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# THE HILLS TIMES

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM GUWAHATI & DIPHU

Voice of the hills people

Vol. No. XXVI Issue No. 120

RNI-ASSEN/2000/12862

DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG, THURSDAY, MAY 15, 2025

PAGES 12

PRICE ₹ 8

## Vain and preposterous: New Delhi on Beijing renaming places in Arunachal NE state an integral part of India, says MEA

**NEW DELHI, May 14:** India on Wednesday outrightly rejected as "vain and preposterous" China renaming some places in Arunachal Pradesh and said such attempts will not alter the "undeniable" reality that the state "was, is, and will" always remain an integral part of India.

New Delhi's reaction came in response to Beijing announcing Chinese names for some places in Arunachal Pradesh, which the neighbouring country claims as the southern part of Tibet.

"We have noticed that China has persisted with its vain and preposterous attempts to name places in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

"Consistent with our principled position, we reject such attempts categorically," he said.

Jaiswal was responding to a media query on the issue.

"Creative naming will not alter the undeniable reality that

Arunachal Pradesh was, is, and will always remain an integral and inalienable part of India," he said.

In April last year too, India had reacted sharply when Beijing released a list of standardised names of 30 places in Arunachal Pradesh.

The Chinese Civil Affairs Ministry released the first list of the standardised names of six places in Zangnan in 2017, while the second list of 15 places was issued in 2021 followed by another list with names for 11 places in 2023.

China's release of the new list of names of places in Arunachal Pradesh comes amid efforts by the two countries to normalise ties hit by the eastern Ladakh border standoff.

After a gap of nearly five years, India and China last month decided to resume the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, a move that was seen as an attempt to repair the relationship.

The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra was suspended initially in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently because of the



military standoff between the two sides along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.

The militaries of India and China completed disengagement of troops at the two remaining friction points of Demchok and Depsang under a pact sealed on October 21 last year.

Two days later, Prime Minister

Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks in the Russian city of Kazan and agreed to revive various bilateral dialogue mechanisms.

Following the Modi-Xi talks, the two sides held a series of meetings in the last few months which were aimed at normalising the bilateral relations. (PTI)

## India appears to have had 'clear edge' in targeting Pak's military facilities: NYT report

**NEW YORK, May 14:** India appears to have had a "clear edge" in targeting Pakistan's military facilities and airfields during the recent four-day confrontation, the New York Times reported, citing satellite images.

High-resolution satellite imagery, from before and after the strikes, shows "clear damage" to Pakistan's facilities by Indian attacks, according to the report.

"The four-day military clash between India and Pakistan was the most expansive fighting in half a century between the two nuclear-armed countries. As both sides used drones and missiles to test each other's air defences and hit military facilities, they claimed to inflict severe damage," the report said.

It added that satellite imagery indicates that while the attacks were widespread, the damage was far more contained than claimed — "and appeared mostly inflicted by India on Pakistani facilities."

In the new age of high-tech warfare, the report said that strikes by

both sides, verified by the imagery, appeared to be precisely targeted.

"Where India appears to have had a clear edge is in its targeting of Pakistan's military facilities and airfields, as the latter stretch of fighting shifted from symbolic strikes and shows of force to attacks on each other's defence capabilities," the report said.

At Bholari air base, located less than 100 miles from the Pakistani port city of Karachi, India's defence officials said they had struck an aircraft hangar with a precision attack. "The visuals showed clear damage to what looks like a hangar," the NYT report said.

Further, the Nur Khan air base, within a roughly 15-mile range of both the Pakistani Army's headquarters and the office of the country's prime minister and a short distance from the unit that oversees and protects Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, was "perhaps the most sensitive military target that India struck." The Indian military said it had particularly targeted the runways and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Panchayat polls results: BJP wins all major seats

**GUWAHATI, May 14:** The ruling BJP and its ally AGP bagged all the major Zilla Parishads and Anchalik Panchayats across Assam, according to the rural poll results declared by the state election commission on Wednesday.

The Assam State Election Commission (ASEC) in a statement declared the final results, four days after the counting of panchayat election votes started on Sunday morning at 8 am across 39 counting centres.

Panchayat elections took place in two phases on May 2 and 7 in Assam's 27 districts for the first time after the delimitation of the constituencies.

According to ASEC data, the BJP has won 1,261 members of Anchalik Panchayat (AP) constituencies, while its ally Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) has bagged 184 seats so far. Opposition Congress has won 481 seats, while 64 seats have been bagged by AIUDF, 17 by Rajior Dal, four by Trinamool (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## NE may attract fresh investment of ₹ 2.5-3 lakh cr, says Scindia

**NEW DELHI, May 14:** Fresh investment in northeastern states may go up in the range of ₹ 2.5-3 lakh crore across sectors, Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Wednesday ahead of the business summit.

Union minister for the Development of North Eastern region (DoNER) Scindia said his ministry has received investment commitment of ₹ 1.12 lakh crore from nine roadshows organised by his ministry and does not include any old investment that has already been announced earlier.

The minister was speaking during the curtain raiser of the two-day Rising Northeast Investors' Summit 2025, scheduled to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 23.

Scindia said the DoNER ministry will ramp up investment numbers till the summit ends on May 24.

"You got to add to this kitty, the six industrial houses that we have met and what they are going to invest. Plus, you got to add to this kitty all what the PSUs are going to invest. The rough order book should be between ₹ 2.5 lakh and 3 lakh crore," Scindia



said. Scindia has held one-on-one meetings with large conglomerates, including the Tata Group, Reliance Industries, Aditya Birla Group, etc, for investment in the northeastern region.

After the summit, DoNER will work with the Investment Promotion Authorities set up by the northeastern states to develop the investments on the ground, Scindia said.

"We will be hand-holding the investors and the state government to convert these commitments into reality," the minister added. (PTI)

## Himanta leads 'Tiranga Yatra' in Assam

**GUWAHATI, May 14:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and BJP state president Dilip Saikia on Wednesday led a "Tiranga Yatra" in the state capital to mark the success of "Operation Sindoor" carried out by the Indian armed forces in retaliation to the Pahalgalam terror attack. The rally from Adabari to Jalukbari was attended by hundreds of party workers and supporters.

Former Eastern Army Commander Lt Gen (retd) Rana Pratap Kalita also joined the march. Holding tricolours, BJP workers and supporters raised slogans such as 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai', 'Indian Army Zindabad' and 'Pakistan Murdabad' during the rally.

"Our forces have shown that they are the best in the world and gave the enemy a body blow in #OperationSindoor. To celebrate its success and the valour of our forces, I am taking part in the #TirangaYatra in Guwahati," Sarma said in a Facebook post.

Saikia also praised the armed forces and said they have displayed India's strength to the rest of the world. The ruling BJP also organised similar Tiranga Yatras in other towns of Assam. (PTI)



## 12 militants arrested from 3 Manipur districts

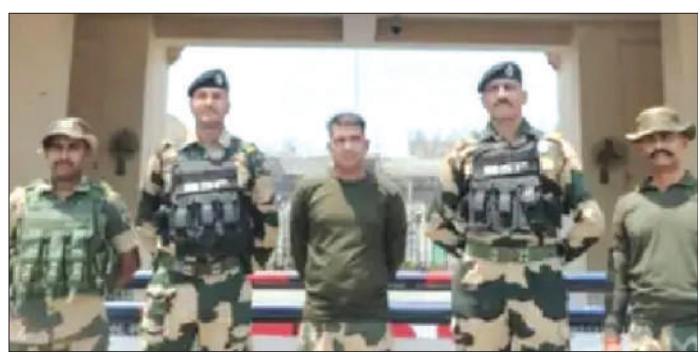
**IMPHAL, May 14:** Security forces have arrested 12 militants belonging to proscribed outfits and two arms dealers from Manipur, police said on Wednesday. All the arrests were made on Tuesday, they said.

Four cadres of the banned People's Liberation Army, two members of Kangleipak Communist Party and one of Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup were apprehended near Yongkhul village in Tengnoupal district, a police officer said.

Besides, two members of the outlawed KCP (PWG) were arrested from Lilong Nungei and Wangbal in Thoubal, and two cadres of PREPAK from Koirengi Kabui Khul Gate in Imphal East.

Another active cadre of the proscribed United National Liberation Front (Pambei group), who is also an arms dealer, was held from Puhkhao (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Pakistan hands over BSF jawan to India after 21 days



**AMRITSAR, May 14:** India and Pakistan on Wednesday handed each other's border-guarding personnel captured by the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Pakistan Rangers respectively at the International Borders (IB) between the two countries, officials said.

BSF jawan Purnam Kumar Shaw was handed over to India, 21 days after he was apprehended by the Rangers from along the International Border in Punjab.

Shaw was apprehended by the Pakistan Rangers a day after the Pahalgalam terrorist attack in which 26 people were killed.

The officials said a Pakistan Ranger apprehended by the BSF from the Rajasthan border on May 3 was also handed back to the neighbouring country.

Constable Shaw was handed over to the BSF by the Pakistan Rangers at 10.30 am at the joint check post (JCP) Attari in Amritsar district opposite Pakistan's Wagah, a BSF spokesperson said.

A picture of the jawan released by the force showed a bearded Shaw with ruffled hair and wearing a dark green round-neck T-shirt.

"Today at 1030 hours Constable Purnam Kumar Shaw has been taken back from Pakistan by the BSF at the Attari-Wagah border," the spokesperson said.

Shaw had "inadvertently" crossed over to the Pakistan territory while on operational duty in

the Ferozepur sector on April 23 around 11.50 am and detained by the Pak Rangers, he said.

The officials told PTI that the jawan will undergo a full body check-up and medical test followed by a counselling and 'debriefing' session where he will be asked "relevant questions" by the BSF officials about his 21-day detention by the Rangers.

The jawan, belonging to the 24th BSF battalion, will not be drafted in active duty and will also be part of an official inquiry instituted by the Punjab frontier of the BSF to look into the sequence of his apprehension by the Rangers and find lapses, if any, they said.

The spokesperson said the handover of the jawan at the border "was conducted peacefully and in accordance with established protocols".

"With the consistent efforts of the BSF through regular flag meetings with the Pakistan Rangers and through other communication channels, the repatriation of BSF constable has become possible," he said.

The jawan was part of the 'Kisan Guard' that was deployed for the protection of Indian farmers, who till their land ahead of the fence. The trooper apparently "miscalculated" the alignment of the IB and stepped to rest under a nearby tree from where he was apprehended by the Rangers, the officials had said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Diplomatic, economic punitive measures against Pakistan to continue: India

**NEW DELHI, May 14:** India on Tuesday said the punitive diplomatic and economic measures it announced against Pakistan following the Pahalgalam attack, including the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), will remain in place.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India will keep the IWT in abeyance until Pakistan "credibly and irrevocably" abjures its support for cross-border terrorism.

He said the treaty was concluded in a spirit of goodwill and friendship but Pakistan has held these principles in abeyance by promoting cross-border terrorism.

A day after the April 22 Pahalgalam attack, India announced a raft of punitive measures against Pakistan including suspension of the

IWT and downgrading of diplomatic ties in view of cross-border links to the attack.

Jaiswal also responded to Pakistan foreign office calling India's new approach to counter cross-border terrorism as an attempt to fabricate "narratives to justify aggression".

In his reaction, he said Pakistan is only "fooling itself" if it thinks it can escape the consequences of nurturing "terrorism on an industrial scale".

"The terrorist infrastructure sites that India destroyed were responsible not only for the deaths of Indians but of many other innocents around the world," he said.

"There is now a new normal. The sooner Pakistan gets used to it, the better," he added. Jaiswal also responded to claims by Pakistan's

foreign minister Ishaq Dar in an interview to CNN in which he claimed that the Pakistani military beat Indian armed forces.

"In the last week, as a result of Operation Sindoor, Pakistan has seen its terrorism centres in Bahawalpur, Muridke, Muzaffarabad and other places destroyed," the MEA spokesperson said.

"Thereafter, its military capabilities were significantly degraded by us and key airbases effectively put out of action. If the Pakistani foreign minister wishes to project these as achievements, he is welcome to do so," he said.

He added: "Till the night of May 9, Pakistan was threatening India with a massive assault. Once their attempt failed (on the morning of May 10) and they received a devastating (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Two more arrested in Assam for 'anti-India' activities

**GUWAHATI, May 14:** Two more persons have been apprehended in Assam for "anti-India" activities on social media, taking the total number of such arrests to 60 so far in the wake of the Pahalgalam terror attack, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Wednesday.

The police arrested Sahin Ahmed Mazumdar from Hailakandi and Intesab Ahmed Laskar from Cachar district, the chief minister posted on X.

"Crackdown down on Anti-nationals continue. Based on their anti-India activities on social media, @assampolice has picked up two people," Sarma posted.

Earlier, two more persons were arrested from Sonitpur district, the CM had posted.

"58 Pak sympathisers are behind bars. They will also receive special care for their anti-national

activities," he said.

Sarma said the state-wide crackdown on traitors will continue and "nobody will be spared".

The chief minister had last week said at a press conference here that the National Security Act (NSA) will be clamped on certain people arrested, but not on all.

Earlier, opposition AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam was arrested on sedition charges for allegedly defending Pakistan and its complicity in the Pahalgalam terror attack.

Sarma had also threatened to break the legs of those who raised the 'Pakistan zindabad' slogan in the aftermath of the Jammu and Kashmir terror attack.

Twenty-six people were killed after terrorists struck at Baisaran in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgalam on April 22. (PTI)

## SSTET-qualified candidates urge KAAC to release recruitment advertisement

'No concrete steps have been taken so far'

HT Bureau

**DIPHU, May 14:** A total of 50 candidates who qualified in the Sixth Schedule Special Teacher Eligibility Test (SSTET) from Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong have appealed to the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) to immediately release a recruitment advertisement for teachers.

Addressing a press conference at the Rangisna Sarpoo Auditorium Hall, Lorlangso, Diphu, on Wednesday, the candidates demanded employment opportunities.

The SSTET was conducted by the Assam Department of Education on April 30, 2023, for the three Sixth Schedule districts — Karbi Anglong, Dima Hasao, and Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). The results were declared on June 15, 2023.

In Karbi Anglong, 1,023 candidates qualified at the Lower Primary level and 801 at the Upper Primary level. In West Karbi Anglong, 600 candidates cleared the Lower Primary level and 419 the Upper Primary. Altogether, 2,843 candidates from the two districts successfully passed the SSTET



2023. Following the results, both Dima Hasao and BTR districts promptly issued recruitment advertisements, conducted interviews, and appointed qualified candidates. However, more

than a year later, KAAC has yet to publish any recruitment advertisement.

William Hanse, one of the SSTET-qualified candidates, said, "We have approached

the concerned department and higher authorities multiple times, but the only response we receive is that the process is ongoing. No concrete steps have been taken so far."

Highlighting the dire condition in many rural schools across Karbi Anglong—where some schools operate with only a single teacher and others suffer from a mismatch between student numbers and available teaching staff—Hanse added, "If KAAC issues recruitment advertisements and fills the vacant posts, the educational environment in the twin districts will improve significantly. Many young, qualified, and talented individuals are ready to contribute to strengthening the education system."

The SSTET-qualified candidates have made an earnest appeal to KAAC chief executive member Tuliram Ronghang; chief minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma; education minister Ranaj Pegu; minister and Guardian minister of Karbi Anglong, Nandita Gorlosa; KAAC education executive member Richard Tokbi; and other concerned authorities to take immediate action.



# Markets end higher as inflation cools to 6-yr low in Apr; metal shares shine

**MUMBAI, May 14:** Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended higher in a volatile trade on Wednesday due to selective buying support amid easing inflation and positive global cues.

Besides, heavy rush on metal and industrial counters and unabated foreign capital inflows supported the positive trend in the equity markets, traders said.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex climbed 182.34 points or 0.22 per cent to settle at 81,330.56. The gauge hit a high of 81,691.87 and a low of 80,910.03.

As many as 2,857 stocks advanced while 1,121 declined and 147 remained unchanged on the BSE. The NSE Nifty rose 88.55 points or 0.36 per cent to 24,666.90.

"Markets were choppy in intraday trade but managed to end in the green on selective buying support as investors don't want to rush into equities after Monday's strong optimism. While foreign fund flows in the domestic market will be critical going ahead, investors are worried that the US-China settling tariff disputes could revive foreign investors' interest in Chinese markets again," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

Tata Steel emerged as the biggest winner in the Sensex pack, rising 3.88 per cent, followed by Eternal, Tech Mahindra, Maruti, Mahindra & Mahindra, Infosys, IndusInd Bank, HCL Tech, Tata Consultancy Services and Bharti Airtel were the major gainers.

Telecom operator Bharti Airtel climbed nearly 1 per cent after it posted about a five-fold jump in consolidated net profit to ₹ 11,022 crore in the March 2025 quarter,



mainly due to the tariff hike impact and one-time gain on tax benefits. However, Asian Paints, Tata Motors, Kotak Mahindra Bank, NTPC and Power Grid were among the laggards.

Tata Motors dipped over 1 per cent after the firm reported a 51 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to ₹ 8,556 crore for the March quarter, hit by lower volumes and operating leverage.

"The session began on a positive note, supported by encouraging factors, such as easing retail inflation and stable global cues. However, the absence of sustained buying interest and a mixed performance among heavyweight stocks limited further gains as the day progressed," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge jumped 1.63 per cent and the mid-cap index climbed 1.19 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, metal surged 2.46 per cent, industrials (1.73 per cent), realty (1.71 per cent), commodities (1.49 per cent), oil & gas (1.46 per cent), BSE Fo-

cused IT (1.38 per cent) and IT (1.37 per cent). Bankex emerged as the only laggard.

"Nifty Metal was the top gainer, up 2.5 per cent, as easing trade tensions between the US and China lifted sentiment across metal stocks. Nifty IT also saw a 1.3 per cent uptick, rebounding after profit booking in the previous session. Defence stocks continued to witness momentum, backed by strong domestic demand and export optimism," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said.

Meanwhile, retail inflation eased to a nearly six-year low of 3.16 per cent in April, mainly due to subdued prices of vegetables, fruits, pulses, and other protein-rich items, creating enough room for the Reserve Bank to go for another round of rate cuts in the June monetary policy review.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based inflation was 3.34 per cent in March and 4.83 per cent in April 2024. It was 3.15 per cent in July 2019.

Wholesale price inflation dropped to a 13-month low of 0.85 per cent in April, with softening in prices of food articles, fuel and manufactured products, with experts projecting further easing in the data for next month, government data showed on Wednesday.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled higher, while Japan's Nikkei 225 index ended lower.

Markets in Europe were trading mostly lower. US markets ended mostly higher on Tuesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 1.13 per cent to USD 65.88 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 476.86 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

"Market optimism is gaining momentum, driven by a sharp decline in global and domestic risks...Currently, Midcaps are witnessing renewed interest, fuelled by marginal upgrades in recent earnings and the potential for a stronger rebound in FY26.

"Contributing factors include a consistent decline in inflation, rising disposable incomes, increased government spending, and falling interest rates. Meanwhile, a pause in global trade tensions is boosting sentiment in international markets, with metals gaining traction amid easing concerns over an economic slowdown," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

On Tuesday, the Sensex tanked 1,281.68 points or 1.55 per cent to settle at 81,148.22. The broader Nifty of NSE dropped 346.35 points or 1.39 per cent to 24,578.35. (PTI)

## WPI inflation dips to 13-month low of 0.85 pc in April

**NEW DELHI, May 14:** Wholesale price inflation dropped to a 13-month low of 0.85 per cent in April with softening in prices of food articles, fuel and manufactured products, with experts projecting further easing in the data of next month, government data showed on Wednesday.

WPI-based inflation was 2.05 per cent in March. It was 1.19 per cent in April last year.

WPI inflation lower than 0.85 per cent was last recorded in March, 2024, when it was 0.26 per cent.

"Positive rate of inflation in April, 2025 is primarily due to an increase in prices of manufacture of food products, other manufacturing, chemicals and chemical products, manufacture of other transport equipment and manufacture of machinery and equipment, etc," the industry ministry said in a statement.

As per the WPI (Wholesale price index) data, deflation in food, and fuel and power WPI, along with disinflation in manufactured products drove the moderation. Food articles saw a deflation of 0.86 per cent in April, against an inflation of 1.57 per cent in March. Deflation in vegetables was 18.26 per cent during April compared to deflation of 15.88 per cent in March.

In onion, inflation eased to 0.20 per cent in April, as against 26.65 per cent in March. Inflation in fruits softened to 8.38 per cent, from 20.78 per cent in the previous month. Potato and pulses saw a deflation of 24.30 per cent and 5.57 per cent, respectively.

"Favourable base effects to keep WPI inflation low in coming months," Barclays said in a research note.

Deflation in fuel and power was 2.18 per cent in April, compared to a 0.20 per cent inflation in March.

"Sharp sequential decline in prices of mineral oils such as kerosene (which was also reflected in consumer prices) and ATF and motor fuels, drove this fall," Barclays said.

Crude oil prices have generally remained in the USD 60-65/ barrel handle in April, with downward pressure arising from OPEC+ announcing production increases. OPEC+ is a group of 23 oil-producing countries that work together to manage the supply of



oil in the world market in order to influence global oil prices. Manufactured products, however, saw inflation at 2.62 per cent in April, compared to 3.07 per cent in March.

ICRA Senior Economist Rahul Agrawal said the IMD's expectation of an early monsoon onset in Kerala and an above normal monsoon in the country is a positive for crop output, and consequently, the food inflation outlook, although the spatial and temporal distribution of the same remains key. "We expect the WPI to average sub-2 per cent in FY2026, which, along with our CPI inflation and real GDP projections for the fiscal implies that nominal GDP growth may be capped at 9 per cent," Agrawal said.

Data released on Tuesday showed retail inflation eased to a near 6-year low of 3.16 per cent in April mainly due to subdued prices of vegetables, fruits, pulses, and other protein-rich items.

Easing of inflation would create enough room for the Reserve Bank, which mainly takes into account retail inflation while formulating monetary policy, to go in for another round of rate cut in the June monetary policy review.

In April, the RBI cut the benchmark policy rate by 0.25 per cent to 6 per cent. This was the second cut during the year to stimulate the economy, facing the threat of US reciprocal tariffs. The RBI sees retail inflation averaging 4 per cent in the current fiscal from the previous estimate of 4.2 per cent. (PTI)

## Lux Cozi launches Women's Wear Brand 'Pynk'

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 14:** Lux Industries Limited, a household name in Indian hosiery for over five decades, has officially ventured into the women's wear segment with the launch of its new brand, Pynk.

The announcement was made on Wednesday through an official company statement, marking a strategic expansion of the Lux Cozi portfolio into the rapidly growing women's apparel market.

Pynk is positioned as more than just a fashion label—it seeks to represent a mindset that champions fluid femininity, comfort, and confidence.

Drawing on Lux's long-standing legacy of quality and market insight, the new brand promises a seamless blend of fashion and function.

Designed to resonate with the modern Indian woman who juggles ambition, emotion, and self-expression, Pynk is seen as a celebration of balance and strength in everyday life. To drive awareness and establish a strong brand presence, Lux Industries has unveiled a 360-degree marketing campaign under the tagline Work. Pynk. Play., featuring Bollywood actor Shraddha Kapoor as the brand ambassador.

The campaign, conceptualised by Rediffusion Brand Solutions Pvt. Ltd. and directed by Abhishek Varman, will be rolled out across 1600 cinema screens, television, digital platforms, airports, and prominent hoardings, complemented by collaborations with around 600 social media influencers.

The campaign is backed by a marketing investment of ₹27 crore. Ashok Kumar Todi, Chairman of Lux Industries, called the launch a "significant milestone" in the company's growth trajectory.

"With Pynk, we aim to establish a powerful new vertical within the Lux Cozi portfolio," he said, emphasizing the company's commitment to aligning with the aspirations of a changing India.

Saket Todi, Executive Director of Lux Industries, elaborated on the vision behind Pynk, describing it as "an ultimate mix of core and fashion."

He revealed that the brand currently offers 20 product varieties and aims to expand to 100 within the next five months.

He projected that Pynk would become a ₹800 crore revenue engine over the next five years, driven by products that emphasise both comfort and contemporary design.

"With every stitch, every silhouette, we have tried to echo her journey," he said, noting that the brand is designed to resonate emotionally with women across different life stages.

Shraddha Kapoor expressed her enthusiasm for the association, stating that Pynk offers a unique combination of comfort and style.

"Whether I am heading to a shoot or just spending time with myself or my friends, I want to feel good about what I wear—and that is what Pynk is all about," she said. The advertising film tells the story of a young woman torn between her passion for dance and her mother's dream of a corporate career.

Instead of choosing one path, she pursues both, reflecting the brand's message of embracing ambition and emotion with equal grace.

The narrative aims to reflect the strength and complexity of Indian women, encouraging them to see their own stories in the brand.

The design philosophy behind Pynk underscores fluidity, grace, and empowerment.

The logo features a soft pink palette, rounded fonts, and a stitch-inspired detail in the letter 'P' that nods to craftsmanship.

Product design prioritises motion-friendly comfort without compromising on aesthetics, using elegant yet bold cues that avoid overt ornamentation.

Pramod Sharma, National Creative Director at Rediffusion, described Pynk as "a step forward" compared to existing leggings brands.

"The film through Shraddha Kapoor is a story of the women of India. It is our tribute to their journey, their strength, and their grace. We want every woman to see herself in Pynk," he said.

Pynk products are set to retail between ₹500 and ₹999, aiming to offer stylish yet accessible options to Indian women. With this launch, Lux Industries signals not just a new product line, but a broader intent to grow with the evolving identities and needs of Indian consumers.

## Gold declines ₹ 650 to ₹ 96,850/10 gm amid weak global cues

**NEW DELHI, May 14:** Gold prices declined ₹ 650 to ₹ 96,850 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid a weak trend in global markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at ₹ 97,500 per 10 grams in the previous market session. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity depreciated ₹ 700 to ₹ 96,400 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). It had settled at ₹ 97,100 per 10 grams on Tuesday. "Gold prices continue to correct as trade tensions ease, with major economies securing trade agreements with the US. China is the latest to strike a deal, as both countries agreed to a 90-day reduction in tariffs on each other's goods," Abans Financial Services' Chief Executive Officer Chintan Mehta said. Extending the losses for the third straight day, silver prices plunged ₹ 1,450 to ₹ 98,000 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) on Wednesday. The white metal had ended at ₹ 99,450 per kg in the previous close.

However, geopolitical tensions in the Middle East remain elevated, keeping underlying support for safe-haven asset, Mehta said. (PTI)

## Ambani flies to Qatar to meet Trump, 2nd meeting since inauguration

**NEW DELHI, May 14:** Richest Asian Mukesh Ambani is flying to Doha to meet US President Donald Trump, his second meeting since Trump returned to presidency in January this year.

Ambani will attend a state dinner that the Emir of Qatar is hosting for Trump at the Lusail Palace in Doha on Wednesday, sources with direct knowledge of the matter said. Reliance Industries Ltd, the firm that Ambani heads, did not reply to an email sent for comments. While business discussions are off the table, his oil-to-retail conglomerate has businesses closely tied to decisions of the US President. Reliance had last year secured waivers from the US to resume importing crude oil from Venezuela. It however had to stop that in March following Trump authorising a 25 per cent tariff on countries buying the South American country's oil.

Reliance also sells fuels like gasoline made from crude oil bought from countries such as Russia into the American market.

Also, US tech giants such as Google and Meta have taken an equity stake in Ambani's digital venture. Reliance has business ties

with Qatar as well. The Gulf nation's sovereign wealth fund, Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) has invested about USD 1 billion in Ambani's retail venture.

Ambani and his wife Nita had attended Trump's second inauguration in January. They were also part of the select 100 who attended an intimate candlelit dinner with Trump a day prior to the inauguration. At the dinner, the two had met Vice President JD Vance and his wife Usha as well, sources said.

Ambanis share close ties with the Trump family. The richest Indian was present when Ivanka Trump, daughter of Donald Trump, visited Hyderabad for the Global Entrepreneurship Summit in 2017. She was an advisor to President Trump then.

He was also present when Trump visited India last as the US President in February 2020. Ivanka, her husband Jared Kushner and their eldest daughter Arabella Rose were among the celebrities who attended the star-studded three-day pre-wedding celebrations of Ambani's youngest son Anant and fiancée Radhika Merchant in Jamnagar, Gujarat, in March 2024. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## India appears to have had

other facilities at some of Pakistan's key air bases and "satellite images showed the damage", the report said, noting that on May 10, Pakistan issued a notice for the Rahim Yar Khan air base saying that the runway was not operational. At Sargodha air base, in Punjab Province in Pakistan, the Indian military said it had used precision weapons to strike two sections of the runway.

"Satellite images of the sites Pakistan claimed to have hit are limited, and so far do not clearly show damage caused by Pakistani strikes even at bases where there was corroborating evidence of some military action." On the Pakistani officials' claim that their forces had "destroyed" India's Udhampur air base, the NYT report said "an image from May 12 does not appear to show damage." India carried out precision strikes under "Operation Sindoor" on terror infrastructure early on May 7 in response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people.

Following the Indian action, Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9 and 10. The Indian armed forces launched a fierce counter-attack on several Pakistani military installations, including Rafiqui, Murid, Chaklala, Rahim Yar Khan, Sukkur and Chuniyan.

Radar sites at Pasrur and Sialkot aviation bases were also targeted using precision munitions, causing massive damage. India and Pakistan reached an understanding on May 10 to end the conflict after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes. (PTI)

## Panchayat polls results: BJP

Congress, three by Assam Jatiya Parishad, one by AAP and 173 by Independents. In Zilla Parishad (ZP), the BJP has won 274 seats along with 27 seats by its ally AGP. Congress bagged 72 seats, while eight were won by AIUDF, three by Rajior Dal and 13 by Independents, the ASEC data showed. "Election to 21,920 Gaon Panchayat wards were held without political party sponsorship and accordingly results were declared for the said wards," it added.

The total seats include 21,920 Gram Panchayat (GP) members, with 10,883 seats reserved for women. Voting also happened for 2,192 Anchalik Panchayat (AP) members, with 1,124 reserved for women and 397 Zilla Parishad (ZP) members, with 199 seats reserved for women.

As many as 2,912 candidates have won uncontested — 34 ZP members, 311 AP members and 2,567 GP ward members. A total electorate of 1,80,36,682, comprising 90,71,264 men, 89,65,010 women and 408 others, were eligible to exercise their franchise in 25,007 polling stations. A total of 74.71 per cent of the eligible voters exercised their franchise during the two-phase panchayat polls. (PTI)

## 12 militants arrested

Ahallup Makha Leikai in Imphal East, he said. The security personnel also nabbed two more arms dealers on Tuesday. A rifle and ammunition were recovered from their possession, the officer added. (PTI)

## Diplomatic, economic punitive

Indian counter-response, their tune changed and their DGMO eventually reached out to us." India carried out precision strikes on terror infrastructure early on May 7 following which Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9 and 10.

The Pakistani actions were strongly responded to by the Indian side by inflicting heavy damages to a number of key Pakistani military installations including air bases, air defence systems, command and control centres and radar sites.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on Saturday evening announced that India and Pakistan reached an understanding to stop all firings and military actions on land, air and sea, with immediate effect. (PTI)

## Pakistan hands over BSF

Shaw hails from Rishra in Hooghly district of West Bengal and his wife has been speaking to BSF officers and the press seeking the whereabouts of her husband and his early release in the wake of the military offensive between India and Pakistan following Operation Sindoor. (PTI)

## Shree Cement Q4 PAT declines 16pc to ₹ 556 cr

**KOLKATA, May 14:** Shree Cement on Wednesday reported a 16 per cent year-on-year decline in consolidated net profit at ₹ 556 crore for the March quarter of FY25, compared to ₹ 662 crore in the corresponding period last year.

Revenue from operations was higher at ₹ 5,240 crore in Q4 FY25, up from ₹ 5073 crore in the year-ago quarter, while the EBITDA remained steady at ₹ 1,381 crore, the company said in a statement. Total cement and clinker sales volume during the quarter reached 9.84 million tonnes, the company's highest-ever quarterly dispatch. Premium product sales contributed 15.6 per cent of total trade volume, up from 11.9 per cent in Q4 FY24. "Our focus on premiumisation and cost optimisation has helped us navigate a challenging cost environment. We remain optimistic about cement demand recovery in FY26 and will continue to pursue strategic growth across products and markets," said managing director Neeraj Akhoury. During FY25, Shree Cement commissioned two grinding units — one at Etah, Uttar Pradesh (3.0 MTPA), and another at Baloda Bazar, Chhattisgarh (3.4 MTPA) — taking total cement capacity to 62.8 MTPA. The company has set a target of crossing 80 MTPA capacity by FY28, with projects in Rajasthan, Karnataka, and Jharkhand underway. The company also expanded clinker capacity at its Nawalgarh unit from 3.8 to 4.5 MTPA in the quarter. (PTI)

## High level of confidence on India's economy, PM's policy: Vaishnaw

**NEW DELHI, May 14:** Investors have continued to exude a high level of confidence in India's economy, the Prime Minister's policy and the country's talent, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Tuesday.

The minister was responding to a question on investor sentiment post-India-Pakistan military stand-off on the sidelines of the inauguration of a new design centre by the Japanese semiconductor company Renesas.

"There is a very high level of confidence about our country's economy, about our Prime Minister's policies, about the excellent talent that we have in our country, and the way, the measured, the calibrated way by which our economy is growing," Vaishnaw said in response to question the mood of investors after heightened tension between India and Pakistan following their four-day military confrontation.

"Everybody wants to come to India at a much faster pace," Vaishnaw said.

The minister said that Renesas has started a new semiconductor design centre in Noida which will



mark the beginning of design for the world's smallest chip in the country. "The key point about this centre is, for the first time in our country, three nanometer chips, which are the most advanced, will be designed here in India end-to-end," Vaishnaw said.

Renesas, India Country Manager and VP, MID Engineering, Analog & Connectivity Group Malini Narayanamoorthi said that it is a proud moment for the company to start designing 3-nanometer chips at its Noida facility.

"We are proud to announce that, for the first time, 3-nanometer chips an industry first will be de-

signed right here at the new Renesas Design Centre in Noida," she said. Vaishnaw said that as part of the chip design effort, the government will provide a microcontroller-based hardware kit, which can be used to develop many semiconductor-based products.

"That will be given to the 270 academic institutions, in which we have set up the EDA tools so that the students can learn, while they are learning the software part of it, they can also try their hands at hardware and develop new products," Vaishnaw said.

Renesas CEO Hidetoshi Shibata, who joined the event virtu-



## Severe storm damages school in West KA



**HT Correspondent**

**KHERONI, May 14:** Powerful storm wreaked havoc at Jengkhla Green English ME School located in Jengkhla Rangpi Arong under Kheroni Police Station, West Karbi Anglong district, on Tuesday, triggering widespread chaos and damage. The sudden storm hit during school hours, forcing hundreds of students to flee their classrooms in panic. Fortunately, all students and staff managed to escape unharmed, though the incident left many shaken.

Strong gusts of wind ripped off tin sheets from the school buildings, leaving the infrastructure severely damaged and exposing classrooms to the elements. The extent of structural damage is being assessed by local authorities, who have also begun surveying other affected areas across the district.

While no injuries have been reported so far, the incident has highlighted serious concerns regarding the structural resilience of school buildings in the face of increasingly frequent extreme weather events. Local officials and disaster management teams are currently working on relief measures and evaluating the necessary repairs to restore normalcy in the affected areas.

## Magisterial enquiry ordered into death of three NSCN (IM) cadres in Haflong

**HT Correspondent**

**HAFLONG, May 14:** The District Commissioner of Dima Hasao has ordered a magisterial enquiry into the recent incident that led to the death of three cadres of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah), or NSCN (IM). The decision was made in light of public interest and the seriousness of the matter.

The enquiry will be conducted by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Sangeeta Devi, ACS. The case has been registered under Haflong Police Station Case No. 20/2025 under multiple sections including 109(1)/132/147/148/149 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), read with Sections 16 and 20 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, and Sections 2591-A/27(2) of the Arms Act.

In an official public notice, the administration has invited any individual, public body, or organization with information relevant to the incident to come forward. Witnesses or those possessing oral, written, or material evidence may appear before the magistrate from May 14 to May 21, 2025, between 11:00 AM and 3:00 PM at the office chamber of the designated enquiry officer.

## Wife murdered by husband in Nagaon Rupahihat

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, May 14:** In a shocking incident, a man allegedly murdered his wife by slitting her throat at Jorthani village, near Rupahihat, in Nagaon district today. According to sources, the accused, identified as Khairul Islam, tied his wife's hands and feet, gagged her mouth with a stone, and then brutally slit her throat. The victim, Sabina Yasmin, was a mother of four children.

After committing the gruesome act, the accused fled the scene, but was later apprehended by locals in the Gonabari area. The

community members immediately handed him over to the Rupahihat police.

It has been reported that the couple had been facing ongoing marital discord for some time, with locals having intervened multiple times in an attempt to resolve their disputes. The violent incident has created tension in the area, and both Rupahihat police and Kaliabor SDPO have initiated an investigation into the matter. The victim's family has demanded the capital punishment for Khairul Islam, sources added.

## NTPC Bongaigaon dedicates Burn HDU and Eye OT facilities to Kokrajhar Medical College

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, May 14:** In a significant step towards improving healthcare infrastructure in the Bodoland Territorial Region, NTPC Bongaigaon, Salakati, under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, has dedicated a state-of-the-art 6-bedded Burn High Dependency Unit (HDU) and a newly renovated Eye Operation Theatre (OT) to Kokrajhar Medical College and Hospital.

The inauguration ceremony was held on Tuesday and attended by key dignitaries including Kokrajhar MP Joyanta Basumatary, who lauded NTPC Bongaigaon's sustained efforts in social development. "These much-needed facilities will deliver timely medical attention to the most vulnerable segments of society. This is a great example of public sector commitment to uplifting healthcare standards in underserved areas," he said.

Kokrajhar Deputy Commissioner Masanda M. Pertin (IAS) highlighted the timely nature of the initiative, describing the new units as symbols of NTPC's proactive engagement in public welfare. "The partnership between district administration and corporates like NTPC is vital

'Saikia also lauded the growing enthusiasm for sports in Upper Assam'

## BCCI Secretary Devajit Saikia inspects DDSA Stadium pitch in Dibrugarh



**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, May 14:** Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Secretary, Devajit Saikia, visited the DDSA Stadium in Dibrugarh on Wednesday to inspect the pitch and outfield being developed by the Dibrugarh District Sports Association (DDSA).

Following the inspection, Saikia was felicitated by DDSA officials at the Dibrugarh Outdoor Stadium

Complex in the presence of key office bearers of the association.

Speaking to reporters, Saikia praised the efforts of DDSA, stating,

"The DDSA officials are working diligently to construct the pitch and develop the outfield. I'm grateful for their dedication and teamwork. DDSA has already hosted the Ranji Trophy and other national tournaments here. In the coming years, we can expect more national-level matches to be played in this stadium."

He further informed that the outfield surface layer has been upgraded, five new wickets have been constructed, and fresh grass will soon be grown to enhance the aesthetics and playability of the stadium.

"The work is expected to be completed within the next three to four months. With the BCCI domestic season starting from September, we are hopeful that Dibrugarh will host more national matches," he added.

Saikia also lauded the growing enthusiasm for sports in Upper Assam, highlighting the active participation of girls in cricket in Dibrugarh.

"A new era of sports has begun in Upper Assam, thanks to the ongoing infrastructure development. It's heartening to see both boys and girls excelling in cricket. I am confident that in the coming years, Dibrugarh will produce national-level cricketers," he said.

The felicitation ceremony was attended by DDSA President Niranjan Saikia, Vice President Manash Jyoti Dutta, Bhaskar Gogoi, and other distinguished members of the association.

## Kendriya Vidyalaya Diphu achieves 100% pass percentage in CBSE exams

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, May 14:** PM SHRI Kendriya Vidyalaya, Diphu has recorded an outstanding academic feat by achieving a 100% pass percentage in both Class X and Class XII CBSE board examinations for the academic session 2024-25.

In an official statement issued by the school principal, it was announced that all 36 students who appeared for the Class X examinations and 35 students from both the Science and Humanities streams of Class XII successfully passed the CBSE board exams, the results of which were declared on May 13, 2025.

"We are proud to announce that PM SHRI Kendriya Vidyalaya Diphu has once again demonstrated outstanding academic performance," the principal said. "The results are a

reflection of our students' hard work, perseverance, and commitment, as well as the relentless efforts of our dedicated teaching faculty."

The principal extended heartfelt congratulations to all the students for their "well-deserved success" and expressed deep appreciation for the unwavering support provided by teachers, parents, and school staff throughout the year.

He further affirmed that PM SHRI Kendriya Vidyalaya Diphu remains committed to fostering academic excellence and holistic development, with the aim of achieving greater milestones in the future.

The remarkable achievement highlights the school's consistent performance and its role in nurturing future-ready students equipped with strong academic and ethical foundations.

## Modern technology for ensuring safety of Lumding - Badarpur hill section

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 14:** In a major step towards enhancing railway safety and infrastructure resilience, Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has deployed state-of-the-art technology to address challenges related to landslides, drainage issues and embankment stability along the Lumding-Badarpur Hill Section in Assam of Lumding division under NFR.

This section, spanning hilly terrain across Dima Hasao and Cachar districts, is a vital link connecting the states of Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur and the Barak Valley of Assam with the rest of India. The difficult topography and extreme monsoon conditions make this route especially vulnerable to natural hazards, often disrupting rail traffic and posing significant safety risks.

To mitigate these challenges, NFR has initiated a comprehensive aerial and geophysical

survey over an 80-kilometer stretch of the hill section, from KM-45 to KM-125. This initiative utilizes advanced drone-based LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging), high-resolution aerial imaging and electromagnetic surveys. The survey captured 2 cm resolution LiDAR orthophotos, thermal imagery and Digital Elevation Models (DEMs), providing detailed insights into terrain morphology, slope stability and surface deformation. Complementing the aerial survey, Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR), Transient Electromagnetic Survey, Electrical Resistivity Tomography (ERT) and Seismic Refraction Testing (SRT) have been deployed across vulnerable slopes and track borders. These geophysical methods have helped detect underground faults, soil saturation zones and subsurface water accumulation, enabling early identification of potential

## Federation of Barua Buddhist Welfare Association demands buddhist control over Bodh Gaya Temple Management

**HT Correspondent**

**MARGHERITA, May 14:** The Federation of Barua Buddhist Welfare Association of Assam (FBBWAA) has strongly condemned the recent incident at the sacred Mahabodhi Mahavihara in Bodh Gaya, Bihar, where a Buddhist monk, Bhikkhu Vinacharya, was allegedly assaulted by fringe elements during Buddha Jayanti celebrations. The monk has since gone missing, sparking outrage and concern among Buddhist communities across the country.

Addressing the media, Subash Barua, Chairman of the FBBWAA, and Secretary General Shibu Talukdar criticized the Bihar Government and state police for their failure to locate the missing monk and ensure the safety of Buddhist pilgrims at one of their holiest sites.

The leaders reiterated their long-standing opposition to the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee (BTMC) Act of 1949, under which non-Buddhist individuals are permitted to control the management of the Mahabodhi Temple. They argued that the act is "illegal and unconstitutional" and demanded full control of the temple be returned to the Buddhist community.

"Bodh Gaya is one of the most revered pilgrimage sites for Buddhists worldwide. Unfortunately, some vested non-Buddhist interests, with the support of fringe elements, have taken control of the sanctity of the site and are now trying to obstruct the Mahabodhi Mahavihara Mukti Andolan (MMMA)," said Shibu Talukdar.

He further claimed that Bhikkhu Vinacharya, a monk associated with the MMMA, was assaulted during the protests and has been missing since the inci-



dent. "The silence of the authorities raises serious questions about the commitment of the Bihar Government to protect the sanctity of Buddhist sites," Talukdar added.

The FBBWAA has issued an appeal to President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, and the Bihar Director General of Police to immediately investigate the matter, locate the missing monk, and take strict action against those responsible for the violence.

"If our demands are not met, we will be compelled to raise this issue at the international level, including at the United Nations headquarters in New York," warned Talukdar.

The incident has reignited a decades-old demand for the liberation of the Mahabodhi Temple from non-Buddhist control, with Buddhist organizations across India rallying in support of the MMMA's cause.

## Waterlogging in Dibrugarh

**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, May 14:** A few hours of rainfall in Dibrugarh resulted in widespread waterlogging along the Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya (VKV) Road, creating significant problems for students trying to make their way to school. The entire stretch of road was submerged, causing severe disruption. Local residents expressed frustration over the recurring issue, noting that this is not the first time such waterlogging has occurred. They pointed out that the problem is caused by an inadequate drainage system, with rainwater unable to flush out due to poor drainage maintenance.

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## GOVT OF ASSAM DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF THE PROGRAMME OFFICER DIVISIONAL ICDS CELL, KARBI ANGLONG, DIPHU

No.PO(ICDS)KA/AG(N)/223/2025-26/36

Dated Diphu, the 13<sup>th</sup> May,2025

### Notice Inviting Expression of Interest (Eoi)

Divisional ICDS Cell of Karbi Anglong, Diphu invites Expression of Interest affixing KAAC fee of Rs.10.00 only, from intending Suppliers/ Firm registered under this office/department only for Rate Fixation for Manufacture and Supply of Instant Dal Khichdi, Multigrain Suji Halwa and Rice & Mixed Pulse Based Micronutrient Fortified Energy Dense Food for implementation of Supplementary Nutrition Programme under SAG for the year 2025-26 to the beneficiaries category of age group of 14 to 18 years Adolescent Girls as Take Home Ration in various Anganwadi Centres of KAAC. The terms & conditions and details of items to be supplied are described in the Eoi Document.

Important dates of the tender:

Sl. No.	Scheduled	Start date	Start time	End date	End time
1.	Tender publishing	14/05/2025	10.00 AM	03/06/2025	2.00 PM
2.	Pre-Bid Meeting	15/05/2025	3.00 PM	-	4.00 PM
3.	Bid submission	14/05/2025	12.00 Noon	3/06/2025	2.00 PM
4.	Bid opening	03/06/2025	3.00 PM	-	-
5.	Withdrawal of bid	15/05/2025	10.00 AM	03/06/2025	2.00 PM

The bidder have to submit the Eoi with proof of payment of non refundable tender fee of **Rs. 10,000/- (Rupees ten thousand) only** for each Eoi by crossed Demand Draft/Banker's Cheque issued by a Nationalized Bank drawn in favour of the Programme Officer, Divisional ICDS Cell, Karbi Anglong, Diphu at the A/C No. 11007469713. The tenders should be submitted as per date and time of submission mentioned above.

The bidder shall have to submit the proof of payment of EMD @2% on the total value of the work as per financial capacity expressly stated in the Expression of Interest in the form of crossed Demand Draft/Bankers Cheque/Fixed Deposit Receipt (FDR)/Bank Guarantee drawn in favour of Programme Officer, Divisional ICDS Cell, Karbi Anglong, Diphu from a Nationalized Bank/Scheduled Commercial Bank and payable at Diphu before formal work order.

The original crossed Demand Draft/Bankers Cheque for tender fee along with 3 (three) samples of Micronutrient Fortified Energy dense Food, Instant Dal Khichdi, Multigrain Suji Halwa of 1 Kg packet to be supplied to the Adolescent Girls of age group 14-18 yrs. as per prescribed specification along with laboratory analysis report & other necessary documents should be submitted to the Programme Officer, Divisional ICDS Cell, Karbi Anglong, Diphu in a sealed cover on or before the last date and time of submission of Eoi. The cover should be superscripted with the details of the Eoi as shown above Samples are not returnable.

Quotation called only for rate fixation. Order will be issued only after release of fund from Govt. EOIs should be submitted with all authentic documents of manufacturing unit for supply of Micronutrient Energy Dense Food as THR for Adolescent Girls (14 to 18 Yrs. Age group) only.

Sd/-  
Programme Officer  
Divisional ICDS Cell, Karbi Anglong  
DIPHU

Memo No.PO(ICDS)KA/AG(N)/223/2025-26/

Dated Diphu, the 13th May, 2025



## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*Politics is war without bloodshed while war is politics with bloodshed -Mao Zedong*

## Ban on Awami League

The banning of the Awami League activities by the interim government of Bangladesh led by Dr. Muhammad Yunus last week has got wider implications for the pro-active political parties in the country in view of the coming national elections expected by early next year. Equally, the decision assumes significance for India which is now left with no friendly political party operating in its neighbouring country. The wide ramifications of this action by the Yunus government have not got attention in Indian media due to its total involvement with India-Pakistan conflict last week. Awami League is the political party founded by the legendary Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and this Party led the struggle of liberation for the formation of Bangladesh in 1971. Since the AL ruled Bangladesh most of the years till 2024 excepting the years under the army rule and two tenures of the BNP led by Khaleda Zia, presently the chairperson of the main opposition party BNP. Sheikh Hasina ruled for fifteen years consecutively since 2009 but had to abandon her position as Prime Minister of the Awami League government on August 5, 2024 and left for India. She is still staying in India and occasionally addressing her AL supporters in Bangladesh through video.

Recently, Dhaka witnessed massive 72 hour rally by the new party of students National Citizens Party (NCP) demanding to the government the immediate banning of all activities of Awami League. NCP is the only party which has taken up the banning of Awami League as its core programme. Earlier there were talks that Awami League will be allowed to function in a truncated form excluding the leaders and workers against whom there are charges of murder and torture. BNP was earlier in favour of allowing AL to participate in the elections under some guidelines, but now with the government's official ban, the BNP also announced its support saying it is the national demand. As a result, in the coming elections, the competition will be between the two main parties BNP led by Khaleda Zia, former Prime Minister and the NCP led by the students who engineered the fall of Sheikh Hasina government in August last year through their anti quota movement. The other parties, there so many, are smaller in size, they will try to ally with one group or the other. Jamaat-e-Islami has gained strength in the recent months due to big financial assistance from the Islamic countries abroad but the acceptability of this party among the citizens is very low. The main electoral fight will be limited to BNP and the NCP.

What is the future of Awami League? Awami League has a band of dedicated activists still in the country though many of them cannot work openly. The AL will certainly challenge the ban in the court. But the government has inserted some specific provisions in the order which will make it difficult for AL in their legal battle if they want to fight. The AL leader Sheikh Hasina has not been active in the recent weeks.

# NDA sweeps Assam Panchayat polls, Congress faces rout

In a resounding electoral triumph that has reshaped the political landscape of Assam, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its ally Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), has swept the 2025 Assam panchayat elections, delivering a crushing blow to the opposition, particularly the Indian National Congress. The results, declared on May 11, 2025, following two phases of voting on May 2 and May 7, underscore the NDA's growing dominance in the state's grassroots politics and signal a significant shift in voter sentiment ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections.

The BJP-AGP combine secured an overwhelming 1,409 out of 2,192 Anchalik Panchayat seats, while the Congress managed a mere 122 seats, with other parties and independent candidates collectively claiming 41 seats. This landslide victory, coupled with the NDA's strong performance in Zila Parishad seats, where it won 307 out of 397, cements the alliance's grip on Assam's rural and semi-urban political structures.

The panchayat elections, often seen as a barometer for upcoming state-level contests, were conducted across 27 of Assam's 34 districts, excluding seven under autonomous councils. With a voter turnout of approximately 74.71%, more than 1.8 crore eligible voters participated in the democratic exercise, casting their ballots across 25,007 polling stations. The elections encompassed 21,920 Gram Panchayat seats, 1,920 Anchalik Panchayat seats, and 397 Zila Parishad seats, with the use of ballot papers adding to the complexity of the counting process, which began at 8 a.m. on May 11 and extended late into the evening.

The NDA's dominance was evident early on, as it had already secured 325 seats uncontested before polling began—37 Zila Parishad seats (35 BJP, 2 AGP) and 288 Anchalik Panchayat seats (259

BJP, 29 AGP). This uncontested haul, described by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma as an "unprecedented mandate," set the tone for the alliance's sweeping victory.

The BJP-AGP combine's success was particularly pronounced in key districts such as Dhemaji, Sivasagar, Biswanath, and Sonitpur, where the alliance registered near-total dominance. In Sivasagar, for instance, the BJP won 11 out of 12 Zila Parishad seats and 23 out of 27 Anchalik Panchayat seats, with the AGP securing the remaining Zila Parishad seat and three Anchalik seats. The Congress, by contrast, was relegated to a single Anchalik Panchayat seat in the district. Similarly, in Biswanath, the BJP clinched all 12 Zila Parishad seats and 59 Anchalik Panchayat seats, leaving the Congress with just three Anchalik seats. In Dhemaji, the BJP secured 52 out of 65 Anchalik Panchayat seats, while the Congress managed only five. These results highlight the NDA's ability to penetrate rural strongholds traditionally contested by opposition parties, signaling a shift in voter preference toward the alliance's development-oriented agenda.

CM Sarma, a key architect of the NDA's success, attributed the victory to the public's trust in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's welfare schemes and the state government's focus on grassroots development. Addressing the media, Sarma expressed confidence that the panchayat results foreshadow a strong performance in the 2026 Assembly elections, predicting that the NDA could win around 95 of the 126 Assembly seats. "Towns and cities have been our strongholds traditionally. Now, we have performed very well in villages," Sarma remarked, emphasizing the alliance's expanding rural footprint. He credited the BJP's organizational strength and the tireless efforts of party workers,

or "karyakartas," for translating policy achievements into electoral gains. State BJP president Dilip Saikia echoed this sentiment, describing the outcome as a "historic victory" driven by overwhelming public support for the NDA's governance model.

The Congress, once a dominant force in Assam's politics, faced a near-total rout in these elections, particularly in Upper Assam districts like Jorhat and Sivasagar, which fall under the Jorhat parliamentary constituency represented by Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi. In both districts, the Congress failed to secure a single Zila Parishad or Anchalik Panchayat seat, a stark contrast to its performance in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, where Gogoi had won with a significant margin. This discrepancy suggests a disconnect between the Congress's parliamentary appeal and its weakening grassroots presence. Assam Pradesh Congress Committee chief Bhupen Borah, visibly shaken by the results, accused the BJP of undermining grassroots democracy by delaying panchayat elections and misusing state resources. Borah alleged that the BJP government failed to deliver on key promises, such as providing 100 days of employment under MGNREGA, and claimed that only 6,200 job card holders received the mandated work during the BJP's tenure. He also raised concerns about monetary irregularities in candidate selection, citing complaints from five districts and proposing an inquiry committee to investigate.

Despite these accusations, the Congress's electoral performance paints a grim picture of its declining influence. The party's 122 Anchalik Panchayat seats and 62 Zila Parishad seats reflect a significant erosion of its rural base, particularly in areas where it had previously enjoyed support from minority communities. Sarma, in a pointed remark, suggested that the Congress's limited success was due to "minority votes driven by fear of the BJP," framing the opposition as increasingly reliant on a narrow voter base. This narrative aligns with posts on X, where some users described the Congress as a "Muslim party" in Assam, though such claims lack nuance and oversimplify the complex dynamics of voter behavior in the state.

The NDA's success was not limited to the BJP and AGP. In certain constituencies, smaller allies like the United Peoples' Party Liberal (UPPL) and regional parties like the Rabha Hasong Joutha Sangram Samiti (RHJSS) bolstered the alliance's performance, particularly in tribal areas. The RHAC elections in April 2025, where the NDA won 33 out of 36 seats, served as a precursor to the panchayat polls, demonstrating the alliance's ability to mobilize support among indigenous communities. Political analysts view these victories as a testament to the BJP's strategic outreach, which has combined welfare schemes with a strong organizational network to consolidate its hold over diverse voter groups.

The opposition, particularly the Congress, faces an uphill battle to regain relevance in Assam. Bhupen Borah's criticisms of the BJP's governance, including unfulfilled promises under schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and the Orunodoi initiative, failed to resonate with voters, who appear to have prioritized the NDA's visible development projects and assertive leadership. The Congress's manifesto promises, such as a monthly grant of Rs 3,500 for poor women under the "Lakshmi" scheme, did little to sway the electorate, which seemed more convinced by the NDA's track record. Smaller parties like the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) and Rajior

Dal also struggled to make a dent, with the AIUDF securing just one Anchalik Panchayat seat uncontested and Rajior Dal winning a handful of seats in specific constituencies.

The panchayat elections' significance extends beyond immediate political gains, as they are widely regarded as a "semifinal" for the 2026 Assembly polls. The NDA's ability to secure uncontested victories in 325 seats before polling even began reflects a combination of strategic candidate selection, opposition disarray, and public goodwill. The BJP's focus on "doorstep governance," as articulated by newly elected Zila Parishad members like Ganesh Basowar and Pranodipta Rajkhowa, resonated with voters seeking accessible and responsive leadership. Basowar, who won by a margin of 11,556 votes, promised regular ward visits, while Rajkhowa emphasized addressing public concerns directly in communities rather than from distant offices.

As the dust settles on the panchayat polls, the NDA's sweeping victory has set the stage for a high-stakes Assembly election. For the BJP and AGP, the results affirm their political strategy and organizational prowess, while for the Congress, they signal an urgent need for introspection and reinvention. The opposition's allegations of electoral malpractice and resource misuse, while serious, have been overshadowed by the NDA's electoral juggernaut, which shows no signs of slowing down. With Chief Minister Sarma at the helm, the NDA is poised to leverage this momentum to further entrench its dominance in Assam, leaving the Congress and other opposition parties scrambling to find a foothold in an increasingly saffron-colored political landscape. The 2025 panchayat elections have not only reshaped Assam's rural governance but also set a clear trajectory for the state's political future.

## Global weapons industry is witnessing an unprecedented growth

By Nantoo Banerjee

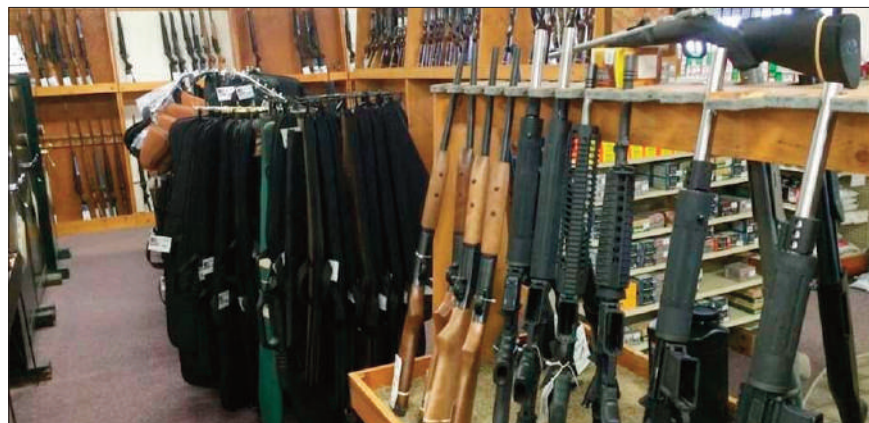
For an import-dependent country on critical arms supplies, it may be risky to get involved in a long-drawn war. Ukraine, currently the world's biggest arms importer, learnt the hard truth after Donald Trump became the US president. Recently, Ukraine had to part with its substantial mineral (rare earth) deposits to secure US arms supplies to fight Russia. Last year, Ukraine displaced India as the world's largest arms importer. The US accounted for around 45 percent of Ukraine's total arms imports, while Germany and Poland provided 12 percent and 11 percent respectively. Without the US help, Ukraine would have possibly surrendered before Russia within months of the Russian attack.

Thanks to the growing military impasse in Europe, Asia, and Asia-Pacific regions, the demand for arms and ammunition has substantially grown in recent years. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the world is witnessing an unprecedented rise in military expenditure. The global military expenditure reached \$2.718 trillion last year, an increase of 9.4 percent in real terms from 2023. It is the steepest year-on-year rise since the end of the cold war. Military spending increased in many parts of the world. It witnessed rapid growth in both Europe and West Asia. The top five military spenders are the US, China, Russia, Germany and India. Together, they accounted for 60 percent of the global total, with combined spending of \$1.635 trillion.

Military spending in Europe (including Russia) rose by 17 percent to \$693 billion last year. It was the principal contributor to the global increase in military spending in 2024. With the war in Ukraine continuing in its third year, military expenditure kept rising across the continent, pushing European military spending to a record level. Russia's military expenditure reached an estimated \$149 billion in 2024, 38 percent higher than the previous year. It represented 7.1 percent of Russia's GDP and 19 percent of all Russian government spending. At 34 percent of GDP, Ukraine had the largest military burden of any country in 2024.

Several countries in Central and Western Europe saw an unprecedented rise in their military spending in 2024. Germany's military expenditure rose by 28 percent to reach \$88.5 billion, making it the biggest spender in Central and Western Europe and the fourth largest in the world. Poland's military spending grew by 31 percent to \$38.0 billion in 2024, representing 4.2 percent of Poland's GDP. For the first time since its reunification, Germany became the biggest military spender in Western Europe. Thanks to President Trump's dislike for supporting NATO's huge military spending, the policies adopted by Germany and many other European countries suggest that Europe has entered a new era of high and increasing military spending.

The US military spending itself rose by



5.7 percent to reach \$997 billion, which was 66 percent of total NATO spending and 37 percent of world military spending in 2024. A significant portion of the US budget for 2024 was dedicated to modernizing military capabilities and the US nuclear arsenal in order to maintain a strategic advantage over Russia and China. European NATO members spent \$454 billion in total, representing 30 percent of total military spending across the alliance. Going by the global arms exports data, the top 10 arms manufacturing countries are: the US, Russia, France, China, Germany, Italy, UK, Spain, Israel, and South Korea.

The military expenditure in the West Asian region jacked up by 15 percent to an estimated \$243 billion in 2024. Israel's military expenditure surged by 65 percent to \$46.5 billion last year, the steepest annual increase since 1967, as it continued to wage war in Gaza and escalated conflict with Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. Its military burden rose to 8.8 percent of GDP, the second highest in the world. Lebanon's military spending rose by 58 percent in 2024 to \$635 million.

Surprisingly, Iran's military spending dropped by 10 percent in real terms to \$7.9 billion in 2024 despite its involvement in regional conflicts and its support for regional proxies. The impact of sanctions on Iran may have limited its capacity to increase military spending. Iran has developed a significant drone industry, notable for its multiple types of drones, including Kamikaze and multi-role UAVs. Iran is known for producing affordable and readily available drones, such as the Shahed-136 and Shahed-131.

China, the world's second largest military spender, raised its military expenditure by seven percent to an estimated \$314 billion. China accounted for 50 percent of all military spending in Asia and Oceania, continuously investing in modernization of its military and expansion of its cybersecurity capabilities and nuclear arsenal. Japan's military expenditure rose by 21 percent to \$55.3 billion in 2024, the largest annual increase since 1952. Its military burden reached 1.4 percent of GDP, the highest since 1958. India's military expenditure, the fifth largest globally, grew modestly to \$86.1 billion.

Amid rising tensions with India over the

April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, cash-strapped Pakistan endorsed an 18 percent hike in defence spending in its 2025-26 budget. India's defence budget for the current financial year too showed a record 9.53 percent rise as the country looks to modernise its armed forces and indigenous defence production against heightened geopolitical tensions. India's armed forces will receive Rs.6.81 trillion (USD78.3 billion), although only 26.4 percent of this budget will be spent on new acquisitions. Almost 23.6 percent will go towards pensions, which have been a major burden on India's defence spending since 2008. Almost 75 percent of the procurement sub-budget, or ₹ 1.12 trillion, will be set aside solely for domestic spending.

Ironically, the two rival South Asian nations, Pakistan and India, are heavily dependent on arms imports. India's historic import dependence on arms should be a matter of genuine concern for the country surrounded by hostile neighbours such as Pakistan, China and Bangladesh. Russia, itself fighting a prolonged war with Ukraine, remains the largest arms supplier to India although its share has decreased. India is increasingly diversifying its arms imports. However, the country needs to be self-sufficient in producing critical arms to be truly militarily powerful. No country can sustain a long-drawn war with imported arms. Currently, two of India's close defence allies and suppliers, Russia and Israel, themselves are involved in prolonged wars.

As in the case of India, Pakistan too is substantially import dependent for critical arms. It relies heavily on next door China for such arms supplies. China accounted for 81 percent of Pakistan's arms imports between 2020 and 2024. China's dominance in this area has increased over the past decade. Now, Pakistan, which is less than one-fourth the size of India, is the fifth-largest arms importer globally, accounting for 4.6 percent of global arms imports. Last year, the world's top five arms importers were Ukraine, India, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. Almost entirely dependent on China for sophisticated weapons, Pakistan can't involve itself in a long-drawn war unless it continuously gets substantial artillery support from China. (IPA Service)

## India's twin assertion of strength Operation Sindoor and the BrahMos leap

By: Dipak Kurmi

In a moment resonant with symbolism and strategy, Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh virtually inaugurated the BrahMos Integration and Testing Facility Centre in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh on May 11, 2025. The event, which coincided with National Technology Day, was not merely a celebration of India's burgeoning defence manufacturing capabilities but also a powerful reaffirmation of its national resolve in the aftermath of Operation Sindoor—a military retaliation that has come to define New India's approach to terrorism.

Speaking with gravitas, Rajnath Singh described Operation Sindoor as more than a retaliatory strike. It was, in his words, a "symbol of India's political, social, and strategic willpower." This sentiment echoed through the Defence Minister's speech as he lauded the Indian Armed Forces for their precision and restraint in carrying out the operation, ensuring that only terrorist infrastructure was targeted deep within Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). Twenty-one terror camps across nine locations were reportedly struck in a calibrated response to the brutal Pahalgam massacre, where innocent civilians fell victim to Pakistani-sponsored terrorism.

India refrained from immediate disclosure of the specific weaponry used in the early morning offensive on May 7. However, Wing Commander Vyomika Singh, an IAF helicopter pilot, offered critical insight during the official briefing, emphasizing that niche technology weapons with meticulously selected warheads were employed to avoid collateral damage. This strategic precision exemplifies the evolving doctrine of the Indian military: to neutralize threats with minimal civilian harm, leveraging advanced technology and refined tactics.

The foundation for such surgical precision lies in India's growing arsenal of modern weapon systems. Among the key tools likely used in Operation Sindoor is the HAMMER (Highly Agile and Manoeuvrable Munition Extended Range), an air-to-ground weapon tailored for the Rafale fighter jets. Developed by the French defence giant Safran, the HAMMER boasts a range of up to 70 km and can be launched from low altitudes, functioning autonomously and resiliently in jammed electronic environments. India has steadily acquired this system, reinforcing its aerial strike capabilities.

Complementing this is the SCALP-EG missile, known as Storm Shadow in the UK, which is a stealth-enabled, long-range air-launched cruise missile. With a range of 450 km and a triad of navigation systems—INS, GPS, and terrain referencing—the

SCALP can penetrate heavily fortified targets, including bunkers and ammunition depots. Its ability to operate in all weather and at night adds to its lethality, making it ideal for deep-strike missions like those in Operation Sindoor.

In the air-to-air combat sphere, the Meteor missile stands out as a game-changer. Designed by MBDA, the Meteor is a Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM) that thrives in contested electromagnetic environments. Its solid-fuel ramjet provides consistent thrust, resulting in the largest "No Escape Zone" of any missile in its class. The Meteor equips Indian fighter aircraft with unmatched supremacy in aerial engagements.

Perhaps the most iconic of India's arsenal, however, remains the BRAHMOS supersonic cruise missile. Developed jointly by India's DRDO and Russia's NPO Mashinostroyeniya, BrahMos operates at speeds nearing Mach 3 and features the 'Fire and Forget' mechanism, drastically reducing engagement time and exposure to enemy countermeasures. Capable of flying at altitudes as low as 10 metres, and carrying warheads between 200-300 kg, BrahMos strikes fear into adversaries due to its versatility and speed. Its range has been extended significantly in recent years, adding strategic depth to India's strike capabilities.

In recent times, India has also expanded its deployment of loitering munitions—drones capable of surveilling targets before engaging them with surgical precision. These systems embody the convergence of surveillance and strike capabilities, enhancing the Armed Forces' ability to conduct autonomous operations with minimal risk to personnel.

It is within this context of technological advancement and strategic resolve that Rajnath Singh's statements about Operation Sindoor take on their full significance. Noting that Pakistani forces attempted to retaliate by targeting civilian zones including temples, gurdwaras, and churches, the Defence Minister underscored the contrast between the conduct of the two nations. While Pakistan's response was indiscriminate, India's was targeted and surgical, underlining a moral high ground even in conflict.

Singh's remarks also made it clear that the operation was not limited to border skirmishes. He revealed that Indian forces struck military targets even in Rawalpindi, home to the Pakistani military headquarters. This disclosure reflects a bold new threshold in India's counter-terror strategy—a willingness to act decisively wherever threats emanate, irrespective of geography.

The backdrop to this assertive military posture is India's parallel push towards self-reliance in defence manufacturing. The BrahMos Integra-

tion and Testing Facility Centre inaugurated in Lucknow exemplifies this vision. Sprawling across 200 acres, the facility will handle integration of booster subassemblies, avionics, propellants, and ramjet engines. With an investment of ₹ 300 crore, it is poised to create significant direct and indirect employment, bolstering the Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor (UPDIC).

This new centre is not only an industrial asset but also a symbol of India's commitment to 'Aatmanirbhar' in defence. The inauguration saw five newly recruited trainees felicitated, among 36 selected to operate the facility, showcasing the emphasis on skill development and local empowerment. The centre also includes a programme design and administrative block, laying the foundation for indigenous R&D.

Quoting the former President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, Singh reaffirmed that strength alone commands respect in the international arena. He praised the Uttar Pradesh government for fostering a robust defence ecosystem, citing 180 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) worth ₹ 34,000 crore under UPDIC, of which ₹ 4,000 crore have already been realized. Projects in UAVs, drones, aircraft manufacturing, textiles, and superalloy materials are underway, marking UP as a pivotal node in India's defence future.

UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, present at the inauguration, echoed the Defence Minister's sentiments, praising Operation Sindoor as a stern message to the world: India no longer tolerates terrorism. He emphasized that only a resolute stance can yield lasting solutions to terrorism, affirming that Lucknow is on the path to becoming a global hub for defence manufacturing.

As global military spending soars, with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reporting a \$2,718 billion defence market in 2024, India sees an opportunity. Singh projected the BrahMos facility as a step towards carving out a significant role in this international market. With the slogan "Make-in-India, Make-for-the-World" gaining momentum, India's aim is not just self-sufficiency but leadership in defence exports.

Thus, Operation Sindoor and the BrahMos facility together signal a dual assertion: a declaration of India's operational capability to strike against terror and a commitment to indigenize its defence backbone. These developments are not isolated; they are integral to a coherent national strategy of deterrence, development, and diplomacy. As the world watches, India is defining its future—on its own terms, with strength and precision. (The writer can be reached at [dipakkurmi91td@gmail.com](mailto:dipakkurmi91td@gmail.com))



# From terror to climate: Act before crisis hits

By: VK Bahuguna

India because of its varied geography, location, geological and climatic conditions coupled with its 'reactive approach' in dealing with things is prone to natural and other disasters. Time and again the national disaster response has not been at all commensurate with the desired level of preparedness as well as, technology and swift action. Our administrative system takes action and rises from slumber only when disasters happen. Every year time and again seasonal disasters occur and several lives are lost as also huge loss of property and life-sustaining resources.

The governance for disaster management during the last few years has improved after the creation of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) but it falls short of the level of international standards. Take for example the recent Pahalgam terrorist attack on 22nd April 2025 in which 26 innocent Hindu lives were brutally killed by Pakistan-sponsored terrorists by first asking about their religion. It was an attack on the soul of India but the administration there miserably failed to plan to prevent such attacks on tourist spots in Kashmir, even as in major tourist spots elsewhere in the country security arrangements are made to oversee law and order and all who matter in running security apparatus in Jammu and Kashmir know full well that Kashmir is always on the radar of Pakistan sponsored terrorists. It was a well-known fact that last year more than 2.35 crore tourists visited Kashmir and the government opened all tourist places without making any arrangements for the security of people.

Whatever, the political rhetoric about peace returning in Kashmir after the aftermath of abrogating Article 370, all Indians were sure that terrorists have been striking at will in Kashmir and Jammu as several cases of civilian killings were

witnessed now and then. There was no coordination between the state and central intelligence agencies though intelligence inputs were indicating terrorist strike. In an era of modern technological innovation, there should not be collateral human loss of our armed forces during search operations to tackle the terrorists. We have a very professional Army no doubt but we need to learn a lesson or two from the Israeli Army and their leadership even though they too have a divided coalition polity. The state and central agencies failed to apprehend the local support to terrorists and Islamists not only in Kashmir but all over as the ecosystem that supports anti-national forces is yet to be given a fatal blow as they gleefully carry out their operations.

There have been talks of hunting down the perpetrators and their supporters for the last 35 years but with minimal lasting success as Pakistan keeps black-mailing about the use of their clandestinely achieved nuclear power status. This is so far about the threat to our national security. A solid standard operating procedure along with accountability and well-defined coordinated responsibility must be enforced.

The government also committed harakiri by opting for an early election as terrorist sympathisers also won and boosted their morale. The government should have told all who matter in clear terms not to have a 'holier than thou' approach on national security matters when the direction to hold elections and delimitation was carried out. Unless total annihilation of terrorism is carried out all such political activities should be suspended as politicians tend to confuse the issue for selfish electoral gains.

Let us discuss the other disasters looming large in the coming months. The coming summer is showing its fangs. Only a well-planned strategy can help prevent life and property losses. But what Delhi-NCR saw on 2nd May 2025 a severe thunderstorm, gusty

winds, hails and rains that choked the roads with fallen trees and water logging killing 6 people in Delhi proves that no lesson has been learnt. The roadside trees fell as a pack of cards because for the last many years, the environmentalists have been arguing against the concretisation of soil around trees and pavements which dries up moisture, and trees become weak as their roots cannot spread and do not get water.

The weather pattern and westerly winds coupled with rising temperatures due to climate change are making flying challenging as has been noticed for many days in the last 15 days. A concerted pinpointed strategy is the need of the hour. India's summer and monsoon seasons in 2025 are poised to aggravate challenges due to climate change, population pressures, poor planning, and systemic inefficiencies.

The issues needing attention are heatwaves, water scarcity, flooding, agricultural disruptions, and health risks as their intensity and frequency are increasing every year. While some measures are in place, India's response remains inadequate, and at best policies are reactive, inadequate investment, and bureaucratic inertia with a lack of accountability.

The second important issue which needs to be addressed is how to deal with Heat Island effects and Heat strokes. It is music to hear to notice that the Delhi Chief Minister had the other day proposed a 3-3-hour break from 12 PM to 3 PM for the labourers working on roads and construction works. Last year during 2024 the country experienced a severe heatwave, resulting in more than 700 reported heatstroke deaths across 17 states, according to the "Heat Watch 2024" report. It also identified around 40,000 cases of heatstroke. What this report misses is the actual data which is several times more as the reporting mechanism does not cover all such deaths in rural areas.

There are instances of heat island effects in cities mainly due to factors like reduced vegetation, impervious surfaces concrete pavement, and building materials that store and release heat. In this regard, the Metropolitan cities need to emulate the urban landscape management of Agartala city by the Tripura government where roads and pavements all over have been aesthetically redesigned with vegetation. The civic authorities must plan for at least 20 heat waves this season for each city and proper water management and availability in both urban and rural areas.

The heat-related mortality may increase in slums and rural hinterlands. A new building code be prepared by the civic bodies under the supervision of IDMA which should have provisions on how to deal with heat island effects and how greenery should be used to tackle it.

To deal with seasonal diseases like gastroenteritis and other viral diseases must have a plan of action. Yet another issue is managing the water resources in urban areas.

As more than 60 per cent of our districts in the country are water stressed. Cities like Bengaluru and Chennai may face "Day Zero" scenarios, where water supplies run dry, as seen in Cape Town in 2018. There is a complete absence of water use planning at the household level. We must prepare for rainwater harvesting and water harvesting at the landscape level in both urban and rural areas, especially in forestlands.

Tamil Nadu's success in reviving water bodies should be replicated all over India so all other successful stories. The National Disaster Management Authority must be reformed and be given the role of policy planning and monitoring of disaster preparedness for the entire country and only qualified experts should be posted in it rather than making it a post-retirement sinecure for lobbyists. (Courtesy: The Pioneer)

## US sees world's highest disaster displacement as 11 million forced to relocate in 2024



By: Preetha Banerjee

As many as 11 million people in the United States were forced to relocate within the country due to disasters in 2024 — a quarter of the global figure, according to the latest report by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). This was the highest for a single country in the year, the report noted.

The number of people displaced due to wildfires in the country was also the highest globally, according to the Global Report on Internal Displacements 2025. This was in keeping with the trend for the decade.

A majority of the 266,000 movements due to wildfires took place in California, the authors wrote in the report. "The largest event was the Park fire in Butte and Tehama counties in late July, triggering more than 66,000."

Wildfires are particularly debilitating for the displaced people because it delays their return home. The authors cite the example of Hawaii, where the Maui fires of August 2023 have caused 3,000 people to continue to live in internal displacement by the end of 2024, they observed.

### Internal displacements due to disasters & conflict

Disaster-related internal displacements were at an all-time high across the world, with 45.8 million forced out of their homes in 2024. This was the largest figure since IDMC began monitoring the category of internal displacement in 2008. The global figure was also more than double the annual average of the last decade, the analysis showed.

Almost all the disaster displacements (99.5 per cent) were in the aftermath of weather-related events made severe by climate change, the authors highlighted. Further, some 29 countries and territories, including the US, recorded their highest disaster displacement in 2024.

IDMC acknowledged that many of these internal displacements were pre-emptive evacuation that saved lives in places such as the US, the Philippines and Bangladesh. However, the authors flagged that without adequate support, these people may remain displaced longer than they need to be. "Of the 163 countries and territories reporting disaster displacements last year, 53 reported pre-emptive evacuations, but incomplete data means the true number is likely higher."

Some 9.8 million people across the world were living in internal displacement in 2024 due to disasters. This is the

total number of people displaced due to disasters historically who are still waiting to return home.

Moreover, some 20.1 million people were displaced internally due to conflict. The analysis also highlighted the interplay between disasters and conflict in the lives of displaced individuals. "More than three-quarters of people internally displaced by conflict and violence as of the end of 2024 were living in countries with high or very high vulnerability to climate change," they wrote, adding that the number of countries that reported displacements due to both the reasons have tripled since 2009.

### Global internal displacements in 2024

Sub-Saharan Africa witnessed the highest number of internal displacement in 2024, with 19.3 million people forced to leave home due to conflict, violence and disasters. Of this, 7.8 million were displaced due to disasters. Further, all 23 countries that recorded conflict displacements also registered movements triggered by disasters, the analysis showed.

East Asia and Pacific followed with 16.2 million internal displacements, of which 14.8 million were due to disasters. This marked the highest disaster-related movement among regions. The number of disaster displacements was the region's highest since 2016.

This was followed by the Americas, where 14.5 million people were displaced internally in 2024 — 13.1 million for disasters. The overall figure for the region was higher than the previous five years put together.

South Asia recorded 9.2 million internal displacements, almost all of which was due to disasters. "After drier conditions associated with El Niño in 2023, the number of disaster displacements in South Asia nearly tripled in 2024 to reach 9.2 million. The figure was the second highest for the region in more than a decade," the researchers wrote.

Middle East & North Africa recorded 5.7 million internal displacements. Some 599,000 of this was due to disasters.

Europe and Central Asia saw the least number of internal displacements in the year at 846,000, of which 358,000 were disaster-related. Almost 60 per cent of the region's displacement was due to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. However, 10 countries in Europe and Central Asia reported their highest disaster displacement numbers ever recorded. (Courtesy: Down to Earth)

## What it means to be disabled during a 45°C Summer

By: Puneet Singh Singhal

It's just the beginning of summer in Delhi, and the temperature is already crossing 40°C. The ceiling fans in many low-income homes barely cut through the thick, hot air. Water coolers sputter, electric bills soar, and public spaces — once offering a semblance of relief — become unbearable or outright inaccessible.

According to the June 2022 report by the Disability Inclusive Climate Action Research Programme (DICARP), only 39 out of 192 countries explicitly reference persons with disabilities in their national climate policies. This policy invisibility reflects what I've witnessed firsthand in Delhi—where disabled individuals are often left to navigate life-threatening heatwaves without support. The International Labour Organization (ILO) also warns that climate change will severely worsen health conditions for vulnerable populations, particularly those with pre-existing conditions or who work in informal sectors with no cooling access. These insights underline what we already feel: climate vulnerability is not just about temperature—it's about whose lives are consistently left out of planning and protection.

But while the heat affects everyone, it doesn't affect everyone equally.

Over the past few months, under my project "Green Disability," I interviewed more than 20 disabled, neurodivergent, and chronically ill individuals across Delhi/NCR. I have decided to keep their identities undisclosed — mostly from working-class backgrounds — to understand how

they are coping with the worsening heatwaves. These interviews were anonymous to protect the privacy of the individuals, but their voices and lived truths are undeniable.

Delhi's Heat Action Plan, while a positive step in recognizing climate risk, lacks any mention of persons with disabilities. It lists cooling centers, early warning systems, and public awareness campaigns—but without integrating accessibility standards. There are no detailed provisions for inclusive shelters, assistive cooling devices, or multilingual alerts in accessible formats. This omission makes clear that even well-intentioned policies can deepen marginalization when inclusion is an afterthought rather than a foundation.

The findings? Brutal. Exhausting. And invisible to the mainstream climate conversation.

**The City That Doesn't Care If You Can't Move Fast**  
Delhi's streets are a nightmare during a heatwave. Melting asphalt, honking traffic, dust rising from dry gutters. For wheelchair users and people with mobility impairments, simply stepping out becomes a risk.

"The pavement is too broken to use," one respondent told me. "And the buses are too crowded and too hot. But it is what it is. In order to survive, I have to work somehow."

For those with chronic illnesses who rely on electricity-powered medical equipment, power cuts during peak heat hours are dangerous.

Delhi may pride itself on becoming a "smart city," but the smartness seems reserved for the few who can afford private ACs, fast cars, and walled societies with backup generators.

Public Infrastructure: Designed for the "Able" and the Wealthy

The lack of shade, tactile paving, or sensory-friendly spaces means most public infrastructure simply wasn't built with disabled people in mind. In 40°C+ heat, this exclusion isn't just inconvenient—it's oppressive.

The heat amplifies every barrier. "I use a walker," said another participant, "and the metal burns my hands in the sun. The bus stop nearby has no shelter. I have to wait in the open, sweating, dehydrated."

Even hospitals, already stretched thin, become sites of further exclusion. Long queues in sweltering corridors. Broken elevators. No sign language interpreters. And for caregivers, the mental and physical toll doubles.

Delhi's heat doesn't just test infrastructure—it exposes neglect.

### The Hidden Cost: Emotional and Mental Health

What surprised me most was how many people described not just physical exhaustion but deep emotional fatigue.

An autistic young woman spoke of the sensory overwhelm — the buzzing heat, noise, pollution — that leads to frequent meltdowns. "It feels like the city is screaming," she said.

Others mentioned worsening anxiety, mood swings, and isolation. When staying indoors becomes a necessity, and stepping out becomes a hazard, loneliness sets in.

Many disabled individuals live alone or with limited family support. Their community networks — already frayed by social stigma — become even harder to maintain during extreme weather.

"I miss meeting my friends," one participant told me. "But my body just can't take the heat anymore."

### Water, Jobs, and What It Costs to Stay Cool

For some, the summer heat directly affects their income. A visually impaired man who sells small goods at traffic lights told me he's lost over half his daily income — people don't roll down windows any more in the heat. His own energy dips before noon.

Others reported skipping medical appointments, reducing daily meals, or going without drinking water for long hours because toilets aren't accessible or nearby. For menstruating or chronically ill women with disabilities, the choice between hydration and dignity is a daily negotiation.

Cooling becomes a luxury — not just in terms of money, but in effort. What does it cost to fill a bucket of water when your building has no lift and you can't walk unassisted? What does it mean to "stay hydrated" when you need assistance just to reach the kitchen?

### The Unasked Questions, and a City That Must Listen

The most powerful thread through all the stories was this: no one asks. No one asks disabled people how they're coping. No one asks if they need help. No one asks what the city can do better.

**But they should.**  
Because it's not just about heat. It's about who gets to be seen as worth protecting during a crisis. Who gets counted when policies are made, and who is left to figure it out alone.

As one respondent said: "We're not even in the conversation. Not with the city, not with the climate activists, not with the media."

### What Needs to Change — Right Now

If there's one thing the recent heatwave has made clear, it's this: accessibility and climate adaptation must go hand in hand.

Here's what the city can do immediately:

Ensure that every cooling center and public space is wheelchair accessible, and that information is shared in formats accessible to people with visual and hearing disabilities.

Create heatwave early warning systems with multiple modalities: audio, text, visuals, and community volunteers.

Equip community health workers and caregivers with training to assist disabled individuals during climate crises.

Provide subsidies or support for assistive cooling technologies — such as cooling vests, solar-powered fans, or battery backups for medical devices.

Center disabled people in climate planning. Nothing about us without us.

### Heat and Hope: Why We Still Believe in Change

Through my initiative, Green Disability, I'm trying to push this conversation forward — not as a token "add-on" but as an urgent justice issue. We're holding workshops, building digital accessibility resources, and bringing lived experiences into the heart of climate dialogue.

This story is about heat. And it's about dignity. About the right to move freely, to breathe safely, to be part of the city — even when it's 45 degrees and rising.

Because until our cities are designed for everyone, they don't really work for anyone.

And as the climate crisis deepens, we can't afford to leave anyone behind. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

## Navigating India's water woes - A pricey matter

By: Soumya Bhowmik

India is confronting the harsh reality of water scarcity. The annual decline in per capita water availability from 1486 m<sup>3</sup> in 2021 to 1367 m<sup>3</sup> by 2031 sets an alarming trajectory, falling below the current global average of approximately 5500 m<sup>3</sup> and signalling a severe water scarcity challenge for the nation.

The growing population exacerbates the demand for water, affecting food, sanitation, and development needs. Worsening water pollution, climate change-induced droughts, and inadequate water resource management further strain water supply, particularly groundwater resources.

India's reliance on monsoons for agriculture intensifies the pressure on water resources, with droughts increasing in frequency and projecting a worsening trend until 2049.

The agricultural sector, which employs 70 per cent of the population, is the primary water consumer but faces low water-use efficiency. Inefficient irriga-

tion systems and overexploitation of groundwater aggravate the water stress.

India's irrigation sector, consuming 80 per cent of total water, relies heavily on unsustainable groundwater extraction, driven by perverse subsidies and sub-optimal water pricing.

Groundwater depletion at a rate of 0.3 metres annually poses a severe threat to the country's water security. Recognising the urgency, the Ministry of Jal Shakti was established in 2019, implementing programs to enhance irrigation efficiency and promote optimal water resource utilisation.

However, with declining real prices, the existing water pricing system has led to inter-state conflicts — emphasising the need for a holistic approach to water pricing, considering the comprehensive values and ecosystem service losses associated with water diversion.

### Ecosystem Services and Water Valuation

Water allocation challenges arise from spatiotemporal differences in availability, requiring efficient management to al-

locate scarce resources among competing needs. Hence, a robust and inclusive water valuation technique is needed to enhance water governance processes.

Valuing water serves as an objective tool for decision-making, providing a quantified basis for ranking and prioritising projects in water-related infrastructure. Equitable and inclusive valuation aids the allocation of scarce resources, balancing efficiency, equity, and sustainability considerations for social optimality in consumption and production. Water plays a pivotal role in providing ecosystem services, benefiting both people and the environment in various ways.

Ecosystems like rivers, wetlands, and marine ecosystems offer goods such as clean water and fish, along with services like water purification and flood mitigation. Environmental flows, which allocate water to sustain ecosystems, are crucial for the well-being of these environments and the communities dependent on them.

Despite water's importance in sustain-

ing diverse ecosystems, there is a lack of detailed quantitative knowledge regarding the impacts of environmental changes on ecosystem structure and functions.

Examples include changes in biodiversity, water quality parameters, hydrological flow data, and the economic valuation of ecosystem services. Such data helps understand and manage the trade-offs between human activities and ecosystem health. However, recognising water's contribution to ecosystem services remains an emerging research area.

The importance of integrating environmental sciences and economics for collaborative research efforts cannot be understated, and the need for a balance between equity and efficiency in water pricing must be emphasised.

Efficiency aims to optimise water allocation for maximum net benefit, while equity ensures fairness among economically diverse groups. Differential pricing (higher for industrial use than domestic), market-based pricing, and

output pricing (charging based on crop production) are possible strategies to achieve equity and efficiency in water allocation, recognising the challenges in objectively measuring fairness.

### Pricing Water in India

India faces a severe water crisis driven by significant demand-supply gaps, inefficient water resource management, and climate change. Predictions indicate critical water shortages by 2050, highlighting the urgency for practical solutions. There is a disparity in irrigation water pricing across states, leading to low revenue collection. This is mainly attributed to low water taxes, infrequent charge revisions, and flaws in the revenue collection mechanism.

However, the regulatory body's effectiveness is contingent on the establishment of a robust pricing mechanism.

A uniform and rigid water pricing system across India is highly required to accurately value and sustainably utilise the depleting resource. Currently, water pricing in India varies significantly across states, with many states setting nil

to low water taxes and rarely revising charges.

This results in flawed revenue collection mechanisms and low revenue generation in the irrigation sector. Again, over utilisation of groundwater resources due to a focus on supply-side measures exacerbates the crisis, necessitating the immediate implementation of a stringent water tariff system nationwide. The multifaceted water tariff design approach must balance revenue generation, efficiency, demand management, economic development, and public welfare.

The tariff-setting process should be transparent, ensuring equity, sustainability, and resource conservation. Forward-looking rates should consider environmental costs, align with government policies, and adapt to varying water supply characteristics.

The overarching goal is to address India's water crisis through an integrated approach involving effective regulation, pricing mechanisms, and sustainable resource management. (Courtesy: ORF)



## Convinced India, Pak to let's have peace: President Trump

**NEW YORK, May 14:** US President Donald Trump has repeated his claim that Washington "got involved" with India and Pakistan, saying he "didn't like what was happening" and that he did a "good job" as he "convinced" the two countries "to let's have peace and let's go and make trade deals." Trump was speaking to Fox News aboard Air Force One after he wrapped up his Saudi Arabia visit on Tuesday. This is the fifth time since Saturday that Trump has claimed that the US brokered the "ceasefire" between New Delhi and Islamabad.

India and Pakistan reached an understanding on Saturday to end the conflict after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes. Indian government sources in New Delhi have been maintaining that the Director Generals of Military Operations (DGMOs) of India and Pakistan reached an understanding to stop all firings and military actions on land, air and sea, with immediate effect. They said no third party was involved.

"Well, I've been busy, but I've enjoyed it, because we're getting things accomplished. You can have times when you're working very hard and not getting things done. That happens too, but we're getting a lot done," Trump said in an interview to Fox News' Sean Hannity.

Trump was responding to a question that it has been "an amazing week so far", with the President getting a trade deal with China, playing a big role in India and Pakistan and slashing prescription drug prices.

"I don't think there's ever been a little period like this with the potential nuclear war. And two countries (India and Pakistan), they have very good leaders, people I know very well. And, yeah, it was, it was a very important process. We got involved with India and Pakistan," Trump said. When asked to give an insight into what happened behind the scenes, Trump said, "Well, I didn't like what was happening. And you know, they're two very strongly nuclear countries, with very, very powerful amounts of nuclear, too, serious stuff."

"And if that ever started, boy, that's the beginning of something that could be really bad. Even a minimal minimum, you could have millions of people killed and with one shot, two shots. And I just thought it was something we could get involved in," he said.

"And I did a good job. (Secretary of State) Marco

(Rubio) did a good job, and (Vice President) J D (Vance) did a good job. We sort of were a team. And we, I think, convinced them to let's have peace and let's go and make trade deals. If we can make trade deals, we like that much better than nuclear weapons. And that was a great thing."

Hours earlier, addressing a high-level audience at the Saudi-US investment forum in Riyadh, that he doesn't like war and wants to be a peacemaker and unifier.

With Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the audience, along with senior members of the Saudi and American governments, Trump said, "Just days ago, my administration successfully brokered a historic ceasefire to stop the escalating violence between India and Pakistan."

"And I used trade to a large extent to do it. And I said, 'Fellows, come on. Let's make a deal. Let's do some trading,'" Trump, who was in Saudi on the first leg of his four-day Gulf region trip, said to applause from the audience.

Sitting in the audience were billionaire Elon Musk, Rubio and other senior members of the Trump administration as well as the Saudi leadership.

"Let's not trade nuclear missiles. Let's trade the things that you make so beautifully. And they both have very powerful leaders, very strong leaders, good leaders, smart leaders. And it all stopped. Hopefully, it'll remain that way, but it all stopped," Trump said.

India carried out precision strikes under 'Operation Sindoor' on terror infrastructure early on May 7 in response to the April 22 Pahalagam terror attack that killed 26 people. Following the Indian action, Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9 and 10.

The two countries reached an understanding on Saturday, May 10.

On Saturday, Trump announced that India and Pakistan had agreed to a "full and immediate ceasefire" after a "long night of talks mediated by the United States."

Later, in a post on Truth Social, Trump offered to work with India and Pakistan for a "solution" on Kashmir, while crediting Washington for helping the two nations arrive at the "historic and heroic decision" of stopping the conflict.

India has always maintained that the Kashmir issue is a bilateral matter with Pakistan and there is no space for any third party. (AP)

## Israeli airstrikes in Gaza kill 60 people, including 22 children, Health Ministry says

**DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA STRIP), May 14:** At least 22 children were killed in Gaza early Wednesday in a punishing series of Israeli airstrikes across Gaza, according to local hospitals and health officials.

The strikes killed at least 60 people in total, Gaza's Health Ministry reported, including 10 people in the southern city of Khan Younis. The strikes came a day after Hamas released an Israeli-American hostage in a deal brokered by the United States, and as President Donald Trump was visiting Saudi Arabia.

On Tuesday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said there was "no way" Israel would halt its war in Gaza, dimming hopes for a ceasefire.

The Israeli military refused to comment on the strikes, but had warned residents of Jabaliya to evacuate late Tuesday night due to Hamas infrastructure in the area, including rocket launchers.

In Jabaliya, rescue workers smashed through collapsed concrete slabs using hand tools in order to remove bodies of some of the children who were killed.

Israel threatens to escalate operations in Gaza.

In comments released by Netanyahu's office Tuesday, the prime minister said Israeli forces were just



days away from a promised escalation of force and would enter Gaza "with great strength to complete the mission... It means destroying Hamas."

The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants killed 1,200 people in a 2023 intrusion into southern Israel. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed over 52,800 Palestinians, many of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many of the dead were combatants or civilians.

Israel's offensive has obliterated vast swaths of Gaza's urban landscape and displaced 90% of the population, often multiple times.

The strikes came amidst hopes that Trump's visit to the Middle East could usher in a ceasefire deal or renewal of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

France condemns Israeli blockade of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

International food security experts issued a stern warning earlier this week that the Gaza Strip will likely fall into famine if Israel doesn't lift its blockade and stop its military campaign.

French President Emmanuel Macron strongly denounced Netanyahu's decision to block aid from entering Gaza as "a disgrace" that has caused a major humanitarian crisis.

"I say it forcefully, what Ben-

jamin Netanyahu's government is doing today is unacceptable," Macron said Tuesday evening on TF1 national television. "There's no medicine. We can't get the wounded out. Doctors can't get in. What he's doing is a disgrace. It's a disgrace." Macron, who visited injured Palestinians in El Arish hospital in Egypt last month, called to reopen the Gaza border to humanitarian convoys. "Then, yes, we must fight to demilitarise Hamas, free the hostages and build a political solution," he said.

Nearly half a million Palestinians are facing possible starvation, living at "catastrophic" levels of hunger, while 1 million others can barely get enough food, according to findings by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, a leading international authority on the severity of hunger crises.

Israel has banned all food, shelter, medicine and any other goods from entering the Palestinian territory for the past 10 weeks, even as it carries out waves of airstrikes and ground operations.

Gaza's population of around 2.3 million people relies almost entirely on outside aid to survive, because Israel's 19-month-old military campaign has wiped away most capacity to produce food inside the territory. (AP)

## Military ops against India was designed under supervision of Nawaz Sharif, claims Punjab minister

**LAHORE, May 14:** A senior leader of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on Wednesday claimed that the military operation against India was designed under the supervision of the party president Nawaz Sharif.

Nawaz, the former three-time premier and elder brother of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, had congratulated Pakistan's civil and military leadership soon after the two countries reached an understanding on Saturday to end the conflict after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes.

"The whole operation against India was designed under the supervision of former prime minister and PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif," Pakistan's Punjab province Information Minister Azma Bukhari claimed.

She said Nawaz is not a leader of "a, b, c, d type", rather his work speaks for himself.

"It was Nawaz Sharif who made Pakistan a nuclear power and now designed the whole operation against India," the minister claimed.

India carried out precision strikes under 'Operation Sindoor' on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir early on May 7 in response to the April 22 Pahalagam terror attack. Following the Indian action, Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9 and 10.

Nawaz had been advocating for a diplomatic solution to the rising tensions with India. "Pakistan is a peace-loving country and prefers peace, but also knows how to defend itself," Nawaz said in a post on X on Saturday.

"Thanks be to Allah Almighty for making Pakistan proud. I congratulate and congratulate the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shabbaz Sharif, the Chief of Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir, the Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zahoor Rindoo, and the armed forces of Pakistan," he said.

Nawaz was the prime minister of Pakistan during the Kargil war of 1999. (PTI)

## IMF disburses USD 1.023 bn tranche to Pak; to hold virtual discussions about budget

**KARACHI/ISLAMABAD, May 14:** The International Monetary Fund has disbursed a second tranche of USD 1.023 billion under the Extended Fund Facility programme for Pakistan, the central bank said on Wednesday.

The disbursement of the second tranche comes on a day when the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is holding virtual discussions on Pakistan's upcoming budget as the visit of its mission to Islamabad was delayed due to security concerns in the region. The federal government is planning to unveil the budget for fiscal 2025-26 on June 2.

The IMF talks will continue until May 16.

The Central bank said the second tranche amount would be reflected in its foreign exchange reserves for the week ending May 16.

The amount was approved last week by the IMF board under the ongoing Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and allowed an additional arrangement for the USD 1.4 billion Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF).

The decision to release the funds came after the IMF expressed satisfaction on the first review of Pakistan's economic reform programme supported by the EFF Arrangement, the bank said.

The IMF noted that Pakistan's policy efforts under the EFF had already delivered "significant progress" in stabilising the economy and rebuilding confidence, amidst a challenging global environment.

"Fiscal performance has been strong, with a primary surplus of two per cent of gross domestic product achieved in the first half of FY25, keeping Pakistan on track to meet the end-FY25 target of 2.1 per cent of GDP."

Pakistan's gross reserves stood at USD 10.3 billion at end-April, up



from USD 9.4 billion in August 2024, and are projected to reach USD 13.9 billion by end-June 2025 and continue to be rebuilt over the medium term, it was pointed out.

Meanwhile, the IMF talks that started virtually Wednesday will continue until May 16.

The global lender has appointed a new mission chief to Pakistan and the mission is now expected to travel to Islamabad over the weekend, subject to the security situation, government sources told The Express Tribune on Tuesday.

The IMF mission delayed its scheduled arrival here on Tuesday due to uncertainty caused by the India-Pakistan conflict that had affected air travel across the region.

"Virtual discussions are expected to be held from today. For the second and final leg of the talks, the IMF team is expected to arrive in Islamabad on Saturday and stay until May 23," the source said.

The IMF's Resident Representative to Pakistan Mahir Binici did not respond to a request for comment on the change in the travel plan.

Finance Ministry spokesperson Qamar Abbasi also did not respond to questions on the change in the travel plans.

Meanwhile, the IMF appointed Iva Petrova, a Bulgarian origin staff member, as new Mission Chief to Pakistan. She would join the discussions along with the outgoing Mission Chief Nathan Porter — who served in the position for an extended

term.

Binici also did not comment on whether both outgoing and new mission chiefs would join both rounds of talks.

Petrova, who holds a PhD degree in economics from the Michigan State University, has been serving as the IMF Mission Chief to Armenia. Previously, she had served with the missions to Israel, Iceland and Latvia.

In Pakistan, the fiscal policy is expected to remain tight in the next fiscal year too. The IMF has asked Pakistan to make a budget on the assumption of having 1.6 per cent of the GDP primary budget surplus, which will require generating about ₹ 2 trillion over and above the non-interest expenses.

The tax target for the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) is proposed to be 11 per cent of the GDP or Rs 14.3 trillion. The IMF would examine whether the government plans to take credibly realistic measures to back the new tax target, said the sources.

The IMF has set multiple fiscal conditions, whose successful completion has so far helped smooth continuation of the programme despite initial setbacks.

Pakistan has met the IMF targets for a primary budget surplus by the federal government, as well as net revenue collection and cash surplus targets by the four provinces.

Against a primary surplus target of ₹ 2.7 trillion, the federal government reported a surplus of Rs 3.5 trillion, or 2.8 per cent of GDP.

The size of the federal budget still remains tentative due to redoing of defence needs and the government plans to announce less than ₹ 18 trillion budget. The overall budget deficit target after incorporating large provincial cash surpluses is projected at 5.1 per cent of the GDP or ₹ 6.7 trillion, the sources said. (PTI)

## Funerals held in Myanmar for pupils, teachers killed in airstrike on school

**BANGKOK, May 14:** Funerals have been held in Myanmar for almost two dozen students and teachers alleged to have been killed in an airstrike on a local school by a ruling military jet fighter.

Local resistance groups and independent media said Tuesday that 20 pupils and 2 teachers died in the attack on Ohe Hein Twin village, in Sagaing region's township of Tabayin, also known as Depayin. Their reports said that as many as 100 people were wounded.

The dead students were from grades 2 to 11, with the youngest seven years old, according to the shadow National Unity Government, which serves as an umbrella organization for opponents of military rule.

A member of a local resistance group fighting against army rule told The Associated Press that another student, who was severely injured in Monday's bombing, died Tuesday afternoon while undergoing medical treatment.

The resistance fighter, who requested that neither he nor his group be named for fear of arrest by the military, said the incident occurred while more than 100 students were studying in a school in the village, which has about 500 houses. He denied that any resistance fighters were stationed in the village that was attacked.

Sagaing has been a stronghold of armed resistance to army rule in Myanmar, and the military in recent

years has stepped up airstrikes in their fight against resistance forces, which include the armed People's Defense Forces. The resistance has no effective defense against air attacks, which many reports say hit non-military targets. Myanmar has been in turmoil since the army's 2021 takeover ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, which led to nationwide peaceful protests that escalated into a durable armed resistance denying the army control of much of the country.

A report Tuesday in the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper denied the army had carried out the airstrike, saying malicious media outlets were intentionally spreading false information. The military's tight control over the media and the relative remoteness of many such incidents makes independent confirmation of what occurred difficult.

The bodies of 18 of the victims, most of them under the age of 10 were buried Monday in two village cemeteries after hastily arranged funerals just a few hours after the bombing incident, the unidentified resistance fighter said.

About 100 wounded people, both students and teachers, were being treated in regional hospitals as the village's clinic lacked adequate facilities. At least two victims have had to have limbs amputated, he added. (PTI)

## Indian heritage Anita Anand is Canada's new foreign minister

**OTTAWA, May 14:** Indo-Canadian heritage Anita Anand and Maninder Sidhu have landed important portfolios in the new cabinet announced by Prime Minister Mark Carney after reshuffle. While Anand was appointed as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sidhu is the new Minister for International Trade in the new cabinet announced on Tuesday.

Carney announced the reshuffle almost two weeks after his Liberal Party won the federal elections in Canada. He had replaced Justin Trudeau months ahead of the elections.

Anand, 58, was the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry before the polls and in the past has served in the roles including of defence minister. She replaced Melanie Joly, who is now the Minister of Industry.

"I am honoured to be named Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs. I look forward to working with Prime Minister Mark Carney and our team

to build a safer, fairer world and deliver for Canadians," Anand, an MP from Oakville East, posted on X soon after taking oath. Sidhu, 41, also took to X after swearing-in and said, it is an "honour of a lifetime" to be appointed as Canada's International Trade Minister.

"I'm grateful to Prime Minister @MarkJCarney for the confidence he's placed in me to diversify trade, support Canadian businesses in reaching new global markets, and help create good-paying jobs across Canada," he said. "I'm proud to stand alongside my colleagues as we work together to build the fastest-growing economy in the G7," he added in the post on X.

Sidhu's appointment as the Minister for International Trade comes at a time when Canada is battling the Trump administration's aggression towards Canada on tariffs. Anand, who was a front-runner in the race to be the next prime minister to replace

Trudeau, had in January declared that she is backing out from the race and also that she would not be seeking re-election. However, she had reversed the decision on March 1 saying, "Canada is facing a crucial moment in our nation's history." Born and raised in rural Nova Scotia, Anand moved to Ontario in 1985.

The Prime Minister of Canada's website mentions that Anand was first elected as a Member of Parliament for Oakville in 2019 and previously served as President of the Treasury Board, as Minister of National Defence, and as Minister of Public Services and Procurement.

"Anand has worked as a scholar, lawyer, and researcher. She has been a legal academic, including as a Professor of Law at the University of Toronto, where she held the J.R. Kimber Chair in Investor Protection and Corporate Governance," it said and listed her other academic achievements too. (AP)

## Hope parties will use deal for outstanding issues: UN spokesperson

**UNITED NATIONS, May 14:** With India and Pakistan having reached an understanding to end hostilities "we're in a better place," a spokesperson for UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said and hoped the countries would use it to deal with their "outstanding issues".

India and Pakistan reached an understanding on May 10 to end the conflict after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes.

"The ceasefire is holding. I think we have seen we're in a better place than we were before. We hope that the ceasefire will continue to hold, and we hope that the parties will use this to deal with a lot of the outstanding issues between them," Stephane Dujarric, spokesperson for the Secretary-General, said at the daily press briefing Tuesday.

India carried out precision strikes under 'Operation Sindoor' on terror infrastructure early on May 7 in response to the April 22 Pahalagam terror attack that killed 26 people. Following the Indian action, Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9 and 10.

After announcing the understanding, Indian government sources in New Delhi have maintained that the Director Generals of Military Operations (DGMOs) of India and Pakistan reached the understanding to stop all firings and military actions on land, air and sea, with immediate effect. They said no third party was involved.

Guterres had earlier welcomed the "ceasefire" agreement between India and Pakistan, describing it



as a "positive step" toward ending current hostilities and easing tensions. Guterres said he hopes "the agreement will contribute to lasting peace and foster an environment conducive to addressing broader, longstanding issues between the two countries," Dujarric had said in a statement on Saturday.

The United Nations stands ready to support efforts

aimed at promoting peace and stability in the region, it had said. Meanwhile, New York City Mayor Eric Adams said in a post on X that "New York City is home to vibrant Indian and Pakistani communities, whose ties to their homelands run deep. The recent ceasefire brings hope to many New Yorkers, and we stand with all those who long for lasting peace." (PTI)

## Want to encourage direct communication between India, Pak: US State Department

**NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, May 14:** The US said it encourages "direct communication" between India and Pakistan and commends Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for choosing the path of peace. India and Pakistan reached an understanding on Saturday to end the conflict after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes.

Indian government sources in New Delhi have been maintaining that the Director Generals of Military Operations (DGMOs) of India and Pakistan reached an understanding to stop all firings and military actions on land, air and sea, with immediate effect. They said no third party was involved.

"We also welcome the ceasefire between India and Pakistan and commend Prime Ministers Modi and Sharif for choosing the path of peace. As President Trump said, their decision reflects strength, wisdom, and fortitude," Principal Deputy Spokesperson at the State Department Thomas Pigott said at a press briefing Tuesday.

"We urge both sides to maintain direct communication to preserve regional stability," he said.

In response to a question on whether, in his calls with the Pakistani leaders Secretary of State Marco Rubio had received any commitment that they (Pakistan) will dismantle terrorist infrastructure, Pigott said he is not going to talk about private diplomatic conversations.

"What I can say is reiterating what we've been saying for a couple days now is that we welcome the ceasefire reached between India and Pakistan this weekend and we commend both prime ministers for choosing the path of peace. 'The President Truthed about this. He was very clear in terms of that. We also want to encourage direct communication between the parties. That is something we've also been clear about as well,' Pigott said, referring

to the social media platform Truth Social.

On India refusing any US effort to mediate and how hopeful is Washington to bring the two countries together in the same room for talks, Pigott said: "Well, I'm not going to speculate on that. What I can say is that we encourage direct communication. We have been clear on that. We continue to encourage that direct communication."

"The President has been clear on that. And the President, as I said, has also been clear in praising both prime ministers for choosing the path towards peace and the wisdom and fortitude that that shows."

On whether the US has sent a team to Pakistan following reports of leaks of nuclear radiation, he said he has nothing to preview on that at this time.

He added the US is happy to see the "ceasefire". "That is what we are happy to see. That's where our focus remains. And we want to see a ceasefire be maintained, and we want to encourage direct communication. That is our focus here. Our focus is the ceasefire. Our focus is on encouraging direct communication. That's where our focus is going to remain. The President has spoken on this," he said. "...the President — President Trump — is a peacemaker. He's a peacemaker. He values peace. He's also a dealmaker, and he has shown that again and again and again in terms of both pursuing an America First agenda but also pursuing peace and wanting to see peace and conflicts come to an end," Pigott added.

In response to another question, Pigott reiterated that Washington is happy to see a ceasefire. "We want to see direct communication between the parties. And when it comes to, again, solving conflicts that have existed in regions around the world, the President wants to solve those conflicts when he can." (PTI)



## Credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership with the operation's success Arunachal BJP organises 'Tiranga Yatra' supporting armed forces, hails Op Sindoor

ITANAGAR, May 14: The Arunachal Pradesh unit of the BJP on Wednesday organised 'Tiranga Yatra' to celebrate the success of Operation Sindoor and express solidarity with the Indian Armed Forces.

The yatra, which began at Tower Clock Ganga, concluded at the Tennis Court in IG Park here, and drew participants from all walks of life.

The party's state general secretary and yatra convener Nalong Mize highlighted the unprecedented success of Operation Sindoor, calling it a historic milestone in India's fight against terrorism.

He credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership with the operation's success, stating that over 100 terrorists were neutralised and several terror bases and airbases deep within Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) were destroyed.

Mize declared that the 'New India', under PM Modi, no longer tolerates terrorism and is now proactive, firm, and uncompromising when it comes to national security.

"This bold and calculated strike reflects the maturity of India's evolving security doctrine, one that goes beyond mere retaliation," he said. The event was attended by BJP leaders, including general secretaries Zingnu Namchom and Tadar Niglar, MLAs Techhi Kaso, Mutchu Mithi and Tojir Kadu, Itanagar Mu-

nicipal Corporation Mayor Tame Phassang, senior office bearers, morma heads, among others.

Local MLA Techhi Kaso praised the Indian Armed Forces and warned Pakistan against further terrorist activities, asserting that Arunachal Pradesh stands steadfast with the forces in protecting the nation.

Air Commodore (Retd) R D Musabi commended the armed forces for their professionalism, denouncing Pakistan's support for terrorism. He called upon the people of Pakistan to reject such destructive policies, stating that Pakistan has become a factory of terrorism and poses a global threat.

President of the All Arunachal Ex-Service-men Association Tatung Taro expressed deep gratitude to Mize for organising the yatra and thanked Chief Minister Pema Khandu for flagging off the Tiranga Yatra from Walong.

In a stern message, Taro warned Pakistan to open its eyes to the reality that India will not tolerate further provocation.

"India stands united with its armed forces and will show no mercy to any future misdeeds," Taro added.

The party announced that similar yatras will be conducted across various districts and mandals in the state to continue honouring the sacrifices and valour of the Indian Armed Forces. (PTI)



## Pasighat Police cracks house theft case; stolen ornaments recovered



**HT Bureau**  
NAMSAL, May 14: In a swift and commendable operation, Pasighat Police successfully solved a house theft case, recovering stolen gold and silver ornaments and arresting the main accused within days of the inci-

dent. The case was initiated following a written complaint lodged by Shri Tajing Padung on 06/05/2025, who reported that unknown miscreants had broken into his government residential quarter at Officers' Colony,

High Region, on May 5 at around 3 PM. The intruders had decamped with valuables including gold earrings, a gold ring, silver coins, and other ornaments.

A case was registered under PSQT PS Case No. 38/2025 U/S

305/329/332(C) BNS, and SI Johnny Tasung was assigned as the Investigating Officer. Prompt investigation efforts included examining the crime scene, recording witness statements, and alerting local jewelers.

Relying on actionable intelligence, the police tracked the stolen items to Mirsam Village, where they were recovered from the possession of Smti Osi Taloh and Shri Talom Taloh, who had received the ornaments from the prime suspect. The stolen items were identified by the complainant's wife and seized in the presence of independent witnesses.

Based on the duo's confession during interrogation, the team arrested the main accused, Shri Kadum @ Kabang Pertin, also of Mirsam Village. He was produced before the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Pasighat, and has been remanded to judicial custody. The stolen ornaments were released to the rightful owner on Zimma as per legal procedures.

The operation was carried out by a dedicated police team including SI Johnny Tasung, ASI (SG) T. Ering, Ct. K.W. Kharmo, and L/Ct. N. Sawin, under the leadership of the Officer-in-Charge, Pasighat PS, and the guidance of Superintendent of Police, East Siang, Shri Pankaj Lamba, IPS.

The successful recovery and arrest showcase the efficiency, diligence, and commitment of Pasighat Police in maintaining public safety and delivering justice.

The East Siang Police urge citizens to remain alert and report any suspicious activity to help ensure a safer community.

## Final rites to be held in Khemlee Village Rev Techhi Togum Tara passes away at 47

**HT Bureau**  
NAMSAL, May 14: In a profound loss to the Christian community and the society of Arunachal Pradesh, Rev. Techhi Togum Tara, a respected spiritual leader and devoted community servant, passed away on Tuesday morning, May 13, at Aditya Hospital, Dibrugarh, Assam. He was 47 years old and had suffered a brain stroke.

Rev Tara's mortal remains were brought to the Nyishi Baptist Church Council (NBCC) Campus at Kankarnallah, Naharlagun, where hundreds of mourners gathered to pay their last respects. Floral tributes poured in from people of all walks of life, including prominent political leaders, religious figures, and social activists. The final rites will be conducted on Wednesday at his native village, Khemlee, in Sagalee Sub-Division of Papum Pare district.

Born on November 1, 1977, Rev Tara was the son of Late Techhi Tani and Late Techhi Pera. He is survived by his wife, Techhi Nisha, and daughter, Techhi Amin.

Rev Tara began his journey in ministry with the NBCC on August 8, 2001, and for the past 23 years, served faithfully across Papum Pare district, especially in the Balijan Pastoral Range. Known for his compassion, humility, and unwavering dedication, he played



a vital role in spiritual leadership and social welfare, earning the admiration of communities far and wide.

Among the dignitaries who paid their respects were former Chief Minister and APCC President Nabam Tuki, Arunachal Christian Forum Chairman Tarih Miri, NBCC Chairman Techhi James Tara, NBCC General Secretary Tagang Gello, and several other public leaders, religious personalities, and social workers including Toko Kach.

Rev. Tara leaves behind a rich legacy of faith, community service, and spiritual leadership. His passing is deeply mourned by all who knew him, and his influence will continue to inspire generations to come.

## 'Urban Development (UD) Department alone cannot achieve the mission's objectives' Galo Welfare Society launches cleanliness drive under 'Clean & Green Daporijo' Mission

**HT Bureau**  
NAMSAL, May 14: In a major boost to the "Clean & Green Daporijo" initiative, the Galo Welfare Society (GWS), Upper Subansiri Unit, carried out a plantation and cleanliness drive in the daily market area of Daporijo. The activity is part of a larger district-wide effort wherein the District Administration has allocated specific areas to various registered Tribal Community-Based Organizations (TCBOs) for adoption under a one-year tenure.

Speaking during the drive, Tasso Gambo lauded the collective effort and reiterated the administration's commitment to improving hygiene and sanitation across the township. He emphasized that the Urban Development (UD) Department alone cannot achieve the mission's objectives without active involvement from the public and key stakeholders. "To ensure sustainable cleanliness, various colony and area-wise responsibilities have been assigned to different organizations.

We need the continued cooperation of the public to maintain and build upon these efforts," Gambo said.

He further urged the residents of Upper Subansiri to embrace civic responsibility and support the beautification of the district. "Let us make Upper Subansiri a model district in terms of cleanliness and civic discipline," he added.

The initiative marks another step toward fostering community participation and environmental stewardship in the region.

## 'Through these training programmes, our youth can become self-reliant and even job creators' Third batch of trainees Under 'Catch Them Young' initiative felicitated at Nirjuli

**HT Bureau**  
NAMSAL, May 14: The third batch of trainees under the state government's "Catch Them Young" initiative was formally felicitated with certificates of completion at a valedictory function held at the Directorate of Animal Husbandry, Veterinary & Dairy Development in Nirjuli.

The initiative, spearheaded by the Department of Animal Husbandry, Veterinary & Dairy Development under the leadership of Minister Gabriel D. Wangsu, aims to skill and empower youth across Arunachal Pradesh in the field of animal husbandry and dairy development.

Addressing the gathering as chief guest, Secretary of Animal Husbandry & Dairy Development, Shri Hage Tari, congratulated the trainees and commended the success of the programme. "With three batches successfully trained, and two more to go, this initiative is making a visible impact on the ground," he said.

Tari highlighted the importance of self-employment and skill development in light of limited government job opportunities. "Government cannot provide employment to everyone, but through these training programmes, our youth can be-



come self-reliant and even job creators," he emphasized.

He further encouraged the trainees to utilize the knowledge and skills gained to

access various state and central schemes focused on dairy and livestock development. "This is the beginning. Do not stop here—use what you've learned to move

toward self-sustainability and entrepreneurship," he urged.

Referring to the Chief Minister's vision of a 'White Revolution' in

Arunachal Pradesh, Secretary Tari mentioned the government's ongoing coordination with the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) to promote

dairy farming. "Buffalo-based dairy production is being emphasized in many states like Uttar Pradesh, and we too are aligning with this approach," he added.

Each district in Arunachal Pradesh has been assigned a mentor secretary to ensure effective implementation and monitoring of such initiatives. "We are reaching the doorsteps of the people through visionary governance under Chief Minister Pema Khandu," Tari noted.

Director of the department, Dr Danjan Longri, also addressed the function, expressing hope that the trainees would apply their skills in establishing dairy units and allied ventures. "This initiative has provided the platform to learn, overcome challenges, and move forward confidently in the dairy sector," he said.

The event marked the successful completion of the third batch of trainees, following earlier batches focused on piggery and dairy. Officials said the remaining two batches will soon begin training under the same initiative.

The ceremony was attended by Nodal Officer Dr N Taipodia, Joint and Deputy Directors, senior officials, farm managers, project officers, resource persons, and other department staff.



## Major success for anti-Naxal operations

### 31 Maoists killed in 21-day action at Karregutta hills: CRPF DG

**BLJAPUR (CHHATTISGARH), May 14:** Central and state security forces have eliminated at least 31 Naxals in a 21-day-long comprehensive operation carried out in dense forests around Karregutta hills on the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border, security officials said Wednesday, asserting it is the "beginning of the end" of the Maoist menace.

Addressing a press conference, CRPF Director General GP Singh and Chhattisgarh Director General of Police (DGP) Arun Dev Gautam said during the 21-day operation that started on April 21, the forces have recovered bodies of 31 Maoists, of which 28 have been identified.

"The eliminated Naxals identified so far carried a reward of Rs 1.72 crore on their heads. The forces have also seized a massive haul of weapons and destroyed four technical units of Naxals that used to manufacture weapons and IEDs," Vivekanand, Additional DG (Anti-Naxal operations) of Chhattisgarh Police, said.

The officials said that after analysing facts and information during the operation, it can be safely believed that many senior



Maoist leaders have either been killed or seriously injured during the encounters.

"Whatever we had set out to do, we have achieved more than that. We are confident and happy that this is the beginning of the end and we will achieve the target of completely eliminating Naxal violence from the country by March 31, 2026," Singh said in response to a question by PTL.

The security forces have not been able to recover all the bodies or arrest the injured because of ex-

tremely difficult terrain, the officials said.

The forces have recovered 35 weapons and a huge quantity of ammunition including automatic, semi-automatic and country-made weapons as well, they said.

During the operation, 450 IEDs and a large number of detonators, explosive devices, besides 12,000 kilograms of other material, including medical supplies, electric equipment, Naxal literature, etc, have been seized, they said.

The forces have destroyed four

weapons-producing factories of Naxals where generators, drills, motors, and cutters were found.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday termed the operation as a historic breakthrough by security forces in the resolve to make the country Naxal free.

Shah also said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government is determined to root out Naxalism. "I once again assure the countrymen that India is sure to be Naxal-free by March 31, 2026," he wrote on 'X' in Hindi.

The police have registered 17 FIRs related to the operation in which the help of the National Investigation Agency is also being sought, officials said.

CRPF DG Singh said security forces are undertaking "relentless and ruthless" operations to ensure that Naxalism is eliminated by March 31, 2026.

Singh said the anti-Naxal operation, which started in 2014, has been intensified and made more focused since 2019, with central paramilitary forces working "shoulder to shoulder" with state police with a commitment to stamp

out Naxalism.

Highlighting the effects of the operations on the ground, he said that in 2014, the number of the most Naxal-affected districts was 35, which has reduced to six in 2025 so far, while the number of Naxal-affected districts has come down from 126 to 18 during the period.

"The number of violent incidents in 2014 was 1,080, which has come down to 374 in 2024. The number of security personnel killed in Naxal violence in 2014 was 287, which has dipped to 19 in 2024. The number of Naxals eliminated during the period has reached 2089," he said.

As many as 928 Naxals have surrendered before security forces in 2024, while another 718 Maoists have surrendered so far this year, he said.

Security forces have been trying to drive out Naxals from their hideouts and "fill the vacuum". In such areas, 320 new security camps have been established so far, besides 68 night landing helipads. "We are committed to eliminating Naxalism by March 31, 2026, through relentless and ruthless operations," he said. (PTI)

## Trump not only hyphenating India, Pakistan but also comparing PM Modi with Sharif: Cong

**NEW DELHI, May 14:** With US President Donald Trump reiterating his claims about having "successfully brokered" a "ceasefire" between India and Pakistan, the Congress on Tuesday said he was not only hyphenating the two countries but also comparing Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Pakistani counterpart Shehbaz Sharif.

The Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khara shared a clip of Trump's latest comments during an event in Saudi Arabia.

"US president says it again: 'I used trade to make a deal between them, and they agreed'. Not only is Donald Trump hyphenating India with Pakistan, he is comparing Prime Minister Modi with Shehbaz Sharif," he said in the caption.

He asked if such a comparison was acceptable to the PMO. Professionals' Congress and Data Analytics chairman Praveen Chakravarty took a swipe at the government, saying, "Pakistan's prime minister and India's prime minister are equal. Pakistan and India are equal powers". Who is saying this? Prime Minister Modi's 'good friend' President Trump."

Congress MP Karti Chidambaram also shared Trump's remarks in Saudi Arabia on X and took a dig at the government.

"This narrative wasn't part of the syllabus," he said. Trump once again claimed his administration "successfully brokered a historic ceasefire" to stop the escalating violence between India and Pakistan.

"As I said in my inaugural address, my greatest hope is to be a peacemaker and to be a unifier. I don't like war. We have the greatest military, by the way, in the history of the world," Trump said while speaking at a Saudi-US investment forum in the Saudi capital.

"Just days ago, my administration successfully brokered a historic ceasefire to stop the escalating violence between India and Pakistan," claimed Trump, who is in Saudi Arabia on the first leg of his four-day trip to the Gulf region.

"And I used trade to a large extent to do it. And I said, 'Fellows, come on. Let's make a deal. Let's do some trading'," Trump said to applause from the high-level audience, which included billionaire Elon Musk.

## Modi chairs Cabinet Committee on Security meet, first since pause in India-Pak hostilities



**NEW DELHI, May 14:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday chaired a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security, the first since the halt in the India-Pakistan military standoff, and is learnt to have discussed the security situation in the wake of the pause on Operation Sindoor.

He was joined by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Home Minister Amit Shah in the meeting, where they discussed the current situation and India's preparedness.

The prime minister later chaired a meeting of the Union Cabinet. Asked about ministers lauding the prime minister during the cabinet meeting, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, "Operation Sindoor was an example of India's pride, the role of armed forces and the decisive leadership, besides the new doctrine. This is very com-

mendable for the country."

At the briefing, Vaishnaw announced the cabinet's nod to a Rs 3,706 crore semiconductor plant at Jewar in Uttar Pradesh and said, "You saw the use of science and technology in Operation Sindoor and how India has emerged stronger with the use of technology."

In his first address to the nation after Operation Sindoor on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi sternly warned Pakistan that India will not succumb to nuclear blackmail and sent a clear message to the world: terror and trade, terror and talks cannot go together.

"Operation Sindoor is India's new policy against terrorism and our unwavering pledge for justice. It is the new normal. We have only kept in abeyance our operations against Pakistan and the future will depend on their behaviour," Modi said in the 22-minute address.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump's claim of mediation between India and Pakistan in bringing about a halt in hostilities has been rejected by India. Despite India's rebuttal, Trump again claimed that his government "brokered a historic ceasefire" between the two countries. (PTI)

## J&K CM visits shelling affected areas, promises help to rebuild houses

*'Will immediately provide relief to the people first and then take up the issue of individual bunkers with the Centre'*

**SRINAGAR, May 14:** Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday assured every possible help to rebuild homes of people affected by Pakistani shelling near the Line of Control, and said "the pain of my people is deeply personal".

Abdullah, who visited the shelling affected areas of Uri, including Salamabad, Lagama, Bandi and Gingal in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, also said that he would take up the demand for building individual bunkers in these areas with the Centre. "It is our responsibility to provide you help from the government so that your houses are rebuilt," Abdullah, who was accompanied by his advisor Nasir Aslam Wani, MLA Uri Sajad Uri and senior officials of the district administration, said while interacting with the families whose houses were damaged by the shelling in Uri.

The chief minister said the people of Uri have endured pain several times but have risen every time with courage and resilience. "Visited shelling affected areas of Uri including Salamabad, lagama, Bandi and Gingal. This land has endured so much -- from the impact of the 2005 earthquake to the pain of



cross-border shelling. Yet, its people rise every time, with courage in their hearts and resilience in their spirit," Abdullah said in an X post.

In an earlier post, he said the pain of the people of Jammu and Kashmir "is deeply personal".

"Heading to Uri today to meet those affected by the recent shelling. Over the past few days, I have witnessed immense pain, loss and unimaginable courage of our people. These visits should have been to share joy and to speak of development, not to offer condolences. The pain of my people is deeply personal," he said.

Later, speaking to reporters in Uri, Abdullah said during the shelling from Pakistani side, it seemed there was a "deliberate attempt" to inflict maximum harm on the civilians.

"There was ruthless shelling on our

**NEW DELHI, May 14:** Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai, who has been part of several benches that delivered landmark rulings including the one upholding the Centre's decision to abrogate provisions of Article 370 bestowing special status to Jammu and Kashmir, was on Wednesday sworn in as the 52nd Chief Justice of India.

The 64-year-old was administered oath by President Droupadi Murmu at a brief ceremony at the Ganatantra Mandap in the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

He succeeds Justice Sanjiv Khanna, who demitted office on Tuesday on attaining the age of 65.

CJI Gavai, who was elevated as a judge of the Supreme Court on May 24, 2019, will have a tenure of over six months and would demit office on November 23.

He took the oath of affirmation in Hindi.

Soon after he took oath, CJI Gavai sought blessings of his mother Kamal Tai Gavai by touching her feet. He was greeted by Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union ministers and former judges.

PM Modi later posted pictures of the swearing in on his social media handle.

"Wishing him the very best for his tenure," the prime minister wrote on X.

Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, J P Nadda and Arjun Ram Meghwal attended the swearing in ceremony along with former president Ram Nath Kovind.

Born on November 24, 1960, in Amravati, Justice Gavai was elevated as an additional judge of the Bombay High Court on November 14, 2003. He became a permanent judge of the high court on November 12, 2005.

Justice Gavai has been a part of several Constitution benches in the apex court which delivered path-breaking verdicts.

He was part of a five-judge Constitution bench which in December 2023 unanimously upheld the Centre's decision to abrogate provisions of Article 370 bestowing special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Another five-judge Constitution bench, of which Justice Gavai was a part, annulled the electoral bonds scheme for political funding.

He was part of a five-judge Constitution bench which, by a 4:1 majority verdict, gave its stamp of approval to the Centre's 2016 decision to demonetise Rs 1,000 and Rs 500 denomination currency notes.

Justice Gavai was also part of a seven-judge Constitution bench, which by a 6:1 majority held that states are constitutionally empowered to make sub-classifications within the Scheduled Castes, which form a socially heterogeneous class, for granting reservation for the uplift of castes that are socially and educationally more backward among them.

A seven-judge Constitution bench also having Justice Gavai ruled that the arbitration clause in an unstamped or insufficiently stamped agreement between parties was enforceable as such a defect was curable and did not render the contract invalid.

In an important verdict, a bench headed by Justice Gavai laid down pan-India guidelines and said no property should be demolished without a prior showcase notice and the affected must be given 15 days to respond.

He is also heading the bench which is hearing matters related to forests, wildlife and protection of trees.

He had joined the bar on March 16, 1985, and was the standing counsel for the Municipal Corporation of Nagpur, Amravati Municipal Corporation and Amravati University.

Justice Gavai was appointed an assistant government pleader and additional public prosecutor in the Bombay High Court's Nagpur bench from August 1992 to July 1993.

He was appointed a government pleader and public prosecutor for the Nagpur bench on January 17, 2000.

According to the memorandum of procedure -- a set of documents guiding appointment, elevation and transfer of high court and Supreme Court judges -- the law minister writes to the CJI to name his or her successor.

The memorandum of procedure says the senior-most judge of the apex court is considered fit to hold the office of the CJI and the views of the outgoing head of the judiciary have to be sought "at an appropriate time". (PTI)

## LeT dealt a blow with 3 terrorist killed in encounter in Shopian: Official



**SRINAGAR, May 14:** Terror outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) has suffered a major loss with three of its members, including "Operations Commander" Shahid Kuttay, killed in an encounter in south Kashmir's Shopian district, an official said on Wednesday.

Kuttay led terrorist recruitment in the Kashmir valley and misled many youths to join the terror group, the person said.

He, and the other two, Adnan Shafi, a resident of Vanduna Melhara area of Shopian, and Ahsan ul Haq Sheikh, a resident of Murrana area of the neighbouring Pulwama district, were killed in an encounter in Shukroo Keller area on Tuesday.

The official said the three terrorists were active in south Kashmir for a long time and were involved in several terror attacks.

"Kuttay, who was the Operations Commander of LeT in south Kashmir, promoted terrorist recruitment in Kashmir, also misled many young men and killed many innocent people. LeT and other terrorist groups have suffered a major loss due to this operation," the person said.

The Indian Army in a statement said an operation was launched by the security forces on Tuesday on the basis of intelligence about their presence in the area.

"The operation resulted in the neutralisation of three hardcore terrorists including the local commander of LeT/TRF after an intense encounter," the ADGPI said in a post on X.

Two AK series rifles, a large quantity of ammunition, grenades, and other war-like stores were found in their possession, he said. (PTI)

## Around 7 pc of India's greenhouse gas emissions from industrial boilers: Report

**NEW DELHI, May 14:** Boilers in India's factories release 182 million tonnes of carbon dioxide every year, which is about 7 per cent of the country's total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and over a quarter of all emissions from industries, according to a new report published on Wednesday.

The report also said these boilers emit more particulate matter (PM) and sulphur dioxide (SO2) than the entire automobile sector in India, primarily due to weak emission standards.

Industries such as food processing, chemicals and textiles depend on steam produced by process boilers to operate.

The findings were released at the 'National Conclave on Greening Industrial Boilers in India', organised by the environment think tank iFOREST, in partnership with the Central government's Department for Promotion of Industry

and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and the labour department of the Uttar Pradesh government.

To reduce pollution and help India meet its net zero targets, iFOREST has suggested launching a "Green Boiler Mission" to promote cleaner energy sources.

There are around 45,200 process and co-generation boilers in India which produce around 1.26 billion tonnes of steam per year, said Chandra Bhushan, the CEO of iFOREST.

Eight states account for two-thirds of these boilers. Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh are the top five.

The average age of these boilers is 18 years and nearly 20 per cent are 25 years or older. This raises concerns about their safety and efficiency, the report said.

Bhushan said that PM emissions from these boilers add up to 5.2



million tonnes, more than what comes from the transport sector.

Steam produced by boilers is responsible for 9 per cent of industrial PM, 8 per cent of SO2 and 17 per cent of nitrogen oxide emissions. Gujarat, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh are the top three polluters.

The study found that about 40 per cent of the installed boiler ca-

capacity runs on fossil fuels like coal, gas or oil. These account for nearly 37 per cent of all boilers.

Biomass (including bagasse), though considered carbon-neutral, is used in nearly half of the steam capacity and also causes air pollution. Smaller boilers (up to 2 tonnes per hour capacity) are mostly powered by fossil fuels, especially coal.

Coal-fired boilers played a key role in sparking the industrial revolution in the 18th century, Bhushan said.

"The decarbonization of boilers is now essential to unleashing a new industrial revolution powered by cleaner, greener technologies. It is not just a climate imperative, it is also an economic opportunity to build a green economy and provide green jobs. We must launch a Green Boiler Mission to grab this opportunity," he added.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar said the report provides a clear path to reduce emissions while ensuring economic growth.

"With the right mix of targeted policies, technological shifts and government-industry collaboration, Uttar Pradesh can drive emissions reductions while enhancing energy efficiency, safety and industrial competitiveness," he said. (PTI)



# 'Unless Centre announces and authorises it, we cannot undertake any census independently'

## To review reservation policy, Census data needed: Nagaland govt

**KOHIKA, May 14:** Nagaland government has expressed its inability to move forward with any review of the job reservation policy without accurate and up-to-date population data, reiterating that such a move must be based on the national census figures.

Responding to queries about demands by tribal bodies seeking a re-evaluation of the job reservation system, Nagaland government spokesperson and minister K G Kenye said, "We cannot move blindly. We need a basis—and that basis is the census".

On April 27, representatives of the five major tribes of Nagaland - Angami, Ao, Lotha, Rengma, and Sumi - submitted a letter to the chief minister giving a 30-day ultimatum to the state government, demanding immediate action on their September 2024 request to review the Nagaland job reservation policy for backward tribes.

However, talking to reporters at



the state civil secretariat here on Wednesday, Kenye noted that the census process in Nagaland has been mired in legal disputes.

"Our census has been chal-

lenged. Tribal organisations have approached the high court, and now the matter has reached the Supreme Court," he said, adding that there is disagreement over

which census year as to whether 2001 or 2011, should be considered valid.

"Now, we have already crossed 2021, which should be the reference for the current decade, but even the 2011 census has been challenged," he remarked.

In light of these disputes, "We've decided to hold off until the new census data is available. Only then can we address these sensitive issues," Kenye asserted.

He also clarified that conducting a census is under the purview of the Central government and not within the powers of individual states.

"Unless the Centre announces and authorises it, we cannot undertake any census independently. It is a nationwide exercise," the minister explained.

"We hope our tribal leaders and citizens understand that this is beyond the state's control. We are waiting, just like everyone else," Kenye added. (PTI)

## Tripura to roll out new tech for power line repairs without supply disruption: Minister

**HT Correspondent**

**AGARTALA, May 14:** Tripura Power Minister Ratan Lal Nath on Wednesday announced that the state is planning to introduce advanced technology that will allow repair of electricity lines without disrupting power supply.

Speaking after a review meeting with officials of Tripura State Electricity Corporation Limited (TSECL), Nath said the initiative is part of the government's moonsoon preparedness efforts.

The meeting was attended by officers up to the rank of Senior Manager.

"Usually, we begin preparations before Durga Puja to avoid power cuts during the festive days. But floods often affect these plans. Despite this, our officials have worked relentlessly. Now, with the moonsoon setting in, we held a review to assess how many damaged poles have been replaced, wires cleaned, and new ones installed. We have also instructed officials to issue daily warnings and carry out timely inspections to avoid any power disruption," Nath said.

He added, "We are working to



adopt a technology that will allow us to repair electric lines without having to cut power, which will be a big step forward."

The minister also highlighted significant improvements in the power sector, crediting the hard work of helpers and electricians who are working round the clock.

However, he raised concerns over two pressing issues.

"Only 70 percent of consumers in Agartala have cleared their electricity bills," he revealed.

More alarmingly, he said there

has been a rise in vandalism targeting electrical infrastructure.

"Some miscreants have been deliberately damaging transformers at night. They are opening cut-outs and causing short circuits. On one day alone, 21 such incidents were reported. While we didn't take it seriously earlier, the situation has escalated. An FIR has been lodged, and I have spoken with police officials to arrest those responsible. It's time for the community to come forward and help identify the culprits," Nath added.

## Meghalaya Guv raises concern on drug abuse

**SHILLONG, May 14:** Meghalaya Governor CH Vijayashankar recently said drug abuse is a growing concern that affects not only individuals but "the health of our families, our youth, and our society".

Addressing an awareness programme on drug abuse organised under the Nasha Mukti Bharat Abhiyaan at Raj Bhavan, the governor commended the efforts of all collaborating organisations and the State Government for their proactive role. He especially appreciated the DREAM project — Drug Reduction, Elimination and Action Mission — launched by the state government. It is a crucial step in our collective journey towards a Nasha Mukti Meghalaya.

Earlier, the governor also flagged off the Nasha Mukti Bharat Abhiyaan Awareness Vehicle from Raj Bhavan.

The vehicle is part of a state-wide awareness campaign aimed at spreading the message of a drug-free society across schools, colleges, and local communities.

The event was jointly conducted

by Raj Bhavan Meghalaya in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare, Anti-Narcotics Task Force, Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya, DREAM mission and the Rajyoga Education and Research Foundation.

The session featured a solemn Pledge Against Drug Abuse led by members of the Brahma Kumaris, where all participants pledged to stay away from harmful substances and to spread awareness in their communities.

A keynote address was delivered by Brahma Kumari Sheela Didi, Chairperson of the Education Wing of the Rajyoga Education and Research Foundation, Mount Abu. She spoke on the inner strength and spiritual empowerment needed to resist addiction and live a balanced life, stressing that value-based education is essential in curbing substance abuse.

Speeches were delivered by a local headman, a representative of an NGO, and Pravin Bakshi, IAS, Commissioner & Secretary, Social

Welfare Department, who spoke about the Government's efforts and challenges in dealing with substance abuse across the State.

The programme also consisted of a Technical Session that included presentations and talks by Brahma Kumari Sheela Didi, on Spiritual Solutions to Substance Abuse.

A representative from the Social Welfare Department, who provided an overview of the DREAM Project, which adopts a multi-sectoral strategy involving prevention, treatment, community mobilisation, and capacity building.

A presentation by an officer from the Anti-Narcotic Task Force (ANTF) on the enforcement aspects and trends in drug trafficking and usage in Meghalaya.

This initiative marked another important step in the combined efforts of the State Government, civil society, enforcement agencies, and spiritual organisations to raise awareness, prevent drug abuse, and promote a healthy, empowered, and drug-free Meghalaya. (NNN)

## Matric & Higher Secondary achievers honoured

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 14:** In a touching show of gratitude and celebration, Sorshia Christian College and Needy Home Academy co-organised a Felicitation cum Thanksgiving Programme to felicitate the meritorious students of Matric and Higher Secondary Examinations 2025. The ceremony, organized at Needy Home campus, witnessed the participation of teachers, pastors, parents, and esteemed invitees.

With 93.88% pass percentage and 43 students scoring First Division, the event was not only an example of scholastic brilliance but also the consistent devotion of the institutions to whole-person education. Themreihor Lungkar (88.63%), Deborah Shaiza (83.88%), and Jami Jajo (82.36%) stood as the first three students and were given special awards, setting examples of perseverance and commitment to their fellows. Further, students secured high scores in the form of Letter Marks and Star Marks across subjects—5 and 2 in English, 23 and 7 in Additional English, 5 and 2 in Mathematics, 2 Letter Marks in Social Sciences, and 11 Letter Marks and 3 Star Marks in Home Science.

The programme began with the welcome note given by the Principal of Needy Home Academy, Themshang Sasa Shaiza. A moving speech about the power of change brought to the rural places through education by Mathiusung Pamei commenced the programme. Rev. Ngamlei Zimik, Pastor of Mapao Zing-tun Baptist Church, gave blessings and prayers. Response from the parents was made by Rev. Chi-



naochung Zingkhair, Pastor of Tangkhul Baptist Church, Lamphel. Special Guest, Mr. Jasmat Kumar, Assistant Commandant, 152 Bn CRPF, honoured the event and complimented the students on their success. During the valedictory session, Sorei Raman, Chairman of Sorshia Christian College, shared an inspiring exhortation emphasising the College's vision of developing value-based leadership and intellectual calibre. He also extended a warm invitation to aspiring students to be part of Sorshia Christian College, which is now open for admissions for this academic session.

The event was formally brought to a close with a closing remark and benediction by Chance Raman, Chairman of Needy Home Ministry. Parents, guardians, and prospective students looking for a balanced academic setting that combines modern learning with moral anchorage are cordially invited to visit the campus.

## Respect paid to Constable Deepak Chingakhm

**IMPHAL, May 14:** People in Manipur richly paid tributes today to constable Deepak Chingakhm of the 7th Battalion, BSF, who was killed in a drone attack in Jammu and Kashmir on May 10.

Constable Chingakhm, killed in a drone strike at Kharkhola BOP, was honored with a solemn wreath-laying ceremony at Bir Tikendrajit International Airport in Imphal.

Among those paying their respects were Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, senior government officials, legislators, and political leaders, all united in grief for Chingakhm. A mass procession accompanied Constable Chingakhm's mortal remains on their final journey to his birthplace in Yairipok Yambem, Imphal East district.

Along the route, a multitude offered heartfelt tributes to the fallen hero. The Manipur government has announced an ex gratia of ₹ 10 lakh under the Major Laishram Jyotin Singh Ashok Chakra (P) scheme, extending support to Constable Chingakhm's bereaved family. (NNN)

## 'Indefinite business shutdown' in Nagaland from May 19

**DIMAPUR, May 14:** At least nine out of the 17 commerce and industry associations in Nagaland have announced an "indefinite voluntary business shutdown" from May 19, protesting against the state government's "failure" to meet their demand for representation in urban local bodies (ULBs).

The decision was announced by Khekugha Muru, president of the Confederation of Nagaland Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CNCCI) on Tuesday.

The associations have long been demanding nominated seats in their respective ULBs.

The CNCCI had earlier declared a state-wide business shutdown on April 24 over the same issue, but called it off after talks with the Nagaland government.

The districts that are most likely to be affected by the shutdown include Dimapur, Chumoukedima, Nuland, Peren, Wokha, Zunheboto, Phek, Tseminyu and Meluri, an official of one of the associations said.

Muru, however, said the strike would not disrupt essential services. "The shutter down is not anti-government. We are only exercising our democratic rights. It is going to be voluntary," Muru said.

Despite multiple representations submitted to the government over the years, there has been no concrete response, he added. (PTI)

## Operation Sindoor a success, we stand with PM Modi, armed forces: CM

**HT Correspondent**

**AGARTALA, May 14:** Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Wednesday said that in the wake of the incident in Pahalagam in Jammu and Kashmir, a befitting reply has been given through Operation Sindoor and, due to this successful operation, a Tiranga Yatra has been taken out today expressing unwavering solidarity with the armed forces and extending full support to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Saha said this while participating in the 'Tiranga Yatra' program organized under the banner of Citizens For National Security in front of Rabindra Shatabarshiki Bhawan today.

Saha said, on April 22, Pakistan-backed terrorists in Pahalagam in Jammu and Kashmir killed 26 innocent tourists.

"In protest against this, the jawans of our three armed forces, led by Prime Minister

Narendra Modi, jointly carried out Operation Sindoor and this operation was successful. All the terrorist bases in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir have been destroyed. In addition, our Army, Air Force, and Navy have given a befitting reply to the Pakistani forces," he said.

The Chief Minister said that in the wake of this successful operation, a Tiranga Yatra has been taken out in Agartala today to thank and honor the legendary Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the three armed forces.

"We are with Prime Minister Modi and with the three armed forces," he added.

The Chief Minister was accompanied by Transport Minister Sushanta Chowdhury, Social Welfare and Social Education Minister Tinku Roy, and other public representatives and leaders at this event.

On this day, the Tiranga Yatra traversed various roads of Agartala city.

## CRPF jawans save life through voluntary blood donation in Kohima

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, May 14:** In a noble gesture, two CRPF jawans have earned praise of the people for their selfless act of donating blood to save the life of a critically ill patient at Naga Hospital Kohima on Tuesday.

The two jawans from the 78 Battalion of CRPF based in Kohima, Hengoul Khongsai and Bapina Maharana, voluntarily came forward to donate blood to save the life of the patient, strengthening their bond with the communities they serve. The commandant of the CRPF battalion hailed their gesture as a shining example of compassion and commitment to community service.

"Blood donation is a noble act that can save countless lives. The selfless act of these jawans exemplifies the spirit of sacrifice and

compassion that the CRPF stands for," a CRPF release said. The 78 Bn. CRPF has been active in community outreach initiatives, especially in times of crisis.

The battalion has been organising medical camps and civic action programmes to honour the local youth for their achievements and providing aid during natural disasters and health emergencies, earning the trust and respect of the local population.

"Our jawans are trained not just to protect, but to serve. Blood donation is one of the many ways we express our solidarity and support for the people we live among," the release added. The CRPF reaffirmed its commitment to its guiding motto "service and loyalty", encouraging its personnel to continue participating in life-saving initiatives.



## AFFIDAVIT

I, Cornelius Nitesh Tisso through affidavit would like to mention that in my all educational documents the name mentioned as Nitesh Teron in place of Cornelius Nitesh Tisso. In my official documents like pan card, passport etc. name mentioned as Cornelius Nitesh Teron. My correct name is Cornelius Nitesh Tisso and the names Nitesh Teron; Cornelius Nitesh Teron and Cornelius Nitesh Tisso are single individuals and the same person.

Name:

Cornelius Nitesh Tisso  
Father's Name :  
Mr. Mania Raja

Address:  
Rongturbong, Diphu,  
Karbi Anglong,  
Assam.

## Debtamura marks first Hydrocarbon breakthrough in Tripura by Oil India

### Hydrocarbon exploration and production activities in this block had been beset with a myriad of challenges



**HT Correspondent**

**AGARTALA, May 14:** Oil India Limited has made a breakthrough in Tripura's hydrocarbon scenario, as Debtamura in Gomati District is set to be the first well drilled by any oil and gas company in the state.

Oil India, on X said that on 11th May, Oil India Limited commenced its exploration and production activities in Tripura by spudding the well Debtamura.

They said that this event marks a historic breakthrough in Tripura's hydro-

carbon scenario, as Debtamura#1 is going to be the first well drilled by any oil and gas company in the state under the Government of India's Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) regime.

"The well Debtamura#1 is located approximately 120 KM from Agartala, inside the Baramura-Debtamura Reserve Forest, Gomati District, near the Indo-Bangladesh international border. Till date, hydrocarbon exploration and production activities in this block

had been beset with a myriad of challenges, which broadly include undulated and thickly vegetated terrain, challenging surface logistics due to limited and narrow hilly roads with hairpin curves, a predominant and extended monsoon season causing unprecedented floods, and ensuing landslides due to younger sediments dissected by lineaments—which badly damaged the well plinths and the approach road," said Oil India.

They added that overcoming all these challenges, the spirit of all Oil Indians speaks to this moment and to our aspiration of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Rupjyoti Phukan, RCE, OIL; Maj General (Retd.) Praveen Mathur, Advisor - Security (DGH); Sutirtha Paul, Joint Director, Directorate of Industries and Commerce; Chitra Mohan Borah, Executive Director and HoD, Frontier Basin

Project, OIL; Arunav Baruah, Chief General Manager (FB), OIL; Pankaj Kumar Biswas, General Manager, GAIL; and other senior officials from OIL attended the spudding ceremony at the location.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

No. 228420/ 407

This is to inform all concerned that the result of the Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) selection test held on 30.03.2025 for admission to Class - VI of EMRSs located at 1) Kharadhara, Dist. Bajali, Assam 2) Jalah, Dist. Baksa, Assam, 3) Jonai, Dist. Dhemaji, Assam 4) Howraghat, Dist. Karbi Anglong, Assam and 5) Ardaopur, Dist. Dima Hasao, Assam can be collected from the Office of the Inspector of Schools of the concerned districts.

Sd/-

Secretary to Govt. of Assam,  
Department of Tribal Affairs (Plain), Dispur

DIPR /D/HLT/14/15-May-25

No.GBM/B-flask/2024-25/40

## NOTICE INVITING BIDS (NIB)

Tender No. : GBM/2024-25/07

The Mission Director, Green Bodoland Mission (GBM), BTC, Kokrajhar, Invites bids through e-tendering process for the following work from eligible Suppliers/Dealers/Manufacturer possessing the requisite Valid Certificate of Registration from a recognized authority as a bamboo-based industry/unit or proof of engagement in bamboo products manufacturing/supply. The bidding shall be conducted through the e-tendering portal <http://assamtenders.gov.in> as per standard e-procurement procedures.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Tender Amount (Rs.)	Bid Security (EMD)	Tender Processing fee (In Rs.)	Time of completion
1.	Supply of Eco-Friendly Bamboo Water Bottles and Jute Carry Bags with Green Bodoland Mission logo under Green Bodoland Mission, BTC, Kokrajhar for the year 2024-25.	64,05,000.00	Rs. 1,28,100/- (General Category) & Rs. 64,050/- (Reserved Category)	1,300/-	45 days

## Instructions to Bidders:

1. Bid documents can be downloaded free of cost from the e-Procurement portal: <http://assamtenders.gov.in>
2. All bids must be submitted online at the portal as per instructions in the bid document.
3. Bidders must also submit a hard copy of the Technical Bid in the office of the Procuring Entity on or before the last date.
4. Late bids will be summarily rejected.
5. Bid must be accompanied by the EMD and Bid Processing Fee as mentioned.

Sd/- Mission Director,  
Green Bodoland Mission,  
BTC, Kokrajhar

Kokrajhar Dated: 13.05.2025



# Tom Cruise's 'Mission: Impossible - Final Reckoning' clocks 45,000 ticket sales in advance bookings

**NEW DELHI, May 14:** Hollywood superstar Tom Cruise's "Mission: Impossible - Final Reckoning" has registered over 45,000 ticket sales across India's top national chains -- PVR Inox and Cinépolis -- in the advance bookings. "Final Reckoning", the eighth installment of Cruise's blockbuster action franchise, is set to open in Indian cinemas on May 17. Its advance booking opened on Monday. "Within just 24 hours of opening, the film sold over 11,000 tickets, signalling massive anticipation among fans. The action-thriller has already crossed over 45,000 tickets sold across India's top three national chains -- PVR Inox and Cinépolis -- underlining the franchise's phenomenal draw and the growing excitement ahead of release," a press release stated. In "Final Reckoning", which will be released in India in English, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu, the Hollywood superstar reprises the role of the fan-favourite spy Ethan Hunt. "We're witnessing an extraordinary response to 'Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning'. The first 24 hours saw great momentum, reflecting India's appetite of celebrating cinema at scale. "Tom Cruise continues to be a massive

box-office draw, and this film, with its scale, spectacle, and legacy, has reignited excitement across our properties nationwide. It's heartening to see a Hollywood tentpole unite fans and bring back the 'event film' energy to theatres," said Kamal Gianchandani - Chief Business Planning and Strategy - PVR-INOX Limited. Devang Sampat - MD Cinépolis India said the advance bookings for "Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning" marks a major milestone for the theatre chain's 479 screens. "We haven't seen this level of anticipation for a Hollywood release in quite some time. Tom Cruise and the franchise carry a legacy that clearly resonates with Indian audiences. Everyone's looking forward to experiencing this action-packed spectacle on the big screen of Cinépolis cinemas, and we're thrilled to be a part of the excitement," Sampat added. "Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning" also stars Hayley Atwell, Esai Morales, Henry Czerny, Simon Pegg, Pom Klementieff, Vanessa Kirby, Hannah Waddingham, Nick Offerman, Katy O'Brian and Trammel Tillman. Directed by Christopher McQuarrie, the film is presented by Paramount Pictures and Skydance Productions. (PTI)



## NO PRESSURE ON STAR KIDS AFTER FIRST FILM, SAYS TUSSHAR KAPOOR

**MUMBAI, May 14:** Actor Tusshar Kapoor on Wednesday said it's natural for audiences to have high expectations from star children but they are on their own once their first film is released.

Kapoor, son of veteran star Jeetendra and producer Shobha Kapoor, was speaking at the trailer launch of his new film "Kapkapii".

"There is no pressure from the audience. I feel they like a movie for what the movie is. They like an actor or an actress for the kind of work that they put in. Our hard work, talent, screen presence, all these things and they don't compare or judge enough. Before the first film there were expectations."

"But thereafter you're on your own and the work has to do the talking. It's also about how you conduct yourself, how you choose the right projects, where you take your career, your attitude towards your work," the actor told reporters here.

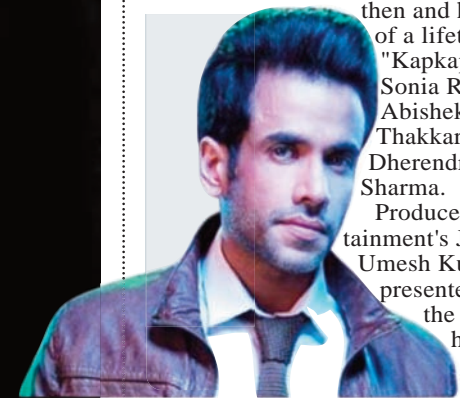
Also starring Shreyas Talpade, "Kapkapii" is a horror comedy, which is the last film by director Sangeet Sivan, who died in 2024.

Kapoor, who did his first comedy film "Kya Kool Hai Hum" in 2005 with Sivan, described the filmmaker for teaching him everything he knows about the genre.

"My first comedy film was with him 'Kya Kool Hai Hum' and before that I didn't do any comedy films. Whatever I have learnt about comedy first I learnt from him. He gave me a role of a lifetime

then and he's given me a role of a lifetime now," he said. "Kapkapii" also features Sonia Rathee, Siddhi Idnani, Abhishek Kumar, Jay Thakkar, Varun Pandey, Dhirendra Tiwari, and Dinkar Sharma.

Produced by Bravo Entertainment's Jayesh Patel and Umesh Kumar Bansal, and presented by Zee Studios, the film is scheduled to hit the screens on May 23. (PTI)



## 'All We Imagine...' coming to Cannes helped film's release in India, says Payal Kapadia



**NEW DELHI, May 14:** Director Payal Kapadia says the recognition "All We Imagine As Light" received at last year's Cannes Film Festival played a key role in securing the film's distribution in her home country India. "All We Imagine..." revolves around two Malayali nurses in Mumbai and their friendships. The Malayalam-Hindi film created history by becoming the first from India to win the Grand Prix at Cannes in May last year. The filmmaker said she is grateful to the festival and film critics for giving visibility to the movie, which also marked her feature directorial debut. Kapadia, who is part of the jury panel headed by French star Juliette Binoche at the 2025 edition of the Cannes Film Festival, was speaking at the opening press conference of the gala. "Our film coming here in Cannes and getting the recognition and all of you writing about it really helped us to get the film out. Even the distribution in India was helped by that. "I'm really grateful. The one thing (you want) as a filmmaker is that your film should be watched by the people in your own country and everywhere else. So that was a really big bonus for me," she told international media at the presser. "All We Imagine..." received a limited release in Kerala last September, before opening nationwide in November to positive reviews. It was distributed in India by Telugu cinema star Rana Daggubati's Spirit Media. Besides the Grand Prix, the film received many accolades across the globe, including Jury Grand Prize at Asia Pacific Screen Awards, Best International Feature at Gotham Awards, was named Best International Film by New York Film Critics Circle, Best Film at Asian Film Awards. It was also nominated at the Golden Globe Awards in Best Director and Best Foreign Language Film categories. (PTI)

## Avinash Tiwary, Medha Shankr to star in 'Ginny Weds Sunny 2'

**MUMBAI, May 14:** "Madgaon Express" star Avinash Tiwary and Medha Shankr of "12th Fail" fame are set to feature in the sequel of the 2020 romantic-comedy "Ginny Weds Sunny", the makers announced on Wednesday.

"Ginny Weds Sunny 2" is written and directed by Prassanth Jha, and produced by Vinod Bachchan under the banner of Soundrya Production.

Avinash and Medha shared the picture of the film's clapperboard from the sets on Instagram. Shooting on the film is underway in Uttarakhand.

Bachchan said they are excited to bring a new chapter to the "Ginny Weds Sunny" universe.

"The love the first film received encouraged us to explore new narratives and characters, and with Avinash and Medha, we've found a refreshing and dynamic pairing. "We are confident the sequel will offer even more heart, laughter, and connection," the producer, known for "Tanu Weds Manu" and "Shaadi Mein Zaroor Aana", said in a statement.

The original movie featured Yami Gautam and Vikrant Massey in the title roles and premiered on Netflix in 2020.



"Ginny Weds Sunny 2" promises a fresh story and twist with a blend of romance, family fun, quirky comedy, and heartwarming moments for all ages, a press release issued by the makers read. (PTI)

## One-man studio: 'Mission: Impossible 8' stars remember their favourite Tom Cruise moments

**NEW DELHI, May 14:** His first "Mission: Impossible" film was in 1996. Almost three decades and seven films later, Tom Cruise is now 62. And his co-stars in "Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning" doff their hats to the producer and high-octane action star who has made every MI film all his own and also mega hits.

For Hayley Atwell, Cruise is a one-man studio. Greg Tarzan Davis says the man is filmmaking school in himself, Simon Pegg remembers when they went feeding sharks, Esai Morales recalls the energy that he brings to every frame and Angela Bassett just loves to see him run.

After all, Cruise has not only headlined the series as Ethan Hunt, the American spy out to kill the baddies and save the world, but also redefined what it means to be an action star. He has been battered, broken many bones and still insisted on doing his own stunts.

Atwell, who essays the role of his ally Grace, said he is never just an actor on set. He is many things.

"I think it is his ability, how to be spatially aware and how he can be focused very intensely in the scene. But yet you also know that he can see through the lens what is picking up on the camera," Atwell told PTI in a virtual interview.

"He knows where the focus puller is. He knows what the lighting is doing. If some-

one sneezes at the back of the set, he'll bless them and ask them if they are okay. He has the ability to be an actor, a producer, a writer, a director, a lighting designer, a focus puller and a cameraman all at the same time," she said.

Cruise, who debuted as Hunt in Brian de Palma's "Mission: Impossible", has almost written himself into legend in his subsequent turns as the spy, giving audiences a cinematic experience in all MI movies since.

He has taken the art of performing stunts to an unknown level jumping from one building to another in "Mission: Impossible III", scaling the Burj Khalifa in 2011's "Ghost Protocol", hanging off a flying plane in "Rogue Nation" or riding a motorcycle off a cliff in the previous entry "Dead Reckoning".

In "Final Reckoning", speculated to be his swansong, Cruise has pulled off some more daring stunts, including one where he hangs from the wing of a plane.

"He was up there piloting the plane himself obviously, and he was performing on the wing. And he's the only one really who can be aware of what the camera's going to pick up and where the light's going to be and how much he needs to kind of position himself so that the camera can see his performance," Atwell said.

"So that feels very Tom Cruise to me.

He's a one man studio," she added.

Pegg, who has been a regular in the franchise as tech genius Benji Dunn since "Mission: Impossible III", recalled the time the cast was shooting in South Africa.

"We were doing a drive up this big long road and the helicopter would follow up the road filming us and then we'd get to the top and we'd all jump in the helicopter and Tom would fly us back down... And then we'd do the shot again," he said.

The actor said they tried the shot six times and Cruise flew them down every time.

"We got the shot and we had a little bit of time left in the day and Tom said, 'Hey, do you want to go diving with sharks?'"

"And we said sure. And so we all got in the helicopter with Tom. We went out to the coast and the next thing we knew it was me, Pom, Tarzan, Hailey and Tom all in a cage, feeding these giant eight foot copperhead sharks. That is a typical Tom Cruise day."

Bassett first worked with Cruise on the sixth movie "Fallout" in 2018, playing CIA deputy director Erika Sloane. She returns for "Final Reckoning" but this time as US president.

In both movies, Bassett said she would always look forward to Cruise's running sequences that have also become a signature of the franchise.

"On set I remember seeing the movie or seeing all his movies and commenting, 'Boy, that guy can run.' I know they're all the big crazy stunts that he does but I really just love to see him sprint nonstop," she said.

Her off-stage memory of Cruise is watching him dance.

"We know he's a pretty good dancer, a good dance partner. So his birthday occurred while we were working and we were able to get him to give us a few steps here and there."

Morales, who plays the villain Gabriel in "Final Reckoning", said he is simply in awe of the Hollywood superstar as well as director Christopher McQuarrie, who has helmed all the four instalments since "Rogue Nation".

"There's nothing they won't tackle. There's nothing they won't consider at least, to bring joy and thrills to their audiences."

Ethan Hunt is now older and weather-beaten, and just as compelling.

According to Morales, the MI franchise sees Hunt evolve.

"You see him from this cheeky young agent. If you go back and see he is literally cheeky. He is like a kid in the beginning of this... Into this weathered person. Every line in your face is a story."

He also remembered the time Cruise

screened a behind-the-scenes promo for the cast.

"It's nice to have a dinner party. And then he said, 'I've got a surprise for you.' And we watched this massive screen and at the end of this, you see this little boy emerge from him."

"He would go like, 'isn't that great?' And it's so infectious and you really see that these folks live for their audiences. They live to entertain and hopefully enlighten, but mostly entertain."

Davis, who also starred in Cruise's 2022 blockbuster "Top Gun: Maverick", said the superstar always puts his best foot forward.

"He demands a certain type of excellence and hard work. And it was cool to be able to see it through both projects... He embraces the fandom and what the audience wants to see and he gives his all to it."

"What I learned from him is understanding how the audience views film and storytelling. I'm looking forward to taking all the knowledge of this Tom Cruise School of Filmmaking and applying it to my own projects in the future," he told PTI.

"Mission: Impossible - Final Reckoning", directed by McQuarrie and co-produced by Cruise, will be released in India in English, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu in 4DX and IMAX on May 17. The film is presented by Paramount Pictures and Skydance Productions. (PTI)



# Raphinha's breakthrough season key for Barcelona as it nears Spanish league title



**MADRID, May 14:** Raphinha is about to cap his best season for Barcelona with the Spanish league title.

Lamine Yamal has been getting most of the attention as Barcelona moves closer to lifting the trophy, but Raphinha has been just as important for the Catalan club in its title run.

Barcelona can clinch its 28th

league title if Real Madrid fails to beat Mallorca at home on Wednesday, or if it beats Espanyol in the Barcelona derby on Thursday.

Barcelona came from behind to defeat Madrid 4-3 in the last "clasico" of the season on Sunday - with a double by Raphinha - to open a seven-point lead over its rival with three matches

remaining.

The 28-year-old Raphinha is having his breakthrough season with Barcelona, being decisive in big matches and putting up career-high numbers in terms of goals and assists.

He scored five of the 16 goals scored by Barcelona in the four "clasico" matches that it won against Madrid this season.

"I demand a lot of myself and I'm a player who wants to be doing his very best all the time," Raphinha said. "I've been working hard for these moments and I've tried to find my best version ever since I arrived at this club. I've always said that I came here to try to write my name in the history of this club."

His performances have already helped Barcelona win the Copa del Rey and the Spanish Super Cup, when he scored twice in a 5-2 final against Madrid. Raphinha also was key in a 4-0 rout of Madrid in a Spanish league match at the Santiago Bernabeu, when he had a goal and an assist.

Raphinha has scored 34 goals for Barcelona this season, more than tripling his previous tallies. The Brazil forward scored only 10 goals in each of his first two seasons after joining the Catalan club from Leeds United.

He is the second top scorer for Barcelona behind Robert Lewandowski, who has 40 goals so far. Raphinha led the team with 13 goals in the Champions League before it was eliminated by Inter Milan in the semifinals. The Brazilian has scored 18 goals in the league, and in addition to his double in the Spanish Super Cup, he also scored once in the Copa del Rey.

Raphinha has also been prolific with his assists, with 22 in 52 appearances this season. He had a total of 23 in the last two seasons combined.

Only Yamal has more assists than Raphinha in the Spanish league, with 12 against the nine by the Brazilian. The two have teamed up to near perfection and with the help of the likes of Lewandowski, Pedri, Dani Olmo and Ferran Torres, Barcelona is set to celebrate yet another league title. (AP)

## Pragg draws and maintains joint lead, Gukesh loses again in Superbet Classic



**BUCHAREST, May 14:** Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa played out a draw with Duda Jan-Krzysztof of Poland to maintain joint lead with 3.5 points but compatriot D Gukesh lost a tense battle against Alireza Firouzja of France in the sixth round of Superbet Chess Classics, a part of the grand chess tour.

Playing the black side of an English opening, Praggnanandhaa was subjected to some initial tactics by Duda, who is looking forward to come back in the event, but the Indian was quite up to the task in not giving any free-way to his Polish opponent. The Polish Grandmaster showed his intent with a queen sacrifice for a rook and minor piece in the middle game and Praggnanandhaa was quick to realise that his chances were slim. The draw was a just result as neither player could make much progress. Gukesh, not at his best, suffered his second loss in the event late on Tuesday night and, in live rankings, slipped to number five with Arjun Erigaisi taking over as the new world number three.

The game should have been a

draw once the endgame reached after Alireza missed out on his chances in the middle game.

However, with a rook and Bishop on board besides just a pawn each, Gukesh made a huge blunder which was beyond recoverable. Alireza, Fabiano Caruana of the United States, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France and Praggnanandhaa share the joint lead. Caruana tried hard to break through with a piece sacrifice against local hero Deac Bogdan-Daniel but he had to settle for a draw as well. The other overnight leader Vachier-Lagrave could do little with his white pieces either as he drew very quickly with Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan.

Results after round 6: Duda Jan-Krzysztof (POL, 2.5) drew with R Praggnanandhaa (IND, 3.5); Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (FRA, 3.5) drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov (UZB, 2); Levon Aronian (USA, 3) drew with Wesley So (USA, 3); Firouzja Alireza (FRA, 3.5) beat D Gukesh (IND, 2); Fabiano Caruana (USA, 3.5) drew with Deac Bogdan-Daniel (ROU, 2.5). (PTI)

## Asian chess: Srija Seshadri in joint lead

**ALAIN (UAE), May 14:** Overnight sole leader Woman Grandmaster Srija Seshadri made sure she did not slip too much as she earned a hard-fought draw against the highest-ranked Indian woman player Vantika Agrawal to remain in joint lead after the seventh round of the Asian continental women's chess championship here on Tuesday. With her second draw in seven games, Srija took her tally to six points and is now sharing the lead with Mongolian Mungunzul Bat-Erdene, who put it across P V Nandhidhaa.

In the 'Open' section, things did not change much as the leader, Bardiya Daneshvar was held to a draw by Ivan

Zemlyanskii of Russia, while the second-placed Indian Murali Karthikeyan also drew with another Russian Sergei Lobanov.

It is strange why the Russians are playing in the Asian event for the first time but the decision seems to have likely been taken because they can no longer participate in European tournaments due to the conflict with Ukraine. With two more rounds to come, the competition is wide open in the women's section, while Daneshvar seems to be on course for a gold medal triumph.

Important results (Round 7)

Open (Indians unless stated): Ivan Zemlyanskii (Fid, 5.5) drew with Bardiya Daneshvar (Iri, 6); Murali Karthikeyan (5)

drew with Sergei Lobanov (Fid, 5); Yang Zilong (Chn, 4.5) lost to Shamsiddin Vokhidov (Uzb, 5.5); M Pranesh (5) drew with GB Harshavardhan (5); Nihal Sarin (5) beat Rinat Jumabayev (Kaz, 4); Amin Tabatabaei (Iri, 4.5) drew with Raja Rithvik (4.5); Dai Changren (Chn, 4.5) drew with Nodirbek Yakubboev (Uzb, 4.5); Denis Makhnev (Kaz, 4.5) drew with A R Saleh Salem (UAE, 4.5); Abhimanyu Puranik (5) beat Sina Movahed (Iri, 4); S Aswath (4.5) drew with Xu Xiangyu (Chn, 4); Lev Zverev (Fid, 4.5) drew with P Iniyan (4.5); Bai Jinshi (Chn, 4.5) drew with A R Ilamparthi (4); Huang Renjie (Chn, 5) beat Bharath Subramaniam (4); Jiang Haochen

(Chn, 4) lost to Pranav Anand (5);

Women: Vantika Agrawal (5.5) drew with Srija Seshadri (6); PV Nandhidhaa (5) lost to Mungunzul Bat-Erdene (Mgl, 6); Valentina Gunina (Fid, 5.5) beat Batkhuyag Munguntuul (Mgl, 4.5); Anastasia Bodnaruk (Fid, 5.5) beat Olga Girya (Fid, 4.5); Xeniya Balabayeva (Kaz, 5) drew with Song Yuxin (Chn, 5); Swati Ghate (5) drew with Pham Le Thao Nguyen (Vie, 4.5); Tokhirjonova Gulrubbegim (Uzb, 5) beat Elnaz Kaliahmet (Kaz, 4); Galina Mikheeva (Fid, 4.5) drew with Padmini Rout (4); B Savitha Shri (4.5) drew with Rouda Essa Alserkal (UAE, 4.5). (PTI)

## Pahalgam fallout: Pakistan doubtful for Asia Cup hockey in Rajgir

**NEW DELHI, May 14:** The national federation is awaiting a government advisory but Pakistan's participation in this year's Hero Asia Cup hockey tournament in India is in serious doubt because of the prevalent tension between the two countries after the Pahalgam terror attack.

The Asia Cup will be staged in Rajgir, Bihar from August 27 to September 7. Hosts India, Pakistan, Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Oman and Chinese Taipei are scheduled to participate in the 12th edition of the continental showpiece, a qualifying tournament for next year's World Cup to be held in Netherlands and Belgium. "It is too early to say anything but we will follow the government's directive on this issue, which has been the case in the past," HI secretary general Bholanath Singh told PTI.

"We can't predict anything right now especially after the recent barbaric Pahalgam attack and Operation Sindoor that India conducted following that. There is still close to three months for the tournament but we will abide by what our government suggests us. There are no two ways about it."

In the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack, which claimed 26 lives and injured many, the government ordered all Pakistani nationals to leave the country and revoked their visas.

A fortnight after the gruesome incident, India responded launched 'Operation Sindoor' and carried out missile strikes on terrorist hubs in Pakistan and Pakistan Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. This led to further escalation as Pakistan launched drone and missile attacks, which were neutralised by India's robust air defence system. India responded by hitting military installations and air defence systems located in promi-

nent Pakistani cities like Lahore and Rawalpindi among others. The two countries agreed to a ceasefire on May 10 after Pakistan's Director General of Military Operations reached out to his Indian counterpart. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his address to the nation, made it clear that any engagement with Pakistan will hinge on clear evidence of action against terrorism by that country.

"If the government advisory does not give an all clear than Pakistan won't travel to India. It all depends on the government position at that time," a federation source told PTI. In case Pakistan doesn't get the nod to travel to India, the decision to make the tournament a seven-team affair or bring in a new team to fill the vacant slot, will be entirely in the hands of the Asian Hockey Federation.

"It's very hard to predict right now whether a new team will be added in such a scenario or it will be a seven team tournament. The Asian Hockey Federation will take a call on this," the official said on condition of anonymity.

The last time a Pakistan hockey team did not compete in a multi-national event in India was the 2016 Junior World Cup, which took place a few months after a terror attack at the Pathankot air base.

Malaysia had replaced the Pakistani team in that event.

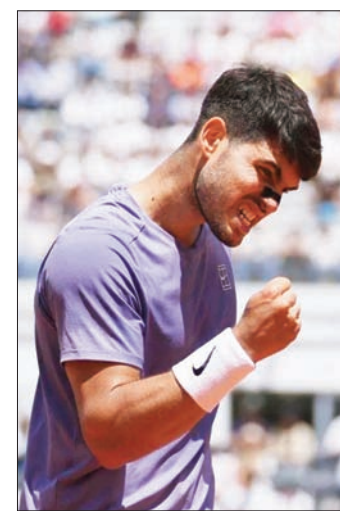
The current scenario has also put a question mark on Pakistan's participation in the upcoming Junior World Cup to be held in Chennai and Madurai from November 28 to December 10.

The Asia Cup assumes high significance as it is a World Cup qualifier, with the winner earning a direct spot for next year's mega-event that will be held in the Belgian city of Wavre and Netherlands' Amstelveen from August 14 to 30. (PTI)

## Alcaraz sets up rematch with Draper in Italian Open quarterfinals; Sinner faces a test vs. Cerundolo

**ROME, May 14:** Carlos Alcaraz was made to work for a 6-3, 3-6, 7-5 victory over Karen Khachanov that earned him a spot in the Italian Open quarterfinals on Tuesday and a rematch with Jack Draper — who beat him earlier this year.

Alcaraz saved two break points early in the third set then dropped his serve later on to waste an early break before improving to 5-0 in his career against the 24th-ranked Khachanov. "Physically I was struggling a little bit," Alcaraz said. "Not any pain in any part of the body. I was just tired. I had to run a lot. I was really proud the way I fought (for) every



ball." The third-ranked Alcaraz wore a long black brace that covered the upper portion of his right leg and stretched down to just below his knee. Alcaraz withdrew from the Madrid Open last month due to an upper right leg ailment that bothered him during the Barcelona Open final. He also had a left leg injury.

Alcaraz, who won the Monte Carlo Masters in April, improved to 12-1 on clay this season. The four-time Grand Slam champion will next face No. 5 Draper, who rallied past Corentin Moutet 1-6, 6-4, 6-3 on the red clay courts of the Foro Italico.

While Alcaraz holds a 3-2 career edge over Draper, the

British player won their most recent meeting in the semifinals at Indian Wells, California, in March. Alcaraz is playing the Italian Open for the second time. During the Spaniard's debut last year, he lost to then-135th-ranked Hungarian qualifier Fabian Marozsan in the third round as he dealt with a bothersome right forearm issue.

But Alcaraz then went on to win back-to-back Grand Slam titles at the French Open and Wimbledon.

Later in the other half of the draw, top-ranked Jannik Sinner was to play No. 18 Francisco Cerundolo in the biggest test so far after his return from a three-

month doping ban.

Rome is the last big warmup tournament before the French Open starts May 25.

In the women's quarterfinals, Jasmine Paolini rallied past Diana Shnaider 6-7 (1), 6-4, 6-2 to become the first Italian woman to reach the semifinals in Rome since her doubles partner, Sara Errani, lost the 2014 final to Serena Williams.

Paolini was trailing 3-0 in the second set when the match was briefly stopped due to rain. Shnaider went on to hold serve and go ahead 4-0 after the suspension but then Paolini won six straight games to take the set. (AP)

## How Carlo Ancelotti's move from Real Madrid to Brazil got awkward

**MADRID, May 14:** Carlo Ancelotti is swapping Real Madrid for Brazil in one of the biggest moves in world soccer. The problem is, neither he, nor Madrid, want to talk about it.

As coaching switches go, they don't come any bigger than this. But when news broke Monday that Ancelotti was leaving the sport's the most successful and iconic club team to take charge of its most successful and iconic national team, there was an awkward silence.

Madrid chose to ignore the announcement by the Brazilian soccer federation and was still to publicly acknowledge it 24 hours later.

There was silence, too, from Ancelotti, who didn't even provide a quote for his new employer when it published its official statement.

That left an uncomfortable vacuum until Ancelotti finally confirmed his departure during a scheduled news conference on Tuesday, which he only took

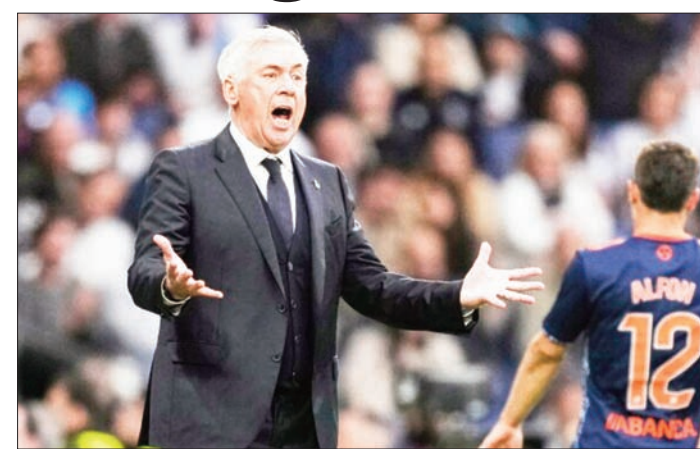
part in because he was supposed to preview Madrid's upcoming match against Mallorca.

"If I didn't have this news conference today it would have been a fantastic day. But in this news conference I have to explain things that I don't want to explain," the Italian coach said.

Becoming coach of record five-time world champion Brazil should be among the proudest moments of Ancelotti's career. He is the first foreign coach to take charge of the team of Pele, Ronaldo and Neymar; and the most iconic yellow jersey in soccer.

But even for Ancelotti — who is famed for his cool demeanour on the sideline, cigar smoking and the odd raised eyebrow — his reaction has been understated.

The 65-year-old Ancelotti — who has won a record five Champions League titles as a coach — does not begin his new job until May 26 with a view to leading Brazil to next year's



World Cup.

With three more rounds of the Spanish season to go said he did not want "anybody asking me about other things, because I respect this jersey a lot and I want to respect it until the last day."

The announcement came after Madrid's 4-3 loss to Barcelona over the weekend all but confirmed the defending Spanish champion would surrender its

league title.

Barcelona needs just two points to be crowned champion and can complete the job against Espanyol on Thursday.

Ancelotti's exit has been long-trailed, with departing Bayer Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso widely expected to replace him. So news of the deal will not have come as a surprise to Madrid, which was involved in

the negotiations to release Ancelotti early from a contract that had another year to run.

But its silence has been notable, with no messages of congratulations or thanks to a coach that won two Champions League titles and the Spanish title in his second spell at the club. Ancelotti also coached Madrid from 2013-15, which saw him win another Champions League.

"Real Madrid will release the statement when they want. There's no problem whatsoever. They'll do it at the appropriate time for Real Madrid and there's nothing further to add," Ancelotti said. The appointment of Ancelotti, who is arguably the greatest active coach in soccer, is a major coup for Brazil as it aims to return to the summit of the sport next year. Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has previously been linked with the job, but signed a contract extension with his club this season. (AP)



# Test cricket would have been a 'far blander place' without Kohli: Vaughan

**LONDON, May 14:** "Gutted, shocked and sad" at Virat Kohli's sudden retirement from the longest format, former England skipper Michael Vaughan said no individual has done more for Test cricket than the star Indian batter.

Kohli announced his retirement from Test cricket on Monday, drawing the curtain on a stellar red-ball career. He represented India in 123 Tests, scoring 9,230 runs at an average of 46.85, including 30 centuries.

"There are not too many Test retirements where I am left genuinely disappointed that I won't watch a cricketer play again. But I'm gutted we won't see Virat Kohli in England this summer or in whites any more," Vaughan wrote in his column for the Telegraph.

"I'm shocked that he's retiring now, and I'm also quite sad about it. In my time involved in the game, stretching back more than 30 years, I don't believe there is any individual who has done more for the Test format than Virat."

Kohli led India to 40 wins in 68 Tests -- the most by any Indian skipper to date -- and Vaughan said it was the 36-year-old Indian who



brought the love back to the traditional format, and the five-day game would have been a "far blander place" without him.

"When he took the captaincy just over a decade ago, I was worried India was losing interest in Test cricket," said the 50-year-old, who served as England Test captain from 2003 to 2008.

"MS Dhoni was one of the great white-ball players but it felt like he captained a Test team who did not love the format. The game needs

India to be madly in love with Test cricket, and that is what Virat fostered as captain.

"His passion, skill, and the way he talked about Test cricket always being the pinnacle has been a huge shot in the arm for the format. Test cricket would have been a far blander place without him, and there is a chance it would have lost its appeal if he had not been as interested and invested in it," Vaughan described Kohli as the greatest player across all formats and called his re-

tirement a blow to Test cricket.

"His retirement now is a blow to Test cricket and very disappointing for fans -- not least in England this summer -- but my belief is that he has helped forge a love for the format among the generation that will follow him, and kept the flame burning," wrote the former opening batter. "It's impossible to compare across every era, but if you look at since T20 came in around 20 years ago, he is almost certainly the greatest player when you consider all three formats."

There has been a lot of criticism around Kohli's on-field aggressive persona but Vaughan feels the Indian superstar didn't have such a big ego as has been made out to be.

"All great players have egos, but maybe Virat's wasn't quite as big as we thought. Perhaps family life has mellowed him a bit, and he just wants as normal a life as he possibly can, which is probably going to be in London, where he spends a lot of time now. "Those outside that bubble really can't imagine what it's like being a Kohli or a Sachin Tendulkar, with the pressure of billions of adoring fans on your shoulders." (PTI)

## WTC Final-bound SA players likely to miss IPL playoffs

**JOHANNESBURG, May 14:** South African players who have been picked for the World Test Championship Final against Australia are likely to miss the IPL playoffs as the country's cricket board is standing firm on prioritising national duty over league commitments.

The BCCI confirmed on Monday that the IPL will resume on May 17 with the final slated for June 3.

However, the revised schedule has left players from WTC finalists Australia and South Africa in a tight spot. The franchises and the BCCI have urged foreign boards to make their players available for the remainder of the tournament.

CSA, however, has reiterated its commitment to WTC Final preparations. "It is an individual decision, obviously, to return or to play or continue," CSA's director of national teams and high performance Enoch Nkwe said during press conference.

"One thing we've made clear, and we are finalising this with the IPL and the BCCI, is sticking to our original plan when it comes to the WTC preparations."

"May 26 is the latest for the Test guys to come back. The original plans don't change because the No. 1 priority is the WTC final. We've been engaging with them over the last day or two to make sure we're all on the same page," he added.

Eight South African players -- Kagiso Rabada (Gujarat Titans), Lungi Ngidi (Royal Challengers Bengaluru), Tristan Stubbs (Delhi Capitals), Aiden Markram (Lucknow Super Giants), Ryan Rickelton (Mumbai Indians), Corbin Bosch (MI), Marco Jansen (Punjab Kings) and Wiaan Mulder (Sunrisers Hyderabad) -- have been named in the Proteas squad for the WTC Final, scheduled to start from June 11 in London.

Currently, GT, RCB, MI, PBKS, DC and LSG are in contention for an IPL playoff spot.

South Africa head coach Shukri Conrad echoed CSA's stance.

"Our initial agreement with IPL-BCCI was, with the final being on the 25th, our players would return on the 26th, so that it allows them ample time before we fly out on the 30th. As it stands, we're not budging on this. We want our players back on the 26th," he said.

"That is the ongoing conversations that are being had between people in a higher pay grade than I am. They're dealing with that. We want our players back on the 26th and hopefully that comes to fruition."

The IPL season was suspended on May 9 due to a military confrontation between India and Pakistan, triggered by the April 22 terrorist attack in Pahalgal, South Kashmir. A ceasefire announced the following day paved the way for the tournament's resumption.

As per the new schedule, the league stage ends on May 27, with playoffs running from May 29 to June 3, dates that clash with CSA's WTC preparations.

While CSA has taken a strong position, Cricket Australia has allowed its players to decide individually, and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) is set to review its No Objection Certificates (NOCs). (PTI)

## DC signs Mustafizur Rahman as Jake-Fraser's replacement

**NEW DELHI, May 14:** Delhi Capitals on Wednesday signed Bangladesh left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman as replacement for Australian batter Jake-Fraser McGurk, who will not rejoin the team for the remainder of Indian Premier League after returning home due to the ongoing India-Pakistan hostilities.

Fraser-McGurk's release won't hurt DC as he was dropped after the first six games in which he tallied only 55 runs. Also, if Mitchell Starc doesn't come, as is widely anticipated, then Mustafizur's left-arm seam bowling, with expertise in death overs, would come in handy.

"The JSW and GMR co-owned franchise Delhi Capitals today announced the signing of Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman as a replacement for Australian opener Jake Fraser-McGurk, who will be unavailable for the remainder of the TATA IPL 2025 season," the franchise stated in a release.

McGurk and a host of other foreign players had returned to their respective countries due to the military showdown between India and Pakistan in the aftermath of the Pahalgal terror attack.



Mustafizur, who made his IPL debut in 2016, previously represented the Delhi Capitals during the 2022 and 2023 seasons.

In 2022, he picked up eight wickets in eight matches with an economy of 7.62 and in the following season, he played two matches for Delhi Capitals.

Over the course of his IPL career, the 29-year-old has played 38 matches, claiming 38 wickets at an economy rate of 7.84.

He has also turned out for multiple franchises in the league, forming a reputation of bowling effectively in all phases of an in-

nings.

With 132 wickets in 106 T20Is for Bangladesh, Mustafizur has established himself as one of the leading left-arm pacers in white-ball cricket.

Across all T20 competitions in the domestic circuit and globally, he has taken 351 wickets in 281 matches.

Meanwhile, veteran South African keeper-batter Quinton de Kock has confirmed his availability and will rejoin the Kolkata Knight Riders squad in Bengaluru for their next IPL game, as per an ESPNcricinfo report. (PTI)

## India have huge amount of talent to fill big shoes of Kohli and Rohit: Anderson

**LONDON, May 14:** England pace great James Anderson feels India's next generation of batters have the aggression and fearlessness to step into the "big shoes" of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma in the Test team.

Kohli and Rohit, legends of Indian batting, bid farewell to Test cricket within a week of each other. Having already stepped away from T20Is last year, the duo will now only feature in ODIs for India.

Kohli ended his inspiring run in the traditional format, scoring 9230 runs from 123 matches with 30 hundreds at an average of 46.85, while Rohit accumulated 4301 runs from 67 Tests at an average of 40.57 and has 12 centuries and 18 fifties to his name.

"Great players. Kohli, one of the greatest Test batters that's ever been," Anderson said on 'talkSPORT'.

The twin retirements mean India will not only have a new captain at the helm but will be without two of their most experienced players.

"There will be a new captain because Sharma has retired. There's big shoes to fill there but they've got a huge amount of talent in their squad," Anderson added.

Anderson praised the new crop of Indian batters for their attacking mindset.

"You just have to watch the IPL. They are bringing players into Test cricket from the IPL now who are just so attacking, aggressive, and fearless," he said.

England are scheduled to host India for a five-match Test series starting June 20, which is also the beginning of the 2025-2027 World Test Championship cycle.

England will head to Australia for the marquee Ashes series later this year.

Anderson, however, warned against looking too far ahead and underestimating India.

"It's a huge year (for England) with the Ashes coming but it is important to get some momentum going.

"If I'm being honest, looking back at my career, that happened too much where, 18 months out from an Ashes the management and even the players starting to look towards that and actually forgetting what's in front of you," said Anderson, who has 704 wickets from 188 Test matches and 269 scalps from 194 ODIs.

"India is going to be such a tough challenge even at home. They are a strong side," said Anderson. (PTI)

## It was complete madness, we were crammed into vans: Healy recalls IPL halt

**MELBOURNE, May 14:** Australia women's team captain Alyssa Healy has shared a gripping account of the night of "complete madness" when the IPL match between Punjab Kings and Delhi Capitals was called off midway in Dharmasala due to air raid sirens in neighbouring cities.

The match was halted when Punjab were cruising at 122 for 1 in 10.1 overs with floodlight failure cited as the initial reason. Healy, who is married to Australia and Delhi Capitals pacer Mitchell Starc, was in the stands along with family members of other players.

Assuming it was a minor issue, Healy and the others with her stayed calm at first before things went out of hand.

"Couple of the light towers went out and we were just there waiting. I heard a rumour a couple of seats down that we might have to evacuate the stadium cause the lights gone down," Healy said on the 'WillowTalk' podcast.

"And we are large group of family and extra support staff. And next minute the guy that kind of wrangles the group of us and gets us on the bus comes up and his face was white.

"And he was like, we need to go right now. And we were saying, 'oh, it's okay'. Like we're probably best off letting everyone else get out of the stadium and like stay here. We're probably safer at the moment. Cause there'll be people going down the stairs everywhere," she added.

Things escalated quickly and they were shuffled into what Healy described as "a holding pen," where the PBKS and DC players were already present.

"Then the next guy came out, his face was white, grabbed one of the children and said 'we need to leave right now'," the wicketkeeper batter said.

Such was the urgency that Healy recalled Faf du Plessis being in the room without his shoes.

"The boys (players) are there. Faf didn't even have shoes on. They're all just waiting there looking stressed. I asked to Mitch, 'what's going on?' And he said, 'the town 60 kilometres away had just been smacked by some of the missiles'."

"And so there was a complete blackout in the area, which meant that's why the lights were off because



the Dharmasala stadium was like a beacon at that point in time."

It was then that the gravity of the situation dawned. India had launched missile attacks on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan Occupied Jammu and Kashmir a fortnight after the April 22 Pahalgal terror attack in which 26 people were killed.

On the day of the match, a blackout was enforced in several districts including Pathankot, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Mohali in Punjab and Union Territory Chandigarh amid air raid alarms and reports of explosion-like sounds in Jammu.

"So all of a sudden we're crammed into vans and off we go back to the hotel. There was madness. We're sitting on the bus with some of the Punjab players. I think Shreyas was on my bus. It was just like get in a van as soon as you can get out of there," Healy added.

The teams were brought to Delhi through a lengthy road and train journey which involved traversing Hoshiarpur and Jalandhar.

The IPL was suspended for a week but is set to resume on May 17 with most of the foreign players expected to fly back for their respective franchises. (PTI)

## Lakshya Sen bows out of Thailand Open, Aakarshi, Unnati advance

**BANGKOK, May 14:** Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen crashed out in the opening round of the Thailand Open, while Aakarshi Kashyap and Unnati Hooda advanced after hard-fought victories in the Super 500 tournament here on Wednesday.

Sen fell to Ireland's Nhat Nguyen in a tense three-game battle, losing 18-21 21-9 17-21 in a men's singles match that lasted one hour and 20 minutes.

After dropping the first game, Sen found his rhythm in the second, dominating with aggressive rallies. However, Nguyen held his nerve in a close-decider, edging ahead at 17-13 before sealing the win. Priyanshu Rajawat too made a first-round exit as he went down 13-21 21-17 16-21 against Alwi Farhan of Indonesia. (PTI)

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