland and Wales, which have historically leaned left. REUTERS

largely driven by English support, is now making inroads in Scotland and Wales, reflecting a rejection of the U.K.'s traditional two-party system.

In Thursday's vote, Reform is likely to become the official Opposition in Scotland and Wales to local parties, the Scottish National Party (SNP) and Plaid Cymru, polls indicate. Its share of vote is forecast to jump to about 20% in Scotland – from 0.2% in the last vote in 2021 – and almost 30% in Wales from about 1%.

Labour is expected to haemorrhage votes with the Conservatives reduced to a handful of seats.

The two nations, which have historically leaned left, have become fertile ground for Reform's populist message: rip up decades-old political systems, evict "liberal

establishment elites" and crack down on immigration to better focus on local issues.

Local aspirations

The high street of Bargoed, a town in the Welsh valleys, is peppered with boarded-up shops. The community, blighted by the closure of a coal mine in the 1970s, is classed as suffering "deep-rooted deprivation", according to the Welsh government.

At the dishevelled local pub, supporters of the insurgent party are vocal, in private if not public. "This is a very strong Reform pub," says former stage builder Wayne Hunt, 60, who claims to prefer Plaid because it was more Welsh.

Conrad Ritchie, who is aiming for a seat in Scotland's parliament Holyrood as Reform's candidate

for Banffshire and Buchan in the north, says the regional elections were a key element of his party's quest for national government.

"This is another building block," he adds. "And I think you know, come the general election, which will not be too far away... then I reckon that we have a serious chance of becoming the next ruling party."

Labour spokespeople for Scotland and Wales say that Reform would divide communities and drag politics "into the gutter", adding that Labour was focused on bringing about fair change. The Conservatives did not respond to a request for comment.

Reform's critics say the fledgling party, founded as the Brexit Party in 2018 before being rebranded in 2021, is wholly unprepared for governing regionally,

let alone nationally.

Indeed, questions about readiness pervade the party itself; six Reform sources who requested anonymity sat that rather than running the Scottish and Welsh parliaments, the party might be better off coming a close second to get used to the way administrations and assemblies work, before the national election.

Thorny issues

Among Reform's most thorny, and scandal-ridden, problems has been its vetting of candidates. Following failures at the last general election in 2024, when more than 100 candidates were removed, some over racist comments, the party has tightened its procedures, adding credit data agency Experian checks to those completed by its central office, Reform officials say.

Llyr Powell, Reform's candidate for Blaenau Gwent Caerffili Rhymini, the so-called super constituency in southern Wales, says his vetting process included being grilled by Jeremy Kyle, a U.K. tabloid talkshow presenter, in mock media interviews.

Yet the problem still looms large.

Since March, when the party announced its slate of more than 160 candidates in Scotland and Wales, 15 of them have withdrawn following the resurfacing of racist or derogatory online material,

disputes with the party, or administrative errors.

In one case in Wales, a candidate resigned after images emerged of him making a Nazi salute. In Scotland, another stepped down after publicly describing the country's first Muslim leader as "not British" and an "Islamist moron".

Mr. Powell admits there have been "bumps along the way" but says Reform includes people "with real life experience" rather than polished career politicians.

Nonetheless, the charges of racism resonate with some in Scotland and Wales. The SNP and Plaid, which are both playing down any push for independence after the May 7 elections, accuse Reform of inflaming tensions around immigration. But they also see how Mr. Farage can aid their cause.

Delyth Jewell, deputy leader of Plaid, says she had lost count of voters in her Blaenau Gwent Caerffili Rhymini constituency saying they were voting for her party to keep Reform out.

"They have resented the vitriol, the nasty rhetoric that has been brought in by Reform to our streets, and they want to do anything they can to oppose that," she says. "So in lots of ways, I think the leader of Reform unifies so many people in being against his nasty vision for the future of the U.K."

Infamous bloom



Weeding out: Taliban security personnel destroy a poppy plantation in Yaftal Sufla of Badakhshan province, Afghanistan, on Monday. AFP

Separatists calling for Alberta's exit from Canada demand referendum

Associated Press
EDMONTON

Alberta separatists said on Monday they have formally submitted almost 3,02,000 signatures to try to trigger a referendum on the province leaving Canada.

The group needed 1,78,000 signatures to force the province to consider such a vote.

The question of separation could go on a province-wide ballot as early as October, as Alberta Premier Danielle Smith has said she would move forward if enough names are gathered and verified. Ms. Smith has said she personally does not support the oil-rich province leaving Canada.

A "yes" vote would not trigger independence au-



An Alberta separatist at a rally on Monday where signatures were submitted for an independence referendum. AFP

tomatically as negotiations with the federal government would have to take place.

Mitch Sylvestre, the head of Stay Free Alberta, arrived at the Elections Alberta office in Edmonton on Monday leading a convoy of seven trucks to de-

liver the names.

"This day is historic in Alberta history," Mr. Sylvestre said adding that most papers were handled five times to verify the signatures.

However, the petition could face another hurdle this week as a ruling is ex-

pected on a court challenge launched by a group of Alberta First Nations who say Alberta separation would violate treaty rights.

Ms. Smith has accused previous federal Liberal governments of introducing legislation that hamstring Alberta's ability to produce and export oil, which she said has cost the province billions of dollars. She also said she does not want the federal government meddling in provincial issues.

Some indigenous groups, who are already using the courts to prevent the referendum, would try to stop independence from happening, Daniel Béland, a political science professor at McGill University in Montreal, said while adding that a referendum is likely to lose.

Circassians living in Israel rely on food and language to sustain ancient heritage

Agence France-Presse
REHANIYA

On a sunny afternoon, Shina Shabso was busy making traditional cheese pastries for a wedding on Israel's border with Lebanon, the celebration in the Circassian village of Rehaniya a much-needed break from weeks of war.

Known as *halyuj*, the fried semi-circular pastries are a staple of life in this tiny community of Circassians spread across two villages in northern Israel and are served up to honour guests at a celebration or to comfort those who mourn.

"Preserving traditional food, especially Circassian cheese, is very important

because in Israel we are a minority of around 5,000," said Ms. Shabso, who filled the pastries with her own freshly-made cheese, a tradition passed down through families for generations.

"It is important for the next generation to know where we came from, what people used to eat and how they used to produce it," said the 32-year-old artisan cheesemaker who runs Gvinot Shabso with her husband Itzik.

It is an explanation she often gave tour groups who would visit before the northern border started coming under heavy Hezbollah fire with the start of the 2023 Gaza war.

Like their Jewish and

Arab neighbours, the Circassians – Sunni Muslims who serve in the Israeli Army – have had their lives disrupted by the latest fighting between Hezbollah and Israel that began in March.

For now, though, the skies were clear with only a few distant booms echoing over the border some 4.5 kilometres away.

Long history

The Circassians are an ethnic group indigenous to the North Caucasus, a mountainous region between the Black and Caspian seas, in what is today primarily southern Russia.

They were massacred and forcibly expelled from their homeland by Russian



People take part in a Circassian wedding ceremony in the northern Israeli town of Rehaniya, by the border with Lebanon. AFP

troops between 1860 and 1864 in what their descendants want recognised as genocide, its anniversary marked every May 21.

Known for their resilience to harsh conditions, fighting skills, and loyalty

to the place they live, the Circassians were brought to West Asia by the Ottoman Empire in the mid-1870s.

Today, they number five million worldwide, of which 30 lakh live in Turki-

ye, 1,20,000 in Syria and 1,00,000 in Jordan, while the rest are scattered across Russia, Europe, and the United States.

"When the rulers changed, the Circassians stuck with it, they are people of their word. Loyalty means you are loyal to your surroundings," said Zuher Tchaoscho, 52, director of the Circassian museum in Kfar Kama, another Circassian village.

Although he speaks Hebrew, his native tongue is Circassian – a phonetically-rich language based on 64 letters written in Cyrillic that graces the street signs, alongside Hebrew and Arabic.

"This is the only place in the world where children

are taught Circassian as part of the education system," Mr. Tchaoscho said.

The everyday use of Circassian is what sets the community apart, according to Riyad Gosh, 80, former head of Circassian heritage at Israel's Education Ministry.

"We have retained our Circassian identity 100 per cent. We preserve our community in language, culture, customs, and behaviour," he said, wearing a green baseball cap with the 12 gold stars and three crossed arrows of the Circassian flag.

Although the recent conflicts have been hard on everyone in the community, no one would consider leaving, least of all

Ms. Shabso. "We feel connected to the state of Israel, we are really attached to the Israelis here. It is like an inseparable part of my life," she said.

Her cheese business survived thanks to loyal customers spreading the word, with orders now coming from across the country, she said.

"I do not really know the history of the Circassian people but I drive 45 minutes just to buy these delicious things," Zeev Dragobetsky, 52, a veteran customer from Kfar Vradim, said with a grin.

"Whether there is a war or not, whenever Shina starts to fry (her cheese pastries), I would come – rockets or no rockets."

FAST AND FURIOUS

Have to be ready for every game and can't let a loss linger: Vettori



NAGARA GOPAL

Sunrisers Hyderabad head coach Daniel Vettori stressed on the importance of a short memory in the IPL ahead of a crucial clash against Punjab Kings. "The IPL is so short and fast that you have to be ready for every game, and you can't let a loss linger. You just have to focus on those things that's really worked".

BOOMING GUNS

Haddin all praise for Priyansh and Prabhshimran's fearless approach



ANI

Punjab Kings assistant coach Brad Haddin praised his side's openers Priyansh Arya and Prabhshimran Singh. "They've been one of the reasons we're at the top of the table. The one thing that they've given us is a no-fear approach at the top of the order and you have to play that role with the way the game's going".

TEAM MAN

His knocks are often impactful: Gavaskar praises Rohit's batting



EMMANUAL YOGINI

Ever since he (Rohit Sharma) was removed as captain in white-ball cricket, he has focused more on his batting. In the IPL, he usually scores 400 to 500 runs a season, but his knocks are often impactful. He may not have many 80-plus innings, but his 40 to 50-run starts give his team early momentum — Sunil Gavaskar.

DEMANDING JOB

Leadership is tough and Pant is carrying a lot of pressure: Langer



EMMANUAL YOGINI

Leadership is a tough position and he (Rishabh Pant) is carrying a lot of pressure. But he is chipping away and working hard. He has had a match-winning game earlier in the season. We love it when we see him smiling and playing that swashbuckling style and he is not far off — LSG head coach Justin Langer.

Samson's sublime knock wins it for Super Kings

The opener smashes an unbeaten 87 and guides the visiting side home along with Kartik on a tricky surface; the CSK bowlers restrict DC to a modest total despite Stubbs and Rizvi's late charge

IPL-19

Vivek Krishnan
NEW DELHI

In years gone by, Chennai Super Kings' tried-and-tested template for success manifested itself majestically on slow and sluggish surfaces. The IPL 2026 clash at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on Tuesday, where chants of "CSK, CSK" reverberated all along, was a throwback to that style.

The five-time champion kept Delhi Capitals down to 155 for seven on a tricky strip before the batters in yellow adopted a measured approach to knock off the target in 17.3 overs with eight wickets in hand.

The pursuit was anchored by the experienced Sanju Samson (87 n.o., 52b, 7x4, 6x6).

The Indian opener, who has been in sublime touch since the latter stages of the T20 World Cup, pulled with panache and drove elegantly during a knock that demonstrated his wisdom.

Attack on Kuldeep

He notably went after the off-colour Kuldeep Yadav, whose short deliveries were meat and drink for the man from Kerala.



Game-changers: Akeal got the prized scalp of Rahul before Samson ensured Super Kings overhauled the target without fuss. R.V. MOORTHY

At the start of CSK's chase, the impression of the surface being inimical for strokeplay was rein-

forced. It ambled to 28 for one in five overs before Urvil Patel pummelled Lungi Ngidi for two consecutive

maximums in the sixth over. Urvil, however, fell to Axar Patel in the very next over, lured into lunging for-

ward and missing the ball altogether as K.L. Rahul whipped off the bails for a stumping. Samson, in con-

junction with Kartik Sharma (41 n.o., 31b, 4x4, 2x6), took control thereafter and ensured no more hiccups.



SCOREBOARD

DELHI CAPITALS
Pathum Nissanka c Breviss b Mukesh 19 (15b, 3x4, 1x6), K.L. Rahul c Rituraj b Akeal 12 (13b, 2x4), Nitish Rana c Kartik b Noor 15 (13b, 2x4), Karun Nair c Gurjapneet b Noor 13 (13b, 2x4), Axar Patel c Akeal b Gurjapneet 2 (6b), Tristan Stubbs c Mukesh b Overton 38 (31b, 1x4, 2x6), Sameer Rizvi (Impact Player for Karun) (not out) 40 (24b, 4x6), Ashutosh Sharma run out 14 (5b, 2x6), Mitchell Starc (not out) 0 (0b); Extras (w-2): 2; Total (for seven wickets in 20 overs): 155

FALL OF WICKETS
1-29 (Nissanka, 3.6 overs), 2-36 (Rahul, 5.1), 3-52 (Karun, 7.6), 4-61 (Nitish, 9.3), 5-69 (Axar, 10.6), 6-134 (Stubbs, 18.5), 7-149 (Ashutosh, 19.5).

SUPER KINGS BOWLING
Akeal 4-0-19-1, Mukesh 4-0-31-1, Kamboj 4-0-49-0, Noor 3-0-22-2, Gurjapneet 4-0-29-1, Overton 1-0-5-1.

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS
Sanju Samson (not out) 87 (52b, 7x4, 6x6), Rituraj Gaikwad c Rizvi b Ngidi 6 (13b, 1x4), Urvil Patel st. Rahul b Axar 17 (9b, 2x6), Kartik Sharma (not out) 41 (31b, 4x4, 2x6); Extras (lb-1, w-7): 8; Total (for two wickets in 17.3 overs): 159.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-24 (Rituraj, 3.5), 2-45 (Urvil, 6.3).

CAPITALS BOWLING
Starc 4-0-30-0, Axar 4-0-25-1, Ngidi 4-0-30-1, Kuldeep 3-0-34-0, Natarajan 2-3-0-39-0.

Toss: Capitals.
Player-of-the-Match: Samson. Super Kings won by eight wickets with 15 balls to spare.

Next assignment
DC: May 8 vs. KKR
Delhi, 7.30 p.m.
CSK: May 10 vs. LSG
Chennai, 3.30 p.m.

Sunrisers and Kings aim to return to winning ways

Anirudh Velamuri
HYDERABAD

Two sides, both jolted out of rhythm just when they seemed unstoppable, now collide in a high-stakes showdown as Sunrisers Hyderabad locks horns with Punjab Kings in an IPL 2026 match at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium.

The hosts were riding a wave of confidence, stringing together five consecutive wins before Kolkata Knight Riders stormed their fortress and snapped their momentum over the weekend. Meanwhile, Kings have stumbled just as dramatically. What once looked like an unshakable campaign has suddenly hit a speedbump, the successive defeats to Rajasthan Royals and Gujarat Titans threatening to derail their charge.

Head back in business
SRH, the flag-bearer of the 200-plus score, is up against a side that has repeatedly chased down tall targets. Though Travis Head's return to form is reassuring, but the unit needs to fire as a whole. With proven match-winners like Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan and



Key player: It would serve Ponting's men well if Prabhshimran gets the visitors off to a flyer. NAGARA GOPAL

Today's match
SUNRISERS HYDERABAD vs PUNJAB KINGS
Hyderabad, 7.30 p.m.
HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played: 25
SRH 17 | PBKS 8
PREVIOUS MEETING
PBKS won by six wickets, 2026
LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 & JIHOOTSTAR

Heinrich Klaassen in its ranks, SRH possesses the firepower to either make imposing totals or hunt down daunting totals if it clicks in unison. The bowling attack, particularly the pace unit, has been a pillar of resilience this season, stepping up under pressure, especially in the death.

That resolve will be tested again against a Kings line-up capable of dismantling any attack.

PBKS' top four has driven its surge to the top, but their all-out aggression has resulted in early wickets too. While blistering displays with the bat masked the frailties of an inconsistent bowling unit for much of the season, the underlying cracks are beginning to surface.

With momentum stalled and questions mounting, both sides walk into Wednesday's contest chasing more than just two points. Pride, redemption, and a return to winning ways are on the line, setting the stage for a contest that promises no shortage of drama.

'PBKS is striving for the perfect game'

Anirudh Velamuri
HYDERABAD

After a cherished stint as the runaway leader, Punjab Kings has seen its surge grind to a halt in recent outings. Despite PBKS showing signs of vulnerability, assistant coach Brad Haddin struck an upbeat tone ahead of the clash with Sunrisers Hyderabad. "Tournament cricket is all about playing your best right at the end and that's what we're striving for at all the time. We're striving for that perfect result and perfect game. When we find that, we'll be a hard team to beat," Haddin said.

While results haven't gone Kings' way recently, Haddin insisted there were positives to look at. "Against Gujarat Titans, we didn't get the result but we

got ourselves right back into the game and fought right to the end.

"There are some good signs out there with the ball and in the field that we're happy about. The partnership between Marcus Stoinis and Suryansh Shedge was really good given the circumstances," the Australian added.

Haddin dismissed concerns over over-reliance on the top-order and backed the team's aggressive approach. "You need to find ways to limit [the opposition in] the PowerPlay. A lot comes down to how effective you are with the new ball — that's with both (the) ball and bat. At this stage of the tournament, you want to start stringing good games together and off the back of those, you want to get results".

Points table

	M	W	L	NR	PTS	NRR
Punjab Kings	9	6	2	1	13	0.855
Royal Challengers	9	6	3	0	12	1.420
Sunrisers Hyderabad	10	6	4	0	12	0.644
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	9	2	7	0	4	-1.076

Nitish offers balance and makes life a lot easier, says Vettori



Back in the swing: Nitish's return after missing the Knight Riders game will boost Sunrisers. FILE PHOTO: NAGARA GOPAL

Anirudh Velamuri
HYDERABAD

Nitish Kumar's absence against Kolkata Knight Riders forced Sunrisers Hyderabad into an unsuccessful middle-order shuffle. The Daniel Vettori-coached side, however, is set for a timely boost with the return of the all-rounder, who appeared in fine touch during Tuesday's training session.

"Every team has that player who makes selection quite straightforward. Against KKR, we picked R. Smaran as we needed a batter and then had to manoeuvre around for another seamer. Nitish, like a Marco Jansen or Marcus Stoinis, offers balance and makes my life a lot easier," Vettori said ahead of SRH's clash against Punjab Kings.

The New Zealander acknowledged that the Kings will pose a familiar challenge, especially if their explosive opening pair gets going.

"They're top of the table for a reason. In a lot of ways, they're like us — very aggressive with the bat, and then they just try and mitigate anything they can with the ball. You'd anticipate a high-scoring game."

Bowling strategy
The 47-year-old broke down how his bowlers are dealing with life in a batting-conducive tournament. "The games in Hyderabad are not about bowling teams out for low scores, but mitigating big overs. In some ways, the pressure's not on them because they know the batters will be so aggressive".

East Bengal beats Mumbai to go top

Sports Bureau

East Bengal FC, with goals from substitutes Yousef Ezzejjari and Nandha Kumar, defeated Mumbai City FC 2-1 in an Indian Super League contest here on Tuesday. Brandon Fernandes had struck in the eighth minute for the host.

East Bengal moved to the top with 21 points from 10 matches, above Jamshedpur FC on goal difference, while Mumbai slipped to fifth with 19 points in 11 games. It was Mumbai's first home defeat of the season.

It was the Islanders who nosed ahead. Akash Mishra's long throw into the box created commotion, and Brandon fired a left-footer into the top left corner. East Bengal coach Oscar Bruzon made three changes at half-time, introducing Miguel Figueira, Ezzejjari and Souvik Chakrabarti. The impact was immediate and the equaliser came in the 58th minute through Ezzejjari, who slotted home a penalty. Nandha Kumar cut in from the left and struck from the edge of the box in the 71st minute, the strike proving decisive.

The result:
Mumbai City 1 (Brandon 8) lost to East Bengal 2 (Ezzejjari 58-pen, Nandha Kumar 71).

IN BRIEF



Silver for Khandagale in World junior weightlifting

Yash Khandagale totalled 309kg to finish overall second and take the men's 71kg category silver at the World junior weightlifting championships in Ismailia, Egypt. Competing in Group 'B', Khandagale lifted 140kg in snatch and 169kg in clean and jerk to secure a silver and a bronze in the respective segments. His aggregate placed him behind gold medal winner Albert Ian Delos Santos (326kg) of the Philippines. Ecuador's Jimmy Lopez (301kg) bagged the bronze.

Deotale and Aditi secure their best scores of the season

Ojas Deotale and Aditi Swami shot their season's best scores to emerge as top Indian compound archers after qualification round at the Archery World Cup Stage-2 in Shanghai on Tuesday. Deotale scored 711, while Aditi logged 700.

The results: Qualification round: Compound: Individual: Men: Ojas Deotale (seventh, 711), Sahil Jadhav (eighth, 711), Kushal Dalal (18th, 708), Abhishek Verma (25th, 705). **Women:** Aditi Swami (13th 700), Pragati (19th, 697), V. Jyothi Surekha (21st, 695), Madhura Dhamangaonkar (33rd, 690). **Team: India: Men** (third, 2130), **Women** (fifth, 2092), **Mixed** (sixth, 1411).



China's Wu Yize wins World snooker championship

China's Wu Yize won the World snooker championship for the first time with an 18-17 victory over Shaun Murphy in the final at Sheffield's Crucible Theatre on Monday. The 22-year-old is the second Chinese, and second youngest after Stephen Hendry, who was 21 while claiming his maiden title at 21 in 1990, to win the world crown after Zhao Xintong made history as the first Asian to lift the trophy last year.

India loses to Japan in AFC u-17 women's Asian Cup

India went down 0-3 to Japan in the AFC under-17 women's Asian Cup in Suzhou, China, on Tuesday. The Young Tigresses did well to hold the Japanese goalless in the first half. However, Yumi Hayashi broke the deadlock in the 59th minute. Yuzuha Ikeda struck in the 76th and 81st minutes to complete the win for Japan. India, which lost 0-2 to Australia, needs to beat Lebanon in its last Group-B match on Friday to have any chance of making it to the quarterfinals.

Bilbao names Terzic as new coach on a two-year deal

Former Borussia Dortmund boss Edin Terzic will take charge of Athletic Bilbao next season, the club announced on Tuesday, following the departure of Ernesto Valverde this summer. Terzic will arrive on a two-year deal.

ITA serves Vinesh notice for missed dope test

Wrestler Vinesh Phogat has been notified by the International Testing Agency (ITA) for a missed out-of-competition doping test dating back to Dec. 18, 2025, marking her first whereabouts failure in the last 12 months. In a communication dated May 4, 2026, the ITA informed Vinesh that the missed test has been formally recorded following a review of her explanation submitted on January 19, 2026. The notice refers to an earlier correspondence which had flagged the apparent missed test and sought her response.

India u-18 hockey teams to play series against Australia

The Indian men's and women's under-18 hockey teams will each take on Australian counterparts in a four-match series from May 15 to 20 in Bhopal as part of the Asia Cup preparations. The exposure series will serve as preparation for the U-18 Asia Cup in Kakamigahara, Japan, later this month.

'Asiad will be tough, but we know how to prepare for it'

Chirag says the team is keen to build on the momentum gained at the Thomas Cup; the doubles specialist and Prannoy feel it is difficult to convince players when there is not much recognition

BADMINTON

Uthra Ganesan
NEW DELHI

The Indian Thomas Cup team returned home late on Monday night with bronze, its second medal at the prestigious event in the last three editions. By finishing joint third in Denmark, India became one of only seven countries to clinch more than one medal.

While the players acknowledged the support received over years, they rued that the general public was largely unaware of the importance of the achievement at what is dubbed the World Cup of badminton. On Saturday, India went down to France in the semifinals, adding to the maiden title it bagged in 2022.

Deserving more

"I think it didn't get celebrated by the fans the way it should have been. People who know about the sport knew how big the tournament was, but the general public, I feel, didn't really know the magnitude of the result. "We are not a sporting nation as yet, we don't celebrate our athletes the way we should. There is plenty more we need to



All for one, one for all: The Indian players combined well to finish on the podium. X@MEDIA_SAI.

do. There is only a little that the government can do, the ecosystem needs to start celebrating sport," Chirag Shetty said during an interaction facilitated by the Sports Authority of India on Tuesday.

On his part, H.S. Prannoy said: "When there is not enough recognition, it is tough for players to be convinced every time because they question the value of doing this... trying to build a team in a sport where we play individually 99% of the time. It is also tough for the seniors to convince the juniors that we need to get this done

for the country."

With the Asian Games scheduled later this year, Chirag is keen to build on the momentum. "The team has been preparing really well. The Asian Games was good last time, and we want to do something similar this time around as well. It will be difficult, but we all know how to prepare for such events," he insisted.

The Lakshya factor

Prannoy admitted that Lakshya Sen's injury was a big blow for the team in the Thomas Cup semifinal clash. "Lakshya not being

there definitely made a big difference because rankings eventually matter. He pulled off such a huge win against Chou Tien-Chen (Taiwan) a day before and he was gaining confidence.

"I believe he would have beaten Christo Popov; that would have been a big positive and it could have given us a chance to play the fourth and fifth matches. We would have definitely been stronger as a team if the tie had gone past the third match."

Lakshya is scheduled to play the Thailand Open next week but he was still waiting for doctor's advice.

Skeet shooters miss out on final spots

Press Trust of India
ALMATY

Indian skeet shooters failed to reach the finals in both the men's and women's events in the ISSF World Cup Shotgun on Tuesday.

Mairaj Ahmad Khan and Raiza Dhillon finished highest among the Indian shooters.

Mairaj, who started day two in 26th place, shot 23 and 25 in the final two series to end the qualification stage in 18th with a total of 119. Bhavtegh Singh Gill was the next best Indian performer, also with a final score of 119 (24, 24, 23, 24, 24) to finish one place below Mairaj.

Anantjeet Singh Naruka started the fourth series with a perfect 25 and fol-

lowed it up with a series of 23 to finish in 38th with 117. Gurjoat Singh Khangura was 54th with 115 after shooting 22 and 23 in his final two series. Abhay Singh Sekhon shot 23 and 20 in the fourth and fifth series for a total of 113 and finished 71st.

In the women's event, Ganemat Sekhon managed 22 and 20 in her final two series to end 33rd with 112. Raiza finished with 115 (22, 23, 24, 23, 23) for 17th place.

Parinaaz Dhaliwal finished one place above Ganemat with 112 after shooting 24 and 22 in the final two series. Vanshika Tiwari and Rashmi Rathore, competing for ranking points, finished 29th and 47th with scores 112 and 102.

Men in Blue retain top spot in T20I rankings

Press Trust of India
DUBAI

India on Tuesday retained the top spot in the ICC men's T20I rankings followed by England and Australia at second and third respectively.

"The latest rankings rate all matches played since May 2025 at 100% and those of the previous two years at 50%," the ICC said on its website. "Sitting at

275 points, India see its lead over England (262 points) trimmed by merely one point, while Australia is placed closer to England at the third place with 258 points," it added.

While two-time T20 World Cup winner England has 262 rating points, Australia has 258 points.

In all, there is no change in ranking for the top seven teams in the ICC T20I rankings.

Players should boycott Slams if they don't receive bigger prize money: Sabalenka

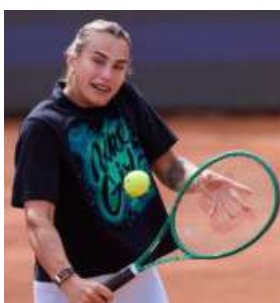
TENNIS

Associated Press
ROME

Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka believes tennis players should organise a boycott if they don't start receiving a bigger share of tournament revenues at the Grand Slams.

Sabalenka and fellow No. 1 Jannik Sinner were among leading players – most of them ranked in the top 10 – who issued a statement on Monday expressing "deep disappointment" over the French Open prize money.

"Without us there wouldn't be a tournament and there wouldn't be that entertainment. I feel like definitely we deserve to be paid more percentage," Sabalenka said on Tuesday at the Italian Open as she celebrated her 28th birthday.



Sabalenka. GETTY IMAGES

"I think at some point we will boycott it. I feel like that's going to be the only way to fight for our rights."

Iga Swiatek, said "the most important thing is to have proper communication and discussions with the governing bodies so we have some space to talk.

"Hopefully before Roland Garros there's going to be opportunity to have these type of meetings and we'll see how they go," Swiatek added. "But boycotting, it's a bit extreme kind of situation."

Man City's stumble at Everton hands Arsenal the advantage

EURO LEAGUES

Agence France-Presse
LIVERPOOL

Jeremy Doku's stoppage-time strike salvaged Manchester City a 3-3 draw at Everton, but a second half collapse handed the destiny of the Premier League title back to Arsenal on Monday.

The Gunners now just need to win their final three games to end a 22-year wait to become the champion of England.

City remains five points adrift of Mikel Arteta's team, with a game in hand, and will struggle to recover from the manner of its implosion.

Pep Guardiola's side appeared to be cruising to victory when Doku opened the scoring at the end of a dominant first half.

However, an error-strewn second period was punished as Thierno Barry scored twice for the Toffees, either side of Jake



Special strike: City's Doku scores deep in added time to salvage a draw against Everton. REUTERS

O'Brien's header.

Erling Haaland and then a sensational effort from Doku in the 96th minute did however rescue a point which could ultimately keep City in the race.

Arsenal visits relegation-threatened West Ham on Sunday before hosting Burnley and visiting Crystal Palace on the final day of the campaign.

Nottingham Forest took a huge step towards Premier League survival with

a 3-1 win at Chelsea on Monday that dealt a major blow to the Blues' hopes of qualifying for the Champions League.

Sevilla moved out of the relegation zone of LaLiga with a 1-0 victory over Real Sociedad on Monday.

An Alexis Sanchez goal in the 50th minute was enough for Sevilla to grab a vital win.

Roma eased past Fiorentina 4-0 on Monday to move within a point of the

final Champions League spot in Serie A.

The results: Premier League: Chelsea 1 (Joao Pedro 90+3) lost to Nottingham Forest 3 (Awoniyi 2, 52, Jesus 15-pen); Everton 3 (Barry 68, 81, O'Brien 73) drew with Manchester City 3 (Doku 43, 90+, Haaland 83).

LaLiga: Sevilla 1 (Sanchez 50) bt Real Sociedad 0.

Serie A: Cremonese 1 (Bonazzoli 29) lost to Lazio 2 (Isaksen 53, Noslin 90+2); Roma 4 (Mancini 13, Wesley 17, Hermoso 34, Pisci 58) bt Fiorentina 0.

Bayern's Kompany promises repeat fireworks against holder PSG in semifinal second leg

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Agence France-Presse
MUNICH

Bayern Munich coach Vincent Kompany has promised to stick with his high-octane, high-risk approach in Wednesday's Champions League semifinal second leg against holder Paris Saint-Germain.

PSG hold a one-goal advantage from last week's incredible 5-4 first leg in Paris, where some of the game's leading attackers were given free rein to go for the jugular.

Despite the match in the



All set: Kompany oversees a Bayern training session. AP

French capital being lauded as one of the best games of the modern era, Kompany and his side have faced criticism for being too vulnerable at the back.

But the former central defender has repeatedly promised not to change a thing and even doubled down as six-time European Cup winner Bayern looks

to blast its way to the final in Budapest.

Bayern has scored 116 goals in 32 games – a record in the Bundesliga this season and among the best anywhere in Europe.

The Bavarians, however, have conceded 16 goals in their past six games, with just one clean sheet.

"I'm not the kind of person who sees things in black or white. For me, what happened in Paris is perfectly logical," Kompany said on Friday. "I also would be glad to keep a clean sheet."

The strategy has paid clear dividends in the competition so far.

Indians register strong results across categories

BOXING

Press Trust of India
TASHKENT

Indians continued to dominate at the Asian Boxing under-15 & -17 Championships 2026 with a series of strong performances here on Monday.

In the u-17 boys section, Yadav Yash (50kg) secured a 5-0 victory over Turkmenistan's Suleyman Ahmedov while Karuna Albertson Kom (60kg) impressed with a 4-1 defeat of Tajikistan's Ali Nazarov.

Gopal Rameshwar Ganeshe (52kg) went down

2-3 to Tajikistan's Nazarov Damir and Mishra Prashant (57kg) lost 0-5 to China's Tangjie Liu.

In the u-15 girls' quarterfinals, Khushi Rana (49kg) won by RSC in the first round against Vietnam's Thi Ngoc Truc Nguyen, while Hanshika Attri (46kg) defeated Uzbekistan's Visola Bakhtiyorova 5-0.

Nitya Pandey (55kg) went down to Kazakhstan's Aruna Shalman.

Samir advances

Among u-15 boys, Samir Bohra (43kg) registered a 5-0 victory over Chinese Taipei's Hao-Ting Chang in the preliminary round.



S. Shrivathsan

In a sultry day at the Serapong course in Sentosa Golf Club, Jeev Milkha Singh kept going although the odds were stacked against the veteran Indian golfer during a challenging first-round outing in the recent Singapore Open.

The 54-year-old, who is in the twilight of his storied career, was pitting his wits against players who were much younger – many even less than half his age – and stronger. In demanding conditions that his ‘junior’ Karandeep Kochhar likened to an ‘oven’, Jeev’s body was simply not coping so much so that he even struggled to swing properly.

“At this age, the body does not stay with you. That is the sad part. I still have that winning habit (he clinched an Indian Golf Premier League (IGPL) title in Colombo late last year), but the body has to stay with me. I hope it stays,” Jeev expressed optimism.

He failed to make the weekend cut in the International Series-Asian Tour tournament, but it was not because of lack of hunger. Jeev, well aware that there is not much gas remaining in his tank, is determined to add a trophy to his cabinet before bowing out.

“That is my goal. Before I stop playing on the Asian Tour, I want to win one tournament. I want to win to prove that age is just a number,” he said.

Where is the hunger?

That appetite to dazzle, especially on the biggest stages, is missing among several players, and it is no surprise that Indian men’s golf is going through a tumultuous phase.

The negative trends are worrying to say the least.

Courtesy the ties between the IGPL and Asian Tour, the Bharath Classic will be held in Casablanca, Morocco, from June 4 to 7

It has been nearly two-and-a-half years since an Indian secured an Asian Tour crown – Gaganjeet Bhullar went the distance in the Indonesia Masters in 2023. Only six Indians – Bhullar, Karandeep, Shubham Jaglan, Rashid Khan, Shaurya

Bhattacharya and Ajeetesh Sandhu – currently hold Asian Tour cards. On the European Tour, Shubhankar Sharma has been the lone consistent figure from the nation in recent years.

The Indians’ numbers on the Official World Golf Rankings make for poor reading – the top-placed player from the country, Yuvraj Sandhu, stands at a lowly 450th. Not that Indian golfers have been setting international events alight, but it is to be noted that the players who have sided with LIV Golf-backed tournaments have been affected by the ranking system.

Jeev and Bhullar felt that the members of the current crop were not aiming big. “At the end of the day, what matters the most for a professional athlete is the belief system – what you have and what you want. You have to set high standards for yourself. You have to believe that you can be the best in the world. If you do not aspire to become the best... if you do not have that discipline and routine which are linked to each other, you are just going to be a mediocre player,” Jeev, one of India’s best, provided a recipe for success.

Concurring with his ‘senior’, 11-time Asian Tour winner Bhullar said: “It is true (on Indians being unable to translate their promise to success at the international level) and that is sad. Honestly, I do not know what happened. It is very hard to pinpoint one, two or three reasons. Maybe the level of hunger is not as high as what we had.”

Staying in the comfort zone

The desire is hard to spot as several golfers are settling for what they have and are reluctant to get out of their comfort zones. The handsome prize money on the

There is light at the end of the tunnel for Indian golf



Though the sport is going through its toughest phase, Bhullar and Shiv believe that the next generation will turn things around in a few years; Jeev urges the youngsters to show more hunger if they have to tee off at the top level

Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI) – a total purse of minimum of ₹1 crore for every tournament – is offering comfortability to those who are unwilling to explore new avenues.

“The PGTI and IGPL tournaments are a great benchmark to see where a player is at. It is a good stepping stone to uplift your game, but it is definitely not the destination. They have to work towards bigger goals. This is what I have been telling a lot of players,” Bhullar said.

S.S.P. Chawrasia and Shiv Kapur, both experienced campaigners, sang the same tune.

“The new boys are more comfortable in India. They should step out and try harder because nothing comes easy. With the PGTI getting bigger and the IGPL also being there, they are making good money. They feel that it is good enough. If they keep playing only in India, they will never reach their full potential,” said Chawrasia.

“This is what happened with the Japanese players back in the day. They were content with playing there and making a good living. They did not want to travel overseas. If you compare the prize money (in domestic and international events), the difference is huge, but a bit of complacency sets in,” said Shiv, who delivered a hole-in-one in Singapore.

International exposure

Besides hosting competitions in India, the IGPL, in its 2026 schedule, has stops in Mauritius, South Africa, Congo and Morocco. Courtesy the ties between the

Only six Indians – Bhullar, Karandeep, Shubham Jaglan, Rashid Khan, Shaurya Bhattacharya and Ajeetesh Sandhu – currently hold Asian Tour cards

IGPL and Asian Tour, the Bharath Classic will be held in Casablanca, Morocco, from June 4 to 7.

“We are playing internationally (in Africa) during the IGPL season to ensure the players get better. Playing on home ground and playing on courses that you are familiar with does not necessarily make you a better international golfer. The more you play on international golf courses, the better you will become,” opined Shiv.

What is concerning is that the Indians are not even up to par on courses they have been playing all their lives on – performances have been such that merely making it to the weekend in the DP World India Championship (Delhi Golf Club) and Indian Open (DLF Golf and Country Club in Gurugram) gets treated as an achievement in this part of the world.

Eight-year drought

The last victory by an Indian in a top-level international tournament hosted in the country came in 2018, when Khalin Joshi bagged the Panasonic Open crown.

So, are there issues pertaining to skills? Karandeep replied in the negative.

“I completely agree that we have not been performing the way we should be.



Bhullar, Jeev, Shubhankar and Karandeep. GETTY IMAGES

We have the skills. The infrastructure at home needs to get better; the practice facilities are not as good as the ones we have in other parts of Asia, areas where we have the Asian Tour,” said Karandeep. “The fire to travel outside [India] has gone down but not in my case. When I lost my card in Asia, I could not come to terms with it.

“When we have more players competing, it will get better for us. Our players are working hard. The good times are coming,” he added.

The barren run has lasted years now, but Bhullar and Shiv, like Karandeep, believe that there is light at the end of the tunnel for Indian men’s golf.

Positive outlook

“These things happen. In four to five years, the next generation should be ready to take over. It is just a matter of time before these kids start believing in themselves, go outside India and play the Q-School. When they do that, they will be ready. I have a feeling that one of them is going to go out there and win a big one,” Bhullar said.

On his part, Shiv said: “Every sport goes through such phases. You look at cricket, golf, or any other sport; you will have peaks and troughs. There will be a period where you will have a lot of Indians playing well. It is just about breaking through.”

When they eventually manage to do it is the lingering question.

(The writer was in Singapore at the invitation of The International Series).

THE GIST

▼ The 54-year-old Jeev, who still has the fire in him, wants to win an Asian Tour trophy before bowing out

▼ Bhullar says that the PGTI and IGPL tournaments are stepping stones but not the destination

▼ It has been nearly two-and-a-half years since an Indian secured an Asian Tour crown, but Karandeep feels that good times are coming