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● Israeli strikes kill 14 in Gaza, destroy heavy equipment needed to clear rubble

● B'desh rejects India's allegation over Hindu leader's death

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● J-K terror attack: Govt vows 'harshest consequences' for perpetrators

● Anurag bats for 'one nation, one election', calls it 'win-win situation' for country

Terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir

26 people, mostly tourists, killed in Pahalgam's 'mini Switzerland' ● Toll may rise

PAHALGAM (J&K), April 22: Terrorists opened fire at a famed meadow near Kashmir's Pahalgam town on Tuesday afternoon, killing 26 people, mostly tourists, in what is the deadliest attack in the Valley since the Pulwama strike in 2019.

The 26 dead included two foreigners and two locals, a high ranking official said without getting into details. The toll is still being ascertained, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said while describing the terror attack as "much larger than anything we've seen directed at civilians in recent years".

The attack, which comes as US Vice President J D Vance is visiting India and just as the tourist and trekking season is picking up momentum, took place around 3 pm, officials said.

Baisaran, about six kilometres from the resort town of Pahalgam, is an expansive meadow ringed by dense pine forests and mountains and a favourite with visitors from across the country and the world.

Armed terrorists came into the grassland, dubbed 'mini Switzerland', and started firing at tourists milling around eateries, taking pony rides or just picnicking, officials and eyewitnesses said. At least 20 people were injured in the strike in the volatile Kashmir Valley where tourists have so far mostly been spared.

As news of the terror attack targeting tourists in Kashmir spread, The Resist-



ance Front (TRF), a shadow group of the banned Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terror group, claimed responsibility.

Officials said it was possible the terror group members could have crossed over from Kishtwar in Jammu and reached Baisaran through Kokernag in south Kashmir.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah briefed Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is on a visit to Saudi Arabia, and reached Srinagar in the evening for an urgent security review meeting with all agencies.

Officials said Shah is likely to visit Pa-

halgam on Wednesday.

"I strongly condemn the terror attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir. Condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. I pray that the injured recover at the earliest. All possible assistance is being provided to those affected," the prime minister said on X.

"Those behind this heinous act will be brought to justice... they will not be spared! Their evil agenda will never succeed. Our resolve to fight terrorism is unshakable and it will get even stronger," he added.

Eyewitnesses painted a chilling picture of gunfire breaking the calm of a regular

Tuesday afternoon with scores of people enjoying their day out. Cries for help were heard as lifeless bodies lay motionless in pools of blood.

Some put the number of attackers at five.

"My husband was shot in the head while seven others were also injured in the attack," a woman survivor told PTI over phone.

The woman did not identify herself but pleaded for help in evacuating the injured to hospital.

As gunshots rang out, there was panic and tourists ran for cover but there was no place to hide in the wide, open space, said another woman tourist.

A woman said terrorists first asked the name before shooting down the victims.

The tourists gathered at Baisaran were from several states, including Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat. Among those killed was Karnataka businessman Manjunath Rao, who was from Shivamogga.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah condoled the death and called a meeting of officials. A team of officials from Karnataka left for Kashmir, an official statement said.

With Baisaran accessible only by foot or horses, choppers were deployed to evacuate the injured. The families of those killed and injured were taken to the government-owned Pahalgam Club under tight security. The entire district administration and police (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

India will hunt down all terrorists who killed tourists in J&K: Himanta

GUWAHATI, April 22: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday asserted that all the terrorists, who are responsible for attacking and killing 26 people in Jammu and Kashmir, will be "hunted down" by India.

The entire nation stands firmly with the bereaved families in this hour of grief, he added.

"I have full faith that Bharat will hunt down each and every one of those cowards responsible for the dastardly attack in #Pahalgam today," Sarma said in a post on X.

Terrorists opened fire at a famed meadow near Kashmir's Pahalgam town on Tuesday afternoon, killing 26 people, mostly tourists, in what is the deadliest attack in the Valley since the Pulwama strike in 2019.

The 26 dead included two foreigners and two locals, a high-ranking official said without getting into details.

The toll is still being ascertained, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said. (PTI)

Nagaon's Bhaswat Saikia claims 474th rank in UPSC Exam

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, April 22: Bhaswat Saikia, a young and talented individual from Nagaon, has brought glory to the district as well as the state by securing the 474th rank in the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) exam 2024.

This is not the first time Saikia has made headlines; he had previously secured the 552nd rank in the UPSC exam 2023 and became an IPS officer.

Saikia's academic journey is marked by consistent achievements.

He had secured the 68th rank in the IFS exam 2022.

Despite being an IPS officer, Saikia appeared for the UPSC exam 2024 with the aim of becoming an IAS officer and has improved his rank compared to the previous year.

Bhaswat Saikia's educational journey began at Balya Bhavan in Nagaon, where he completed his primary education.

He then attended the Nagaon Government Boys' Higher Secondary School and secured the 10th position in the HSLC exam in 2012.

Saikia later pursued B.Tech from IIT Guwahati and joined City Group as (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

HT BRIEFS

Child rescue

GUWAHATI: Assam Police rescued a one-year-old girl, who was sold around 11 months ago by her step-grandfather, and arrested two persons for their alleged involvement in the crime, a senior officer said on Tuesday. Deputy Commissioner (East) of Guwahati Police, Mrinal Deka, told reporters that the two accused have been arrested on charges of selling and buying a minor for a sum of ₹ 5,000 and the child has also been rescued. "We received a complaint from the mother, a resident of an area near the Games Village here, yesterday stating that her stepfather had taken away the child on May 30 last year on the pretext of medical treatment in the absence of her husband," he added. Subsequently, the woman came to know that her minor one-month-old daughter was sold by her stepfather to someone for ₹ 5,000, Deka said. "Accordingly, a case was registered with Basistha police station and an investigation was initiated. A police team rescued the child from Sontali area in Kamrup district," he added. The DCP said that police apprehended the girl's step-grandfather and the buyer from the village.

Road mishap

TEZPUR: Two youths died in the spot in a road mishap at 18 Mile area on NH 15 near Balipara under Chariduar PS in Sonitpur District on Tuesday morning while their Swift Dzire car bearing Registration No AS 12 BC 6765 fell into a ditch losing its control. The deceased were later identified as Ranjit Sahani and Mithun Sahani of Tezpur Gerek area. Two others travelling with the deceased were safely rescued.

US Vice President pats Modi as 'special person'

Vance urges India to drop non-tariff barriers; procure more American energy, military hardware

JAIPUR, April 22: US Vice President JD Vance on Tuesday called on India to drop non-tariff barriers, give greater access to its markets and buy more American energy products and military hardware as he outlined a roadmap of deeper ties between the two nations for a prosperous and peaceful 21st century.

In an address at an event here, Vance repeatedly praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi describing him as a "special person" and emphasised on the need for India and the US to work unitedly to deal with global challenges.

"I really believe that the future of the 21st century is going to be determined by the strength of the United States-India partnership," he said.

"I believe that if India and the US worked together successfully, we are going to see a 21st century that is prosperous and peaceful. But I also believe that if we fail to work together successfully, the 21st century could be a very dark time for all of humanity," Vance said.

The US Vice President, accompanied by Indian-origin Second Lady Usha Chilukuri, and their three children -- sons Ewan, Vivek and daughter Mirabel -- landed in Delhi on Monday amid growing global concerns over the US's tariff war.

Vance and Modi held wide-ranging talks following the two leaders welcomed "significant progress" in negotiations for a mutually beneficial bilateral trade agreement.

In his remarks, Vance also urged India to provide greater market access to American products and buy more defence platforms and energy from his country.

"We also want to help India explore its own considerable natural resources, including its offshore natural gas reserves and critical mineral supplies," he said.

"We have the capacity and we have the desire to help. Moreover, we think energy co-production will help beat unfair competitors in other foreign markets."

"But India, we believe, can go a long way to enhance energy ties between our nations. And one suggestion I have is maybe consider dropping some of the non-tariff barriers for (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Gauhati High Court gets bomb threat

GUWAHATI, April 22: The Gauhati High Court received a bomb threat on Tuesday morning, police said.

The high court received an email threatening that there would be a blast in the building, they said.

"We have immediately rushed a team to the high court after getting the threat message. Our experts are checking every corner of the premises, and nothing has been found so far. We believe it is a hoax," a senior police officer told PTI.

He said the details will be known only after the search operation is over.

A senior official of the high court said the email was received from an unknown organisation, named 'Madras Tigers', which threatened to blow up the entire building. (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

CM addresses election rally in Charaideo Himanta fires salvo at Oppn

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, April 22: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma addressed a large election rally at Lakwa Public Field in Charaideo on Tuesday, urging voters to support the BJP in the upcoming Panchayat elections if they seek development.

He contrasted this with the Congress, saying that a vote for them would mean a return to "lungi, suria, suta, kombal," referencing welfare distributions made in the past.

The Chief Minister announced several welfare promises, including a monthly allowance of ₹300 for matriculation students to purchase books, and a grant of ₹2,500 for young men to help cover expenses for job examination applications. He also pledged efforts to reduce

electricity charges. Taking a swipe at the opposition, Sarma stated, "If the Congress continues to heckle us, my government will increase the existing ₹10,000 assistance to ₹25,000 for each beneficiary."

He further said, "If people want to see fights in the Assembly, they should vote for Akhil Gogoi. But if they want jobs without corruption, vote for the BJP."

Sarma also highlighted generous assistance from the Centre and outlined future infrastructure plans, including elevated corridors over Kaziranga National Park, an underground tunnel beneath the Brahmaputra River, and more development initiatives. The rally also featured Union Minister of State for External Affairs, (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

10 arrested after youth dies in Jorhat assault

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, April 22: A 33-year-old man, Bedanga Bhushan Baruah of Chandan Nagar, Jorhat, succumbed to his injuries on Tuesday after being brutally assaulted by a group of youths late Sunday night.

The incident occurred as he was returning home from a Bihu function in the locality.

According to police sources, ten individuals have been arrested in connection with the assault based on CCTV footage and eyewitness accounts.

Interrogation of the accused is currently underway.

Baruah was initially admitted to Jorhat Medical College and Hospital late Sunday night and was later shifted to a private hospital on

Monday morning in a state of coma.

He was admitted to the ICU with severe head injuries and placed on a ventilator.

Doctors conducted a critical surgery lasting over three hours in the afternoon, but despite efforts, he succumbed to his injuries early Tuesday morning.

Following a First Information Report (FIR) lodged by Baruah's family, police launched an investigation that led to the swift arrests.

The arrested persons have been identified as Pranab Gowla, Rohit Rajput, Ashwajit Barua, Babu Ali, Debajit Barua, Bikash Chetry, Abdul Noor, Mon Barua, Ramjan Khan and Abdul Rahim. Booked under (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Spreading 'misinformation' a sign of disrespect towards the law: Poll panel EC pins Rahul Gandhi's charges

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 22: The Election Commission on Tuesday refuted Rahul Gandhi's allegations of abnormal voter turnout in the Maharashtra polls, asserting that any "misinformation" being spread was a sign of disrespect towards the law and hurt the efforts of political workers and polling personnel.

They also said such claims brought disrepute to the thousands of representatives appointed by political parties and demotivated lakhs of election staff working untiringly and transparently during elections.

After any unfavourable verdict

by voters, trying to defame the Election Commission (EC) by saying that it had been compromised is completely absurd, the poll body sources said.

On Monday, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Gandhi alleged in Boston, US, that, in simple terms, more people voted in the Maharashtra assembly election than there were adults in the state.

Gandhi had alleged that the Election Commission was "compromised" and said that he noted an "unusual" increase in the voter turnout in the last two hours of voting during the Maharashtra Assembly polls.

"Any misinformation being spread, by anyone, is not only a sign of disrespect towards Law, but also brings disrepute to the thousands of representatives appointed by their own political party and demotivates lakhs of election staff who work untiringly and transparently during elections," the EC said in a statement.

"...After any unfavourable verdict by the voters, trying to defame the Election Commission by saying that it is compromised, is completely absurd," the statement further read.

Reading out facts which showed efficiency of the robust system placed by (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Heavy rains lead to waterlogging in Guwahati

GUWAHATI, April 22: Heavy rains in the early hours of Tuesday flooded parts of Guwahati, leading to massive traffic snarls on most arterial roads.

The rains that lasted for two-three hours led to knee-deep water on all major roads of the city.

Waterlogging was reported from Zoo Road, RG Baruah Road, GS Road, Nabin Nagar, Anil Nagar, Guwahati Club, Lachit Nagar, Chandmari, Panjabari, Jorabat, Tarun Nagar, and Survey, among others. Power cuts were also reported from some areas.

"Thunderstorms and lightning accompanied by gusty winds reaching up to 50-60 kmph are very likely to occur at isolated places over Assam," the IMD's Regional (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Heroin worth ₹4 crore seized in KA

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, April 22: In a significant seizure, Dillai police recovered over half a kilogram of heroin from a vehicle during a routine check at the Dillai Police Check Post on National Highway 36 in Karbi Anglong district on Monday night.

The vehicle, bearing registration number HR 26 AW 2022, was stopped around 10 p.m. while en route from Dimapur to Guwahati. Upon inspection, police discovered 45 plastic containers filled with heroin, weighing a total of 528.72 grams. The seized narcotics are estimated to be worth approximately ₹4 crore in the illicit market.

One individual, identified as Azad Khan, a resident of Manipur, was arrested in connection with the case. Police sources noted that Karbi Anglong remains a key transit route for drug and arms trafficking in the region. Narcotics and illegal firearms (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Father credits academic discipline, determination to daughter's achievement

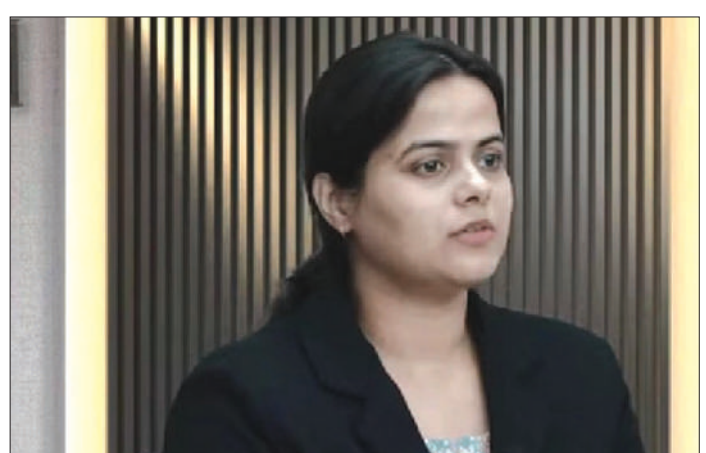
Shakti Dubey tops UPSC 2024 without coaching

PRAYAGRAJ (UP), April 22: Shakti Dubey, who has secured the top rank in the Civil Services Examination 2024 conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), achieved the feat without enrolling herself in any coaching institute, her father revealed on Tuesday.

Dubey, a resident of the Mamabhanja Talab area in the Naini area of Prayagraj's Yamuna Nagar locality, studied locally up to Class 12.

"Shakti studied till Class 12 at the SMC Ghosipur, just nearby, and later topped the B.Sc exam from the University of Allahabad," her father, Devendra Dubey, a sub-inspector in the Uttar Pradesh Police, told reporters here.

"After graduation, she pursued M.Sc from the Banaras Hindu University (BHU), where she also



topped. Though we initially sent her to Delhi for coaching, the COVID-19 pandemic forced her to return home and she continued her preparations on her own," he said. Shakti's mother, Prema Devi,

said the news of her daughter topping the exam was overwhelming. "I could not believe it at first. This has been possible only with the god's grace," she said, adding that Shakti is currently in Delhi and

will be returning home soon.

According to the UPSC, Shakti appeared in the examination with political science and international relations as her optional subjects. She holds a B.Sc degree in biochemistry from the University of Allahabad.

Harshita Goyal and Dongre Archit Parag secured the second and third ranks respectively in this year's examination, the commission announced on Tuesday.

The Civil Services Examination is held annually in three stages -- preliminary, mains and interview -- to recruit officers for the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS), Indian Police Service (IPS) and other central services. The preliminary examination for 2024 was held on June 16 last year, with 9,92,599 candidates (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Vance's visit takes India-US dialogue a step further: Scindia

NEW DELHI, April 22: US Vice President JD Vance's visit to India takes dialogue between the two countries a step further, Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Tuesday as New Delhi looks to stitch an early deal with Washington that spares it from President Donald Trump's additional tariff hikes.

Vance began a four-day tour of India on Monday as the two nations engage in talks to nail a bilateral trade agreement that would avoid reciprocal tariffs. A 26 per cent 'reciprocal' tariff on Indian exports to the US is currently on a 90-day pause, set to expire on July 8. However, like other countries, India is presently subject to a 10 per cent tariff under the existing policy.

In an interview with PTI, Scindia said India and the US represent "tremendous markets", adding that closer cooperation between the two nations is not only mutually beneficial but also in the broader interest of the world.

"Vice President of the United States coming to India is a very welcome and a very important step. I think it takes that level of dialogue and communication one step further," said Scindia, who is the Minister for Communications as well as Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Trump share a warm



personal rapport, but the US president has repeatedly criticised India's high tariffs, labelling it a "tariff king" and a "big abuser" of trade ties.

The US is India's largest trading partner and the biggest buyer of its exports. New Delhi has already cut tariffs on a number of goods in the past few months and may consider doing so on more products to help cut a bilateral trade deal.

India and the US are making progress in negotiating a bilateral trade deal, the countries had said after a meeting between Modi and Vance in Delhi on Monday.

Citing Modi's visit to the US and his meeting with President

Trump at the White House two months ago, as well as his meeting

with Vance earlier, Scindia underlined the bond and synergies between the two nations.

"Our prime minister recently visited the United States, met with Vice President J D Vance...and I think this will go further in terms of taking forward our dialogues, not only in terms of our trade talks and other issues but also in terms of investment, also in terms of co-operation on many other fronts, be it defence, information technology, biotech, innovation, AI, and across the board," the minister said.

India and the US are the world's largest and the oldest democracies.

"They both present tremendous markets. We also have a huge added, very important form of

'ambassadorships' and that is our 'Pravasi Bhartiya' who are based in the US and they have created a tremendous amount of goodwill for Bharat in the United States and I think both these countries coming closer together, working closer together, is at the end of the day, in the interest of the world...in the political space, in the business space, even in the social sector space and even in the space with Sunita Williams," he said. Vance, accompanied by Indian-origin Second Lady Usha Chilukuri, and their three children -- sons Ewan, Vivek and daughter Mirabel, landed in Delhi on Monday on a largely personal four-day visit to India that comes amid growing global tensions over the US tariff.

India and the US said on Monday that they made "significant progress" in negotiations for a mutually beneficial bilateral trade pact as PM Modi and US Vice President Vance held wide-ranging talks focusing on boosting cooperation in areas of defence, energy and strategic technologies.

The White House said Vance and Modi welcomed "significant progress" in the negotiations for the trade pact and formally announced the "finalisation of the terms of reference" for the negotiations, laying down a roadmap for further discussions about economic priorities. (PTI)

Airtel announces new features in its continued fight against SPAM

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 22: Following the launch of its AI powered spam detection tool that flagged over 27.5 billion calls as SPAM to its customers, Airtel announced the introduction of two significant enhancements aimed at staying ahead of spammers on Monday.

According to an official release, customers will now receive SPAM alerts for calls and SMS messages in their preferred Indian languages. This new feature will be available in ten vernacular languages, with plans to add more in the future.

Airtel's AI-powered tool will now screen and alert customers to all SPAM calls and SMSes originating from international networks.

Once Airtel intensified its efforts to combat domestic spam calls, scammers and spammers resorted to exploiting foreign networks to funnel fraudulent calls into India. This alarming trend resulted in a 12% increase in overseas spam calls in the last six months. Airtel expects to nullify this growing challenge with its new feature.

Commenting on the initiative, Siddharth Sharma, Director Marketing and CEO Connected Homes, Bharti Airtel, said, "With the growing volume of SPAM traffic shifting to foreign networks, we have decided to expand our AI-powered tool to scan all SMS messages and phone calls originating from international numbers. Our dedicated team of engineers and data scientists will continue to refine and enhance our offerings, ensuring we stay ahead of any and all emerging threats."

Sensex, Nifty rise for 6th day on foreign fund inflows, buying in banking shares

MUMBAI, April 22: Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty advanced on Tuesday, marking their sixth straight day of rise helped by gains in banking and FMCG shares and foreign fund inflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 187.09 points or 0.24 per cent to settle at 79,595.59. During the day, it jumped 415.8 points or 0.52 per cent to 79,824.30.

The NSE Nifty rose by 41.70 points or 0.17 per cent to 24,167.25. Barring IT and energy sectors, most indices ended in the green, with realty, FMCG, and banking emerging as the top gainers.

From the Sensex pack, ITC, Hindustan Unilever, Mahindra & Mahindra, HDFC Bank, Eternal, Kotak Mahindra Bank, State Bank of India and ICICI Bank were the major gainers. On the other hand, IndusInd Bank fell the most by 4.88 per cent after reports claimed that the bank has hired EY for forensic audit into ₹ 600 crore microfinance discrepancy.

The bank after the market hours informed exchanges that it has not engaged EY for a forensic audit as reported in the news item but its Internal Audit Department (IAD) is conducting a review of the MFI business to examine certain concerns.

Power Grid, Bharti Airtel, Infosys, and Bajaj Finserv were among the laggards.

"Despite negative global cues related to Trump-Fed tensions, the national market has maintained its optimism. The RBI's relaxed liquidity coverage ratio guidelines, which are anticipated to enhance credit growth, boosted the finance sector. Foreign inflows

have remained consistent for the fourth consecutive day, driven by a weakening dollar and competitive valuations.

"Additionally, domestic macroeconomic conditions are improving, with declining inflation and rising expectations of further rate cuts by the RBI, which are likely to lower costs and stimulate demand. These factors are expected to support corporate earnings in FY26," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited. The BSE smallcap gauge jumped 0.82 per cent and midcap index went up by 0.81 per cent. Among BSE sectoral indices, realty jumped 2.40 per cent, FMCG (1.87 per cent), consumer durables (1.43 per cent), healthcare (0.75 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.72 per cent) and bankex (0.61 per cent).

BSE tech, BSE Focused IT, power, utilities, IT and telecommunication were the laggards.

As many as 2,477 stocks advanced while 1,504 declined and 149 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Since April 9, the BSE benchmark has jumped 5,748.44 points or 7.78 per cent, and the Nifty zoomed 1,768.1 points or 7.89 per cent.

"A pause after a strong uptrend is normal. While strong domestic fundamentals continue to provide support, underperformance in the US markets is capping the upside momentum," Ajit Mishra – SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹ 1,970.17 crore on Monday, according to exchange data. (PTI)

OPPO launches K13 5G

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 22: OPPO India has launched the OPPO K13 5G, engineered to deliver an "Overpowered" performance experience with power efficiency and a premium user experience.

According to an official statement, the device, powered by the Snapdragon 6 Gen 4 Mobile Platform, features a 7000mAh graphite battery with 80W Super-

VooC fast charger, segment-leading VC cooling, a 120Hz FHD+ AMOLED display, and intelligent network optimisation—offering smooth multitasking, immersive gaming, long-lasting battery life, and reliable connectivity.

Priced at ₹ 17,999 for the 8GB+128GB variant and ₹ 19,999 for the 8GB+256GB variant, the OPPO K13 5G will be available

for purchase starting April 25 on the OPPO e-store and Flipkart from 12 PM onwards, in two colour options – Icy Purple and Prism Black.

Consumers purchasing the smartphone can avail an ₹ 1000 instant discount only on the sale day with select bank offers or with an exchange bonus of ₹ 1000, bringing the effective price at ₹ 16,999 and ₹ 18,999, respectively.

Contd. from Page 1...

Terror attack in Jammu

force were mobilised and ambulances pressed into service. Some of the injured were brought down from the meadow by local people on their ponies. Army, CRPF and local police rushed to Baisaran, much sought after by filmmakers in the 1980s, after initial news came in of gunshots being heard, officials said. A massive anti-terrorist operation has been launched to hunt down the assailants and security forces have fanned out in all directions, they said. The Jammu and Kashmir administration set up 24x7 emergency control rooms in Anantnag and Srinagar. "The death toll is still being ascertained so I don't want to get into those details. They will be officially conveyed as the situation becomes clearer. Needless to say this attack is much larger than anything we've seen directed at civilians in recent years," Abdullah said in a post on X. "I'm shocked beyond belief. This attack on our visitors is an abomination. The perpetrators of this attack are animals, inhuman and worthy of contempt. No words of condemnation are enough. I send my sympathies to the families of the deceased," he said.

The office of Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha said anti-terror operations had been launched to neutralise terrorists. "Entire nation is angry & blood of our forces is boiling. I want to assure the nation that perpetrators of Pahalgam attack will have to pay a very heavy price for their heinous act. My heartfelt condolences to bereaved families," it said on X.

Altaf Ahmad Wani, National Conference MLA from Pahalgam, described the attack as "cowardly" and said targeting innocent persons is against the teachings of Islam. "The attack was very painful and unfortunate and took place at an unexpected location which is about five kilometres from Pahalgam (bus stand). It is used for trekking and the people go there on horses," he told reporters. Pahalgam town, which is teeming with tourists this morning, went into complete silence. Tourists began leaving in droves. The incident comes when Kashmir is witnessing a surge in tourist arrivals after reeling under militancy for years.

On February 14, 2019, 40 CRPF personnel were killed in a suicide attack in south Kashmir's Pulwama area. Since then, there have been other terror attacks but none as serious. More than 30 people were killed in an attack on Amarnath base camp in Pahalgam in 2000.

A year later, 13 people died in a strike on Amarnath pilgrims at Sheshnag while 11 persons were killed in another attack in 2002 in the Pahalgam area. A tourist couple from Rajasthan was injured in a firing incident by terrorists at Yammur in Pahalgam in May last year. In March 2000 when then US president Bill Clinton was visiting India, terrorists killed 35 Sikhs in Chhattisinghpura in south Kasimr in March 2000. (PTI)

Nagaon's Bhaswat Saikia claims

a software developer. Born to Brendra Saikia and Dibyajyoti Saikia, Bhaswat hails from Diphalu, the outskirts of Nagaon town. His success has brought immense joy to his family, friends, and the entire community. On his success, Bhaswat Saikia said that systematic hard work and dedication are the keys to achieving success. His achievement has inspired many young aspirants in the state, and his name is being touted as a role model for civil service aspirants. With this achievement, Bhaswat Saikia has once again brought glory to Nagaon and the state, inspiring others to work towards their goals with dedication and perseverance.

Himanta fires salvo at Oppn

Pabitra Margherita, who praised the state government's efforts under Sarma's leadership, citing cultural projects such as the UNESCO-recognized Charaideo Moidams, the Lachit Borpuhan statue in Jorhat, and the Rang Ghar project. The event was attended by Minister Jogen Mohan, former Union Minister Rameswar Teli, MLA Dharmeswar Konwar, and several other prominent leaders.

Gauhati High Court gets bomb threat

"Police have come and they are carrying out a search operation. They have brought different equipment to sanitise the building," he said. The official said the threat has not hampered the functioning of the court, and judges are hearing cases as scheduled. (PTI)

US vice president

American access to the Indian market," he added. Vance said he and President Donald Trump are looking forward to stronger ties with India. "Americans want further access to Indian markets. This is a great place to do business and we want to give our people more access to this country and Indians," he said. "We believe, will thrive from greater commerce in the United States. This is very much a win-win partnership, certainly will be far into the future," he said. Vance cautioned that if India and the US "fail to keep pace", then there will be consequences for the entire world and it will be "quite dire".

"And this again is where India and the United States have so much to offer one another."

"There's a lot to be gained by working together. And this is why President Trump and I both welcomed India's leadership in a number of diplomatic organisations. "Of course in the Quad, we believe a stronger India means greater economic prosperity but also greater stability across the Indo-Pacific, which is of course a shared goal for all of us in this room and it's a shared goal for both of our countries," he said. The visiting leader also welcomed the Modi government's budget announcement to amend India's civil nuclear liability laws. The liability laws prevented US producers from exporting small modular reactors and building larger US-designed reactors in India.

"There's much that we can create, much that we can do together. We believe that American energy can help realise India's nuclear power production goals," he said. "And this is very important as well as its AI ambitions, because it's the United States knows well and I know that India knows well, there is no AI future without energy security and energy dominance," he said. (PTI)

10 arrested after youth

Sections 126 (2), 118 (2), 109 (1), 3 (5) and 103 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) in the Jorhat Police Station case number 202/2025. Speaking to media on Tuesday, Baruah's father said his son had reportedly asked a group of youths near the Bihu venue not to create a disturbance.

Shortly after, he was attacked and later found unconscious by friends, who rushed him to the hospital. Grieving the loss, the father urged police to take stringent action against the attackers and to prevent such violent incidents in the future. Residents of the locality also expressed outrage and demanded justice. It is worth noting that a similar incident occurred on March 15 during Holi celebrations in the JPR locality, where another youth suffered serious head injuries following an assault. Four individuals were arrested in connection with that case.

Heavy rains lead to waterlogging

Meteorological Centre (RMC) in Guwahati said in a weather bulletin. The Gauhati High Court in August last year said that the time had come to deal with the problem of flooding in the city and the government was required to take steps to resolve this problem permanently. (PTI)

Heroin worth ₹4

originating from the Golden Triangle often enter India through Moreh, a border town in Manipur adjacent to Myanmar, and are transported via Karbi Anglong to Guwahati and onward to other parts of the country. Further investigation is underway.

FM Sitharaman invites global IT

allocated ₹ 500 crore. "FM @nsitharaman underlined the steps that the Government of India has taken over years to boost digital infrastructure, including budgeting ₹ 10,300 crore for IndiaAI Mission, creating AI language technologies through BharatGen and Sarvam-1, and the establishment of the Srijan Centre for Generative AI at IIT Jodhpur @saide. iitj among others," another post said.

The Finance Minister explained to him about the potential opportunity through the proposed ₹ 1 lakh crore corpus, private sector-driven research, development, and innovation scheme, and informed about India ranking first globally in AI skill penetration where India is ahead of many developed countries.

In another meeting with Anjney Midha, General Partner with a16z and Raghu Raghuram advisor VMware, Sitharaman suggested that a16z and VMware may like to explore collaboration across sectors within the domain of AI including in education, healthcare, and AI Centres of Excellence. "Mr. @RaghuRaghuram, former CEO @VMware said that #AI is a strategic infrastructure, and the work India is doing in the field of #AI is visible.

"Mr. AnjneyMidha said that @a16z is working in 16 areas of #infrastructure dedicated sectoral funds across many countries to provide solutions to real-world problems," another post said. (PTI)

Shakti Dubey tops UPSC 2024

applying and 5,83,213 appearing. A total of 14,627 candidates qualified for the written (main) examination in September 2024. Of them, 2,845 made it to the personality test conducted between January 7 and April 17 this year. In all, 1,009 candidates -- 725 men and 284 women -- have been recommended for appointment to various services by the UPSC. (PTI)

EC pins Rahul Gandhi's

the commission, the ECI stated that nearly 116 Lakh voters could have voted in last two hours. Therefore, casting of 65 lakhs votes by electors in two hours was much below the average hourly voting trends

"During the Assembly Elections in Maharashtra 6,40,87,588 electors, who reached the polling station from 7 am to 6 pm, voted. About 58 lakh votes were polled per hour on an average. Going by these average trends, nearly 116 Lakh voters could have voted in last two hours. Therefore, casting of 65 lakhs votes by electors in two hours is much below the average hourly voting trends," the statement read.

The ECI stated that in every polling booth, the voting progressed in front of the polling agents formally appointed by candidates/political parties. Refuting allegations, the ECI further stated that INC's nominated candidates or their authorized agents had not raised any substantiated allegations with regards to any kind of abnormal voting at the time of scrutiny before the Returning Officer (RO) and the Election Observers on the next day.

"Electoral Rolls in India including Maharashtra are prepared as per the Representation of People Act, 1950 and the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960. As per law, either just before the elections and/or once every year, Special Summary Revision of the Electoral Rolls is conducted and a final copy of the Electoral Rolls is handed over to all the National/State political parties, including Indian National Congress (INC)," the statement read.

After the finalisation of these Electoral Rolls during Maharashtra elections, as against 9,77,90,752 electors, only a total of 89 appeals were filed before the 1st appellate authority (DM) and only 1 appeal was filed before the 2nd appellate authority (CEO). Therefore, it is amply clear that there was no grievance of INC or any other political parties before the conduct of Maharashtra Assembly Elections in 2024, the ECI stated.

Pointing out further about the process of revision of electoral rolls the ECI stated that for 1,00,427 Polling Booths, along with 97,325 Booth Level Officers appointed by the EROs, 1,03,727 Booth Level Agents were also appointed by all Political Parties, including 27,099 by INC.

"The Election Commission had brought out all these facts in its reply to INC on December 24, 2024 itself which is available on ECI's website. It appears that all these facts are completely being ignored while raising such issues again and again," the statement read. (With inputs from PTI)

AFFIDAVIT

I, Sarbong Teron S/O Benjamin Teron, a resident of Lobang, P.O. & P.S. Umrangso, district Dima Hasao, Assam, do hereby solemnly declare that in my Aadhaar Card vide no.2643 6681 8076 wherein my name has inadvertently been recorded as Samson Rongpi instead of my actual and correct name Sarbong Teron, I, the deponent do hereby verify that the contents made above are true to the best of my knowledge, belief and information and I put my hand on this 11th day of April, 2025 at Hojai S/Nagar Court.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Harilal Mirdha S/O Jaych Mirdha, a resident of Lobang, P.O. & P.S. Umrangso, district Dima Hasao, Assam, do hereby solemnly declare that in my Aadhaar Card vide no.9410 6640 6386 wherein my name has inadvertently been recorded as Welson Hanse instead of my actual and correct name Harilal Mirdha, I, the deponent do hereby verify that the contents made above are true to the best of my knowledge, belief and information and I put my hand on this 11th day of April, 2025 at Hojai S/Nagar Court.

GURUGRAM, April 22: Union Minister Pralhad Joshi on Tuesday said 40 GW of renewable energy (RE) can soon come online as talks are on with states for signing power purchase agreements (PPAs).

"We are targeting 50 GW of RE capacity annually to meet the 500 GW target by 2030, which of course includes 292 GW of solar energy", Joshi told reporters on the sidelines of inauguration of solar PV module testing facility at National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE) here.

India added 29.52 GW RE capacity in 2024-25.

The New & Renewable Energy Minister said peak power demand will double in 2032 from the present levels.

The peak power demand touched an all-time high of 250 GW in May 2024. The power ministry has estimated 270 GW peak power demand during this summer.

Joshi said India needs to create innovative solutions to maximize solar energy generation from available land resources.

The minister also called for use of innovative solutions for using building materials like glass to generate solar energy from limited

space available like in high-rise buildings. He said talks are on with states to sign PPAs for 40 GW RE projects.

Joshi also said that 12 lakh households have installed rooftop solar under Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana.

Earlier, speaking on the occasion, the minister said that India has already achieve 106GW of solar and 51GW of wind energy generation capacity.

He stressed on the need for having solar electric vehicle charging stations in the country saying that presently EVs are being charged by conventional energy. Joshi opined that EVs should be charged by green energy.

He noted that with this lab, NISE is now empowered to offer comprehensive testing, calibration, and certification services, especially for photovoltaic modules and technologies where no established standards currently exist.

That makes this a pioneering facility in India, he said.

As Indian companies scale up production of large modules, this facility will ensure that Indian products meet the highest standards, he noted.

He pointed out that this lab will give a major boost to India's PLI

₹5 lakh will be allocated annually to each community for various developmental activities

BTC govt nod to Community Welfare Department

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, April 22: The Government of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) has announced the creation of a Community Welfare Department dedicated to the upliftment of the 26 recognized communities within the council area on Tuesday.

This key resolution was adopted during an Executive Council meeting of the BTC, being held at the BTC Secretariat on Tuesday in Kokrajhar.

The EC meeting was chaired by Pramod Boro, the chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region, and attended by executive members (EMs) of the BTR.

The meeting discussed at length on various developmental and welfare initiatives being initiated by the government of BTR towards upliftment and development of the region.

This meeting reviewed the implementation of various flagship programmes and developmental initiatives, while emphasising the need to enhance service delivery to the people.

Under the newly created community welfare department, the BTC government will allocate ₹ 5



lakh annually to each community for various developmental activities and welfare programs across the region.

The proposal will be formally introduced and passed during the upcoming BTC Budget Session of the BTC Legislative Assembly.

In addition, the BTC government has also resolved to address and settle various long-standing land issues affecting multiple communities across the BTR. This decision aims to bring clarity, justice, and stability in matters related to

land ownership and usage Region. This proposal will also be presented and passed in the upcoming Council Assembly session.

Addressing the reporters at a press conference held at the BTC Secretariat, BTR executive member, Ranjit Basumatary stated that the BTC government has decided to create new department which is named as Community Welfare Department to render services towards the communities in the region. He said that the BTC government has been committed to

work for all round development and welfare of the communities who are residing in the Bodoland region. He said that several flagship programmes initiated by the BTC government have been implemented across the region, and received a good response from the citizens since its inception. He mentioned that the Mission Bwiswathi has so far received a good response, and accordingly several land related issues are resolved through the mission in the Bodoland region.

Pramod Boro, the chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region told that the EC meeting of the BTC discussed at length and reviewed progress of various flagship initiatives and discussed measures to enhance project implementation and improve delivery of citizen-centric services in BTR.

"I'm delighted to chair a meeting of the Executive Council of BTC in Kokrajhar this morning. Reviewed progress of various flagship initiatives and discussed measures to enhance project implementation and improve delivery of citizen-centric services in BTR", CEM Boro said.

Chilling murder in Karbi Anglong; parents slain, children fight for life

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, April 22: In a horrifying incident that has sent shockwaves across the region, a couple was brutally murdered and their three children viciously attacked at Jilangso Munda Basti, bordering the Nambornadi Tea Estate under Barpathar region of Karbi Anglong district.

The victims, identified as Julo Munda and his wife Panchami, were reportedly kidnapped by a group of miscreants and later found dead in a water-filled abandoned coal mining pit. In a chilling display of brutality, the bodies were discovered with their hands and legs tied, stuffed inside gunny bags, and stones fastened around their necks to weigh them down.

The couple's three children, aged between 9 and 13 years, were also targeted during the attack. One of the children has sustained grievous injuries and is currently undergoing critical treatment at a medical facility.

Upon learning about the barbaric incident, the Deputy Speaker, Assam Legislative Assembly, Numal Momin (MLA of Bokajan Constituency) and De-



opani MAC Shorbon Kumar Telenga strongly condemned the heinous crime and expressed solidarity with the victims' family.

Following swift search operations, the bodies of the slain couple were recovered yesterday. Preliminary investigations hint at personal reasons as a possible motive behind the crime, though officials caution that the exact

cause remains under investigation. As of now, two suspects have been apprehended, and an intensive manhunt is ongoing to nab others involved.

Authorities have urged the public to remain calm and assured that justice will be served. Further details will be disclosed once the police complete a thorough investigation.

Upar Chachal Bihu Sanmilan's Silver Jubilee Rongali Bihu concludes



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 22: Upar Chachal Bihu Sanmilan, a prominent cultural organisation in Guwahati, organized its Silver Jubilee Rongali Bihu festivals from April 15 to April 20, 2025.

As part of the celebration, on April 15, Hareswar Deka, the president of Upar Chachal Bihu Sanmilan was ceremonially welcomed to the site of celebration with a procession.

Over 25 distinguished individuals and guests hoisted Bihu flags, symbolizing the spirit of Bihu and also paid tribute to senior citizens and distributed Bihu gifts and clothing among 15 economically weaker individuals.

On occasion of four-day long

celebration of its silver jubilee, a slew of competitions, such as Bihu Huchori, Bor Bihuwati, and Solo and Group Folk Dance, art, quiz, etc were held.

Besides, the festival featured cultural programmes, including music and dance performances by local artists.

The winners of the various competitions were awarded prizes.

In the Bihu Huchori competition, Charadeo Samannay Bihu Huchori team won the first prize, while Rongghar Bihu Huchori team secured the second position while in Bor Bihuwati competition, Bonyani Gogoi won the first prize, while Barsha Buragohain secured the second position. Similarly, in group (A) Solo folk dance,

Riyansi Baruah, Dikshita Baishya and Anushree Das bagged 1st, 2nd and 3rd position respectively while in group dance competition, Debashree Dance Group won the first prize.

The festival featured a slew of cultural evenings, which were inaugurated by prominent personalities, including Mrigen Sarania, Mayor of Guwahati Municipal Corporation, Thaneswar Malakar, noted literary figure, Former minister and incumbent BJP MLA Atul Bora, Pranab Jyoti Lahkar, vice chairman of Assam State Transport Corporation, senior scribe Sonit Kr Bhuyan and Dr Hitesh Baruah, etc.

It's pertinent to mention that on occasion of celebration of its silver jubilee, a souvenir titled 'Bohagi' was also ceremonially released by former president of Asom Sahitya Sabha, Dr Surya Hazarika.

The four-day festival concluded with a grand finale on April 20, 2025. The event was successful in showcasing the rich cultural heritage of Assam and promoting the spirit of Bihu. Dhananjay Talukdar, Cultural Secretary of Upar Chachal Bihu Sanmilan, expressed gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of the festival.

Road accident claims two women near Doboka reserve forest

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, April 22: A devastating road accident occurred near Doboka reserve forest along NH-129 on Monday morning, claiming the lives of two women and leaving drivers critically injured. The collision involved an Ultra Bus (AS 09 BC 5503) traveling from Diphu and a Maruti Alto car (AS 01 GB 5035) headed toward Diphu, under the jurisdiction of Doboka Police Station.

The deceased have been identified as Rojoni Enghipi and Nojomi Timungpi, both residents of Satgaon in West Karbi Anglong district. Authorities confirmed that the drivers of both vehicles sustained severe injuries and were rushed to a nearby hospital for treatment.

Local sources indicate that the accident took place in a forested stretch of the highway, prompting concerns over road safety in the area. Police are investigating the cause of the collision, with preliminary reports suggesting possible speeding or loss of control. Officials have urged drivers to exercise caution on NH-129, especially near accident-prone zones.

Autonomous status to Rangapara College

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, April 22: The Sonitpur Rangapara College, a pioneer higher educational institute of the district has secured the Autonomous status first ever in the district of Sonitpur on Tuesday. Principal of Rangapara College Dr Ranjan Kalita, informing the good news said, 'Rangapara College has been conferred autonomous status by the University Grants Commission (UGC) for a period of five years, starting from the academic year 2025-2026 to 2029-2030. The decision was made during the UGC Commission meeting held on April 3, 2025'.

Affiliated with Gauhati University, Rangapara College has been recognized for its commitment to academic excellence and its role in providing higher education opportunities to economically and socially disadvantaged students in rural Assam. Established in 1979, the college has been proactive in enhancing its academic standards, including achieving a NAAC B++ grade in 2023 and obtaining ISO 9001:2015 certification.

raged crowd allegedly assaulted the duo and set their scooter on fire. One of them died on the spot due to severe injury," said a police official.

Police have picked up six persons in connection with the incident and after questioning them two persons involved in the mob lynching incident were arrested. The deceased person has been identified as Shankar Gogoi of Borbaruah, while the injured Jyotirmoy Hazarika of Boiraimoth has been undergoing treatment at AMCH.

"We have arrested two persons in connection with the incident and forwarded them to court. After the incident, six persons were picked up and after interrogation, we have arrested two persons. Our investigation is on and more arrest are likely to happen in future," said Dibrugarh superintendent of police Rakesh Reddy.

Two arrested in Dibrugarh in connection to mob lynching incident

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, April 22: Dibrugarh police arrested two persons on Tuesday in connection with the mob lynching of a youth at Hatigarh Bokpara Division of Bokul tea estate in Dibrugarh suspecting him of goat theft. The accused has been identified as Lakhindra Bhakta and Sanjib Munda.

On Monday, an enraged mob thrashed two youths suspecting them of goat thieves, and among them one youth died on the spot. The other was admitted at hospital in critical condition.

The incident took place at around 10.30 am at Hatigarh Bokpara Division of Bokul Tea Estate in Dibrugarh on Monday.

"The two suspected goat thieves arrived on a scooter and were caught red-handed by local residents. The en-

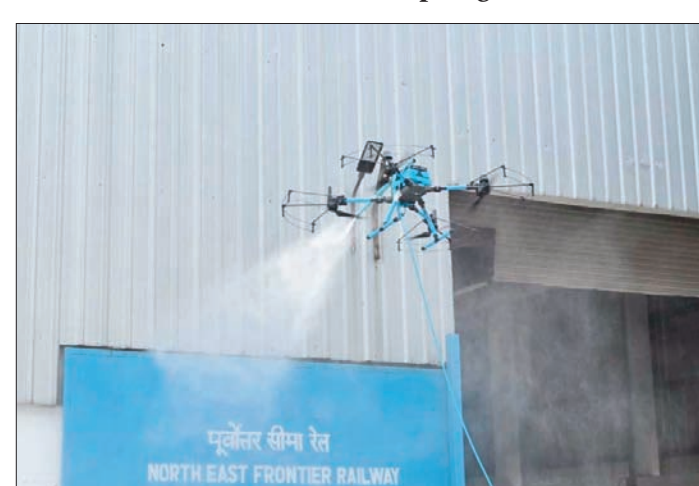
First ever experimental drone-based cleaning at Kamakhya Railway Station

Initiative reflects NFR's continued commitment to adopting innovative, technology driven solutions

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 22: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) successfully conducted its first ever experimental drone-based cleaning operation at Kamakhya Railway Station. The demonstration specifically targeted the cleaning of high rise and difficult to reach structures within the station premises, as well as roof and outer areas of train coaches, showcasing the potential of drone technology in enhancing cleanliness and hygiene.

The areas covered during the experimental cleaning included the Kamakhya Coaching Depot Sick Lane, Underfloor Wheel Lathe Shed, and the Exterior Dome Portion of Kamakhya Station and several train coaches. The operations effectively showcased the capability of drone technology to effi-



ciently access and maintain elevated structures with precision and ease.

This initiative reflects NFR's

continued commitment to adopting innovative, technology driven solutions for enhanced cleaning operations, aiming to improve

efficiency, precision and hygiene across railway premises. Drone-based cleaning not only improves accessibility and precision but also reduces the dependency on manual labour in hazardous or elevated areas.

The success of this pilot demonstration opens the door to wider implementation of drone-based cleaning across additional major stations and trains under the NFR network. It aligns with Indian Railways' vision of embracing cutting-edge, smart maintenance practices that adhere to international standards. Northeast Frontier Railway continues to lead the way with sustainable, tech-driven innovations, fostering a cleaner, safer and more efficient railway environment for both passengers and railway personnel.

NTPC observes World Earth Day in Kokrajhar

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, April 22: Along with rest of the state, NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati celebrated the World Earth Day with a special plantation drive organised by its Environment Management Group (EMG) Department, reaffirming its commitment to environmental protection and sustainable practices.



The event was inaugurated by Arnab Maitra, Head of Project, NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati, who planted a sapling to kick off the initiative. He was joined by Debabrata Kar, General Manager (O&M), along with senior officials and employees from various departments.

Over 50 saplings, including fruit-bearing and native species, were planted within the NTPC township and plant premises as part of the drive. The initiative aimed to raise awareness about the importance of green cover and promote a healthier, eco-friendly environment.

The day event was held to create awareness on the reforestation and green environment amongst the citizens in the region.

Pramod Boro, the chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) has extended his warm greetings to the peoples of the world on the World Earth Day.

"There's no planet B. On the World Earth Day, let's move beyond pledges to real action. Every small step—planting a tree, reducing plastic, conserving water—protects our only home for the future generations", CEM Boro said.

'Freedom through Education' classroom inaugurated

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, April 22: Taking forward Round Table India's Motto of "Freedom through Education", a 2-classroom block project undertaken by Tezpur Round Table-351 (TRT-351) at Noorbari Government MV School was inaugurated on Monday (April 21) by District Commissioner Sonitpur Ankur Bharali. Under this project two fully equipped classrooms have been built by TRT-351 at the school premises along with all amenities. This project has been executed in partnership with P&G Shiksha and major support from Tribeni Foundation and other willing donors. Earlier, a 5-toilet block was also built by TRT351 at the school premises. TRT351 has been associated with the school and have organised various programmes for the students on special occasions like Independence Day, Republic Day and Children's Day.

Ankur Bharali, District Commissioner, applauded the efforts of Round Table India. Tablers from Siliguri and Guwahati were also present along with other donors of Tezpur. Chaitanya Dev Singh, National President, Round Table India and Rahul Singhania, Area Chairman, Area 14 also attended the event.

Police constable brutally attacked following drug arrest in Dhubri, 12 apprehended

HT Correspondent

DHUBRI, April 22: A police constable attached to the Dhubri Police was brutally attacked by family members of an individual arrested earlier on Tuesday morning after a joint operation by South Salmara Police and a team from Dhubri Police led to the arrests of Kudas Ali in connection with a narcotics case registered in South Salmara Mankachar police station.

Kudas Ali, was arrested under Case Number 45/25, facing charges under Section 21(b) and 22(c) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act by the South Salmara Police Station jurisdiction. He was then transit to South Salmara Mankachar on Tuesday.

Later in the evening, a group of individuals identified as family members of the accused allegedly attacked Abbas Ali Mondal, a Police Constable serving in the Rider Party

of Dhubri Police in front of Police reserve. The attack is reported to have been severe, leaving the constable injured.

Following the assault, police have taken swift action, arresting several individuals in connection with the incident. Those apprehended include Javeda Khatun, Amona Khatun, Jamela Khatun, Romisa Khatun, Jamila Bewa, Jamiron Bewa, Farida Khatun, and Nayan Ali all residents of Aironjongla.

Additionally, Sohridur Rahman, a resident of Mutakhwa, and Abdul Aziz, Munna Mollah and Rashida Khatun, from new ghat area have also been arrested. Authorities have not yet released further details regarding the attack or the extent of the constable's injuries. However, this incident highlights the potential dangers faced by law enforcement personnel in the line of duty, particularly in cases involving drug-related offenses.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Try to be like the turtle- at ease in your own shell
- Bill Copeland

ILO report on employment

Informal employment in the total employment in India remains almost stagnant at around 90 per cent since 2014, according to a latest ILO report. It was worse in 2024 than the global average of 58 per cent, Asia Pacific average of 66 per cent, and worse than neighbouring countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. The ILO report titled "Innovative approaches to formalization in Asia and the Pacific" shows informality in India at 88.8 per cent, in Pakistan 84.3 per cent, in Bangladesh 84.9 per cent, and in Sri Lanka 67 per cent. Though the report mentioned many Indian schemes to improve schemes for formalization of employment in India while praising them as innovative approaches, but said nothing about the failures of the schemes in significantly reducing informality in the last one decade. For example, the Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme was praised by the report but it does not mention that the budget year 2024-25 was just lost without even launch of this scheme. Nevertheless, the report read, "In terms of the overall global distribution of informality, the majority – nearly two thirds – of workers in the informal economy are in Asia and the Pacific. This is due in part to the size of the population of the region, notably in China and India, and persistently high levels of informality."

Within the region, there is noticeable variation in the incidence of informal employment, ranging from nearly 87 per cent in Southern Asia to as low as 35 per cent in the Pacific Islands (East Asia is also considerably low, at around 27 per cent if China is excluded). In terms of patterns over the past two decades, like the region overall, gains in the Pacific Islands have been slow and are relatively unchanged in the past five years. In contrast, in Southern Asia where rates are already elevated, there has been an increase in the overall share of informal employment in total employment in the past decade. Whereas South-Eastern Asia and Eastern Asia – pandemic increases aside – have seen significant and steady improvements since 2004. A number of sub regional trends merit highlighting. First, the share of informal employment in Southern Asia is as high as what is found in Sub-Saharan Africa (89.2 per cent). Second, within Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Asia and South-Eastern Asia experienced the most significant decreases in the share of informal employment over the last two decades, with both subregions seeing declines of nearly 14 percentage points (significantly more the region as a whole).

Underlying these, the report mentions country specific variations and says that the rate of informality remains close to 90 per cent or more in India and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. By contrast, a number of countries from South-Eastern Asia experienced a significant decline in the share of informal employment. For instance, there has been approximately a 10 percentage point decrease in the rate of informality in Thailand and Viet Nam over the past decade. While in Mongolia (East Asia), a decrease of nearly 8 percentage points in the share of informality was achieved between 2010 and 2022.

Akhilesh Yadav's announcement to fight 2027 assembly polls under INDIA bloc enthuses cadres



By: Pradeep Kapoor

Samajwadi Party national president and former chief minister Akhilesh Yadav's announcement in Prayagraj that his party will contest 2027 assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh under INDIA alliance has boosted the morale of his PDA (pichda, dalit and alpsangkayak) core programme and the cadres of both the SP and the Congress.

Much significance is attached to the confidence of Akhilesh Yadav that he asserted that PDA will defeat BJP from power in UP. It was only on the combined strength of INDIA Alliance which fought 2024 Lok Sabha polls in UP Samajwadi Party succeeded by securing 37 seats and emerged as third largest group in Lok Sabha after BJP and Congress.

It was only due to the perception that Rahul Gandhi was fighting against BJP and the manner in which he along with Akhilesh we're able to convince the dalit voters to protect the Constitution, the Congress also gained the vote share and number of seats in Lok Sabha.

Akhilesh Yadav and Rahul Gandhi are under tremendous pressure from backwards, dalits and minorities to stay together to fight against BJP. For the first time under the guidance of Rahul Gandhi, the selection of district and city presidents was done while giving major share to OBC, dalits and minorities.

It was idea of Rahul Gandhi that during oath taking ceremony of district and city presidents, all Congress minded people who had been earlier ignored we're called

which infused confidence in them to work for the party.

Deepa Kaul, cousin sister of Indira Gandhi said that there was a huge crowd in her own district Ghaziabad when new president took over as all Congress minded persons were traced and called for the event.

Rahul Gandhi interacted with newly appointed district and city presidents and said they would play important role in the selection of candidates for Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha. This action will certainly strengthen the party at the grass-roots.

The manner in which Akhilesh Yadav defended dalit party MP Ramji Lal Suman who is being continuously under attack from BJP and Karni Sena which gheraoed his Agra residence, has boosted the moral of PDA.

Akhilesh Yadav not only defended his party MP inside the Parliament but staged demonstration outside which was joined by other MPs also.

In order to express his solidarity with party MP Samajwadi Party national president Akhilesh Yadav visited the residence of Ramji Lal Suman and said that Karni Sena was nothing but BJP workers who had attacked a dalit MP.

There is a realisation in backwards, dalits and minorities that only combined strength of INDIA alliance can defeat the Saffron brigade or it would be very difficult the elections.

That is why it is all the more important for Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav to stay together for their own survival and remain relevant to win the state. (IPA Service)

Informal employment in India remains close to 90 per cent since 2014

Informal employment in the total employment in India remains almost stagnant at around 90 per cent since 2014, according to a latest ILO report. It was worse in 2024 than the global average of 58 per cent, Asia Pacific average of 66 per cent, and worse than neighbouring countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.

The ILO report titled "Innovative approaches to formalization in Asia and the Pacific" shows informality in India at 88.8 per cent, in Pakistan 84.3 per cent, in Bangladesh 84.9 per cent, and in Sri Lanka 67 per cent.

Though the report mentioned many Indian schemes to improve schemes for formalization of employment in India while praising them as innovative approaches, but said nothing about the failures of the schemes in significantly reducing informality in the last one decade. For example, the Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme was praised by the report but it does not mention that the budget year 2024-25 was just lost without even launch of this scheme.

If we go through the India's innovative approaches mentioned in the ILO report to formalization of employment or creation of decent jobs, it reads well, but informal employment remaining at about 90 per cent is clear indication that India's strategy for formalization of jobs or creation of formal jobs have failed, a fact which ILO report avoided to put on record in clear terms.

Nevertheless, the report read, "In terms

of the overall global distribution of informality, the majority – nearly two thirds – of workers in the informal economy are in Asia and the Pacific. This is due in part to the size of the population of the region, notably in China and India, and persistently high levels of informality. In fact, while there has been progress in reducing the incidence of informality over the past two decades, which has fallen from nearly 73 per cent of total employment in 2004 to just under 66 per cent in 2024, the rate of progress has slowed considerably since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the incidence of informality in the region remains second only to Africa (83 per cent) and nearly 80 per cent or more in India and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. By contrast, a number of countries from South-Eastern Asia experienced a significant decline in the share of informal employment. For instance, there has been approximately a 10 percentage point decrease in the rate of informality in Thailand and Viet Nam over the past decade. While in Mongolia (East Asia), a decrease of nearly 8 percentage points in the share of informality was achieved between 2010 and 2022.

The informal economy presents significant challenges to workers' rights, social protection, decent working conditions and inclusive economic growth. Globally, over two billion people work informally, with the Asia and Pacific re-

gion accounting for nearly two-thirds of this total, the report emphasized. The persistence of informality undermines sustainable enterprises, hinders access to labour rights and social protection, erodes public revenues and exacerbates inequality and poverty.

Informality is persisting despite the ILO's recommendation adopted in 2015, which provides guidelines for transitioning from informal to formal economy. Nevertheless, the ILO report says that Asia-Pacific region has made some progress, about 7 per cent decline in informality in the last two decades to 66 per cent. However, this decline has been offset by the overall growth in the total number of workers, leading to an increase in the absolute number of informal workers.

Part of the challenge in the region is the notable absence of dedicated and integrated approaches that acknowledge the complex interrelations and synergies required to effectively and persistently tackle informality. Currently, tripartite structures engaged in the governance and coordination of formalization efforts are largely lacking across the region, with only a few notable exceptions. Large segments of the workforce are trapped in low-productivity sectors. Efforts to reduce informality are most effective when focus is on increasing incomes and improving working conditions, which strongly influence workers' capacity to move between the informal and formal economies, and hence, the report says, more efforts are needed. (IPA Service)

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Dr. Gyan Pathak

Left Alliance fares better than far right in regional polls in Finland

By: Mike Watson

Finland is widely seen in Western Europe and the United States as a progressive paradise. In truth, its center-right-led coalition government in office since June 2023 has presided over far-reaching austerity measures, leading to rising homelessness and cuts in local health provisions. Yet there are also signs that this period may finally be coming to an end.

The coalition government, led by Petteri Orpo's pro-business National Coalition Party, has seemingly been weakened by the collapse in the vote share of its main partner, the harder right Finns Party, in municipal and regional elections held on April 13. This signals the probability of a government led by the center-left Social Democratic Party (SDP) following the next general election, to be held by spring 2027 at the latest.

Chair of the right-wing populist Finns Party Riikka Purra admitted defeat on results night, describing a "red wave" sweeping Finland. Overall, the Finns Party (formerly "True Finns") was down 6.8 percent compared to the 2021 municipal elections, while the Social Democratic Party (headed by Antti Lindtman, who replaced outgoing premier Sanna Marin in 2023) made gains of 5.3 percent and had the highest vote share overall. Meanwhile, the democratic socialist Left Alliance boosted its vote by 1.3 percent, overtaking the Finns Party and sitting just behind the Green League, with which it often forms a red-green pact. Crucially, while the SDP increased its percentage share, the red-greens did not suffer as a result, as in previous elections. This time, the SDP took votes from the Finns Party after making the local elections a kind of referendum on the coalition government's austerity measures.

Still, this has its limits. The SDP has moved further toward the center since 2021, when Marin was prime minister, during which time she gave members of the Left Alliance and the Green League important cabinet positions. In contrast, Lindtman's Social Democrats approved several of the government's social-security cuts in their alternative budget and have signalled openness to forming a future

coalition with the center right.

This places Left Alliance as the genuine left opposition, who must perform well in the next general election to gain any leverage over the center. I emailed a handful of politicians from the party to see what currents they picked up on the local campaign trail, to better understand how they might move forward.

Olli Kohonen, a mental health nurse based in the Northern city of Oulu, who won both regional and municipal seats, cites mental health, waiting times, and eldercare as important campaign themes: "Basic issues that are really close to everyday life."

Ville Kellokumpu, a postdoctoral researcher who also ran in Oulu, says, "The current coalition has been very austerity-minded, hawkishly demanding quickly balanced budgets from the regions [responsible] for welfare, which has led to a deterioration of especially health and social security services. The poll gains for the Left Alliance are a response to that."

Seemingly, the Left has made advances by simply pledging support for working people and functioning services. Former Left Alliance leader and current member of the European Parliament Li Andersson argues that while the Finns Party promised that it would not cut services — in this, claiming to stand up for the Finnish working class — once in government it supported a slash-and-burn policy. "The Finns Party have been trying to present themselves as a kind of voice of the working people. And I think we now see a huge contrast between what they've said and what they've actually done," she comments. Andersson sees these elections as a "vote of no confidence in the right-wing government."

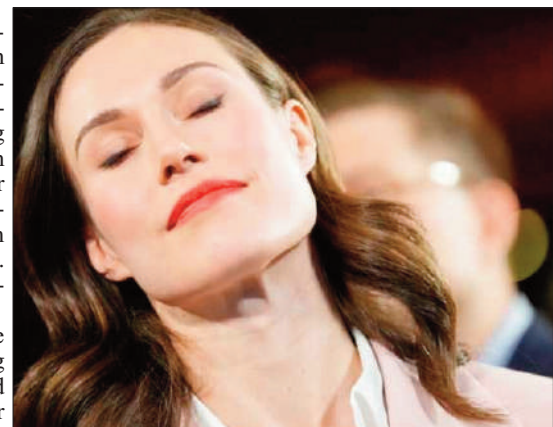
So did they lose that confidence vote? The Finns Party

was rejected. Yet the main ruling party, National Coalition, will more likely feel that its austerity approach has been exonerated: indeed, Prime Minister Orpo's party increased its municipal vote share by 1.2 percent, even though this only placed it second overall. Further, while many expect an SDP-led government sooner or later, it is not clear if it will lean toward left-wing parties or the center right. Meanwhile, even though the Finns Party is in decline, it should also be recognized that its voters generally turn out in higher numbers for general elections (turnout this week was just 54 percent for the municipal vote and 51 percent for the regionals). In these results, contradictions and uncertainties outnumber clear rules.

The best path for the Left Alliance may be to continue to build bridges with workers, with simple messages to bring working Finns to the Left: "You want affordable, prompt health care? So do we." "You want a secure future for your family? So do we," and so on.

As Left Alliance leader Minja Koskela told me in email, "many are fed up, and rightly so, with their material conditions noticeably worsening. The hardest hit are those with already low incomes, working-class people, students, single-parent families, disabled people, and elderly people with low pensions."

If bridges can be built with the oppressed and disaffected, perhaps Finland can become the beacon of hope that many in the West imagine it is — with the Left Alliance once again playing a key role in government. Koskela's party seems to be going some way to achieving this, building upon Andersson's work in Marin's coalition. Not for the first time, the women leading the Finnish left are bringing hope. (IPA Service)



Bangladesh factor in Saudi crackdown on immigration and visa curbs

By: Tajul Islam

Saudi Arabia's recent sweeping crackdown on immigration violations and a sudden tightening of visa regulations, particularly targeting 14 nations including Bangladesh, signals more than just internal security enforcement. Behind these actions lies a mounting strain in Saudi-Bangladesh relations now further exacerbated by the controversial arrest of Bangladeshi actress and model Meghna Alam, reportedly at the informal behest of the Saudi ambassador.

Between April 3 and 9, Saudi authorities arrested 18,669 individuals for violating residency, labour, and border security laws. Among them, 11,813 were detained for breaching residency rules, 4,366 for violating border protocols, and 2,490 for labour law infractions. Additionally, 1,497 individuals were apprehended attempting to enter Saudi Arabia illegally, while 59 were caught trying to flee.

The Interior Ministry's announcement of these mass arrests comes just as Saudi Arabia begins ramping up preparations for the 2025 Hajj season. Historically, the pilgrimage season attracts not only worshippers but also those looking to bypass labour restrictions and settle illegally under the cover of religious travel. This has led to overcrowding, logistical nightmares, and a persistent headache for Saudi authorities who aim to maintain tight control over migration during this critical period.

In a striking development, Saudi Arabia has temporarily suspended the issuance of Umrah, business, and family visas to citizens of 14 countries including Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Egypt, and Indonesia. The ban is expected to last until at least mid-June, with exceptions being made for those already issued Umrah visas before April 13.

The primary motive, according to Saudi officials, is the misuse of multiple-entry visas by foreigners who enter the Kingdom during Hajj and overstay illegally, often blending into the informal labour market. This influx not only violates immigration norms but disrupts labour market equilibrium and poses significant security risks.

However, this decision has raised alarm in Bangladesh, where over five million citizens work and live in Saudi Arabia. The timing and sweeping nature of the visa ban have triggered concerns that the move may not be merely administrative but politically charged—especially in light of recent developments involving a Saudi diplomat.

The arrest of Meghna Alam, a model and actress in Bangladesh, adds another layer of complexity to the already fragile relationship. On April 11, police confirmed her detention under the Special Powers Act, citing a complaint filed by Saudi Ambassador Essa bin Yusuf Al Dhuhailan. The ambassador, who recently completed his term in Dhaka, reportedly lodged an informal complaint to the Bangladeshi Foreign Ministry, claiming that Alam had attempted to extort him and had made threats.

Following this, the Home Ministry instructed police to investigate. When initial attempts to settle the matter through Alam's family failed, the authorities opted for her arrest. The court has since approved her 30-day detention, and she is currently held at Kashimpur Central Jail.

In a Facebook post prior to her arrest, Meghna accused Ambassador Isa of orchestrating the abduction of individuals through the police and warned that the government was prepared to side with the diplomat against her. This claim, combined with her arrest under a broad and controversial law often criticized for enabling arbitrary detention, has sparked public outrage and raised questions about the influence of foreign diplomats over domestic legal procedures.

Additionally, another individual, Dewan Samir—reportedly an associate of Meghna—has been arrested in connection with the case. Diplomatic sources have acknowledged that the ambassador's informal complaint was enough to trigger a chain of governmental action, raising concerns about sovereignty and due process. At a time when Saudi Arabia is tightening its visa policies and labour enforcement, this incident risks further souring relations.

Experts warn that Bangladesh must act quickly and diplomatically to manage the deteriorating situation. Failure to do so could have serious repercussions—not only in terms of the country's international image but also for its economy, which is heavily reliant on remittances from workers in the Gulf region, particularly Saudi Arabia.

Adding further fuel to the fire was a recent protest in Dhaka on April 12, where participants in a 'Palestine Solidarity Movement' at Suhrawardy Uddyan were seen carrying placards that not only condemned Israel and the United States but also included derogatory slogans against US President Donald Trump, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Footage of the event, which was organized by several Islamist-leaning political groups, has circulated globally and is being closely monitored by international media. The protest reflects the interim government's shifting foreign policy, which many observers say has veered toward an anti-US, pro-Pakistan, anti-India posture in recent months.

This ideological alignment combined with incendiary rhetoric against key regional players—risks isolating Bangladesh at a time when it can ill afford diplomatic friction. Saudi Arabia, a historically close ally and one of the largest sources of foreign remittances, may interpret these actions as a hostile turn, further complicating matters for the millions of Bangladeshis living and working there.

The convergence of the visa ban, the arrest of a public figure based on a diplomat's complaint, and public protests targeting the Saudi monarchy indicates a rapidly deteriorating situation. The Bangladeshi government must tread carefully to repair ties with Riyadh, as any prolonged strain could endanger its labour exports, Hajj quota, and access to vital Gulf funding. (IPA Service)

POST BAG

Kaziranga's tourism boom – A cause for concern

Sir/Ma'am

The record footfall of over 4 lakh tourists and revenue of Rs 10.95 crore in Kaziranga National Park during

2024-25 is being hailed as a tourism success. However, this rapid growth raises serious ecological concerns.

Kaziranga is a fragile, UNESCO-listed ecosystem. The uncontrolled rise in hotels and infrastructure poses a threat to its wildlife and habitat. Key questions arise: Has the forest department assessed the park's tourist carrying capacity? Has the eco-sensitive zone been enforced? What is the status of the nine critical animal corridors?

Without stringent regulation and planning, Kaziranga

risks being overrun by commercial interests. True development should prioritize sustainability over short-term profits. The focus must be on protecting Kaziranga, not exploiting it.

I urge the authorities to act responsibly to ensure that tourism does not become the reason for Kaziranga's decline.

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73% of women face cyber violence, why are we still ignoring it?

By: Lucky Jha

In today's digital world, we're more connected than ever before. From chatting with friends to attending online classes or even finding job opportunities, the internet is a huge part of our lives. But along with all these benefits comes a serious issue that's affecting women everywhere—cyber violence.

Online harassment, threats, and the non-consensual sharing of private photos are just some of the ways women are being targeted on the internet. According to a UN report from 2021, about 73% of women globally have experienced some form of online violence. That's a massive number, and it shows how serious the problem really is.

What is Cyber Violence?

Cyber violence includes all the harmful activities done through the internet to harass, abuse, or threaten women. Some common examples are:

- **Cyberstalking:** Repeated unwanted messages or tracking someone's location online.
- **Online Harassment:** Abusive comments, threats, or hate messages on social media.
- **Doxing:** Sharing someone's personal information like phone number or home address online.
- **Revenge Porn:** Posting private pictures or videos without permission.
- **Deepfake Videos:** Using AI to create fake, usually sexual, videos of someone.

And it doesn't just happen on

Facebook or Instagram—women face this kind of abuse on dating apps, in online games, and even on platforms meant for work or learning.

Some Real Cases That Show the Reality

1. The Bulli Bai & Sulli Deals Incident (India)

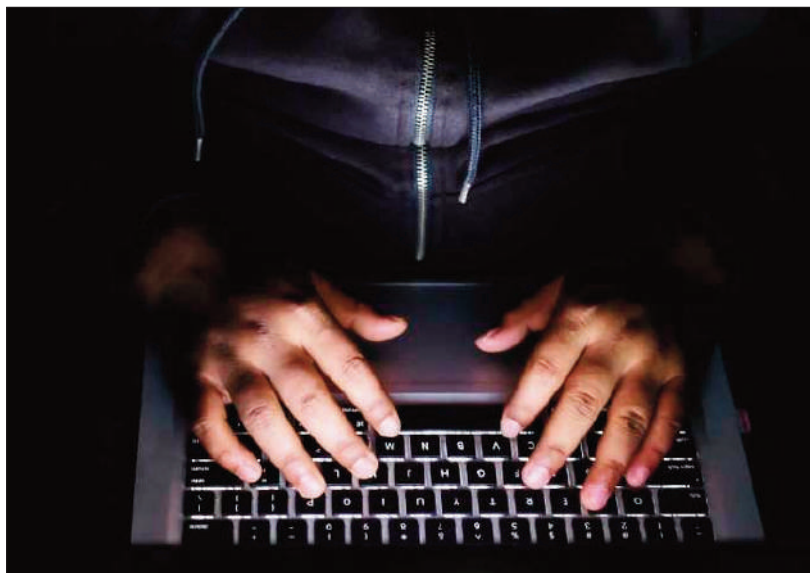
This was one of the most shocking cases in recent years. Some people created fake apps that put up photos of Muslim women and called it an "auction." These pictures were stolen from social media and used without any permission. It wasn't a real auction—it was pure harassment and humiliation. After a lot of public outrage, some of the people behind it were caught. But this incident showed how easy it is to target women online.

2. Deepfake Abuse in Delhi (2023)

A 23-year-old girl from Delhi found out that someone had made fake explicit images of her using deepfake technology and shared them on social media. She hadn't done anything wrong—but still, she became a victim. Even after complaining to the police, the content stayed online for a long time. It left her emotionally drained and scared.

3. Journalist Rana Ayyub's Story

Rana Ayyub, a well-known Indian journalist, has faced constant online harassment. People sent her threats, shared fake videos, and even leaked her personal details. Just because she spoke out boldly, she became a target. Her case shows how unsafe it can be for women, especially those who are in the public eye.



4. The Kerala Story (Movie Reference)

This movie, though controversial, shows how some young women were manipulated online and taken into dangerous situations. While the storyline is dramatized, it does reflect a truth—women are sometimes groomed and emotionally trapped through fake online identities. This is another side of cyber violence that doesn't get talked about enough.

It's Not Just in India—It's a Global Problem

In the USA, female celebrities like Jennifer Lawrence had their private photos leaked in 2014. The case became known as "The Fappening" and started a global conversation on digital privacy.

In the UK, a study found that 1 in 5 women faced online abuse. Politician Diane Abbott received thousands of hateful messages just because of her gender and race.

In the Philippines, when flight attendant Christine Dacera passed away under suspicious circumstances, people spread misinformation and shamed her online, even though nothing was confirmed.

In Middle Eastern countries, women have been arrested just for sharing videos that some considered inappropriate. This shows how cyber policing can be used unfairly to control women.

So, it's clear—this is not just an Indian issue. Women all over the world are dealing with similar things.

How Does Cyber Violence Affect Women?

• **Mental Stress:** Anxiety, depression, or even trauma from constant abuse.

• **Fear and Isolation:** Many women delete their accounts or avoid being online.

• **Career Impact:** Some women, especially journalists and creators, step back from their work.

• **Safety Issues:** In some cases, online abuse leads to real-life stalking or attacks.

A survey by Amnesty International showed that over one-third of women who were abused online changed how they behaved on the internet. Many of them were scared that things would get worse.

What Does the Law Say?

In India, there are laws to deal with cybercrime, but they're not always enough:

• **IT Act Section 66E:** Deals with privacy violations.

• **IT Act Section 67A:** Punishes people who share explicit content.

• **IPC Section 354D:** Related to cyberstalking.

But even with these laws, getting justice is hard. Many police officers aren't trained in handling cyber cases, and victims often don't know how to report crimes.

Other countries are also making changes. For example:

• **Australia** has an eSafety Commissioner to handle such complaints.

• **The UK** is working on an Online Safety Bill.

• **The European Union** is putting pressure on social media companies

to take action.

What Can Social Media Platforms Do?

- **Improve their reporting systems.**
- **Respond faster to abuse reports.**
- **Use better AI tools to detect harmful content.**

Sadly, right now, they're not doing enough.

How Can We Solve This Problem?

Here are some ways we can fight cyber violence:

• **Teach Digital Safety:** Everyone, especially young girls, should learn how to stay safe online.

• **Better Laws and Police Training:** Governments must update laws and train officers to handle digital crimes.

• **Tech Companies Must Step Up:** Platforms like Instagram and X (Twitter) should be held responsible when they fail to protect users.

• **Awareness Campaigns:** Public messages can help fight stigma and encourage more women to speak out.

• **Mental Health Support:** Victims should have access to counseling and emotional support.

Conclusion

The internet should be a safe space for everyone, especially women. We must work together—individuals, police, government, and tech companies—to stop cyber violence. It's not just about punishing the guilty, but also about protecting the innocent. With the right steps, we can make digital spaces safer and more respectful for everyone.

Because in the end, no one should be afraid to speak, post, or simply exist online—just because they're a woman. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

Spring fruits that boost collagen in your body



By: Shahnaz Husain

Collagen isn't just a buzzword, it's the glue holding your body together. Collagen comprises amino acid chains which is essential for the structure of the skin, bones, muscles, and tendons.

Collagen is the protein that gives skin its structure, suppleness, and stretch. It's also involved in essential processes like helping your blood to clot, helping wounds to heal and protecting the nervous system.

Collagen is the most abundant protein in the body, making up 30% of its total protein. It's the structural foundation of your connective tissues: ligaments, tendons, and cartilage, keeping them strong and flexible.

Unfortunately, starting from the mid 20s, our natural production of collagen decreases up to 1.5% per year, giving way to stiffer joints, slower muscle repair, signs of skin aging such as wrinkles, dryness, sagging skin or even pigmentation spots. So it is important to both preserve the collagen you have and stimulate your skin to produce it faster.

Our body is capable of producing all of the collagen one needs if you eat a balanced diet. Foods that contain gelatine are a good source of collagen, because gelatine is essentially cooked collagen.

Because your body is capable of producing all of the collagen you need if you eat a balanced diet, supplements may not be necessary for everyone.

Eating collagen-rich foods or foods that boost collagen production may also help create the building blocks you need for your skin goals. Incorporate vitamin C-rich fruits like citrus fruits (oranges, lemons, grapefruits), berries (blueberries, raspberries, strawberries), and tropical fruits (kiwi, pineapple, mango) into your diet, as vitamin C is essential for collagen synthesis.

1. **Kiwi/fruit** - They're sweet, easy to eat, and highly nutritious. Kiwi/fruit contains large amounts of vitamin C, which helps the body produce collagen, which can reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, giving you a smoother and more youthful complexion.

It gives the skin its fullness, flexibility and elasticity. The fruit contains approximately 80% water content, providing natural hydration benefits for the skin.

This high water content fruit helps keep skin soft and supple when consumed regularly. For optimal results, either consume kiwis or simply apply a kiwi slice to your skin.

You can exfoliate and moisturise your skin by applying kiwi slices on your face. Your epidermis becomes softer and plumper as a result of this gentle exfoliation. Eating kiwi can help you reach optimal blood levels of vitamin C.

2. **Pineapple** - Pineapple contains vitamin C and bromelain, which boost collagen production, reduce inflammation, and promote a clear, glowing complexion.

These antioxidants can help reduce wrinkles, improve overall skin texture, and minimize skin dam-

age from sun and pollution exposure.

Pineapple's vitamin C content encourages the production of collagen, a protein matrix that gives your skin its structure while maintaining its plasticity. Pineapple can help prevent damage to skin cells caused by free radicals. It may help promote wound healing by supporting the production of new skin cells.

Pineapple hydrates and brightens skin, while reducing the appearance of circles under eyes, protecting against sun damage.

One cup of pineapple contains 78.9 milligrams of vitamin C. That's more than the recommended dietary allowance for adult women (which is 75 mg per day) and close to the recommendation for men (90 mg per day).

Pineapple is lower in calories than other sweet treats, so if you enjoy a serving of pineapple versus an ice cream cone for your nightly dessert, you may consume fewer calories and, in turn, lose weight.

3. **Guava** - A lesser-known superfruit, guava is rich in Vitamin C, antioxidants and lycopene, which prevent aging and improve skin health. Guavas are a bulbous fruit with a green rind and pink or white flesh. Guava is a fantastic, natural way to boost collagen production and improve skin elasticity, making it a beauty secret hiding in plain sight.

The high vitamin C content of guava helps in boosting immunity, improves collagen production, and may naturally protect against free radical damage. The fiber content in guava helps in digestion, controls blood sugar levels, and promotes heart health.

The high concentration of vitamin C content in the fruit helps your body fight against viruses and pathogens and maintain skin health.

Guava has antioxidants like lycopene and beta-carotene that help fight inflammation and support eye health. Adding guava to the daily diet can enhance overall health, improve digestion, strengthen immunity, and improve skin health, which makes for a healthy option to add to the diet.

Very rich in vitamin A and vitamin C both of which act as an antioxidant for the skin. It can help support healthy skin, reduce wrinkles and slow down ageing.

4. **Berries** - Berries like strawberries, blueberries, and blackberries are a great way to add vitamin C to your diet, a nutrient that helps your body build collagen. Berries are rich in antioxidants which play a crucial role in maintaining and producing collagen.

The antioxidants protect your collagen from damage, while Vitamin C directly supports new collagen growth. Incorporating these fruits alongside other natural sources of collagen supports overall skin health and reduces inflammation.

A cup of strawberries has nearly 100% of your daily target for vitamin C, and a cup of raspberries or blackberries has about 35% of your daily C goal. If you eat 1 cup of berry daily, you can keep the symptoms of ageing away for a long time. (The author is international fame beauty expert and is called herbal queen of India)

7 tips to enhance fertility in women with PCOD

By: Dr Geeta Shroff

Polycystic ovarian disease PCOD, also referred to as polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) is one of the most common complications found among women nowadays, especially under the age bracket of 40 years. It is a very common hormonal imbalance that occurs due to the irregularity of the menstrual cycle or no menstrual cycle at all or due to the presence of excessive male hormones in the body of women. As the name suggests, polycystic ovarian disease refers to a condition where the ovaries are enlarged and have multiple small cysts in it but in some cases, it is possible that a woman does not face the problem of having cysts in the ovary and still has this disease. So, the symptoms of this disease are not the same for all the women going through it.

What are the symptoms?

Some of the most common symptoms which should alert one to make a visit are as follows:

1. **Menstrual Imbalance:** Prolonged irregularity in the menstrual cycle is a serious complication. Though the irregularity in periods may be normal in the starting, but with time, the delay prolongs, leading to no periods at all.

2. **Ovulation issues:** Women experiencing difficulties in conceiving may get them screened for this condition as ovulation may be prevented due to development of PCOS causing infertility.

3. **Excessive Hair growth:** As the condition can increase the levels of testosterone in the women's body, it can lead excessive hair growth on the upper lip, lower abdomen, and chin and around the nipples. It can also cause excessive acne on face and male pattern baldness in women.

4. **Dysfunctional bleeding:** PCOD decreases

the progesterone levels in the woman's body, this is due to issues in ovulating properly and this further leads to growth stimulation of the endometrial tissue which helps in lining the uterus resulting in dysfunctional bleeding in women. This issue can lead to more severe problems like uterine cancer as well if not taken care properly.

5. **High insulin levels and obesity:** It has been observed by the medical researchers and doctors that at least half of the number of women suffering from PCOD are overweight and also, insulin resistance is seen in some who are free from the issue of obesity however some can have both the issues to deal with.

What should you 'do' if having PCOD?
Though advanced treatments are available for PCOD, but adapting to certain changes will increase the efficiency and outcomes of the ongoing treatment procedure.

1. **Exercise Regularly:** Being under treatment does not make you eligible for bed rest, but instead, a more active lifestyle including 30 minutes walking can make wonders in the treatment outcomes.

2. **Have plenty of sleep** - Getting a proper amount of sleep can help you feel better and refreshed as well as it can help in reducing weight if you are facing the issue of obesity. Remember that your eight hours sleep is more than important for you as not having a proper amount may result in imbalance in the hormone which deals with the hunger further leading into unwanted consumption of unhealthy food items available in hand.

3. **Take Proper medications** - Skipping the prescribed medicines can lead to the ineffectiveness of the whole medical treatment based on the pills intake and it can also be dangerous for your health and the disease you are going through.

4. **Maintain proper weight** - it is better to

maintain your proper weight and avoid complications. You can do this by regularly exercising, by eating healthy food and maintain a balanced diet instead of unhealthy food intake as it will just make situations difficult for you.

5. **Keep track of periods:** Keep a thorough track of your menstrual cycle because irregularity in periods or missing periods can be a matter of concern for the people suffering from PCOD. It can lead to endometrial cancer or other major complication and if you keep track of your periods, it will be easier to report such problems to the doctor and it will help the doctor to deal with it more efficiently.

6. **Smoking cessation and drinking:** When you are suffering from PCOD, you are prone to develop new and severe disease along with your already damaged health and smoking and drinking habits can increase your levels of getting caught by diseases like diabetes, heart diseases, etc. So, you need to quit these harmful habits for a healthier life ahead and to efficiently treat PCOD.

7. **Identify the symptoms of possible depression** - women who are suffering from PCOD are more prone to have depression than other people. So, if you notice any kind of symptoms that are indicating towards the issue of 'Depression' then don't take it lightly. These symptoms can be excessive sleeping and eating habits, excessive weight loss or gain, imbalance or difficulty in sleeping and eating habits, frequent sadness for a longer period of time, etc.

PCOD is one of the challenging diseases that can affect you in many ways if not taken care properly but this should not stress you out because if you go through treatment in a disciplined way with adoption of a healthy way of living life then it is far easier to get out of it without increasing complications. (The author is the Founder Director of Nubella Centre for Womens Health)

Rural women, climate shock: Beijing report warns

By: Privanka Saurabh

When we talk about climate change, the discussion often confines itself to melting glaciers, rising sea levels, and changing weather cycles. But its human face—particularly that of rural Indian women—is often forgotten. The Beijing India Report 2025 once again makes it clear that the climate crisis is not a "gender neutral" disaster. Its impacts are deep, unequal, and misogynistic. Millions of rural women in India are already burdened by resource scarcity, social limitations, and unpaid domestic responsibilities. Climate change makes this burden even heavier—sometimes in the form of droughts, sometimes in the form of floods, and sometimes in the form of a slow, toxic combination of malnutrition and exhaustion. The Beijing Report shows that the climate crisis is not only degrading the quality of women's lives but also depriving them of their biological, social, and economic dignity. Health facilities for rural women are already limited, but the nutrition crisis and heat stress caused by climate change severely impact their reproductive and maternal health. According to the report, persistent dehydration and anemia have led to a rise in the incidence of premature hysterectomies among women. This is not just a medical procedure but an assault on their bodily autonomy and dignity. Infertility, complicated childbirth, and difficulties in conceiving are now becoming common problems—and climate insecurity is clearly behind them.

Most of India's rural women either work in the fields or engage in small agricultural work, but they do not own the land. When rains are unseasonal, when crops dry up, or when soils turn barren,

these women are the first and the worst hit. In regions like Bundelkhand, persistent droughts have not only led to a drop in production but also increased seasonal unemployment among women. Being cut off from the field means an empty kitchen, girls leaving school, and another round of debt. Women who were engaged in handicrafts, food processing, or small-scale businesses other than agriculture are also not spared by extreme weather. The Beijing report shows that women's incomes in the non-agricultural sector fell by an average of 33% during extreme climate events in 2023-24. This is not just an economic loss but also a blow to self-reliance and confidence. Climate-induced displacement, falling family incomes, and traditional thinking—all three are hampering the education of adolescent girls. When families have limited resources, girls' education is one of the first to be cut short. They are pulled out of school and put into domestic work or prepared for early marriage. This broken chain of education limits their lifelong opportunities. Adivasi and Dalit women in particular—who are already socially marginalized—are most vulnerable during climate disasters. During the 2020 cyclone Amphan, Dalit women in the Sundarbans region reported being excluded from relief centers and had no say in shelter decisions. Social discrimination becomes even more acute during a climate crisis.

The Beijing India Report not only highlights this crisis but also suggests clear ways to address it—most importantly, putting gender sensitivity at the center of climate strategy. State-level climate plans must incorporate women's specific needs. States like Odisha have begun incorporating gender indicators into their climate strategies, but this initiative needs to be

replicated in every state. Gender-based data collection by village, caste, and economic status is essential for policies to be effective at the ground level. Creating a climate vulnerability index with a gender component at the panchayat level can be an effective step. Self-help groups and women's cooperatives can be strengthened by providing skills in areas of climate-resilient agriculture, green jobs, renewable energy, and agro-processing.

Better resourcing of primary health centers, especially for reproductive and maternal care, is imperative—especially in areas affected by the climate crisis. Women-run Jal Samitis in Gujarat have proven that when women are part of policymaking and resource management, solutions are more sustainable and responsive. Women's participation should be made mandatory in local disaster management, forest rights committees, and water management. Missions under the National Climate Action Plan—such as Ujala Yojana, PMUY, etc.—should be redefined with a women-centric approach. Expansion of these schemes in climate-sensitive areas will not only strengthen health and livelihoods but will also promote gender justice.

Rural women are not just victims of climate change—they can also be agents of change. But this requires us to see them as partners, not just 'objects for help.' This is the message of the Beijing report—that if we are to tackle climate change effectively, gender and climate must be understood together, not separately. When a woman scrapes drinking water for her child from the mud of a drying pond, she becomes not just motherhood but the most tragic image of the climate crisis. It is time for policy, science, and society to listen to her voice seriously.

Seeks Rail modernisation, new services

Tripura MP meets railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, April 22: In a move to accelerate railway development in Tripura, Lok Sabha MP and former Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb met Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw in New Delhi today to push for major upgrades in the state's railway infrastructure and services.

Taking to Facebook after the meeting, Deb shared that the discussions focused on comprehensive plans for modernisation, expansion, and enhanced connectivity in Tripura. Key proposals included double-laning of the Lumding-Sabroom and Agartala-Sabroom railway lines, introduction of electric trains, and extending the Vande Bharat Express service up to Guwahati.

Deb also pressed for the intro-



duction of new long-distance express trains connecting Agartala to

Jammu, Puri, and Gaya — routes that would significantly boost con-

nectivity between Tripura and major pilgrimage and cultural destinations across the country.

As part of infrastructure development under the Amrit Bharat scheme, Deb advocated for the modernisation of key railway stations such as Agartala, Dharmamagar, Kumarghat, and Udaipur. He also proposed transforming Agartala Railway Station into a world-class hub.

Other key points of discussion included the establishment of an industrial rail link, the upgradation of Jirania Yard, and the addition of more rail services to cater to increasing passenger demand.

Deb noted that the Union Railway Minister responded positively to the proposals and assured that appropriate actions would be taken on a priority basis.

Nagaland trader body calls voluntary business shutter down

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, April 22: The Confederation of Nagaland Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CNCCI) has declared indefinite voluntary business shutter down across the state from April 24.

In a letter dated April 21, CNCCI chairman Dr Khekugha Muru informed the District Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) presidents about the shutter down referring to their letter to the CNCCI office urging for collective action against the state government for equitable justice in the nomination of DCCI representatives to the district urban local bodies (ULBs). The DCCI presidents also expressed disappointment over the state government's "step-motherly treatment" over the matter.

Muru said the CNCCI has exhausted all possible means, including a formal appeal to the chief minister and issuing a press release warning of a democratic protest if justice was not delivered by April



20, 2025.

"Unfortunately, the state government has not responded," he said.

Muru said in accordance with the demand of the nine aggrieved DCCIs, the CNCCI announced the "democratic indefinite voluntary business shutter down", which will also include banking institutions.

Medical services, gas stations, petrol pumps, taxi services, vehicular movement, educational insti-

tutions and all government offices will remain unaffected and function as usual during the first phase of the shutter down.

The CNCCI asked all DCCIs to ensure the protest remains peaceful without any untoward incidents.

It said the second phase of the protest will be deliberated on April 25 during its executive council meeting to be attended by all DCCI presidents.

Five human traffickers arrested in Tripura in ongoing crackdown

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, April 22: In a significant crackdown on human trafficking, the Government Railway Police (GRP), in coordination with the Border Security Force (BSF) and Tripura Police, arrested five alleged human traffickers from three localities in West Tripura district.



early Monday morning.

GRP Officer-in-Charge Tapas Das said that the arrests were made following a tip-off regarding the whereabouts of the accused. The joint operation was conducted in the Lankamura, Sharmalunga, and Samura areas under West Tripura

district.

"The individuals arrested were wanted in connection with two ongoing human trafficking cases and had reportedly been absconding for quite some time," said Das. "A special team at the Agartala GRP Police Station is currently interrogating them. More arrests may follow as the investigation progresses."

The arrested individuals have been identified as Sumon Das alias Bikash (39), Rahul Das (27), Bishwajit Das (49), Anibesh Sarkar (31), and Jewel Sarkar (26). All are residents of the aforementioned areas in West Tripura.

They will be produced before the court later today for police remand.

In recent days, at least seven Bangladeshi nationals were also apprehended at Agartala Railway Station for allegedly entering Tripura illegally in an attempt to travel beyond the state.

Manipur: Four militants arrested; arms and ammunition seized

IMPHAL, April 22: Security forces have arrested four militants of a banned outfit from different areas in Imphal East district of Manipur, police said on Tuesday. Three militants, including a woman, belonging to PREPAK (Pro) outfit were arrested from Ngakhat Adventure Kharok area on Monday, a police officer said.

A .32 pistol with a magazine loaded with five cartridges, six mobile phones and two two-wheelers were seized from their possession, he said. They were allegedly involved in the recent kidnapping of two persons for ransom near Naorem Biraiah College in Imphal East district, the officer said. Another insurgent of PREPAK was arrested on Sunday from Sawbung in Imphal East district. He was identified as Khundrakam Katho Singh (22).

Meanwhile, 22 IEDs, seven mobile phones and camouflage clothes were seized during a search operation in Yanggoubung and T Bongmol villages in Tengnoupal district on Saturday, the police officer said.

A 7.62 self-loading rifle with a magazine, a 12-bore single-barrel gun, a sniper rifle, two 9mm pistols with two magazines, a .22 pistol with magazine, cartridges, a wireless set and four bulletproof plates were seized during another search operation in the foothills of Keirao Wangkhem village near TB Hospital in Imphal East district on Monday, he added. (PTI)

HYC nabs 4 suspected Bangladeshi nationals

SHILLONG, April 22: The Hyniewtrep Youth Council (HYC) today apprehended four suspected Bangladeshi nationals from Shella village along the Indo-Bangla border in East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya even as it demanded the state government to seriously address the issue of illegal immigration into the state.

Informing this during a news conference, HYC president Roykumar Synrem said, "Today at around 8 am members of the Shella unit of HYC apprehended the four persons coming from Dalia located near the border fencing with Bangladesh. On being questioned, these people were informed that they had reached the Dalia locality last night and today they were supposed to go back to Shillong and then go to Assam. They have produced EPIC cards, Aadhaar and PAN Card as documentation proof."

He added, "The suspected Bangladeshi nationals have claimed to visit Dalia as tourists but however they could not give the name of the owner of the house they had stayed at last night. They also could not tell by what vehicle they came to the village."

Synrem informed on further checking them, it was found that one of the apprehended persons pos-

sessed two EPIC cards with different names (Samchul Hoque and Samchul Bor) issued on the same date by the electoral registering officer from Nagaon district, Assam.

"This has raised serious doubt in the mind of the HYC members. After checking their phones, one of the photographs they have was of the currency of Bangladesh. After not getting satisfactory reply from them on whether they are Indian citizens or not, our members have handed them over to the Shella police station," he said adding, "I have also personally called the SP of East Khasi Hills district informing about this matter and he has sent the SDPO of Sohra to Shella PS to investigate and find out whether these people are genuine Indian citizens or not."

"During interrogation, the SDPO said these people have informed the police that they were supposed to go to NEIGRIHMS for some treatment but they can't tell how they reached Shella so that is something which created a lot of doubts in our mind and the Police department should take the matter very seriously by conducting thorough investigation on the matter," he added further.

Expressing concern over illegal immigration entering the state, Synrem said for the past few

weeks the HYC have received information from sources and people residing along the border that there has been a lot of movement of people from Bangladesh entering Indian territory.

Referring to the Union Home Minister Amit Shah's statement over large influx of infiltrators entering India through West Bengal with valid documents, the HYC president said, "If these people can get EPIC, Aadhaar or Pan Card from West Bengal or Assam or any other state then they can easily enter Meghalaya and once they come here, they will reside and after sometime they will become the residents of the state."

"We don't want that to happen and therefore, we call upon the state government to take the issue of influx very seriously. If steps are not taken, we fear that a day will come that these people will get a residency in the state of Meghalaya and become a voter and get all rights and privileges as citizens and when they become majority, our political rights and economic rights will be at stake," he added.

Further, Synrem informed that COMSO have written to the chief minister regarding the status of ILP and MRSSA amendment bill, 2020 and till date they are yet to get any reply from him. (NNN)

Manipur militant arrested in Meghalaya

SHILLONG, April 22: A self-styled finance secretary of the outlawed militant group Kangleipak Communist Party (People's War Group) of Manipur was arrested from his hideout in Meghalaya's Ri-Bhoi district, police said on Tuesday. Acting on the information received, a counter insurgency raid was conducted at the Bymihat area of the district close to the interstate border with Assam last night.

During the raid, one Khundongbam Herojit Meitei was apprehended from a house he had rented in the area, the Superintendent of Police (SP) of the district, V S Rathore, told PTI. Two mobile phones and other incriminating materials were seized from his possession, following which he was arrested, the SP said.

According to the SP, during interrogation, Herojit admitted that he is a member of the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP-PWG) militant group which terrorised Manipur citizens during the 2023 violence and he has been collecting money on behalf of the outfit. He said, prima facie Herojit was hiding in the Assam-Meghalaya border to avoid getting arrested by the security forces which are presently taking strict action on various militant organisations involved in creating law & order problems in Manipur. (PTI)

Truth cannot be bulldozed by lies: Congress leader

IMPHAL, April 22: Attacking the BJP-led central government, AICC joint secretary and advocate Mathew Antony said that "truth cannot be bulldozed by lies". The Congress leader was addressing a press conference organised by the Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) at Congress Bhavan in Imphal today. The event marked the beginning of the Indian National Congress's nationwide campaign "Congress Truths, BJP Lies," running from April 21 to 24.

Antony accused the BJP of orchestrating a "deliberate political witch-hunt" by misusing central agencies like the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to defame Congress leaders ahead of the upcoming elections. His remarks came in response to the ED's chargesheet naming Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and other senior Congress figures in the National Herald case, alleging a ₹ 988 crore money laundering scheme.

"Just because a lie is repeated doesn't make it the truth. The BJP is weaponizing institutions to silence the Opposition. This isn't just about Congress. It's about the future of Indian democracy," Antony said. (NNN)

Nagaland observes state mourning for Pope Francis

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, April 22: Along with the rest of the country, Nagaland is observing a two-day state mourning as a mark of respect to Pope Francis from Tuesday.

During the period of the state mourning, the national flag is being flown at half mast throughout Nagaland on all buildings where the tricolor is flown regularly.

The state government also declared a one-day state mourning on the day of the funeral Supreme Pontiff of the Holy See (the date of the funeral will be intimated separately).

There will be no official entertainment during the state mourning, the state home department said.

Nagaland governor La Ganesan expressed deep sorrow over Pope Francis's death, calling him a revered spiritual leader whose life exemplified humility, compassion and unwavering faith.

"As the Head of the Catholic Church, he championed the cause of peace, social justice and care for the poor and the marginalised. His leadership inspired millions across the world, transcending boundaries of faith and culture," Ganesan said in a condolence message.

He offered heartfelt condolences to the Catholic community and all who mourn his passing.

Ganesan also prayed for his noble soul to rest in eternal peace.

Meanwhile, as a mark of respect, all Catholic institutions in the Diocese of Kohima remained closed on Tuesday and observed a special day of mourning.

Bishop of Kohima, Most Rev. Dr. James Thoppil, expressed deep sorrow over the passing of Pope Francis, describing him as "a true shepherd of God's people" who dedicated his life to proclaiming the Gospel, championing the cause of the poor and marginalised, and calling the world to embrace compassion, justice, and care for creation.

Tripura equips 455 schools with sanitary vending machines

Trains over 1.42 Lakh girls in self-defense

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, April 22: In a significant move toward promoting gender-sensitive education and safety, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Monday announced the installation of sanitary vending machines in 455 schools and self-defense training for more than 1.42 lakh girl students across the state.

The Chief Minister highlighted that the present government is prioritizing quality education alongside infrastructure development. "We are committed to creating a robust educational environment. Around 123 school buildings will be upgraded, and necessary teaching and non-teaching positions will be filled to support this vision," Saha said.

He was speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the newly constructed building of Amtali Higher Secondary School. The event also witnessed the virtual inau-

guration of new school buildings at Henry Derozio Academy, Gandhigram H.S. School, Taltala H.S. School, Indranagar High School, and Nandan Nagar H.S. School.

Saha emphasized the need for ecological awareness and holistic education, quoting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's constant advocacy for nature conservation. "The Earth is our only home. If we fail to maintain ecological balance, we will face grave consequences. Education today must go beyond textbooks — it must evolve with time," he said.

He reiterated that education remains the top priority for the state government. "Without a strong foundation in education, development is not possible. Our government, along with the education department, is working tirelessly to ensure comprehensive progress in this sector," he added.

Tripura CM launches 'QR codes for flora', with details of trees, on Earth Day

'Digital catalogue will be prepared by the schools from April 22 to 30'

AGARTALA, April 22: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Tuesday launched 'QR codes for flora', with details of trees, in a school on the occasion of Earth Day.

Once scanned, different QR codes, affixed to trees in Amtali High School in West Tripura district, will instantly provide information about the specific tree's name, species, characteristics and benefits.

The initiative is aimed at encouraging students to learn more about plants on their school premises.

Addressing a programme organised to mark the inauguration of the newly constructed building of the school, the chief minister said that the Ministry of Education has introduced the 'QR codes for flora' initiative to mark Earth Day.

"On this occasion, we launched 'QR codes for flora' for each tree on the school premises. The QR codes will instantly provide information about the particular tree's name, species, characteristics and benefits," he said.

Saha said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been laying emphasis on maintaining ecological balance to make Earth liveable.



"Under the initiative, a digital catalogue will be prepared by the schools from April 22 to 30," he said.

Saha, who holds the education portfolio, said his government has taken all possible measures to provide quality education to the students.

"We have implemented the National Education Policy (NEP) to impart quality education to the students. The education department has adopted a holistic progress report, 'Vidya Setu' module and introduced smart classes in 854 schools," he said.

Asserting that the government is spending huge funds to create educational infrastructure, the chief minister said that ₹ 264 crore will be spent on constructing new school buildings and repairing the old ones in the 2025-26 fiscal.

"An amount of ₹ 153 crore has been spent on constructing 44 new school buildings between the financial years 2014-15 and 2024-25 so that students get better facilities. Besides, funds under Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) are also spent on creating infrastructure in different schools," he added. (PTI)

Police personnel asked not to attend meeting

IMPHAL, April 22: The Kangpokpi district police has asked its personnel not to attend the meeting called by a "fictitious organisation", stating that disciplinary action would be taken otherwise. In a statement, the district police said it was learnt from social media that the Kangchup Area Protection and Development Committee, under the aegis of Kuki Inpi, South West Sadar Hills, has called for a meeting of all personnel of police, Manipur Rifles and Indian Reserve Battalion from Kuki villages in Kangchup area on April 30. "All personnel are strictly warned that the announcement made by the fictitious organisation is illegal and any uniformed personnel attending the meeting will be considered to have committed gross service misconduct and strict disciplinary action will be initiated," it said. (PTI)

No.RDB-69/15th Finance/BTC/2021-22,

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders with a validity period of 180 (one hundred eighty) days from the date of receipt in prescribed form affixing non-refundable court fee stamps of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight and paise twenty five) only subsequently to be drawn up in printed F-2 form are hereby invited from the Govt. registered PWD Building, Irrigation, Water Resources, PHE others Govt. Contractor's under Class-I (A, B, C), Class-II and Class-III category according to tender limit of eligibility for the following works and will be received in the office of the undersigned from 11.00 AM up to 2.00 pm on 28-04-2025 and will be opened on 16-05-2025 at same place at 2.15 pm in the presence of willing contractors or their authorized agents.

Name of Dev. Block	Name of Scheme	Tender Amount (Rs.)	Earnest Money	Cost of Tender in Rs.	Time for completion in days
Rupshi Dev. Block.	"Const. of Drinking water supply at Athokojhar part-4".	Rs.10,00,000.00	1% for ST, SC, OBC & .2% for others	300.00	3 (Three) Month

Details NIT may be seen in all working days in the office of the undersigned. Tender paper will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agent up to 12.00 Noon on all working days from 23-04-2025 to 28-04-2025 in the office of the undersigned on payment of in the form of Banker cheque/ Demand draft of nationalized Bank (Preferable SBI) duly pledged to the BDO, Rupshi Dev. Block, BTC, Kokrajhar. The Cost of tender (Non-Refundable) must be in the form of Demand Draft/ Banker Cheque of a Nationalized Bank drawn in favour of the Principal Secretary, BTC, Kokrajhar and payable at SBI, Kokrajhar to be deposited 0.03%.

Sd/-Block Development Officer
Rupshi Development Block.

PROVISION OF RCC OVER HEAD TANK & MAINTENANCE WORKS

E-Tender Notice No. TSK/Engg/12 of 2025 Dated: 17-04-2025. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Item No. 1. Brief Description of Item: Provision of 60,000 Gallon capacity RCC over head Tank under the jurisdiction at New Tinsukia (2 Nos. 10000 Gallon capacity and 2 Nos. 20000 Gallon capacity at New Tinsukia). Tender Value: ₹2,15,29,832/- Earnest Money: ₹2,57,700/- Item No. 2. Brief Description of Item: At Tinsukia Division-Maintenance of Officer's & Subordinate Rest house under the jurisdiction of ADEN/Tinsukia, ADEN/ Dibrugarh Town, ADEN/Saru Patthar, ADEN/Mariani Jn. for 2 years. Tender Value: ₹2,52,75,728/- Earnest Money: ₹2,76,400/- Date & Time of closing of Tender: 15.00 hrs. of 09-05-2025 & opening at 16.00 hrs. of 09-05-2025. The complete information with the tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15.00 hrs. of 09-05-2025 in website www.ireps.gov.in

DRM (W), Tinsukia
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

E-AUCTION PROGRAMME FOR THE MONTH OF MAY 2025

E-auction programme for sale of Railway Scrap materials under jurisdiction of Tinsukia Division for the month of May 2025 is hereby fixed as under:

SN	MONTH	DATE FIXED
1	MAY 2025	09-05-2025, 16-05-2025 & 26-05-2025 for Tinsukia Division 07-05-2025, 13-05-2025 & 29-05-2025 for GSD/Dibrugarh Town

Interested bidders may participate in E-auction through IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in

Dy. Chief Materials Manager/Dibrugarh
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers with a smile

Dated Kokrajhar the 22nd April, 2025

Parties say it 'must not go unanswered'

J-K terror attack: Govt vows 'harshest consequences' for perpetrators

NEW DELHI, April 22: The deadly terror attack targeting tourists in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam on Tuesday drew strong condemnation and outrage with Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserting that the perpetrators will not be spared and their evil agenda will never succeed.

The opposition, at the same time, demanded accountability claiming the government's claims of normalcy in Kashmir have fallen flat, with the Congress seeking an immediate all-party meeting and stressing that the attack "must not go unanswered effectively".

President Droupadi Murmu, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar and Speaker Om Birla were among the leaders who said the attack on innocent citizens is utterly unpardonable and condoned the loss of lives.

Home Minister Amit Shah briefed Prime Minister Modi, who is in Saudi Arabia, and rushed to Srinagar to take stock of the situation after one of the biggest terror attacks in recent times.

Terrorists struck in the picturesque Baisaran in Pahalgam which is the favourite hotspot of tourists from across the country, gunning down 26 people and injuring several others.

Describing it as a dastardly and inhuman act that must be con-



demned unequivocally, Murmu said, "Attacking innocent citizens, in this case tourists, is utterly appalling and unpardonable. My heartfelt condolences to the families who have lost their dear ones and my prayers for the quick recovery of the injured."

In a post on X, the prime minister said, "They (terrorists) will not be spared! Their evil agenda will never succeed. Our resolve to fight terrorism is unshakable and it will get even stronger."

Modi also conveyed his condolences to those who lost their loved ones in the attack.

"I pray that the injured recover at the earliest. All possible assis-

tance is being provided to those affected," he said.

Before leaving for Srinagar, Shah said he held a meeting with the officials concerned via video conferencing.

"Anguished by the terror attack on tourists in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir. The entire nation is united in fighting the scourge of cross-border terrorism," Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said in a post on X.

"These dastardly targeted attacks are a blot on humanity. News reports indicate that precious lives have been lost. On behalf of the Congress party, my heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims. Our thoughts and prayers are with the injured. (PTI)

Home Secretary Govind Mohan, Director of Intelligence Bureau Tapan Deka and a few senior officials accompanied the home minister.

"Anti-terror ops launched to neutralise terrorists. Entire nation is angry and the blood of our forces is boiling. I want to assure the nation that perpetrators of the Pahalgam attack will have to pay a very heavy price for their heinous act. My heartfelt condolences to bereaved families," Manoj Sinha said on X.

The Congress said the terror attack on innocent tourists in Pahalgam is a blot on humanity and the government should ensure accountability instead of making hollow claims about normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir.

"I strongly condemn the cowardly terror attack on innocent tourists in Pahalgam, Jammu & Kashmir. The entire nation is united in fighting the scourge of cross-border terrorism," Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said in a post on X.

"These dastardly targeted attacks are a blot on humanity. News reports indicate that precious lives have been lost. On behalf of the Congress party, my heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims. Our thoughts and prayers are with the injured. (PTI)

Anurag bats for 'one nation, one election', calls it 'win-win situation' for country

SRINAGAR, April 22: BJP MP Anurag Thakur on Tuesday said the implementation of the 'one nation, one election' formula would be a win-win situation for the country as it would not just cut the expenses incurred in conducting various polls but also save a lot of time.

"Elections were held in Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir within a few months of the Lok Sabha polls (last year). Then elections were held in Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Delhi. So, there are at least five assembly elections in a year.

"If all the polls are held simultaneously, it will reduce the expenditure, save time and increase the voting percentage as well," Thakur told reporters in Srinagar on the sidelines of a party event on 'one nation, one election' (ONOE). The former Union minister said conducting simultaneous polls would reduce the expenditure of the candidates, political parties, and help the country save money.

"Around Rs 1.5 lakh crore was spent in the (2024) Lok Sabha elections -- by political parties, candidates, other institutions and the Centre, which can be saved. It can add 1.5 per cent to India's GDP. Thus, it will be a win-win situation for India wherein people will have a good government for five years," Thakur said.

With the implementation of ONOE, officials who are usually busy conducting elections will be able to focus on their primary duties, the five-time sitting MP from Hamirpur, Himachal Pradesh, said.

"When the model code of conduct is implemented, it slows down developmental works. A lot of time is lost before and after the conduct of elections, which usually takes 45-90 days.

"It also takes time to form a government, so a lot of time is lost. That is why we are saying that there should be 'one nation, one election'," Thakur said.

If the ONOE formula is implemented in 2029, all the elections will be held together, he said.

"If it (ONOE) matures up for 2029, elections in Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Punjab, which are scheduled in 2027, will be valid for two years only, and in 2029, all the elections will be held together," Thakur said.

"If Lok Sabha polls and state elections are conducted together, the country will benefit," he added.

To a question on the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, Thakur said the BJP has promised it and "J-K will get it".

Asked about the situation in the Jammu region, which witnessed a spate of terror attacks in the recent past, Thakur said the BJP has zero tolerance policy towards terrorism.

"Naxalism and terrorism are being dealt with sternly across the country. Naxals are being killed and



arrested at many places, while several Naxals have laid down arms. If you see the situation in Kashmir, there is a lot of peace now compared to the previous years.

"If there were attempts (to launch attacks) in some parts of Jammu, our security forces took strong action against those. There is no place for terrorism. BJP has zero tolerance policy against terrorism," Thakur said.

Asked whether some BJP leaders were trying to put pressure on the Supreme Court over the challenges to the Waqf (Amendment) Act, the former Union minister said, "We are not putting any pressure on anyone. Our national president has made it clear." "The Congress and the opposition parties created fear and misled the people on issues such as Articles 370, and 35A, triple talaq, Ram Mandir, and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). When these cases went to the SC, the government's stand was proven right.

"Banning triple talaq has benefitted our Muslim sisters. After the Ram Mandir was built, no one suffered any losses, but got benefitted. None of the Muslims lost their citizenship after the CAA was implemented. The opposition is lying while Rahul Gandhi is maligning India even on foreign shores," Thakur said.

Hitting out at Rahul Gandhi, Thakur said he loses elections in India and then runs an agenda against the nation in foreign countries.

"He (Gandhi) should ask Uncle Sam, his mentor Sam Pitroda, for clarity. Pitroda said there is no contribution of Babasaheb Ambedkar in framing the Constitution but Rahul Gandhi walks with Ambedkar's photo in India.

"So, what is their stand? Pitroda said there should be wealth distribution... What is Rahul Gandhi's stand on that? Pitroda has made statements against India many times, not just once. But he is a mentor to Rahul Gandhi, from whom he takes inspiration," Thakur alleged. (PTI)

IAF official attack: Action will be taken as per law, says K'taka CM

MANDYA/BENGALURU, April 22: Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday said he has asked police officials to take action in accordance with law irrespective of whoever is involved. The CM's instruction came in connection with a road rage incident in the city involving a Wing Commander and a call centre employee.

Stating that the IAF officer had made "unwarranted and derogatory" remarks about Karnataka and Kannadigas on social media, displaying conduct that is deeply disrespectful and inflammatory, he highlighted that the inclusive spirit of this land is well documented in history.

"I have asked officials to take action in accordance with the law, whoever it is -- whether Wing Commander or anyone else," Siddaramaiah told reporters in Mandya.

Noting that both sides have given police complaints, he made it clear that action would be taken in accordance with the law.

Later in a post on 'X' Siddaramaiah said, "In connection with a recent incident in CV Raman Nagar, Bengaluru, Wing Commander Shiladitya Bose assaulted a Kannadiga, Vikas Kumar, following a minor vehicle-related matter. Subsequently, he made unwarranted and derogatory remarks about Karnataka and Kannadigas on social media, displaying conduct that is deeply disrespectful and inflammatory."

Kannadigas are proud of their mother tongue, but they are not parochial or intolerant. "It is not in our culture to attack or abuse others over linguistic matters," he said.

"Karnataka has a long and proud tradition of embracing people from across the country, treating them with respect, and accepting them as one of our own. The inclusive spirit of this land is well documented in history," he added.

An FIR has been registered against the 40-year-old IAF officer on charges of attempt to murder, criminal intimidation and voluntarily causing hurt based on a counter-complaint by a call centre employee, who was previously arrested on the officer's complaint in a road rage incident, police said on Tuesday. (PTI)

National Herald case is BJP's invention to divert people's attention from govt's failure: Cong

PANAJI, April 22: AICC general secretary Syed Naseer Hussain on Tuesday dubbed the National Herald case a BJP's invention to distort the legacy of freedom struggle and divert people's attention from the failures of the Central government.

Addressing a press conference in Panaji, Hussain said the Modi government unleashed the ED, "which is their favourite criminalised extortion machine", on the Congress party after it was rattled by the "historic AICC session" in Gujarat.

"The National Herald case is the digression of public attention from crucial issues facing the nation, diversion from its failures, and distortion of the freedom struggle and disparaging its heritage," he alleged.

He termed the "so-called" charge sheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate against Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi as a "political witch-hunt".

"Every member of the Gandhi family - whether in politics or not - is being targeted by the BJP," the Congress leader added. (PTI)

He said, "Our connection is not new. It is rooted in civilisational exchanges that go back to centuries. From ideas to trade, there has been a constant flow between our two great nations."

Modi asserted that their ties have been on an upward trajectory since he took office in 2014, noting that the formation of the Strategic Partnership Council in 2019 marked a major milestone.

"Since then, cooperation between us has expanded across many sectors. And let me tell you, this is just the beginning. Our partnership has limitless potential," he said.

Asked of his personal rapport with the crown prince, Modi said he has left a deep impression on him with his insights, forward-thinking vision, and passion for fulfilling the aspirations of his people. Under his leadership, Saudi Arabia has undergone tremendous social and economic transformation, he said.

He said, "This personal rapport has naturally translated into how both countries give priority to our partnership. He is a strong advocate of our bilateral ties. He has been a great supporter of the Indian diaspora in Saudi Arabia and our people living in Saudi Arabia deeply admire him."

He said when they talk, they focus on making this partnership future-ready.

Modi said he found complementarities between Saudi Vision 2030 and India's Viksit Bharat 2047, noting that bilateral investments have been increasing.

He said, "Today, the Indian growth story

offers immense opportunities for Saudi majors to invest and partner, from space economy to global supply chain collaborations.

Indian companies have also maintained a strong presence across various sectors in Saudi Arabia. They are playing a crucial role in the realisation of Saudi Vision 2030." To a question about the future of energy collaboration between the two nations, especially in the context of global energy transitions, Modi said Saudi Arabia has been a strong and reliable energy partner and is one of India's top suppliers of crude and other petroleum products.

He said, "As India seeks to become a developed country, our energy demands will continue to grow. And Saudi Arabia will remain a close partner in our energy security. As strategic partners we agree that our energy cooperation is not limited to a mere buyer-seller relationship. We are also exploring joint projects in refineries and petrochemicals."

Even in India's ambitious green targets, there is an immense scope of collaboration with Saudi Arabia, including in supply chains, circular economy, energy efficiency and green hydrogen, he added.

Referring to the proposal of India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC), he said they are working on feasibility studies for electricity grid interconnectivity between India and Saudi Arabia and the wider region.

The prime minister said this corridor will define the future of connectivity in all forms for centuries to come. (PTI)

India-Saudi Arabia ties have limitless potential: PM Modi

NEW DELHI, April 22: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has hailed Saudi Arabia as one of India's most valued partners, and a trusted friend and ally, describing the current period as promising times for their ties having a "limitless potential".

He told Arab News in an interview ahead of his two-day visit to the country, "India and Saudi Arabia will keep moving forward together - for peace, progress and prosperity, not just for our people, but for the entire world."

Noting that the two countries are working on a Bilateral Investment Treaty, he said the proposed Free Trade Agreement between India and GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) has immense potential to transform the economic relationship between India and Saudi Arabia, and the region in general. He praised the Saudi leadership for playing a vital role in strengthening this partnership and thanked Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for the invitation, which marks his thirteenth visit to the kingdom as prime minister.

He said, "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of India's most valued partners a maritime neighbour, a trusted friend and a strategic ally."

Modi said the economic ties between the two countries are as old as the monsoon winds, noting that they not only survived global challenges but have grown.

While sectors like energy, agriculture and fertilizers are the main areas of the trade, efforts at diversification have borne fruits, he said, adding that Indian businesses and Saudi industry are building stronger con-

nections.

He said, "Our connection is not new. It is rooted in civilisational exchanges that go back to centuries. From ideas to trade, there has been a constant flow between our two great nations."

Modi asserted that their ties have been on an upward trajectory since he took office in 2014, noting that the formation of the Strategic Partnership Council in 2019 marked a major milestone.

"Since then, cooperation between us has expanded across many sectors. And let me tell you, this is just the beginning. Our partnership has limitless potential," he said.

Asked of his personal rapport with the crown prince, Modi said he has left a deep impression on him with his insights, forward-thinking vision, and passion for fulfilling the aspirations of his people. Under his leadership, Saudi Arabia has undergone tremendous social and economic transformation, he said.

He said, "This personal rapport has naturally translated into how both countries give priority to our partnership. He is a strong advocate of our bilateral ties. He has been a great supporter of the Indian diaspora in Saudi Arabia and our people living in Saudi Arabia deeply admire him."

He said when they talk, they focus on making this partnership future-ready.

Modi said he found complementarities between Saudi Vision 2030 and India's Viksit Bharat 2047, noting that bilateral investments have been increasing.

He said, "Today, the Indian growth story

National Herald case an attempt by Modi govt to divert attention from failures: Shrinete

RAIPUR, April 22: Congress leader Supriya Shrinete on Tuesday alleged that the Centre was trying to divert people's attention from its failures through the "fabricated" National Herald case and rejected allegations of money laundering against top leaders of the party.

Addressing a press conference at the Congress party office, Shrinete alleged that the government has turned the Enforcement Directorate into the "election department" and misused it to target political opponents systematically.

"The National Herald case is nothing but an attempt by the BJP to distract, mislead, and distort facts. It aims to shift focus from the critical problems the country is facing and from the government's failures," Shrinete said. She alleged that the Modi-Shah duo, rattled by the Congress party's recent historic session in Gujarat, had once again weaponized the ED against the Congress.

"The so-called chargesheet filed against Sonia Gandhi ji and Rahul Gandhi ji is a political conspiracy. Every member of the Gandhi fam-

ily—whether active in politics or not—is being targeted by the BJP," she claimed. Highlighting "flaws" in the case, Shrinete pointed out, "It is ironic that money laundering charges have been framed in a case where not a single rupee or asset has been transferred".

She said converting debt into equity to make a balance sheet debt-free is a legal and common corporate practice. "When there was no money involved, where is the laundering?"

Calling the case a "conspiratorial political scam," she alleged that the Modi government has transformed the ED into a tool for political revenge. "The conviction rate in ED cases is merely 1 per cent. Moreover, 98 per cent of political cases registered by the ED are against rivals of the ruling party," she said. Shrinete alleged that the BJP government was adopting all possible means to suppress the Congress party, its leadership, and their families.

"This is a direct and dangerous attack on democratic opposition. It represents the worst form of revenge politics," she alleged. (PTI)

MP govt turned tribal-dominated districts safe corridors for liquor smuggling, alleges Cong



BHOPAL, April 22: The Congress on Tuesday accused the Madhya Pradesh government of turning tribal-dominated districts like Jabua, Alirajpur, Dhar and Ratlam into "safe corridors" for liquor smuggling, and demanded a ban on alcohol in these areas on the lines of religious places.

Addressing a press conference, Vikrant Bhuria, the president of the Congress' tribal wing, claimed that liquor is smuggled in large quantities from this tribal belt in Madhya Pradesh to neighbouring Gujarat, where it is banned.

"Tribal-dominated districts in the state, especially those bordering Gujarat and Maharashtra, like Jabua, Alirajpur, Dhar and Ratlam, have become safe corridors for liquor smuggling. Large consignments of liquor seized from

time to time are proof of this," he said.

Smuggling of liquor is not possible without the connivance or protection of the state government, administration and police officials, he alleged.

Citing media reports, Bhuria claimed that seven corridors have been built for liquor smuggling in Jabua and Alirajpur bordering Gujarat, and wine shops have been opened there at a distance of 400 metres to 5 kilometres from the Gujarat border so that the smuggling of alcohol can be done easily.

He also demanded that all the liquor shops bordering Gujarat be closed with immediate effect.

Bhuria, MLA from Jabua, also alleged that the contract of each liquor shop in the villages located

along the Gujarat border was given for ₹ 13 crore.

But this area is backward and impoverished, and half of the population here is below the poverty line, he said.

"In such a situation, where does the alcohol go?" he asked.

All types of alcohol, except traditional mahua liquor, should be banned in tribal areas because the use of mahua alcohol is a part of tribal tradition and worship practices. "To protect our culture and future in tribal-dominated areas, we demand the government to impose a complete ban on all other liquor except the liquor made from mahua," he said.

Mahua liquor is made from the dried flowers of the mahua tree.

"When alcohol can be banned at religious places, then why can't it be banned in the tribal areas of the state?" he asked.

Alcohol has been banned in 19 cities of religious importance in Madhya Pradesh and areas falling under some gram panchayats. These include Ujjain, Omkareshwar, Maheshwar, Mandleshwar, Orchha, Maihar, Chitrakoot, Datia, Panna, Mandla, Multai, Mandasaur and Amarkantak. Apart from this, liquor ban is also applicable in the village panchayats of Salkanpur, Kundalpur, Bandakpur, Barmankalan, Barmankhurd and Linga. (PTI)

Dubey attacks Congress on judicial appointments; oppn party hits back with 'Lodha, Gogoi' examples

NEW DELHI, April 22: BJP MP Nishikant Dubey on Tuesday hit out at the Congress over appointments in the higher judiciary during its tenure, evoking a sharp response from the opposition party that said the "shameless political use" made by the RSS, Jana Sangh and the BJP of the judicial process, courts and judges was recorded in history.

Dubey cited the example of former Rajya Sabha member and Supreme Court ex-judge Baharul Islam to attack the Congress over appointments in the higher judiciary.

"An interesting story of the Congress 'Save Constitution'. Baharul Islam sahib joined the Congress in Assam in 1951. In the name of appeasement, the Congress made him a Rajya Sabha member in 1962. Six years later, in 1968, he was again made a Rajya Sabha member for his service. The Congress could not find a bigger sycophant than him. Without making him resign from the Rajya Sabha, he was made a high court judge in 1972," Dubey said in a post in Hindi on X.

"Then, in 1979, he was made the acting chief justice of 'Assam High Court'. The poor fellow retired in 1980. But this is the Congress. A judge who retired in January 1980 was directly made a Supreme Court judge in December



1980. In 1977, he had resolved all the corruption cases against Indira Gandhi with great dedication. Then, happy with this, the Congress retired him from the Supreme Court in 1983 and made him a Rajya Sabha member for the third time from the Congress in 1983. Will I not say anything?" he said.

In an earlier post, Dubey said, "Do you know that Kailash Nath Wanchoo, the chief justice of India in 1967-68, had not studied law at all." Hitting back at the BJP MP, the Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khara said Dubey might not have heard the name of Guman Mal Lodha and would not say it even if he had heard it.

"He (Lodha) was president of Jana Sangh Rajasthan from 1969

to 1971. He was a member of the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly from 1972 to 1977 and head of many committees. Then, with the grace of the Jana Sangh in the Janata Party government, he became a judge of Rajasthan High Court in 1978. The matter did not end there. In 1988, Guman Mal was made chief justice of Guwahati High Court." Khara said in a post on X. When he left, he was made an MP thrice on tickets of the Jana Sangh and the BJP, Khara pointed out.

Another incident is even more serious in which the chief justice of the Supreme Court was forced to resign and asked to contest the presidential election, he said, claiming that this incident was the "biggest and most shameful exam-

ple" of political use of judges in independent India.

K Subbarao became the ninth chief justice of India on June 30, 1966, but resigned a few months later on April 11, 1967, under pressure from the Jana Sangh as the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra Party wanted him to be the presidential candidate, Khara claimed.

"Subbarao resigned from the post of chief justice of India on April 11, 1967, and entered the electoral fray. However, he lost the presidential election and the plans of the Jana Sangh could not be fulfilled. Zakir Hussain defeated him by a huge margin," the Congress leader pointed out.

"The matter does not stop there, it goes up to Ranjan Gogoi... nowadays a video of a hateful Sanghi is also very viral that how he announced the decision on Ram Mandir to save his son-in-law," he alleged.

"The shameless political use made by the RSS, Jana Sangh and the BJP of the judicial process, courts and judges is recorded in the pages of history," Khara said.

Dubey's recent attack on the Supreme Court and Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna, blaming him for "religious wars" in India, had forced the BJP to reject his criticism and distance itself from the controversial remarks. (PTI)

J&K LG, CM condemn Pahalgam terror attack

JAMMU/SRINAGAR, April 22: Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday condemned the terror attack in the tourist resort of Pahalgam in south Kashmir's Anantnag district and vowed to bring the perpetrators to justice.

At least 12 tourists were injured in the terror attack at Baisaran, a meadow accessible only by foot or ponies in Pahalgam.

"I strongly condemn the cowardly terror attack on tourists in Pahalgam. I assure the people that those behind this despicable attack will not go unpunished," the LG said in a post on X.

He said he has spoken to the director general of police and other security officials, and that teams of the Army and police have been rushed to the area to launch search operations.

"Directed the district administration and the health officials to provide immediate medical attention to those admitted at Pahalgam. An injured tourist has been evacuated to GMC Anantnag. I pray for the speedy recovery of all the injured," he added.

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also condemned the attack, saying it is an abomination.

"I'm shocked beyond belief. This attack on our visitors is an abomination. The perpetrators of this attack are animals, inhuman and worthy of contempt. No words of condemnation are enough. I send my sympathies to the families of the deceased," he said in a post on X.

Abdullah said he has spoken to his ministerial colleague, Sakina Itoo, who has reached the hospital to oversee the arrangements for the injured.

"I'll be flying back to Srinagar immediately," the chief minister, who was in Jammu, added.

He also said the attack is "much larger than anything we have seen" directed at civilians in recent years.

"The death toll is still being ascertained so I don't want to go into those details. They will be officially conveyed as the situation becomes clearer. Needless to say this attack is much larger than anything we've seen directed at civilians in recent years," he said.

People's Democratic Party (PDP) chief Mehbooba Mufti said such attacks must be denounced.

"I strongly condemn the cowardly attack on tourists in Pahalgam, which tragically killed five and injured several as being reported for now. Such violence is unacceptable and must be denounced," she said in a post on X.

The former chief minister said historically, Kashmir has welcomed tourists warmly, making this rare incident deeply concerning, and called for a thorough investigation.

"A thorough investigation is needed to bring the perpetrators to justice and examine potential security lapses. Ensuring visitor safety is paramount, and steps must be taken to prevent future attacks. Our thoughts are with the victims and their families," she added.

The Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) strongly condemned the attack, describing it as the most unfortunate and shameful act.

"The rank and file of the JKPCC, led by president Tariq Hameed Karra, strongly denounced the militant attack on tourists. It is very shocking and anguishing to learn about the mindless and dastardly militant attack on innocent tourists," it said in a statement.

Such incidents are highly deplorable and have no place in a civilised society, it added.

The incident has put a big question mark on the tall claims of the Bharatiya Jnata Party-led Centre with regard to the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir, the statement said, adding that the perpetrators of the heinous crime must be identified and given exemplary punishment.

People's Conference chief Sajad Lone said the perpetrators of the attack are the worst enemies of Kashmiris.

"Condemn strongly the dastardly and cowardly attack in Pahalgam. For decades we have been identified with being great hosts. We have a history of hospitality. And some cowardly terrorists want to destroy it all," he said in a post on X.

Lone said the tourism industry here has suffered a lot and those involved in the sector have begun to restart their lives after a long time.

"They had begun to dream. And here are the ugly villains to shatter it all. Make no mistake. These terror attacks are aimed at yet again disempowering us economically. Those who do this are the worst enemies of Kashmiris.

"They defile our history of hospitality, smearing our glorious past. And they are a curse on our present. They are enemies of our children of our young generation. We have to unitedly send a message that there is no tolerance for terror. Let us live our lives in peace and economic dignity. Please get out of our lives. These tourists are our revered guests," Lone said. (PTI)

'I find it conceivably intriguing that some have recently reflected that constitutional offices can be ceremonial or ornamental' Every word spoken by constitutional functionary guided by national interest: Dhankhar

NEW DELHI, April 22: Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Tuesday asserted that every word spoken by a constitutional authority is guided by supreme national interest, as he hit out at his critics for questioning his remarks on a recent Supreme Court order.

Dhankhar also said that efforts of forces working against the country to tarnish and run down institutions should be neutralised, "be it that of the presidency".

Asserting that Parliament is supreme, Dhankhar said, "There is no visualisation in the Constitution of any authority above Parliament. Parliament is supreme... Let me tell you, it is as supreme as every individual in the country."

A top court bench recently prescribed a three-month timeline for the president of India to decide on Bills reserved by governors for her nod. Reacting to the directive, Dhankhar had said that the judiciary cannot play the role of a "super Parliament" and get into the domain of the executive.

Addressing a Delhi University event, he said every word spoken by a constitutional functionary is



guided by the supreme sublime interest of the nation.

"I find it conceivably intriguing that some have recently reflected that constitutional offices can be ceremonial or ornamental. Nothing can be far distanced from a wrong understanding of the role of every one in this country - constitutional functionary or a citizen," he said.

Stating that everyone of them has a role, he said, "The soul of democracy resides and pulsates in every citizen. Democracy will blossom. Its values will get heightened.

When citizen is alert, citizen contributes and what a citizen contributes, there is no substitute for that." Dhankhar also said that there is no visualisation in the Constitution of any authority above Parliament.

"Part of 'We the People' is an atom in democracy and that atom has atomic power. That atomic power is reflected during elections and that is why we are a democratic nation," Dhankhar, who is also the Rajya Sabha chairperson, underlined. Voicing concern over

the recent Supreme Court ruling prescribing a timeline for the president to decide on Bills, Dhankhar on Friday said India had not bargained for a democracy where judges will legislate and perform executive functions and act as a "super Parliament".

Earlier this month, the Supreme Court had, for the first time, prescribed that the President should decide on the Bills reserved for her consideration by governors within three months from the date such reference is received.

"There is a directive to the president by a recent judgement... We never bargained for democracy for this day. President being called upon to decide in a time-bound manner, and if not, becomes law," Dhankhar said.

The vice-president was criticised for questioning the judiciary, with critics terming his remarks "unconstitutional".

In an apparent response to Dhankhar's "super Parliament" remark, a top court bench on Monday said that "as it is, we are alleged of encroaching upon the parliamentary and executive func-

tions".

Justice B R Gavai, who was heading a bench also comprising Justice Augustine George Masih, made a similar observation in another matter.

While one matter was over the recent violence in West Bengal during anti-Waqf law protests, the other plea sought a direction to the Centre to take appropriate steps to prohibit streaming of sexually explicit and pornographic content on OTT and social media platforms.

While hearing the plea on online content, Justice Gavai said, "Who can control it? It is for the Union (government) to frame a regulation in that regard."

Gavai is set to be the next chief justice of India.

In a related development, Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Tuesday said everything the apex court said was consistent with the country's constitutional values and guided by national interest.

Sibal's remarks in a post on X came soon after Dhankhar asserted that every word spoken by a constitutional functionary was guided by supreme national interest. (PTI)

UP govt transfers 33 IAS officers

LUCKNOW, April 22: In a major administrative reshuffle, the Uttar Pradesh government transferred 33 IAS officers, including district magistrates of 11 districts and three IPS officers, officials said here on Tuesday.

Among those transferred included Director Information, Shishir, who has been made special secretary MSME, export promotion and CEO, Khadi board, while Varanasi Divisional Commissioner Kaushal Raj Sharma has been appointed as the new secretary to the chief minister, they said. DM, Bhadohi, Vishal Singh will be the new Director, Information and Culture, while District Magistrate, Varanasi, S Rajlingam has been made Divisional Commissioner Varanasi. Besides, them district magistrates of Hapur, Azamgarh, Bareilly, Ambedkarnagar, Ghazipur, Jhansi, Mahoba, Kushinagar, Sant Kabir Nagar, and Bhadohi have also been reshuffled. According to the transfer list, L Venkateswarlu has been relieved of the charge of Principal Secretary, Transport and Chairman, Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation. (PTI)

Amit Shah leaves for Srinagar after terrorists attack tourists in J-K

NEW DELHI, April 22: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday left for Srinagar to take stock of the situation in Jammu and Kashmir in the wake of a deadly terror attack on tourists at Pahalgam, official sources said.

Shah headed for J-K soon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to him and asked him to visit the Union Territory, they said.

Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj Sinha, who was in the national capital, Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, Director of Intelligence Bureau Tapan Deka and a few senior officials accompanied the home minister, who has left on a special flight from IGI airport here.

The home minister in a post on 'X' said he had briefed the prime minister about the incident and held a meeting with the officials concerned via video conferencing.

"Anguished by the terror attack on tourists in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir. My thoughts are with the family members of the deceased. Those involved in this dastardly act of terror will not be spared, and we will come down heavily on the perpetrators with the harshest consequences," Shah said.

In Srinagar, Shah will hold an urgent security review meeting with all the agencies.

Multiple tourists were feared killed and at least 20 injured when terrorists opened fire in a picturesque meadow near Kashmir's Pahalgam town, breaching the calm of a regular Tuesday afternoon with scores of people enjoying their day out.



The death toll could be more than 20, a high-ranking official indicated without getting into details.

The attack, which comes as US Vice President JD Vance is visiting India, took place around 3 pm, the officials said. The toll is still being ascertained, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said while describing the terror attack as "much larger than anything we've seen directed at civilians in recent years".

More than 30 persons were killed and 60 others injured in a terror attack on Amarnath base camp in Pahalgam in 2000. A year later, 13 persons were killed and 15 others injured in an attack on Amarnath pilgrims at Sheshnag while 11 persons were killed in another attack in 2002 in the Pahalgam area.

Eight pilgrims were killed in a terror attack in 2017 as they were on the way home from Amarnath shrine.

A tourist couple from Rajasthan was injured in a firing incident by terrorists at Yannar in Pahalgam in May last year. (PTI)

Return to work, leave tainted-untainted list to govt: Mamata

KOLKATA, April 22: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday urged protesting teachers who lost jobs following a Supreme Court ruling, to return to work, assuring them that her government will "protect" their salaries.

Thousands of teachers on Tuesday continued their overnight protests outside the West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) headquarters in Salt Lake.

"You don't need to worry about who is tainted and who is not. You only need to worry about whether you have your job and whether you are getting your salaries on time. The list to identify the tainted and untainted teachers remains with the government and the courts.

"We assure that your jobs are safe for now and you will get your salaries. Please return to your schools and resume classes. I have spoken about this several times since last night. We are with you," Banerjee said at an administrative programme in Midnapore.

The CM said a review petition for Group C and Group D staff, who have lost their jobs, will also be filed before the Supreme Court and "keep your faith in us till then".

Banerjee also warned the protesting teachers not to fall prey to those trying to provoke them.

"Had I been in Kolkata, I could have solved the issue within seconds. Do not pay heed to those who are provoking you. Let the state government look after it," she said.

Referring to "similar developments in Uttar Pradesh and Tripura", Banerjee said, "People have lost jobs in those states in huge numbers and never got them back. Don't let that happen here."

The agitators were among nearly 26,000 teaching and non-teaching staff whose appointments were invalidated by the apex court on April 3, citing "widespread irregularities" in the 2016 recruitment drive. (PTI)

Confident of getting adequate central help for landslide-hit in Ramban: Omar

RAMBAN (J-K), April 22: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday said he will approach the Centre to declare Ramban a "disaster zone", and hoped adequate Central assistance will be provided to extend relief to the people affected by flash floods and landslides in the hilly district.

In his second visit to the affected area in as many days, the chief minister assessed the ground situation and met with the affected families.

Abdullah said the road clearance operation along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway is going on at a war footing and officers have assured him that the only all-weather road connecting Kashmir with rest of the country will be restored for single-way traffic within next 24 hours.

"The first priority of the administration was to save the lives of the people trapped in their homes and vehicles, which was successfully done. The second priority is to restore the blocked roads to restore con-

nectivity and for that machinery has been deployed and I was assured that the highway will be opened for single-way traffic by 24 hours which will be followed by clearing the massive sludge in other areas," he told reporters.

"We are trying to rehabilitate the affected population temporarily somewhere till their houses are restored. The deputy commissioner (Baseer-ul-Haq Chaudhary) has been directed to provide immediate relief under Red Cross norms to the affected families and when the recovery work is over, we will make assessments to provide relief under SDRF and NDRF norms. We will also approach the Centre to declare Ramban as 'disaster zone'. I am fully confident that the Centre will provide us with the required assistance," Abdullah said.

The natural calamity has claimed the lives of three persons, while causing extensive damage to residential structures, vehicles, and critical road infrastructure.

The chief minister, accompanied by his

political advisor Nasir Aslam Wani, flew in a helicopter to Chanderkote area of Ramban this morning and immediately left for landslide-hit Seri to assess the situation.

Deputy Commissioner, Ramban was seen briefing the chief minister as he moved on foot and met the affected families. The chief minister made an impromptu stop during his visit to Ramban market to meet a group of residents, who had halted his motorcade, seeking urgent assistance following the devastating cloudburst that damaged their homes.

"I am here to listen to your concerns and assure you that we will do everything possible to help you rebuild your lives," the chief minister stated.

Among the crowd, an agitated woman said, "Our house was washed away in the cloudburst, but nobody from the administration has provided any help so far. If the government won't listen to us, then who will? We chose them, and it is their responsibility to provide us relief."

The atmosphere was charged as protesters chanted, "Fulfill our demands".

Another resident highlighted the ongoing distress within the community, indicating that the administration has yet to offer any relief or restore essential services such as electricity and water supply to the affected areas.

In an apparent reference to the protest, Abdullah said this was the third time that senior ministers in the administration visited Ramban to review the situation and supervise the rescue and relief measures.

"On day one (Sunday), deputy chief minister along with two MLAs concerned toured the district. On Monday, I came by road from Srinagar and today I am here again to ensure that the restoration work is done as fast as it could be," he said.

Indirectly blaming local BJP leaders for the protest, Abdullah said, "I would like to request a BJP candidate moving around here to do this type of politics in Delhi rather than here. Instead, he should seek a



special package from the Centre."

The chief minister also said that many people complained that blocking of culverts during highway construction works was the main reason for the tragedy.

"I will reach out to Union Transport minister Nitin Gadkari and bring him here along with National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) officers to make a fresh review of the highway for its stabilization," he said. (PTI)

US Vice President Vance, family visit Amber Fort in Jaipur

JAIPUR, April 22: Caparisoned elephants, colourful rangolis and folk dancers... There was all this and more as US Vice President JD Vance and his family visited the famed Amber Fort to a red carpet welcome on Tuesday morning.

Vance, his Indian-origin wife Usha Chilukuri and their three children -- Ewan, Vivek, Mirabel -- reached the UNESCO World Heritage at around 9.30 am. The Vances spent around two hours at the fort before returning to the luxurious Rambagh Palace Hotel, where they are staying. Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and Deputy Chief Minister Diya Kumari welcomed them at the fort.

Flanked by security personnel, as the Vances entered the main courtyard -- Jaleb Chowk -- two decorated female elephants named Chanda and Mala greeted them by raising their trunks, an official said. They also witnessed a cultural performance featuring folk dances, including Kacchi Ghodi, Ghoomar and Kalbeliya, offering a glimpse into the vibrant culture of



Rajasthan, he said. While Vice President Vance walked the red carpet holding his sons, Ewan and Vivek, by the hand, his wife carried their daughter Mirabel. The family appeared captivated by the impressive courtyard and architecture, officials said. After the visit, the family returned to the hotel as Vance is scheduled to deliver a speech on US-India ties at the Rajasthan International Centre.

The Amber Fort Palace was

closed to the public from 12 pm on Monday to make preparations for the Vance family's visit. Traffic was rerouted to ensure that the stretch of road from Rambagh Palace Hotel to the fort remained clear for the VIP movement.

The Amber Fort is situated in the Aravalli mountain range, nearly 11 km from the centre of Jaipur. It is an extensive palace complex built with pale yellow, pink sandstone and white marble. The fort is divided

into four main sections, each with its own courtyards. Amber was the capital of the Kachhwaha Rajputs before they shifted their capital to Jaipur. Man Singh I started the construction of the new palace complex at the end of the 16th century. After Raja Man Singh I, Mirza Raja Jai Singh I and Sawai Jai Singh II made some modifications, including to the interiors of the fort. The fort was constructed in four stages, and the palace inside was the residence of the Rajput Maharajas and their families.

It consists of a 'Diwan-e-Aam' (hall of public audience), 'Diwan-e-Khaas' (hall of private audience), a 'Sheesh Mahal' (mirror palace) and a 'Sukh Niwas'. In the Sheesh Mahal, numerous minuscule mirrors are placed on the walls in a unique arrangement. Even a single ray of light entering the palace gets reflected in a way that illuminates the entire hallway.

The Sukh Niwas is known for its distinctive cooling feature created by winds blowing over cascading water. (PTI)

Bengal school job loss: Protesting teachers vow to intensify stir, stay put outside SSC office

KOLKATA, April 22: Thousands of teachers, whose appointments were annulled following a Supreme Court verdict, on Tuesday vowed to intensify their stir, as they continued the overnight protests outside the West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) headquarters in Salt Lake.

The agitators were among nearly 26,000 teaching and non-teaching staff whose appointments were invalidated by the apex court on April 3, citing "widespread irregularities" in the 2016 recruitment drive.

Braving the scorching sun, the protesters numbering over 2,000 surrounded the WBSSC headquarters, denying entry and exit of officials, including its chairman Siddhartha Majumdar, who has been inside the building since last evening.

The agitating teachers have been demanding that the commission publish the list of candidates who were recruited on the basis of merit, and those who got appointments by allegedly paying bribes. "We have realised we have nothing more to lose. This agitation will only end with justice -- not another promise, not another lie," asserted one of the protesters.

"We will not let any food item enter the SSC building. If we are forced to starve on the streets under the open sky, those sitting inside air-conditioned rooms should also feel the heat," said another agitator, as more barricades were put up around the commission premises and security was tightened.

The protesters banged empty bottles and raised slogans for justice, accusing the commission of "consistently lying" and terming state Education Minister

Bratya Basu's assurances "betrayal in the disguise of legal advice".

A delegation of eight teachers who had gone to meet the chairman was still inside the building and continuing their sit-in without any food, a protester claimed.

"A woman protester had earlier fainted in this heat, but she insists she will not budge until justice is delivered," he said.

Another sacked teacher said: "I have served for seven years. Now, all of a sudden I have been deemed 'undeserving'. My daughter needs regular kidney treatment. I have nothing left to save her."

Earlier, state Education Minister Bratya Basu had said that the list of "deserving and undeserving" candidates would be published in two weeks.

The protests outside the SSC building erupted after the commission failed to publish the list by Monday evening, even after another round of meeting with representatives of the teachers.

SSC Chairman Siddhartha Majumdar, in a late-night statement on Monday, said the commission will abide by the apex court directives and ensure "the (jobless) teachers having rendered services will be given salary".

Making no mention about posting the list of all "tainted/untainted" candidates as per the April 21 deadline, Majumdar said: "In respect of the matter of recruitment of teachers in 2016, it is made clear that SSC will abide by the orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court." (PTI)

Row over Kangana's 'Emergency': Author Coomi Kapoor alleges distortion of facts, contract breach



New Delhi, April 22: Actor and BJP MP Kangana Ranaut's controversial film, "Emergency", has landed in trouble once again after senior journalist and author Coomi Kapoor accused her production house, Manikarnika Films Private Limited, and Netflix of "intentionally and maliciously distorting facts" and exploiting her name by claiming that the film is based on her book, "The Emergency: A Personal History".

Kapoor, whose book was published by Penguin in 2015, has claimed that the tripartite agreement signed between Manikarnika Films, Penguin and herself regarding the book's intellectual property rights for adaptation into a feature film has been "blatantly

breached".

She has accused the makers of the film of "multiple factual inaccuracies and misleading portrayals of historical events".

"My daughter is a lawyer, so on her advice, I had included two clauses. While the producers had full artistic freedom to create the film, nothing should be altered that contradicts historical facts that are publicly available," Kapoor explained.

"The contract also stated that the author's name and book could not be used for promoting or exploiting the film without prior written consent. I was in Goa and had not seen the film at the time, believing that they would honour the contract. But they are still claiming

that the film is based on the book," she said, adding that she has already sent two legal notices, but received no response.

To buttress her point, Kapoor cited her August, 2023 WhatsApp exchange with Kangana Ranaut's brother, Akshat Ranaut of Manikarnika Films, in which she repeatedly emphasised that the contract must be followed and that the phrase "based on her book" should not be used, though referencing the book in the sources section is acceptable.

"Akshat replied and had agreed to these terms during the conversation," she said.

The film, "Emergency", on Netflix includes a disclaimer, stating that it is "inspired by the books, 'The Emergency' by Coomi Kapoor and 'Priyadarshani' by Jayanth Vasant Shinde".

However, toward the end, the disclaimer shifts tone, stating that the film is "based on the books, 'The Emergency' by Coomi Kapoor and 'Priyadarshani' by Jayanth Vasant Shinde", which Kapoor argues directly contradicts the terms of their agreement.

The author further pointed out that at the time of signing the agreement, she was told that only a specific chapter on former prime minister Indira Gandhi from her book would be referenced for the film. However, she was surprised to find that the film's title closely mirrored that of her book.

"This now appears to be a deliberate attempt on part of you to get traction for the said film, especially since it had been subject to uncomplimentary remarks," states a legal notice sent by Kapoor to the filmmakers.

The author pointed out that the film contains numerous historical inaccuracies - far more than those detailed in the legal notice.

Among those is a scene that shows Gandhi personally threatening the then President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed into declaring the Emergency without consulting her Cabinet as well as a depiction suggesting that the Emergency ended

when she announced the general election.

"Factually, the Emergency was not removed till after Mrs Indira Gandhi lost the general election in March 1977," the legal notice said.

On June 25, 1975, Gandhi declared a state of Emergency in the country, suspending civil liberties, jailing opposition leaders and dissidents and effecting press censorship. The Emergency was lifted on March 21, 1977.

Other distortions highlighted in the legal notice include the incorrect association of Jayaprakash Narayan's 1974 "Total Revolution Movement" with Gandhi's 1972 Shimla Agreement as well as inaccurate portrayals of the arrest and imprisonment of political leaders during the Emergency.

PTI attempted to contact Kangana Ranaut's sister and manager, Rangoli Chandel, for a comment, but she was unavailable.

Akshat Ranaut though, according to Kapoor, did reach out to her over the phone after the media reported the issue.

"Yes, he (Akshat) called. I told him 'you were never available all this while'. He asked me, 'What would you like?'. I told him I will talk to my lawyer," Kapoor said.

However, according to the notice, Kapoor has demanded immediate compensation for the severe reputational, professional, emotional and financial damage suffered by her due to the filmmakers' reckless and illegal conduct.

"If you fail to comply, our client reserves the right to initiate legal proceedings to seek appropriate remedies for this egregious violation of her rights," the notice said.

"Emergency", which was also directed and produced by Kangana Ranaut, had earlier courted controversy over its censor certificate and allegations that it misrepresented the Sikh community.

It was not screened at cinema halls in Punjab after protests by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) and other Sikh organisations. (PTI)

Anurag Kashyap apologises to Brahmin community for his outburst, says deviated from the issue



MUMBAI, April 22: Filmmaker Anurag Kashyap on Tuesday apologised for his remark against the Brahmin community, saying he crossed a boundary by using "abusive language" while replying to someone in anger.

The director has been at the centre of a major controversy over his intemperate comment on the Brahmin community and he admitted that he spoke badly "about the entire community".

"There are many from the (Brahmin) community who have been in my life and still are and they contribute a lot. Today, they all are hurt by me, my family is hurt by me.

Many intellectuals, whom I respect, are hurt by my anger and my way of speaking," the filmmaker said in a statement on Instagram.

Kashyap, who has criticised the protests by the Brahmin community against the release of Hindi film "Phule" and the censor troubles faced by caste-based films such as "Santosh" and "Dhadak 2", admitted that he deviated from his "point of view" due to the choice of his words.

"I sincerely apologize to this community to whom I did not want to say this, but wrote it in anger while responding to someone's cheap comment. I apologise to all my friends, my family and the (Brahmin) society for my way of speaking and for the abusive language.

The filmmaker said he will work on his anger to avoid a similar situation in future. "And if I have to talk about the issue, I will use the right words. I hope you will forgive me," Kashyap wrote in Hindi.

On Friday, the 52-year-old "Gangs of Wasseypur" director said he and his family were receiving "rape and death threats" for his comments, which were "taken out of context".

"This is my apology, not for my post but for that one line taken out of context and the brewing hatred. No action or speech is worth your daughter, family, friends, and colleagues getting rape and death threats from the kingpins of san-skar. I won't take back what I said. Abuse me all you want. My family didn't say anything. If you want an apology, here it is," he said at the time. (PTI)

Kartik Aaryan to play shape-shifting snake in 'Naagzilla', film to release on Aug 14 next year

MUMBAI, April 22: Bollywood star Kartik Aaryan-starrer "Naagzilla" is set to arrive in theatres on August 14, 2026, the makers announced Tuesday.

The upcoming film will feature Aaryan in the never-before-seen avatar of Preyarnvadeshwar Pyare Chand, an Ichadaari (shape-shifting) 'Naag' (snake) embarking on an epic adventure.

Billed as a one-of-a-kind fantasy comedy, "Naagzilla" is directed by Mrigheep Singh Lamba of the "Fukrey" franchise from a script written by Gautam Mehra.

The movie is produced by Karan Johar, Mahaveer Jain, Adar Poon-awalla, Apoorva Mehta, Sujit Jain, and Lamba, who said it is an entertainer that blends fantasy, folklore, and full-on fun.

Johar's Dharma Productions and

Aaryan unveiled the first look from the film on their official Instagram handle.

The 45-second video features the "Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3" star surrounded by snakes.

"Insanon wali picharein toh bahut dekh leen, ab dekho naagon wali pichehar! #NaagZilla - Naag lok ka pehla kaand... Funnn phailaane aa raha hai - Preyarnvadeshwar Pyare Chand Naag Panchami par aapke nazdeeki Ssssinemas mein - 14 August 2026 ko," the post read.

"Naagzilla" marks the second collaboration between Aaryan and Dharma Productions after "Tu Meri Main Tera, Main Tera Tu Meri".

The film will clash with Varun Dhawan-starrer "Bhediya" from Dinesh Vijan's horror-comedy universe, which is also set to release on August 14, 2026. (PTI)



Pope Francis: How cinema has explored papacy and the man at the helm of Vatican

NEW DELHI, April 22: Pope Francis, the first non-European pope in 1,300 years, figured in many films and documentaries centred on him and exploring his extraordinary legacy.

Pope Francis died on Monday at the age of 88. Jorge Mario Bergoglio, from Buenos Aires, presided over the Catholic Church for more than 12 years and was known for injecting a breath of fresh air into the 2,000-year-old institution with his progressive views.

He was the first pope to play a cameo in the 2017 film "Beyond the Sun", which was directed by Graciela Rodriguez Gilio and Charlie Mainardi and revolved around stories of hope, faith and courage from the Bible.

German filmmaker Wim Wenders famously explored the late Pope's life in his 2018 documentary "Pope

Francis: A Man of His Word". The documentary premiered at the Cannes Film Festival. It features the Pope addressing various global issues, aiming to connect directly with viewers.

In an interview with the Film Society Lincoln Centre, Wenders said the documentary began after a cinephile prefect at Vatican contacted him.

"My secretary came with a letter and said you have got mail from the Vatican and it was in Italian," Wenders said, sharing that he was asked in the letter whether he was interested in exploring a project on Pope Francis' life.

Wenders said he had some 55 questions and the Pope answered them all "quite spontaneously".

The 2013 documentary "Francis: The Pope From the New World", which was filmed in Buenos Aires,

features interviews and archival footage to draw an intimate portrait of the Pope and his efforts towards the upliftment of the poor and downtrodden.

A 2015 Italian film "Call Me Francis" revolved around his life as Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Buenos Aires before he became the Pope.

The 2019 film "The Two Popes", directed by Fernando Meirelles, starred Anthony Hopkins as Pope Benedict XVI and Jonathan Pryce as Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio.

It is set before the events of 2013 when Pope Benedict XVI resigned. It follows him as he tries to convince the Cardinal to reconsider his decision to resign as archbishop. He tells Bergoglio that he is planning to abdicate.

Bergoglio took over as the pope in March 2013.

"The Two Popes" was nominated

for best actor, best supporting actor and best adapted screenplay.

Renowned filmmaker Martin Scorsese met Pope Francis in 2023 and announced a film about Jesus.

It was not just Pope Francis. The papacy has also held fascination for the common public.

"Conclave", a 2024 film deconstructs the mystery of how a pope is elected. It is set just after the death of a pope and revolves around the papal election process and the College of Cardinals convene to elect the Bishop of Rome.

Directed by Edward Berger, the film featured a starry cast in Ralph Fiennes, Stanley Tucci, John Lithgow, Sergio Castellitto, and Isabella Rossellini. It was nominated at the Academy Awards in eight categories including the best picture. The film won the Oscar for best adapted screenplay. (PTI)



India finish third in Peru World Cup, NRAI pleased with young shooters' performance

LIMA (PERU), April 22: Indian shooters finished third at the ISSF World Cup after the pair of Prithviraj Tondaiman and Pragati Dubey failed to reach the medals round in the trap mixed team event, here on the final day.

Simranpreet Kaur Brar fetched India's final medal in the women's 25m pistol event on Monday, taking the country's tally to seven, including two gold, four silver and a bronze.

While the USA also ended with seven medals, they edged ahead of India to take second place, courtesy of a higher gold-medal count.

China finished on top of the standings with four gold, three silver and six bronze medals.

The standout performer for India

was 18-year-old Suruchi Inder Singh, who claimed both of the country's gold medals. She outgunned Paris Olympics double medallist Manu Bhaker to win the 10m air pistol title before teaming up with Saurabh Chaudhary to secure gold in the mixed team event.

In the trap mixed team event on Monday, Tondaiman and Dubey posted a combined score of 134 to finish eighth, while the other Indian pair of Lakshay and Neeru ended 13th with the total score of 128. Only the top four teams advance to the medal rounds.

K Sultan Singh, Secretary General, National Rifle Association of India (NRAI), seemed pleased with the young Indian shooters' show.

"It was a young squad and the exposure of going half-way around the

world into alien conditions, adapting to the surroundings, the ranges, and then bringing out your best for India, will be an experience which will hold them in good stead," Singh was quoted as saying in a press release.

"Remember, the next LA Olympics will be a similar experience. Having said that, given the quality of competition, the squad as they have been doing generally over the years, performed splendidly," added Singh.

In the back-to-back World Cups in Argentina and Peru, Indian shooters reached a total of 32 finals, including medal matches in the mixed events and returned with 15 medals including six gold.

The 18-year-old Suruchi was the most successful, bringing home three

gold and one bronze medal.

Arya Borse was the other World Cup debutant to shine, making it to three finals and returning with two silver medals in the mixed team rifle event.

"It gives us immense pleasure to look at the depth we have developed in the sport. There are so many accomplished international shooters who were back home and not part of this tour and still we have produced such results. This shows that Indian shooting is moving in the right direction," Singh said.

The next international assignment for Indian shooters will only for shot-gun exponents who will compete in the Cyprus World Cup, beginning in the first week of May in Nicosia. (PTI)



Djokovic returns to Madrid seeking his 100th tour-level title



MADRID, April 22: Former champion Novak Djokovic has returned to the Madrid Open for the first time in three years in hopes of achieving his 100th tour-level title.

Djokovic is seeded fourth in the same half of the draw as second-

seeded Carlos Alcaraz, the home favorite who arrives at the Caja Magica this week with fitness concerns after reaching consecutive clay-court finals.

The 37-year-old Djokovic, a three-time champion in Madrid, hasn't played in the Spanish capital

since losing to Alcaraz in the 2022 semifinals, their first meeting.

Djokovic won his 99th title last August at the Paris Olympics. He has lost four finals since then, most recently last month in Miami.

The 100-title club features only Jimmy Connors (109) and Roger

Federer (103).

Over the last two weekends, Alcaraz has won the Monte Carlo Masters and lost in the Barcelona Open final, where he needed treatment on his upper right leg on Sunday.

"I'm confident it won't affect me in Madrid," he said. "That's what happens when you play so many matches and have so few days to rest. It's so demanding, and you have to give 100% every day. Having played a tournament like Monte Carlo and arriving in Barcelona with few days to adapt is really tough."

Alcaraz said fellow Spaniard Rafael Nadal, a five-time winner in Madrid, wrote to him after the Barcelona final to encourage him and say he hoped he wasn't injured.

"I bow at the feet of Rafa because of what he did week after week," Alcaraz said. "You have to respect that."

Alexander Zverev, No. 2 in the world after winning in Munich at the weekend, was the top seed in Madrid and Taylor Fritz was the third seed. Defending champion Andrey Rublev was the seventh seed.

Djokovic has a 30-9 record in Madrid, with titles in 2011, 2016 and 2019. He beat his coach Andy Murray in the 2016 final.

Alcaraz won Madrid in 2022 and 2023. (AP)

Forest beats Spurs to move into third and Leeds and Burnley win promotion from C'ship

LONDON, April 22: Nottingham Forest beat Tottenham 2-1 to move into third place in the Premier League and deepen the gloom at White Hart Lane.

Forest was clinical in front of goal and 2-0 up within 16 minutes against a team that showed many of the same failings that have dogged it all season.

Elliott Anderson's deflected shot bagged the opener after five minutes and Chris Wood added a second with a header 11 minutes later. Between the two, Wood had a goal chalked off for offside.

Although Spurs controlled possession in the second half it took it until the 87th minute to score, when Richarlison netted a header.

The result was another disappointing one for Spurs fans, who booed their team off at the final whistle.

Although Ange Postecoglou has guided the team to a Europa League semifinal, Monday's defeat was its 18th in 33 Premier League games and left it in 16th place. For Forest, meanwhile, it was a return to winning ways after defeats by Everton and Aston Villa.

In third place, it was one point above Newcastle, two above Manchester City and three above Chelsea and Aston Villa. They will be joined in the top tier next season by Leeds United and Burnley, both of which guaranteed spots in the Premier League with wins.

Leeds beat Stoke City 6-0 and Burnley beat Sheffield United 2-1 to open unassailable leads in the second-tier Championship with only two games remaining.

The top two gain automatic promotion and the next four go into the playoffs for the last remaining spot. The victories ensure another two U.S.-owned clubs will enjoy the estimated revenue uplift of around \$180 million that comes with a place in England's top tier.

Leeds is owned by the San Francisco-based 49ers Enterprises group, members of whom include American golfers Jordan Spieth and Justin Thomas. Red Bull, the energy drink company whose other soccer interests include owning Leipzig in Germany, bought a minority stake in the club last May.

Burnley, meanwhile, has been majority-owned since 2020 by the ALK Capita investment group. The New York group is fronted by U.S. businessman Alan Pace and counts former NFL star J.J. Watts as a notable shareholder. Third-placed Sheffield United and fourth-placed Sunderland are guaranteed two of the four playoff spots and Bristol City and Coventry City are in pole position to join them. (AP)

KKR batters are low on confidence: Mentor Bravo



KOLKATA, April 22: Kolkata Knight Riders batsmen are "low on confidence" right now, the team's mentor Dwayne Bravo conceded after the franchise slumped to its fifth loss in eight IPL matches this season but refused to blame the much-talked about Eden Gardens pitch for the side's woes.

KKR were handed a 39-run loss by Gujarat Titans here on Monday with skipper Ajinkya Rahane's 36-ball 50 being the only knock of substance in the steep chase of 198 here.

"IPL is a tough tournament, and when you don't start well, you know, batsmen go into a period where they lose confidence," Bravo said at the post-match media interaction, summing up the mood in the dressing room.

"That's what's happening at the moment. So like I said, we just have to keep backing them, and hopefully they come good...our batters, low in confidence and normally runs bring confidence."

"Form brings confidence. And we, at the moment, to be honest, don't have that confidence," he explained.

The Eden Gardens surface has been under the spotlight this season after the KKR camp voiced concerns about not getting its preferred home track. However, Bravo steered clear of blaming the pitch.

"Nothing is wrong with the wicket. I didn't come here to talk about the wicket. I think both teams play on the same wicket. We didn't play a good game of cricket. They played better than us," he asserted.

Last night's loss came close on the heels of an embarrassing collapse against Punjab Kings, where they were bundled out for 95 while chasing just 112. Bravo insisted that despite the horror run, the batsmen have been doing everything they can to regain rhythm in practice.

"...they are not sitting back and missing practice. So as coaches, as a group, we cannot fault the effort. It's just not working out in the middle. But I have to just keep backing the team and supporting

the guys."

Asked about the big-hitting Andre Russell's continued struggles with the bat, Bravo was quick to dismiss the idea of teams targeting their star all-rounder in particular.

"Russell is not the only one who is struggling at the moment. Russell is an experienced player, he's a successful player. Actually as a team we're not batting properly. So that's just the reality."

"...But as a group, we have to make sure that the players keep putting in their work and practice, keep preparing well, try to keep them mentally focused," he explained.

Rahane has done the heavy-lifting, and young Angkrish Raghuvanshi has impressed with his fluent strokeplay. KKR's decision to send the promising youngster as low as number nine as an impact sub raised several eyebrows in their match against GT.

Bravo, however, defended the move.

"Well, we didn't start the game for him to bat at number nine. But the way how the game panned out, eventually, he ended up at number nine. So, you know, we tried to create that left-right combination," he reasoned.

"He's one of our better players. He's been doing very well for us throughout the season. But when you're chasing 200, you try to maximise as much as possible and try to get the guys who have the ability to really hit the ball in the middle."

Bravo however did admit that they were "caught up" with the left-right combination and Raghuvanshi ended up batting way down the order when the match had all but slipped out of their hands.

Bravo acknowledged that finishing has become a massive problem for KKR.

"...there is a fine line between backing a player and trying to come up with the best combination that we can also try to make some changes, make some necessary adjustments to give the team that spot that is missing."

"It's something we have to discuss as a group, as a staff." (PTI)

I'm going to ensure I make the most of opportunity: Young women's hockey midfielder Kujur

PERTH, April 22: Drafted into the senior national women's team following an impressive performance in the Hockey India League with JSW Soorma Club, young midfielder Ajmina Kujur is desperate to make the most of the opportunity in the upcoming five-match away series against Australia.

India are set to play two games against Australia A on April 26 and 27, followed by three matches against the Australian senior team on May 1, 3, and 4 at the Perth Hockey Stadium.

"I am grateful that they have given me a chance to play now so I have to give my 100 per cent. Two years ago, I was in the senior team camp but I didn't make it into the team. Now that I have been given this chance, I am going to ensure I make the most of it," Kujur said in a Hockey India release upon landing in Australia.

Kujur had been training in the senior national camp in SAI, Bengaluru, since March 23 in preparation for the tour.

"Training with the seniors has been a wonderful experience. I am learning a lot and I am excited to play with them ahead. Everyone has enjoyed training with each other and now it is time for us to give it our best against Australia," the 23-year-old said.

"The senior players are really helpful, especially Sushila di (Sushila Chanu) who has supported me a lot during the camp. She tells me every time I make a mistake and has taught me how to play to my strengths. I also tend to think a lot when I make an error but the senior players have helped me cope with it and I am a lot more confident now."

At the start of the year, Kujur played a crucial role in the HIL (Women) as she featured in all the seven matches for runners-up side JSW Soorma Hockey Club. (PTI)

KKR facing same failures as seen throughout this IPL, says Eoin Morgan

KOLKATA, April 22: Defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders have struggled with batting issues throughout this IPL season and the changes made for the home game against Gujarat Titans were not effective, feels former captain Eoin Morgan.

KKR's loss to Gujarat Titans by 39 runs here on Monday was their second consecutive defeat in the tournament, third in the last five matches and overall fifth in eight games.

It has also been a season of struggle at home for the three-time champions who have also lost three of the four matches at the Eden Gardens.

"Kolkata Knight Riders has simply not bounced back as well as we would have liked them to. It's always a good sign for a strong team with a lot of character around, but they had the same failures that they've shown throughout the tournament," said JioStar expert Morgan.

"They made a couple of changes (against GT), mainly to try and gain some impetus in their batting

line-up, and it didn't necessarily come off. Were the changes worth it? They'll sit back and say no."

Morgan said KKR failed to forge partnerships in chase of 199 as they finished at an ordinary 159 for eight.

"It was interesting to hear Ajinkya Rahane talk about 199 being a chaseable score because towards the back end of Gujarat Titans' innings, we thought the ball held up more than we expected (and) that made finding boundaries harder," he said.

Morgan added, "But there was no rhythm, no substantial partnerships — almost the polar opposite of what Gujarat Titans displayed."

Morgan was all praise for India and GT pacer Prasidh Krishna who delivered another vital spell of 4-0-25-2.

"He's the purple cap holder at the moment, and his rhythm just keeps getting better. We know he has that extra bit of pace to work with, but you have to admire the strength he brings during the middle phase of the game," he said. (PTI)

It wasn't on my roster: Bhogle explains absence from KKR-GT match commentary panel

NEW DELHI, April 22: Noted commentator Harsha Bhogle has rejected speculation that he was kept away from the IPL match between Kolkata Knight Riders and Gujarat Titans on Monday due to a complaint by the Cricket Association of Bengal, insisting that he was only empanelled for two games in Kolkata, which are over.

His clarification came a day after the CAB's letter to the BCCI, sent about 10 days ago by its secretary Nareish Ojha, was revealed in media reports. In the letter, the body asked for the removal of Bhogle and New Zealand's Simon Doull from the commentary panel for matches in Kolkata after they stated that the Eden Gardens pitch was not helping the local franchise Kolkata Knight Riders.

"There are some inappropriate conclusions being drawn about why I wasn't at yesterday's game in Kolkata. Quite simply, it wasn't on the list of matches I was down to do!" Bhogle posted on 'X'.

"Asking me would have resolved the issue. Rosters are done before the tournament starts. I was rostered for two games in Kolkata. I was there for the first and an illness in the family prevented me from being at the 2nd," he added without specifying the games.

KKR played against Gujarat Titans at the Eden Gardens on Monday and lost by 39 runs.

Both KKR captain Ajinkya Rahane and head coach Chandrakant Pandit have demanded a more spin friendly track at the venue and expressed their frustration at not being given a track that suits their attack featuring Varun Chakravarty, Sunil Narine and Moeen Ali. After the CAB threw its weight behind curator Sujun Mukherjee, Doull had suggested that KKR should look for a new base given that Mukherjee was not fulfilling the team's requirements.

Bhogle had also stated that KKR deserved to have the home advantage. (PTI)



Misfiring SRH face resurgent Mumbai Indians



HYDERABAD, April 22: The misfiring Sunrisers Hyderabad will hope for a happy homecoming when they take on a resurgent Mumbai Indians here on Wednesday, eyeing a much-needed victory to revive their campaign in the Indian Premier League.

With only two wins in seven outings, SRH are in a desperate situation. Their power-packed batting has let them down more often than not while their bowlers are not making any strong impression either.

That SRH are a one-dimensional side has been proven by the manner in which it has struggled on slow and turning pitches. The Pat Cummins-led outfit has lost two home matches too.

Their four-wicket defeat to MI in Mumbai on a tricky Wankhede pitch with grip and

turn was the most recent instance of their frailties being exposed in challenging conditions.

SRH batters thrive on flat wickets which produce high-scoring contests and having a favourable surface against MI would give them the best chance to find some momentum.

Abhishek Sharma and Travis Head will have their task cut out against MI given SRH's chances of winning hinge, to a large extent, on the left-handed opening pair. Their success in the powerplay defines the team's fortunes in a contest.

Abhishek smacked a 55-ball 141 in his last outing here against Punjab Kings to record the highest individual total for any batter in this IPL.

There will be, however, some concerns around Head who hasn't gone all guns blazing like he usually does and SRH will want their Australian star to be at the top of his game.

A defeat would put SRH in a tough situation. They will also have to be wary of their head-to-head record against Mumbai Indians. The team has won 10 out of their 24 matches while losing 14.

For Mumbai Indians, it is a perfect opportunity to test their resurgence in an away game before they return home to face Lucknow Super Giants in Mumbai on Sunday.

Mumbai Indians have put their disappointing start to the IPL behind with three consecutive wins.

The five-time champions are coming off a massive nine-wicket hammering of Chennai Super Kings on a batting-friendly wicket on which they went over the line chasing a target near 180 with more than four overs to spare.

Rohit Sharma's sensational 76 not out and Suryakumar Yadav's 68 not out with all his trademark shots coming out fluently signalled the return to form of MI's two batting pillars.

Tilak Varma did not get to bat against CSK but the left-hander has been in prime form, while Naman Dhir has shown signs of hitting his strides as a finisher alongside skipper Hardik Pandya.

Jasprit Bumrah hasn't been at his menacing best when it comes to taking wickets but the ace India bowler has begun nailing his line and lengths perfectly.

This could be a warning sign for the SRH batters given MI tend to use Bumrah more strategically, with Trent Boult and Deepak Chahar sharing the new ball.

The nature of the surface could have a bearing on the outcome with SRH's two wins here coming on flat decks ensuring run-fests in their contests against Rajasthan Royals and Punjab Kings earlier.

Teams:

Sunrisers Hyderabad: Pat Cummins (c), Ishan Kishan (wk), Atharva Taide, Abhinav Manohar, Aniket Verma, Sachin Baby, Smaran Ravichandran, Heinrich Klaasen (wk), Travis Head, Harshal Patel, Kamindu Mendis, Wiaan Mulder, Abhishek Sharma, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Mohammed Shami, Rahul Chahar, Simarjeet Singh, Zeeshan Ansari, Jaydev Unadkat, Eshan Malunga.

Mumbai Indians: Hardik Pandya (c), Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Robin Minz, Ryan Rickelton (wk), Shrijith Krishnan (wk), Bevon Jacobs, Tilak Varma, Naman Dhir, Will Jacks, Mitchell Santner, Raj Angad Bawa, Vignesh Puthur, Corbin Bosch, Trent Boult, Karn Sharma, Deepak Chahar, Ashwani Kumar, Reece Topley, VS Pannemetsa, Arjun Tendulkar, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Jasprit Bumrah.

Match starts at 7:30pm IST. (PTI)

Bumrah named Wisden's leading men's cricketer

Mandhana wins women's honour



NEW DELHI, April 22: India's premier pacer Jasprit Bumrah was on Tuesday named as Leading Men's Cricketer in the World while prolific batter Smriti Mandhana grabbed the honour in the women's category in the 2025 edition of Wisden Cricketers' Almanack.

The two Indian players were honoured for their stand-out performances last year.

The 31-year-old Bumrah picked up 71 Test wickets in season 2024 at an average of 14.92, the most by any bowler with such an economy in a single year. He became the first Test bowler in history to claim 200 wickets at an average of less than 20.

In the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Australia, Bumrah almost single-handedly carried India's attack with 32 wickets at an average of 13.06.

At the T20 World Cup, he was named Player of the Tour-

namment for his 15 wickets at an economy rate of just 4.17, leading India to their first ICC trophy since 2013.

Women's team senior batter Smriti Mandhana made it an India double as she was named as Wisden's Leading Women's Cricketer in the World.

The 28-year-old Mandhana scored 1659 runs across formats in 2024 -- the most by a woman cricketer in a calendar year of international cricket -- including four ODI hundreds, which was another record.

She capped her efforts with a second Test century -- 149 -- in a 10-wicket win over South Africa.

Mandhana became the first Indian woman since the inception of the award to earn the title twice. She had already earned the coveted honour in 2018 also.

West Indian Nicholas Pooran was named as the Leading T20 Player in the World. (PTI)

England tour: Around six names in contention for 2 reserve middle-order slots

NEW DELHI, April 22: The national selection committee is expected to name the India and India A squad for the Test tour of England in the second week of May and there will be at least six contenders for a couple of reserve middle-order slots that would be up for grabs.

During the tour of Australia, the BCCI sent a 17-member team but for the five Tests against England, the final squad could be 15 or 16 as the India A contingent's presence makes it easier to call up anyone if the situation warrants.

However, the national selection committee under Ajit Agarkar might need to do some brainstorming when it comes to selecting the fringe players, especially the reserve batters from the pool that comprises domestic performers, some tried and tested names and a couple of names who are yet to realise their true potential.

If everyone is fit and fine, then skipper Rohit Sharma, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Shubman Gill and Virat Kohli select themselves. The all-rounder's slot belongs to Nitish Kumar Reddy for the time being.

There would be a slot for one extra middle-order batter if it is a squad of 15. A couple could be added if they beef it up to 16 for the assignment that will start June 20 and wind up only in the first week of August.

While no one would like to zero in on them right now, there are at least six names that are expected to be discussed as per PTI's understanding. One, if not two, can find their place in the senior team while the rest will certainly be a part of the India A series against England Lions which will be held at the same time.

B Sai Sudharsan:

With seven tons in 29 first-class games, Sai Sudharsan is a player to watch out for even in red ball cricket. He has already been a big hit for Gujarat Titans in the IPL. The reason why selectors will have a closer look at the southpaw is his tight technique and he also did well for India A in Australia before getting injured.

His biggest strength is that he can open the batting and also bat in the middle-order as per the team's requirement. He is a long-term prospect and at 23 and half years, he is ready for the big league.

Shreyas Iyer:

Shreyas Iyer 2.0 is a player who cannot be ignored as he has come

back to red ball cricket with a far more tighter technique and plays the short ball way better than he did during his earlier stint.

On the England tour, experience will be of premium and having played 14 Tests, including one in England in 2022, Iyer knows a thing or two about challenges. After being dropped from central contracts, he has played a lot of domestic cricket and looked at ease. Whether he will get another shot at red ball is the question.

Rajat Patidar:

If one goes purely by statistics, then Patidar has probably blown away his chance at Test cricket by not even getting a single fifty against England at home. However, there are very few players outside the current India set-up who are as classy as the MP batter with strokes all round the park.

Add to it, his elegance which also at times can be his undoing. The Ranji season (less than 450 runs) didn't go as per plan but can Agarkar's committee show a leap of faith is the pertinent question.

Karun Nair:

One of India's only two triple centuries in Test cricket, Karun Nair lost his way in the middle before finding his mojo for Vaidarba in what has been a dream domestic season with more than 850 first-class runs.

He had once tweeted a couple of seasons ago "Dear cricket, give me one more chance" and who knows the England tour could be that for him. In 2018, he didn't impress Ravi Shastri and Virat Kohli during net sessions and perhaps 2025 could be a different script for the Bengaluru man.

Devdutt Padikkal:

Another sinevy left-hander, who got a chance to make his Test debut in Australia due to the absence of Rohit Sharma in the first game. Padikkal did show glimpses of his talent in the second innings during an effective stand with Yashasvi Jaiswal. He has been in good touch in IPL and if he doesn't make the senior team cut, he will be in and around the India A team for sure.

Sarfraz Khan:

After he scored a 150 against New Zealand in Bengaluru in October, Sarfraz should have sealed his place in the Test squad but some atrocious shot selection in the following Tests put him down in the pecking order.

In Australia, he was more of a tourist and wasn't even discussed for a place in the first XI. However for the sake of continuity, selectors can still look at him. (PTI)

Venky Mysore backs 'resilient' KKR, recalls 2014 record run

KOLKATA, April 22: Kolkata Knight Riders CEO Venky Mysore has thrown his weight behind the team despite its stuttering campaign this season, calling it a "resilient" unit and urging players to draw inspiration from the side's dramatic turnaround in the title-winning 2014 season under Gautam Gambhir.

The defending champions slumped to their fifth defeat in eight matches on Sunday, going down by 39 runs to Gujarat Titans at Eden Gardens.

With only six points on the board, KKR now face an uphill task in their bid to reach the playoffs, needing to win at least five of their remaining six matches to stay in contention.

"This is a very resilient team, the Knight Riders. This is our 18th season, we've always been in top-three," Mysore said during a promotional event here.

He recalled their campaigns in 2014 and 2021 when they bounced back, winning the title and reaching the final respectively.

"There are two instances that come to my mind that I always share with new people who come into the setup..."

"In 2014, at the halfway stage we won only two and lost five, but you know what happened in 2014, we set an IPL record and won nine games on the trot and won the IPL."

"After that we played the Champions League, and we won five in a row. So



there's a record of 14 wins in a row. That was not a flash in the pan. In 2021, we again had two wins and five losses, we went on to play the final.

"So anything can happen in this format. There's still plenty of games left and it's a matter of somebody showing that inspiration to get us across the line. The inspiration can come from anywhere."

Mysore urged fans and critics alike not to get too caught up in the league table, highlighting that the IPL's unpredictability often offers unexpected turnarounds.

BAI pushes for former players to hone coaching skills under foreign coaches



BAI plans to rotate the shortlisted coaches across training centres. Initially they will be assigned to junior players at the National Centres of Excellence (NCoE).

"These coaches will be rotated in the centres. We want these coaches to work with

junior players at the NCoE before moving to elite coaching."

The BAI is also focussing on the development of junior players as it wants to create a "chain of talent".

"Our focus at the NCoE is on junior play-

ers. Earlier, we would just hold 15-day camps before tournaments. But now, with the NCoE, they have a consistent space to train together," he said.

"It will take 3-4 years, but eventually, the question of 'who after Sindhu?' or 'who after Prannoy?' will be answered."

"In China if top two are not playing, the third string player also goes and wins a tournament. We want to develop a similar system, prepare a chain of players so that even if the top two are not available then third best player has the capability to reach the semifinals."

Mishra added that the top players will be given a choice to train across the three NCoEs in Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Guwahati where one foreign coach will also be stationed.

Currently, Malaysia's Tan Kim Her works at NCoE in Hyderabad and Indonesian Irwansyah Adi Pratama in Bengaluru while South Korea's Park Tae-Sang, who coaches junior players, works in Guwahati.

He also added that shuttlers will undergo fitness tests thrice a year.

"SAI has been focussing on players being fit or ready to play. They have set some parameters for this, some test that players should take thrice a year."

India will host the senior World Championships next year and a team from the world body BWF will travel to India to inspect the venue -- the Indira Gandhi Stadium in New Delhi -- in June. (PTI)