

Good News

Newly opened our Namsai Branch
Office: 2nd Mile, Namsai,
Arunachal Pradesh.
(M) 7002786249, 9612845442



26 YEARS OF DEDICATED JOURNALISM

www.thehillstimes.in

THE HILLS TIMES

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM GUWAHATI & DIPHU

Voice of the hills people

Vol .No. II

Issue No. 67

RNI-ASSEN/2023/86488

GUWAHATI, FRIDAY, MAY 9, 2025

PAGES 12

PRICE ₹ 8

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 Duliajan 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.

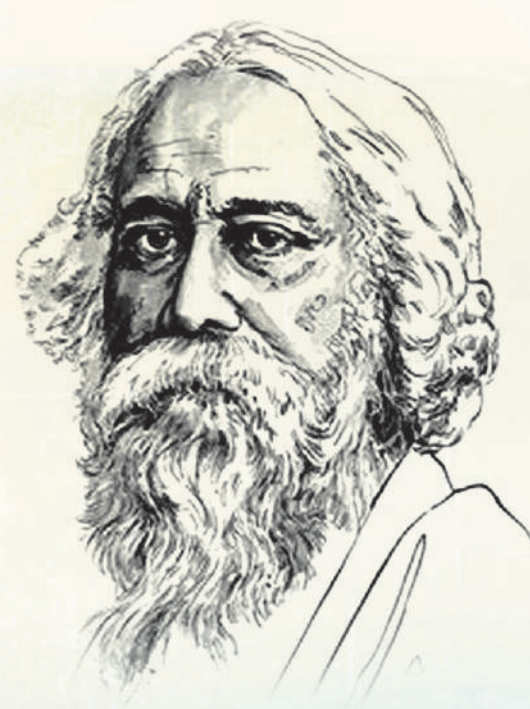
The main reasons for the pollution are untreated wastewater from unauthorised colonies and slum clusters and the poor quality of treated water from STPs and common effluent treatment plants (CETPs).

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 সশ্রদ্ধ প্ৰণাম জনালোঁ

৯ মে' ২০২৫

ড° হিমন্ত বিশ্ব শৰ্মা
মুখ্যমন্ত্রী, অসম

তথ্য আৰু জনসংযোগ সঞ্চালকালয়, অসমৰ দ্বাৰা প্ৰচাৰিত

Connect with us     @diprassam  dipr.assam.gov.in

অসম বাৰ্তা ছাবস্ক্ৰাইব কৰিবলৈ ৭৬৩৬৮৩৪৯৪৩ ত Assam লিখি বাটছপ কৰক

Stock markets fall in volatile trade on rising India-Pak tensions

MUMBAI, May 8: Benchmark Sensex declined by nearly 412 points in a volatile session on Thursday due to selling in banking, FMCG and auto shares triggered by escalating tensions between India and Pakistan.

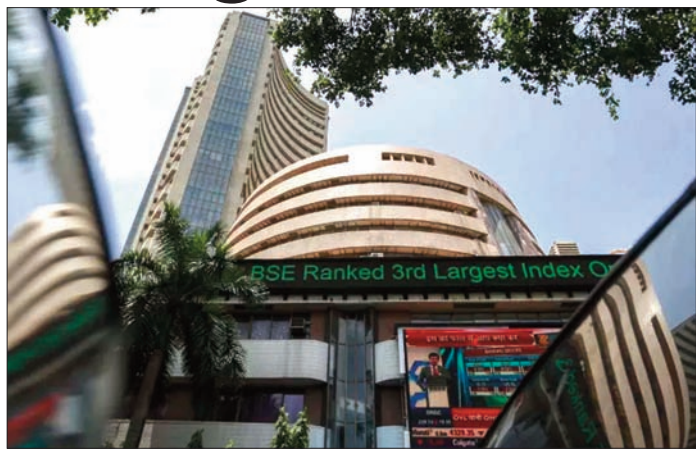
The 30-share Sensex declined by 411.97 points or 0.51 per cent to close at 80,334.81 with 23 of its constituents ending in the red. The index opened higher and traded in a range in the first half of the session. The index hit a high of 80,927.99 in late-morning deals.

However, the barometer lost momentum in the afternoon session as selling emerged in FMCG, auto, and select banking shares. It tanked 759.17 points or 0.94 per cent to hit a low of 79,987.61 in the pre-close session.

The NSE Nifty closed lower by 140.60 points or 0.58 per cent to 24,273.80. Intra-day, it fell 264.2 points or 1 per cent to 24,150.20.

Indian Armed forces foiled attempts by the Pakistani military to engage a number of military targets in Northern and Western India using drones and missiles last night and destroyed a Pakistani air defence system in Lahore, officials said on Thursday.

The Pakistani military attempted to target Awantipura, Srinagar, Jammu, Pathankot, Amritsar, Kapurthala, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Adampur, Bhatinda, Chandigarh, Nal, Phalodi, Uttarai, and Bhuj, they said. These were neutralised by the Integrated Counter Unmanned Aircraft System (Grid and Air Defence systems), the defence ministry said.



"Today morning Indian armed forces targeted air defence radars and systems at a number of locations in Pakistan. Indian response has been in the same domain with the same intensity as Pakistan," the ministry said in a readout.

"It has been reliably learnt that an air defence system at Lahore has been neutralised," it said.

In a strong retaliation to the Pahalgal massacre, India's armed forces early on Wednesday destroyed nine terror sites including that of Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) using deep strike missiles in a 25-minute-long "measured and non-escalatory" mission.

From the Sensex firms, Eternal, Mahindra & Mahindra, Maruti, Bajaj Finance, Tata Steel, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finserv, Asian Paints, Power Grid and State Bank of India were among the laggards. Kotak Mahindra Bank, Axis

Bank, Titan, HCL Tech, Tata Motors, Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services were the gainers.

The BSE midcap gauge dropped 1.90 per cent and smallcap index declined 1.05 per cent.

"The Indian equity market experienced profit-taking by the end of the trading day due to escalating tensions between India and Pakistan, marked by increased cross-border exchanges. "The FOMC policy meeting provided little reassurance, as the FED expressed concerns that aggressive US tariffs could fuel inflation and raise unemployment," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

However, the global market remains stable and positive, buoyed by expectations of an imminent US trade deal with the UK and preliminary indications of trade talks with China.

"Amid escalating tensions with Pakistan, Indian equity markets

ended lower on Thursday, with benchmarks slipping into the red after a volatile session," Vikram Kasat, Head - Advisory, PL Capital, said. Among sectoral indices, realty tanked 2.60 per cent, oil & gas (1.98 per cent), auto (1.92 per cent), power (1.86 per cent), utilities (1.85 per cent), commodities (1.67 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.58 per cent) and services (1.57 per cent).

IT and BSE Focused IT were the only gainers. As many as 2,548 stocks declined while 1,349 advanced and 135 remained unchanged on the BSE.

"Ongoing uncertainty continues to make traders cautious, potentially clouding the prevailing trend amid lingering geopolitical tensions," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹ 2,585.86 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled in the positive territory.

Markets in Europe were trading with gains. US markets ended higher on Wednesday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 1 per cent to USD 61.75 a barrel.

After gyrating between highs and lows during the day on Wednesday, the BSE benchmark ended 105.71 points or 0.13 per cent higher at 80,746.78. The 50-issue Nifty of NSE advanced by 34.80 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at 24,414.40. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Operation Sindoor on, Rajnath

Pakistani claim of downing Indian fighter jets and wondered if the government needed to counter such propaganda.

Gandhi and John Brittas of the CPI(M) suggested that a special session of Parliament should be convened, saying it would send out a message of united national resolve.

Singh said at least 100 people, including hardcore terrorists and their associates, were killed in the Indian strikes. A source quoted him as saying, "It is difficult to give an exact estimate as the operation is still ongoing and we are collating the details. India will give a befitting reply if Pakistan attacks."

The operation has achieved its intended objectives, the defence minister added.

Addressing reporters after the meeting, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said, "The discussions were conducted in a constructive and serious manner given the gravity of the issue at hand. The defence minister briefed all leaders in detail about Operation Sindoor. Each leader expressed their views with responsibility and maturity, recognising the major challenge the country is currently facing."

"Across party lines, political leaders said there is no place for politics in such critical times. All leaders unanimously congratulated our armed forces on the success of Operation Sindoor and assured their full support to the government, with no dissent whatsoever," he added.

The leaders shared their concerns on the issue of national security and the safety of all Indians, especially in border areas, but extended their support, Rijiju said. He quoted Singh as having said, "We do not do politics just for forming governments but also to build the nation."

Leaders from all political parties, including the Congress, AIMIM, Trinamool Congress (TMC), DMK, BJD and Janata Dal (United), extended full cooperation to the government on the issue of national security.

"The raksha mantri told the meeting that it was an ongoing operation and that is why he cannot share the technical details of Operation Sindoor," Rijiju said, adding that this was the reason why armed forces officials were not present at the meeting as they were busy with the operation.

Gandhi told reporters, "There are certain things that should not be discussed. Everyone simply gave their support."

The government informed the gathering that only terrorists camps and places harbouring terrorists were struck and all steps would be taken to ensure the safety of people, especially in border areas.

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi said he complimented the armed forces and the government for conducting Operation Sindoor.

"I also said that we should run an international campaign against The Resistance Front (a Lashkar-e-Taiba proxy) and the UN Security Council should designate it as a terror organisation. We also need to ask the United States to designate the TRF as a foreign terrorist organisation," he said.

The sources said Owaisi also raised the issue of online abuse aimed at Himanshi Narwal, wife of naval officer Vinay Narwal, who was one of the 26 people killed by terrorists in Pahalgal on April 22. Some opposition leaders called for taking all measures to ensure communal harmony.

BJD leader Sasmit Patra said his party "wholeheartedly commends the extraordinary courage, clinical precision and gallant professionalism of our armed forces in carrying out Operation Sindoor. We salute every officer, soldier, unit involved in this mission".

"We are united against the fight on terrorism from Pakistan. This is the need of the hour. We should fight shoulder to shoulder. There should be no division between us," TMC leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay said.

Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president J P Nadda attended the meeting.

The government had also convened an all-party meeting on April 24 to brief leaders on the Pahalgal attack. (PTI)

State schools to become 'Dream Hubs'

this could bridge the learning gap often seen in students from regional-language backgrounds.

Adding a unique dimension to the initiative, the government has announced a partnership with the National Stock Exchange (NSE) to offer skill development programs for school students. The collaboration is expected to introduce financial literacy, entrepreneurship training, and market-based skills into the school curriculum—equipping students with practical tools to navigate real-world challenges.

Sarma has described the effort as a reimagination of the traditional classroom, positioning state-run schools as spaces not just for academic instruction, but for nurturing ambition and capability. The "Dream Hub" initiative, they say, is a step toward building an education system that is inclusive, future-focused, and competitive on a national scale.

India foils Pak attempts

Ludhiana, Adampur, Bhatinda, Chandigarh, Nal, Phalodi, Uttarai, and Bhuj.

"These attempts were neutralised by the Integrated Counter Unmanned Aircraft System (Grid and Air Defence systems)," it said. The S-400 air defence systems were deployed to counter the attacks in northern India.

The statement said the debris of these attacks is now being recovered from a number of locations that prove the Pakistani strikes.

"It was also reiterated that any attack on military targets in India will invite a suitable response."

The statement further said that the armed forces targeted this morning air defence radars and systems at a number of locations in Pakistan. "Indian response has been in the same domain with the same intensity as Pakistan," the ministry said. "It has been reliably learnt that an air defence system at Lahore has been neutralised."

In Islamabad, Pakistan Army spokesman Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry claimed that drones launched by India were neutralised in Lahore, Gujranwala, Chakwal, Bahawalpur, Mian, Karachi, Chhor, Rawalpindi, and Attock. He said one drone crashed near Lahore and four soldiers sustained injuries as a result of the attack.

An official told PTI that at least four drones hit the Lahore cantonment area.

"So far, 25 Israeli-made Harop drones have been shot down by the Pakistani Army's soft kill (technical) and hard kill (weapons)," the Pakistani Army claimed in a statement.

In New Delhi, the MoD said Pakistan has increased the intensity of its unprovoked firing across the Line of Control (LoC) using mortars and heavy calibre artillery in areas in Kupwara, Baramulla, Uri, Poonch, Mendhar and Rajouri sectors in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Sixteen innocent lives have been lost, including three women and five children, due to Pakistani firing," the ministry said. Here too, India was compelled to respond to bring mortar and artillery fire from Pakistan to a halt, it added. "Indian Armed Forces reiterate their commitment to non-escalation, provided it is respected by the Pakistani military."

In a powerful retaliation to the Pahalgal massacre, Indian armed forces early Wednesday carried out the missile strikes on the terror targets including Bahawalpur, a stronghold of the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terror group. A total of 26 people, mostly terrorists, were killed in the Pahalgal attack on April 22.

At a meeting with visiting Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, External Affairs minister S Jaishankar said India has no intention to escalate the situation with Pakistan but if there are military attacks on the country, then it will be met with a "very" firm response.

At the all-party meeting, Minister Rajnath Singh is reported to have said that at least 100 people, including hardcore terrorists and their associates, were killed in the Indian strikes.

A source quoted Singh as saying, "It is difficult to give an exact estimate as the operation is still ongoing and we are collating the details. India will give a befitting reply if Pakistan attacks."

The operation has achieved its intended objectives, he added.

In his address at National Quality Conclave 2025, Singh said the Indian armed forces executed 'Operation Sindoor' with "unimaginable" precision. He again said that a "good number of terrorists" were killed in the mission but did not specify any number.

"The Armed Forces executed the operation without harming any innocent person and with minimum collateral damage, terming it as unimaginable and a matter of great pride for the nation."

At his media briefing, Misri said escalation started from that side (Pakistan) with the Pahalgal attack.

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

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

The retaliatory actions of Pakistan are impacting civilians, referring to firings along the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir, said Misri, flanked by Wing Commander Vyomika Singh and Colonel Sofia Qureshi.

Officials said the Pakistan Army continued shooting along the LoC in four sectors of J and K, prompting a befitting response by the Indian Army.

"On the intervening night of May 7 and 8, Pakistan Army resorted to unprovoked firing using small arms and artillery guns across the LoC in areas opposite Kupwara, Baramulla, Uri and Akhnoor sectors in J-K. The Indian Army responded proportionately," a defence spokesman said in Jammu.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a high-level meeting with secretaries of various ministries and called for continued alertness and clear communication, while reaffirming the government's commitment to national security and operational preparedness. The issues discussed during the meeting included strengthening of civil defence mechanisms, efforts to counter misinformation and fake news, and ensuring the security of critical infrastructure, a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said. Ministries were also advised to maintain close coordination with state authorities and ground-level institutions, it added.

As tensions escalated, US President Donald Trump asserted that he wants India and Pakistan to "stop" what he described as "tit for tat" actions, saying if he can do anything to "help", he will be there.

In Beijing, China urged India and Pakistan to exercise restraint and refrain from taking actions that may "further complicate" the situation, as it asked the two neighbours to act in the "larger interests of peace and stability". (PTI)

Night curfew clamped along

Line (International Border)". Movement of people intending to cross the international boundary, unauthorised procession or unlawful assembly of five or more people and carrying arms or other instruments which can be used as weapons in and around the India-Bangladesh Border were not allowed, according to the order.

A senior home department official said, "Security agencies have briefed Home Minister Prestone Tynsong that there is a likelihood of cross-border movement by members of militant groups, smugglers, and any other illegal activities at night, especially in areas along the unfenced sector."

Over 40 km of the total 444 km-long Meghalaya-Bangladesh border remained unfenced. (PTI)

Delhi's Yamuna-cleaning

cent of their capacity, treating just 2,777 MLD. The remaining sewage flows untreated into the Yamuna.

Of the treated water, only around 1,960 MLD meets the required quality standards, that is, the biological oxygen demand (BOD) and total suspended solids (TSS) levels should be below 10 milligrams per litre.

Narain said the Delhi government spent more than ₹ 6,856 crore on Yamuna-cleaning projects between 2017 and 2022. Despite this, the river remains polluted and dirty. Cleaning the Yamuna will take more than just money. It needs a new and improved plan, she said. For areas not connected to the sewer system, Narain said the government does not need to invest in expensive pipelines, as managing faecal sludge through tankers is quicker and more affordable. She also said that STP standards should be set with water reuse in mind, as large investments needed to upgrade the plants to meet the stricter discharge standards delays the cleaning work.

The report called for a fresh plan for the Najafgarh and Shahdara drains, which together contribute 84 per cent of the river's pollution load in Delhi. (PTI)

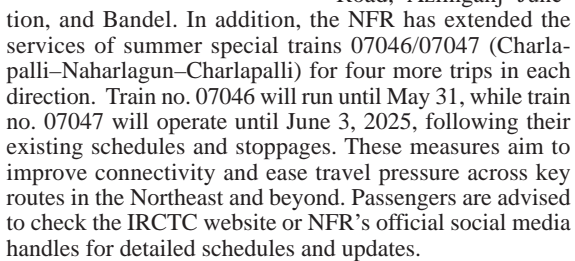
NFR announces special summer trains to ease travel rush

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 8: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) will operate a one-time special summer train between Howrah and New Jalpaiguri on May 10, 2025, to accommodate increased passenger traffic during the summer season.

According to an official statement, train no. 03039 will depart from Howrah at 12:10 a.m. on May 10 and reach New Jalpaiguri at 10:45 a.m. the same day.

The return train, no. 03040, will leave New Jalpaiguri at 12:45 p.m. and arrive in Howrah at 12:10 a.m. the following day. The 20-coach train will travel via Aluabari Road, Barsoi, Jangipur Road, Azimganj Junction, and Bandel. In addition, the NFR has extended the services of summer special trains 07046/07047 (Charlapalli-Naharlagun-Charlapalli) for four more trips in each direction. Train no. 07046 will run until May 31, while train no. 07047 will operate until June 3, 2025, following their existing schedules and stoppages. These measures aim to improve connectivity and ease travel pressure across key routes in the Northeast and beyond. Passengers are advised to check the IRCTC website or NFR's official social media handles for detailed schedules and updates.



Axis Bank honoured with Rotary CSR Award for education program

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 8: Axis Bank has been conferred with the "Rotary CSR Award 2025 for Community Involvement" in the Mega Enterprise category, in recognition of its education initiative in Nagaland.

The announcement was made in an official statement issued by the Bank.

The award, presented by Rotary International District 3131, acknowledged the bank's flagship initiative, the "Axis Dil Se - Capt Late N Kenguruse Maha Vir Chakra (MVC) Centre of Excellence" in Chieswema. The program, run in collaboration with Assam Rifles and the National Integrity and Educational Development Organization (NIEDO), aims to support meritorious students from the Northeast region through academic coaching, mentoring, and holistic support.

According to the statement, over 650 students have benefitted from the program so far, with 205 currently enrolled.

The Chieswema Centre is one of seven Centres of Excellence supported by Axis Bank in the Northeast, spanning states

such as Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Mizoram, Tripura, and another location in Nagaland.

The initiative is a joint effort involving Axis Bank, NIEDO, and Sector Assam Rifles/IGAR (N)/DGAR under the aegis of the Indian Army's Eastern Command.

Assam Rifles provides infrastructure and residential facilities, while NIEDO handles student outreach, selection, and training.

Speaking about the recognition, Vijay Mulbagal, Group Executive & Head - Wholesale Bank Coverage & Sustainability, Axis Bank, said the award reinforces the bank's commitment to supporting underprivileged communities.

He described the program as "a symbol of resilience, aspiration, and opportunity" for students from the region.

Launched in 2018 in Ladakh, Axis DilSe is one of the bank's flagship CSR programs under the education theme, focused on bridging educational gaps in remote and underserved areas across India, including the Northeast, Odisha, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh.

Equity investors' wealth decline by ₹ 5 lakh cr as markets fall in volatile trade

NEW DELHI, May 8: Investors' wealth declined by ₹ 5 lakh crore on Thursday as markets fell in a volatile session amid escalating tensions between India and Pakistan.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped by 411.97 points or 0.51 per cent to settle at 80,334.81 as the benchmark index lost momentum in the afternoon session despite a firm beginning. The benchmark tanked 759.17 points or 0.94 per cent to hit a low of 79,987.61 in the pre-close trade.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded by ₹ 5,00,037.74 crore to ₹ 4,18,50,596.04 crore (USD 4.93 trillion).

India on Thursday said it foiled Pakistan military's attempts to attack 15 places in northern and western India using missiles and drones, and destroyed a Pakistani air defence system in Lahore as tensions between the two sides mounted amid fears of a wider conflict.

The defence ministry said the Pakistani military attempted last night to target Awantipura, Srinagar, Jammu, Pathankot, Amritsar, Kapurthala, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Adampur, Bhatinda, Chandigarh, Nal, Phalodi, Uttarai, and Bhuj.

These attempts were neutralised by the Integrated Counter Unmanned Aircraft System (Grid and Air Defence systems), it said.

The Pakistani attempt came after Indian armed forces early Wednesday carried out missile strikes on nine terror targets in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Pakistan under 'Operation Sindoor'.

"Benchmark indices closed sharply lower on Thursday amid escalating tensions with the neighbouring country. Market traded in a narrow range till noon, before plunging lower on reports of further escalation in the tensions," Satish Chandra Aluri, Analyst, Lemonn Markets Desk, said. (PTI)

LOST

I, Mr. Longsing Timung son of Shri Rasen Timung resident of Chipphongkimi, Diphu lost my original HSSLC Admit Car bearing Roll 0370 No. 20466, Session 2023-24. The finders may contact : 9101729083

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER
PWD (R&B)
HILLS, ASSAM, DIPHU
No. ACEH/CH/Sainik School/15/2024-25/04 Dated Diphu the 3rd May 2025
CANCELLATION NOTICE
It is for information to all concerned that the Tender invited vide this Office Press Notice No. ACEH/CH/Sainik School/15/2024-25/03 Dated 19/03/2025 for the works "Construction of Sainik School at Langvoku, Karbi Anglong" has been cancelled as per instructed by the higher authority of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu until further order due to technical reason.
Sd/-
(Sakti Nath Jigdung)
Addl. Chief Engineer, PWD, (R&B)
Hills, Assam, Diphu
Memo No. ACEH/CH/Sainik School/15/2024-25/04-A
Dated Diphu the 3rd May 2025

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION AND
PUBLIC RELATIONS (HILLS)
KARBIANGLONG DIPHU
No. KAD-1/DDIPR/Estt-1/2022/122 Dated Diphu the 7th May, 2025
NOTICE
It is for information to all concerned applicants that the Written Examination for the selection of 2 (two) LDA posts under the Information and Public Relations Department, Karbi Anglong, Diphu, is scheduled to be held on Sunday, 18th May, 2025, from 11:00 AM to 12:00 Noon at Govt. Boy's Higher Secondary School, Diphu, Karbi Anglong. No TA/DA is admissible.
Sd/-
Deputy Director of Information and Public Relations (Hills), Karbi Anglong, Diphu

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.

Bishnu Jaina for world peace at KPM Hall

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, May 8: The three-day Bishnu Jaina performance for world peace in KPM Hall premises here, organised by Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal in association with the followers of Sanantan Dharma, came to an end today with the termination of purnahuti, ashidrabadharan and nirmali-pradan. The Jaina began on Tuesday following hoisting of the Dharmadwaja by Kamaleswar Saikari, Sangha Salak, Sivasagar Sangha. Hundreds of devotees offered aahuties in the Jaina over the three days while twelve Rihitwicks chanted Veda-mantras from Yajurveda.

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 ex-parte, 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@guahati.ac.in.

Margherita celebrates World Red Cross Day with unity and compassion



HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, May 8: In a heartwarming 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 Hiralal Kerketta house to Manik house at Magurmari village road under Magurmari VCD.	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 Dalabari VCD.	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 Dhaniguri VCD.	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 Magurmari village Road under Magurmari VCD.	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, Titaguri

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

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 Chittagong 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 Bangladesh 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 Rohingyas 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)*

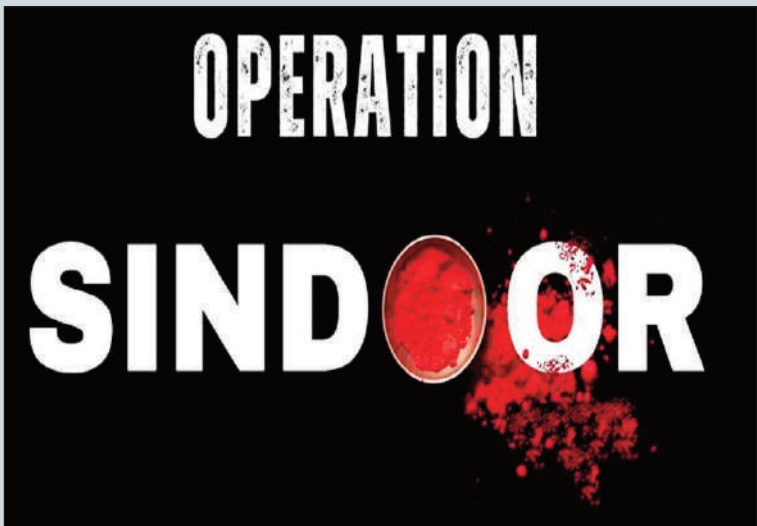
Operation Sindoor: Indian Forces avenge Pahalgam victims

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 infrastruc-



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)*

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.

Deborshi Gautam
Bangora, Nalburi
gautamdeborshi@gmail.com

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 create 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 "Punj-aab" 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 Gursheer 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 Mankikar

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 barred 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 stymieing cooperation with Moscow. They also see Trump's intent to sell crude oil and gas to prize 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)

UK Parliament debates India-Pakistan conflict, appeals for de-escalation

LONDON, May 8: The rising tensions between India and Pakistan in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack and Op Sindoor targeting terror camps in PoK was debated at length in the British Parliament, with members across parties appealing for UK efforts to aid de-escalation in the region.

India launched Operation Sindoor early Wednesday, hitting nine terror targets in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Pakistan's Punjab province in retaliation for the April 22 terror attack that killed 26 people in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam.

UK Foreign Office Minister Hamish Falconer opened the debate in the House of Commons on Wednesday with a statement reiterating Prime Minister Keir Starmer's earlier remarks over the importance of diplomacy and dialogue.

He also expressed concerns related to the very "personal" aspect of the conflict for a large number of British Indians and British Pakistanis in the country. "Our consistent message to both India and Pakistan has been to show restraint. They need to engage in dialogue to find a swift, diplomatic path forward," said Falconer.

"The UK has a close and unique relationship with both countries. It is heartbreaking to see civilian lives being lost. If this escalates further, nobody wins. We clearly condemned the horrific terrorist at-



tack last month," he said referring to the Pahalgam terror attack and said it was the worst such attack for many years for that region.

"Now, we need all sides to focus urgently on the steps needed to restore regional stability and ensure the protection of civilians," Falconer said.

He asserted that the UK will continue to work closely with international partners in pursuit of "short-term de-escalation and longer-term stability". "We now need to see calm heads. Britain will continue to play its full part for de-escalation and diplomacy," he said.

UK shadow foreign secretary Priti Patel highlighted India's right to take "reasonable and proportionate" steps to defend itself, and to dismantle the "vile terrorist infra-

structure" that has caused death and continues to threaten Indian security.

"Terrorists based in Pakistan threaten India and western interests — it was the country that Osama bin Laden was hiding in — and because of the long history of violence being inflicted by terrorists on India, the UK has in place long-standing security cooperation agreements with India," noted the British Indian MP. She went on to question if Britain could offer specific support that might help avert escalation and also asked for the government's assessment of who carried out the terror attack in Kashmir on April 22.

"I can confirm that I have had extended discussions with my Pakistani counterparts about the terror-

ist threats within Pakistan and the efforts that need to be made to address that. That is a terrorist threat that affects Pakistan itself, which, even in recent months, has suffered significant terrorist attacks," minister Falconer responded.

India-born Labour MP Jas Athwal addressed the Commons on a personal note, highlighting that his parents were born in Pakistan. "I know only too well that neither nation will take a backward step, so what can the minister do to assure me and my residents in Ilford South that we will do everything possible to bring both the superpowers to the negotiating table to restore peace to this volatile part of the world," he asked.

Conservative Party MP Bob Blackman called for terrorist bases to be removed "once and for all" from Pakistan.

"It was made clear at the time by India that either Pakistan removes the terrorist spaces along the line of control, or India would remove them... nine sites were hit; Those were terrorist bases where terrorists were being trained to commit further atrocities in India," he said.

A number of Pakistani-origin British MPs also intervened to condemn the "massive escalation" and a real threat of war between the two nuclear powers.

"It is important that the House remains focused on the importance of de-escalation," the minister stressed. (PTI)

US and UK expected to announce a trade deal that Trump says will cement their relationship

WASHINGTON, May 8: The United States and Britain are expected to announce a trade deal on Thursday that will lower the burden of President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs and deliver a political victory for U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

Trump posted on his Truth Social platform that a deal due to be announced at 10 a.m. EDT (1400 GMT) will be a "full and comprehensive one that will cement the relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom for many years to come."

It's the first bilateral trade deal announced since Trump began slapping tariffs on U.S. trading partners. He said: "Many other deals, which are in serious stages of negotiation, to follow!"

Trump had late Wednesday said he would announce a "major trade deal" with a "big, highly respected country," which he did not identify.

Starmer's office said the prime minister would give an "update" about U.S. trade talks later Thursday. "As you know, talks with the U.S. have been ongoing and you'll hear more from me about that later today," Starmer said at a defense conference in London.

The president placed a 10 per cent tax on imports from Britain, as well as 25 per cent tariffs on autos, steel and aluminum on the premise that doing so would foster more factory jobs domestically.

A major goal of British negotiators has been to reduce or lift the U.S. import tax on U.K. cars and steel. The U.S. is the largest destination for British cars, accounting for more than a quarter of U.K. auto exports in 2024, according to the Office for National Statistics. Britain has also sought tariff exemptions for pharmaceuticals, while the U.S. wants greater access to the British market for agriculture products. Starmer's government has said it won't lower U.K. food standards to allow in chlorine-rinsed American chicken or hormone-treated beef.

The British government will see the deal as a vindication of Starmer's emollient approach to Trump, which has avoided direct confrontation or criticism. Unlike the European Union, Britain did not announce retaliatory tariffs on U.S. goods in response to Trump's import taxes. A trade deal with the United Kingdom would be symbolically important, and a re-



lief for British exporters. But an agreement would do little to address Trump's core concern about persistent trade deficits that prompted him to impose import taxes on countries around the world.

The U.S. ran a USD 11.9 billion trade surplus in goods with the U.K. last year, according to the Census Bureau. The USD 68 billion in goods that the U.S. imported from the U.K. last year accounted for just two per cent of all goods imported into the country.

The U.S. is much more important to the U.K. economy. It was Britain's biggest trading partner last year, according to government statistics, though the bulk of Britain's exports to the U.S. are services rather than goods. Trump has shown a desire to strike a trade agreement with the U.K. since it voted in 2016 to leave the European Union. Yet as recently as Tuesday, Trump showed no awareness of the possible terms of the deal when asked about its possibility.

"They're offering us concessions?" Trump told reporters. "I hope so... They do want to make a deal very badly." Trump has previously said that his leverage in talks would be U.S. consumers, but he appeared to suggest that the U.K. would also start buying more American-made goods.

"I think that the United Kingdom, like every other country, they want to ... go shopping in the United States of America," he said. A trade deal with the U.S. is one of several that Starmer's government is seeking to strike. On Tuesday, Britain and India announced a trade after three years of negotiations. (AP)

Bank of England cuts main interest rate by 0.25% to 4.25% in face of US tariff uncertainty

LONDON, May 8: The Bank of England cut its main interest rate by a quarter of a percentage point to 4.25 per cent amid concerns over the potential shock to global growth emanating from the tariff policies of the Trump administration.

The decision Thursday was widely expected, though there was an array of opinion on the nine-member Monetary Policy Committee, with two voting for a bigger half-point cut to four per cent, and two voting to hold rates.

Bank Governor Andrew Bailey said inflationary pressures have continued to ease, paving the way for the fourth quarter-point rate cut since August.

"The past few weeks have shown how unpredictable the global economy can be," he said. "That's why we need to stick to a gradual and careful approach to further rate cuts. Ensuring low and stable inflation is our top priority."

The decision is the first since President Donald Trump made his tariff announcement in early April. Though most tariffs were paused for 90 days following the ensuing market turmoil, including the 10 per cent baseline tariff applied to UK goods entering the US, the backdrop for the global economy

remains highly uncertain.

Some of that uncertainty, with regard to the British economy, could be lifted later Thursday when details of a trade deal between the US and the UK are announced. At the very least, they are expected to lower the tariff burden.

Trump posted on his Truth Social platform that a deal due to be announced at 10 a.m. EDT (1400 GMT) will be a "full and comprehensive one that will cement the relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom for many years to come."

Though the tariff burden may be eased, the biggest uncertainty facing the global economy is the potential for a US-China trade war, which would dampen economic growth everywhere. The rate cut comes despite expectations that inflation will rise further above the bank's 2 per cent target over coming months, from the current 2.6 per cent as a result of a raft of price increases in April, such as domestic energy and water bills, and firms passing on tax rises to consumers. "While headline inflation is expected to rise in the near-term, we do not expect that to persist," said Bailey, adding that it will be back around target in two years time. (AP)

South Korea says North Korea fired several missiles toward its eastern waters

SEOUL, May 8: North Korea on Thursday fired various types of short-range ballistic missiles into its eastern sea, South Korea's military said, adding to a run in military displays that raised animosities in the region.

South Korean military officials were analyzing whether the tests were linked to the North's weapons exports to Russia during its war in Ukraine.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said multiple missiles were launched from the area around the eastern port city of Wonsan from about 8:10 to 9:20 a.m., with the farthest travelling about 800 kilometres. It didn't immediately confirm the exact number of the missiles it detected.

Lee Sung Joon, spokesperson for the Joint Chiefs, said in a briefing the North Korean launches were possibly intended to test the performance of weapons it plans to export, as the country continues to send military equipment and troops to fuel Russia's warfighting against Ukraine.

Lee said the tests likely involved a short-range ballistic missile system launched from vehicles — possibly modelled after Russia's Iskander missile — and also large-caliber rocket artillery systems, which experts say blur the line between traditional artillery and ballistic systems due to their self-propulsion and guided flight.

The Joint Chiefs said South Korean and US intelligence authorities detected the launch preparations in ad-

vance and tracked the missiles after they were launched. The countries were sharing the launch information with Japan, the Joint Chiefs said. It issued a statement denouncing the launches as a "clear act of provocation" that threatens peace and stability in the region.

Japanese Defence Minister Gen Nakatani told reporters that none of the North Korean missiles reached Japan's exclusive economic zone and there was no damage to vessels or aircraft in the area. Nakatani said Japan's government "sternly protested and strongly condemned" the launches through the North Korean embassy in Beijing. It was the North's first known ballistic activity since March 10, when it fired several ballistic missiles hours after US and South Korean troops began an annual combined military exercise, and the country's sixth launch event of the year. Tensions on the Korean Peninsula have escalated in recent months as North Korean leader Kim Jong Un continues to accelerate the development of his nuclear and missile programme and supply weapons and troops to support Russia's war against Ukraine.

Thursday's launch came a day after North Korean state media said Kim urged munition workers to boost the production of artillery shells amid his deepening alignment with Moscow.

After denying its war involvement for months, North Korea last month confirmed for the first time that it had

sent combat troops to help Russia in recapturing parts of the Kursk region, which had fallen to a surprise Ukrainian incursion last year. Moscow also acknowledged the North Korean involvement, with Russian President Vladimir Putin issuing a statement thanking the North for sending troops to support his forces and promising not to forget their sacrifices. Recent South Korean intelligence assessments suggest that North Korea has sent about 15,000 soldiers to Russia, and that nearly 5,000 of them have been killed or injured while fighting against Ukrainian forces. Washington and Seoul have also accused North Korea of supplying Russia with various types of military equipment, including artillery systems and shells and ballistic missiles. Analysts say North Korea's official acknowledgment of its military support for Russia is likely aimed at cementing a deeper, long-term partnership with Moscow and securing greater compensation, potentially including advanced military technology that could enhance the threat posed by Kim's nuclear-armed forces. By formalising its role as a participant in the war, North Korea may also be positioning itself to seek compensation in future negotiations to end the conflict in Ukraine, according to a recent report by the Institute for National Security Strategy, a think tank affiliated with South Korea's intelligence agency. (AP)

Russia attacks Ukraine on the first day of self-declared ceasefire, killing 1 person

KYIV (UKRAINE), May 8: Russia struck northeastern Ukraine on Thursday in the opening hours of a 72-hour ceasefire called by Russian President Vladimir Putin, killing one person, Ukrainian officials said.

The unilateral ceasefire coincides with the celebrations in Moscow for the 80th anniversary of victory over Nazi Germany in World War II, Russia's biggest secular holiday. Kyiv has pressed for a longer-term ceasefire.

Putin on Thursday welcomed Chinese President Xi Jinping in the Kremlin. Xi, who Putin earlier described as "our main guest" at Friday's Victory Day festivities, arrived in Russia on Wednesday for a four-day visit.

Russian forces dropped guided air bombs on residential areas near the border in the northeast Sumy region, killing one and wounded two people, the regional prosecutor's office said. Ukraine's air force also said at least one missile hit the Sumy region until early morning on Thursday.

Large-scale missile and drone attacks, which have been a near-daily occurrence in Ukraine in recent weeks, were not recorded since 8:30 p.m. (local time) Wednesday, the air force said. Smaller-scale Russian attacks persisted elsewhere in the country closer to the front line, causing civilian casualties, it said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy cast doubt on the ceasefire, calling it "manipulation" as U.S.-led peace efforts stalled. "For some reason, everyone is supposed to wait until May 8 before ceasing fire — just to provide Putin with silence for his parade," Zelenskyy said.

In March, the United States proposed a 30-day truce in the war, which Ukraine accepted, but the Kremlin has held out for ceasefire terms more to its liking.

In Russia, officials said that the regions of Belgorod, Lipetsk, Orenburg, Ryazan and Tambov came under a drone threat alert overnight, but there were no reports of any drones being shot down or intercepted. Russia's civil aviation authority Rosaviatsia also briefly imposed restrictions on flights to and from the airport in Nizhny Novgorod.

In welcoming Xi, Putin said that "the brotherhood of arms between our peoples, which developed during the harsh war years, is one of the fundamental foundations of modern Russian-Chinese relations of comprehensive partnership and strategic cooperation." He added that Moscow and Beijing were developing ties "for the benefit of the peoples of both countries and not against anyone."

Xi, in turn, said that "history and reality have fully proved that the continuous development and deepening of China-Russia relations is a necessity for the friendship between the two peoples from generation to generation." He also called for safeguarding "international fairness and justice."

Putin and Xi have met over 40 times and developed strong personal ties that bolstered the countries' "strategic partnership" as both face tensions with the West. (AP)

UNGA chief urges restraint as India, Pak tensions escalate

UNITED NATIONS, May 8: Concerned over the "escalating hostilities" between India and Pakistan, United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) president Philomen Yang on Thursday urged the neighbours to exercise restraint and initiate steps to defuse the tension.

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) president Yang also advocated "dialogue and diplomatic solutions in line with the UN Charter and international law" for lasting peace. Yang's appeal comes a day after India's Operation Sindoor early Wednesday hitting nine terror targets in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Punjab province of Pakistan followed by one of the most intense artillery and mortar shelling in years targeting forward Indian villages along the LoC by Pakistan army. "I am deeply concerned about the escalating hostilities between India and Pakistan. I call for both sides to exercise maximum restraint and for an immediate de-escalation," the UNGA president wrote on X. Yang also denounced terrorism and attacks on civilians, saying that UN Charter should be followed in letter and spirit to resolve vexing issues for lasting peace. "I reiterate my condemnation of all terrorist attacks and attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure," he said. "I firmly believe that dialogue and diplomatic solutions in line with the UN Charter and international law are the only ways to resolve differences and achieve lasting peace and stability," Yang added. (PTI)

No new pope elected yet after black smoke pours out of Sistine Chapel's chimney

VATICAN CITY, May 8: Cardinals failed again Thursday morning to find a successor to Pope Francis, sending black smoke billowing up through the Sistine Chapel chimney after two more inconclusive rounds of conclave voting.

The black smoke poured out at 11:50 a.m. (0950 GMT) after the second and third ballots to elect a pope to lead the 1.4 billion-member Catholic Church.

With no one securing the necessary two-thirds majority, or 89 votes, the 133 cardinals will return to the Vatican residences where they are being se-

questered. They will have lunch and then return to the Sistine Chapel for the afternoon voting session. Two more votes are possible Thursday.

The cardinals had returned to the Sistine Chapel on Thursday to resume voting for a new pope and crowds flocked back to St. Peter's Square to await their decision, after the first conclave ballot failed to find a winner during a longer-than-expected voting session Wednesday afternoon.

The billowing black smoke poured out of the chapel chimney just after 9 p.m. Wednesday (1900 GMT), about 4½ hours after the cardinals filed into

the chapel. That prompted speculation about what took so long for the 133 electors to cast and count their ballots.

Hypotheses abound: Did they have to redo the vote? Did someone get sick or need translation help? Did the papal preacher take a long time to deliver his meditation before the voting began?

"They probably need more time," said Costanza Ranaldi, a 63-year-old who travelled from Pescara in Italy's Abruzzo region to the Vatican. Some of the 133 voting cardinals had said they expected a short conclave to replace Pope Francis. (AP)

Pro-Palestinian demonstrators clash with security guards at Columbia University

NEW YORK, May 8: Police officers in helmets streamed into Columbia University Wednesday evening to remove a group of mask-clad protesters who staged a Pro-Palestinian demonstration inside the school's main library.

Videos shared on social media show a long line of NYPD officers entering the library hours after dozens of protesters pushed their way past campus security officers, raced into the building and then hung Palestinian flags and other banners on bookshelves in an ornate reading room. Some protesters also appear to have scrawled "Columbia will burn" across framed pictures.

Other videos show campus security officers barring another group of protesters from entering the library, with both sides shoving to try and force the other group aside.

Police said at least 80 people had been taken into custody, though it wasn't clear how many came from the demonstration inside the library and how many were outside the building.

Videos shared by a reporter on the scene show more than 30 people being taken away from the library by officers with their hands tied behind their backs. Protesters and other supporters, meanwhile, gather around the metal barriers set up outside the building by police cheering on the detained demonstrators and chanting "Free Palestine."

The university's acting president, Claire Shipman, said the protesters who had holed up inside a library reading room were asked repeatedly to show identification and to leave, but they refused. The school then requested the NYPD come in "to assist in securing the building and the safety of our community," she said in a statement Wednesday evening.

Shipman said two university public safety officers sustained injuries as protesters forced their way into the building.

"These actions are outrageous," she said, adding that the disruption came as students were studying and preparing for final exams.

New York City Mayor Eric



Adams, a Democrat, subsequently said officers were entering the campus "to remove individuals who are trespassing."

New York Gov Kathy Hochul also denounced the protesters.

"Everyone has the right to peacefully protest," the Democrat wrote on X. "But violence, vandalism or destruction of property are completely unacceptable."

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio wrote on X that they are ex-

amining visa status for "trespassers and vandals" who took over the library.

"Pro-Hamas thugs are no longer welcome in our great nation," he wrote. The Trump administration has cracked down on international students and scholars at several American universities who had participated in pro-Palestinian demonstrations or criticised Israel over its military action in Gaza.

Columbia University scholar Mahmoud Khalil, for example, is a legal US resident with no criminal record who was detained in March over his participation in pro-Palestinian demonstrations.

Wednesday's demonstration and the effort to break it up came the same evening that the US Justice Department announced it had brought hate-crime charges against a man who had been repeatedly arrested at pro-Palestinian demonstrations over the past year, including one held near Columbia. An indictment charged Tarek Bazrouk, 20, with assaulting Jewish people at the demonstrations.

Columbia University in March announced sweeping policy changes related to protests following Trump administration threats to revoke its federal funding.

Among them are a ban on students wearing masks to conceal their identities and a rule that those protesting on campus must present their identification when asked. The school also said it had hired new public safety officers empowered to make arrests on campus.

Columbia University Apartheid Divest, a pro-Palestinian student group, said it had occupied part of Butler Library because it believed the university profited from "imperialist violence."

"Repression breeds resistance — if Columbia escalates repression, the people will continue to escalate disruptions on this campus," the group wrote online.

The federal charges against Bazrouk say he kicked a person in the stomach at a protest near the New York Stock Exchange, stole an Israeli flag and punched someone in the face at a demonstration near Columbia, and punched another Manhattan protest in January.

Bazrouk's lawyer, Andrew Dalack, said his attorneys "look forward to zealously defending" him.

A magistrate judge said Wednesday that Bazrouk could be released on bail, but that ruling is being challenged by prosecutors. A hearing is scheduled before a federal judge on Tuesday. (AP)



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 "Kachcha 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. Samyor, 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 Tech 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 Bhalukpong 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.

PM holds meeting with secretaries; stresses on alertness, operational preparedness

Ministries advised to maintain close coordination with state authorities and ground-level institutions

NEW DELHI, May 8: In the wake of 'Operation Sindoor', Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a high-level meeting with secretaries of various ministries on Thursday and called for continued alertness and clear communication, while reaffirming the government's commitment to national security and operational preparedness.

The issues discussed during the meeting included strengthening of civil defence mechanisms, efforts to counter misinformation and fake news, and ensuring the security of critical infrastructure, a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

Ministries were also advised to maintain close coordination with state authorities and ground-level institutions, it said.

The high-level meeting, which included secretaries of various Ministries and departments of the government of India, reviewed national preparedness and inter-ministerial coordination in light of recent developments concerning national security.



PM Modi stressed the need for seamless coordination among ministries and agencies to uphold operational continuity and institutional resilience, the statement said.

"The prime minister called for continued alertness, institutional synergy, and clear communication as the nation navigates a sensitive period. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to national security, operational preparedness, and citizen safety," it said.

The meeting came a day after Indian armed forces carried out missile strikes on nine terror targets in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, including the Jaish-e-Mohammad stronghold of Bahawalpur and Lashkar-e-Taiba's base Muridke. The military strikes were carried out under 'Operation Sindoor' two weeks after the massacre of 26 civilians in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam.

During the meeting, Modi reviewed the planning and prepara-

tion by ministries to deal with the current situation.

Secretaries have been directed to undertake a comprehensive review of their respective ministry's operations and to ensure fool-proof functioning of essential systems, with special focus on readiness, emergency response, and internal communication protocols, the statement said.

Secretaries detailed their planning with a 'whole of government' approach in the current situation, it said.

All ministries have identified their actionables in relation to the conflict and are strengthening processes.

Ministries are ready to deal with all kinds of emerging situations, the statement said.

The meeting was attended by the Cabinet Secretary, senior officials from the Prime Minister's Office, and Secretaries from key ministries including Defence, Home Affairs, External Affairs, Information & Broadcasting, Power, Health, and Telecommunications. (PTI)

Helicopter on way to Gangotri crashes in Uttarakhand, six dead

UTTARKASHI, May 8: A helicopter on way to the Gangotri temple crashed near Gangnani in Uttarakashi district on Thursday, killing six persons, including the pilot, and leaving one seriously injured, officials said.

Five women pilgrims were among the dead.

The private company helicopter, with seven persons on board, crashed over Rishikesh-Gangotri National Highway at around 8:45 am and fell into a gorge about 200-250 metres deep, State Disaster Response Force said.

The helicopter had left Sahasradhara helipad in Dehradun for Kharsali helipad. It was on way to Gangotri from there when it crashed, an official said.

District Magistrate Meharban Singh Bisht said six people died on the spot. One of the helicopter occupants was seriously injured in the crash and has been identified as M. Bhaskar (51) from Andhra Pradesh. He has been airlifted to AIIMS, Rishikesh.

Three on board the helicopter were from Mumbai, two from Andhra Pradesh and one each from Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat.

Those killed were identified as Kala Chandrakant Soni (61), Vi-



jaya Reddy (57), Ruchi Agrawal (56), Radha Agrawal (79), Vedvati Kumari (48) and Capt Robin Singh (60). Capt Singh hailed from Gujarat.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama expressed grief over the loss of lives in the accident.

The administration has been instructed to provide all possible help to the injured and investigate the accident, he said, adding he is constantly in touch with officials

and monitoring the situation.

Officials said the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) will probe the helicopter crash.

The helicopter belonged to AeroTrans Services Private Limited and the company's Bell helicopter was involved in the crash.

According to information available on aviation regulator DGCA's website, AeroTrans Services has two Bell helicopters and one Cessna aircraft. (PTI)

CBI searches 11 locations in Guj, Rajasthan

NEW DELHI, May 8: The CBI on Thursday conducted searches at 11 locations in Gujarat and Rajasthan in connection with an alleged corruption case against 2005-batch IRS officer Santosh Karnani, officials said.

The agency conducted the searches on 11 premises linked to Karnani, who is already facing probe for allegedly seeking bribe from a builder, his associates and family members in Gandhinagar, Ahmedabad and Jaipur, they said.

The CBI booked Karnani, who was earlier posted as additional commissioner of income tax in Ahmedabad, and his wife under the Prevention of Corruption Act for allegedly amassing assets disproportionate to his known sources of income, the officials said.

"It has been alleged that the said accused intentionally enriched himself illicitly and has been found in possession of pecuniary resources disproportionate to his known sources of income," the CBI said in a statement.

The agency alleged that the accused's wife, Arti Karnani, abetted the acquisition of disproportionate assets to the tune of more than Rs 1.31 crore, which was 156.24 per cent above the known and legal sources of his income.

"It was further alleged that the accused invested huge amount of ill-gotten funds in acquiring properties in Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar and Mumbai," the statement said. (PTI)

GRSE delivers first anti-submarine warfare shallow water craft to Navy

KOLKATA, May 8: Defence PSU Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) Ltd said it has delivered the first of eight anti-submarine warfare (ASW) shallow water crafts to the Indian Navy on Thursday.

The ASW shallow water crafts will add punch to the Indian Navy's capability to patrol coastal areas where enemy submarines could be lurking.

'INS Amala', the first of the eight ASW shallow water crafts being constructed by the Kolkata-based warship-maker for the Indian Navy, was delivered on Thursday.

The 77.6-metre-long and 10.5-metre-wide ASW SWCs are capable of full-scale sub-surface surveillance of coastal waters as well as search and attack, GRSE said in a statement.

"These can also carry out coordinated anti-submarine operations with aircraft," the official said.

The ship was constructed through the PPP model with GRSE collaborating with private shipyard L&T Kattupalli in Tamil Nadu, the PSU said in a statement.

GRSE was awarded the Raksha Mantri's Award in 2022 for designing the Amala, described as the 'most silent ship'.

The ship, named after an island with a historic fort off the Maharashtra Coast, has nearly 88 per cent indigenous content, the statement said.

GRSE is now building 16 more warships, including three P17A advanced stealth frigates, seven ASW SWCs, two survey vessels and four next generation offshore patrol vessels. (PTI)

Leaves cancelled, schools shut as Punjab, Rajasthan go on high alert post 'Operation Sindoor'

CHANDIGARH/JAIPUR, May 8: Rajasthan and Punjab are in full alert mode with schools closed in border districts and leave of all police personnel and administration officials cancelled, officials said on Thursday, a day after India struck terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Both states are getting ready for a possible escalation in tensions between Pakistan and India, the officials said.

While Punjab shares a 532-km border with Pakistan, in Rajasthan, the border stretches about 1,070 km.

Punjab Police has cancelled leaves of all its personnel while the state government has shut schools in six border districts, officials said on Thursday.

The Rajasthan government too has cancelled leaves of all administrative officials and police personnel deployed in the border areas, sources said. The military strikes were conducted early Wednesday under 'Operation Sindoor' two

weeks after the Pahalgam attack that killed 26 people, mostly tourists.

In view of "administrative reasons", leaves of all officers/employees of Punjab Police have been cancelled from May 7, an order issued by the DGP's office said.

"Leaves should be granted only in special circumstances with the approval of the competent authority," it said.

Amid the soaring tension, all schools in six border districts of Punjab -- Ferozepur, Pathankot, Fazilka, Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Tarn Taran -- have been shut until further orders.

"Punjab shares a 532-km border with Pakistan. Therefore, the role of the Punjab government becomes extremely crucial during any military tension. All districts near the border have been placed on high alert. The government has also cancelled all public events in view of the prevailing situation," Punjab minister Aman Arora said on Wednesday

"Punjab Police is also fully prepared as the second line of defence. It will join the army in every battle to deliver a crushing response to any Pakistani attack," he added.

In Rajasthan, all government and private schools have been shut in four border districts -- Sri Ganganagar, Bikaner, Jaisalmer and Barmer -- as a precautionary measure.

The administrations in these four districts have made preparations for any emergency situation that may arise, officials said.

Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda has directed the concerned officials to cancel the leaves of all policemen in view of the soaring tension following 'Operation Sindoor'.

Chief Secretary Sudhanshu Pant and DGP U R Sahoo also chaired a review meeting with the divisional commissioners, collectors, IGPs and SPs, directing them to be present at their respective headquarters, sources said.

Directions have been issued to tighten security arrangements across the state. (PTI)

Saudi junior foreign minister in Delhi on unannounced visit

NEW DELHI, May 8: Saudi Arabia's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel Aljubeir is in India on an unannounced visit and held talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday with a focus on de-escalating tensions between India and Pakistan.

Aljubeir's visit to New Delhi comes as the already frosty ties between India and Pakistan plummet further following the Indian military's targeted strikes on nine terror infrastructures in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir.

"A good meeting with @AdelAljubeir, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia this morning," Jaishankar said in a social media post.

"Shared India's perspectives on firmly countering terrorism," he said.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also landed in New Delhi around midnight last night on a sched-

uled visit amid the escalating tensions between India and Pakistan.

Araghchi will hold wide-ranging talks with Jaishankar shortly. He is also meeting President Droupadi Murmu in the afternoon.

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

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said India decided to carry out the "proportionate" strikes to bring the perpetrators and planners of the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack to justice as there was "no demonstrable step" from Pakistan to act against terrorist infrastructure on territories under its control. (PTI)

Liberal approach must be adopted while considering disability pension to army men: SC

Appellant was suffering from Schizophrenia, which is in the nature of a constitutional personal disorder

NEW DELHI, May 8: Observing that a liberal approach must be adopted while construing beneficial provisions, the Supreme Court has granted disability pension to an army man who was relieved from the service as he was suffering from "Schizophrenia."

The top court noted that the decision of the authority to discharge a serviceman is based on a medical report which is devoid of reasons.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and N Kotiswar Singh said the requirement to give reasons by the Medical Board is crucial, critical, decisive and necessary for granting or denying disability pension.

The apex court said it is not a mere formality, but a necessary material based on which the pension sanctioning authority has to decide about the grant or refusal of disability pension.

"Accordingly, in our opinion, if the serviceman is discharged from service or denied the disability pension on the basis of a medical opinion which is devoid of reasons, it would strike at the root of the action taken by the authority, and such action cannot be sustained in law.

"We, therefore, hold that if any action is taken by the authority for the discharge of a serviceman and the serviceman is denied disability pension on the basis of a report of the Medical Board wherein no reasons have been disclosed for the opinion so given, such an action of the authority will be unsustainable in law," the bench said in its judgement dated May 7 which was uploaded today.

The top court was hearing a plea filed by an army man challenging an order passed by the Armed Forces Tribunal, Regional Bench, Kochi, by which the appellant's claim for grant of disability pension was denied.

The petitioner was enrolled in the Indian Army on November 17, 1988, as a sepoy, and after serving more than nine years, he was discharged from service on being diagnosed with Schizophrenia.

His discharge on medical invalidation was based on the opinion of the Invalidating Medical Board held on March 30, 1998, at the Command Hospital, Western Command, Chandimandir which found that the onset of the invalidating disease was in August 1993 during which period the appellant had served in a peace station and that the disability was neither attributable to nor aggravated by military service and the said disease of the appellant was constitutional in nature and not connected with the service.

In its judgement, the top court said a much more liberal view needs to be adopted while dealing with the cases of discharge of servicemen from service on account of suffering from Schizophrenia as they may face several impediments and difficulties in proving the causal connection of the said disease with the military service.

"We must appreciate the fact that the provisions for grant of disability pension are in the nature of a beneficial scheme intended to provide succour to servicemen in hard times who have been discharged from service after having served the nation with dedication. Accordingly, a liberal approach must be adopted while construing such beneficial provisions," the bench said.

The apex court said in cases where the serviceman himself has not applied for discharge but has been discharged by the authority, the onus of proving the disability and grounds for denying the disability pension would lie heavily on the authority.

"Since it is the statutory requirement that the opinion of the

Medical Board is to be the basis of the discharge, in our view, if the opinion of Medical Board is devoid of reasons, the act of the authority based on mere opinion sans reasons can certainly be questioned.

"According to us, if the decision of the authority to discharge a serviceman is based on a medical report which is devoid of reasons, which are required to be given as also mandated by rules as discussed above, such an act of the authority specially when it denies any post discharge benefit will be rendered invalid in the eyes of law," the bench said.

The court said it has noted that in the entire original record produced, there is no material for concluding that the appellant was suffering from Schizophrenia, which is in the nature of a constitutional personal disorder.

"Accordingly, we hold that the order of discharge of the appellant and denial of disability pension to him based on a medical opinion without providing full reasons to support the opinion cannot be said to be valid.

"The question which would arise for consideration now is whether we should remit the matter to the Medical Board at this stage for reconsideration in the light of our observations made above. We, however, feel that adopting the aforesaid course of action at this stage after about 27 years of the appellant being invalided from service on May 18, 1998, would not be in the interest of justice," the bench said.

The top court refused to disturb the order of discharge of the army man on the ground of medical invalidity due to Schizophrenia, but directed the authorities that he be granted disability pension with immediate effect with all attending benefits, as per rules.

However, the appellant will not be entitled to any arrears of invalid pension, except for the last three years, it said. (PTI)

ZSI scientists use DNA metabarcoding to uncover hidden enemies of spider eggs

KOLKATA, May 8: We all know spiders catch insects, but now scientists from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) have discovered that even spiders eggs have their own tiny enemies — creatures so small, we usually can't see them.

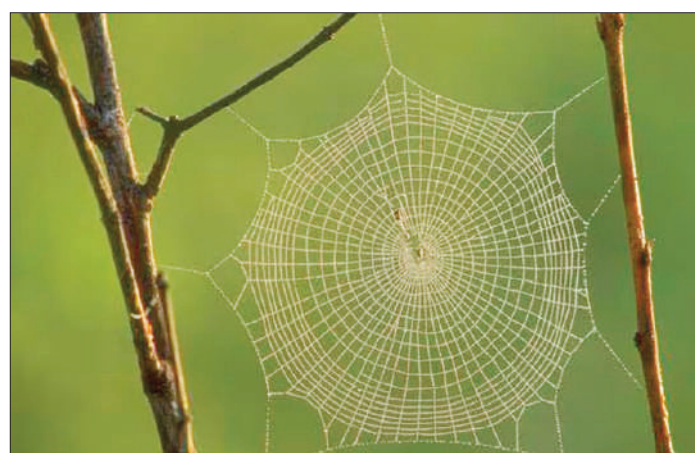
A team of ZSI scientists used an advanced method called DNA metabarcoding to identify which tiny organisms attack spider eggs.

This is the first time anyone in the world has used this advanced technique to study these relationships directly from spider egg sacs, Dr Rupam Debnath, a member of the team, told PTI on Thursday.

Spider egg sacs are protective, silken pouches created by female spiders to hold their eggs.

Led by Dr K Rajmohana, the team also includes V Sushama and Dr KP Dinesh.

Metabarcoding is a technique which allows simultaneous identification of multiple species within a single sample by analyzing DNA



sequences from a set of genes which is different from traditional DNA barcoding which focuses on identification of individual species. Using this DNA-based approach, the scientists discovered tiny, wasp-like creatures — Idris, Odontaculus and Baesus — living on spider eggs, the ZSI said in a

statement.

"These tiny enemies are usually hard to find because they are smaller than a millimeter. You can't easily see them unless you spend a lot of time watching them closely under a microscope," Debnath explained.

"We hope by using this method-

ology and protocol, researchers will be able to explore hidden ecological relationships between insects and spiders the world over," he added.

"Using DNA metabarcoding helped us find new connections between spiders and their enemies that we wouldn't have found using old methods. It's like uncovering a hidden world," Debnath said.

Dr Rajmohana elaborated that DNA metabarcoding is a powerful tool that reveals all the tiny organisms present in a sample—without the need to raise them in a lab.

"This method works best when we already know a lot about these creatures through traditional ways of studying them," the senior scientist said. Sushama added, "This work helps us understand nature faster and shows us how surprisingly complex it is."

The team even identified an unexpected insect, Aphanognomus, in the spider egg sacs.

"This shows that different creatures in nature are connected in more ways than we think," she said.

According to Debnath, the team analysed over two million DNA sequences and identified 28 different types of small creatures — 14 of which were confirmed as tiny enemies attacking spider eggs.

This DNA method also revealed information about what the mother spiders had been eating, giving a better picture of the food chain system.

"We will now focus on building better DNA libraries for these tiny wasps and spiders. This will help researchers identify these creatures more accurately in the future and keep a better eye on the health of our ecosystems," Suresh said.

ZSI Director Dr Dhriti Banerjee congratulated the team, saying that "understanding how different living things are connected is important for nature." (PTI)

Mosques, madrassas open for displaced border residents'

JAMMU, May 8: The doors of all mosques and madrassas in the Jammu region are open for the displaced border residents, prominent Muslim scholar Mufti Sageer Ahmad said on Thursday, as he joined dozens of youngsters to donate blood for the victims of Pakistani shelling here.

The blood donation camp was organised by the Madrasa Markaz-ul-Maarif at Bathindi, near here, following an appeal by social activists after intense Pakistani shelling in Poonch district on Wednesday left 13 people dead and 44 injured.

"We have set up this camp in view of the tense situation on the borders so that there is no shortage of blood in our hospitals... Islam teaches us that saving one life is like saving the entire humanity," Ahmad, who is also the head of the institute, said.

He said the country and its people need them at this crucial juncture and they have come forward to donate blood for those injured on the borders.

"We have kept our madrassas (Islamic seminaries) and masjids ready for the border residents if they are to be relocated. It is the teachings of Islam and we are adhering to it. If we can save a human life, we are saving the humanity," Ahmad said.

He said both teachers and students are voluntarily donating blood and more than 50 units have so far been collected which will be deposited in the blood bank of the Government Medical College (GMC) hospital in Jammu.

"We are ready to extend our support to people irrespective of their religion. We are there to cooperate with anyone, whether it is someone from the administration or from the public," he said. Many mosques and madrassas across the Jammu region are affiliated with the Markaz.

Volunteers and political activists organised blood-donation camps at different places over the past two days, while the Jammu High Court Bar Association is also planning to hold such an event in the district court complex here on Friday.

"In this current time of conflict, understanding its responsibility towards humanity, the association is organising a blood-donation camp to meet the shortage of blood in the blood banks at Jammu," the lawyers' body said, requesting members to come forward and voluntarily donate blood. Meanwhile, the Jamia Zia-ul-Islam, an educational institute, is providing accommodation to about 50 people, mostly border residents who were evacuated amid intense cross-border shelling the previous day. (PTI)

Located 1.5 km from Bangladesh border, Agartala airport seeks BSF protection

Lone operational airport in the northeastern state records 4,000-odd passenger footfalls daily

AGARTALA, May 8: Authorities of the Agartala airport, which is located around 1.5 km from the Bangladesh border, on Thursday requested the BSF to enhance surveillance around the facility.

Currently, the security arrangements of the Maharaja Bir Bikram Airport in the Tripura capital are looked after mainly by the CISF. The force is helped by the state police.

The lone operational airport in the northeastern state records 4,000-odd passenger footfalls daily.

"We held a meeting with all stakeholders to check the security measures at the airport. The police authorities were requested to deploy additional forces. We also urged the BSF to increase



surveillance around the airport because of its proximity to the international border," MBB Airport Director KC Meena told PTI.

It has been decided at the meeting that the BSF would increase surveillance outside the

airport at the earliest possible time, Meena said.

The development following the Pahalgam terror attack that left 26 men, mostly tourists, dead and retaliatory strikes by Indian armed forces in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Pakistan. (PTI)

Night curfew imposed for two months in Indo-Bangla border

SHILLONG, May 8: East Khasi Hills district administration recently imposed a two-month night curfew up to 5 kilometres from the zero line along the Indo-Bangla border.

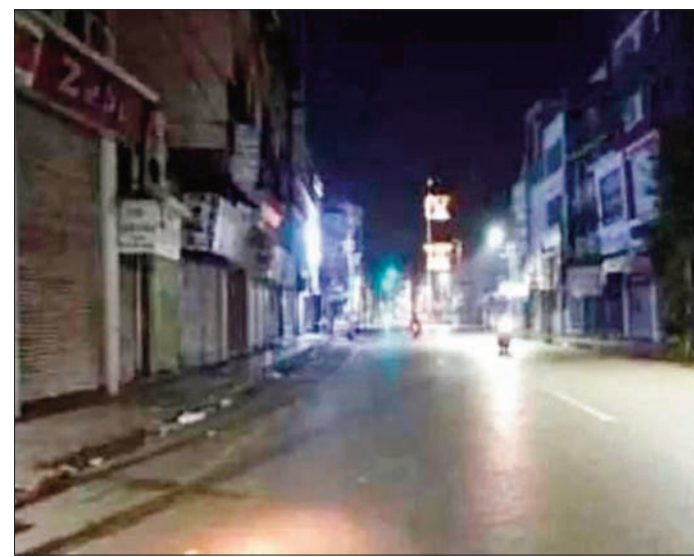
The night curfew will start from 8 pm to 6 am every day.

"In view of the urgency of the matter this order has been made ex-parte and it has come into force with immediate effect and remains in force for a period of two months from the date of issue of this order," district magistrate RM Kurbah said in her order.

The order also prohibited the movement of people at the international border with the intention to cross the international boundary with Bangladesh or sneak into the Indian territory.

It further prohibited unauthorized procession or unlawful assembly of five or more persons and carrying arms/other instruments which can be used as weapons including sticks/rods and stones in and around the Indo-Bangladesh border besides illegal, undesirable activities, smuggling of cattle, contraband goods, betelnut, betel leaves, dry fish, bidis, cigarettes, chati patti etc.

The order has been issued in



view of the current situation in Bangladesh and that there is every likelihood of cross border movement of unwanted elements, members of proscribed militant groups, smugglers and any other illegal activities on the Indo-Bangladesh border.

The bordering areas in East Khasi Hills being unfenced are highly prone to infiltration by illegal migrants, members of organized crime having linkage to

anti-national elements including armed insurgent groups who may gather in large numbers near the international border during the night hours to continue their nefarious activities.

Such illegal/undesirable activities if not prevented may lead to uncontrollable cross border infiltration resulting in breach of peace and tranquillity in the district, state and country as a whole, the order stated. (NNN)

BSF nabs 4 Bangladeshi nationals

SHILLONG, May 8: BSF troops under Meghalaya Frontier, acting on specific intelligence, intercepted and apprehended four Bangladeshi nationals on May 6, while they were attempting to illegally cross the international border. They were handed over to the Mahendraganj Police Station in South West Garo Hills, Meghalaya, for further legal action, a BSF source said.

During the operation, alert troops of the 50th Battalion detected suspicious movement along the border and promptly acted, leading to the apprehension of four Bangladeshi nationals' residents of Mymensingh, Gajipur and Nogaon of Bangladesh, the BSF also said.

"BSF remains vigilant and continues to maintain a high level of operational readiness along the Indo-Bangladesh border to ensure the safety and security of the nation", it added. (NNN)

MODIFICATION OF EXISTING OHE FOR PROPOSED ROB IN LUMDING DIVISION

Tender Notice No. TRD/LMG/O5 of 2025-26; Dated: 06-05-2025. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: **Tender No. EL-TRD: NFR-LMG-OHE-MOD-25: Name of work:** Modification of existing OHE arrangement and Provision for protective Screen, Earthing & Bonding, Safety Item/Boards etc. suitable for proposed launching of 01 No. 12m wide steel girder ROB at Km 165 (ST-44) Between Lanka - Dhalpukhuri Section, Lumding Division. Advertised Value: ₹40,36,365.84; Earnest Money: ₹80,700.00. E-tender will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 30-05-2025. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender is available on website www.i-reps.gov.in

Sr. DEE/TRD & GS/LUMDING
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"Serving Customers with a smile"

Over 21,000 cases to be taken up during National Lok Adalat in Tripura on May 10



HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, May 8: The second National Lok Adalat of the year is set to be held across Tripura on Saturday, May 10. The initiative will be conducted not only at the Tripura High Court but also in all district and sub-divisional court complexes across the state.

According to Jhuma Dutta Chowdhury, Member-Secretary of the Tripura Lok Adalat, a total of 21,410 cases are slated for settlement through 40 dedicated benches. These cases span a diverse range of legal matters including 339 motor accident compensation claims, 221 matrimonial disputes, 5,457 bank loan repayment cases, and 1,000 BSNL bill-related disputes.

In addition, the Adalat will address 14,264 compoundable criminal cases under the MB Act, TP Act, TG Act, and Excise Act. Other matters listed include 63 cheque bounce cases under the Negotiable Instruments Act, 9 consumer complaints, 48 electricity bill disputes, and 8 employment-related cases.

"Notices have already been served to the concerned parties. Since May 5, many individuals have been seeking early resolution through pre-conciliation at the offices of the District and Sub-division Legal Services Authorities," said Chowdhury. To assist attendees, trained Odhikar Mitra volunteers will be present at all venues.

Justice Amarnath Gaur, Executive Chairman of the Tripura State Legal Services Authority, has issued detailed instructions to ensure the smooth and effective execution of the Lok Adalat proceedings.

BJP's N Zangura sworn in as chief of Lai Autonomous District Council in Mizoram

AIZAWL, May 8: BJP leader N Zangura was sworn in as the new Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC) in Mizoram, an official said.

Zangura replaced Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) leader V Zirsanga, who was sworn in as the CEM on February 27.

Lawngtlai district's additional deputy commissioner David Lalrinawma administered the oath of office and secrecy to Zangura at the council's conference hall in Lawngtlai, the official said.

With the swearing-in of Zangura, the BJP is currently in power in all three ADCs in Mizoram, although it formed a coalition executive committee with the Mizo National Front (MNF) in the LADC.

After taking oath as the CEM, Zangura said the new council is committed to serving the people of LADC, keeping aside personal interests.

He called for collective support for the success of the new executive body and vowed to work towards regional progress.

Zangura was appointed the CEM by Governor Vijay Kumar Singh on May 2 and was asked to secure a vote of confidence within 10 days.

He is the fifth person to become the CEM in the current term of LADC since December 2020.



The BJP and MNF had recently tied up and formed the United Democratic Alliance (UDA), unseating the two-month-old ZPM-led executive committee headed by V Zirsanga.

The UDA claimed that it has the support of 13 members -- two of the BJP and 11 of the MNF -- in the 25-member council.

Lone Congress member C Lalhmuangthanga also supported the UDA, state BJP president Vanlalhmua said.

The ZPM now has 11 members. Meanwhile, the Lai Students' Association (LSA) has been protesting, demanding fresh elections to the council because of the instability it is facing.

The organisation, which has been picketing outside LADC and the deputy commissioner's office

since Tuesday, said it would intensify its agitation to ensure the dissolution of the council.

LSA general secretary Matthew Lalthumliana Fanchun said the LADC has witnessed toppling of executive committees at least five times in the current term, which has crippled governance and hampered development works.

The district administration has imposed prohibitory orders under section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNS), prohibiting assembly of more than five persons in the LADC Complex and New Vengpui areas in Lawngtlai town.

The LADC is one of the three autonomous district councils in the state that govern at the local level. It was created in 1972 to govern areas where Lai tribals live. (PTI)

Two-day meeting under the aegis of FNR

KOHHIMA, May 8: Facilitated by the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR), the 'Naga political groups' and 'tribal hohos' held a two-day meeting in Pruzie (Shisha Hoho) in Kohima to continue the process of moving ahead basing on the earlier resolution of the "historical and political rights of the Nagas."

The two-day meeting reaffirmed that no 'Naga political groups' or civil organizations are excluded. "We stand for an inclusive approach, and as signatories, we urge all 'Naga political groups' and civil organizations to join hands in moving forward," a statement from the participants said.

The meeting also took cognizance and appreciated the contributions of all Naga individuals and groups working for the cause of Naga rights. However, it emphasized that those who remain indifferent to this collective and inclusive call will only be excluding themselves. Furthermore, the conclave at Pruzie, Kohima, took additional resolves that include that, "through the respective tribal Hohos, every tribal church council/association will be requested to observe Sunday, May 18, 2025, as a day of prayer—for the people of Naga areas in general and specifically for divine intervention in the impending Naga political issue.

They also resolved that the gathering empathically affirmed that all Nagas must, without delay, converge on the essential unity of the Naga political rights, while in differences, help build bridges of understanding with grace and empathy.

The participants also resolved that, "With the authority and mandate of the 'Naga tribal hohos', the gathering further declared that all 'Naga political groups' must come under the 'Machan' of common belonging where no single group identity imposes hegemonic rule. "In our 'correctness' let us not fence ourselves out. Nagas coming together is an instrument of liberation, that is, Nagas without delay must realize that coming together alone can free us", they added. (NNN)

CRRI to probe cracks on newly-built NH-208 stretch in Tripura

AGARTALA, May 8: The National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) has sought the expertise of the Central Road Research Institute (CRRI) after significant cracks and pavement damage emerged along a newly-constructed stretch of National Highway 208 in Tripura. A CRRI team is expected to reach the state within the next 15 days to carry out a detailed site investigation.

Addressing the media, the Secretary of the Tripura Public Works Department (PWD) Kiran Gite on Thursday said the damaged section lies between Kamalpur and Khowai, where a 25.6-km stretch of the highway was completed on April 17, 2023. Since then, the project has been under a five-year Defect Liability Period (DLP). He said that the PWD and NHIDCL jointly oversee the construction and upkeep of six national highways in Tripura, covering a total of 793 km. Of this, 43 km is

managed by the state PWD, with the rest under NHIDCL's jurisdiction. According to the official, signs of pavement settlement and distress first appeared after heavy rainfall in August 2024, particularly in the Khowai Bypass area between Km 96.000 and Km 97.000. Subsequent inspections revealed that approximately 12 km of the highway had suffered structural damage, marked by alligator cracking and upheaval of the pavement.

"The highway was built under the Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) model, with the contractor adhering to specifications prescribed by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) and the Indian Roads Congress (IRC). Materials were tested both on-site and by NABL-accredited third-party laboratories, and construction quality was monitored by an Authority Engineer and an Independent Special Project Monitoring Unit. A Completion Certificate was issued upon project delivery in April 2023", said Gite.

Gite said preliminary assessments have traced the root of the damage to failures in the subgrade layer of the road. The EPC contractor has attributed this to a sharp rise in groundwater levels, which led to soil saturation and a reduction in load-bearing capacity.

"To investigate further, NHIDCL has proposed that CRRI conduct an in-depth study, and approval from the corporation's New Delhi headquarters is awaited. Meanwhile, rectification efforts are already underway. The contractor has mobilized equipment and manpower over the past two months to excavate and replace the sub-grade soil up to two meters deep. The repair work involves installing a sand-based drainage barrier to block capillary moisture and reapplying a new bituminous layer. Officials who conducted a joint inspection of the site said the repairs are progressing and are expected to be completed within the next two months", he added.

World Red Cross Day

Nagaland governor calls for compassionate action

KOHHIMA, May 8: Nagaland Governor La Ganesan on Thursday emphasised the timeless values of humanity, service, and solidarity while maintaining that the selfless sacrifices and relentless service of Red Cross volunteers in times of crisis embody the very essence of humanity.

He said this while addressing the World Red Cross Day celebration on the theme "On the side of humanity" here.

"Your selfless sacrifices and relentless service in times of crisis embody the very essence of humanity," said the governor, who is also President of the Indian Red Cross Society's Nagaland Branch.

Highlighting the critical role of the Red Cross during natural disasters and in reaching isolated communities across the state's challenging terrain, Ganesan called for collective compassion and increased youth involvement in humanitarian service.

This year's global theme encour-



aged reflection on the core human values of Hope, Empathy, and Kindness, he said.

"Hope is the light that guides us through darkness; empathy connects us to others' pain; and kindness is the language even the brokenhearted understand," the governor said.

He also made a passionate appeal to the citizens, particularly the youth of Nagaland, to embrace a life of service, stressing that addressing contemporary challenges like climate change, health crises, and inequality requires collective will and youthful energy.

"You are not just leaders of tomorrow; you are the change makers of today," he said.

The governor also emphasized the need to nurture compassion from a young age, urging families and educational institutions to instill empathy and kindness in children.

"A society where empathy and kindness abound is not just a dream—it is a choice we make through daily acts of love," Ganesan remarked.

Concluding his speech with a tribute to Red Cross founder Jean Henry Dunant, he reminded the audience of the profound impact of service saying "We are neither angels nor saints, but human beings who try to do what we can, for as long as we can."

The first 'International Red Cross Day', as it used to be known, was celebrated on 8 May 1948. The official title of the day changed over time and became known as 'World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day' in 1984. (PTI)

SRIMANTA SANKARADEVA UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

(A State University of the Govt. of Assam)
Narakasur Hilltop, Bhangagarh, Guwahati, Assam
Phone: 06026177313 (0) E-mail: ssuhs_assam@yahoo.in Website: www.ssuhs.in

No SSUHS/159/2025/3305

EDUCATIONAL NOTICE (GNM ENTRANCE EXAMINATION, 2025)

ADMISSION INTO GNM COURSE IN BOTH GOVT. AND PRIVATE INSTITUTES UNDER THE DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH SERVICES, ASSAM FOR THE SESSION 2025-2026

Applications are invited from the candidates for GNM Entrance Examination (GNMEE) for selection of candidates for admission into **GNM Course under the Directorate of Health Services, Assam** in both Govt. and Private Institutes for the session 2025-26. Online Application Form shall be available at SrimantaSankaradevaUniversityofHealthSciences.in from **13-05-2025 to 13-06-2025**. The Online Application Form must be filled up after carefully going through the instructions given along with the form in the website.

The Entrance Test is going to be held on **13-07-2025 (Sunday)** at Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Silchar, Jorhat, Barpeta, Tezpur, Diphu, Lakhimpur, Nagaon, Nalbari, Dhubri and Kokrajhar.

Details of the Entrance Examination including eligibility criteria and requirements are available at the University website: www.ssuhs.in.

Admit Cards will be available online at www.ssuhs.in from **01-07-2025** which can be downloaded after log in.

Sd/-
Controller of Examinations
Srimanta Sankaradeva University of Health Sciences

DIPR /D/HLT/10/9-May-25

'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".

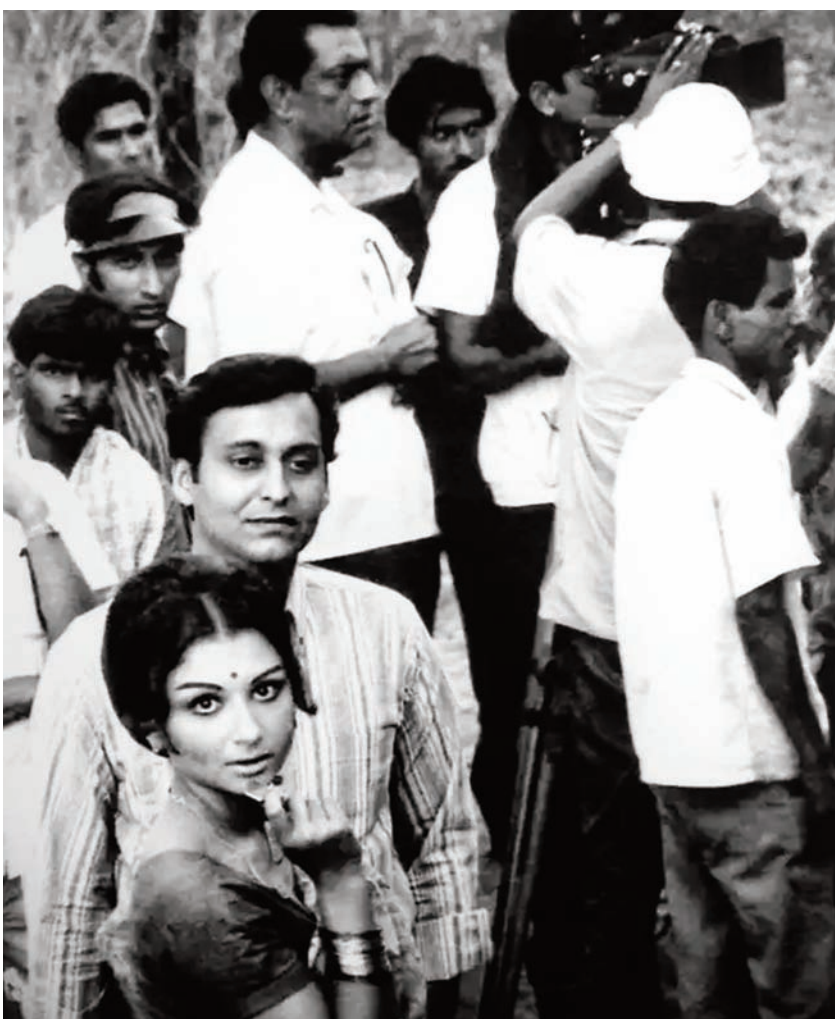
"I must have been three or four when I first auditioned for a reality show for a TV channel in Mangaluru. Not only did I get through easily then, I also got the 'best performer of the week' for that show," added the child star, who has played bit roles in big budget films like 'Kantara', starring Rishabh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

His first fleshed out character came in a 2018 film, written and directed by Rishabh Shetty 'Sarkari Hiriya Praathamika Shaale, Kaasaragodu, 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.

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 Trust Championship and the Myrtle Beach Classic this week on the PGA Tour if they are not already eligible. In the Trust 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 Raúl 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 Éric García, will take his place and face off against Madrid's Vinicius 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, Vinicius 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), 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 Probables:

Goalkeepers: Paval Basude, Elangbam Panthoi Chanu, Keisham Melody Chanu, Moirangthem Monalisa Devi.

Defenders: Purnima Kumari, Phanjobam Nirmala Devi, Martina Thokchom, Shubhangi Singh, Sanju, Malati Munda, Toijam Thoibisana Chanu, Sorokhaibam Ranjana Chanu, Nangbam Sweetie Devi, Viksit Bara, Hemam Shilky Devi. (PTI)

Tendulkar lauds Rohit's growth; Pant recalls dressing room impact in tribute

MUMBAI, May 8: The man who handed Rohit Sharma his Test cap marvelled at his growth in the format, while the bunch which bloomed under his leadership called the swashbuckling opener a talismanic presence in the dressing room, a day after his rather stunning decision to retire from the five-day format.

The 38-year-old Rohit announced his retirement from Tests on Wednesday having represented the country in 67 games in which he captained in 24. He will continue to lead India in ODIs.

Batting great Sachin Tendulkar re-

called the time he handed Rohit his Test cap back in 2013. It was the same series in which Tendulkar bid adieu to his glorious career.

"I remember presenting you with your Test cap in 2013 at Eden Gardens and then standing with you on the balcony of Wankhede Stadium the other day - your journey has been a remarkable one," Tendulkar said in a social media post.

Rohit made a brilliant Test debut in the two-match series against the West Indies in Kolkata, hitting 177 in his maiden appearance and following it up with a 111 not out in Tendulkar's last

Test in Mumbai. "From then to now, you have given your best to Indian cricket as a player and as a captain. Well done, Rohit, on your Test career, and best wishes for what lies ahead," Tendulkar added.

While Tendulkar's post was much-deserved appreciation from a senior player, there was an outpouring of affection from the ones who played under his leadership.

"Your presence and impact will echo in that dressing room forever," posted Rishabh Pant on Instagram.

Pant's fellow wicketkeeper-batter

Dhruv Jurel, who made his Test debut under Rohit, said, "Always my first skipper." Another youngster who started his Test career during Rohit's tenure, Yashasvi Jaiswal, described him as a blessing.

"Rohit Bhai, sharing the crease with you in whites was nothing less than a blessing. Thank you for everything," he said. The 38-year-old Rohit, who had retired from T20s last year, scored 4,301 runs at 40.57 with 12 centuries and 18 fifties with a career-best score of 212 against South Africa at Ranchi in 2019. (PTI)



Red-hot RCB aim to seal play-off spot against under-pressure LSG

LUCKNOW, May 8: Royal Challengers Bengaluru would look to secure play-off qualification while the struggling Lucknow Super Giants will aim to stay alive in the tournament when the two sides clash in the Indian Premier League here on Friday.

Pressure is mounting on LSG skipper Rishabh Pant with every passing game, with his lack of runs coinciding with the team's slide in the business end of the tournament.

LSG have lost four of their last five games and can only reach 16 points if they win their remaining three games. 18 is a much safer number in the play-offs race and RCB would back themselves to get there after winning five of their last six games.

Pant, who became the highest-paid player at the IPL auction, has had a season to forget thus far. He has tried batting at different positions but consistency has eluded him. His strike rate of 99.92 sums up his struggles this season.

LSG have relied heavily on their top three, including Mitchell Marsh, Aiden Markram and Nicholas Pooran, but that will to have change if they are to go deep in the tournament.

"The dream is still alive. If we are going to win the next three



matches, we definitely can turn it around. It makes sense when your top order is batting really well. Every match you can't hope they will come off nicely," said Pant following the loss to Punjab Kings in Dharamsala.

On the bowling front as well, they can improve a lot. Injury-prone pace sensation Mayank Yadav has proved expensive since his comeback. The fielding and catching of the team has also left a lot to be desired.

Chasing an elusive title, RCB,

on the other hand, have enjoyed one of their most professional campaigns in IPL history.

Virat Kohli continues to pile on the runs with ridiculous consistency, having collected seven fifties in 11 innings.

He provides the platform and the likes of Rajat Patidar and more recently Romario Shepherd flex their muscle in the death overs.

Mayank Agarwal has joined the squad as a replacement for injured Devdutt Padikkal, who had reinvented himself this season.

The spin duo of Krunal Pandya and Suyash Sharma have been very effective while Josh Hazlewood and Yash Dayal have bowled the difficult overs with ease in the pace department.

LSG will need to come up with something special to halt the RCB juggernaut.

Squads:

LSG: Nicholas Pooran, Ravi Bishnoi, Mayank Yadav, Ayush Badoni, Rishabh Pant (c & wk), David Miller, Aiden Markram, Mitchell Marsh, Avesh Khan, Abdul Samad, Aryan Juyal, Akash Deep, Himmat Singh, Manimaran Siddharth, Digvesh Singh, Shahbaz Ahmed, Akash Singh, Shamir Joseph, Prince Yadav, Yuvraj Chaudhary, RS Hangargekar, Arshin Kulkarni, Matthew Breetzke, Mohsin Khan.

RCB: Virat Kohli, Rajat Patidar (c), Swastik Chikara, Mayank Agarwal, Jitesh Sharma, Philip Salt, Manoj Bhandage, Tim David, Krunal Pandya, Liam Livingstone, Romario Shepherd, Jacob Bethell, Swapnil Singh, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Josh Hazlewood, Nuwan Thushara, Lungi Ngidi, Yash Dayal, Rasikh Dar Salam, Suyash Sharma, Mohit Rathke, Abhinandan Singh.

Match starts 7.30 IST. (PTI)

Dhoni on IPL future: Nothing to decide now, will take a call later



KOLKATA, May 8: Chennai Super Kings captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni says "there is no escaping the fact" that he is in the twilight of his IPL career but a decision on his future will depend on how his body responds to the pressure of hard work in the next six to eight months.

The former India captain, who is being met with a sea of adoring fans in yellow at every venue he goes to, is well aware of the emotions and his passionate followers' desire to be there when he plays his last game.

"That is the love and affection I have gotten throughout. Not to forget I am 42 (43). I have played a long time. A lot of them don't

know when it is going to be my last time, so they want to come and see me play," Dhoni said after CSK's two-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders here on Wednesday.

Dhoni, who underwent a knee surgery in 2023, has continued to battle fitness concerns. CSK head coach Stephen Fleming recently admitted that the veteran "can't bat 10 overs running full stick."

All of this has contributed in building speculation that the ongoing season is his last outing in the league.

The enigmatic wicketkeeper-

batter said he is fully aware of where he stands in his storied career right now but will not make a

decision without deliberating hard over it and fully assessing his fitness.

"There is no escaping the fact (that I am in the last phase of my career). After this IPL gets over, I have to work hard for another 6-8 months to see if my body can take this pressure."

"Nothing to decide now but the love and affection I have seen is excellent," Dhoni said.

The win was only the third of CSK's disappointing season marred by inconsistency. With play-off hopes dashed, Dhoni said the focus is now on testing bench strength.

"There were a few things that did not go our way. You could get emotional about it, talk about the pride factor but you have to be practical about it."

"(You) want to be competitive but you also want answers - which batter can fit where, which bowler can bowl where, according to the conditions and all. When we started, hardly anyone was scoring."

"We are out of the tournament, so you give them a chance, see how they react. It is the approach, the mental toughness that you want to check. The most technically-correct batter does not always score the runs, if you have good awareness...there is a chance to be consistent." (PTI)

May 11 IPL fixture in Dharamsala moved to Ahmedabad

NEW DELHI, May 8: The IPL match between Punjab Kings and Mumbai Indians, scheduled for May 11 in Dharamsala, has been shifted to Ahmedabad owing to the closure of the hill town's airport in the wake of military action against terror infrastructure in Pakistan. Gujarat Cricket Association (GCA) secretary Anil Patel confirmed the development to PTI. The game will be played in the afternoon. "BCCI requested us and we accepted. Mumbai Indians are arriving later today and travel plans of Punjab Kings will be known later," said Patel. Punjab Kings play Delhi Capitals in Dharamsala on Thursday. The Dharamsala airport has been closed for commercial flights at least until May 10 in the wake of India's military strikes on terrorist infrastructure inside Pakistan and Pakistan Occupied Jammu and Kashmir in retaliation to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack. (PTI)

Skipper Rahane still hopeful of KKR's playoff qualification despite loss to CSK

KOLKATA, May 8: Kolkata Knight Riders stand on the brink of elimination from Indian Premier League after the loss to Chennai Super Kings but captain Ajinkya Rahane remains hopeful.

With just two matches remaining, the maximum KKR can finish with is 15 points while a safe number for play-off qualification is 18.

"I think on 15 points, we can still qualify. We still got to think positive. We have two games left, one against Hyderabad and then Bangalore," Rahane said at the post-match press conference on Wednesday.

"So as a team, we have to be positive, think about how can we win the next two games. We are playing very good cricket."

"Last three games were really good. This one didn't go to our plan, but again, as a team, we are coming back."

KKR's qualification hopes would also depend on Mumbai Indians losing both their remaining matches to stay on 14 points.

Since one of MI's fixtures is against Delhi Capitals (currently on 13), that result would lift DC to 15 as well, setting up a potential

Net Run Rate battle for the final playoff spot between KKR and DC. An alternative scenario could see Punjab Kings losing all three of their remaining games.

In that case, MI could move beyond 15, while DC, PBKS, and KKR could all finish on 15, leading to a three-way NRR showdown. KKR's bowlers had CSK struggling at 60/5 in the powerplay on a turning Eden pitch, but they could not bundle them out.

Backing the bowling unit Rahane felt they weren't at fault and believed they were short by about 15 runs with the bat. "Dube and Dewald (Brevis) they were brave, they took their chances and that paid off."

"I thought we still came back into the game really well. We picked up five wickets initially and they had a very good partnership. But after that, we knew that couple of wickets, we can still come back into the game and that was the plan. "As a bowling unit, we did that pretty well. Six balls, eight runs, MS Dhoni in strike, it's tough sometimes, you know. He can hit a good ball for a six and that's what happened." (PTI)

FIFA picks 8 host cities for the 2027 Women's World Cup in Brazil

SAO PAULO, May 8: Soccer's international governing body has confirmed eight host cities for the 2027 Women's World Cup to be held in Brazil. FIFA announced the venues for the month-long tournament on Wednesday but hasn't decided yet where the opening match and the final will take place.

All eight sites were among the 12 used for the men's World Cup in 2014: Rio de Janeiro (Maracana Stadium), Sao Paulo (NeoQuimica Arena), Belo Horizonte (Mineirao Stadium), Brasilia (Nacional Stadium), Fortaleza (Arena Castelao), Porto Alegre (Beira-Rio Stadium), Recife (Arena Pernambuco), and Salvador (Arena Fonte Nova). "From stunning beaches to cosmopolitan cities, the world will experience the energy, color and warmth that only Brazil can offer," FIFA President Gianni Infantino said in a statement. Some members of Brazil's soccer confederation have said they want to hold the opening match at Sao Paulo and the final at the 78,000-seat Maracana, as it did in the 2014 World Cup. Curitiba, Manaus and Natal, all venues for the men's World Cup, were not included in the women's tournament bid book. Belem was also left out. (AP)

LAND FOR SALE

- 59 Bigha, 4 Katha, 5 Lessa
- With Boundary Wall and Buildings
- At Diphu, Post Office- Diphu, District- KarbiAnglong, Assam
- Near Diphu Railway Station (5km) and Dimapur Airport (55km)

For more details, contact:
Phone No- 7890024500/8638076227
Email Id- bazariveneer@gmail.com

Very few in India played cricket like Rohit Sharma: Kapil Dev

NEW DELHI, May 8: Very few in India can claim to have played cricket and captained the national team like Rohit Sharma, said legendary all-rounder Kapil Dev after the batting maestro announced his retirement from the Test format with immediate effect.

The 38-year-old was India's most prolific Test batter in the second half of his career, scoring 4301 runs in 67 Tests with 12 hundreds and 18 half centuries at an average of 40.57.

"He did a wonderful job, played good cricket. Over the period of time, the way he conducted himself, the way he captained and most importantly the way he played his cricket - because in India, very few played cricket like this," said Kapil in an exclusive interview with PTI videos.

"I congratulate him on a wonderful career."

Having already retired from T20 Internationals after the World Cup last year, Rohit will now only be seen leading India in the ODI format.

"Hello everyone, I would



just like to share that I am retiring from Test cricket. It's been an absolute honour to represent my country in whites," he posted on Instagram with a picture of his Test cap after PTI's newsbreak on Wednesday.

Rohit's retirement from the traditional format means India will need to name a new full-time captain almost immediately after the end of IPL 2025, with India's five-Test series in England scheduled to begin on June 20 at Headingley.

Asked who is the best candidate to lead the Indian Test

team in the coming years, Kapil simply said it's the selectors' job to pick the captain.

"Some of the things and responsibilities should be left for selectors. They will find the new captain. We should not give our views much because selectors have their job, and when it's about Team India, they will do their job with responsibility."

"Whoever they bring as captain will be the best for Team India. Though taking Rohit's place is difficult, someone has to take this responsibility," he added.

Rohit also informed that he will continue to play the ODI format, the next World Cup of which is scheduled to take place in 2027.

Kapil said it's good that Rohit still has the hunger to play the 50-over game.

"Everybody wants to play cricket - Sachin, Gavaskar, everyone wanted to play. But again, this also depends on the selectors. It's good he wants to play. Everyone wants to play the World Cup and win, but some things should be left to selectors."

Speaking about the emergence of young talent in IPL 2025, Kapil stressed the need to stay patient and protect them. "We need to give some time to these youngsters. Talent is there, but whether they will make it big... I think they need a little more time. These youngsters should be protected."

"We need to see and identify who can be the next Sachin Tendulkar, the next Sunil Gavaskar, or the next Rohit Sharma. The future will tell," he concluded. (PTI)

Swastha Hospital

Comprehensive **Kidney Care** for Better Health

NEPHROLOGIST

IN DIBRUGARH

Consultant Nephrology

DR. ANKIT RAY
MD (Medicine) DM (Nephrology)

MON-FRI OPD

FULL-TIME NEPHROLOGIST AVAILABLE

+91 60005-30755

FOR APPOINTMENT

ADDRESS: SWASTHA HOSPITAL, AMC ROAD, GRAHAM BAZAAR TINIALI, NEAR CIRCUIT HOUSE, DIBRUGARH
INFORMATION CENTER AT 'THE HILLS TIMES' OFFICE, 2ND MILE, NAMSAL, ARUNACHAL PRADESH.
PHONE NUMBER: 70027- 86249, 96128-45442