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Assam sees sharp decline in MMR: CM



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 8: Assam has recorded a significant drop in its Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), marking a major public health milestone for the state, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced on Thursday.

Citing data from the latest Sample Registration System (SRS) 2019-21 report, Sarma said the state's MMR has fallen from 195 to 167—a 28-point reduction that

stands as the highest decline among all Indian states.

"This marks a turning point for Assam, which no longer holds the highest MMR in the country," he said, attributing the progress to improved maternal healthcare infrastructure and effective health interventions.

The Chief Minister also reported positive trends in child health, noting that the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) had improved

from 38 to 36. He linked the gains to enhanced neonatal care, increased health awareness, and the expansion of community-based health services.

Sarma credited the central government for supporting Assam's health reforms. "This progress has been made possible under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said, adding that the Centre's focus on strengthening healthcare in rural and underserved regions played a crucial role.

He also praised frontline workers, including ASHA personnel and other healthcare providers, for their commitment.

"Immense gratitude is due to our tireless healthcare workers who have made this achievement a reality," Sarma said.

As per the SRS report, the all-India MMR for 2019-21 is 93 deaths per 1,00,000 live births.

The all-India IMR for 2021 is 27 deaths per thousand live births. (With inputs from PTI)

At least 100 terrorists, associates killed in strikes in Pak, PoK

Operation Sindoor on, Rajnath informs all-party meet



NEW DELHI, May 8: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh told an all-party meeting on Thursday that at least 100 hardcore terrorists and their associates were killed in Indian strikes on terror sites in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied-Kash-

mir (PoK) under the ongoing Operation Sindoor, sources said.

The meeting saw opposition parties backing the government in the military action and hailing the armed forces, as leaders across the po-

litical spectrum projected a united front amid heightened tensions between the two neighbouring countries.

Chairing the meeting, Singh, in his briefing and then responding to points raised by the leaders of different parties, said India does not want escalation but will give a befitting reply to Pakistan if attacked, the sources added.

"In the moment of crisis, we are with the government," Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge told reporters after the meeting, a view reiterated by his party colleague and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and echoed by several other opposition leaders.

Singh noted that it is an emerging and evolving situation, declining to get into the details of the continuing Indian operation.

Kharge said, "The defence minister said this is a sensitive time and in the interest of the country, detailed questions are not to be asked as they pertain to defence secrets." The Congress chief, though, conveyed his disappointment over Prime Minister Narendra Modi not attending the all-party meeting.

A number of opposition leaders, the sources said, referred to the (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Assam Speaker inspects proposed Assembly site in Dibrugarh

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, May 8: Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly, Biswajit Daimary, visited Khanikar in Dibrugarh on Wednesday to inspect the proposed site for a new Assembly building and MLA quarters.

The Speaker also reviewed plans for an 800-seat auditorium and a circuit house during his visit, holding discussions with relevant departments to assess project feasibility and infrastructure needs.

Daimary was accompanied by Duliayan MLA Teras Gowala, Dibrugarh Deputy Commissioner Bikram Kairi, Superintendent of Police V V Rakesh Reddy, and several senior district officials.

Representatives from the Public Works (Roads and Buildings) Department, Assam Power Distribution Company Limited (APDCL), Public Health Engineering, and the District Veterinary Department were also present.

Night curfew clamped along unfenced portion of Indo-Bangla border

SHILLONG, May 8: The Meghalaya government on Thursday imposed night curfew in areas along the around 40 km unfenced portion of the India-Bangladesh border in the state prone to infiltration and smuggling, officials said.

The decision was taken after inputs were received that there is a likelihood of cross-border movements, a senior home department official told PTI.

Instructions were issued to deputy commissioners of border districts to activate restrictions to check infiltration and smuggling, he said.

In an order, the administration of West Jaintia Hills, one of such districts, "imposed curfew from 8 PM to 6 AM up to 200 metres from the Zero (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Pakistani air defence system in Lahore destroyed India foils Pak attempts to target 15 places

NEW DELHI, May 8: India on Thursday thwarted Pakistan's attempts to strike military sites with drones and missiles at 15 places in northern and western regions of the country and targeted Pakistani air defence systems with one in Lahore being "neutralised", as tensions soared between the two countries amid fears of a wider conflict.

The attempts by Pakistan came after the Indian armed forces early Wednesday carried out precise



missile strikes on nine terror targets in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Pakistan under 'Operation Sindoor'. As the Ministry of Defence (MoD) reiterated that any

attack on military sites in India will invite a "suitable response", Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said the choice of de-escalation is with Pakistan as it escalated the situation with the Pahalgam terror attack and that India only responded to it through 'Operation Sindoor'.

As leaders across the political spectrum projected a united front, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is reported to have told an all-party meeting that at least 100 hardcore terrorists and their associates were

killed in the Indian strikes.

At another event, he assured the nation that no limit will become an obstacle for the Government in protecting India's sovereignty. "We are fully prepared for such responsible responses in the future as well." In a press statement, the MoD said that on the night of May 7-8, Pakistan attempted to engage a number of military targets in Awantipura, Srinagar, Jammu, Pathankot, Amritsar, Kapurthala, Jalandhar, (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Choice of de-escalation is with Pakistan: Vikram Misri



NEW DELHI, May 8: The choice of de-escalation is with Pakistan as it escalated the situation with the Pahalgam terror attack and India only responded to it through Operation Sindoor, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said on Thursday.

His comments at a media briefing came amid heightened tensions between the two countries.

Misri said escalation started from that side (Pakistan) with the April 22 Pahalgam attack in which 26 people, mostly tourists, were killed.

"Our approach is not to escalate the situation, we only responded to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack," he said.

On de-escalation of the situation, Misri said, "Pakistan escalated the situation, we only responded. Choice is with Pakistan."

He said at the UNSC meeting, Pakistan opposed mention of the role of terror group The Resistance Force (TRF) when it had already claimed responsibility for the Pahalgam attack.

The foreign secretary also said the retaliatory actions of Pakistan are impacting civilians, referring to firings along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Pakistan's reputation as the centre of global terrorism is rooted in various terrorist attacks across the globe," Misri, flanked by Wing Commander Vyomika Singh and Colonel Sofia Qureshi, said, adding Pakistan has been pursuing cross-border terrorism against India for decades.

He said India's action on Wednesday was restrained and it was confined to terrorist infrastructure.

In retaliation for the Pahalgam terror attack, Indian armed forces early Wednesday carried out missile strikes on terror targets including Bahawalpur, a stronghold of the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terror group.

On Thursday, the defence ministry said the Pakistani military tried last night to target Awantipura, Srinagar, Jammu, Pathankot, Amritsar, Kapurthala, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Adampur, Bhatinda, Chandigarh, Nal, Phalodi, Uttarai, and Bhuj but these attempts were foiled and a Pakistani air defence system was destroyed in Lahore.

Misri also said Pakistan was deliberately creating roadblocks over the years on the Indus Waters Treaty issue. (PTI)

'STP standards should be set with water reuse in mind'

Delhi's Yamuna-cleaning plan needs reset, not just money: Report

NEW DELHI, May 8: Amid renewed efforts to clean the Yamuna in Delhi, a new analysis released on Thursday said authorities need to rethink their strategy and stop the mixing of treated and untreated water in drains flowing into the river.

The analysis by Delhi-based think tank Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) said officials must ensure that tankers collecting faecal sludge from areas without sewer connections do not dump it into drains or the river.

CSE director general Sunita Narain said all such tankers should be fitted with GPS trackers to make sure the sludge is taken to sewage treatment plants (STPs) for proper



treatment and reuse.

She added that untreated water from unsewered areas should be treated near the river before being released.

Narain also said that one of the biggest problems in cleaning the Yamuna is the lack of


clear data on the city's population, which makes it difficult to know if the current treatment capacity is sufficient.

The 22-kilometre stretch of the Yamuna between Wazirabad and Okhla in Delhi, less than 2 per cent of the

river's total length, accounts for 80 per cent of its pollution load.

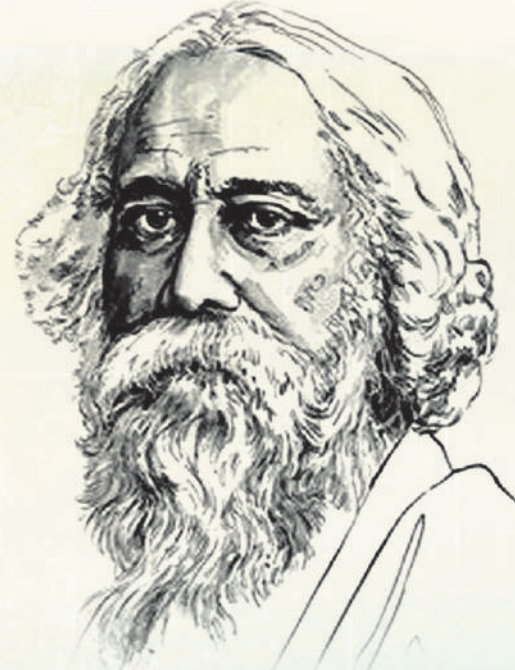
The main reasons for the pollution are untreated wastewater from unauthorised colonies and slum clusters and the poor quality of treated water from STPs and common effluent treatment plants (CETPs).

According to the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC), the city generates 3,600 million litres per day (MLD) of sewage. The 37 STPs in Delhi have a total capacity of 3,474 MLD, about 96 per cent of the sewage generated. However, these plants are currently operating at only 80 per (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)



অসম চৰকাৰ

ৰবীন্দ্র জয়ন্তী








ৰবীন্দ্র জয়ন্তীত অসমবাসীৰ হৈ কবিগুৰু ৰবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুৰলৈ সশ্রদ্ধা প্ৰণাম জনালোঁ

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Gurudev was instrumental in submitting an 11-point memorandum to the Simon Commission in Shillong

Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma's 88th death anniversary observed with reverence in Kokrajhar

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, May 8: The 88th death anniversary of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma, the eminent Bodo social reformer and visionary, was solemnly observed on Thursday at his burial ground in Kazigaon, Kokrajhar district.

The event, organized by the Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma Girudham, Kazigaon, began with a floral tribute to the legendary figure, followed by a grand joygahuti, reflecting deep respect and remembrance for his enduring legacy.

Assam Cabinet Minister Urkhao Gwra Brahma attended the commemoration as the chief guest and paid homage to Gurudev. As a mark of continued development and preservation of his legacy, the minister also laid the foundation stone for the overall development of Gurudev's Samadhi Stall area at Gurudham Kazigaon.

In his address, Minister Brahma highlighted Gurudev's pivotal role in the social renaissance of the Bodo community, lauding his tire-



less efforts toward educational, social, and economic empowerment of the marginalized.

He also recalled Gurudev's staunch opposition to British plans to annex the then Goalpara district of Assam to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), and his unwav-

ering stance in keeping the region within Assam's territorial integrity.

Notably, in 1929, Gurudev was instrumental in submitting an 11-point memorandum to the Simon Commission in Shillong, advocating for, among other demands, the

creation of a Bodo Regiment and protection of indigenous rights.

Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma's legacy continues to resonate as a beacon of justice, equity, and dignity, inspiring generations to uphold the values of progress and community upliftment.

Results of BTC's Bodofa Super 50 Mission declared

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, May 8: The results of the Medical Entrance Examination for the 2025-26 academic session under the Bodofa UN Brahma Super Fifty Plus Mission — a flagship educational initiative of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) government — were officially declared on Thursday.

Addressing a press conference at the Bodoland Guest House in Kokrajhar, BTR Executive Member Wilson Hasda and BTC Secretary Amarjyoti Barman announced that 50 students have been selected on a merit basis to receive free medical coaching under the mission.

Wilson Hasda noted that the selected students underwent a com-

petitive entrance examination conducted by the concerned authorities of the BTC government. The Bodofa UN Brahma Super 50 Mission for Medical, launched under the Department of Education, aims to develop human resources and provide equitable access to professional education across Bodoland.

In a significant move toward inclusivity, 16 additional students from unrepresented communities within the BTC region will also be selected to join the coaching program, bringing more diverse representation to the initiative. Hasda emphasized, "These additional students come from unrepresented communities residing within the BTC region. This move ensures inclusivity and equal opportunity for all in the

pursuit of medical education."

The mission, which is receiving overwhelming public support, was launched under the leadership of Pramod Boro, Chief Executive Member of the BTR. It reflects the administration's dedicated efforts to uplift educational standards and create future healthcare professionals from the region.

The expansion of the Super 50 Plus Mission is part of the BTC government's broader push for humanitarian and educational empowerment, and stakeholders across communities have widely welcomed the announcement. Many have expressed hope that the initiative will lead to transformative changes in the lives of aspiring students from underrepresented areas.

Role of Technical Terminology in literary translation discussed

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 8: The Dirgheswari Range Forest Office under the North Guwahati Divisional Forest Officer has seized a large quantity of illegally felled valuable sal logs from the Dirgheswari Reserved Forest on Thursday.

The operation was led by Dirgheswari Range Forest Officer Nayanmoni Das, who received information last night about the illegal felling and transportation of Sal trees from the forest area. Acting swiftly, the officer, along with forest department staff, reached the spot and managed to seize the logs while they were being transported.

However, the forest mafia involved in the illegal activity managed to flee the scene. A case has already been registered, and an investigation is underway. The forest officer informed the media that the culprits will be apprehended soon.

Body of youth found in Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, May 8: The body of a youth was found in a dense forest in Bengenaati Gandhi Nagar under Morikalong police outpost in Nagaon district on Thursday here.

The deceased, identified as Asim Kalita (25), a resident of Polashbari Sadagar Para, was reportedly working at a dhaba on Nagaon Borghat Bypass.

Locals suspect that Kalita was a drug addict, and his death might be linked to drug abuse. Following the recovery of the body, locals launched a protest against drug trafficking in the area, which led to a tense situation. The police intervened and took control of the situation.

The body was later recovered in the presence of a magistrate, and a post-mortem examination was also carried out. The locals have been demanding that the police administration take strict action against those involved in drug trafficking in the area.

In a related development, the police conducted a raid in the forest area and arrested one youth, Ankur Das. However, several others managed to escape. The locals have urged the authorities to take stern action against those involved in the drug trade and to eradicate it from the area, sources added.



HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, May 8: Tezpur University's (TU) Department of Assamese, in collaboration with the Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSST), organised a Two-Day National Seminar on Thursday focusing on the crucial "Role of Technical Terminology in Literary Translation." Representing CSST at the seminar were Prof Dhananjay Singh, Member Secretary of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) and Chairperson of CSST, and Shahzad Ahmed Ansari, Assistant Director of CSST.

Delivering the inaugural address, Prof Shambhu Nath Singh, Vice Chancellor of Tezpur University, stated that integrating technical terminology within literary translation, particularly within regional languages, helps democratise access to knowledge.

In his lecture, Prof Dhananjay Singh emphasized the inherently tricky nature of translation and underscored the significance of a word's popularity and the critical need to preserve meaning across languages. Prof. Chandan Kumar Sarma, Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Tezpur University, further under-

scored the significant role that translation plays in bridging linguistic and cultural divides, emphasizing its academic and societal relevance.

Shahzad Ahmed Ansari, Assistant Director of CSST, provided valuable context by outlining the background and the operational framework of the Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology, shedding light on its contributions to the field.

During the occasion, five books published by the TU Publication Centre were also inaugurated. The grant for publishing these books was received from CSST. Earlier, Juri Dutta, Head of the Department of Assamese at TU and the Programme Coordinator for the seminar, also briefly outlined the ongoing academic endeavors and research being undertaken by the Department of Assamese in this crucial area. The inaugural session also saw the participation of distinguished experts from other prominent universities in the region, including Prof. Satyakam Borthakur from the Department of Assamese at Dibrugarh University and Dr. Dhurjati Sarma, Assistant Professor in the Department of Modern Indian Languages and Literary Studies at Gauhati University.

Prohibitory order in Sonitpur ensuring peaceful Panchayat election counting

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, May 8: In preparation for the counting of votes for the upcoming Panchayat Election, scheduled for May 11, the District Magistrate of Sonitpur, Ankur Bharali, has issued a Prohibitory Order under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) on Thursday. The order has been enforced exparte, citing the urgency of maintaining public peace and order, and will remain in force until further notice.

According to the order: Gathering of people and vehicle parking within a 100-meter radius of the counting centre at Darrang College, Tezpur, is strictly prohibited. Parking of vehicles directly outside the counting centre gates is also restricted.

Entry into the premises will be allowed only to individuals carrying valid Identity Cards issued by the I-Card Cell of Panchayat Election 2025 for counting purposes.

Carrying of sharp weapons, sticks, or any object that may be used as a weapon is strictly forbidden during public gatherings or victory processions.

Temporary food stalls or shops within the restricted area are not permitted.

The use, bursting, or sound emission of firecrackers is prohibited.

Security personnel and public servants on official election duty are exempt from the vehicle parking restrictions.

Permanent business establishments within the restricted area will not be affected.

The order also clarifies that any aggrieved party may approach the competent authority with proper justification for consideration or exemption.

Violators of the order will face penal action under Section 223 of the BNSS, reinforcing the administration's commitment to ensuring a safe and orderly counting process.

Body of woman recovered

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, May 8: An unidentified body of a woman was found at Jokai 3 no Burbhuri in the sand bar of Buri Dehing river in Dibrugarh on Thursday morning.

The body was sent for post-mortem at AMCH.

The woman aged around 40 years and the identification of the woman has not done yet.

According to reports, the body was recovered by Barbaruah police after getting information.

"If anybody identifies the deceased woman then they should contact us. We have sent the body for post mortem," said a police official.

27-year-old woman goes missing in Howraghat

HT Correspondent

HOWRAGHAT, May 8: A sense of anxiety and speculation has gripped the farming village of Rongkut in Howraghat following the mysterious disappearance of a 27-year-old married woman, Jyoti Mazumdar, on May 5.

According to family sources, Jyoti informed her husband that she was going to her aunt's house nearby in the same village to have lunch. However, when she failed to return home by late evening, her husband, Papon Mazumdar, initiated a search. He visited the aunt's home and also made inquiries at her parental residence in Nagaon, but she was nowhere to be found.



With mounting concern, a missing person report was lodged the following day at the Uttar Borbil Police Outpost under Howraghat Police Station in Karbi Anglong.

The incident has sparked widespread concern and speculation in the otherwise quiet rural community. Jyoti, who has been married for some time and has no children, remains untraceable as of now.

A deeply worried Papon Mazumdar has appealed to the public for any information that may lead to the safe return of his wife. He urges anyone with relevant information to contact Uttar Borbil Police Outpost or call 8761822321.

Regional SAMARTH Support and Coordination Centre inaugurated at GU

HT Correspondent

GUWAHATI, May 8: The Regional SAMARTH Support and Coordination Centre (RSSCC), Assam, was inaugurated on Thursday at Gauhati University. The new centre aims to strengthen the digital transformation of higher education institutions across the state.

The inauguration took place at the NEP Coordination Building in the presence of the Education Minister of Assam, Dr Ranaj Pegu, who officially launched the centre. Vice Chancellor of Gauhati University, Prof Nani Gopal Mahanta, Secretary of the Higher Education Department, Narayan Konwar, IAS and Director of Higher Education, Pomi Baruah, ACS, were also present.

In his address, Ranaj Pegu thanked Gauhati University for hosting the centre. He said that a platform like SAMARTH is important for Assam as the state lacks centralised and reliable data in the higher education sector. SAMARTH, he said, will help improve transparency, efficiency and access to information by bringing all major academic and administrative work under one system.

Prof Nani Gopal Mahanta said



that the new centre is a step forward in digitalising higher education in Assam. He shared that the SAMARTH platform is already helping Gauhati University manage many of its functions better. He said SAMARTH will also help other institutions with modules for admissions, exams, finance, research, file movement and project management.

SAMARTH is an open-source, cloud-based e-governance platform developed by the Ministry of Education, Government of India. It is meant to support universities and colleges in managing their operations digitally.

The new RSSCC at Gauhati University will act as a support and coordination hub. It will help col-

leges and universities in Assam adopt and use the SAMARTH platform. The centre will work closely with the SAMARTH team in New Delhi and the Higher Education Department to implement policies and provide technical support.

Since the launch of the SAMARTH Admission Portal on June 14, 2023, the platform has made the UG admission process easier for students in Assam. The portal started accepting applications on April 11, 2025, for BA, BCom, and BSc courses. The RSSCC will now also help with technical support for the admission process. Students and institutions can reach out via email at rsscc.samarth@gauhati.ac.in.

Margherita celebrates World Red Cross Day with unity and compassion



HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, May 8: In a heart-warming display of humanitarian spirit, Margherita joined the global community in celebrating World Red Cross Day on Thursday at the Margherita Block Conference Hall. The event, organized by the Indian Red Cross Society Margherita Sub-District Branch, was marked by a series of inspiring programs that embodied hope, unity, and a steadfast commitment to humanity.

The celebration commenced with the ceremonial hoisting of the Red Cross flag by Parikshit Thoudam, Margherita Co-District Commissioner and President of the Sub-District Branch. The symbolic lighting of the lamp was carried out by Di-

nesh Pratap Singh Rathod, Margherita Co-District Police Officer and Vice President of the Branch, signifying the light of compassion and care that the Red Cross movement stands for.

A major highlight of the event was a compelling awareness session on heart disease, an increasingly prevalent health issue worldwide. The session was skillfully hosted by Pabitra Borgohain, Secretary of the Margherita Sub-District Branch, who elaborated on the causes, symptoms, treatment options, and preventive strategies associated with heart conditions.

The audience was privileged to hear from the chief guest, Dr. Mriganka Shekhar Chaliha, Head of the Cardiology

Department at Assam Medical College and Hospital, Dibrugarh. Dr. Chaliha delivered an engaging and informative talk on heart health and the importance of adopting healthier lifestyles, which deeply resonated with the attendees.

The event was presided over by Manoj Gogoi, President of the Indian Red Cross Society Margherita Sub-District Branch. Esteemed dignitaries gracing the occasion included: Atanu Kakoty, Principal of Margherita College, Sanat Kumar Dutta, Deputy Superintendent, Margherita FRU/Civil Hospital, Aparajita Phukan, Principal, Digboi Nursing College, Sanjib Sharma, Block Elementary Education Officer, Margherita.

Their presence reflected the strong community collaboration in promoting health and humanitarian values.

More than 200 participants from diverse walks of life took part in the celebration, demonstrating the community's collective commitment to public health and humanitarian ideals.

Concluding the event, Pabitra Borgohain expressed heartfelt gratitude and remarked, "The celebration of World Red Cross Day at Margherita was a resounding success, leaving everyone inspired to continue standing 'on the side of humanity' with compassion and action."

No: KDB/AWDCA/NIT-01/2024-25/

Dated: 08/05/2025

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders affixing a non-refundable Court Fee Stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight & Twenty-Five Paise) only with a validity period of 180 (One Hundred Eighty) days, which will subsequently be converted and drawn up in the APWD's printed F-2 forms are invited from the registered contractors of class-II and class-I (A, B & C) category of Assam PWD (Roads & Building) and BTC, according to their eligibility for submitting tenders for the following works under AWDCA, Assam Fund for the year 2024-25. The Tenders will be received by the undersigned up to 2.00 P.M. on 17.04.2025 and will be opened on the same date & place at 2.30 P.M.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	A. A. Amount	Estimated Amount	Earnest Money	Cost of Tender paper	Time of Completion
1	Construction of CC pavement road from Hirala Keretta house to Manik house at Magurnari village road under Magurnari VCDC.	15,00,000.00	15,00,000.00	15000/- (1% for ST, SC & OBC) & Rs. 30000/- (2% for General)	450/-	3 Months
2	Earth filling and Sand Graveling road from Marshal Xalxo house to Sarma Lakra house at Punakhuri line under Dalobaari VCDC.	3,00,000.00	3,00,000.00	3000/- (1% for ST, SC & OBC) & Rs. 6000/- (2% for General)	100/-	3 Months
3	Earth filling and Sand Graveling road from Gopal Mini Tea Garden to Barman Basti Wooden Bridge at Chandmari village road under Dhanijguri VCDC.	15,00,000.00	15,00,000.00	15000/- (1% for ST, SC & OBC) & Rs. 30000/- (2% for General)	450/-	3 Months
4	Construction of Earth filling and Sand graveling from Akshay Mandal house to Dukhi Das house at Magurnari village Road under Magurnari VCDC.	5,00,000.00	5,00,000.00	5000/- (1% for ST, SC & OBC) & Rs. 6000/- (2% for General)	150/-	3 Months

Details NIT may be seen in all working days during office hours in the office of the undersigned. Tender papers will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agent from 09.05.2025 to 29.05.2025 in the office of the undersigned on payment of cost of Tender paper in the form of demand draft/Fixed deposit/Term deposit from any Nationalized Bank, duly pledged in favour of Principal Secretary, AWDCA, Guwahati, Assam payable at Guwahati.

Sd/-

Block Development Officer
Kokrajhar Development Block, Titagarri

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/309

QUOTE OF THE DAY

*Friends are the siblings God never gave us
-Mencius*

Taliban regime gaining support

Since 2021, seizing power yet again after a gap of 20 years, Afghanistan's Taliban rulers were termed as 'pariahs' and shunned by the international community, but recently the hard-line militants have notched up some big wins in their diplomatic efforts to forge international ties. Coming back to power in Afghanistan after a 20 years period, following the hasty withdrawal of American forces from the country, Afghanistan's Taliban rulers or the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is witnessing a renewed interest in the country. During the last four years, old friends like Pakistan have become foes and old foes like Russia have become friends, in a diplomatic teeter. Last week, India's special envoy for Afghanistan, Anand Prakash was in Kabul for talks with senior Taliban leaders on boosting political and trade links. Meanwhile, a Taliban delegation was in talks with Uzbek Foreign Minister Bakhtiyor Saidov in Tashkent to talk about a proposed trans-Afghan rail link. Except China, no other country has formally recognised the Taliban regime, yet. The militant rulers have been broadly criticised for widespread human rights violations, particularly against women and girls. But things are moving toward in Taliban's favour in international circles. China became the first country to accept a Taliban-appointed ambassador in January 2024. It has been edging talks forward on infrastructure and investment as part of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Russia's Special Representative for Afghanistan recently announced that Moscow is prepared to collaborate with the Taliban in combating the Islamic State (ISIS) affiliate in Afghanistan, known as ISIS-Khorasan. Russia has been targeted by several ISIS-related attacks in recent months, with the deadliest being a shooting at a concert hall near Moscow in March 2024, which resulted in the deaths of 145 people. These incidents have prompted Russia to increase its focus on counterterrorism efforts, both domestically and internationally. Russian officials have repeatedly expressed their readiness to cooperate with the Taliban in various sectors, signalling a shift in Moscow's approach to Afghanistan. Notably, Russia recently removed the Taliban from its list of terrorist organisations, a significant step that further indicates the Kremlin's willingness to engage with the Taliban, despite not officially recognising the group as Afghanistan's legitimate government. Russia has also been seeking to develop economic interests in Afghanistan, especially in the mining and energy sectors. It did, in fact, kept its embassy in Kabul open, merely downgrading it in name after the Taliban seized power.

Taliban's relations with its southern neighbour are currently strained, as Islamabad accuses the Taliban of sheltering militants from Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). It says its army had killed 54 fighters "trying to infiltrate" across the border on April 27. In fact, right after the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, tensions have been high on both sides on the border issue. Pakistan has deported some 100,000 Afghan refugees in recent weeks, accusing them of being linked to terrorism and drug smuggling. These tensions give an added security dynamic to India's attempts to warm ties with Afghanistan, as it faces a stand-off with Pakistan following the deadly militant attack in Kashmir on April 22.

What is the Arakan Army doing in Bangladesh?

Several videos have surfaced on social media recently. The video and posts with photos in social media show that the rebel Arakan Army, which swept Rakhine State from the Myanmar military junta, were inside Bangladesh territory to celebrate South East Asia's most popular "Songkran Water Festival".

A thousand-year-old traditional water-sprinkling festival celebrating the Buddhist New Year is widely celebrated across South and Southeast Asia, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, parts of Northeast India and parts of Vietnam from April 11-15 and features a mix of traditional ceremonies and raucous water fights.

Songkran is recognised by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity, further highlighting its importance.

The festival draws hordes of tourists from around the world, eager to experience the vibrant atmosphere and water-splashing fun.

The festival is also organised by a visible Buddhist population of Marma and Rakhine ethnic communities in southeast Bangladesh bordering troubled Myanmar.

The Rohingya refugees are scared of the presence of the Arakan Army (AA). There are reasons for the Rohingyas who fled for safety and security, the "textbook ethnic cleansing" according to a probe report by the United Nations Human Rights Agency (OHCHR) published in Geneva.

Myanmar's treatment of its Muslim Rohingya minority appears to be a "textbook example" of ethnic cleansing, the top OHCHR official has said.

The 1.4 million refugees are languishing in squalid camps in Kutupalong, the world's largest refugee shelter. Almost one kilometre wide Naf river separates the two neighbours, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

When AA swept through the hills and forests, villages and towns, fighting against the brutal Myanmar military junta, the guerrillas also committed atrocities against the Rohingyas.

The Rohingyas, mostly Muslims, fled Myanmar after the 2017 state-sponsored genocide by Tatmadaw, the military force and paramilitary. The atrocities and persecution have caused a fresh influx of 113,000 Rohingyas to cross into Bangladesh, according to UN agencies in Cox's Bazar.

Mg Aung Hla Shwe, a concerned Rohingya refugee, posted a video on Facebook showing that the AA was very well inside Bangladesh. A less than a minute video on a festival ground where the flags of Bangladesh and United League of Arakan (ULA), a political wing of AA, were seen fluttering at Remakri Mukh, Bandarban district, near the Bangladesh-Myanmar border.

In another video posted on YouTube by a Rohingya refugee, the AA was dancing at the "Water Festival and Concert" and said the venue of the event is 10 km inside

Bangladesh. The video post argues that the event was held when the paramilitary Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) were spectators. No intervention from local authorities or border security forces is seen in the video.

A worried refugee writes: "Our so-called tiger 'BGB' is present there as spectators. Very Shocking!" "This is not just a festival—it looks like a show of force," one social media user posted. "How can a foreign armed group operate publicly inside our borders?"

The open display of the guerrillas with the logo on their uniform inside a sovereign state has sparked serious debate, especially as the AA continues to be accused by an international rights NGO, Fortify Rights, after an investigation of several accusations came to their attention. Fortify Rights lamented grave human rights violations against the Rohingya population in Rakhine State by the AA.

Those who are concerned about security have termed the video "deeply alarming," noting the strategic sensitivity of the Chitragong Hill Tracts (CHT) region. The incident has raised serious concerns over the state of border vigilance and oversight by the BGB.

"Allowing any armed group—especially one accused of ethnic cleansing and persecution—to parade logos inside a neighbouring country is unacceptable," said a regional security researcher. "This is a breach of sovereignty and an erosion of trust in border management."

The Government of Bangladesh has not issued an official statement.

However, government sources indicate that high-level discussions are underway regarding the footage and the broader implications for cross-border diplomacy and internal security. Public outrage continues to build, with citizens demanding a full investigation, stricter border control measures, and clear policies on the activities of foreign non-state actors within Bangladeshi territory. Rohingya community said: "We fled [from] them—now they're here?"

For Rohingya refugees temporarily residing in Bangladesh, the presence of AA members within the country has triggered fresh anxiety and fear. Many in the camps view the AA not only as a rebel force but as one of the primary perpetrators of current abuses in Maungdaw and Buthidaung. "We ran from them. Now we see them walking freely in Bangladesh while we remain locked in refugee camps," said a young Rohingya teacher from Camp 11.

"The AA has forcibly evicted our families, destroyed our villages, and imposed harsh restrictions. If they appear in Bangladesh without resistance, it puts us in danger," said a community elder from Camp 3. The government's indifference regarding the gringos

The open display of the guerrillas with the logo on their uniform inside a sovereign state has sparked serious debate, especially as the Arakan Army continues to be accused by an international rights NGO

from across the border on the Songkran festival with the Rakhine Buddhist community has a strong diplomatic and geo-political significance.

Recently, the UN Development Agency has released a report which paints a grave situation in the Rakhine state, which is experiencing a near famine and proposes that immediate food, medical aid and other essential needs urgent attention from the international aid agencies. The UNDP report states that Rakhine is on the verge of an unprecedented disaster due to a combination of in-

terlinked issues. Restrictions on goods entering Rakhine, both internationally and domestically, have led to a severe lack of income, hyperinflation, and significantly reduced domestic food production. Essential services and a social safety net are almost non-existent, leaving an already vulnerable population at risk of collapse in the coming months.

The report shows that Rakhine's economy has become almost dysfunctional. Critical sectors such as trade, agriculture, and construction are at a standstill. Export-oriented, agro-based livelihoods are disappearing as markets become inaccessible due to blockades by the junta.

UN warns that Rakhine faces the imminent threat of acute famine. The worst victims of a lack of food are millions of internally displaced persons (IDPs), including Rohingyas. Internal rice production is declining due to a lack of supplies of seeds, fertilisers, severe weather, and a rise in IDP who can no longer farm due to the civil war. The UNDP estimates that with the near-total halt of trade, over 2 million people are at risk of starvation.

When UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres visited the camps and had Iftar (food for breaking the fast in Ramadan) with the refugees, he told the Bangladesh author-

ities that a "humanitarian corridor" needed to be opened to reach the hungry people. The government has agreed in principle to the humanitarian corridor. In a series of parleys, the formalities and logistics are still being discussed with senior government bureaucrats, UN officials and the Bangladesh Army.

It is also reported that the United States Army Pacific (USARPAC) has been deployed for logistics at the humanitarian corridor at Silkhal, a small commercial river port.

Highly placed sources said that the mission is to support a US-backed proxy war in Rakhine State against the Myanmar military junta. The clandestine mission will provide weapons and training to AA and its ally, CNF (Chin National Front), battle-hardened guerrillas.

The deal brokered by the Americans would subsequently help repatriate a few hundred thousand Rohingyas, and they would return home and settle down. The international aid agencies would provide rehabilitation for Rohingya refugees.

Myanmar is staunchly anti-US and anti-West. This diplomacy has pushed Naypyidaw, the capital of Myanmar, to develop strategic and military alliances with China and Russia. On the other hand, America, the European Union, as well as the United Nations have imposed numerous economic and diplomatic sanctions against Myanmar's government, which has significantly broken the economic backbone of the country. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, head of the Myanmar military junta, is facing an international arrest warrant issued in November 2024 by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, Netherlands, for crimes against humanity committed against the Rohingya Muslims.

The primary objective of the US proxy war is to capture the most wanted war criminals, including General Hlaing and six other Myanmar senior military officials responsible for the genocide against the Rohingya people, to stand trial in the ICC. However, the political parties, right, left, and Islamists have erupted in fury. They argued that the corridor was an excuse for the American troops to engage in a proxy war for which the country was not prepared.

To pacify the political parties, the government quickly said that nothing had been finalised regarding the humanitarian corridor. However, Khalilur Rahman, the government's adviser on Rohingya issues, told French news agency AFP that the government would be willing to provide logistic support should there be UN-led humanitarian support to the state of Rakhine. *(The author is an independent journalist based in Bangladesh, and a media rights defender with the Reporters Without Borders (@RSF.ORG). He is the recipient of Ashoka Fellowship and Hellman-Hammett Award. Twitter (X): @saleemsamad)*

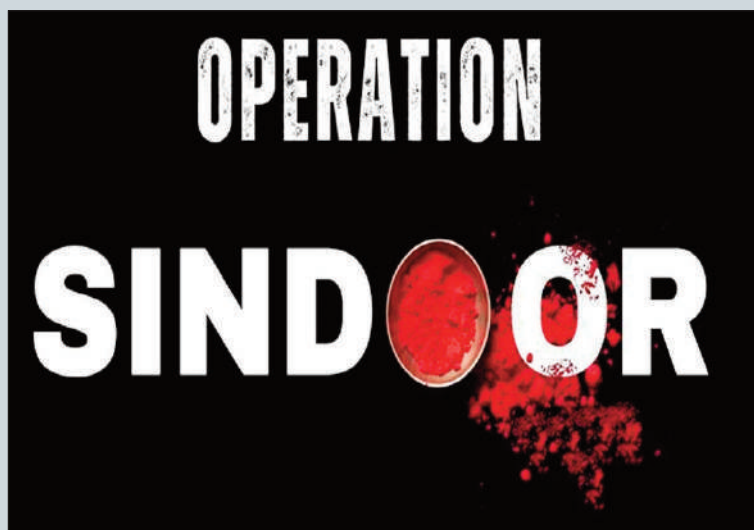
Operation Sindoor: Indian Forces avenge Pahalgam victims

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

On the morning of April 22, 2025, a shocking and brutal terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, sent ripples of grief and anger through the nation. A group of heavily armed militants targeted a group of Hindu pilgrims traveling through the picturesque town, killing 26 innocent civilians in cold blood. The terrorist group, believed to be linked to Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba, left behind devastation and horror. The attack was yet another chapter in the long-running saga of cross-border terrorism that has plagued India for decades, and it was clear that a decisive response was needed. Within days, the Indian government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi vowed to bring those responsible to justice. The response came in the form of Operation Sindoor, a carefully planned and executed military operation targeting terrorist camps across the border in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

The attack in Pahalgam marked a turning point in the fight against terrorism in the region. It was not just an attack on innocent civilians; it was an affront to India's sovereignty and national security. In the face of rising public outrage and political pressure, the Indian government's decision to strike back with military force was not only a matter of strategic importance but also one of national pride. Prime Minister Modi, in his address to the nation, made it clear that there would be no tolerance for those who seek to disrupt the peace and security of India. The message was unequivocal: terrorism would no longer go unanswered.

Operation Sindoor was launched in the early hours of May 7, 2025, under the cover of darkness. India's elite military forces, in coordination with intelligence agencies, meticulously identified nine key targets along the border in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. These targets were believed to be key hubs for militant groups operating in the region. The operation's objective was clear: to strike at the heart of the terrorist networks that had been responsible for numerous attacks on Indian soil over the years. The Indian Air Force, equipped with state-of-the-art Rafale fighter jets, was tasked with carrying out the strikes. The precision of the operation was of paramount importance, as India sought to minimize civilian casualties while delivering a powerful blow to the terrorist infra-



structure.

The nine sites targeted in the operation included training camps, arms depots, and communication hubs, all of which were linked to various Pakistan-based terror outfits, including Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed. The Indian government, while keeping the details of the operation under wraps, confirmed that the airstrikes had successfully neutralized all the targets. According to official sources, the airstrikes were carried out using advanced weapons systems such as the SCALP and AASM Hammer bombs, which are designed to ensure precision and minimize collateral damage. The Indian government maintained that the operation was a targeted strike against terrorists and not an attack on civilian infrastructure.

The strikes were quick, effective, and devastating. Within a span of 23 minutes, India's Rafale jets had destroyed the nine designated targets, sending shockwaves through the region. As expected, Pakistan's military responded immediately, issuing statements condemning the strikes and accusing India of violating international law. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan condemned the attack as an "act of aggression," while the Pakistani military claimed that several civilians had been killed in the airstrikes, including women and children. India, however, denied these allegations, asserting that the airstrikes were carried out with precision and that no civilian areas were intentionally targeted.

In the wake of the operation, there were reports of retaliatory mortar attacks along the Line of Control (LoC) from Pakistan's side. This exchange of fire, however, did not escalate into a

full-scale conflict. The situation remained tense, but both sides refrained from further military action. Internationally, the operation garnered widespread attention. While many nations, including the United States and Israel, expressed support for India's right to defend itself against terrorism, Pakistan sought diplomatic intervention. The United Nations called for restraint from both parties, urging them to avoid further escalation and to engage in dialogue to resolve the issue peacefully.

Back home, Operation Sindoor was met with widespread support. Indians across the country rallied behind their armed forces, applauding the government's decisive action. For the families of the Pahalgam victims, the operation was seen as a much-needed response to the horror they had endured. The attack had struck a deep chord with the Indian public, who demanded justice for the victims and accountability for the perpetrators. Operation Sindoor, in their eyes, was a necessary step in holding those responsible for the carnage to account. The Indian military's swift action sent a clear message that such attacks would no longer go unanswered.

However, not everyone was in full agreement with the operation. Some political leaders, particularly from opposition parties, voiced concerns over the potential for the operation to escalate into a larger conflict. While supporting the need for action against terrorism, they called for caution and urged the government to ensure that the situation did not spiral out of control. The opposition also questioned the long-term impact of military action on India's diplomatic relations with

Pakistan and the broader international community. Despite these reservations, the general consensus among the public and political leaders was that the operation had been a justified and necessary response to the growing threat of terrorism in the region.

The aftermath of Operation Sindoor saw a surge in anti-Pakistan sentiment within India. The operation had not only avenged the victims of the Pahalgam attack but also sent a strong signal to Pakistan that India would no longer tolerate cross-border terrorism. The government made it clear that it would continue to take strong action against terrorist groups operating in the region and that Pakistan would have to bear the consequences of harboring such elements. The message was clear: India would use all available means to protect its citizens from the scourge of terrorism.

On the international stage, the operation brought India's growing military prowess into focus. The successful execution of Operation Sindoor demonstrated the Indian military's ability to carry out complex and precise operations deep inside enemy territory. It also highlighted the increasing sophistication of India's defense capabilities, particularly in the realm of airpower. While Operation Sindoor was a success, it was also a reminder of the fragile nature of peace in the region. Despite the military success, the situation between India and Pakistan remains volatile, and the threat of further terrorism is ever-present.

In conclusion, Operation Sindoor was a significant and necessary step in India's ongoing battle against terrorism. It was a response to the horrific attack in Pahalgam that claimed the lives of innocent civilians, and it sent a strong message to terrorist groups that India would not hesitate to use its military strength to protect its people. The operation was a calculated and well-executed strike against terror infrastructure, designed to minimize civilian casualties while delivering a powerful blow to the militants. While the operation has been praised for its precision and effectiveness, it also raises questions about the long-term consequences of military action in a region where peace remains elusive. The future of India-Pakistan relations and the ongoing fight against terrorism will continue to be shaped by the events of Operation Sindoor. *(The writer can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com or 8486400157, 9864539966)*

POST BAG

What impact will the Pahalgam terrorist attack have on India?

Sir/Ma'am

It is widely known that Pakistan and terrorism are two sides of the same coin. Nearly every major terrorist attack that has taken place on Indian soil has had either direct or indirect involvement from Pakistan. The recent terrorist attack on April 22 in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, also shows evidence of Pakistani involvement, as confirmed by the Indian government, Indian Army, and intelligence agencies.

Whenever Pakistan's name is linked with a terrorist act in India, its usual reaction is to deny the allegations, which has become a routine response. However, the truth is revealed when individuals like Ajmal Kasab, a Pakistani terrorist, are captured alive by Indian security forces. The Pakistani military and government are well aware that they can never win a direct war against India — something they've already experienced in three past wars. Therefore, they have resorted to employing individuals to carry out terrorist operations against India.

These operatives periodically carry out small to large-scale terrorist attacks on Indian soil, following detailed strategies laid out by the Pakistani military and the groups they support. These groups don't limit themselves to physical attacks — they also spread misinformation and propaganda on social media. Such propaganda has the potential to lure a few individuals from Jammu and Kashmir into extremist ideologies.

The terrorist attack in Pahalgam was a well-planned operation. During the attack, terrorists asked victims about their religion, sparing only Muslims and killing people of other faiths. This detail reveals a deeper conspiracy. Furthermore, some individuals were deliberately spared and asked to inform India's Prime Minister about the massacre — indicating a strategic plan to amplify the message. A religiously diverse country like India, where people of all faiths live in harmony, is something Pakistan — a theocratic state — cannot accept. The hidden motive behind the Pahalgam attack was to trigger religious conflict within India, particularly between Hindus and Muslims. The terrorists intentionally spared Muslims while targeting people of other religions to create a rift between communities.

Pakistan knows that if such an incident occurs, Hindus across the country might begin to distrust and even hate Muslims, labeling them as supporters of terrorism. If the local perpetrators involved in the Pahalgam killings are caught or killed, it could lead to unrest in the region again, as seen in the past. People in Jammu and Kashmir might take to

the streets in protest and express sympathy for Pakistan, ultimately leading to communal tensions across India. The attack was executed with the help of Pakistan's military and terrorist organizations, clearly reflecting their ill intentions. However, Pakistan's obsession with disrupting India's unity also reveals its intellectual and strategic shortcomings. Once protests erupted across Jammu and Kashmir against the Pahalgam massacre, Pakistan realized that its plan had failed.

Even though Pakistan's plot could not disrupt India's unity or brotherhood, it has had a significant impact on the local population of Jammu and Kashmir. As a result of the attack, many tourist destinations in the region have been temporarily shut down. This is a serious blow to locals who depend on the tourism industry for their livelihood. The number of tourists in Jammu and Kashmir is rapidly declining, as people now seek safer travel alternatives. Even a temporary setback to tourism is a major loss for the region's economy. Pakistan has never wanted Jammu and Kashmir to progress — be it in education, economy, or politics. If the people of Jammu and Kashmir continue to advance, it will reduce the influence of Pakistani propaganda and discourage local youths from being misled. Eventually, it would become almost impossible for Pakistan to conduct terrorist activities on Indian soil.

Today, every conscious citizen in Jammu and Kashmir understands Pakistan's malicious intent. This awareness is evident in the massive public protests that erupted after the Pahalgam attack. Significantly, some local residents even put their lives at risk to protect tourists from the terrorists. In one such incident, a local man was shot point-blank by terrorists for saving tourists — a heroic act that symbolizes the growing resistance against terrorism. In conclusion, it's clear that no religion promotes terrorism. Rather, it is the product of individuals with twisted minds who misuse religion as a cover for violence. Realizing this, people from all communities in Jammu and Kashmir have come together, demanding justice for the victims and punishment for the attackers. This united stand sends a strong message to Pakistan: no matter how hard it tries, it cannot weaken India's spirit of unity and brotherhood. In fact, Pakistan's hateful actions only strengthen India's resolve.

Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and will always remain so. The recent public response makes it clear that its people reject terrorism and stand with India. Instead of the conflict-ridden image that Pakistan tries to portray to the world, the people of Jammu and Kashmir, with support from the Indian government, are working toward restoring peace and turning the region into a thriving tourist destination once again. May the people of Jammu and Kashmir continue on the path of self-reliance through tourism and development.

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Why terrorists target the innocent?

By: Satyabrata Borah

Terrorism, particularly the kind associated with groups operating out of Pakistan, often leaves people grappling with a haunting question: why would anyone target innocent lives? What could possibly be gained from such acts of violence? The reality is complex, and while these actions are indefensible, understanding the motives behind them can shed light on the broader dynamics at play. It's not about justifying the horror but about unraveling the intentions that drive these groups to commit atrocities. Their goals, though rooted in twisted logic, often revolve around creating fear, destabilizing societies, pushing ideological agendas, and asserting power in ways that ripple far beyond the immediate devastation.

At the heart of many terrorist acts is the desire to instill fear. When innocent people are targeted—whether in bustling markets, quiet villages, or crowded cities—the impact goes beyond the immediate loss of life. The randomness and brutality of these attacks are designed to make everyone feel vulnerable. A shopkeeper going about his day, a child playing in the street, or a family gathered for a meal could be caught in the crosshairs. This unpredictability breeds a sense of helplessness, making people question their safety in even the most mundane moments. For terrorists, this widespread anxiety is a form of control. If a society lives in constant fear, its people may lose trust in their government's ability to protect them, and that erosion of confidence is precisely what these groups aim for. A shaken populace is less likely to resist, more likely to feel defeated, and that's a victory in the eyes of those orchestrating the violence.

There's a broader goal of destabilizing the very fabric of a nation. Governments rely on order and trust to function effectively. When terrorist attacks strike, they expose vulnerabilities in security systems and sow doubts about a state's competence. A bomb in a public square or a coordinated assault on a community doesn't just claim lives—it disrupts the rhythm of daily life, strains resources, and forces authorities to divert attention to crisis management. Over time, repeated attacks can weaken a government's credibility, making it seem incapable of maintaining peace. For some terrorist groups, this is a deliberate strategy to undermine the state, create chaos, and carve out space for their own influence. In regions where governance is already fragile, this tactic can be especially effective, as it amplifies existing tensions and fuels distrust among communities.

The ideological dimension of these acts can't be ignored either. Many terrorist groups operating in or from Pakistan cloak their actions in the language of religion or rigid belief systems. They claim to be fighting for a higher cause, whether it's enforcing their interpretation of faith or challenging what they see as moral corruption. By targeting civilians, they aim to send a message: anyone who doesn't align with their worldview is a legitimate target. This isn't just about violence for violence's sake—it's about projecting power and rallying support among those who might share their ideology. For some, the spectacle of destruction is a recruitment tool, a way to attract disillusioned individuals who feel marginalized or angry at the world. The more dramatic and shocking the attack, the more it resonates with those already on the fringes, drawing them into the fold of extremism.

There's also an international angle to consider. Terrorist attacks often make headlines far beyond the borders of the country where they occur. A single act of violence can dominate global news cycles, putting the perpetrators' cause—however warped—on the world stage. This kind of attention can serve multiple purposes. For one, it amplifies the group's visibility, making them seem more powerful than they might actually be. A small outfit with limited resources can appear as a formidable threat when their actions are broadcast world-



The ideological dimension of these acts can't be ignored either. Many terrorist groups operating in or from Pakistan cloak their actions in the language of religion or rigid belief systems. They claim to be fighting for a higher cause, whether it's enforcing their interpretation of faith or challenging what they see as moral corruption

wide. Additionally, international outrage or fear can influence foreign policy, strain diplomatic relations, or even provoke military responses, which some groups use to further their narrative of victimhood or resistance. By drawing the world's gaze, they ensure their agenda remains in the spotlight, even if it's for all the wrong reasons.

Economic disruption is another key motive. When terrorists strike, the ripple effects can cripple local and national economies. Markets shut down, tourism grinds to a halt, and infrastructure like roads, schools, or hospitals may be damaged or destroyed. The cost of rebuilding, coupled with the loss of productivity, places a heavy burden on governments already stretched thin. In developing nations, where resources are scarce, these attacks can have a devastating long-term impact. Businesses close, jobs disappear, and communities struggle to recover. For terrorists, this economic strain is a way to weaken their adversaries indirectly. A government preoccupied with repairing damage and restoring stability has less capacity to pursue the groups responsible, giving them room to regroup and plan further attacks.

Then there's the element of revenge or retribution. Some attacks are framed as responses to perceived injustices—whether it's military operations against militant strongholds, cultural differences, or historical grievances. By targeting civilians, terrorists aim to inflict pain on the broader society they blame for their struggles. It's a perverse way of settling scores, one that disregards the humanity of their victims. In some cases, these acts are also about asserting dominance over specific groups, whether based on ethnicity, religion,

or political affiliation. The message is clear: we can strike you anywhere, anytime, and there's nothing you can do about it. This show of force is meant to intimidate and suppress opposition, ensuring the group's influence endures.

It's worth noting that these motives often intertwine, creating a vicious cycle. An attack designed to sow fear might also destabilize a government, draw international attention, and serve as a rallying cry for recruits—all at once. The complexity of these goals makes terrorism particularly difficult to combat. It's not just about stopping the immediate violence but addressing the conditions that allow these groups to thrive. Poverty, lack of education, political corruption, and social alienation can create fertile ground for extremist ideologies to take root. When people feel they have no stake in society, they're more susceptible to the promises of groups offering purpose, even if that purpose is destructive.

Yet, for all their calculated aims, the gains terrorists seek are fleeting at best. The devastation they cause often backfires, alienating the very communities they claim to represent. When innocent lives are taken, the public's outrage tends to unify people against the perpetrators, strengthening resolve rather than breaking it. Governments, while initially shaken, often respond with heightened security measures and international cooperation to dismantle terrorist networks. The ideological victories terrorists hope for rarely materialize—most people, regardless of faith or culture, reject the senseless slaughter of civilians. Over time, these groups risk becoming pariahs, shunned even by those who might have once sympathized with their cause.

The human cost of these acts is staggering, and no amount of strategic reasoning can erase the pain they inflict. Families are torn apart, communities shattered, and entire generations left to grapple with trauma. The "benefits" terrorists pursue—fear, chaos, attention—come at the expense of countless lives and offer no lasting triumph. Their actions breed resentment, not loyalty, and their legacy is one of destruction rather than progress. In the end, the question of what they gain is overshadowed by what everyone else loses: the sense of safety, the trust in humanity, and the hope for a peaceful future.

Understanding these motives doesn't make the violence any less horrific, but it does highlight the need for a multifaceted response. Military action alone isn't enough—addressing the root causes, from economic inequality to ideological extremism, is critical. Education, community engagement, and international collaboration can help dismantle the narratives that fuel terrorism. By denying these groups the fear, chaos, and attention they crave, societies can begin to reclaim the peace that's been stolen. It's a long road, but one worth traveling for the sake of those who've suffered and for the generations yet to come.

Attari: At the crossroads of history and hostility

By: Dipak Kurmi

The name Attari, meaning "elevated place" in Punjabi, conjures more than just an image of a sleepy border village. Perched just 28 kilometers from Amritsar and 22 kilometers from Lahore, Attari stands as a powerful testament to the tumultuous relationship between India and Pakistan. Alongside its counterpart Wagah across the Radcliffe Line, it has been a witness to Partition, wars, diplomacy, terror, and trade. Today, in the grim aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack—which stained the meadows of Kashmir with the blood of innocent tourists—the reverberations are being keenly felt at this historic frontier, once again thrust into the center of a gathering storm.

The Attari-Wagah corridor is not just a trade route, but a deep symbolic artery connecting two nations torn apart by history, yet bound by shared culture and lingering memories. In the immediate wake of the Pahalgam tragedy, India suspended all trade activity across the border. Pakistani nationals began queuing anxiously to return home before Indian deadlines came into effect, and Pakistan, in turn, retaliated by suspending trade, even through third countries. It was a swift, inevitable sequence that underlined how security incidents far from the border could freeze the fragile bridges of commerce and contact built painstakingly over decades.

In the collective imagination, Attari-Wagah is most famous for its daily retreat ceremony—a spectacle that is part military drill, part theatre, part catharsis. Every evening, thousands gather to watch soldiers from India's Border Security Force and Pakistan's Rangers engage in an elaborate, synchronised display of national pride, aggression, and discipline. Moments of camaraderie such as exchanging sweets on Eid or Diwali mingle with times when ceremonies turn stonier, depending on political moods. Yet even amid conflict, this ritual has endured—an emblem of rivalry that has, paradoxically, kept a sliver of dialogue alive.

Even though India and Pakistan fought full-scale wars in 1965 and 1971, the Attari-Wagah post remained largely free from violent incidents. An exception was the suicide bombing in 2014, when over 60 lives were lost on the Pakistani side, a grim reminder that even ceremonial spaces are vulnerable to terror. The barbed-wire fencing that now stretches across the International Border, completed in the early 1990s, has made crossings formal and rigid, but Attari has retained its special status—an axis where geopolitics and human emotion collide.

Trade once flowed freely through Attari. Veteran importer B.K. Bajaj recalls a time when merchandise from both sides was carried by porters across the border and then reloaded onto trucks. The customs operation was modest, a relic of a less rigid time, until it was upgraded to an Integrated Check Post (ICP) in 2012 with an investment of ₹150 crore. The sprawling 120-acre facility, managed by the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI), was a symbol of hope—hope that trade could transcend enmity.

At its peak, over 200 trucks would cross daily, carrying goods ranging from dry fruits to textiles. Imports were sourced not just from Pakistan but Afghanistan as well. Yet, the cycle of hope and disappointment has been relentless. Following the 2019 Pulwama attack, India hiked customs duties on Pakistani imports by a staggering 200%, and by August that year, Islamabad, incensed by India's revocation of Article 370, suspended trade ties altogether. Exports that had touched ₹3,052 crore in 2012-13 plummeted to just ₹737 crore by 2018-19, a testament to how political tensions can gut economic aspirations.

Figures like Rajdeep Singh Uppal, who pioneered the export of fresh produce through the Attari route in the early 2000s, have seen it all. His company's first truckload of tomatoes to Lahore seemed then to be the first green shoots of peace. Now, with imports from Afghanistan also threatened after Pahalgam, traders like him stand firmly with New Delhi's hard line, even as their own businesses face uncertainty.

Afghanistan, it should be noted, had become a major source of imports through Attari, with over ₹3,700 crore worth of merchandise arriving in 2023-24 alone—figs, saffron, pomegranates, spices, and more. Yet with the closure of trade routes, even this fragile success story is under threat, tightening the economic noose on border communities who depend on the ICP for their livelihoods.

Attari is not just about commerce; it is also about the deeper, more human project of connection. The land route and railway station at Attari have served as channels for Track II diplomacy—unofficial but significant people-to-people engagements. The "Sada-e-Sarhad" (Call of the Frontier) Delhi-Lahore bus, launched in 1999 after Prime Minister Vajpayee's historic visit, was a powerful symbol of hope. Later, the "Punjab" and "Dosti" buses connected Amritsar to Nankana Sahib and Lahore, respectively, under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's watch.

Similarly, the Samjhauta Express and Thar Express once ferried passengers, including Sikh pilgrims visiting shrines in Pakistan and Pakistani citizens travelling for religious pilgrimage to Ajmer Sharif in India. These services, though, have remained suspended since August 2019. Rail cargo too, once a lifeline for cross-border trade, lies idle. Even cricket, a sport that has often served as a diplomatic ice-breaker, saw thousands cross Attari to watch India-Pakistan matches—only to have this spirit soured by security concerns and vanishing fans.

Local memories in Attari are woven with these alternating threads of opportunity and betrayal. Porters like Gursar Singh recall how the 2019 trade suspension rendered over 5,000 villagers jobless overnight, forcing many to migrate to distant cities in search of work. Now, even the limited Afghan trade that provided a lifeline is at risk. Hawkers like Maninder Singh and Prince Singh, selling tricolour souvenirs to daily visitors at the retreat ceremony, have seen crowds swell to over 20,000 daily—a small balm on their economic wounds, yet no substitute for lost livelihoods.

Yet there is an acceptance, almost a fatalistic stoicism, among Attari's villagers. They have endured wars, witnessed Partition, and seen countless cycles of hope dashed against the rocks of geopolitics. Few were surprised by the Indian government's swift, stern response to Pahalgam. Most see it not with anger or despair, but with weary recognition—an understanding that the border they live beside is a wound too deep for quick healing.

Even the daily retreat ceremony, that dramatic performance of martial rivalry, has its own layered meaning. First initiated jointly in 1947 by Brigadier Mohinder Singh Chopra of India and Brigadier Nazir Ahmed of Pakistan, the ceremony became a daily fixture by 1959. It has since become a global tourist attraction, yet beneath the theatrics lies a shared cultural legacy—a reminder that however fierce the hostilities, the two nations are tied by blood, language, music, and memory.

In many ways, Attari's story is South Asia's story. It is about how borders harden, but hearts remember. It is about how trade can offer peace, but politics often pulls it away. It is about how ordinary people, striving for livelihoods and dignity, bear the brunt of decisions made in distant capitals.

Today, as Pahalgam's pain echoes in Attari's silence, it is clear that the border remains as much a psychological frontier as a physical one. In a region where tragedy often begets tragedy, where retaliation can seem the only language understood, Attari stands as a solemn reminder of what is at stake. It tells us that history is not just past; it is present and pressing. And that every escalation, every act of terror, draws the future further out of reach.

Attari's tryst with destiny continues, caught forever between the memory of what was and the uncertainty of what will be. In the face of fresh bloodshed and rising hostility, it holds up a mirror to the subcontinent—forcing us to confront not just the enemy across the fence, but the battles within our own souls. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

India's manufacturing push worries China amid US courtship

By: Kalpit A Mankar

While visiting India in April 2025, the United States (US) Vice-President J. D. Vance pitched for better bilateral ties and a greater stake for New Delhi in America's manufacturing economy. The visit has given a new fillip to bilateral trade negotiations and defence cooperation. Vance also proposed the co-production of munitions, the joint-autonomous systems industry alliance, and the development of maritime systems. Vance referred to the intention of 'hostile powers' to dominate the Indo-Pacific in a reference to China.

Amid US President Donald Trump's tariff onslaught against China, the Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal has put the onus on Beijing for distorted labour models, hidden subsidies, and unfair trade practices. Goyal also contrasted China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with the India-Middle East Economic Corridor (IMEC), stating that the latter does not violate the sovereignty of nations and territorial integrity. The IMEC blueprint envisages a network of road, rail, and maritime links from India, Saudi Arabia, Europe, and beyond, connecting Asia to the West. New Delhi's stand on China's BRI has been consistently in opposition, considering the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) runs through Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK), which India claims belongs to an undivided Jammu and Kashmir.

Beijing sees these assertions as a convergence of Washington and New Delhi's interests. This has spurred Chinese commentators to assess the evolving nature of India-US relations under Trump 2.0 and Modi 3.0 administrations.

Chinese commentators highlight Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar's front-row seating at Trump's inauguration and Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi's Washington visit in February 2025 as evidence of brewing bonhomie. Nonetheless, they also note the 'irritants' such

as Trump calling out India over high tariffs shortly. Vance is derisively referred to as 'India's son-in-law'. Mandarin-language writing claims that America's goodwill towards India is primarily on account of getting inexpensive labour, its large consumer market, and its utility in containing China.

The aforementioned Chinese commentaries frame soft power as the basis of the US-India friendship. They propound that this soft power rests on the appeal of—immigration, technology jobs, the success of Indian-Americans, the dominance of the English language, Western funding of Indian think-tanks, US investment in Indian media outlets, and India-China tensions. However, there is a view that this soft power has limitations, given the issue of immigration that has become politically contentious in Washington. There is a foreboding that the soft-power quotient may not last in the face of the US tightening its immigration policy, and Trump's rightwing constituency demonising immigrants from India.

China perceives a sense of schadenfreude in New Delhi in the contretemps between Beijing and Washington. India has been trying to develop manufacturing capabilities lately, but China links it to Trump's tariff war against Beijing during his first term. Its strategists feel that India was keen to benefit from this rupture in Sino-American ties and tried to revitalise the 'Make-in-India' campaign to improve manufacturing potential. According to the evidence, Chinese writings point to media reports that the Indian government had decided to earmark land parcels twice the size of Luxembourg in different states to house industrial units. This initiative was prompted by corporate houses voicing concerns about the protracted nature of land acquisition. But Beijing saw ulterior designs in New Delhi's wooing of large multinational companies with offers of business-friendly policies.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, China shut down factories to stop the contagion, which resulted in shortages and price-gouging. In turn, India launched the 'Aatma-Nirbhar' campaign, which Beijing interpreted as a move to shift industrial supply chains away from it. Chinese writing says that India saw this period and the opportunities it offered as comparable to China's industrialisation efforts between the 1980s and 1990s. Cut to the current tariff war under Trump 2.0, Chinese commentators say that India again sees this as a 'once-in-a-life-



time' opportunity to relocate international production and supply chains and pursue industrialisation. As a result of this sustained effort by New Delhi, China evaluates that India's industrial potential shows the characteristics of 'dian zhuang tupo' [点状突破] or 'point-like breakthroughs', essentially implying progress

in foundational manufacturing of toys and smartphones. Trump singling out China paves the way for relatively lower levies on India, and there is a growing belief that India will leverage this situation to its advantage.

In 2024, investment proposals from certain Chinese companies in electronics manufacturing received approval. In some cases, investment proposals involving Indian companies partnered with Chinese firms holding minority stakes, Taiwanese firms listed in Hong Kong, or Taipei-based companies backed by Hong Kong investors received clearances. The government panel scrutinising the joint ventures had set conditionalities on value addition. Another rider reported that Chinese nationals would be debarred from holding key positions in joint-venture companies, or the foreign company cleared to operate in India. Thus, the approach of joint ventures has become a key economic security feature. Beijing commentators fear Chinese companies will be 'strong-armed' to enter joint

ventures with lower equity stakes with Indian firms, enabling the latter to acquire technology with little effort. Chinese writers also point to Beijing and New Delhi's divergent development paths. They see fundamental strength in China concentrating on mastering core technologies, cultivating local

leading enterprises like Huawei, BYD, and ByteDance, and cutting through the US technological blockade by developing domestic intellectual property. India's supposed obsession with the 'prosperity of Silicon Valley outsourcing' is a flaw, say Chinese strategists, and could lead to the nation coming under the US technological hegemony.

Beijing's strategists are wary of the growing India-US ties in light of its tariff war with Washington. China sees India's approach as keen to benefit from the 'current chaos' and 'collapse of global order' by sealing trade deals with the US and developed economies. There is a feeling that the trade deals will come at the expense of China's interests, and to promote manufacturing initiatives like 'Make-in-India' to provide a fillip to India's growth story. It sees New Delhi as keen to profit from the flux in the global order to achieve its objective of becoming a great power.

Beijing perceives that the nature of the US-India cooperation is aimed at China and seeks to disadvantage Russia. China's strategists argue that Washington's defence strategy is to enhance New Delhi's military capabilities by selling the US armaments and stymying cooperation with Moscow. They also see Trump's intent to sell crude oil and gas to prise India apart from Moscow, warning India must remain vigilant and not become 'Asia's Ukraine'.

In conclusion, China's economic woes, compounded by Trump's tariff war, and the growing India-US relationship have heightened Beijing's insecurity. Chinese strategists believe that India's rise will come at China's expense. The question that now remains is how this sentiment can impact the nascent India-China normalisation, given that there is a perception among China's strategic community that New Delhi could be incentivised to join other countries to balance China. Thus, China could prefer to keep the border issue alive as a leverage one way or another. (Courtesy: ORF)



Polo ground

By: Nani Kojin

I have always been a late riser due to my profession, waiting for phone calls from my news section/room for consultation or discussion till late at night. This became a routine since I entered in the field of Journalism.

Very interestingly and to my pleasant surprise, since last couple of days, some kind of blessing has been showered upon me, making me wake up early in the morning once at around 3AM and next at 5 AM every day. I pondered upon this new occurrence and concluded that something good must be happening to me. So, I decided to go for morning walk.

So, the next day I got up at 5 AM, finished my morning routine and, to the surprise of some of my friends who know me for being a late riser, I headed out for a walk by daring to face the foul smell of waste products heaped up on the roadside and smoke emanating from burning of such waste.

The moment I entered D-Sector, Naharlagun, just after crossing the "Hathi Matha" point, I heard a loud cry, seemingly of a woman. I took it casually, assuming that it might be "subha subha" argument in someone's house.

For few days, whenever I entered this area in D-Sector, I was greeted with the same clear and loud cry every time.

Of course, I am not supposed to interfere in someone else's personal affairs, but then I thought that I should at least go and check for myself. As I went towards the source of the sound, I reached a park called "Polo Park" in Naharlagun, which was once a very beautifully managed park. I was welcomed with the stench of garbage.

Overlooking the stench I proceeded. But I could not find the source of the sound coming from any of the nearby houses. Interestingly, the sound was coming from Polo Park itself. I thought some miscreants were misbehaving

with lady visitors. So I decided to go and check what was happening because if someone was actually misbehaving with a lady, I could not overlook it.

I made up my mind that whatever may be, I should see and if situation demands, I shall help her. So, I entered the park. To my utter surprise, it was a beautiful young lady who was crying sitting alone, whom I had met several times many years ago. I was dumbfounded. I could not understand why she was crying alone in such desperation.

There were many people, men and women, old and young, who were jogging, walking, running, exercising, playing football, cricket and doing yoga etc. It seemed none of them had taken notice of her sorrow.

As I approached her, she noticed me and somehow controlled herself for a moment and welcomed me to the park. I asked, "Why are you crying beautiful lady?" Please stop crying. If I can do anything to help you, I will be very pleased."

Somehow, she controlled herself and asked me if I could spare some time and lend her a patient hearing, as she had few problems to share. I agreed and asked her to please go ahead. She wiped her tears and confided in me that once upon a time she used to be a very beautiful and charming lady; adored by every visitors.

She said, "In those days, many visitors used to visit us and they loved and appreciated us for our beauty and charm. Unlike now, I wasn't alone in those days and had many beautiful companions by my side like deer, bears, colorful birds, varieties of monkeys and snakes, and many others. Once those loving friends were shifted to their better sweet home called the Zoological Park at Itanagar, I was left out here all alone. I thought I would be looked after well for a long time. But I was ignored and uncared for.

Instead of taking care of me, I was

Meeting Madam Polo

attacked. They cut me on the head, neck, arms and no part of my body was spared. My entire body was covered with wounds and cut marks. It felt like the sky had befallen upon me. Thus, I looked like a rugged old woman surrounded by littered waste materials of all sorts thrown everywhere around me.

Some years back, people from Itanagar Smart City Development Corporation Ltd. along with forest officials visited me and saw my condition. They had mercy on me. They washed, cleaned and gave me good treatment. Thus, I survived. But one thing that bothers me is the uneven high rise RCC stairs and footpath laid in RCC and tiles which is not senior citizen friendly. In some places, it bends towards left and in some towards right. However, I am happy that the Smart City Development Corporation people came and put "Lal Tikka" on me that you people refer to as "Synthetic EPDM rubber" footpath. It is very senior citizen and child friendly. Also, I was very happy because they constructed retaining wall around my body to secure me from dangerous local invaders."

Then I said to her, "now that so many things have changed and you are taken care of, you should be very happy and content. But why are you still sad and crying in agony?"

She lamented, "Uncle, you may not be aware of the fact that I have been attacked several times in the past by local invaders. And it is very likely to happen again. So, I keep crying out loud in hopes that someone like you will hear my cries and help me pass on my message to Smart City, Itanagar. Few months back, rain came and washed away a portion of my feet because concerned authority did not complete the construction of retaining wall. I am worried that very soon the local invaders will be encroaching in my area, initially by constructing a pig sty or "Kacha Ghar". Gradually, turning them into a concrete jungle."

She continued, "Once, I heard a group of people talking. Some of them were neatly dressed in suits and some were roughly dressed. They were discussing something. One gentleman dressed in suit and tie sitting on a bench said that he grew up in a village in the jungle. He said that he had enough of the jungle life and wanted to come out of it. He proudly said that now he lives in Itanagar and he does not care about conservation of trees. He cut down many trees; sold it, cleared jungles, occupied the land and constructed huge RCC buildings. Now, I am living in concrete jungle!

Then another roughly dressed gentleman who was standing facing towards the well dressed people sitting on the bench added, "While we don't have money like you, we also cut down the beautiful and ever fruit bearing trees and cleared the plot, occupied it and thereafter we sold it to people like you. We have sold many such plots to

garbage which I witnessed earlier was cleared and the park looked very fresh and beautiful. Here, I again met the charming and beautiful lady who looked at peace and was happy. She greeted me with a smile and said, "It seems that you have passed on the message to the Smart City people. Now, they have started the work of construct-

were kind enough to hear me out and pass on my plea to the concerned authority.

I believe that to maintain the ecological balance, we have to be very careful to preserve the green surroundings around us. We all have seen the impact of global warming and how it is affecting the people across the world. We all need modernity and urbanization but not at the cost of cutting down trees and putting garbage all across the city. Cleanliness is next to Godliness"

She retorted, "Uncle, we need active listeners like you to save this lone greenery across Naharlagun, which is the lung of the city. Trees and plants in urban environments improve the air quality by absorbing pollutants. Thus the phrase "greenery is the lung of the city" is a metaphor that highlights the vital role of trees and other vegetations in improving air quality and overall urban health. Green spaces help filter pollutants, release oxygen, and regulate temperature, making them essential for a healthy and livable urban environment.

I hope that you keep coming to visit me in the morning in the future so that I can share and update you of the happenings around me."

I was really happy that finally she was not crying and was smiling and I also heaved a sigh of relief that her sorrows will be lessened from now on and she will be taken care of. I bid her adieu with the promise of meeting her on my morning walks in the coming days. (The author is Editor, Arunachal Front)



Before

earn money to sustain ourselves. But none of our friends became rich like you.

Hearing such nonsense gossips, I felt very irritated. I thought to myself, how difficult it is to maintain the ecological balance? People with such mentality will never spare any part of my body. The thought itself agonized and horrified me. So, I have been thinking about it day and night, and that is the reason I have been crying all along.

So Uncle, I sincerely request you to please help my voice reach the Itanagar Smart City Development Corporation Ltd. or the Forest Department for my protection."

I assured her that even if I am not able to do anything, but for sure I will help to get across your feeling of agony and fear to the concerned authorities. But we have to wait for the right time and that is to approach them during the working season. If we do it in any other time, they will say that working season is over.

Thereafter, she breathed a sigh of relief and with a grateful heart, bid me farewell, and disappeared into thin air.

Recently, I went for another morning walk at 5 AM to "Polo Park" and was surprised to see that the stench of

ing the retaining wall, a part of which was washed by the rain earlier and I was crying because of that. I am really grateful that I met you that day and you



After

Continuous crackdown on drug trafficking under Operation Dawn 2.0

Five arrested, over 140 grams of heroin seized in Banderdewa and Naharlagun

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 8: In a major breakthrough under Operation Dawn 2.0, police teams from Naharlagun and Banderdewa Police Stations carried out two successive anti-drug operations on May 7, resulting in the arrest of five individuals and the seizure of over 140 grams of suspected heroin, along with vehicles used in trafficking.

In the first operation, acting on intelligence inputs, a team from Naharlagun PS led by Inspector Krishnendu Dev (OC, Naharlagun PS), assisted by SI Sunny Hodong, SI Vivek Linggi, HCP. Tari, HC K. Samyur, Ct. D. Borah, Ct. Nogam Hai, Ct. Likha Akin, and Ct. T. Dawa, conducted a raid in Prem Nagar, Naharlagun. The team apprehended one drug peddler, Md. Sariful Islam (36) of Bihpuria, Assam, and seized 37 vials of suspected heroin weighing 48.7 grams.

Following disclosures made during interrogation, the team intercepted Md. Shaik Farid (24) of Lakhimpur and Md. Ashraf Islam (23) of Laluk, Assam, at Kankarnallah after a brief chase and physical confrontation. An additional 24 grams of suspected heroin concealed in two soap cases and a Bajaj motorcycle (Reg. No. AS-07Z-6671) used for transportation were recovered. A case was registered at Naharlagun PS under Case No. 62/2025 U/S 21(b)/29 of the NDPS Act.

In a separate operation the same day, a special team from Banderdewa PS—comprising SI S.K. Singh, SI Sunny Salong, HC Phassang Guna, L/Ct. N.S. Chauhai, L/Ct. R. Devi, and a section of the 138 Bn CRPF—intercepted a Maruti SX4 (Reg. No. AS26-1427) at the Banderdewa Check Gate. The occupants, Miss Kirry Riba (23) of Nirjuli and Shri Techi Maj (27) of Lekhi, were apprehended. Upon search, conducted in the



presence of independent witnesses and as per legal procedures, the team recovered 66.75 grams of suspected heroin (10 vials) from Miss Riba. The vehicle was also seized. A case was registered at Banderdewa PS vide Case No. 41/2025 U/S 21(b) NDPS Act

R/W Section 3(5) BNS. Both operations were conducted under the direct supervision of SP Naharlagun Shri Mihin Gambo, IPS and SDPO Naharlagun Shri Rishi Longdo. Commending the team's efforts, SP Gambo reiterated the police's

zero-tolerance approach towards drug trafficking. "We are committed to shielding our youth from the menace of narcotics. Our focus remains firm on curbing drug peddling, both within the township and at critical interstate border points," he said.

DNGC observes 24th death anniversary of Lt Dera Natung



HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 8: Dera Natung Government College (DNGC) solemnly commemorated the 24th death anniversary of Lt Dera Natung, in a heartfelt tribute attended by students, faculty, and distinguished guests.

The event honoured the memory and enduring legacy of the revered leader, who made pivotal contributions to the development of Arunachal Pradesh.

Among the special guests were Lezen Gyadi, President of the All Nyishi Students' Union (ANSU) and a DNGC alumnus (2012–13), as well as a relative of Lt. Natung. He was joined by ANSU executive members. Also present was Sunita Natung, General Secretary of the ANSU Women's Wing and another relative of the late leader. Both participated in the floral tribute alongside other family members.

The commemoration commenced with a solemn ceremony at the DNGC campus. Attendees gathered at the statue of Lt Dera Natung to offer floral tributes and observe a moment of silence, reflecting on his life of service and sacrifice.

MQ Khan, Principal of DNGC, delivered a moving address, high-

Among the special guests were Lezen Gyadi, President of the All Nyishi Students' Union (ANSU) and a DNGC alumnus (2012–13), as well as a relative of Lt. Natung. He was joined by ANSU executive members. Also present was Sunita Natung, General Secretary of the ANSU Women's Wing and another relative of the late leader. Both participated in the floral tribute alongside other family members

lighting the multifaceted legacy of Lt. Natung. "Born to a humble family—Sepai Natung and Yache Natung—in Veo village of East Kameng District, Lt. Natung exemplified simplicity and high ideals," he said. "He was an alumnus of Sainik School, Imphal, and graduated with honours in Political Science from J.N. College, Pasighat, in 1984. He completed his post-graduation at Punjab University in 1986."

Khan recalled Natung's transition from student leader to states-

man, serving three consecutive terms as MLA from the 12th Pakke Kessang constituency beginning in 1999. He held key ministerial roles in sports and youth affairs, tourism, social welfare, art & culture, fisheries, education, and more.

He also spoke of the tragic helicopter crash near Bhalupong on May 8, 2001, which claimed Lt Natung's life while he was on a mission to survey sites for new educational institutions in the Bomdila-Tawang region.

"Lt Natung was not only a visionary leader but a compassionate human being whose commitment to education and social upliftment was transformative," said Dr. Khan. "In recognition of his contributions, this college was named after him on May 27, 2001. Let us honour his memory by continuing to serve society with the same passion and selflessness."

The event saw active participation from students, faculty, non-teaching staff, and NCC cadets of the college, including the CTO SW NCC DNGC. Attendees expressed pride in being part of an institution bearing the name of such a distinguished figure, reaffirming their commitment to uphold his values and carry forward his legacy.

'The Royals' a mix of modern-day 'Bridgerton', 'Schitt's Creek': Bhumi Pednekar

MUMBAI, May 8: Actor Bhumi Pednekar says her debut web series "The Royals" is a blend of modern-day "Bridgerton" and "Schitt's Creek", capturing the dysfunctional dynamics of a royal family with a touch of comedy and romance.

Billed as a modern-day rom-com, the Netflix show stars Ishaan Khatter as Aviraaj Singh, a reluctant new-age prince, and Pednekar as Sophia Shekhar, a self-made CEO of a start-up, who team up to transform the former's haveli into a luxury B&B experience. As their journey unfolds, viewers can expect a rollercoaster ride of romance, comedy and a whole lot of drama, reads the official synopsis.

"It is (like) a modern-day 'Bridgerton' because of the setting and the world that's been created, but definitely a bit of 'Schitt's Creek' because there's the royal family and the dysfunctionality and everything that happens with them.

"But I grew up reading 'Mills & Boon' (romance novels), and I'm a very, very big fan of it. This ('The Royals') is a very classic boy-girl romance. It's just that there's no damsel-in-distress. It's refreshing," Pednekar told PTI in an interview.

"Bridgerton" is a British costume drama set in the 19th century's regency era, whereas the Canadian show "Schitt's Creek" follows the trials and tribulations of the formerly wealthy Rose family. Both series are

available on Netflix.

"The Royals" is created by Rangita and Ishita Pritish Nandy and directed by Priyanka Ghose and Nupur Asthana.

While romance is at the core of "The Royals", the series ambitiously delves into larger themes such as privilege, power dynamics, and the complexities of contemporary life, including the entourage trend and the use of artificial intelligence (AI).

Calling AI a "disruptive" tool, Pednekar said one must use this technological innovation "responsibly".

"You can't use it (AI) for things like, 'Create an itinerary for me because I'm going on a holiday'. It's a powerful tool... It depends on how you're using it... When it comes to the cre-

ative field, I don't know what the future is going to be like because it's evolving so fast.

"I don't think it can bring the kind of human nuance and touch that somebody writing a script can, but I don't think we are far from that. What's also lacking is that we don't have laws protecting us. There are so many loopholes, you see deep fakes. Today, on Instagram, there are so many times that a lot of AI-generated content looks so real," the actor added.

"The Royals" also features Sakshi Tanwar, Nora Fatehi, Dino Morea, Milind Soman, Chunky Panday, Vihaan Samat, Kavya Trehan, Sumukhi Suresh, Udit Arora, Lisa Mishra and Luke Kenny. (PTI)



AICWA CALLS FOR PROBE INTO 'KANTARA' CREW MEMBER'S DEATH, MAKERS SAYS INCIDENT DIDN'T HAPPEN ON SET

NEW DELHI/UDUPI, May 8: A cine workers' association on Thursday called for an investigation into the death of a junior artist who allegedly drowned during the shoot of the upcoming film "Kantara: Chapter 1".

However, the makers of the movie denied the claim, stating the incident occurred during the artist's personal trip.

Meanwhile, police in Karnataka said a case of unnatural death has been registered at the Kollur police station and an investigation is underway.

The deceased, identified as MF Kapil, reportedly drowned in the Souparnika river near Kollur in Kundapur taluk of Udupi district during a lunch break on Wednesday late afternoon, police said, adding that the incident resulted in a "temporary halt" in the shooting.

According to police, Kapil entered the river for a swim when he was swept away by strong currents. A prompt search and rescue operation

was launched by the fire department and local authorities, and his body was recovered later that night.

In a statement on X, the All Indian Cine Workers Association (AICWA) expressed sorrow over the death of the junior artist, saying it is concerned that "incidents of fatalities on film sets are consistently misrepresented".

"In this latest tragedy, the claim of drowning needs to be thoroughly investigated to determine if it is the true cause of death or if there are other factors involved. AICWA urges the Honourable Chief Minister of Karnataka, Shri Siddaramaiah, to initiate a high-level, impartial investigation into the death of MF Kapil, ensuring justice for his family," the statement read.

The association further demanded that an FIR be filed against film's lead star Rishab Shetty and the production house, and appealed to the makers to provide financial compensation of Rs 1 crore to the family of the deceased. Later in the

day, "Kantara: Chapter 1" executive producer Adarsh JA said the team deeply regrets the "unfortunate incident" and rejected the reports that the accident did not take place on the sets of the film.

"In fact, there was no shooting scheduled on the day the incident occurred. The incident happened during his personal trip with friends. We request everyone to kindly avoid any speculation linking it to the film," Adarsh claimed in a statement.

"Kantara: Chapter 1", produced by Hombale Films, is the prequel to 2022's National Award-winning "Kantara" which brought national attention to coastal Karnataka's folklore and traditions. The film in the franchise was also written and fronted by Shetty.

The prequel of the Kannada language movie is slated to be released on October 2. (PTI)

Saif Ali Khan-Rani Mukerji's 'Hum Tum' set for re-release on May 16

MUMBAI, May 8 "Hum Tum", the 2004 romantic comedy starring Saif Ali Khan and Rani Mukerji, will return to Indian theatres for a second innings on May 16.

The announcement about the re-release of the movie was made by Khan's team.

"Hum Tum", written and directed by Kunal Kohli, was produced by Aditya Chopra under his banner Yash Raj Films. It is loosely based on the 1989 English film, "When Harry Met Sally".

It follows the love story between Karan Kapoor (Khan), a cartoonist, and Rhea Prakash (Mukerji), who cross paths on a flight. Though they don't connect at first, luck brings them together to kindle a romance.

The film received critical acclaim, especially for the performances of Khan and Mukerji, its music, and narrative, cementing its place as one of the most beloved romantic comedies in Hindi cinema.

"Hum Tum" also received several accolades, including the National Film Award for Best Actor for Khan in 2005. (PTI)



To play Mithya, I had to unlearn acting: Child actor Athish Shetty

BENGALURU, May 8: To play the character Mithya, which, incidentally, won him awards and accolades, child actor Athish Shetty said he had to "unlearn" everything he knew about acting after doing more than a dozen films.

"Mithya" directed by Suman Bhat, under the banner of Rakshith Shetty's Paramvah Studios, is now showing on Amazon Prime.

"Before 'Mithya', I was doing normal child characters you know, where you try to be cute, laugh a lot, cry every now and then. But Mithya was nothing like that, he was so silent he did not even cry although he was obviously sad that I couldn't understand him in the beginning," said Athish.

Athish, who is turning 15 soon, said he has been part of the entertainment industry "as long as he could remember".

"I must have been three or four when I first auditioned for a reality show for a TV channel in Mangaluru. Not only did I get through easily then, I also got the 'best performer of the week' for that show," added the child star, who has played bit roles in big budget films like 'Kantara', starring Risabh Shetty, and 'Vikrant Rona' starring Sudeep Kiccha.

His first fleshed out character came in a 2018 film, written and directed by Rishab Shetty 'Sarkaari Hiriyaa Praathamika Shaale, Kaasragodu, Koduge: Raamanna Rai' starring industry bigwigs like Anant Nag. The film that won the 66th National Film Awards for Best Children's Film, is about a Kannada medium government school in Kasargod of Kerala that sits on the border of Karnataka. Even in that film, said Athish, he played a "normal child character".

Nothing really prepared him for the titular role in 'Mithya', he said. "I think I am very lucky to have played Mithya," he added. He was only 11 or 12, when Bhat asked him to do a screen test, said Athish. "To tell the truth, my screen test was underwhelming. Sumanth sir persisted with me only because I worked previously in a web series produced by him," he said.

Bhat told PTI that there was something about Athish's screen presence that he decided to stick with him despite his lacklustre take of Mithya during the screen test.

"I knew that he would get into the character once I explained to him the nuances of being Mithya," said Bhat. Athish said the two-month workshop in Manipal that Bhat organised forever changed the concept of acting for him. "Sumanth sir was very thorough, he broke down Mithya's character in such minute detail that I understood where his angst and resentment could come from, even though as a person he is so different from me. I am not at all moody and I talk a lot. But I could understand why Mithya won't. This helped me a lot when I was shooting for the film," said Athish. "Mithya" is not an easy film: it ventures too close to reality for comfort. It tells the story of a boy struggling to come to terms with the deaths of his parents. For much of the film, we watch Athish's Mithya whittle away at his restlessness until he reaches the core of his resentment he blames his younger sister for triggering their parents' domestic discord. Athish said he also got lucky because Bhat eventually decided to let his younger brother Avish play his sister in the film. (PTI)



Satyajit Ray's 'Aranyer Din Ratri' set for screening at Cannes under Classics section

NEW DELHI, May 8: A 4K restored version of master filmmaker Satyajit Ray's 1970 film "Aranyer Din Ratri" will be screened at the 2025 Cannes Film Festival under the Classics section, the organisers said on Thursday.

Based on the novel of the same name by author Sunil Gangopadhyay, the Bengali-language film, titled "Days and Nights in the Forest" in English, featured an ensemble cast of Soumitra Chatterjee, Subendu Chatterjee, Samit Bhanja, Robi Ghosh, Aparna Sen, Sharmila Tagore and Simi Garewal.

The movie, which explored themes of alienation, class, and modernity, followed the story of four city-bred men who escape to the forests of Palamau for a carefree holiday, only to

undergo a journey of self-discovery. "Aranyer Din Ratri" is presented and restored by The Film Foundation's World Cinema Project at L'Imagine Ritrovata in collaboration with the Film Heritage Foundation (FHF), Janus Films, and the Criterion Collection. The funding was provided by the Golden Globe Foundation, a press release issued by the festival organisers said.

The 4K restoration was completed using the original camera and sound negative preserved by producer Purnima Dutta, who will attend the screening along with Tagore, Margaret Bodde, executive director of The Film Foundation, and FHF founder Shivendra Singh Dungarpur. The premiere of "Aranyer Din Ratri" will be presented by renowned Holly-

wood filmmaker Wes Anderson, a self-professed and long-time admirer of Ray.

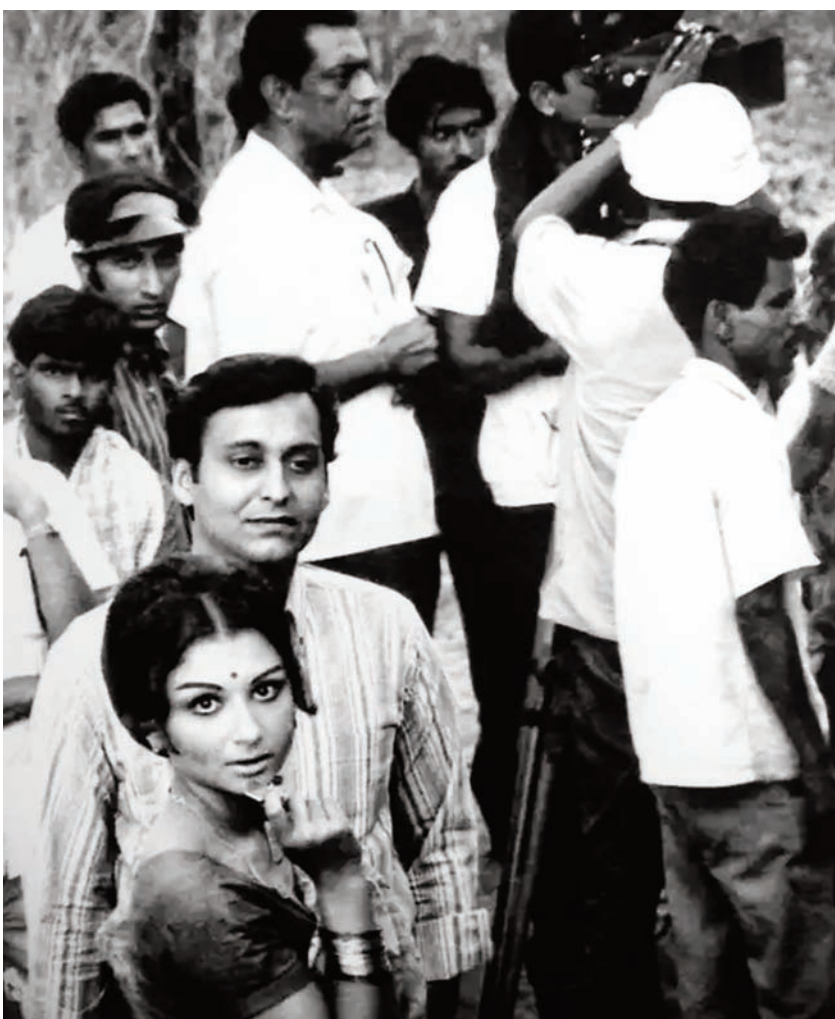
"Anything signed by Satyajit Ray must be cherished and preserved; but the nearly-forgotten 'Days and Nights in the Forest' is a special/particular gem... Made in 1970. Modern and novelistic. Ray worked in terrain perhaps more familiar to Cassavetes.

"A clash/negotiation between castes and sexes. Urbans and rurals. Selfish men and their hopes and cruelties and spectacular lack of wisdom. Women who see through them. The great Soumitra Chatterjee: lost but searching. The great Sharmila Tagore: mysterious, cerebral, mesmerizing. From the master, another masterpiece," Anderson said, as quoted by the FHF.

"Aranyer Din Ratri" had its world premiere at the 20th Berlin International Film Festival, where it was nominated for the top prize of Golden Bear for Best Film.

The Cannes Classics section will also screen Charlie Chaplin's "The Gold Rush" to celebrate the movie's centenary year. The film gala will also showcase Alejandro G Inárritu's "Amores Perros" to mark its 25th anniversary as well as Edward Yang's "Yi Yi" (2000), John Woo's "Hard Boiled" (1992), and Sri Lankan filmmaker Sumitra Peries' "Gehenu Lamai" (1978), and Marcel Pagnol's "Merlusse" (1935).

Last year, the 4K restored version of Shyam Benegal's "Manthan" (1976) was screened in the same section at the prestigious gala. (PTI)



PGA Championship sets the field for the second major of the year, Johnson gets a special invitation

NEW YORK, May 8: The PGA Championship released its field Tuesday for next week at Quail Hollow, leaning heavily on the top 100 in the world ranking and giving full consideration to players from the Saudi-funded LIV Golf League.

The PGA Championship tries to get the top 100 in the world ranking, which won't be the case because No. 24 Billy Horschel announced on social media he will have hip surgery next week.

The PGA Championship is May 15-18 at Quail Hollow in Charlotte, North Carolina. Xander Schauffele is the defending champion and Justin Thomas is the last PGA Championship winner at Quail Hollow in 2017.

LIV Golf will have 16 players in the 156-man field, the same number as last year. That includes John Catlin, a reserve who has played three LIV tournaments this year. He qualified through his Asian Tour performance. Dustin Johnson required a special invitation because the PGA takes the last five winners of the Masters, instead of a Masters champion getting a five-year exemption. Johnson won the Masters in November 2020 during rescheduling from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Among the LIV players getting a spot was Tom McKibbin of Northern Ireland, who joined the rival league this year. He is No. 115 in the world ranking. His lone victory was the European Open in Germany in 2023, and he spent only two weeks in the top 100 before joining LIV.

Also getting special invitations were Joaquin Niemann, a three-time winner on LIV this year, and Sergio Garcia. They were notified months ago. Patrick Reed sewed up his spot with his third-place finish in the Masters.

The PGA Championship does not have a specific category for the

top 100 in the world ranking. It's more an unwritten tradition to fit them under "special invitations." Unlike the U.S. Open and British Open, the PGA chose not to create a category for LIV. That's similar to the Masters, which can invite players through its special exemptions.

"That's what we have done the last three years and continue to do so," said Kerry Haigh, the championships director for the PGA of America. "We have that flexibility to be able to invite those players who are deserving from whichever tour."

The PGA of America takes the



top 70 from PGA points — a PGA Tour money list from the last 12 months — and then goes beyond that to fill the field. In this case, it did not go beyond the top 70, leaning more on the world ranking. The world ranking formula was changed in 2023 and is more heavily weighted toward PGA Tour events because of stronger fields. Patrick Fishburn was bumped out of the top 70 in PGA points the final week to No. 71. He also is No. 110 in the world. Fishburn winds up getting in with the Horschel withdrawal. Rico Hoey is the first alternate and likely to get in. The PGA is reserving two

spots for winners of the Trusti Championship and the Myrtle Beach Classic this week on the PGA Tour if they are not already eligible. In the Trusti Championship, a signature event in Philadelphia, Michael Thorbjornsen is the only player not yet eligible for Quail Hollow. The PGA Championship also offered an exemption to Rickie Fowler, who has plunged to No. 125 in the world. There is a category for players in the most recent Ryder Cup — Fowler was at Marco Simone in Italy — provided they are among the top 100 in the world. (AP)

Sans superstars, PSG reach Champions League final, to face Inter Milan for elusive title

PARIS, May 8: Paris Saint-Germain weathered one attack after another and showed remarkable adaptability Wednesday to hold off and defeat an inspired Arsenal 2-1 to reach the Champions League final and have another shot at the title it craves.

Deprived of the ball possession it usually enjoys, PSG looked shaky early on but found answers by relying on counter-attacks and goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma to advance 3-1 on aggregate.

PSG reached the final of Europe's elite tournament for just the second time in club history — it was runner-up five years ago — and did so in the first season following superstar Kylian Mbappé's departure to Real Madrid.

The big hole left by Mbappé was not filled by yet another superstar. It was a major change at a club where for more than a decade owners had spent lavishly to attract big names such as Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Lionel Messi and Neymar.

The club's new approach allowed coach Luis Enrique to build a rejuvenated, rock-solid side playing some of the best football in Europe.

"I said from the first day that our goal was to work hard enough to be in a position to make history — and that remains our goal," Enrique said. "To be the first to win the long-awaited trophy. This is a project that has evolved since last year, and I feel very comfortable



here as a coach because I have the freedom and support from the president to build what we want, adapting to the market to put together a team that improves every day."

The French club will try again for its first Champions League title when it faces Inter Milan on May 31 in Munich.

"We believe in our coach and

we believe in our players — in our talented, young, hungry players," PSG president Nasser al-Khelaifi told CBS Sports. "They fight for the team, they die for the jersey, that's the most important, for the city, for the club."

"There's still one match to go... we are not done."

Three-time European champion Inter defeated Barcelona 7-6 on

aggregate in one of the greatest semifinals in the competition's history. PSG, which eliminated Aston Villa and Liverpool before sending Arsenal home, had lost to Borussia Dortmund at this stage last year and was beaten by Bayern Munich in the 2020 final.

PSG broke the deadlock in the 27th minute from a set piece after the Arsenal defense cleared a free

kick toward the edge of the area. The ball bounced back into the path of Fabian Ruiz, who smashed a stunning half-volley into the back of the net.

Achraf Hakimi curled in a precise finish in the 72nd minute to make it 2-0 on the night before Bukayo Saka pulled one back for the Gunners. Arsenal had struggled early on last week in London — unable to cope with PSG's intensity in midfield — and lost 1-0. This time, boosted by the return of midfielder Thomas Partey, the Gunners mustered 61 attacks, compared to PSG's 26.

The visitors' dominance was quickly rewarded when Declan Rice rose high but missed his header, and Gabriel Martinelli saw his effort saved by Donnarumma.

Arsenal overwhelmed PSG on the flanks, and went close again in the eighth minute when Martin Ødegaard unleashed a low drive from outside the area that forced Donnarumma into another fine save.

PSG had little choice but to wait for chances on the counterattack, and they were few.

An opening finally came in the 17th minute. With some space on the left, Khvicha Kvaratskhelia came inside on his right foot and curled one of his trademark pinpoint shots that rattled the post.

PSG then failed to capitalize on a poor pass from William Saliba. But Désiré Doué could only fire a weak shot straight at Raya. (AP)

Rohit's aim is to win the 2027 ODI World Cup: Childhood coach Dinesh Lad



NEW DELHI, May 8: Rohit Sharma has quietly drawn the curtain on his Test career, but his story in Indian cricket is far from over.

In what could be the final chapter of a glittering career, the batting stalwart is now fully focused on the 50-over format and bringing glory to the country in the 2027 ODI World Cup, his childhood coach Dinesh Lad has said.

Rohit recently added the Champions Trophy to his cabinet to go with the T20 World Cup title India won under his captaincy last year as the veteran emerged as one of the most successful skippers the country has produced.

Lad feels Rohit would like to bow out on a high by winning the ODI World Cup, which has eluded India since 2011 when the team led by MS Dhoni lifted the trophy.

"His (Rohit's) aim is to win the 2027 ODI World Cup and then retire," Lad told PTI Videos on Wednesday.

"His target was the World Test Championship, but unfortunately we didn't qualify. Now, it's the 2027 World Cup... I also want him to win the 2027 World Cup and then retire," Lad added.

The 2027 Cricket World Cup is scheduled to be played in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia in October and November.

Rohit's glittering ODI career has seen him score more than 11,168 runs, including 32 centuries and a highest score of 264, making him one of the most dangerous 50-over batters in international cricket.

Lad said the Test retirement by the legend was a strategic shift to prolong his career.

"He didn't take it (decision to retire from Tests) in a hurry. He didn't want to play T20s post the World Cup (last year in the Americas) but it was his decision to play the other two formats. He must have thought well about what is best for him," said Lad.

"This decision has nothing to do with the upcoming tour to England," he added, when asked if Rohit wasn't confident of leading the side for the five-match away series beginning in June.

"The major thought would have been to give the next generation a chance, like he did just after the T20 World Cup last year," said Lad.

Lad also shared that Rohit's Test debut knock against the West Indies was his most memorable moment.

Rohit scored 177 runs against the West Indies at Kolkata in 2013.

"It was his debut Test hundred against the West Indies... it was the moment he knew he had arrived. It is my favourite Test knock of his," he said.

With Rohit potentially nearing the end of his international career, discussions around the future leadership have already begun. Lad backed the likes of Shubman Gill and KL Rahul to take over the baton.

"I can't say who will take what. It is the decision of the BCCI. But there are many who are ready for the captaincy. For example, Shubman Gill was made the vice-captain. KL Rahul is also a contender," he added. (PTI)

Azteca Stadium to reopen 75 days before start of the 2026 World Cup

MEXICO CITY, May 8: The revamped Azteca Stadium is scheduled to reopen 75 days before the start of the 2026 World Cup with improved services around it, Mexico City mayor Clara Brugada announced on Wednesday.

The iconic venue closed last May for renovations ahead of next year's 48-team competition hosted by Mexico, the United States and Canada.

The 83,000-seat Azteca, which recently was renamed, will host five games including the tournament opener. It also hosted the first matches in the 1971 and 1986 World Cups.

Brugada did not reveal further details regarding the re-opening of the stadium on March 28, 2026.

Stadium director Felix Aguirre said they are thinking long term.

"The stadium is moving ahead with its renovations so it can work for the next 40 or 50 years," he said. "We are respecting its legacy, but we also want to improve the fan experience."

The stadium owners, a company related to Televisa, Mexico's largest television network, have released images of work done on the pitch and the lower seats. The luxury boxes apparently haven't been touched because some owners refuse to release them to FIFA.

Brugada also said that for the 2026 World Cup, they are going to improve a light rail line that heads toward Azteca, will enhance outdoor lighting and a pedestrian bridge around

it among other things.

On game days, the Xochimilco Light Rail known as Tren Ligero is one of the fastest ways to reach the stadium, located south of the city, but it currently has 20 trains and the city's government will purchase 17 more.

"We will have around 40 trains to attend a daily requirement of over 400,000 passengers," Brugada said.

The current capacity of the trains is 160,000 passengers per day and the ride from Taxqueña station, the closest metro line, to the stadium is around 15 minutes with trains departing every 10 minutes.

Brugada said that with more trains the departures time will be shorter.

The mayor said they will be upgrading the city's video surveillance camera system for the tournament and adding 40,000 to have a total of 123,000.

Mexico City's video surveillance system is called the Command, Control, Computing, Communications, and Citizen contact center known as C5. Besides the cameras, the system has 1,000 panic buttons to enhance public safety.

"The video surveillance system put us in the forefront, we are the most video-monitored city in Latin America," Brugada said.

Brugada also informed that Los Pinos, which until 2018 was the Mexican president's official office and residence, will serve as the media center. (AP)

Barcelona must regroup after Inter loss to face Real Madrid in crucial La Liga clasico

BARCELONA, May 8: Barcelona must recover from its painful Champions League exit in time to face Real Madrid on Sunday with the La Liga title on the line. Flick's team was moments away from reaching its first European final in a decade when Inter Milan conjured a 4-3 extra-time comeback on Tuesday. The Italian side won 7-6 on aggregate in one of the most memorable knockout ties in recent soccer history.

Barcelona's youthful team was left reeling from the loss, but Flick immediately tried to put the focus on the upcoming clasico with only four days separating the two crucial games.

"This game is over and now we have to pick ourselves up and look ahead as we have the clasico coming up," Flick said after the defeat at San Siro. "I will wake the team up."

Barcelona leads Madrid by four points and a victory would give it a comfortable cushion, but a Madrid win would throw open the title chase in the three remaining rounds.

Barcelona is seeking a double after having beaten Madrid 3-2 in extra time in the Copa del Rey final two weeks ago. A Barcelona triumph would also complete a sweep of all four clasicos this season; it beat Madrid 5-2 in the Spanish Super Cup in January after winning 4-0 at Madrid in the league in October.

Madrid, in contrast, is trying to salvage a disappointing season by successfully defending its La Liga title ahead of this summer's expanded Club World Cup.

Madrid to field second unit in defense. The wear and tear of the season has taken its toll and left several players, especially in de-



fense, on the injured list.

Madrid will be without its entire first-choice backline of Antonio Rudiger, Eder Militao, Dani Carvajal and Ferland Mendy. Midfielder Eduardo Camavinga, who moonlights as a left back, is also out.

That means youth player Raül Asencio and midfielder Aurélien Tchouaméni will likely anchor Madrid's defense with Lucas Vázquez and Fran García as full backs. Barcelona is hoping left back Alejandro Balde will recover from a left-thigh injury that ruled him out of the series against Inter. Right back Jules Koundé, who netted the winner in the Copa del Rey final, has been ruled out by a left-thigh injury. Ronald Araújo, or perhaps Eric García, will take his place and face off against Madrid's Vinícius Júnior. Flick will have to decide if Robert Lewandowski or Ferran Torres starts at striker. Lewandowski missed several matches before he came on as a late substitute against Inter this week but was unable to prove ef-

fective.

Watch out for the midfield battle between Barcelona's Pedri González and Madrid's Jude Bellingham. The playmakers are critical to directing their teams' attacks. Bet on more goals. All three prior clasicos have been high scoring — at least for Barcelona with 12 total goals to Madrid's four, so expect more goals against the depleted defenses at the Olympic Stadium.

Led by Raphinha, Lamine Yamal and Lewandowski, Barcelona has a league-high 91 goals, compared to Madrid's 69. Both sides have conceded 33 goals this campaign.

Lewandowski leads the league with 25 goals. Madrid's Kylian Mbappé is right behind with 24. But while Yamal and Raphinha are having breakout seasons, Vinícius and Rodrigo have been inconsistent. With Barcelona ruling the statistics and recent meetings, Madrid will have to capitalize on its extra days of rest and hope that Barcelona's morale was damaged by Inter. (AP)

Indian women's football team to play Uzbekistan in two international friendlies

NEW DELHI, May 8: The Indian senior women's team will play two FIFA international friendly matches against Uzbekistan in the May/June window, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) said on Thursday.

The two matches against Uzbekistan will be played on May 30 and June 3 at the Padukone-Dravid Centre for Sports Excellence in Bengaluru.

The Blue Tigresses, coached by Crispin Chhetri, are preparing for the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026 Qualifiers, having begun their camp in Bengaluru on May 1.

India have been drawn in Group B, where they are set to face Mongolia (June 23), Iraq Timor-Leste (June 29), Iraq (July 2), and hosts Thailand (July 5), in Chiang Mai.

India, who are at 69th position in the FIFA Women's Rankings, have played Uzbekistan,

ranked 50th, on 13 occasions.

The White Wolves have come out victorious on nine occasions, while the Blue Tigresses have won one match. Three matches between the two sides have ended in draws.

FIFA Women's International Friendlies:
 May 30: India vs Uzbekistan; Padukone-Dravid CSE
 June 3: India vs Uzbekistan; Padukone-Dravid CSE
 India probabilities:
 Goalkeepers: Payal Basude, Elangbam Panthoi Chanu, Keisham Melody Chanu, Moirangthem Monalisha Devi.
 Defenders: Purnima Kumari, Phanjobam Nirmala Devi, Martina Thokchom, Shubhangi Singh, Sanju, Malati Munda, Toijam Thoibisana Chanu, Sorokhaibam Ranjana Chanu, Ngangbam Sweety Devi, Viksit Bara, Hemam Shilky Devi. (PTI)

