

6 WORLD Two former Chinese defence ministers sentenced to death for corruption Bangladesh seeks China's support in Teesta river restoration project 8 NATION Kerala CM race shifts to high command as AICC observers consult MLAs, UDF allies Population control policies, UCC require public cooperation: RSS chief

Modi, Shah to attend swearing-in ceremony NDA Legislature Party meeting to be held on May 10

State to get new NDA govt on May 12



Staff Reporter GUWAHATI, May 7: Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia on Thursday said the swearing-in ceremony of the BJP-led NDA government in Assam will be held on May 12 at Khanapara in Guwahati in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and several senior NDA leaders.

ing-in ceremony. A large number of supporters and citizens are expected to gather at Khanapara to witness the historic occasion," Saikia said.

According to him, Prime Minister Modi is likely to arrive at the Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati at around 10.15 am on May 12 and will then proceed to the Narengi helipad before reaching the venue at Khanapara.

Saikia further stated that apart from the Prime Minister and the Union home minister, former BJP national president JP Nadda, several Union ministers, chief ministers and deputy chief ministers from NDA-ruled states, along with senior party leaders from across the country, are expected to attend the programme.

He said preparations for the event are being closely monitored by the party and the state government.

Several ministers, senior BJP functionaries and organisational leaders have been assigned responsibilities for overseeing arrangements and maintaining discipline during the programme.

Meanwhile, the Assam BJP president also informed that meetings of the BJP Legislature Party and the NDA Legislature Party will be held on May 10.

The meetings, to be attended by JP Nadda and Haryana chief minister Nayab Singh Saini, are expected to formally elect the new leader of the legislature party before the formation of the government.

Devajit Saikia resigns following end of govt tenure

Staff Reporter GUWAHATI, May 7: Senior advocate and Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) secretary Devajit Saikia on Thursday announced that he has resigned from the post of Advocate General of Assam following the completion of the tenure of the present state government.

In a statement posted on X, Saikia said he had tendered his resignation on Wednesday in keeping

with constitutional tradition and established practice after the end of the current government's term under chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

"Keeping and upholding the high tradition and constitutional practice, I have tendered my resignation yesterday from the Office of the Advocate General, Assam upon completion of my tenure of nearly five years and consequent to the end of the present Government's

term," Saikia stated.

He described his tenure as Advocate General as a matter of "immense honour and privilege" and expressed gratitude to the state leadership and legal fraternity for their support and cooperation during his term in office.

Saikia thanked the chief minister, members of the Council of Ministers, government officials, fellow lawyers and all those associated (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

No terror sanctuary is safe, says Indian military in stern warning to Pakistan on Op Sindoor anniv

JAIPUR, May 7: No terror sanctuary across the Line of Control is safe, and India will target every terrorist infrastructure at a time and manner of its choosing, the Indian military said on Thursday, sending a clear warning to Pakistan on the first anniversary of Operation Sindoor.

Detailing what is now considered India's most significant combat mission in five decades, the then heads of military operations for the three services elaborated on the strategic successes of the massive tri-services campaign during a media briefing here. They asserted that the window for military action against cross-border terrorism remains firmly open.

"No sanctuary across the Line of Control is safe. We will hit everything. We will go after everything and that has been made clear in the new normal that the prime minister said last year. But the conditions, the timing and the method will be ours," said Lt Gen Rajiv Ghai, Deputy Chief of Army Staff (strat-

egy). The timing and method for targeting terror infrastructure will remain at the Indian military's discretion, he said.

In his capacity as the Director General of Military Operations of the Indian Army, Ghai had played a key role along with his counterparts from the Indian Air Force and Navy in execution of Operation Sindoor.

"Operation Sindoor was not an end and it was just the beginning," Lt Gen Ghai, currently serving as the Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Strategy), said.

In response to the Pahalgam terror attack, India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7 last year carrying out airstrikes on nine terror infrastructures in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir eliminating at least 100 terrorists.

The strikes triggered a rapid escalation in tensions with Pakistan launching retaliatory strikes though most of them were thwarted (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

World saw India's defence might in Operation Sindoor: Himanta

GUWAHATI, May 7: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said that the world witnessed India's "strike and defence capabilities" during the 'Operation Sindoor'.

On the first anniversary of the defence operation, he said India will "identify, track and punish" every terrorist and their backers.

"This was the clear message to the notorious elements who dared to raise their eyes on Maa Bharti as the wrath of the Indian military was soon unleashed on them during #OperationSindoor," Sarma said in a post on X.

With pure precision and power, the terrorists and their all-weather backers were eliminated, he added.

"...The world also saw India's strike and defence capabilities in this evolving scenario, Operation Sindoor was a message to all those anti-India elements - DO NOT DARE to act against India, else you will be annihilated from the face of Earth," Sarma said.

Operation Sindoor was carried out by the three defence forces along with the BSF along the western border, targeting terrorist and military facilities in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir from May 7-10, 2025.

This operation was carried out in retaliation to the April 22, 2025 terror attack in Pahalgam in which 26 people, mostly tourists, were killed. (PTI)

Killing of Suwendu's PA: Probe points to planned hit Spectre of political violence returns ahead of Bengal oath

KOLKATA, May 7: West Bengal sank into a miasma of fear and despair in the face of political violence yet again on Thursday, following uncharacteristically peaceful elections in the state, as early leads in Chandranath Rath's murder investigation showed the personal assistant to BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari was killed in a planned hit on Wednesday night.

Investigators suspect the involvement of professional shooters, with police recovering vehicles carrying fake number plates, even as the murder deepened the state's post-poll fault lines and led to a fresh war of words between the winner BJP and the loser TMC.

Rath's grieving mother alleged that the killing was linked to Mamata Banerjee's defeat against Adhikari in Bhabanipur.

"I would not have suffered so much had he died in an accident. He was targeted because he worked for Adhikari," she told reporters.

Speaking before Rath's body was taken to his hometown Chandipur in Purba Medinipur district, Adhikari said the Indian Air Force veteran was killed because of association with him and his victory in Bhabanipur, where he defeated TMC chief Mamata Banerjee.

"The IAF ex-serviceman might not have been



killed had he not been my PA and had I not won from Bhabanipur. His only fault was that he was Suwendu Adhikari's personal assistant. Five bullets were fired at him to ensure his death," Adhikari told the media at Barasat State General Hospital, where the post-mortem examination of Rath's body was conducted.

As political tempers soared outside, Rath's family struggled to come to grips with the tragedy. Party leaders said the family would take a final call on the last rites after consulting relatives.

Police said multiple teams were examining CCTV footage collected from Kolkata Police and Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Cong has turned into 'another Muslim League': Ajmal

AIUDF chief says party failed to function as an effective Opposition in Assam

Staff Reporter GUWAHATI, May 7: All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) chief Badruddin Ajmal on Thursday launched a blistering attack on the Congress, alleging that the party had "turned into another Muslim League" and completely failed to perform the role of an effective Opposition in Assam.

Speaking to reporters after his victory from the Binakandi Assembly constituency, Ajmal claimed that the Congress had abandoned minority communities and indirectly helped the BJP politically in the state.

"Congress can no longer function as a genuine Opposition force. It has become like another Muslim League while failing to raise the real issues of the people," Ajmal



said. He asserted that the AIUDF would now take up the responsibility of challenging the BJP-led government inside the Assam Assembly.

The AIUDF leader said that despite the party securing only a handful of seats, its legislators would continue to raise issues concerning minorities, eviction drives,

detention centres and the D-voter system.

"Even one AIUDF MLA will be equal to a hundred voices inside the Assembly," he remarked.

Ajmal alleged that Muslims in Assam had faced fear, insecurity and humiliation during the past several years, but the Congress remained silent instead of strongly opposing the government led by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

Referring to political rhetoric surrounding the Miya community, he said minority voters had expected the Congress to take a stronger stand but were left disappointed by the party's inaction.

According to Ajmal, the Congress leadership failed to fill the political (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Rise in BJP women MLAs reflects public trust in governance: Ajanta Neog

Staff Reporter GUWAHATI, May 7: Assam Finance Minister Ajanta Neog on Thursday said the increase in the number of women legislators elected on BJP tickets in the Assam Assembly polls reflects growing public confidence in the party's governance and leadership.

Speaking to reporters here, Neog said the BJP's improved electoral margin in the state was a "historic achievement" and credited the victory to the efforts of party workers at all organisational levels. "The victory margin has increased significantly this time. This is a historic mandate and the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Om Shanti ! Om Sadgati ! Om Shanti !



MEENA NUNISA [Bablisma]

It's been a three year since you left us. Everyday sweet memories of yours comes our way. Since you will never be forgotten, we pledge to you today. The hollowed space within our hearts is the, place, where you'll always stay. We still love you and deeply miss you though you are gone.

That, ten years ago, despite your best efforts, it was not possible to cure, Bhaswati [Lovely], our sec-ond daughter, of the infection she had contracted.

On the 29th of April, 2014 we bid farewell to her as she left for another world. In the process of caring for her, you too, unfortunately, picked up the disease, and [you] battled the same for ten years, finally losing out on the 8th of May 2023.

And, you must have reunited with Bhaswati [Lovely] in the other world. Do stay with her always and give her all the possible love. And that, though you completed the tenure of your successful service on the 29th of February, 2020, but you could enjoy the benefits of pension only for three short years We are getting your dues [Pension] as "Family Pension".

Finally, today on Wednesday the 8th of May, your 3rd death anniversary, we remember you with tear-fill eyes and beseech the Almighty to grant your soul, everlasting peace.

Bereaved family members -

Dr. Motilal Nunisa [Husband]

Mrs. MAINODI [Babli] [Eldest daughter]

Ms. PONAXI [Lolo] [Youngst daughter]

Brothers - in - law:

Pradweep Nunisa, DTO [Retd.]

Dr. Ruplal Nunisa, Addl.DHS, Assam

Dr. Bishnu Ram Nunisa

Shri Ramesh Thaoson, ACS [Retd.]

Sisters - in - laws :

Smti. Usha [Nunisa] Hojai

Smti. Ale [Nunisa] Thaoson

Smti. Jayanti [Hojai] Nunisa,

Smti. Prabhati [Thaoson] Nunisa, IAS,

Dr. Ritui [Thaoson], Nunisa

Smti. Anima [Thaoson] Nunisa,

And all Nephews and Nieces -

Thairngdao Jaymala, Tanushree [Nathum], Donlikdi [Piky], Ronlikdi [Pinky], Priyashree [Jitnju], Bangham [Mao], Dr.Ringlikdi [Nicky], Chiranjeev [Bonny], Ringsmaidi, Shivraj [Veer], Repshodao [Tintin], Ringdao, Jushingdao !

Western Railway sends 4,200 quintals of spices in special freight initiative from Gujarat to Assam

NEW DELHI, May 7: The Western Railway Zone has dispatched 4,200 quintals of cumin seeds through a special parcel train from Mehsana station in Gujarat to Azara station in Assam, marking a first for an organised rail transportation of spices.

Officials said the train, comprising 30 wagons, commenced its journey on Wednesday and will cover an approximate distance of 2,477 kilometres.

"A total of 13,800 packages of spices were loaded into the rake, with a total weight of approximately 4,20,000 kilograms (420 tonnes). Through this operation, the Railways earned more than Rs 25.28 lakh in freight revenue," a press statement from Western Railway said.

It added, "This marks a historic achievement for the Ahmedabad Division, as organised rail transportation of spices has been carried out for the



first time in this sector."

Officials stated that this initiative will play a significant role in directly connecting Gujarat's spice industry

with markets in Northeast India.

"At the same time, it will further strengthen rail transport as a safe, economical and environment-friendly

mode of transportation. This initiative will provide major convenience to traders and exporters and will open up greater possibilities for similar freight movements in the future," they added.

According to Western Railway, it is continuously achieving new milestones in freight transportation and revenue generation, thereby providing a new direction to Indian Railways' freight operations.

Officials involved in the operation said the successful movement of this Deemed VP rake (parcel van) reflects Ahmedabad Division's strong freight-handling capability, efficient logistics management, and customer-oriented services.

"Ahmedabad Division remains committed to providing fast, safe and reliable freight transportation services in line with future business requirements," a senior official said. (PTI)

EU envoy seeks investment liberalisation chapter in FTA with India, early investment pact conclusion

NEW DELHI, May 7: Ambassador of the European Union to India Herve Delphin on Thursday called for inclusion of investment liberalisation chapter in the free trade agreement (FTA) between India and the EU, and urged for early conclusion of the investment protection pact.

India and the 27-nation bloc European Union (EU) announced conclusion of negotiations for a free trade agreement on January 27, which is touted as "mother of all deals".

Under this, a number of Indian goods will enjoy duty-free access to the 27-nation bloc, while imports of luxury cars and wines from the EU will become less expensive.

Both sides are engaged in legal scrutiny of the over 1,000-page FTA text, which is expected to be completed in July. The agreement is likely this calendar year and may come into force early 2027.

He said the agreement covers about two billion people, which is a quarter of the global population, and a quarter of the global GDP.

However, he said, "The FTA does not cover all relevant areas. And we need to look at what I call unfinished business and beyond FTA. And investment is the main case in point".

Like the EU seeks to attract investment, India also needs investment to sustain its growth and European companies in India are already investing here and are ready to do more. Delphin said at the Federation of European Business in India (FEBI) members meet on Wednesday India-EU FTA.

"And European companies not



yet present in India want to come and are ready also to invest more. But you need to create the favourable conditions. So this FTA, and it has already been noticed by the specialists, doesn't have a chapter on investment liberalisation in non-services sectors.

"That would have given a boost and encouragement to the private sector. Hopefully, the EU and India should revisit this area two years down the road after the entry into force of the FTA, as envisaged in the review clause, to see whether we can find common ground and address this missing element of the investment liberalisation chapter," he said.

The ambassador also said both sides should promptly conclude the ongoing negotiation on investment protection agreement (IPA), which should give investors a solid legal framework and an additional incentive to expand their footprint in India.

He added that both political as

ment of Commerce Darpan Jain said "we are working" on the investment thing.

"That is something which we plan to work on in future," Jain said.

Meanwhile, the ambassador added that under the FTA, the EU will eliminate or reduce duties on more than 99 per cent of Indian goods exports, while India will grant better access for almost 97 per cent of EU exports.

"So we will have on the EU side European customers benefiting from cheaper Indian textiles, leather, footwear, gems, jewellery, tea, coffee, spices, marine products, to name a few. And Indian businesses will see lower prices on EU industrial goods like machinery, aircraft, or medical equipment," Delphin said.

So customers at the end of the day will enjoy a wider choice and lower prices and businesses will save on lower tariffs and cheaper production inputs, he said, adding that both economies will benefit from trade diversification.

The bilateral trade in goods and services currently stands at over USD 190 billion.

"We have documented evidence that for every single FTA that the EU has had, the trade has grown twice faster than with partners with non-FTA. So we are confident that this also will happen with India. And think of it, it is estimated that EU's goods exports to India will double by 2032. And with preferential access to the EU market, Indian companies will be well positioned to significantly increase their sales to the EU," he said. (PTI)

well as the business constituencies are expecting this agreement.

"And to complete the picture, we should also swiftly conclude negotiations on the third agreement launched in parallel with the FTA and IPA, which is the agreement on geographical indications. And be sure that it will give also a boost to trade by ensuring proper protection of Indian and the EU's iconic products, whether Darjeeling cheese or Roquefort cheese," he said.

About 6,000 European firms are present in India.

The EU is already a leading investor in the country, with an FDI stock of over 140 billion euros, and the stock of Indian investment in Europe stands at 440 billion euros.

"So the opportunities arising from the FTAs are pretty clear, and now the challenge is to turn these opportunities into achievements," he added.

Speaking at the event, India's chief negotiator for this FTA and Additional Secretary in the Depart-

Tripura showcases investment potential at Guwahati roadshow

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, May 7: The Department of Industries and Commerce, Government of Tripura, organised the "Destination Tripura - Investors' Roadshow" in Guwahati on Wednesday as part of preparations for the upcoming Destination Tripura: Business Conclave 2026.

Held at Vivanta Guwahati, the roadshow aimed to strengthen engagement with the North-East's business community and promote cross-state investment collaboration.

The event brought together industry leaders, entrepreneurs, financial institutions and other stakeholders from across the region.

The programme highlighted Tripura's industrial ecosystem, infrastructure development, policy initiatives and investment opportunities across various sectors, with emphasis on ease of doing business and investor facilitation.

Addressing the gathering virtually, Kiran Gitte said the state government remained committed to creating a business-friendly environment through policy reforms, procedural simplification and time-bound approvals.

He said Tripura was emerging as a preferred investment destination in the North-East due to improving connectivity, strategic location and responsive governance.

Gitte also highlighted Tripura's proximity to Bangladesh and its potential as a gateway for trade, logistics and cross-border economic activity.

Providing an overview of sectoral opportunities, Dr. Deepak Kumar outlined investment prospects in IT and digital services, healthcare, tourism, agri and food processing, rubber, bamboo and agarwood-based industries, renewable energy, urban infrastructure and manufacturing.

He said the state was offering industrial land, plug-and-play infrastructure and end-to-end facilitation support for investors, from project planning to implementation.

The event was also attended by the Chairman and Managing Director of North Eastern Development Finance Corporation, who spoke on financing opportunities and the role of development finance institutions in promoting industrial growth in the North-East.

The programme featured presentations, interactive discussions and business-to-government meetings, enabling direct interaction between investors and senior government officials.

Officials said the roadshow forms part of Tripura's broader efforts to position itself as an investment-ready and reform-driven economic hub ahead of the Destination Tripura: Business Conclave 2026 in Agartala.

India, Vietnam must deepen ties amid profound changes in world: To Lam

MUMBAI, May 7: Vietnamese President To Lam on Thursday pitched for deepening of ties between Vietnam and India amid "profound changes" like advent of AI at the global level.

Reconstruction of global supply chains, strategic competition between major economies, emergence of digital technologies like artificial intelligence, green transformation and increasing demands for economic autonomy are the profound changes happening in the world, Lam said.

"These developments challenge and open up historic opportunities for Vietnam and India to upgrade economic cooperation, from traditional cooperation to strategic integration in new value chains," Lam said at the India-Vietnam Business Forum here.

Lam, who is on a state visit, said the bilateral cooperation between Vietnam and India has developed strongly and comprehensively ever since the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2016.

He, however, said that there is far more that the two countries can do.

"We have even more opportunities to write a new chapter in this story, not just cooperation but co-creation in the global supply chain," Lam, who is also the general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee, said.

Business community from both countries needs to be bolder in taking advantage of the facilitative environment ushered by the two governments, he said, adding that they should work together, and share experiences and technology.

Lam urged the business community to broaden ties and make the bilateral trade more balanced, and also invest more into key areas of the future such as AI, semiconductor, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, clean energy, logistics, data centre and research and development.

"We pledge to uphold the legitimate rights and interests of investors, foster dialogue and create a transparent business environment and healthy competition," he said. (PTI)

JLR India cuts prices of Range Rover SV models ahead of India-UK FTA

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, May 7: Jaguar Land Rover India on Wednesday announced revised pricing for select Range Rover CBU models imported from the United Kingdom, ahead of the proposed India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The company said the revised prices would apply to the Range Rover SV and Range Rover Sport SV models and would come into effect immediately. Under the new pricing structure, the Range Rover SV has been reduced from ₹4.25 crore to ₹3.50 crore (ex-showroom).

The company also announced that SV Ultra Metallic paint options in gloss and satin finishes would now be offered as standard.

The Range Rover Sport SV has been repriced from ₹2.75 crore to ₹2.35 crore (ex-showroom), a move aimed at strengthening its position in the luxury performance

SUV segment.

Managing Director of JLR India Rajan Amba said the repricing reflected the company's intention to pass on the anticipated benefits of the India-UK FTA to customers.

He said the move would make the company's SV portfolio more accessible and strengthen JLR India's growth in the domestic market.

The company clarified that prices of locally manufactured models, including the Range Rover, Range Rover Sport, Range Rover Evoque, Range Rover Velar and Discovery Sport, would remain unchanged.

JLR India also said pricing of the Land Rover Defender and Land Rover Discovery models would not be affected, as these vehicles are manufactured in Slovakia and are outside the scope of the India-UK FTA provisions.

Advanced GroHair & GloSkin Clinic opens Guwahati branch

Expansion takes brand's presence to over 150 clinics globally

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, May 7: Advanced GroHair & GloSkin Clinic inaugurated its Guwahati branch on Wednesday, expanding its network to more than 150 clinics across India and overseas.

The launch event was attended by Assamese actress Barsha Rani Bishaya as chief guest and the brand's founder and managing director Saran Vel J Franchise partners Shakti Raj Jammula, Sumit Sao and Abhishek Peddini were also present.

Company officials said the Guwahati clinic marks a major step in expanding advanced hair regrowth and skin rejuvenation services in the Northeast.

Speaking at the launch, Saran Vel J said the clinic aimed to bring advanced aesthetic and wellness solutions closer to people in the region.

He said the brand's growth has been built on technology-driven treatment and customer trust.

Addressing the gathering, Barsha Rani Bishaya said the increasing awareness around self-care and well-



ness has created demand for professional hair and skin treatment facilities in the region.

The clinic offers services including Percutaneous FUE Hair Transplant, PRP-based treatments, laser hair therapy and regenerative procedures. Skin and aesthetic treatments available at the centre include HydraFacial, Q Switched Laser, Botox, fillers, thread lift and laser-based

treatments. The company also introduced its in-house wellness product line, OnePro, which includes hair and skincare products designed to complement clinical treatments.

Officials said the launch reflects the brand's continued efforts to expand access to specialised aesthetic and wellness care across India and international markets.

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Killing of Suwendu's

areas to trace the men who intercepted Rath's SUV near Madhyamgram on Wednesday night and opened fire from close range before escaping on motorcycles. The murder, coming immediately after the BJP's landmark assembly poll victory ended the TMC's 15-year rule in Bengal, has transformed the state's fragile post-election atmosphere into a political confrontation marked by fear, revenge narratives and accusations of retaliatory violence. The BJP launched a sharp attack on the TMC, alleging the murder reflected a "complete collapse" of law and order in Bengal. State BJP president Samik Bhattacharya claimed party workers were being targeted after the electoral victory and urged cadres to maintain restraint. "While we are the ones who won the election, we are also the ones who are dying," he said. Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan termed the incident a reflection of Bengal's "blood-soaked political culture", while Chirag Paswan said people had voted against precisely "this politics of violence". The TMC rejected the allegations, insisting the party had no role in the murder and accusing the BJP of politicising the incident even before the investigation was complete.

Congress and CPI(M) leaders also condemned the killing and demanded an impartial probe. Investigators said Rath, 42, was returning to his Madhyamgram residence from Kolkata around 10.30 pm on Wednesday when his vehicle was intercepted near Doharia between Doltala and Madhyamgram Chowmaha. According to preliminary findings, a small car first slowed Rath's SUV before one of the motorcycle-borne assailants approached the vehicle and fired multiple rounds from close range. Police later seized the abandoned small car and found its number plate to be fake. "The chassis number and engine number have been erased. It indicates the murder was planned earlier," a senior officer said. Investigators also recovered one of the motorcycles allegedly used in the attack from near a tea stall around 4 km from the crime scene. Police found that the motorcycle, too, carried a fake registration number and its chassis number had been scrubbed. The second motorcycle used in the crime is yet to be traced.

Police recovered empty cartridges, live ammunition and bullet shells from the spot, while forensic experts indicated that sophisticated Glock pistols appeared to have been used in the attack. "A weapon of this nature is generally not used by ordinary criminals. We are examining whether professional shooters were involved," a senior officer said. Rath's driver Buddhadeb Bera also sustained bullet injuries and remained critical after undergoing surgeries at a Kolkata hospital. Police stepped up deployment across Madhyamgram, Doharia and adjoining pockets after BJP supporters staged protests and road blockades demanding immediate arrests.

DGP Siddh Nath Gupta and CRPF Director General Gyanendra Pratap Singh visited the crime scene as investigators pursued leads. Police said CCTV footage showed the suspicious car travelling towards Madhyamgram shortly before the attack. Officers also questioned a tea estate employee from Siliguri after discovering that the registration number used on the abandoned car belonged to his vehicle.

He claimed he had uploaded photographs of the car on an online platform to sell it, investigators said. The killing followed the fiercely fought assembly elections that handed the BJP a historic victory in Bengal and set the stage for the swearing-in of its first government in the state. For the BJP, preparing to form its first government in the state, the incident reinforced its long-standing allegation that Bengal's political culture under the TMC thrived on intimidation and targeted attacks. For the TMC, already grappling with the fallout of a crushing electoral defeat, the optics of the murder have become deeply damaging despite its attempts to distance itself from the crime and demand a court-monitored CBI probe. The murder sharpened the intensely personal rivalry between Adhikari and the TMC leadership, while also aggravating fears that Bengal's turbulent cycle of post-poll violence could enter an even more dangerous phase. (PTI)

Cong has turned

vacuum in the opposition space, forcing AIUDF to emerge as the principal voice against the ruling dispensation. He also criticised senior Congress leaders, including Gaurav Gogoi and Lurinjyoti Gogoi, alleging that they were unable to politically counter the BJP. The AIUDF president further claimed that both the Congress and the BJP worked in coordination during the election campaign to politically weaken his party.

On internal party matters, Ajmal dismissed speculation over leaders leaving the AIUDF, saying those who exited the party had been removed because of organisational differences and disciplinary issues.

Devajit Saikia resigns

with the administration and judiciary for the trust reposed in him during the past several years. "It has been a matter of immense honour and privilege to serve the State of Assam in the constitutional office of Advocate General," he said in the statement. Devajit Saikia had served as the top law officer of the Assam government for nearly five years and represented the state in several important legal and constitutional matters before various courts. Apart from his legal responsibilities in Assam, Saikia also holds the position of secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and has been associated with Indian cricket administration for several years. His resignation comes ahead of the swearing-in of the new BJP-led NDA government in Assam, scheduled to take place on May 12 in Guwahati. Sources indicated that a new Advocate General is expected to be appointed after the formation of the new Council of Ministers in the state.

ECI lifts Model Code

of the election process in most regions, the Cabinet Secretary and Chief Secretaries of the concerned states have been directed to inform all relevant authorities regarding the withdrawal of the restrictions.

The lifting of the MCC will now allow governments and departments to resume regular administrative functions, policy decisions and developmental activities that were temporarily restricted during the election period.

Rise in BJP

credit goes to the leadership and workers of the BJP from the grassroots to the top level," she said. The minister congratulated party workers for their extensive campaigning and organisational efforts during the elections and said the leadership of chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma played a major role in strengthening public support for the BJP-led NDA government. According to Neog, welfare-oriented schemes and development initiatives undertaken by the state government over the past few years directly benefited people at the grassroots level and contributed to the party's electoral success. "The government's policies and welfare measures reached ordinary citizens and this strengthened people's faith in the BJP," she said.

Neog pointed out that seven women MLAs have been elected on BJP tickets this time, an increase from the previous Assembly, where the party had five women legislators. She also referred to the long-pending Women's Reservation Bill and expressed disappointment that the legislation had not yet been implemented despite widespread expectations among women leaders and political workers. "We had hoped that the Women's Reservation Bill would be passed earlier. Unfortunately, that did not happen," she said.

The finance minister alleged that opposition parties, particularly the Congress and some of its allies, lacked sincerity on the issue of women's political representation. At the same time, Neog praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for taking initiatives aimed at women's empowerment and said the proposed reservation framework would play a crucial role in enhancing women's participation in politics. She expressed confidence that greater representation of women in legislative bodies would strengthen democratic participation and policymaking in the future.

No terror sanctuary

by the Indian military. The hostilities ended with an understanding on halting military actions on May 10 following talks over the hotline between army officials of the two sides. Lt Gen Ghai noted that several terror camps have been shifted from the border region to depth areas, but made it clear that distance offers no sanctuary from India's precision capabilities. The senior Army officer also highlighted how India quickly ended the conflict after achieving Operation Sindoor's strategic objectives. "In an era of prolonged conflicts around the world, we struck hard, achieved clearly defined objectives and then decided to cease hostilities when the Pakistanis were compelled to negotiate and requested us to stop," he said. "The objectives were achieved through a calibrated shot and sharp shock that altered the enemy's risk appetite and disrupted his command and control without locking India into a long-drawn war or conflict," he added. Lt Gen Ghai said the Operation Sindoor showcased capabilities of India's indigenous weapon systems and platforms and made a mention of BrahMos and Akash, missiles, homegrown surveillance and targeting systems and ammunition.

"Operation Sindoor was not an end. It was just the beginning. India's fight against terror will go on. A year on, we remember not just the operation but also the principle behind it. India will defend its sovereignty, its security, and its people decisively, professionally and with the utmost responsibility," he said.

In his remarks, Air Marshal A K Bharti, who too play a crucial role as Director General of Air Operations in implementation of Operation Sindoor, highlighted the "primacy of air power" in achieving desired results.

He said India's military might is being strengthened significantly and that the India Air Force has been constantly monitoring the activities of China and Pakistan. "We are continuously factoring in whatever they are (up to)," he said. "We struck and decimated their nine terrorist camps. The proof is there for everybody to see. We struck 11 of their airfields. We destroyed 13 of their aircraft either on the ground or in the air, including one high-value air-borne asset at a record distance of more than 300 kilometres," he said. Air Marshal Bharti, currently serving as Deputy Chief of the IAF, however, did not mention about losses of assets by his force. "They (Pakistan) have not been able to inflict any major damage on our side; neither any military infrastructure nor much of the civilian structures," he said. "Whatever they may say, remember narratives and rhetoric do not give you victory. Victory is measured by hard facts," he added. The senior official said India achieved its objectives by carrying out Operation Sindoor. "When the Pakistanis establishment decided to side with terror and make it their own fight, we had no choice but to respond in kind. It was about self-defence, much beyond a counter-terror operation. When we responded, it was lethal and ruthless," he said. Director General of Naval Operations Vice Admiral AN Pramod said Operation Sindoor underscored the strategic vision of India's approach in combating terrorism.

He said the forward deployment of the Indian Navy assets compelled Pakistani naval and air units to enter in a defensive posture and it largely confined the Pakistani Navy to harbours.

"Operation Sindoor validated India's ability to respond to asymmetric provocation with deliberate, precise and proportionate force. It demonstrated that terror infrastructure and supporting military enablers can be targeted swiftly and effectively," he said. "The operation also highlighted the decisive role of indigenous cutting-edge technologies, platforms, systems and equipment, including drones," he noted.

In his remarks, Lt Gen Ghai said Operation Sindoor underscored India's "whole-of-government" approach in combating terrorism and that it played out in a clockwork fashion on the battlefield.

"They (Pakistan) lost more than 100 soldiers. Around 100 terrorists were killed in those nine terrorist camps," he said. "Inadvertently, their awards list was out on the internet and it told us that so many of those awards were given posthumously," he said. Lt Gen Ghai declined to mention the number of terrorist training camps currently operating across the Line of Control saying the numbers keep fluctuating.

"Some of these camps and launchpads have moved further in the depth where they feel that they will be safer. But as I said, no sanctuary is safe," he said. The senior military officer also talked about "collusivity" between Pakistan and China. "The fact is that Pakistan and China in their own words have a relationship that is deeper than the seas, higher than the mountains, that's a given. The fact that Pakistan has 80 per cent of its military equipment of Chinese origin is a given," he said. At the same time, he asserted that the Indian military is confident of dealing with any security challenge. The officials also gave a detailed overview of how the three forces have been focusing on boosting overall combat prowess including through acquisitions of new platforms, weapons and critical technologies. (PTI)

MERGING OF L-XING GATE IN TINSUKIA DIVISION

Tender Notice No.: TSK/Engg/13 of 2026, **Dated:** 05-05-2026.

E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work:

Item No. 1: Brief Description of Item: Merging of L-Xing gate ST/88 & ST/89 by elimination of ST/88 under jurisdiction of ADENI/Mariani Jn. **Tender Value:** ₹ 2,70,40,091/-, **Earnest Money:** ₹ 5,40,800/-, **Date & time of closing of tender at 15:00 hrs. and opening of tender at 16:00 hrs. on 28-05-2026.** For complete information alongwith the tender document of above e-tender will be available up to 15:00 hrs. on 28-05-2026 in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>.

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Students' body warns of legal action, sets 10-day deadline over alleged violation of Right to Education

ABSU demands immediate supply of Bodo medium textbooks

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, May 7: The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) has demanded proper implementation of the Right to Education, which is a fundamental right for Bodo medium education across the state to ensure a quality educational environment.

Addressing reporters on Thursday at Bodofa House in Kokrajhar, ABSU president Khwrmwdao Wary demanded the provision of Bodo medium textbooks to secure the future of Bodo medium education.

The ABSU has urged the Government of Assam and particularly the School Education Board of Assam to immediately provide all textbooks for Bodo medium students, irrespective of shortages in different classes. The academic session has already begun a month ago, yet students are without textbooks. This is a direct violation of the Fundamental Right to Education. Providing free education and textbooks is the responsibility of the state government. The non-availability of textbooks goes against the principle of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE 2009). The union demanded that all textbooks be



provided as early as possible and stated that a copy of the memorandum is being sent to the Chairman of the School Education Board of Assam.

The union also reminded the Government of Assam and the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan State Director to provide "real Bodo Dokhona" as uniform to students of secondary stage from Class IX to XII, and proper cotton uniforms to all other students in the elementary stage as early as possible. It strongly condemned the use of

poor-quality factory-made polyester dresses provided in the previous year and demanded that such practices be stopped. It appealed to the SSA in Assam to respect the dignity of traditional dresses like Dokhona or Mekhela in Assam, noting that Dokhona is now recognised with GI tagging as "Bodo Dokhona." The union urged the government to intervene seriously in the matter of uniforms and allow locally woven traditional attire for students, including Bodo Dokhona, Assamese Mekhela, and others.

The students' union further urged the provision of school stationery such as school bags in time and with good-quality materials.

It also appealed to the state government to take immediate steps to fill all vacant Bodo medium teaching posts from LP to PG levels in Assam and urged the BTC government to appoint elementary teachers at the earliest, as interviews have already been conducted.

The ABSU stated that in the era of artificial intelligence and machine learning, it is unfortunate that Bodo medium students are deprived of basic educational materials like textbooks while the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) is already being implemented in Assam. It warned that any neglect or "step-motherly treatment" towards Bodo medium education in Assam will not be tolerated in the future and said it is prepared to file a writ petition in the High Court in case of violation of the Right to Education.

The ABSU has set a deadline of 10 days, till May 18, 2026, for the concerned departments to resolve the issues, marking 63 years since the introduction of Bodo medium education in Assam in 1963.

Newly elected MLAs felicitated in Gossaigaon

Operations conducted at multiple stations between April 24 and 30

HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, May 7: Newly elected MLA of 2 No. Dotma constituency, Rabiram Narzary, who has been elected for a third consecutive term, was accorded a grand public felicitation at Kachugaon under the Gossaigaon subdivision on Tuesday.

The felicitation programme, organised by the Kachugaon Block Committee of the BPF was held at the Sujit Narzary Memorial Auditorium.

Speaking on the occasion, Narzary said he would accept any responsibility entrusted to him by his party with humility and continue to serve the people of the constituency, particularly the deprived and underdeveloped sections. He stated that his entry into politics was driven by the aim of addressing public grievances and asserted with confidence that no opposition force would be able to defeat him in the Dotma constituency unless he voluntarily retires from politics.

Responding to queries from media persons, Narzary also took a dig at opposition parties and said preparations for the next election had already begun, with a renewed focus on public service.

Referring to the alliance, he emphasised that cooperation between



parties must be based on mutual trust and respect. He added that the alliance between the BJP and BPF leadership was being strengthened at both higher and grassroots levels to ensure its long-term sustainability. The meeting was presided over by Bani Prasad Boro, president of the Kachugaon Block Committee, BPF and was attended by a large number of party workers, supporters and leaders.

Several speakers at the event urged the Chief Minister to consider Narzary for a ministerial berth, describing him as a dedicated and hardworking public representative.

During the programme, the

MLA was felicitated with traditional items including phulam gamosa, aronai, panchi and other ethnic attire. He also attended similar felicitation programmes at Gurufela, Sarabil and other places in the subdivision.

Meanwhile, the Gossaigaon District Committee of the BPF, in a similar programme held at the premises of the Sarabil Block Committee, felicitated Sobharam Basumaty for winning the prestigious 1 No Gossaigaon LAC.

In his statement, Basumaty said he would raise the pressing issues of society in the Assembly and work with the people of the BTC to advance overall development.

Krisanu Dev Ray excels in MBBS final examination



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 7: Krisanu Dev Ray, a student of Gauhati Medical College has secured the 22nd rank at the state level in the recently declared MBBS final examination results, bringing recognition to his home district of Bongaigaon.

Hailing from Kakojiana village in the district, he also secured the 12th position within Gauhati Medical College.

Krisanu is the elder son of Manabendra Dev Ray, Secretary of the Information, Public Relations, Printing and Stationery Department of the Assam government and Monalisa Roy. Apart from academics, he is also a skilled guitarist and a talented singer known for his melodious voice.

Morigaon woman pilgrim dies at Kedarnath

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, May 7: Sensation prevailed following the demise of a young woman pilgrim, Papor Deka of Dolonghat under Morigaon district, on Thursday. According to information, the woman pilgrim, along with a group of friends, went to the Kedarnath shrine for worship. Unfortunately, she suffered acute dyspnea when only 500 metres were left to reach the Kedarnath shrine and died on the spot.

KCC congratulates BJP on landslide victory in Assam

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 7: The Kamrup Chamber of Commerce (KCC) has extended its heartfelt congratulations to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on its landslide victory in the state of Assam.

The KCC congratulated Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, along with his entire team, party members and dedicated workers, for this remarkable achievement. The KCC firmly believes that under the visionary leadership of Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam is set to witness significant all-round development in the areas of industrialisation, tourism, hospitality, infrastructure and employment generation. The people of Assam have shown immense faith and trust in the leadership of Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, whose long-term vision, determination and commitment towards the progress of the state continue to inspire confidence among citizens and the business community alike. The KCC strongly feels that this leadership, along with its capable team will not only transform the demographic and economic landscape of Assam but will also play a major role in boosting the overall economy of the North East region.

Late attendance alleged at Laokhowa education office

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, May 7: Despite the Assam Government's ongoing efforts to build a strong work culture in government offices, negligence by a section of officials and employees is allegedly undermining these initiatives. Fresh allegations of staff absenteeism have surfaced from government offices in Nagaon district.

According to the latest complaint, officials and employees at the office of the Block Elementary Education Officer and Block Mission Coordinator in Laokhowa, Nagaon district, are not reporting for duty on time. As a result, work at the office has reportedly come to a near standstill, with several staff members allegedly remaining absent until 12 noon.

Locals have also alleged that the Block Education Officer himself is irregular in attendance. Conscious citizens from

the area claimed that the officer visits the office only occasionally. Parents, teachers and other visitors who come for various official work often have to return without getting their tasks completed due to the absence of officials and staff.

Additionally, there are complaints that some teachers spend hours at the office instead of taking classes in their respective schools.

The alleged absenteeism in such a crucial department as education has triggered strong reactions among the public. Residents have expressed concern that the functioning of the block-level office, which is vital for school administration and academic monitoring, is being severely hampered.

With the government emphasising accountability and punctuality in public service, all eyes are now on the steps authorities may take to address the issue.

Cong spokesperson resigns, alleges autocratic leadership

Manoranjan Borgohain blames party leadership for disconnect with grassroots workers

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, May 7: State Congress spokesperson and secretary Manoranjan Borgohain on Wednesday tendered his resignation from the primary membership of the party, relinquishing all party responsibilities while alleging chaotic and autocratic leadership within the organisation.

Addressing a press conference at Rangpurjyoti Club in Sivasagar town, Borgohain blamed the party's debacle in the 2026 elections on State Congress chief Gaurav Gogoi's failure to understand the sentiments of grassroots workers. He said a senior worker like him had to wait for months to get an appointment with the state president. He further alleged that the Congress party had failed to learn



from its mistakes and claimed that those who could please top leaders were able to secure party tickets.

In a statement, Borgohain said he had served the party with utmost dedication for over 33 years, but his sacrifice was not even recognised, let alone rewarded.

"There is no place for sincere

NFR steps up measures to prevent buffalo dashing incidents

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 7: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has undertaken a series of proactive measures to prevent incidents of buffalo dashing in the strategically important Lumding-Badarpur Hill Section under the Lumding Division.

Considering the safety of train operations as well as the protection of livestock, NFR has intensified preventive initiatives in vulnerable locations where such incidents had been reported frequently in the past.

As part of the safety enhancement measures, fencing work is being carried out along the approaches to major railway tunnels in the hill section to restrict the movement of buffaloes and cattle onto railway tracks. Recently, fencing work of approximately 150 metres in length between Tunnel No. 16 and Bridge No 262 on both sides of the track was successfully completed. In addition, fencing work near Tunnel No 10 and Tunnel No 12 is currently under progress and is being expedited for early completion.

These initiatives are expected to significantly reduce the chances of cattle straying onto the tracks and help avoid cattle-train collisions, thereby improving operational safety. Alongside infrastructural measures, NFR is also conducting extensive awareness campaigns in villages located close to areas prone to buffalo dashing incidents, particularly in the New Harangajao-Ditokcherra section.



Railway officials, in coordination with village councils and local residents, are sensitising people about the dangers posed by cattle and buffaloes trespassing onto railway tracks and tunnels. During these campaigns, pamphlets are being distributed and awareness posters are being displayed to encourage villagers to keep livestock away from railway tracks and premises.

NFR reiterated its commitment to ensuring safe and uninterrupted train operations in the hill section through continuous monitoring, infrastructure strengthening and community participation. The railway authority also appealed to local residents and cattle owners to extend their cooperation in safeguarding railway operations and preventing accidents involving livestock.

Karunadhara Darrang committee raises over ₹ 4.4 lakh

HT Correspondent

MANGALDAI, May 7: The Darrang District Committee of Karunadhara Nyas has deposited a total of Rs 4,40,448 into the trust's fund.

The humanitarian organisation, Karunadhara Nyas, founded on February 12, 2011, under the leadership of eminent litterateur, journalist and former Assam Sahitya Sabha president Homen Borgohain, received the contribution from its Darrang district wing.

From April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026, the committee collected the amount purely through voluntary donations. Without soliciting help from anyone or going door-to-door or shop-to-shop with receipt books, the committee accepted spontaneous contributions from kind-hearted citizens on various personal occasions such as birthdays, death anniversaries, wedding anniversaries and other auspicious events.

Mukul Chandra Deka, president; Shekhar Majumdar, executive president; Ganesh Dutta, chief secretary; and Golok Bora, treasurer of the Darrang District Helper Committee, stated that they had been able to build a genuine "movement of the heart" through donations willingly made by compassionate people.

It may be mentioned that Karunadhara Nyas has been providing financial assistance to economically weaker sections of society, particularly those suffering from critical illnesses and persons with disabilities, offering them courage, love and inspiration.

Kaziranga University student found dead in suspected suicide at Kakodonga river

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, May 7: In a case of suspected suicide, a student of The Assam Kaziranga University at Koraikhowa on the outskirts here was found drowned on Thursday in the nearby Kakodonga river in adjoining Golaghat district.

The deceased, who was an 8th semester BTech student, has been identified as Tsaliba T (24) of Pongren village in Kiphire district, Nagaland.

A university official said that as per information received from a roommate of Tsaliba, who was residing at a private PG at the Panichakua area near the institute, Tsaliba had gone out in the morning on his motorcycle and had later called him over phone and told him that he was at the Kakodonga

river bank. After some time, the roommate received a message providing his location and the number of his uncle.

Thereafter, his friend tried to contact him and found the phone switched off, following which he suspected something amiss and informed the local police and the university authorities.

The police reached the spot and found Tsaliba's motorcycle, slippers and mobile phone on the bank of the Kakodonga river. An SDRF team later searched the area and recovered the body.

As the incident site falls under Golaghat district, the body has been sent to Golaghat Civil Hospital for post-mortem examination.

The deceased's family has been informed and an investigation is underway.



Photography Exhibition By Samir Choudhury on the occasion of Birth centenary of Bhupen Hazarika at Gauhati Artists Guild in Guwahati on Thursday. HT photo

One killed in tragic road accident at Balugaon in Darrang

HT Correspondent

DALGAON, May 7: A tragic road accident claimed the life of a motorcyclist at Balugaon under Kharupetia Police Station in Assam's Darrang district on Wednesday.

According to reports, the incident took place when an oil tanker, reportedly coming from the same direction, rammed into a motorcycle travelling from Kharupetia towards Dalgaon. The impact of the collision was severe, leading to the death of the biker on the spot.

Soon after the accident, police personnel reached the scene and recovered the body. The deceased was later sent to Mangaldai Civil Hospital for post-mortem examination. The deceased is identified as Taber Ali (30), who is a school teacher from Kalitpra of Morabega under Udalgiri District, and had gone for his brother's wedding. The tragic incident has cast a pall of gloom over the Balugaon area.

Several detained in connection with death of Kartik Mech in Tezpur

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, May 7: Two persons identified as Raju Mech (20), Palak Keot (20) and a 17-year-old girl, along with two women have been detained by the police in connection with the alleged murder of a man at Upper Gereki in Tezpur under Sadar Police Station.

According to police sources, the victim, identified as Kartik Mech alias Kapou was allegedly assaulted on Wednesday night following a domestic dispute. The detained Raju Mech (20), Palak Keot (20) and the 17-year-old girl are all stated to be relatives of the deceased.

Police said the trio allegedly attacked Kartik Mech during the altercation. He was later found dead on his bed on Thursday morning. Following information about the incident, personnel from Tezpur Police Station rushed to the spot. The body of the deceased was sent to the Tezpur Kanaklata Civil Hospital for post-mortem examination.

Tezpur Police arrest vehicle thief

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, May 7: Tezpur Police arrested a person identified as Hafizul Islam of Thelamara on Wednesday and recovered a stolen goods-laden vehicle during a late-night operation.

Addressing mediapersons, Officer-in-Charge of Tezpur Sadar Police Station Bhaskar Bezbaruah said that the vehicle bearing registration number AS12BC2312 had been stolen from Tezpur on May 5. Following the incident, a police team launched an investigation and apprehended Hafizul while he was hiding at Dolabar in Tezpur. Acting on his confession, the police also recovered the stolen vehicle from a concealed location. OC Bezbaruah said the accused was allegedly linked to an inter-State vehicle theft racket and was involved in several similar theft cases.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Nature never deceives us; it is we who deceive ourselves.
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Tough task ahead for LDF in Kerala

The hallmark of a political party or front is its ability to turn even adversity to account. Such an opportunity has presented itself to the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) in Kerala, which has been shaken to the core by the devastating defeat it has suffered in the 2026 State Assembly election. It is but natural that the LDF is in a state of shock and disbelief. That is understandable, given the magnitude of its loss. But the need of the hour is to shake off the feeling of diffidence and disappointment and snap out of the blue mood. The task of identifying the causes of the defeat and applying the correctives must start right away. And the CPI(M)-led LDF has the resolve, will power and organisational strength the daunting task entails. After all, the Left parties have faced worse situation in the past and bounced back in style. A close look at the facts and figures is necessary to put things in perspective. No doubt, this is the LDF's worst Assembly performance in over four decades. In every election since 1982, the LDF had polled at least 43.5% of the vote, its previous low being 43.48% in 2016 and 43.7% in 2001. In 2021, the LDF created history by securing an unprecedented second consecutive term. But it suffered a setback in the local bodies elections held last year. And its hopes of reversing that trend have not materialized as is evident from the debacle in 2026. Both the CPI(M) and the CPI have recorded similar vote shares—close to 39% in the seats they contested. But ally Kerala Congress(M) fared badly, drawing a blank. The party lost all the 12 seats it contested. Even its chief Jose K. Mani bit electoral dust, again, in Pala, his father K. M. Mani's pocket borough. Another LDF constituent, the RJD managed to win one seat. As for the CPI(M), the party contested 77 seats but won only 26. The CPI dropped from 17 to 8 of the 24 seats it contested.

Next is the alienation of the minority votes—especially that of the Muslims. What made the Muslims abandon the LDF was the refusal of the LDF leaders to criticize the intemperate anti-Muslim outbursts made by the SNDP boss Vellappally Natesan. The LDF paid a heavy penalty for this failure. Another reason has been the arrogant public conduct of a few LDF leaders. This deepened the LDF's disconnect with the people and created an aversion in their minds against the front and the Government. Unless the front leaders learn appropriate lessons from the defeat, the disconnect will become more pronounced.

The emergence of Yoga and soft power

By: Dr Satyavan Saurabh

Yoga has evolved from an ancient Indian discipline to a powerful tool of India's "soft power." This statement not only underscores yoga's historical journey but also highlights the role of cultural diplomacy in the contemporary global landscape, especially in an increasingly fragmented world where the lack of global trust and social cohesion has become a serious challenge. Yoga's origins date back to the archaeological remains of the Indus Valley Civilization, to the Upanishads and Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, where it was considered the science of unifying mind, body, and spirit. In ancient times, yoga was a means of spiritual practice, but in the modern era, it has become an integral part of physical health, mental peace, and lifestyle. Swami Vivekananda introduced yoga to the Western world at the 1893 Chicago Parliament of Religions, laying the foundation for its global acceptance. However, the real change came when the United Nations declared June 21st as International Yoga Day, a proposal by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This decision transformed yoga from a mere exercise to a cultural ambassador. Today, yoga is celebrated in over 190 countries, a testament to India's soft power. Soft power, as defined by Joseph Nye, is the ability to influence through charm and persuasion, rather than force. In India's context, yoga is its perfect expression, as it has been adopted globally without controversy. For example, the yoga industry in the United States is worth \$16 billion, while in Europe and Australia it has become a part of health policies. This not only provides economic benefits but also establishes India's image as peaceful, inclusive, and a repository of ancient wisdom.

Cultural diplomacy is fundamental to soft power, serving as a bridge between the state and society. This diplomacy goes beyond traditional diplomatic negotiations and deepens relationships through culture, art, music, dance, and philosophy. In an increasingly divided world, where geopolitical tensions such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the US-China trade war, instability in the Middle East, and domestic polarization are growing, cultural diplomacy is the only medium that can transcend ideological boundaries. The global crisis of trust is at its peak today. Pew Research Center surveys show that trust in international institutions has declined in a majority of countries, while social media-generated fake news has further deepened divisions. In such a context, cultural diplomacy restores shared human values. Yoga is a prime example. International Yoga Day events bring together people from diverse cultures in asanas, symbolizing social solidarity. From events held at the United Nations Headquarters to the streets of Times Square, yoga has connected divided societies. India has established yoga centers through the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), which not only provide training but also encourage cultural exchange. In neighboring countries like Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka, yoga has strengthened historical bonds, while in European Union countries it has become popular as a solution to stressful lifestyles.

Yoga's success is based on three key principles of cultural diplomacy: inclusivity, universality, and long-term impact. Inclusivity is because yoga is not bound by any religion or caste; it is for everyone, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. African-American communities in the United States have integrated yoga into social justice movements, while in Muslim countries in the Middle East, it has been combined with Islamic meditation practices. Universality is inherent in yoga's philosophy of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam." This message proved particularly relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, when India launched the "Yoga for Wellness" campaign, connecting countries grappling with the global health crisis. Online yoga sessions brought millions of people home, providing a digital form of cultural diplomacy. Yoga has a long-term impact on the younger generation. Yoga courses in universities, curriculums in schools, and corporate wellness programs have made it a part of life. The UNESCO-recognized Yoga Institute in France and the Yoga Festival in Germany are testaments to this. These efforts not only build trust but also enhance social cohesion.

Yoga is central to India's soft power strategy. Over the past decade, India has improved its ranking in the Soft Power Index, where yoga, Ayurveda, and Bollywood are key components. Yoga sessions at G-20 summits have impressed host countries. Yoga, along with the African Union's membership in the 2023 Delhi G-20, united the global South. Cultural diplomacy has repositioned India as a "Vishwa Guru." Unlike Western models like the British Council and the Goethe Institute, India's model is more holistic. Programs like Mission Suryodaya have promoted Surya Namaskar in 100 countries, linking it to environmental awareness. These efforts demonstrate solidarity on global issues like climate change. While there are challenges—commercialization is diluting the spiritual essence of yoga, and Western adaptations are losing its original elements. Nevertheless, Indian government policies, such as the joint efforts of the Ministry of AYUSH and the Ministry of External Affairs, are addressing these challenges. Cultural diplomacy has become increasingly relevant in an increasingly divided world. Polarization following the US presidential election, internal fissures within the European Union, and border disputes in Asia have fractured the world. In such a context, cultural diplomacy complements hard power.

Ultimately, yoga symbolizes cultural diplomacy that connects a divided world. It not only strengthens India's soft power but also binds humanity together through a common thread. In the future, yoga's reach will expand further through digital platforms and virtual reality. India must lead global solidarity while preserving it in its original form. This journey, starting from ancient sages and reaching global citizens, is a triumph of cultural diplomacy.

The core reasons behind Congress's collapse in Assam

The recent results of the Assam Legislative Assembly elections have made it abundantly clear that while the ruling BJP-led alliance has managed to secure a massive and historic victory, the position of the Congress as the principal opposition party has deteriorated to an extremely pitiable and fragile state. The huge vote margin between the ruling party and the Congress is itself a testament to the fact that the emotional and practical connection that once existed between the Congress and the common people has been completely severed. From the era of great leaders like Gopinath Bordoloi to the tenure of Tarun Gogoi, the party that once established an



DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

unchallenged dominance over Assam's political, economic, and social landscape now finds itself struggling merely to preserve its basic existence. This downfall is neither sudden nor accidental; rather, it is the result of prolonged organizational weakness, an acute lack of context-appropriate leadership, a complete failure to understand the changing mindset of the people, and an inability to adapt with time. In today's transformed political environment, voters no longer cast their ballots based on past emotions, legacy, or blind loyalty; they demand rapid development, security, improvement in living standards, and a strong and stable government. The Congress has not only failed to effectively highlight the shortcomings of the ruling government as an opposition but has been far more unsuccessful in presenting itself as a credible, reliable, and strong alternative. While the ruling party conducted its electoral campaign in a highly strategic, scientific, and disciplined manner, the Congress's preparation appeared directionless, disorganized, and outdated. In a complex and sensitive state like Assam, relying merely on anti-incumbency sentiment or a wave of dissatisfaction proved to be an illusion that shattered against harsh reality. This defeat is not merely an electoral loss but a comprehensive collapse of the party's ideological, organizational, and practical foundations, raising a profound question about

not only exposed the opportunism among leaders but also demonstrated a severe lack of coordination between the central and state leadership, eroding confidence in the party's future. The ruling party tactically exploited these weaknesses, effectively dismantling the Congress from within. A strong political party requires unwavering trust and respect for its leadership among grassroots workers, but in the case of the Assam Congress, this trust had completely eroded. The central leadership, based in Delhi, failed to address the ground realities of Assam or resolve internal conflicts. This leadership crisis and repeated defections reinforced among the public the perception that a party incapable of managing its own internal affairs cannot be trusted with the governance of an entire state. The electorate does not favor instability and disorder. Consequently, instead of crossing the electoral threshold, the Congress found itself unable even to defend its own existence, suffering a humiliating defeat and gradually losing its political significance in Assam.

Another significant factor behind this dismal defeat was the Congress's weak strategy regarding the delimitation process and its failure to reach timely and effective understandings with allied parties. The delimitation exercise drastically altered Assam's electoral map, providing a structural

advantage to the ruling party in terms of geography and demographics. The Congress limited its response to criticism, legal challenges, and media statements, but failed to undertake any meaningful grassroots restructuring to adapt to the new realities of constituencies. Contesting elections based on outdated equations proved disastrous. Moreover, the delay and conflicts in forming a united opposition alliance with parties such as Rajgor Dal, Assam Jatiya Parishad, and leftist groups left little time for effective campaigning. The Congress's perceived arrogance and refusal to acknowledge ground realities in seat-sharing negotiations alienated potential allies. Its once-dominant hold over minority vote banks also weakened, as divisions emerged due to conflicts with former ally AIUDF and shifting political equations. While the ruling party strengthened its organization at the booth level and reached voters at their doorsteps, Congress leaders remained largely confined to urban meetings and rallies. Winning elections today requires scientific analysis, data-driven strategies, and constant engagement with the electorate, all of which were glaringly absent in the Congress's organizational structure. The lack of coordination among allies, confusion among workers, and unfamiliarity with newly defined constituencies pushed the Congress into a position of near irrelevance.

The ruling party's consistent implementation of welfare schemes, particularly its strategy of creating direct beneficiaries, played a decisive role in eroding the Congress's support base. Schemes like "Orunodoi," which ensured direct financial assistance to lakhs of economically weaker women, created a strong sense of loyalty among rural female voters. These initiatives positively impacted daily life, health, and household stability, thereby influencing political preferences. The Congress, instead of offering a viable alternative economic model, dismissed such schemes as mere electoral gimmicks or fiscal irresponsibility. However, voters today prioritize tangible and immediate benefits over theoretical critiques. The ruling party's targeted approach in identifying beneficiaries and delivering consistent support helped consolidate a reliable vote bank. In contrast, the Congress remained focused on highlighting issues such as corrup-

tion, debt burden, and inflation without providing practical solutions. Although economic challenges persisted, the sense of financial security offered by welfare schemes and transparent recruitment processes mitigated dissatisfaction. Women voters, a silent yet decisive force, shifted overwhelmingly toward the ruling alliance. The Congress's inability to address grassroots economic realities rendered it politically ineffective.

The growing disconnect between the Congress and the indigenous population's emotions, identity, and cultural concerns further accelerated its decline. Assam's political history is deeply rooted in identity politics and the struggle to preserve cultural and demographic integrity. The Congress failed to adopt a clear, firm, and uncompromising stance on these issues. Particularly in Upper and Central Assam, where indigenous Assamese Hindu voters dominate, distrust toward the Congress intensified. The ruling party skillfully leveraged issues of cultural identity, land rights, and national security, convincing voters that their interests were safeguarded only under its leadership. Meanwhile, the Congress's perceived continuation of minority appeasement politics alienated a significant section of the indigenous population. A political party earns public trust only when it genuinely reflects the people's concerns about land, language, culture, and future security. The negative perception created by past alliances, especially with Badruddin Ajmal's party, continued to haunt the Congress. Its ambiguous stance on issues like illegal immigration further deepened public skepticism. In a state where nationalist sentiment is strong, relying solely on national-level narratives proved politically disastrous. The Congress failed to offer concrete solutions to demographic concerns, prompting voters to shift decisively toward a stronger and more assertive political alternative.

The Congress also lagged significantly in adopting modern campaign techniques, utilizing information technology, and engaging with the younger generation. In the digital age, political messaging reaches voters instantly through mobile platforms. The ruling party effectively used social media to promote its achievements, expose opposition weaknesses, and build a positive narrative. In contrast, the

Congress's communication machinery remained ineffective and outdated. Young voters, especially first-time voters, seek employment opportunities, modern infrastructure, industrial growth, and a promising future. The Congress's rhetoric, focused on past achievements and personal attacks, failed to resonate with them. The absence of targeted messaging for different social groups and the lack of a strong intellectual or strategic think tank further weakened its campaign. While the ruling leadership maintained constant direct contact with people through extensive statewide tours, the Congress lacked a charismatic and unifying figure capable of inspiring mass support. Electoral success today requires not only ideology but also strategic execution, hard work, and psychological understanding of voters, all of which were missing within the Congress framework. This failure to connect with the youth has jeopardized its future support base.

A neutral assessment makes it evident that the Congress's catastrophic defeat in the 2026 Assam Assembly elections is not the result of a single mistake but rather a cumulative outcome of years of failures, lack of vision, organizational stagnation, and complete disconnection from the masses. Politics is a dynamic process, and any force that fails to evolve with time inevitably fades into irrelevance. Instead of understanding public sentiment, the Congress remained trapped in the arrogance of its past legacy. Ignoring indigenous concerns, failing to provide economic alternatives, and being unable to maintain internal unity led the party toward self-destruction. The electorate has moved forward, but the Congress remained stagnant. This defeat sends a clear message that if the party intends to regain relevance, it must rebuild itself from the ground up. Old strategies, old faces, and outdated thinking no longer hold value in Assam's current political landscape. Only a radical transformation and a renewed connection with grassroots realities can revive the party. Otherwise, this election will not merely mark a defeat but will be remembered as the formal end of the Congress's political existence in Assam. A rational analysis reveals that democracy does not sustain irrelevant entities, and the present condition of the Congress in Assam stands as a stark proof of that undeniable reality.

The Architecture of Influence: Himanta Biswa Sarma and the New Assam

The political trajectory of Assam over the last decade represents one of the most significant shifts in Indian regional governance. The recent victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the subsequent rise of Himanta Biswa Sarma to a position of unrivaled authority offer a complex study of how electoral success is manufactured and maintained. While the numbers suggest a resounding mandate, a deeper analysis reveals a transformed political landscape where traditional ethnic identities have been replaced by a sharp religious binary, and where the machinery of the state has been utilized to reshape the electorate itself.

The ascent of Himanta Biswa Sarma is the primary driver of this transformation. His career began within the Congress party, where he served as a key lieutenant during the tenure of Tarun Gogoi. His departure from the Congress in 2015 was not merely a change of personal allegiance but a catalyst for the total collapse of the old order. Since 2001, Sarma has won six consecutive elections from the Jalukbari constituency, demonstrating a level of local popularity that few leaders in India can match. Since becoming Chief Minister in 2021, he has used his exceptional organizational abilities to turn the BJP into a machine that operates with clinical precision.

This machine relies on two distinct but complementary pillars: welfare delivery and administrative restructuring. The Orunodoi scheme is perhaps the most visible example of the party's success in building a loyal base. By providing direct cash transfers to women from lower-income families, the government created a direct relationship with the female electorate that bypassed traditional community leaders. Similarly, Mission Basudhara sought to streamline land records and protect the rights of indigenous settlers. While these initiatives brought modernization to a bureaucratic system, they also served as tools for the deep expansion of the BJP's influence into the most remote parts of the Brahmaputra Valley.

While welfare schemes provided the carrot, administrative measures provided the stick. The 2023 delimitation of assembly constituencies stands as a masterclass in political engineering. By redrawing the boundaries of seats, the government managed to pack certain communities into specific areas while cracking others across multiple districts. The primary result of this exercise was the systematic suppression of Muslim representation in the legislative assembly. This ensured that even with a high percentage of the population, certain demographics could no longer influence the outcome of enough seats to challenge the ruling coalition. This process effectively rendered regional parties and the opposition inconsequential, as the new maps favored the demographic concentrations that support the BJP.

The consequences of this victory are felt most acutely in the social fabric of the state. Assam has a long history of complex ethnic and linguistic politics, where the primary tension often existed between Assamese speakers and Bengali speakers regardless of religion. Under the current leadership,

this has been simplified into a Hindu-Muslim binary. The rhetoric employed during the campaign and within the halls of government has consistently prioritized a specific definition of indigenous identity that excludes Bengali-speaking Muslims. This polarization has moved from the realm of speech into the realm of state action.

In 2025 alone, the state witnessed the displacement of 40,000 individuals through massive eviction drives. Officially, these actions are framed as a necessary measure against encroachment on government land or protected areas. In practice, these drives have disproportionately targeted Bengali-speaking Muslim communities. By framing these actions as the protection of land rights for the "sons of the soil," the government has successfully used state power to consolidate its Hindu voter base while marginalizing a significant portion of the population. This selective targeting of communities has created a sense of insecurity that echoes through the sensitive border regions of the state. The victory of the BJP in Assam also has national implications for the internal power dynamics of the party. Himanta Biswa Sarma is widely perceived as being close to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and his success in Assam has made him the central figure for the BJP across the entire Northeast. The party now commands a majority on its own in the 126-member assembly, and the ruling coalition sits comfortably with 102 members. This level of dominance has allowed the BJP to dilute the influence of

regional allies who were once essential for its survival in the state. The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and other local entities have been forced into a position of total dependence, losing their ability to act as independent voices for regional interests. As the state moves forward under this renewed mandate, the long-term health of the polity remains a point of concern. Assam is a geographically and demographically sensitive region that shares borders with several countries. The stability of such an area depends on the inclusion and participation of all its citizens. While the BJP has proven its ability to win elections through a mix of welfare, rhetoric, and administrative power, the cost of this success is a deeply divided society. The current assembly reflects a state where communities are more isolated from one another than ever before.

The question for the future is whether a government can sustain its authority solely through polarization and the suppression of the opposition. All political parties have the right to seek power and consolidate their influence. Genuine success in a democracy requires a commitment to the interests of the country as a whole rather than just the majority that placed the leaders in power. The triumph of the BJP in Assam is undeniable in its scale, but the methods used to achieve it have left a lasting mark on the democratic institutions of the state. At this moment of victory, it is necessary to examine the fractures that have been created in the pursuit of total political dominance. The health of a democracy is not measured by the size of a majority but by the protection of those who are not part of it.



DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Satyabrata Borah

The silent force of the RSS behind Bengal's historic victory

By: Lalit Garg

The historic, remarkable, and charismatic victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the West Bengal Assembly elections owes much to the deep-rooted efforts of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Undoubtedly, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah played pivotal leadership roles in this success. However, in the face of a formidable challenge from Mamata Banerjee, it was the RSS's sustained groundwork over the years that emerged as the decisive force behind BJP's triumph. Anticipating the political climate shaped by rising tensions and shifting socio-religious dynamics, the RSS had begun preparing for this electoral contest long in advance. It organized over 175,000 small and large meetings across West Bengal. Over the past fifteen years, the organization has significantly expanded its presence, with the number of its branches growing from around 900 to nearly 5,000. Through extensive door-to-door campaigns under the theme "Save Bengal," RSS volunteers carried out a widespread voter awareness initiative. This meticulous micro-level planning laid the foundation for BJP's unprecedented electoral gains and eventual rise to power.

The election results once again demonstrated that politics is not solely determined by grand rallies, loud slogans, or visible campaigns. Often, the real battle is fought quietly at the grassroots—beyond the reach of cameras and headlines. While the aggressive campaign of the All India Trinamool Congress dominated the public discourse, RSS-affiliated workers executed what may be described as a "silent revolution," strengthening their grassroots connect with discipline and subtlety. Issues of Bengal's identity, development, and cultural heritage were central to this outreach. Tailored engagement strategies were designed to reach women, youth, intellectuals, farmers, laborers, and marginalized communities. This broad-based social engagement gradually shaped public opinion in favor of change.

The 2026 West Bengal elections marked not merely a political shift but a deeper social, cultural, and ideological transformation. For decades, Bengal's political landscape was dominated first by Leftist ideology and later by the Trinamool Congress. However, the decisive tilt of public mandate toward BJP challenged long-standing assumptions. At the heart of this transformation lay the quiet yet powerful role of the RSS, whose influence, though largely invisible, proved highly effective. This victory was not the result of short-term elec-

toral tactics but of years of organizational discipline, ideological outreach, and sustained social dialogue. The RSS's expansion in Bengal was never purely politically motivated; rather, it reflected a long-term social vision. Its work unfolded not as a loud campaign but as a gradual, silent societal transformation that steadily influenced public consciousness. By the time elections arrived, a favorable mindset had already taken root.

The strategic vision of RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat also deserves recognition. He viewed Bengal not just as a political unit but as a culturally rich land integral to India's identity. The RSS made conscious efforts to connect with Bengal's cultural ethos, presenting festivals such as Durga Puja, Kali Puja, and Ram Navami as symbols of unity and pride. In doing so, it positioned Hindutva not as an external imposition but as a natural extension of Bengal's own cultural spirit. For a long time, it was believed that Bengali identity and Hindutva were at odds. However, this election challenged that perception. The simultaneous resonance of slogans like "Jai Shri Ram," "Jai Maa Kali," and "Jai Shaa Durga" conveyed not merely political messaging but a deeper cultural synthesis. This alignment suggested that regional identity and broader cultural ideology can coexist harmoniously, fostering a renewed sense of awareness among voters—one that transcended development issues to include identity, security, and cultural pride.

The discourse of "existence" and "identity" emerged strongly during the elections, giving a new dimension to political engagement. The BJP and RSS framed the contest not just as a political rivalry but as an ideological struggle centered on dignity and recognition. Allegations of appeasement against the ruling party intensified this narrative, leading to clear polarization among voters. At the grassroots, RSS played a crucial role in shaping and legitimizing this discourse through consistent engagement. Organizationally, the election underscored the importance of a strong ground structure. From both-level management to coordination among workers, from controlling factionalism to integrating new and old cadres—the RSS's contribution was significant. This was not merely the effort of a political party but the result of a coordinated organizational ecosystem that elevated BJP into a formidable electoral force.

While the popularity of Narendra Modi and the strategic acumen of Amit Shah were critical, the social foundation that enabled their effectiveness was built by the RSS.

Gangotri to Gangasagar, the BJP's 'Hindu Wave' gains momentum

By: Sanjay Saxena

After its victory in West Bengal, a new trend is becoming visible. Earlier, the BJP used to say that it did not receive Muslim votes. Now the same party openly says that it wins elections with Hindu votes. Along with this, it also adds that those who stood with us, we stand with them. Earlier, however, Prime Minister Modi used to say, 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' (Together with all, development for all). The question is whether the BJP is now changing. The party appears to be moving ahead continuously with the support of a growing Hindu wave. To unite Hindus, could this electoral mantra of the BJP blunt the edge of Akhilesh Yadav's PDA strategy in Uttar Pradesh, just as seen in the 2017 and 2022 Assembly elections? It is possible that the formula of PDA (Backward classes, Dalits, and Minorities), which helped Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav significantly check the BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, may collapse in 2027. After all, voters' thinking changes in every election. In politics, no formula remains successful forever.

This is being said because the BJP's spectacular victory in West Bengal has created a stir in political circles. Workers celebrating on the streets there are shouting that they won because of Hindu votes. Earlier, the BJP used to say that Muslims did not vote for it, but now the same party openly admits that it gained power because of Hindu brothers. At the same time, it strongly says that whoever stood with us, we stand with them. Hearing this new tone raises questions: is the BJP changing its path? The Prime Minister's old slogan was 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas,' but now it seems the chant of Hindu unity is gaining strength. In Uttar Pradesh politics, this shift could challenge Akhilesh Yadav's PDA formula. Looking back, in the 2017 and 2022 Assembly elections, this very polarization of Hindu votes had defeated the Samajwadi Party. So, will the PDA magic that succeeded in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections now lose its effect?

In any case, the victory in West Bengal is no ordinary event. The BJP has shaken the stronghold of the Trinamool Congress there. Party workers are overjoyed. Standing on stages, they are declaring that Hindu brothers chose them, and therefore they will protect Hindu interests. Earlier, the BJP was accused of being deprived of Muslim votes. Now the same party leaders are openly saying that Hindu unity is their real strength. Whoever stood with us, we will stand with them. Hearing such statements has stunned opposition parties. The Trinamool Congress had long accused the BJP of practicing polarization politics, but now the BJP



itself seems to be accepting it openly. Is this a new strategic turn? In a state like West Bengal, where Hindus are in the majority but traditionally divided, this slogan appears to have worked. The question now is whether the same slogan will create a similar impact in a large state like Uttar Pradesh.

The politics of Uttar Pradesh has always been complex. Here, vote-bank calculations are set with great precision. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Akhilesh Yadav adopted the PDA formula. By uniting backward classes, Dalits, and minorities, he gave the BJP a tough challenge. The Samajwadi Party demonstrated the power of alliances along with socialist policies and won several seats. But the history of Assembly elections tells a different story. In 2017, the BJP played the Hindu card. It raised the Ram Temple issue. From Gorakhpur to Varanasi, slogans of Hindu unity echoed. The result was that the SP-BSP alliance was crushed. The same happened again in 2022. Yogi Adityanath used bulldozer politics to crack down on criminals. Hindu votes consolidated. The

PDA formula of the Samajwadi Party failed. Akhilesh Yadav kept trying to unite backward communities, but Hindu polarization destroyed those efforts. Now, after the West Bengal victory, the BJP is once again bringing out the same old weapon. Will Akhilesh's PDA become ineffective again?

Political analysts say that voters' thinking changes constantly. Every election writes a different story. No formula remains successful forever. In 2014, the Modi wave swept the country. The slogan 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' echoed everywhere. Development, nationalism, and the anti-corruption campaign demolished the Congress. But in 2019, national security became the dominant issue. The Pulwama attack and the Balakot airstrike gave wings to Hindu nationalism. In 2024, the opposition showed unity. The INDIA alliance was formed. In Uttar Pradesh, PDA performed impressively. The Samajwadi Party said it would take everyone along. It united Yadavs, Muslims, and Dalits and achieved partial success. But now the BJP is preparing to implement the

Bengal model in Uttar Pradesh. Encouraged by its victory through Hindu votes in Bengal, BJP leaders are saying that the same formula can work nationally. Hindus make up nearly 80 percent of Uttar Pradesh's population. If they unite, what will happen to PDA?

BJP leaders are now speaking openly. In West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee's party was attacked as being anti-Hindu, and it was said that Hindus therefore chose the BJP. Now, in Uttar Pradesh too, Yogi Adityanath may follow the same path. The bulldozer still stands as a symbol. By projecting fear regarding law and order, Hindu votes may again be consolidated. Akhilesh Yadav may be challenged with the accusation that his PDA is merely a vote-bank business, while the BJP presents itself as the true protector of Hindu interests. Temple-mosque disputes may once again heat up. Credit for the Ayodhya Ram Temple will be highlighted. Attention may also shift toward Kashi and Mathura. Will minority votes remain with the Samajwadi Party, or will they scatter out of fear? This is exactly what happened in 2017 and 2022.

Muslims largely voted for the SP, but Hindus shifted toward the BJP.

Now the 2027 Assembly elections are approaching. The BJP may amplify the Bengal narrative in Uttar Pradesh. Akhilesh Yadav's difficulties could increase. His PDA is an attempt to attract backward communities. But in Hindu polarization, Brahmins, Thakurs, Vaishyas, and other Hindu groups often move toward the BJP. Dalits too, at times, become dissatisfied with the Bahujan Samaj Party and lean toward the BJP. In 2024, the Samajwadi Party projected Brahmin faces prominently and achieved some success. But if the BJP says it is fighting for Hindu unity, Brahmin votes could once again slip away. The Samajwadi Party depends heavily on Yadav support, but Hindu sentiment in rural areas may intensify. Akhilesh will have to find a new response. Perhaps he may emphasize development and employment or strengthen alliances. But in politics, voters' minds keep changing. West Bengal has shown how effective the Hindu slogan can be. Opposition parties too will now have to rethink their strategy. Congress and other parties are worried about the BJP's new tone. They say it goes against the spirit of the Constitution. But what will the public think?

This debate will spread through tea stalls in Uttar Pradesh villages. Some will say the BJP is right and Hindus should unite. Others will argue that Akhilesh will take everyone along. Electoral strategies are changing. The BJP's slogan of 'Sabka Saath' seems to be fading into the background. Now the chant is about Hindu interests. The victory in West Bengal is being seen as proof of this. If the same strategy succeeds in Uttar Pradesh, then the PDA formula of the Samajwadi Party could collapse. Everything depends on the thinking of voters. Every election creates new hopes, but the danger of history repeating itself remains. This shift is a major gamble for the BJP. Earlier, it tried to appeal to everyone, but now it appears to be openly playing the Hindu card. Will this completely alienate Muslim voters? Or will some return in the name of development? Uttar Pradesh remains a difficult test. Castes are deeply fragmented there. Yadavs, Jats, Kurmis, Mauryas all think differently. PDA attempted to unite them, but the slogan of Hindu unity could overshadow these divisions. Akhilesh will have to remain cautious. He will need to build a new narrative perhaps by raising farmers' issues or promising jobs to the youth. Politics is an uncertain game. West Bengal has sent a signal. What will happen in Uttar Pradesh, only time will tell. The voter is king. If the voter's thinking changes, political formulas will change as well.

Tamil Nadu's game-changer: How Vijay's TVK stormed to power

By: Dipak Kurmi

The remarkable electoral debut of actor-turned-politician Vijay's Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), which has emerged as the front-runner to form the Government in Tamil Nadu, has put a sharp spotlight on political startups, very few of which have managed to turn into unicorns instantly. Following the historic results on Monday, TVK has successfully followed in the illustrious footsteps of parties such as the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in moving to form the Government after its very first electoral outing. While the AAP famously formed the Government with the support of the Congress following its debut election of 2013, the AGP had formed a Government in 1985, soon after its formation, with the support of successful independent candidates affiliated with the Assam movement. Similarly, the TDP under NT Rama Rao had swept the Andhra Pradesh Assembly polls in 1983 with a huge majority, winning 201 seats just a year after its inception.

However, the history of Indian democracy suggests that not many political startups have turned into electoral unicorns; while some took time to mature, others failed to leave any lasting imprint on the national or regional psyche. Just last year, in the 2025 Bihar elections, the highly anticipated Jan Suraj party bit the dust, failing to translate a massive grassroots campaign into legislative presence. There have been other parties that created a strong buzz but ultimately failed to succeed at the hustings, such as actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan's Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM), which drew a blank in the 2021 Tamil Nadu Assembly polls despite high media visibility. The TVK, from its very start in 2024, created a strong buzz that resonated across the state, and with several political startups formed by movie stars doing well in the past in the South, there were exceptionally high expectations from it in the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly polls. The TVK has stunned one and all, causing a major political earthquake in Tamil Nadu by beating both the DMK and AIADMK, the two main players that have dominated the state for decades. According to the Election Commission of India (ECI) website, the TVK was leading in 107 seats, while the ruling DMK trailed with leads in 58 seats and the AIADMK in 51, marking a significant departure from traditional voting patterns. Given that the majority mark in the 234-member Tamil Nadu Assembly is 118, the TVK's performance is nothing short of extraordinary for a debutant entity. This success stands in stark contrast to the fate of several small startup parties in Bihar, such as the Purals Party headed by Pushpam Priya Choudhary, which failed to secure seats despite a sophisticated campaign.

Other small parties in Northern India have maintained limited ambitions and survive only in specific pockets, such as Jitan Ram Manjhi's Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) and Upendra Kushwaha's Rashtriya Lok Morcha. In Uttar Pradesh, there are similar localized parties like the NISHAD Party, Peace Party, Apna Dal (Sonelal), and Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj

Party (SBSP) that act primarily as alliance partners. In India, parties keep getting formed and disappear after a poor showing at the hustings, hardly creating any lasting buzz. However, this could not have been said about Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraj because it created more than a splash, with many predicting that it could emerge as the next Aam Aadmi Party in the Bihar polls. However, the media euphoria around it proved to be a mirage as the party was decimated at the hustings and failed to open its account in any of the 238 seats it contested.

If one looks at the political landscape of the country today, there are six national parties: the BJP, Congress, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM), National People's Party (NPP), and AAP. Against this backdrop of established giants, actor-turned-politician Vijay has delivered his biggest blockbuster in Tamil Nadu, recording one of the most striking electoral upsets in recent years, only two years after forming the TVK. Bagging 109 seats eventually, his performance, like his films, was packed with suspense and high-octane drama, notwithstanding the tragic stampede in Karur that claimed 41 lives on September 27, 2025, during his 38-district tour. This tragedy had raised serious questions about crowd management and security planning, yet the electoral momentum remained largely unaffected as voters prioritized the promise of systemic change.

Moreover, Vijay has effectively rewritten the southern state's historical political trends, which have long been identified with specific Dravidian ideologies. Vijay not only won his seat from Perambur with a margin of over 49,000 votes but his debutant party outpaced both DMK and AIADMK across diverse geographical regions. The TVK emerged on Monday as the dominant force in Tamil Nadu, leaving the AIADMK with 42 seats and the DMK with 38. The BJP secured four seats, the Congress two, and others accounted for eight seats. Vijay's TVK secured a massive 34.82 per cent vote-share compared to the DMK's 24.13 per cent, and although the new outfit fell short of the magic majority mark of 118 seats, it remains the strongest contender to lead the next government.

Interestingly, the TVK and Vijay differed significantly from mainstream political parties and their conventional ways to seek votes. Vijay neither introduced candidates in all the constituencies nor toured all segments or vigorously campaigned in the traditional sense by addressing endless series of rallies. He neither met the press nor gave frequent interviews, choosing instead to communicate directly to people via social media platforms. Unusually, he focused his communication on teens, youngsters, and children to persuade their parents to vote for TVK, a strategy that paid off handsomely. What began as a high-profile political entry quickly turned into a full-blown electoral surge, with TVK gaining ground even in the traditional strongholds of the Dravidian majors, marking a rare instance where voters decisively moved away from the familiar DMK-AIADMK binary that has existed since 1962.

Actor-turned-politician Vijay will now join the likes of former chief ministers M.G. Ramachandran (MGR) and Jay-

alalithaa, both legendary actors who made it big in the political firmament of Tamil Nadu. He notably did not repeat the mistakes of superstars like Kamal Haasan, Vijaykanth, and Rajinikanth, who had entered the political arena but could not leave a lasting mark of this magnitude. As the results echoed across the state, many wondered if this was just an election result or the end of an era. Vijay's charisma and established fan base played a crucial role in tilting the scales, but so did his list of lofty poll promises, specifically the "Super Six" promises for women, which included 8 grams of gold for marriage worth approximately 14,000 rupees per gram, six free LPG cylinders, and monthly financial aid.

The TVK manifesto also assured a quality silk saree in addition to gold for independent brides and interest-free loans up to 5 lakh rupees for women-run Self-Help Groups (SHGs). Vijay assured corruption-free good governance and placed heavy importance on education by promising 15,000 rupees annually to mothers of children in Government schools to prevent dropouts. Additionally, the party promised a Minimum Support Price (MSP) of 3,500 rupees per quintal for paddy and 4,500 rupees per tonne for sugarcane. To address youth unemployment, Vijay pledged to create five lakh new Government jobs and offer stipendiary internships, with unemployed graduates receiving a monthly aid of up to 4,000 rupees.

When Vijay repeatedly asserted that the 2026 Assembly polls would be a fight between the TVK and the ruling DMK, many skeptics did not buy the argument. However, his social media messages were forwarded relentlessly by his fans and followers, creating a word-of-mouth campaign that bypassed traditional media. When polling crossed 85 per cent, Vijay, addressing himself as "Vijay Mama" (Vijay uncle), specially thanked the "Kutti, Nanba, Nanbees" (little children and friends) for guiding their families to the booths. He brilliantly combined elements of Dravidian ideology and Tamil nationalism in formulating his party's core identity. This branding was decades in the making; his family had introduced the title "Ilaya Thalapaty" (Young Commander) as early as 1994, which evolved into "Thalapaty" as he matured.

Now, Chandrasekar Joseph Vijay, at 51 years old, has successfully graduated from being the "Thalapaty" to a "Thalaivan" (leader) and potential "Muthalvar" (Chief Minister). This rise was foreshadowed in 2021 when his fans, under the Vijay Makkal Iyakkam (VMI) banner, won local body polls using his photos. Many VMI office-bearers are now key functionaries of the TVK. Even his 2013 movie "Thalaiva" carried the tagline "Born to Lead," a clear hint of his ambitions that was eventually removed following controversy with the then AIADMK government. From his child artist debut in "Vetri" (1984) to his first lead role in "Naalaya Theerpu" (1992), Vijay's journey has been one of persistence. His victory in Virugambakkam, where R. Sabarathanan, the son of his long-time driver Rajendran, won by 27,086 votes, exemplifies the grassroots loyalty that has finally broken the decades-long DMK-AIADMK sway. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

Why distance from in-laws and hold on husband?

By: Dr Privanka Saurabh

Marriage isn't a power struggle, but rather a relationship of trust, respect, and responsibility between two individuals. However, in our society, marriage is often transformed from a partnership into a game of control, where one party seeks to impose its traditions and the other adopts a rigid stance to protect its independence. This conflict eventually turns into conflict, distance, and distrust, leading people to blame the relationship as a whole. The real problem lies not in the relationship itself, but in the way we understand it.

It's easy to dismiss the marital tensions we see today as merely a matter of women's perception, but that would be an incomplete analysis. Indian families have long placed the man in the role of decision-maker and the woman in the subservient role. Within this framework, the daughter-in-law was expected to accept, remain silent, conform, and unquestioningly follow family traditions. On the other hand, a new generation of women, with education, jobs, self-reliance, and self-respect, are challenging this role. They no longer want to be just "daughters-in-law"; they want to be respected as individuals.

This is where the generational divide becomes clearly visible. In the past, marriage meant moving into the husband's home and adapting to the same system, whether it was fair or not. Today's woman believes that even after marriage, she should retain her own individuality, her own family, her own thoughts, and her own boundaries. This demand is not wrong in itself. Every person has the right to live with dignity and self-respect. The problem begins when this right is mistaken for stubbornness or rebellion.

On the other hand, many men also remain stuck in old patterns. They want their wives to completely integrate into their family, obey their parents' every word, follow every household tradition, and remain unquestioning under any circumstances. They forget that marriage is a union of two individuals, not a power of one over the other. When a man believes that his wife simply has to adjust, and only he has the power to change her, it creates an imbalance in the relationship. This imbalance gradually turns into suspicion, bitterness, and distance.

The relationship with in-laws remains sweet as long as there is respect. Respect doesn't just mean formal respect, but emotional acceptance. Expecting a daughter-in-law to abandon her parents, her values, her thoughts, and her priorities is actually a form of emotional pressure. It's one thing to acquire a new home after marriage, but it's quite another to sever old ties. A woman can be a daughter, a wife, and a daughter-in-law all at the same time. The problem arises when she is asked to remain only a daughter-in-law, and her other identities are neglected.

Similarly, it's true that in some cases, wives turn the relationship into a struggle for control rather than a partnership. They try to control their husbands not through love, under-

standing, and communication, but through pressure, complaints, and accusations. Such behavior also weakens the relationship. If one party in a marriage tries to dominate everything, the other either breaks down or becomes rigid in resistance. Therefore, it wouldn't be correct to say that the fault lies solely with men or solely with women. The problem lies with the mindset that turns marriage into a struggle for power balance rather than cooperation.

In fact, many layers of marriage interact in Indian society. Love, tradition, caste, family, property, prestige, and social pressure all influence marriage. Expecting one person to accept everything without protest is unrealistic. Society is changing, education has increased, economic independence has grown, and access to information has also expanded. People no longer accept past decisions without question. This is why the need for communication within marriage is greater than ever. Unfortunately, communication is often replaced by accusations, complaints, and emotional distance.

In many homes, problems arise less from the husband and wife than from the family's intrusive role. In-laws, siblings, relatives, and society all join forces to voice their opinions about the couple's personal lives. Advice, comparisons, and interference on every small matter erode the relationship. When the husband doesn't stand by his wife, the wife feels she has no support left after marriage. And when the husband feels that because his wife has come to his home, he must completely submit to her, he loses sensitivity. This creates a distance between the two parties. The relationship becomes less loving and more strategic.

It's also important to understand that freedom and independence are not the same thing. A woman speaking up for her dignity, making her own decisions, and protecting her self-respect isn't independence. However, if she sees conflict as the only solution to everything, there can be no peace in the relationship. Similarly, a man's responsibility to his family is essential, but unilaterally ruling over his wife in the name of responsibility is unfair. The relationship between husband and wife should be balanced by dignity, compassion, and respect. Until this balance is achieved, tensions will persist in the marriage.

Society must accept that today's woman is no longer the silent and tolerant woman she once was. This change isn't bad. It's a sign of social progress. A woman who is educated, earns, and understands her rights won't compromise on everything. She also realizes that marriage doesn't mean surrender, but a shared life. Similarly, a man must understand that respecting his wife isn't a sign of weakness, but rather maturity. A husband who can treat his wife as an equal is truly strong. A husband who seeks to suppress his wife isn't powerful, but insecure.

The most pressing need within families is to view relationships not as hierarchies, but as partnerships. A daughter deserves the same respect as

a daughter-in-law in her own home. A wife deserves authority in her husband's home, not favor. A husband should also be a partner who understands, listens, and shares responsibilities, not just earns. The sooner this is understood, the sooner tensions in marital relationships will diminish. The future of marriage lies in dialogue, not oppression. It lies in trust, not fear. It lies in equality, not command.

Today, we need to stop generalizing about women. Not every woman is the same. Not every man is the same. Some women genuinely seek dominance in relationships, while others simply seek respect and security. Some men are true life partners, while others only seek to impose their will. Therefore, blaming one group is not the solution. The right approach is to understand relationships on a human level, not to draw one-sided conclusions based on gender.

To save a marriage, ego must first be reduced. The husband must accept that his wife is not his property. The wife must understand that controlling her husband is not love. The in-laws must accept that the daughter-in-law is not an external object, but a member of the family. And the parents must also understand that the solution to every problem lies not in interference, but in patience and dialogue. As long as each party views its role as one of authority and pressure, the problem will persist.

The truth is that the biggest challenge in modern marriage is balancing freedom and responsibility. If freedom is sought only for oneself and responsibility is placed on the other, the relationship will not work. If responsibility is demanded only from one party and the other is given leeway, the relationship will also fail. Therefore, a shared understanding is needed. Husband and wife must learn to stand for each other, not against each other. Only when this feeling is developed will the true meaning of marriage be restored.

Society also needs to change its language. Comments like "the daughter-in-law broke the house," "the wife changed the husband," "the woman wants everything" only inflame a complex problem. Such statements simplify thinking, but offer no solution. The problem will be solved when we recognize that every marriage involves two individuals with different desires, boundaries, emotions, and expectations. Understanding and balancing these is the key. This understanding saves families, and this understanding makes relationships respectable.

Ultimately, the future of marriage lies not in the victory of one gender, but in mutual respect. Neither woman must conquer the man, nor man must dominate the woman. Together, they must build a life where love, freedom, dignity, and trust coexist. Only relationships built on equality endure. Relationships built on dominance appear strong but are inherently hollow. This is the truth that today's society must understand. (Dr Privanka Saurabh, PhD (Political Science), is a poet and social thinker.)

Two former Chinese defence ministers sentenced to death for corruption

BEIJING, May 7: Two former Chinese defence ministers, Wei Fenghe and Li Shangfu, were sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve over graft charges by a military court on Thursday, in an unprecedented purge at the top of the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

Their sentences were separately handed down by the military court. Both Wei and Li were also former members of the powerful Central Military Commission (CMC), headed by President Xi Jinping, and former state councillors, a high-ranking designation of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC).

Wei, 72, was convicted of accepting bribes, while Li, 68, was convicted of both accepting and offering bribes, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported, citing the court rulings.

In China, death penalties with reprieve are typically commuted to life sentences. Both Wei and Li headed the powerful Rocket (missile) Force, established in 2015 as part of Xi's military overhaul.



Gen Wei, who headed the rocket force from its inception until 2017 and later served as the defence minister from 2018 to 2023, was detained and expelled from the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) over corruption charges. The Rocket Force operates China's most powerful long and short-range missiles and is regarded as significant, as it is the key military arm of the PLA.

They were stripped of their political rights for life, and all of their personal properties will be confiscated. The court rulings said that no further commutation or parole will be allowed after their penalties are commuted to life imprisonment in accordance with the law upon the expiration of the two-year reprieve period. Under the current political order in China, officials convicted of

corruption have at times received death sentences, though these were seldom carried out because the judgments typically included a two-year reprieve.

The reprieve provision allowed the accused to confess their crimes and cooperate with investigators.

Ever since Xi took over power in 2012, he has carried out major purges of officials and the military. Over two million officials were reported to have been punished for corruption.

The periodic purges were reportedly aimed at instilling fear and obedience in the rank and file.

In a shocking move in January, Gen Zhang Youxia, the highest ranking official of the PLA, along with senior General Liu Zhenli were placed under investigation for serious violation of discipline of the CPC and laws.

Zhang is the first Vice Chairman of the CMC - the highest-ranking uniformed officer in the Chinese military. Liu is a member of the CMC and served as chief of staff of the Joint Staff Department of the CMC. Besides corruption, which is the main allegation against the

sacked military officials, indiscipline and disobedience of the CPC leadership were stated to be the reasons for the action against them.

Since he came to power in 2012, Xi has been insisting that the military should function under the leadership of the CPC.

Critics say that through the anti-corruption movement, he consolidated his power, emerging as the core leader of the party, next only to the party founder, Mao Zedong.

In his recent address to the military officials, Xi said all thoughts or actions driven by personal gains and corruption are completely incompatible with the Party's nature and purpose. He urged high-ranking military officials to take the lead in putting down the official airs, and remain true to the identity of revolutionary service personnel.

Xi said that everyone should be equal before laws and regulations, and there are no special cases in the observance of laws and regulations and no exceptions in their enforcement. (PTI)

Bangladesh seeks China's support in Teesta river restoration project

BEIJING, May 7: Bangladesh's new government, headed by Tarique Rahman, has formally sought China's involvement and support for the Teesta River restoration project, a move that may cast shadow on New Delhi-Dhaka ties.

The issues concerning the Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project (TRCMRP) were discussed in a meeting between Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Beijing on Wednesday, according to state-run Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) news agency.

The Teesta River flows from the eastern Himalayas through Sikkim and West Bengal before entering Bangladesh, where it is a key source of irrigation and livelihoods of millions of people. Expressing support for the new Bangladesh government, Wang was quoted saying by BSS news agency that China is ready to promote the alignment of the high-quality Belt and Road cooperation with Bangladesh's national development strategies and deepen cooperation in traditional

areas like economy, infrastructure, and people-to-people exchanges, among others. The government will also encourage Chinese enterprises to invest in Bangladesh, he said.

According to the Chinese official readout, Wang stressed that China's development of relations with Bangladesh and other South Asian countries does not target any third party, nor should it be affected by any third party.

This is Rahman's first visit to China after the new government headed by Tarique Rahman took over power in February this year. He arrived here on May 5 and is scheduled to leave on Thursday.

Last month, Rahman was in India. His talks with Indian leaders were closely watched in Beijing as the interim administration led by Muhammad Yunus had moved closer to China and Pakistan after the fall of Sheikh Hasina, straining ties between Dhaka and New Delhi.

China has for years shown interest in developing the TRCMRP, located near India's sensitive Siliguri Corridor connecting the mainland with the northeastern states. (AP)

Pak Army says it will continue to upgrade its capabilities to meet future challenges

ISLAMABAD, May 7: The Pakistan Army on Thursday said that it would continue to upgrade its capabilities to meet future challenges and respond decisively to any aggression.

On the first anniversary of 'Marka-e-Haq', the name given by Pakistan to the four-day conflict with India last year, the army described it as a "defining chapter" in the country's military history.

In response to the Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people, mostly tourists, were killed, India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7 last year, carrying out airstrikes on nine terror infrastructures in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, eliminating at least 100 terrorists.

The action triggered a rapid escalation in tensions, with Pakistan launching retaliatory strikes, though most of them were thwarted by the Indian military.

The hostilities ended with an understanding on halting the military actions on May 10 following talks over the hotline between army officials of the two sides.



In a statement datelined 'Rawalpindi, Midnight 6/7 May, 2026', the Pakistan Army said that armed forces remain fully cognizant of the evolving geopolitical and regional security environment, as well as the aggressive capability pursuits of adversarial forces.

"While the strategic environment continues to transform, the resolve, vigilance and commitment of Pakistan Armed Forces to defend the nation remain unwavering," it said.

"Pakistan Armed Forces continue to invest in critical capabilities, advanced technologies and professional excellence required to meet future challenges. More focused than ever before, they stand prepared for the future battlespace and remain ready to decisively respond to any aggression imposed upon the homeland," it said.

The army said that any hostile design against Pakistan will be countered with even greater strength, precision and resolve far stronger

than what was witnessed by the adversary during the four-day conflict last year.

Highlighting the role of Pakistan Air Force, it said that the historic milestone reflects the PAF's "steadfast journey towards becoming a future-ready air power through smart inductions of cutting-edge systems and swift operationalisation of niche and disruptive technologies, consolidating its operational reorientation".

"By mastering the skillful employment of Multi-domain Operations, Pakistan Air Force continues to consolidate itself into a future-focused and capable air power, fully prepared to uphold the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan in the face of the evolving nature and parameters of modern air warfare," it said.

It said the "successful execution of these operations, unprecedented in scope and novel in the history of aerial warfare, not only underscored the professional excellence of the Pakistan Air Force but also renewed the pride, confidence and spirit of the resilient Pakistani nation." (PTI)

India, EU discuss mobility and migration on margins of UN forum

UNITED NATIONS, May 7: India has held talks with the European Union on mobility and migration issues, including cooperation under the mobility framework signed earlier this year.

Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh met European Union Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration Magnus Brunner in New York on Wednesday on the margins of the second International Migration Review Forum (IMRF), being organised by the UN General Assembly from May 4 to 8.

"Our discussions focused on mobility and migration matters. Also took stock of multiple meetings of the India-EU comprehensive framework on cooperation in mobility and the recently launched Legal Gateway Office in ICT Sector," Singh said in a post on X.

The India-EU mobility agreement, signed in January 2026, aims to make legal migration easier and safer for Indian professionals, researchers and students, while the European Legal Gateway Office launched in New Delhi in February serves as a one-stop centre for opportunities across the EU's 27 member states. (PTI)

Judge releases note cellmate says he found after Epstein's suspected suicide attempt

NEW YORK, May 7: A note Jeffrey Epstein's former cellmate claimed he found after the millionaire sex offender's first suspected jail suicide attempt was made public Wednesday, years after being sealed and locked in a courthouse vault as part of an unrelated legal dispute.

US District Judge Kenneth Karas in White Plains, New York, ordered the release of the note after The New York Times asked him last week to unseal it and other documents in a case involving the former cellmate, Nicholas Tartaglione. Federal prosecutors did not oppose the request.

Few people had known about the note until Tartaglione, a former police officer serving a life sentence for killing four people, mentioned it last year on writer Jessica Reed Kraus' podcast. Tartaglione claimed he discovered the note in a book after Epstein was found on the floor of their cell at a Manhattan federal jail on July 23, 2019, with a strip of bedsheet around the financier's neck. That was about three weeks before Epstein was found dead in

his cell in what authorities concluded was a suicide.

"They investigated me for month -- found nothing!!!" said the short note, which is hard to decipher in some places. "It is a treat to be able to choose" the "time to say goodbye," the note continues. "Watcha want me to do -- Bust out cryin!!!" "NO FUN," the note concludes, with those words underlined. "NOT WORTH IT!!!"

It is unclear who wrote the note Tartaglione claimed to have found. It wasn't mentioned in the lengthy government reports examining the circumstances of Epstein's death, nor did it surface in the Justice Department's recent release of files on the late financier. In a written ruling, Karas said he weighed the privacy interests of third parties, including Epstein, before ruling to release the note. He said existing case law suggests that privacy interests of a deceased person, such as Epstein, "are vastly reduced and disclosure of the deceased's information is unlikely to work a concrete harm."

According to jail records, Epstein

had friction marks and skin irritation on his neck from the suspected July 23 attempt. Jail officers said he was breathing heavily but responsive. One officer reported at the time that Epstein said he believed Tartaglione had tried to kill him, according to a memo included in the Justice Department's files. Jail officials placed Epstein on suicide watch for 31 hours after the incident before downgrading him to psychiatric observation — his status when he killed himself. According to jail records, he denied trying to harm himself, telling a jail psychologist that suicide was against his Jewish religion and that he was a "coward" who didn't like pain.

A chronology included in the files states that Tartaglione told his lawyer about the note four days after the suspected July 23 attempt. The note was later submitted as evidence in Tartaglione's criminal case and was placed under seal amid a dispute over his legal representation.

Both men were interviewed by jail personnel on July 31, 2019, according to jail records. (AP)

Brazil's Lula to discuss fighting organised crime, tariffs in Trump meeting

RIO DE JANEIRO, May 7: Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva will discuss cooperation on the fight against organised crime and tariffs with US President Donald Trump, Brazil's finance minister Dario Durigan has said, one day ahead of the scheduled meeting between the pair.

"The goal is to protect Brazil's population, prioritise the country and maintain constructive dialogue," Durigan told state broadcaster EBC on Wednesday. "Expectations for the trip are very positive." The encounter at the White House follows a crisis in bilateral relations last year, after the Trump administration imposed a 50 per cent tariff on Brazilian goods and tied the measure to the prosecution of former President Jair Bolsonaro for his involvement in a coup plot.

Lula sharply defended Brazil's sovereignty and Trump later loosened tariffs on Brazil as part of his effort to lower consumer costs for Americans.



Trump and Lula started mending fences at the United Nations General Assembly in September, which was followed by their first private meeting in Malaysia in October and subsequent phone conversations.

The Brazilian government's handling of the 50 per cent tariff likely raised the country's leverage with the Trump administration, said Ana Garcia, an international relations professor at the Rural Federal Uni-

versity of Rio de Janeiro.

"The Trump administration likely sees Brazil as a partner that must be taken somewhat seriously, but will continue to pressure it to make concessions," Garcia said.

An ongoing point of contention between the two governments is the Trump administration's reported consideration of designating Brazil's largest criminal factions — Red Command, or CV, and the First

Capital Command, or PCC — foreign terrorist organizations.

The designations would give the US more power to "to act as a political or economic actor in Brazil," said Leonardo Paz Neves, an international relations professor at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, a think-tank and university. "It's a defensive issue for Brazil that doesn't serve Brazil's interests at all."

A Brazilian government official, who spoke on condition of anonymity as they are not allowed to discuss the matter publicly, said that both sides appeared to be committed to deepening cooperation on the fight against organised crime rather than opting for unilateral actions.

Another key item likely to be on the meeting's agenda is access to Brazil's rare earth deposits. The South American country has the world's second-largest reserves of rare earth minerals, used in a wide range of products, including smartphones, electric vehicles, solar panels and jet engines. (AP)

EKLAVYA MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL, HOWRAGHAT
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 Email: emrs.howraghat@gmail.com
ENGLISH MEDIUM

School Estd Year: 2025 CBSE Affiliation No:-
 School UDISE+ No:- 18190410306 School No:-

No. EMRS/Howraghat/2026-27/DC/KA/05 Dated: 22/04/2026

SUBJECT: TENDER FOR HIRING OF VEHICLE FOR EMRS, HOWRAGHAT.

Sealed quotations/tenders are hereby invited from vehicle owners/agencies for the hiring of one vehicle for official use at Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS), Howraghat on monthly basis, subject to the terms and conditions mentioned below.

- Details of Requirement**
 - Type of Vehicle: 4-wheeler and should have capacity to carry up to 4 persons having a comfortable seat for carrying a sick child.
 - Purpose: Official use of EMRS, Howraghat.
 - Hiring Basis: Monthly
 - Duration: initially for 2 years, which may be extended based on satisfactory service and requirement?
 - Place of Duty: EMRS, Howraghat.
- Eligibility Criteria**
 - The vehicle should have capacity to carry up to 4 persons having a comfortable seat for carrying a sick child.
 - The vehicle must have all valid documents such as:
 - Registration Certificate (RC)
 - Insurance
 - Pollution Certificate
 - Driving License of driver
 - Valid taxi permits for entire period of hiring.
 - The vehicle should be latest model, preferably not more than 03 years old.
- Terms and Conditions**
 - The contract will be for a period minimum two years, extendable up to 5 years, subject to satisfactory performance.
 - Rental Charges: Rs 35,000/- per month (inclusive of drivers salary, fuel up to 900 Kilometer per month and maintenance charges).
 - Fuel Limit: The rental includes fuel for up to 900 KM per month; beyond that, it shall be charged at Rs.14/- per kilometer.
 - Vehicle Usage: The vehicle shall not be used for any personal purpose by any official of the school.
 - Vehicle should be parked in the EMRS premises only at owner's risk.
 - The vehicle, along with the driver, should have made available on a 24X7 basis. The driver should be accommodating within the EMRS campus, subject to availability. In the event that accommodation is not available within the EMRS campus, the vehicle owner should make suitable alternative accommodation arrangement for the driver within a reasonable and accessible distance from the school, at no additional cost to EMRS.
 - A maximum of one day per month, i.e., 12 days in a year, may be permitted for routine maintenance /servicing of the vehicle. The vehicle should not be sent for repair for more than four consecutive days at a time. In case the vehicle remains unavailable beyond the period specified above, the owner should provide an alternate vehicle.
 - Payment Terms: The payment shall be made on a monthly basis upon submission of the invoice and necessary log details.
 - Prohibition of Intoxicants: The driver is strictly prohibited from consuming alcohol, tobacco, or any intoxicating substances while on duty or within the school premises. Any violation will lead to immediate termination of the contract.
- Submission of tender**
 Interested bidders may submit their sealed tender in the office of the undersigned on or before 11th May 2026 up to 03:00 PM.

The enveloped should be superscripted as: "Tender for Hiring of Vehicle for EMRS, Howraghat"

5. Required Documents

- Copy of RC Book.
- Insurance
- Taxi permit
- Pollution Certificate
- Driving License
- Bank Account details

Sd/-
 Principal i/c
 EMRS, Howraghat
 Karbi Angiong (Assam)

Khandu says every attack on India will be answered with 'strength and resolve'

Arunachal CM lauds armed forces on anniversary of Operation Sindoor

ITANAGAR, May 7: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Thursday lauded the Indian armed forces on the first anniversary of Operation Sindoor and asserted that the bravery and determination displayed by the military personnel sent a strong message that every attack on the country would get an answer with "strength and resolve".

In a post on X, Khandu expressed pride in the courage and unwavering commitment of the armed forces, while saluting their role in safeguarding the sovereignty and dignity of the country.

"On the anniversary of Operation Sindoor, heartfelt salute to



our brave Armed Forces whose courage and determination sent a clear message that every attack on Bharat will be answered with

strength and resolve," the chief minister said.

In response to the Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people,

mostly tourists, were killed, India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7 last year, carrying out airstrikes on nine terror infrastructures in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Lauding the armed forces for their success in Operation Sindoor, Khandu also said, "The nation stands proud of your valour and unwavering commitment."

The chief minister had, on several occasions, lauded the role of the armed forces, especially in the strategically important northeastern region, and reiterated the state government's support and respect for the personnel serving the nation under challenging conditions. (PTI)

Armed militants torch houses in Manipur's Kamjong district, residents flee

IMPHAL, May 7: Heavily armed militants attacked villages in Manipur's Kamjong district near the India-Myanmar border on Thursday morning, torching houses and forcing residents to flee, officials said.

According to police, the militants attacked the Tangkhul Naga villages of Namlee, Wanglee and Choro within Kasom Khullen police station area around 4 AM, prompting residents of the border settlements to take shelter in nearby forests.

The villages are located less than a kilometre from the international border.

At least one elderly woman sustained injuries while attempting to flee during the attack, officials said.

According to villagers, two houses in Namlee, three to four houses in Wanglee and several houses in Choro, except for a church, were reduced to ashes.

Security forces, including the Assam Rifles, later reached the area to assess the situation.

Phungyar MLA L Keishing alleged that the attack was carried out from across the border by Myanmar-based militant groups Kuki National Army (Burma) and the People's Defence Force (PDF).

"So far, the state had been seeing internal conflicts, but today there has been external aggression. A combined force of Kuki Na-



tional Army-B and People's Defence Force attacked four to five border villages at 3.30 AM," Keishing told reporters.

"Several houses have been reduced to ashes, though there have been no fatalities. Two persons, including a woman, remain untraceable. Eyewitnesses said they were taken away by the armed militants," the Naga People's Front legislator claimed.

Calling it an "external aggression", the MLA said both the state and central governments should not remain silent.

"There is no presence of Manipur Police in the area," he alleged.

Keishing accused the Assam Rifles of failing to protect the villages.

"Assam Rifles troops visited the villages yesterday, and the attack happened today. Villagers have expressed frustration over the devel-

opments," he said.

Meanwhile, the Tangkhul Aze Katamnoo Long (TAKL), also known as the Southern Tangkhul Students' Union, expressed "extreme urgency and outrage" over the attacks on Tangkhul Naga border villages by alleged Kuki militants operating under the Kuki National Army-Burma.

The student body alleged that around 100 armed KNA-B militants crossed the Indo-Myanmar border into Kamjong district and attacked villages including Namlee, Wanglee, Ashang Khullen and Choro.

It demanded that the state government immediately deploy Manipur Police commandos in the affected villages and demanded an immediate explanation regarding the alleged security lapse that allowed around 100 armed militants to cross the international boundary undetected. (PTI)

Four Upper Siang villages in Arunachal back SUMP survey activities

ITANAGAR, May 7: Residents of four villages in Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Siang district on Thursday signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) supporting the pre-feasibility report (PFR) survey activities of the proposed Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP) during a programme held at Tuting. Altogether 127 families from Ningging, Singging, Angging and Rising villages extended their consent for the PFR activities in the presence of more than 300 people attending the programme.

The MoUs were signed between Upper Siang Deputy Commissioner Talo Jerang, representing the state government, and village representatives Rikdu Yalik of Ningging, Momok Lipir of Singging, Olom Sitek of Angging and Oni Tondrang of Rising village.

Among those present were MLA of Tuting-Yingkiang constituency and Advisor to the Chief Minister

Alo Libang, hydro power development chief engineer K Perme, state nodal officer (SUMP) Atek Miyu, among others.

Libang appreciated the public response and urged people to continue supporting developmental initiatives in the region. The deputy commissioner clarified issues related to the survey works and said the large public participation reflected a changing mindset towards development and progress. "This shows that our people are gradually embracing a progressive mindset, which will go a long way in transforming the lives of the people," he said. Jerang also assured that transparency and accountability were being maintained throughout the process and appealed to the public to remain cooperative and positive. He said the district administration travelled to Tuting to facilitate the signing process despite adverse weather conditions and road blockades for the convenience of villagers. (PTI)

Arunachal deputy CM pitches for integrated Buddhist tourism circuit in northeast

ITANAGAR, May 7: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein on Wednesday pitched for developing an integrated tourism circuit linking key Buddhist destinations in the northeastern states for a seamless spiritual and cultural experience for visitors.

He said that the collaborative effort by roping in neighbouring states and countries should be branded 'Tawang Initiative' to give it a distinct global identity.

Calling for a 'professional and collaborative' approach to the development of tourism, Mein said the proposed circuit should link key Buddhist destinations in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Sikkim, Manipur, and neighbouring countries.

He made the remarks while speaking at the inaugural session of a workshop on the 'Development of the Buddhist Circuit in Northeast India' in Tawang, which was attended by delegates from Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and several Indian states.

Highlighting Tawang's spiritual importance, the deputy chief minister said the place is home to a 400-



year-old monastery, the birthplace of the Sixth Dalai Lama, and lies along an important route associated with the present Dalai Lama.

He also flagged heritage sites such as Dirang Dzong, Thembang, the sacred Pemako region, and the picturesque Mechuka valley as anchors for a broader Buddhist and cultural tourism network.

Mein also stressed Arunachal Pradesh's tourism potential, citing the harmonious coexistence of 26 major tribes with distinct languages, attire, and customs, as

well as the state's rich biodiversity that supports ecotourism, adventure tourism, and spiritual retreats.

To safeguard the state's intangible heritage, the government is digitising ancient manuscripts, traditional knowledge systems, and religious texts to preserve them for future generations, he said.

He announced plans to host an international tourism event in Arunachal later this year and invited global stakeholders to partner in positioning the state as a premier destination. (PTI)

MUSIK-A marks 10 years of nurturing talent

Governor praises organisation's role in promoting music, unity and youth development in Nagaland

DIMAPUR, May 7: The 10th anniversary of MUSIK-A was celebrated with great enthusiasm and cultural vibrancy, marking a significant milestone in the organisation's journey of promoting music and nurturing talent in Nagaland, at Town Hall, Dimapur on Wednesday.

The event was graced by Governor of Nagaland, Nand Kishore Yadav, who attended as the chief guest, expressed immense pleasure and honour in being part of the celebration, describing the occasion as not just a passage of time but a testament to dedication, passion and the unifying power of music. Over the past decade, MUSIK-A has established itself as a prominent platform in the state's cultural landscape, fostering creativity and providing opportunities for musicians across generations.

The Governor highlighted the unique role of music in bridging differences, stating that it transcends language, tribe and background, bringing people together in harmony. MUSIK-A was lauded for embodying this spirit and strengthening unity through artistic expres-

into a community-driven movement. He shared that establishing a music institute was not part of his original aspirations, as he had initially envisioned a career focused on performing, singing and touring. However, a turning point came during a tour to Hong Kong in 2015, where he experienced a deep sense of responsibility to give back to society after being blessed with opportunities beyond the state. This realisation inspired him to contribute meaningfully to the growth of aspiring artists in his home region.

Highlighting the challenges faced by young musicians in Nagaland, Aloblo pointed out the limited access to formal music education at the time. This gap led to the founding of Musika Society in 2016, guided by the motto "share, educate and be enriched." The initiative aimed to create a platform where talented youth could receive structured training, exposure and mentorship.

He mentioned that, over the past decade, Musika Society has made notable strides in the field of music and youth development, the institute has trained more than 1,000 youths in areas such as music education, recording arts and lifestyle management. In addition, it has organized over 250 events across Nagaland and Assam, providing performance opportunities and industry exposure to emerging artists.

The organisation has also played a supportive role in shaping individual careers, having sponsored and assisted over 250 young individuals in pursuing their artistic ambitions. Emphasising its broader mission, Aloblo stated that Musika is not confined to music alone but extends to education, personal growth, and cultural preservation.

He further noted that the institution has expanded its activities into sports training, incorporating values such as discipline, character building and teamwork into its programmes. This holistic approach, he said, aims to equip youth with life skills beyond artistic excellence. The decade-long journey of Musika Society stands as a testament to the transformative power of music and education in empowering youth and strengthening community bonds in the region.

The event commenced with the national song and national anthem, followed by an invocation led by Pastor of Thilixu Village Baptist Church, Rev Kheto Shikhu. The formal programme featured a rich blend of musical performances, including renditions such as "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" and Sonata No. 14 (Moonlight Sonata), 3rd Movement (Opus 27 No. 2), showcasing the diverse talents of the institution's students and faculty.

The event was hosted by Kekhrie Ringa Jakha, while participation from faculty members, students and special invitees contributed to the overall success of the celebration. An interaction session was held towards the end, encouraging engagement between guests, performers and attendees. (NNN)



Income disparity report shows high-income inequality in Nagaland

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, May 7: The report on income disparity in Nagaland has indicated a high-income inequality in the state, with a Gini coefficient of 0.46. According to the report, while the Gini coefficient for rural Nagaland is 0.42, the coefficient for urban Nagaland is 0.44, suggesting that the urban income inequality is only marginally higher than that of rural income inequality.

The report was released by Nagaland chief secretary Sentiyanter Imchen at the Nagaland civil secretariat in Kohima on Thursday.

The report on income disparity in Nagaland is the outcome of a project undertaken as part of the central sector scheme of the ministry of statistics and programme implementation, Support for Statistical Strengthening Sub-scheme, which was conducted in collaboration with Hyderabad University. The field survey of the report was undertaken between October 2024 and December 2024 and the reported data pertains to the calendar year of 2024. A total of 4,396 household samples were collected to prepare the report.

In urban areas, altogether 1,315 households from 60 wards were surveyed, while a total of 3,080 households were surveyed from 140 villages in rural areas.

In terms of percentage share of income, the bottom 50% of the households receive about 18% of the total income of the state, whereas around 21% of the gross income is received by the top 5% of the households.

In relation to average monthly income, the top 5% receive a mean monthly income of ₹ 71,028, while the bottom 50% receive an average monthly income of only ₹ 1,639.

Govt explores collaborations with streaming platforms to boost indigenous talent

Arunachal govt to promote local artistes on world stage

ITANAGAR, May 7: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Thursday said his government was exploring collaborations with global streaming platforms to promote indigenous talent to help youth build sustainable careers in the entertainment industry.

Chairing a high-level review meeting with organisers of premier state events, he said cultural platforms must evolve beyond annual competitions and provide participants with clear pathways to professional opportunities in music, fashion, media and performing arts.

"Our goal is to ensure that every event moves beyond being a stand-alone competition and instead evolves into a structured talent pipeline. We are not just looking for performers; we are building careers," he said.

The meeting focused on six flagship state platforms, Miss Arunachal, Mr & Mrs Arunachal, Arunachal's Got Talent, Arunachal Super Dance, and Arunachal Idol, an official statement said.



To strengthen institutional support for the sector, Khandu announced that the Creative Economy Cell within the Chief Minister's Office would be reinforced to facilitate industry linkages and career progression for local talent.

He said the government was also exploring strategic collaborations with

global digital platforms, including Spotify, to help emerging singers from the state reach wider audiences.

"We want the world to engage with and appreciate our indigenous music, art and cultural expressions," Khandu said.

Citing the Ziro Festival of Music as a successful model for promoting in-

dependent musicians, he assured the meeting of continued government support for similar initiatives.

In another major decision, the chief minister said his government was finalising a fresh agreement with organisers of the six major events to extend their term for five years under the official state calendar.

The meeting also reviewed the growth of technical expertise within the state's creative ecosystem.

"The creative economy is emerging as a powerful pillar of growth in Arunachal Pradesh. We are seeing a shift where our youth and women are not just performers, but entrepreneurs, evolving from singers into composers and from models into fashion designers," Khandu said.

The initiative is being implemented under the Arunachal Pradesh Regulatory Board of State Events, chaired by Mallo Attu, which will oversee the new standards aimed at strengthening the state's presence in the national entertainment and Bollywood circuits. (PTI)

Militant arrested for blast near Imphal airport, say police

IMPHAL, May 7: A member of a proscribed outfit in Manipur has been arrested from the Imphal East district in connection with a blast near the state capital's airport a couple of days ago, police said on Thursday.

Officials said Laishram Ibomcha Meitei (47) was arrested from his residence at Wangkhei in Imphal East district on Wednesday and has been remanded in police custody for 10 days. The proscribed Kangleipak Communist Party had claimed responsibility for the May 3 explosion

that happened barely one kilometre from the Imphal airport. Security forces have arrested a 51-year-old woman member of the same outfit from her residence at Sagolband in Imphal West district on Wednesday, but clarified that the action was not related to the explosion. They also arrested a self-styled lieutenant of the United Kuki National Army (UKNA) from M Songgel village in Churachandpur district on Tuesday, police said, adding that a cache of arms and explosives was seized following his interrogation. (PTI)

No.DDB/BTC/15th (FC)-18/2026-27/42

Date 05/05/2026

CORRIGENDUM

It is hereby informed to all the Contractor/Firm/Suppliers that due to MCC, Assam State Assembly Election 2026 the tender process for the following work is hereby rescheduled on 12/05/2026 from 1000 hrs. to 1400 hrs. and will open on the same day instead of 19/04/2026 which was published on (Dainik Agradoot & Hayeni Radab). So, all the interested parties are requested to visit the office of the undersigned on or before 12/05/2026 terms and conditions will remain as earlier published.

1. Installation of Solar Street Light from Dalanguri to Dotma Bazar.
2. Installation of Solar Street Light from Bodofa Tomb to U.N. Brahma College.
3. Installation of Solar Street Light from Dotma Bazar to Dotma Chariali.
4. Providing with Installation of Solar Street Light from Dotma Bazar to Bodofa Tomb.
5. Providing with Installation of Solar Street Light at Baghmara Village.
6. Const. of Heavy S/G of Road from Hogmabil Fulkumari PWD Road to Kanaklaji's House at South Singmari Village.
7. Const. of Boundary Wall at Sikwnajhar Porasiali EM School Seranguri.

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/5

Sd/- Block Development Officer,
Dotma Dev. Block, Dotma

Kerala CM race shifts to high command as AICC observers consult MLAs, UDF allies

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, May 7: Amid intense lobbying among three senior Congress leaders for Kerala's Chief Minister post, AICC observers Mukul Wasnik and Ajay Maken on Thursday took the views of party MLAs and UDF allies on the leadership choice, shifting the centre of activity to the high command.

Days after the party-led UDF stormed back to power after a decade with a massive mandate in the Assembly elections, the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) unanimously passed a resolution authorising AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge to decide on the CLP leader who would become the Chief Minister of the state.

Following the adoption of the resolution, the AICC observers held individual meetings with MLAs to seek their views on the leadership issue at the KPCC headquarters here.

The party's state in-charge Deepa Dasmuni, senior state Congress leaders, and newly elected legislators attended the closed-door meeting.

Later, the observers met leaders of the Congress' alliance partners to seek their views on the

next Chief Minister.

Senior leader Ramesh Chennithala, former Leader of the Opposition V D Satheesan, and AICC general secretary K C Venugopal are the top contenders for the post. The CLP meeting was held amid intense lobbying, besides a fierce social media campaign by their camps to garner support for their respective leaders.

Responding to reporters after the CLP meeting, Wasnik said there was an atmosphere of jubilation as the Congress victory in the Assembly election was "remarkable" and "historic".

"It is a matter of great joy, and in this atmosphere the meeting took place," he said.

Asked whether it was a tough or easy decision for the AICC observers to make on the next Kerala Chief Minister, Wasnik did not give a clear answer.

"The meeting went on very well. The first item the Congress legislators decided was to unanimously pass a resolution, which was moved by KPCC president Sunny Joseph and seconded by the CLP leader in the previous Assembly, V D Satheesan, authorising the Congress president to



decide on the next CLP leader," he said.

Maken said, "Let us see what happens next." He said the party leadership wanted one-on-one discussions with all MLAs.

"We held discussions with all MLAs. In the evening, we are leaving for Delhi. We will submit our report. We are hopeful that a decision will be taken soon. Everyone has left it to the leadership to decide," Maken said.

After the meeting, KPCC president Sunny Joseph told reporters that the resolution has been informed to the AICC.

"The observers will return to New Delhi and

give the information to the high command, after which a proper decision will be taken," he said.

Before heading for New Delhi, the observers also met leaders of the UDF partners, including the IUML and KEC.

Following the meeting Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) leader P K Kunhalikutty told reporters here that the party's stand on the issue was communicated to the Congress leaders.

"They patiently heard us and said they will report it to their high command in Delhi. We will wait for further communication from Delhi and when it comes, we will discuss the same in our party and will take a decision," Kunhalikutty, who won with a huge majority from the Malappuram assembly seat, said.

He was accompanied by party leaders P M A Salam and E T Mohammed Basheer.

Besides the IUML, leaders of the Kerala Congress (KEC), Kerala Congress (Jacob), and the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) also met the observers.

After the meeting, RSP leader Shibu Baby John said the political situation in Kerala, the UDF victory, and all related aspects were discussed with the observers.

"We also told them that whoever the Congress selects as the CM will be acceptable to us. We did not say anyone's name and we do not intend to interfere in the matter," he said.

He also said they were neither asked whom they preferred as Chief Minister nor did they suggest anyone's name.

As developments unfolded during the day, supporters of Venugopal and Satheesan stepped up pressure through their backers in the state as well as on social media.

While Venugopal's supporters put up huge hoardings outside the KPCC headquarters and in other parts of the state, Satheesan's followers staged demonstrations in various places, demanding that he be made the next Chief Minister of Kerala.

UDF secured 102 seats out of the 140 constituencies in the state assembly election held on April 9. The Congress won 63 seats. (PTI)

Population control policies, UCC require public cooperation: RSS chief

MYSURU (KARNATAKA), May 7: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Thursday said population control policies and the implementation of a Uniform Civil Code required public cooperation and long-term thinking, and asserted that caste-based politics would disappear only when society stopped identifying with caste divisions.

Addressing an interaction session after delivering a lecture on "Social Harmony as a Catalyst for National Development" at JSS Mahavidyapeetha here, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief also called for harmony among religions and communities. He urged people to practise equality in social life through conduct rather than slogans.

"Because society remembers caste, politicians take advantage of it. Their legitimate aim is to get votes. If they cannot get votes through work, they will get votes through caste," he said.

Replying to a question on the Population Control Bill and Uniform Civil Code (UCC), Bhagwat said the RSS was not the government but a social organisation and emphasised that laws could succeed only with public participation.

"People must first be educated. Policy is necessary, but policy can only succeed with public cooperation," he said.

Referring to population control measures during the Emergency period, Bhagwat said aggressive enforcement had led to public resentment and political backlash.

Regarding population control, there was once a government that aggressively tried to control population during the Emergency, especially in north India. People were forcibly dragged for sterilisation operations. That government was completely defeated afterwards, he said.

Demographic imbalance, women's education, empowerment



and health should all be considered before formulating future population policies.

"Once a policy is decided and people are educated about it, it should apply equally to everyone without exception," he said.

On the UCC, Bhagwat said some states had already moved ahead with it. Uttarakhand has already brought such a law and a few other states have introduced similar measures.

"So state by state it is progressing. Perhaps one day it may come across India. Be patient. In democracy, everything happens slowly because no one person decides—142 crore people decide," he added.

Speaking on caste divisions, Bhagwat said society itself had to change before politics could change. He stressed that society must forget caste and then only politics will correct itself.

"Do not merely tell people to forget caste. Otherwise they will remember caste in the process of trying to forget it. Instead, behave as though caste does not exist," he said.

Bhagwat advocated inter-caste social relations and marriages. In this context, he referred to a 1942 inter-caste marriage in Maharashtra.

"The first inter-caste marriage in Maharashtra happened in 1942. Two prominent people sent messages of blessing -- B R Ambedkar and M S Golwalkar (second RSS chief)," he said.

On religious harmony, Bhagwat said all religions ultimately aimed at truth despite differences in practices and traditions.

"Communities, religions -- we have to have it. It is not a question of 'can we'. Because all religions try to take us to truth," he said.

Quoting a Sanskrit verse, the RSS head said different paths ultimately reached the same destination just as rivers merged into the ocean.

"So creating religions and quarrelling is not what is desired. Religions should realise that the destination is one and there should be coordination and cooperation. That is a must for humanity to survive. There is no choice," he said.

Bhagwat also said marriage should be viewed as a social responsibility rather than personal bondage.

"Marriage is a partnership, not slavery. Husband and wife are equally responsible partners creating responsible social citizens," he said.

On Hindu traditions and conduct, Bhagwat said rituals and sects

may differ but behaviour rooted in Dharma remained central.

Underlining that 'Dharma' arises from conduct, he said values such as restraint, discipline and ethical conduct formed its essence.

He also asserted that Hindu society should preserve its traditions through exemplary conduct. "Every Hindu may have his own tradition and rituals, but through them he must attain this behaviour,"

Bhagwat said India repeatedly lost its freedom because of internal divisions and stressed that fraternity and emotional integration rooted in the feeling of oneness were essential for national development and social harmony.

Indian civilisation viewed society and nation differently from the West and was founded on the principle of universal oneness.

"Our history shows that because of our internal divisions, we repeatedly lost our freedom. Ambedkar warned that if we continue quarrelling like this, our freedom cannot be protected. The Constitution also asks us to promote emotional integration. What is that emotion? The feeling that we are one."

The western concept of society was based on contracts and mutual benefit, whereas the Indian concept of 'Samaj' (society-community) emerged from people living together over generations with a shared purpose and emotional bond.

"A society in the Western sense is a grouping of people who live together and help each other so that everybody benefits," he said.

Contrasting the two approaches, Bhagwat said, "That kind of contract is not there in our society."

Quoting Swami Vivekananda, he said, "Every nation has a message to deliver. Every nation has a mission to attempt. Every nation has a destiny to fulfil." (PTI)

ED raids 'aide' of Punjab CM's OSD, others in land 'fraud' case

Mann says operation has 'nothing to do with us'



CHANDIGARH, May 7: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday conducted searches at multiple locations in Punjab and Chandigarh, including the premises of an alleged close associate of an OSD in the CMO, as part of a money laundering probe into a land fraud case, officials said.

They said about a dozen locations in Mohali and Chandigarh linked to Suntec City project, Ajay Sehgal, ABS Townships, Altus Builders, Dhir Constructions and associates are being searched under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

A person named Nitin Gohal is also being searched by the agency and he is alleged to have "helped" builders who "defaulted" in payment of Greater Mohali Area Development Authority (GMADA) fees and arranging "political protection" for them, ED officials said.

Officials claimed Gohal, an IT professional, was linked to Rajbir Ghuman, Officer on Special Duty (OSD) to Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann.

The accused have been charged with fraud in obtaining CLU (change of land use) licences from GMADA and subsequently cheating public. They are alleged to have collected funds worth crores of rupees from the investors, the officials said.

Mann, however, asserted that the central agency's operation has "nothing to do with us".

Responding to a question while addressing the media in Amritsar during his 'Shukrana Yatra', Mann said, "The ED raid has nothing to do with us. They (ED) have come here in connection with some company. They can undertake checks at any place."

The officials said an incident of recovery of cash, that was apparently flung from a high-rise building, has also taken place in Mohali. The agency was trying to ascertain the value of the cash, they said.

Sources said the incident took place in Mohali's Kharar area where two bags stuffed with Rs 500 denomination cash were seen lying on the ground, indicating that they were thrown from a flat in a residential society following the

ED raid.

A few bundles of cash could also be seen scattered on the ground of the residential society, the sources said.

A video of the bags containing cash lying on the ground went viral on social media.

The sources added that a raid operation was carried out at the flat located in Western Towers in Kharar by ED sleuths.

SAD leader Bikram Singh Majithia posted on X about the two cash bags.

"Crores of Money, 500 notes flying in Air. Money Belongs to whom--- OSD CM Mann Rajbir Singh, 'Kattar Fraudsters' in ED trap. ED raids on CM Bhagwant Mann's close aide OSD Rajbir Ghuman's close aides and relatives Nitin, Veer Davinder," Majithia said in Punjab.

"ED raids Mohali high-rise linked to CM Mann's aide; Rs 500 notes fly around after bags thrown from 9th floor. Crores of money is thrown out of 9th floor. Crores of money is flying in Air after ED raid on CM Mann's close aide's relatives. Hawala transactions unearthed. Major expose would land soon," he added.

The ED, over the last few weeks, has undertaken some major action against politically-linked persons in Punjab, which is slated to go to polls in early 2027.

It raided the premises of Punjab Industries Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Sanjeev Arora, his son, some others, and then AAP Rajya Sabha member Ashok Kumar Mittal in separate cases. Mittal recently joined the BJP along with six other AAP MPs. (PTI)

India urges Bangladesh to expedite nationality check for nearly 3,000 Immigrants

NEW DELHI, May 7: India on Thursday conveyed to Bangladesh to expedite the nationality verification of nearly 3,000 suspected illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, days after Dhaka said it will take action if New Delhi forcibly pushes any such individuals.

New Delhi's comments came against the backdrop of a social media post by Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman on the issue on Tuesday in which he said Dhaka will take action if there any "push-in" incidents from the Indian side.

"These comments must be seen in the context of the core issue of repatriation of illegal Bangladeshis from India. This requires cooperation from Bangladesh," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

"Over 2862 cases of nationality verification are pending with Bangladesh, some for over five years. Our policy is that all illegal foreign nationals staying in India must be repatriated as per our laws, procedure and established bilateral arrangements," he said.

"We expect Bangladesh to expedite nationality verification so that repatriation of illegal immigrants can take place in a smooth manner," he said.

Jaiswal was responding to a question on Rahman's remarks.

The issue of illegal migration from Bangladesh came to fore during the campaigning for the assembly election in West Bengal.

In the course of the campaign, the BJP accused the Trinamool Congress of allowing the influx of Bangladeshi nationals into the region. The Trinamool Congress had trashed the charges. (PTI)

Adopt tech-driven governance, ensure 90 per cent public satisfaction: Andhra CM tells collectors

AMARAVATI, May 7: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday directed district collectors to adopt technology-driven approaches to improve public satisfaction in the delivery of government services and welfare programmes.

Addressing the seventh collectors conference at the Secretariat, the CM instructed the collectors to utilise social media platforms to publicise the government's achievements.

"Come out with innovative ideas by adopting technology to achieve highest public satisfaction level in delivery of government services, including welfare programmes," said Naidu.

Emphasising that public satisfaction should be top priority, he gave them the mandate to achieve more than 90 per cent public satisfaction in all services.

He directed all the 28 district collectors, including the two newly formed districts, to transform their district into an innovation hub to empower people, achieve development and implement welfare schemes.

By introducing 28 'best policies', Naidu said the coalition government was able to enhance Andhra's credibility

nationally and internationally, resulting in increased investments. Through 17 State Investment Promotion Board (SIPB) meetings in the past 23 months, he said Rs 23 lakh crore worth investments were approved with the potential to generate 24 lakh jobs.

Naidu said the state is progressing towards green energy, green hydrogen, green ammonia production and was able to transform Vizag into a technology hub with the arrival of the USD 15 billion Google data centre, and added that a quantum valley is emerging in Amaravati.

Further, he directed officials to finalise revenue records by March 2027 to strengthen public confidence.

Noting that ratings will be given to both ministers and district collectors based on their performance, the CM said the principle of 'seeing is believing' will be followed, and called on the collectors to make field visits to learn public response personally.

He encouraged healthy competition among district collectors in improving district-level performance, Naidu said those implementing best practices will be made mentors and those best practices will be implemented in other districts. (PTI)

Akhilesh meets Mamata after TMC rout, alleges Bengal polls held on 'UP model'

KOLKATA, May 7: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday met TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee at her Kalighat residence and expressed solidarity with the party leadership following its defeat in the West Bengal assembly polls, while alleging that the elections in the state were conducted on the "Uttar Pradesh model" through intimidation and manipulation.

Yadav was received by TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, where the SP chief is understood to have discussed the post-poll political situation in West Bengal and reiterated support for opposition unity against the BJP.

The meeting assumed political significance amid efforts by opposition parties to recalibrate strategies after the recent assembly elections in several states, and as Banerjee has vowed to strengthen the INDIA bloc after the TMC's electoral debacle.

"You have not lost. The fight to save democracy will continue, and we stand beside you," Yadav was heard telling Banerjee during the meeting, sources present there said.

He also congratulated Abhishek Banerjee for "putting up a strong fight" in the elections.

Addressing reporters later, Yadav alleged that the Bengal polls witnessed "multi-layered mafia tactics" involving the BJP, the Election Commission and "underground elements."

"What happened in Uttar Pradesh was repeated in Bengal. Opposition polling agents were threatened, and votes were conducted under fear. Central forces were used to ensure the defeat of the opposition," he alleged.

"The election was looted. BJP, the Election Commission and underground elements together conducted this election," the SP chief claimed, while displaying photographs and data before mediapersons to support his allegations.

He further alleged that officials were "lured with promises of higher posts" to influence the electoral process and claimed that BJP candidates secured unusually high victory margins in several constituencies because opposition polling agents were intimidated.

Yadav also expressed concern over the safety of Mamata Banerjee and Abhishek Banerjee, alleging that the BJP was "anti-women", and asserted that democratic forces across the country must unite.

The SP leader also questioned the post-poll violence in the state and, when asked about the killing of Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari's close aide Chandranath Rath, said Union Home Minister Amit Shah should be answerable for the incident.

"Answers should be sought from him for the lapses," Yadav said.

Rath, considered a close associate and executive assistant to Adhikari, was shot dead by unidentified assailants in North 24 Parganas district on Wednesday, triggering sharp political reactions amid mounting post-poll tension in the state. (PTI)

India has every right to defend itself against cross-border terrorism from Pakistan: MEA

NEW DELHI, May 7: On the first anniversary of Operation Sindoor, India on Thursday reaffirmed its right to defend itself against Pakistan-backed cross-border terrorism while vowing to further strengthen the global fight against the menace.

External affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, referring to the operation, asserted that India gave a befitting reply to Pakistan for sponsoring terrorism.

"We are marking the first anniversary of Op Sindoor today. The entire world saw the Pahalgam terrorist attack for what it was. We gave a befitting reply to Pakistan for its sponsorship of cross-border terrorism," he said.

"The world knows that cross-border terrorism has long been an instrument of state policy for Pakistan. We in India have every right to defend ourselves against terror-



ism," he said at his weekly media briefing. Jaiswal said India will continue to work to strengthen the global fight against terrorism.

In response to the Pahalgam terror attack, India launched Operation Sindoor on May

7 last year carrying out airstrikes on nine terror infrastructures in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir eliminating at least 100 terrorists.

The strikes triggered a rapid escalation in tensions with Pakistan launching retaliatory strikes though most of them were thwarted by the Indian military.

The hostilities ended with an understanding on halting the military actions on May 10 following talks over the hotline between army officials of the two sides.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said Operation Sindoor demonstrated India's resolve to defend itself against cross-border terrorism from Pakistan.

"With its decisive actions, India ensured accountability for terrorist actions. And underlined that such a serious threat to peace and security will be effectively countered," he said on social media.

Jaishankar said India, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stands "strong and determined" to convey a message of "zero tolerance" for terrorism.

In responding to a question on the Indus Water Treaty, Jaiswal said India's position on it is consistent.

"Indus Water Treaty (IWT) stands in abeyance in response to Pakistan's continued sponsorship of cross-border terrorism. Pakistan must credibly and irrevocably abjure its support for cross-border terrorism," he said.

As part of a series of punitive measures against Pakistan following the Pahalgam terror attack, India had put the treaty in abeyance.

India and Pakistan signed the IWT on September 19, 1960 after nine years of negotiations with a sole aim to manage issues relating to cross-border rivers. (PTI)

Executive must eliminate ad-hocism in public employment: SC

NEW DELHI, May 7: Observing that strengthening education is the need of the hour rather than subsidising it with ad-hoc measures, the Supreme Court on Thursday directed the Jharkhand government to notify 50 per cent of total vacancies of assistant teachers and sahayak acharyas exclusively for para-teachers within four weeks across the state.

Para-teachers are hired on fixed-term contracts under government initiatives like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan to address teacher shortages quickly.

The top court said time has come for the executive to conduct periodic performance audits and eliminate ad-hocism in public employment.

A bench of justices Pankaj Mithal and SVN Bhatti directed the Jharkhand government to issue a notification inviting applications exclusively from para-teachers for appointment to 50 per cent of the marked vacancies for both assistant teachers and sahayak acharyas.

"The need of the hour is to strengthen education, particularly at the primary and secondary levels, rather than subsidising it with ad hoc measures. Providing education itself is not the objective, but providing comprehensive, high-quality education is..."

"The sense of security of employment is a sine qua non for enhancing efficiency in any service, and education is no different. The teacher-student bond is not temporary but spans the academic years. Expecting a para-teacher, without a guarantee of their employment, to guarantee a child's future and education is fallacious. The time has come for the executive to conduct periodic performance audits and eliminate ad-hocism in public employment," the bench said.

The top court said courts do not advise the executive, but the executive, by putting in place ad hoc mechanisms, would affect society's progress



and the future of children.

The apex court was hearing a batch of appeals filed by para-teachers challenging an order of Jharkhand High Court which dismissed their pleas seeking regularisation of services as assistant teachers based on seniority and continuous service besides several other reliefs.

While refusing to regularise their services, the top court said providing any relief in this regard would create a new mode of recruitment not sanctioned by law.

In an attempt to cure the purported irregularity in appointment, if para-teachers are regularised under Articles 226 or 142, it would change the source of appointment altogether, the bench said.

On the issue of equal pay for equal work, the apex court said it is not an automatic entitlement, but rather, the claimant must demonstrate that their duties, responsibilities, qualifications, accountability and conditions of service are qualitatively identical to those of regular employees.

"Para teachers, though they perform similar classroom functions, are not assigned the full range of responsibilities of an Assistant Teacher. We are of the view that the claim of para-teachers for regularisation does not rest on sound legal and

constitutional principles," the bench said.

The para-teachers have a right to participation and consideration under the extant rules, but do not have a right to regularisation, it added.

While directing the Jharkhand government to notify 50 per cent of total vacancies, the top court also ordered it to issue advertisement inviting applications exclusively from eligible para teachers for the earmarked 50 per cent of assistant teacher/sahayak acharya posts, in accordance with the Jharkhand Primary School Teacher Recruitment Rules, 2012 and the Jharkhand Elementary School Sahayak Acharya Cadre (Appointment, Promotion and Service Conditions) Rules, 2022.

"Preparation and publication of districtwise/State-level merit list based on academic marks (Matric, Inter, Graduation, Teacher Training) and TET/JTET marks, in accordance with the applicable Rules. (PTI)

PM, ministers, BJP leaders change social media DPs marking one year of Op Sindoor

NEW DELHI, May 7: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday changed the display pictures on his social media handles to mark one year of Operation Sindoor and asked everyone to do the same as a mark of respect to the armed forces and their success.

All Union ministers, including Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah and S Jaishankar, besides BJP president Nitin Nabin and other party leaders, also changed their profile pictures on their social media handles, marking the one year of Operation Sindoor.

The profile picture of Modi on his handles on X, Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp channels have been changed to an image with the text 'Operation Sindoor' on a black background. The picture has a tri-colour, with one of the 'O's of 'SINDOOR' filled with 'sindoor' (vermillion) -- a symbol of married Hindu women.

In a post on X, the prime minister said a year ago, during Operation Sindoor, the Indian armed forces showcased their valour and gave a firm response to those who attacked people and every Indian is proud of the country's armed forces.

"As a mark of respect to our forces and their success during #OperationSindoor, let us all change our display pictures on social media, including X, Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp to the picture shared below," he said, referring to the image he uploaded on his social media handles.

Operation Sindoor was carried out by the three defence forces along with the BSF along the western border, targeting terrorist and military facilities in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir from May 7-10 last year. The operation was carried out in retaliation to last year's April 22 terror attack in Pahalgam in which 25 tourists, all Hindu men, and a tourist guide were killed.

Defence Minister Singh, while updating his profile photo on X, said Operation Sindoor stands as a "powerful symbol" of national resolve and preparedness, with their actions reflecting unmatched precision and



setting a "benchmark" for modern military operations.

"On the anniversary of Operation Sindoor, we salute the valour and sacrifices of our armed forces, whose courage and dedication continue to safeguard the nation. Their actions during the operation reflected unmatched precision, seamless jointness and deep synergy across services, setting a benchmark for modern military operations," he wrote.

"Operation Sindoor stands as a powerful symbol of national resolve and preparedness, showing that our armed forces are always ready to act decisively when it matters most. It also stands testament to India's steady advance towards achieving #Atmanirbharta, enhancing capability while reinforcing resilience," he added.

Home Minister Shah, in a post on X, said Operation Sindoor stands as an epochal mission of India that will always remind our enemies of the infallible striking power of our armed forces.

"History will remember it as the day of the precise striking power of our armed forces, meticulous intelligence of our agencies and resolute political will rising together as one to destroy each and every address of terror across the border that dared to cast an evil shadow on our citizens at Pahalgam," he said.

"This day will continue to bring the dreadful message to our enemies that no matter where they hide, they cannot escape." (PTI)

Rajnath, Shah, other ministers change social media profile photos to 'Op Sindoor' logo

NEW DELHI, May 7: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Home Minister Amit Shah and other top ministers on Thursday changed the display pictures on their social media profiles to mark the first anniversary of Operation Sindoor following a call by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The prime minister, earlier in the day, shared a digital poster depicting the now widely recognised logo of Operation Sindoor and urged others to do the same as a mark of respect to the armed forces.

Union Culture and Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav, Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav, Women and Child Development Annapurna Devi and Jal Shakti Minister C R Paatil too updated their profile photos.

Operation Sindoor was launched in response to the deadly Pahalgam terror attack, with Indian forces conducting precision strikes on multiple terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir (PoK).

After launching the military operation, the Indian Army, in a post on X, at 1:51 am on May 7 said "Justice is served. Jai Hind!"

Marking its first anniversary, Modi on Thursday posted, "A year ago, during #OperationSindoor, our armed forces showcased their valour and gave a firm response to those who attacked our people. Every Indian is proud of our armed forces." "As a mark of respect to our forces and their success during #OperationSindoor, let us all change our display pictures on social media, including X, Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp to the picture shared below," he wrote.

Defence Minister Singh, while updating his profile photo on X, said Operation Sindoor stands as a "powerful symbol" of national resolve and preparedness, and that their actions reflected unmatched precision, and set a "benchmark" for modern military operations.

"On the anniversary of Operation Sindoor, we salute the valour and sacrifices of our armed forces, whose courage and dedication continue to safeguard the nation. Their actions during the operation reflected unmatched precision, seamless jointness and deep syn-

ergy across services, setting a benchmark for modern military operations," he wrote.

"Operation Sindoor stands as a powerful symbol of national resolve and preparedness, showing that our armed forces are always ready to act decisively when it matters most. It also stands testament to India's steady advance towards achieving #Atmanirbharta, enhancing capability while reinforcing resilience," he added.

Jaishankar, too, changed his profile picture and posted an image of the Operation Sindoor logo on his timeline. Home Minister Shah, in a post, on X, said, "Operation Sindoor stands as an epochal mission of India that will always remind our enemies of the infallible striking power of our armed forces."

After Indian forces had launched the operation in the early hours of May 7, Pakistan later had also launched offensives against India, and all subsequent counter-offensives by India were also carried out under Operation Sindoor.

The military conflict between the two nuclear-armed neighbours, lasting nearly 88 hours, halted after they reached an understanding on the evening of May 10. Union Culture and Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, in a post in Hindi, said that Operation Sindoor under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi was a clear message to the world that India strikes like lightning on conspiracies hatched against its citizens.

"Operation Sindoor is a symbol of India's decisive will power, military capability, and an unwavering commitment to national security," Shekhawat said. Environment minister Yadav also shared another digital poster on X.

"The day India avenged Sindoor! One year of #OperationSindoor," he wrote, with the poster reading, those who wiped 'sindoor' off the forehead of Indian women, they were "erased from the map".

On the first anniversary of the Pahalgam attack, the Army in a post on X said, for acts against India, "the response is assured", and carried a digital poster bearing an image portraying three armed soldiers in uniform standing next to each other against a backdrop that depicted a large red circle, with a caption "OPERATION SINDOOR CONTINUES..." (PTI)

Police examining CCTV footage, form teams to trace killers of Suvendu's aide

KOLKATA, May 7: The police have been examining CCTV footage and have formed multiple special investigating teams to trace those involved in the killing of BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari's close aide Chandranath Rath, a senior officer said on Thursday.

The police are also probing whether contract killers were engaged to murder Rath, who was shot dead in his car by bike-borne gunmen in the middle of a road at Madhyamgram in North 24 Parganas district on Wednesday night.

A forensic team visited the spot on Thursday morning and collected samples, while officers of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) also joined the probe, he said.

"Going by the circumstantial evidence, it seems that the murder was pre-planned. Investigators are examining CCTV footage from the crime spot and nearby areas, while multiple police teams have been formed to trace the assailants," the officer said.

"We are also examining videos taken using mobile phones by witnesses who also helped in taking Rath, his driver and the other person inside the SUV to the nearby hospital," he stated.

Since the crime took place some time after rain on Wednesday night, not many people were pres-



ent on the roads leading to Rath's residential complex.

"We have spoken to those people who were seen in the CCTV footage," he said.

According to preliminary information, Rath's car was blocked by a vehicle near Doharia between Doltala and Madhyamgram Chowmaha between 10-10.15 pm on Wednesday when motorcycle-borne men arrived at the spot and fired at him from close range before fleeing.

Rath, 42, was returning to his residence in Madhyamgram from Kolkata when the incident occurred, he said. The deceased is survived by his son and wife.

The vehicle was being driven by Buddhadeb Bera, who also sus-

tained bullet injuries and is undergoing treatment at a hospital in Kolkata, another officer said.

Bera, who underwent a couple of surgeries, remained "very critical", sources in the hospital said. "Rath's car was intercepted around 100 metres from the housing complex where he lived," the officer said. The small car was waiting for Rath's vehicle to arrive near the street, he said.

"Once the occupant of the small car found Rath's vehicle approaching, he drove it to block its way. And once his vehicle got stuck there, the gunmen put the firearms against the glass and started firing, fatally hitting the deceased," the officer said.

The occupants of the small four-

wheeler later abandoned the vehicle and escaped on motorcycles, police said. Police suspected that the killers fled on two motorcycles in two directions.

"One probably took the main road towards Jessore Road, while the other took a narrow street on the left leading to Rajarhat," the officer said.

Another police officer said CCTV footage showed the car travelling towards Madhyamgram before the attack.

Investigators said they are taking help from both Kolkata Police and Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate to check CCTV footage installed under their respective jurisdictions and study the movement of the killers.

"The number plate attached to the small car left by the assailants was found to be fake. The original one belongs to a person based in Siliguri, who works in a tea estate. The chassis number and engine number of the small car have also been erased. It indicates that they had planned the murder," he said.

The person in Siliguri is being interrogated by the local police.

"He is claiming to have uploaded a photograph of his vehicle on an online platform with the intention of selling it. We are verifying his claims and rechecking them," the officer said. (PTI)

Rani Kapur-Priya Kapur dispute: SC appoints ex-CJI DY Chandrachud to act as mediator

NEW DELHI, May 7: The Supreme Court on Thursday appointed former Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud to act as a mediator in the dispute between late industrialist Sunjay Kapur's mother Rani Kapur and his wife Priya Kapur over the family trust.

Asking the parties to participate in the mediation proceedings with an open mind, the apex court said they may not make any statements in the public and also not go on social media about the dispute.

"It is a family dispute. Let it be confined among the family only. It should not be a source of entertainment," a bench of Justices J Bardiwala and Ujjal Bhuyan said. The bench observed that having regard to the nature of the dispute among the family members, it had suggested on April 27 that the parties should consider going for mediation.

"Today, all the counsel appearing for the respective parties have very graciously agreed to go for mediation. In such circumstances referred to above, we appoint D Y Chandrachud, former Chief Justice of India, to act as a mediator," the bench said.

"We shall await for a preliminary report from the mediator and thereafter proceed further with the matter," the bench said and posted the matter for August.

It said the fees of the mediator and other modalities shall be fixed in consultation with the parties.

It directed the parties to get in touch with the mediator. The bench made it clear that the mediation would

be confined only so far as the family members were concerned.

"This being a family affair, the endeavour on their part should be to get the dispute resolved at the earliest and put an end to the entire matter. We firmly believe that all parties should participate in the mediation proceedings with an open mind," it said.

The bench said it will be in the interest of one and all if they are able to resolve the matter before the mediator, otherwise this is going to be a "long drawn litigation". It said the mediation would be confined to the present matter.

On April 27, the top court sought a response from Priya Kapur and others on a lawsuit by Sanjay Kapur's mother seeking directions to declare the family trust "null and void".

The bench had issued notice to Priya Kapur and others on the plea filed by the 80-year-old Rani Kapur alleging that the trust, which was constituted in her name in October 2017, was a product of "forged, fabricated and fraudulent" documents.

The legal proceedings over control of the estate and assets are pending before the Delhi High Court and the petition before the top court seeks a status quo on alienation of all the properties of the trust.

During the hearing on April 27, the top court asked the parties in the dispute over the Sona Group Family Trust to explore mediation. (PTI)

Consumers can't be required to pay for service which they no longer received: SC

NEW DELHI, May 7: The Supreme Court on Thursday said consumers cannot be required to pay for a service which they no longer received, and tariff determination is not merely a mathematical exercise but a regulatory balancing act.

The apex court set aside a February last year order of the Appellate Tribunal for Electricity (APTEL) which had directed that entire capital cost of Rithala Combined Cycle Power Plant in Delhi be permitted to be recovered through depreciation over a period of 15 years.

A bench of Justices P S Narasimha and Alok Aradhe delivered its judgement on an appeal by the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) challenging the APTEL's order. "The tariff determination is not merely a mathematical exercise but a regulatory balancing act. The object of enabling reasonable cost recovery for utilities must be weighed against and calibrated with, paramount obligation to safeguard consumer interest," the bench said.

It said in this case, admittedly, electricity was not supplied to consumers beyond March 2018.

"The consumers cannot be required to pay for a service which they no longer received," the top court said. It said under the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA), the Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (TPDDL) had to supply electricity only for a period of six years.

The bench noted that Section 61 of the Electricity Act, 2003, governs the determination of tariff and Section 61(d) specifically provides that in specifying the terms and conditions for the determination of tariff, the appropriate commission shall be guided by the object of safeguarding consumers' interests and at the same time, recovery of the cost of electricity in a reasonable manner.

"This provision establishes consumer welfare not as a peripheral consideration but as a central and guiding statutory principle in tariff determination," the bench said.

It noted that TPDDL had moved a proposal for allotment of land at Rithala for setting up a temporary 108-megawatt gas-based power plant with operational tenure expressly limited to five to six years, following which the land would revert to the Delhi Development Authority (DDA).



The bench said the genesis of the project lay in the pressing and urgent need to augment power supply in the National Capital Territory of Delhi in the lead-up to the Commonwealth Games, 2010.

It said that in May 2008, the TPDDL intimated the DERC of its intention to establish and operate the plant, and in April 2009, the commission granted in-principle approval for the scheme based on TPDDL's proposal.

The top court noted that the DERC in November 2019 allowed depreciation at the rate of 6 per cent per annum in respect of the

plant only up to financial year 2017-2018, resulting in a cumulative depreciation of ₹ 83.34 crore.

"The remaining capital cost of approximately ₹ 94.59 crores together with carrying cost, was not allowed to be passed through in tariff, on the ground that plant has ceased to supply electricity to the consumers after March 2018," the bench noted. The commission's order was challenged by the TPDDL. APTEL in February 2025 held that the DERC itself had fixed the useful life of the plant at 15 years and had computed the capital cost on that basis and therefore, the

depreciation cost cannot be restricted only to six years.

APTEL set aside the DERC's order and remanded the matter to it with a direction to allow recovery of the entire capital cost of the plant by way of depreciation over the useful life of the plant for 15 years. The DERC then moved the apex court, challenging the APTEL's order. The top court noted that the DERC, while computing the capital cost of the plant for determination of the final tariff generated, had in August 2017 found that useful life of the plant was 15 years. It said the DERC in its August 2017 order, which was not challenged by the TPDDL, approved the PPA only for six years from the date of commercial operation till March 2018.

"For the foregoing reasons, the substantial questions of law which arise for consideration in this appeal, are answered in favour of the Commission and against the TPDDL. The impugned judgment dated February 10, 2025 passed by the APTEL is set aside and order dated November 11, 2019 passed by the Commission is restored," the bench said, while allowing the appeal. (PTI)

He gave us the room to make 'Kartavya' on our own: Saif Ali Khan on Shah Rukh Khan

Actor Saif Ali Khan says producer Shah Rukh Khan gave the team of "Kartavya" a free hand to make the film the way they wanted.

In fact, Shah Rukh was the one who called Saif to inform about the script that they were developing at Red Chillies.

"He said, 'There's a lovely script, and I would like you to hear it, and do it'. Then I listened to it and met the director. Once the film was complete, he said, 'It has come out as a lovely movie'. He was very happy," Saif said.

"Sometimes the presence (of Shah Rukh) can be overwhelming on sets and I think he understands that. He gave us room to make the film on our own. I felt I was working for his production with his kind of sensibility," the actor added.

Directed by Pulkit of "Bhakhshak" fame, the film stars Rasika Dugal opposite Saif and the actor said he is a huge fan of the "Mirzapur" star.

"It was elevating (to work with Dugal). When you work with an artist of this calibre, and she (Rasika) is such a wonderful actor, I was challenged and tried my best and it brought out the good work in me also... I'm a big fan of

hers and it was nice working with her," the actor said at the trailer preview of the movie here.

Dugal said she has long admired Saif and had a fun experience working with him.

"I've been an admirer of his work for many years. I had heard that Saif is the most fun co-actor to work with and that was true and more. He has a fantastic sense of humour and he brought in a certain energy to the set, which was beautiful. I wish we had more days to shoot. We unanimously agree (that he is handsome)," she said.

Produced by Gauri Khan under Red Chillies Entertainment, "Kartavya" follows a police officer (Saif), as he navigates rising threats while grappling with the weight of his duty and the safety of his family.

As the lines between right and wrong begin to blur, the film unfolds as a layered exploration of power, guilt, and the consequences of silence, inviting audiences to question morality and the true cost of justice.

Saif said that what drew him to "Kartavya" was its layered narrative and his character of a police man, named Pawan.

"We did the film because it's a good story. If you put

pressure on any person then you are revealing your true identity and this character goes through different kind of pressure, be it work related, family. I found that very interesting and I was like, 'How will he get out of it, what decisions will he make?' I thought it was lovely and it all builds up slowly. Pulkit is fantastic director and I thank the producer for making the film and releasing it," the actor said.

On portraying a cop on the screen, Saif said, "I play people who happen to be police officers. It's more about the person than the cop."

Dugal, who has garnered acclaim for playing the role of a cop in the popular series "Delhi Crime", said "Kartavya" continues her interest in exploring the human side of law enforcement.

"It's the story of exploring the human side (of a police



officer) and 'Kartavya' is also about the moral conflict of a police officer and it has been explored beautifully in the film. It's the classic tussle between duty and conscious, which is the theme I'm not tired of," she said.

The event was attended by actors Sanjay Mishra, Manish Chaudhari, Zakir Hussain, and Ruchikaa Kapoor Sheikh, Director, Original Films, Netflix India. (PTI)

Bengali film producers, distributors protest against EIMPA chief Pia Sengupta

Kolkata, A section of producers and distributors in the Bengali film industry has launched a protest against EIMPA chairperson Pia Sengupta, demanding her resignation and the formation of a new screening committee amid escalating tensions at the organisation's office over the past three days.

It was decided that both sides would hold a meeting on May 8 to discuss ways to ensure

neutral film producers' body, and a meeting involving all stakeholders before any discussion is taken by the executive committee.

However, they alleged Sengupta refused to hold a meeting with producers, exhibitors, distributors and associate members before meeting the executive committee.

On Wednesday, the producers and distributors again gathered at the EIMPA office with the same demands while Sengupta held a meeting with the executive committee members.

It was announced that a meeting with the protesting producers and distributors would be held on May 22 to hear their grievances.

Meanwhile, personnel from Bowbazar police station and central forces reached the spot after Sengupta lodged a general diary claiming that she did not feel safe inside the EIMPA office.

"On May 8, both sides will sit for a meeting. We will discuss our demands that day," Saha said.

He, however, reiterated their demand for Sengupta's resignation and the formation of a new committee.

Sengupta, who is considered close to outgoing West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, maintained that EIMPA and her role as an office-bearer had always remained politically neutral.

"In the coming days, the committee should be formed through a proper voting process following all procedures. There should not be any political influence. People from all ideologies will work equally. We are against any ban and threat culture," Saha said, alleging that the present regime was not adhering to these principles. (PTI)



transparency in the democratic functioning of the apex film body, distributor Satadeep Saha, one of the protesters, said on Thursday.

Recalling the developments over the past three days, Saha said protesting producers and distributors gathered at the Eastern India Motion Pictures Association office on May 4, the day of counting of votes, demanding Sengupta's resignation.

They sprinkled Ganga water across the office premises as part of a "purification" ritual and also celebrated with saffron-coloured gulal.

The protests continued on May 5, when another group of producers and distributors gathered at the EIMPA office, reiterating their demands for Sengupta's resignation, a politically

Ten years later, the cult of 'The Nice Guys' keeps growing

When "The Nice Guys" debuted 10 years ago, the writing was on the wall for the big-screen comedy. It came out sandwiched between "Captain America: Civil War" and "X-Men: Apocalypse." It opened against "Angry Birds." The cartoon birds, Ryan Gosling has lamented, "just destroyed us."

"They're just so angry," Gosling once sighed. And yet, marking its upcoming 10th anniversary this month, "The Nice Guys" has established itself as one of the most beloved comedies of the last decade — a decade in which Hollywood studios largely left the genre for dead.

A 1970s-set comic noir directed and co-written by Shane Black, "The Nice Guys" paired Gosling and Russell Crowe as private eyes in a Los Angeles crime caper that, a decade later, keeps getting better.

"There's a lot of interest in 'The Nice Guys' today that wasn't there when it opened. And the box office will attest to that," Black deadpanned in a recent interview. "But people find these things. I think there's kind of a joy of finding a movie on streaming or rental and then suddenly kind of realizing: How did I miss this? And 'The Nice Guys' was easy to miss."

Now, "The Nice Guys" is almost always on, in reruns on cable or streaming services. Whenever it's on Netflix, it ranks among the most viewed on the platform. As more have become familiar with the comic talents of Gosling, in "Barbie" or "Project Hail Mary," fans inevitably ask: "But have you seen 'The Nice Guys'?"

Black has known box-office smashes; he originated the "Lethal Weapon" movies. But he's come to view films of his that didn't make money as his favorites. In 2005, he made another cult favorite in "Kiss Kiss Bang Bang," which helped revive

Robert Downey Jr.'s career. (Downey makes a cameo as a corpse in "The Nice Guys.")

"There's something to being the king of the midnight movie," says Black. "It's not the most lucrative thing in the world."

Earlier in the 2000s, comedy was a moviegoing staple. The films of Will Ferrell, Judd Apatow and Melissa McCarthy were some of Hollywood's most lucrative. Movies like "The Hangover," "The 40-Year-Old Virgin" and "Bridesmaids" helped define the era.

But as the franchise film grew, and international ticket sales took on greater importance, the big-screen comedy began falling out of favor right around the time Warner Bros.' "The Nice Guys" (with a \$50 million budget) reached theaters, earning about \$71 million worldwide at the time. Tastes were also changing. Horror took comedy's place as the genre of the day.

There are signs that trends may be shifting. This year, "Project Hail Mary" and the just-launched "The Devil Wears Prada 2" have put comedies in front at the multiplex. But over the last decade, funny movies have largely migrated to streaming (Netflix's pact with Adam Sandler was an early coup) or turned into the stuff of easy-to-miss cult.

Black's initial germ for the film, writing with Anthony Bagarozzi, was inspired by detective stories like those of William Campbell Gault and Brett Halliday. He's read so many of them, he says, that "it's almost a superpower." "I thought: There's so much joy here," Black says. "There's so much fun in plot and twists and capers. You light a fuse and these guys go on this wild caper, and in the end, it's just these two guys that are important. You can't really remember the caper but it was there to service the idea, the shape of: These guys are at it again." (AP)



Nora Fatehi apologises before NCW over 'Sarke Chunar' row



Actress Nora Fatehi on Thursday appeared before the National Commission for Women in connection with a controversy surrounding the song 'Sarke Chunar' and apologised, saying there was "no intention to offend anybody."

Speaking to reporters after the hearing, Fatehi said she had been put in a situation unintentionally but acknowledged her responsibility as an artist.

"It was just a situation that I was put in, and there was no intention to offend anybody. But of course, I have to be responsible as an artiste. I definitely apologise, we have done everything in writing. They have been so kind and helpful," she said.

The actress also said she has decided to sponsor the education of a few orphan girls.

"It's really important for us to give back to society. So, I decided that we should sponsor a few orphan girls, their education, so that is the goal after this matter," she said.

Earlier, Fatehi distanced herself from the Hindi version of the song, saying she had shot the Kannada version and that her permission was not taken for its use in Hindi.

The Hindi version of the song, released on March 15 on YouTube, triggered outrage among a section of the public over its allegedly explicit lyrics.

Following the backlash, the makers removed the Hindi version from YouTube, though it continued to circulate across platforms. The lyricist, singer and director have also issued apologies.

"KD The Devil" is a Kannada film, dubbed in four languages, including Hindi. (PTI)

Difficult to satisfy old school fans of the game: 'Mortal Kombat' co-creator Ed Boon

It is always a huge challenge to live up to the expectations of loyalists of any video game, says Ed Boon, the co-creator of "Mortal Kombat" franchise, who describes his role on the game's upcoming film adaptation as being the representative of the fans.

Boon, who created the globally popular video game alongside John Tobias, said the nostalgia factor works against filmmakers trying to impress an older audience.

"From my perspective, satisfying old school fans is definitely more difficult. A lot of 'Mortal Kombat' fans remember where they were when they first saw the game, what the reaction was, how it made them feel. They were a lot younger when they first saw it and they want to recreate that moment."

"It is very difficult to satisfy somebody who saw something as a teenager. You just have a different mind when you're a teenager -- what can impress you, where you are in your life. Trying to duplicate that for somebody who's 40-something years old is a little tougher," the video game programmer told PTI in an interview.

Boon and Tobias co-created the arcade fighting game in 1992, which became a pop culture phenomenon for its brutal combat style and the now-iconic finishing moves.

The game was adapted into a 1995 feature film of the same title that became a huge hit but its 1997 sequel, "Mortal Kombat Annihilation", failed to click and brought an end to the movie franchise.

After a gap of two decades, the franchise was rebooted with a new iteration, "Mortal Kombat" (2021), directed by Simon McQuoid and backed by James Wan. Released simultaneously in theatres and on HBO Max, the film grossed over USD 84 million worldwide.

Though he had little input on the reboot, Boon said he was much more involved in its upcoming sequel "Mortal Kombat II", which is set to be released in theatres on Friday.

"I was able to read the script early and give feedback. Over the years, we've gotten a sense of what



"Mortal Kombat" fans and players want to see in a "Mortal Kombat" movie, and I felt like I was that voice," he said, adding that he visited the film's set in Australia and witnessed the shooting of some of the action scenes.

The franchise is known for several fan-favourite characters like Johnny Cage, Shao Kahn, Scorpion, Raiden, Sub-Zero and Kitana, each unique in their own ways and combat styles.

Boon said the movie has tried its best to remain loyal to the fanbase.

"There are things players are going to want to see -- things that will jar memories. Nostalgia is a big part of it. They just want to see Scorpion throw a spear, Sub-Zero freeze somebody and Raiden do his dive move," he said.

The video games were about an ancient inter-dimensional martial arts tournament where Earth's champions must prevent the evil realm of Outworld from conquering humanity.

The games and later, the films became known for

their martial arts-inspired combat, fantasy mythology, and graphic finishing moves called "Fatalities".

The new film introduces Johnny Cage, one of the franchise's major characters who was teased in the first movie, with Karl Urban stepping into the role.

In the film, the champions of Earthrealm, joined by Cage, are forced into battle as they attempt to resist the rule of antagonist Shao Kahn, whose rise threatens the survival of Earthrealm and its defenders.

"Johnny Cage in our games is so over the top -- he's almost like a cartoon character, so flashy and self-indulgent. There are elements of that in Karl's performance, but at the same time we're catching Johnny Cage at a different point in his life in this movie."

"He's a little past his prime, he has self-doubts, and he's very much looking in the rear view mirror. He's a little more mature, a little more experienced, and Karl does a great job presenting that different take on Johnny Cage," he said.

Boon said Shao Kahn is the big villain in "Mortal

India eye U17 Women's Asian Cup history in decisive Lebanon clash

SUZHOU (CHINA), May 7: Having lost to two continental heavyweights, India face a must-win game against Lebanon in the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup here on Friday, knowing that victory could seal a first-ever qualification to the knockout stage of the competition.

After losing to Australia (0-2) and Japan (0-3) in Group B, the equation for India has become clear: one final match and one final chance to make the quarter-finals.

India are alive in the race for the knockout stage as one of the two best third-placed teams.

India currently hold a superior goal difference of -5 compared to Group C sides Philippines (-13)

and Chinese Taipei (-14), who face each other on the final matchday.

That means either side would require a heavy-margin victory to overtake India's goal difference if the Young Tigresses defeat Lebanon.

Furthermore, if Thursday evening's Group A fixture between Vietnam and Myanmar ends in a draw or the latter wins by less than three goals, India will confirm their place in the last eight with a victory, irrespective of the Group C result.

For India, playing their first AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup in 21 years, progressing beyond the group stage would mark a historic achievement.

Head coach Pamela Conti expects a very different challenge against Lebanon compared to the previous two matches.

The Italian believes the contest will demand more attacking flair since both teams require a win to qualify.

The West Asians, making their debut in the tournament, opened with a 0-13 loss against Japan, followed by a sensational point in a 1-1 draw with Australia.

"I watched Lebanon's game against Australia that ended 1-1. They are a team at our level, but they have very good attacking players. We need to be careful and not open up too much, because they can hurt us on the counter-attack," said Conti.



Unlike the opening two matches, where India spent large phases defending deep against physically and technically superior oppo-

nents, the Young Tigresses now have to play with greater attacking intent.

On Wednesday, the girls had recovery sessions indoors in the gym

and the swimming pool. On Thursday, they had a 90-minute official training session involving tactical and set-piece work, and small-sided games.

Conti revealed that the team had long anticipated this decisive final group-stage encounter.

"I expect the girls to continue working hard and giving everything. I trust them a lot. We have prepared for this. We knew our qualification would come down to the match against Lebanon, and now we must give it everything," she said.

The stakes are not lost on the squad.

For a generation returning India to the AFC U17 Women's Asian

Cup after more than two decades, the possibility of reaching the quarter-finals would represent another milestone in what has already been a landmark year for Indian women's football across senior, U20 and U17 levels.

While the former two could not make the last eight in their respective tournaments earlier this year, the U17 now have the golden opportunity to make it happen.

"If we qualify, it will be an incredible achievement for everyone, and for the country. We are focused on giving that joy to the nation. I hope it happens for the staff, for us, and especially for the players, because they are the protagonists," Conti said. (PTI)

Bayern Munich falls short of Champions League final again ruing referee decisions



MUNICH, May 7: For the second time in three seasons, Bayern Munich fell short in the Champions League semifinals with regrets about a referee's decision in the second leg.

A free kick that should have led to a second yellow card for handball by Paris Saint-Germain defender Nuno Mendes was overturned after just 29 minutes when Bayern badly needed a way back into Wednesday's game.

"That would have been a decisive moment if PSG had lost a player so early," said Bayern's Konrad Laimer, who instead was eventually judged — on the fourth official's advice — to have handled the ball seconds earlier.

Two years ago, a potential goal in stoppage time by Bayern's Matthijs de Ligt to force extra time at Real Madrid was ruled out by a quickly raised flag for a possible offside that was marginal at best.

In 2024, Bayern's then-coach Thomas Tuchel called the on-field ruling a "disastrous decision" that "feels almost like a betrayal."

It is now six years and counting — since six-time European champion Bayern last played in the final.

An added frustration is the passage of play around the Nuno Mendes handball could not be reviewed by the VAR system — though a similar incident could be next season when the rules are updated.

Key moment
PSG took a deserved third-minute lead in Munich on Wednesday when Ousmane Dembélé finished a fast break driven by Khvicha Kvaratskhelia's skills and speed.

That made it 6-4 on aggregate to PSG, and Bayern seeking a big change in momentum.

It seemed to come when Laimer

surged forward and flicked the ball up to the side of Nuno Mendes, whose outstretched right arm made his body bigger and blocked the ball.

Referee João Pinheiro blew his whistle and signaled with his left arm a free kick to Bayern. Another yellow card for Nuno Mendes, already booked for tripping Michael Olise, seemed inevitable.

Before Pinheiro reached the spot to take the free kick, his right arm was out in the PSG direction of play. The Portuguese referee gave a thumbs up signal to his fourth official on the touchline, Espen Eskjaal from Norway.

Laimer was judged to have handled the ball several meters (yards) further back when he first controlled the bouncing ball. Television replays were inconclusive.

"You don't feel it during the game itself. I thought I had played the ball with my stomach, and then

Mendes with his hand," Laimer said. "The referee whistled for handball against me five seconds later. That's really strange."

No VAR review
The VAR protocol today allows video review of "clear and obvious errors" in four game-changing situations: A goal, a penalty, direct red cards, mistaken identity when the wrong player is shown a red or yellow card.

Starting at the World Cup next month, VAR can intervene to overturn a red card if a second yellow was shown in error.

Nuno Mendes never was shown a second yellow on Wednesday. However, a similar situation next season will let the referee follow their first instinct and review the whole passage of play at a pitch-side monitor.

"I thought he was giving it," Bayern coach Vincent Kompany said of Pinheiro moving toward a second yellow for Nuno Mendes. "I felt he pulled out because he realized he had already given him a yellow and he didn't want to send him off for that, and he's turned it around to the other side."

"I've seen it from a few angles. I don't see Konrad Laimer touch the ball with his hand."

Instead of playing one hour against PSG down one man, Bayern faced a full-strength opponent and did not score until Harry Kane's goal at the very end of a 1-1 game that cut the overall score to 6-5.

Minutes after the Laimer decision, Bayern was correctly denied a penalty for handball by PSG's João Neves because the ball was played to his arm by a teammate. That nuance is not specified in The Laws of the Game but it is in a supplementary document called Football Rules.

PSG will defend its Champions League title against Arsenal on May 30. Bayern's wait goes on. (AP)

Champions League winner Niklas Süle retires at 30 after injuries

DUESSELDORF (GERMANY), May 7: Champions League winner and five-time Bundesliga champion Niklas Süle has announced his retirement at the age of 30 after an injury scare led him to reconsider his future.

The Borussia Dortmund and Germany defender is leaving soccer at the end of the season, when his contract at the club was already due to expire.

"I'm very, very clear about my decision," Süle said on the Spiel-macher podcast in an episode released Thursday. "Despite that, football has given me a huge amount and I had such a great, cool time that there's pain in saying this."

Süle has missed 22 games with various injuries this season and said a moment of clarity came after he hurt his knee in a game against Hoffenheim last month.

Süle said he "cried for 10 minutes" in the showers after the club doctor examined his knee and shook his head, leaving Süle to fear he'd sustained a third career ACL tear, meaning months of recovery.

Family, weight concerns
The injury turned out not to be that severe but Süle said it left him considering the health impact of continuing to play soccer and how injury rehab would affect his ability to play with his children.

Süle also discussed struggles managing his weight throughout his career and being perceived as lacking fitness. At one stage, he said, he resorted to fasting and wearing a raincoat in the sauna to sweat out water and be lighter for weekly weighing sessions.

Süle won the Champions League with Bayern Munich in 2020 and the German title five times before a move to Dortmund in 2022. Süle narrowly missed out on another title when Dortmund lost the Bundesliga title to Bayern in the final minutes of the 2022-23 season. (AP)

Italian Open leaders side with players on prize money issue and aim to become a 5th Grand Slam

ROME, May 7: Italian Open organizers are supporting tennis players who are urging a boycott unless the Grand Slam tournaments improve their prize money.

Angelo Binaghi, the president of the Italian Tennis and Padel Federation, is taking advantage of the move as part of a campaign to turn their event into a fifth Grand Slam.

The players have targeted the coming French Open for reducing players' share of revenue to an alleged 14.3% — compared to the 22% at ATP and WTA events like the Italian Open this week.

Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka and Coco Gauff were among players this week threatening a boycott of the Slams if they don't start receiving more compensation.

"The players have our full support," Bi-

naghi said. "It's scandalous that we're required by the ATP to share a bigger cut of the revenues with the players and the four Grand Slams hand out a smaller cut."

"It's shameful and creates competitive disparities, too, because the four nations (that organize the Slams) have a huge amount of money to invest in their technical sectors that other nations don't have," Binaghi added. "I want to blow apart this monopoly."

Italian Open prize moneyIt should be noted that the Italian Open has offered less prize money for women than men for years. The total men's prize money this year in Rome is \$9.6 million while the women's prize money is \$8.3 million.

But next week the women's champion in

Rome will earn 1.055 million euros — slightly more than the 1.007 million euros handed out to the men's winner.

Fifth Grand SlamFor more than a year, Binaghi has been campaigning to turn the Italian Open into a fifth Grand Slam alongside the Australian Open, French Open, Wimbledon and U.S. Open — upending a century of tennis history.

With Jannik Sinner dominating at No. 1 and three other Italians in the men's top 20 rankings — No. 10 Lorenzo Musetti; No. 12 Flavio Cobolli and No. 20 Luciano Darderi — Italian tennis is booming.

Italy has won the Davis Cup for three straight years and the Billie Jean King Cup — the women's team event — for the last two years.

So Binaghi, who took over the federation a quarter century ago when it was nearly bankrupt, wants to take advantage of the boom for his Grand Slam dream.

"We're experiencing a stretch of tennis in Italy that will be tough to repeat, because it also needs to be considered in comparison with the Italian soccer debacle," Binaghi said, referring to how Italy failed to qualify for a third consecutive World Cup.

Foro Italico running out of roomBesides tradition and scheduling issues, Binaghi faces another major obstacle toward making the Italian Open bigger: There's little room for expansion at the Foro Italico.

"We're open to organizing a (fifth Grand Slam) anywhere in Italy — on any surface," Binaghi said. (AP)

Tension builds in Bundesliga with five teams in relegation danger

BERLIN, May 7: Five teams are fighting for Bundesliga survival with two rounds remaining while Stuttgart and Bayer Leverkusen are level before their high stakes Champions League qualification duel.

Hoffenheim also is making it a three-team race for fourth place and the last guaranteed qualification spot for the Champions League.

Germany may yet get five Champions League qualification spots depending on Freiburg's international success. Freiburg faced a 2-1 deficit to Braga before the second leg of their Europa League semifinal on Thursday.

Key matchups
Leverkusen visits Stuttgart on Saturday knowing a defeat or even a draw could allow Hoffenheim to take advantage with a win over relegation-threatened Werder Bremen at the same time.



Bremen is just above the relegation zone, one of the five teams still in danger.

Wolfsburg moved into the relegation playoff spot last weekend but next faces a visit from Bayern, which will hope to bounce back from its disappointment against PSG. Last-placed Heidenheim held Bayern to 3-3 between its two meetings with PSG, meaning the Bavarian powerhouse is on a three-game winless streak.

Second-from-bottom St. Pauli, which is winless in eight games,

faces a daunting trip to third-placed Leipzig on Saturday. Leipzig can clinch Champions League qualification with a win.

Heidenheim will be hoping Wolfsburg and St. Pauli lose — preferably heavily — so it could potentially move into the relegation playoff spot with a win in Cologne on Sunday. But Cologne is not safe yet either.

Union Berlin fought back for its first point under new coach Marie-Louise Eta against Cologne last weekend. Union has a reunion with

Mainz coach Urs Fischer on Sunday as Eta goes for her first win. Both teams are safe from relegation.

Players to watch
Bayern's Lennart Karl made his return from a hamstring injury in the final minutes against PSG on Wednesday. The 18-year-old Karl should get more playing time in Wolfsburg to prove his fitness for Germany at the World Cup.

Patrik Schick is hitting form at just the right time for Leverkusen with his hat trick against Leipzig last weekend taking his tally to six goals in three games.

Harry Kane has 55 across all competitions including the German Supercup.

Heidenheim's Budu Zivzivadze and Eren Dinkci scored at Bayern last weekend. If Frank Schmidt's side does somehow pull off a great escape, it will be down in large part to his two forwards.

Who is out?
St. Pauli's survival hopes have been dealt a blow by injuries to defenders Janik Robatsch, Karol Mets and Manolis Saliakas likely ruling them out for the rest of the

season.

Borussia Dortmund defender Rami Bensebaini is out of the last two rounds against Eintracht Frankfurt on Friday and Bremen the following week with a foot injury. Coach Niko Kovac says his World Cup participation with Algeria is not in doubt.

Off the field
Bayern captain Manuel Neuer's future remains uncertain as the club awaits the 40-year-old goalkeeper's decision on whether he'll play another year. He may well wait till the German Cup final — Bayern plays Stuttgart in Berlin's Olympiastadion on May 23 — before deciding.

Defender Konrad Laimer's contract with the club runs for another year. Talks over a new deal are ongoing and the player will likely have to rein in his expectations after comments from Bayern powerbroker Uli Hoenes. "He works incredibly hard for the team. But he's not Maradona. And players like that have to accept there are limits," Hoenes said. (AP)

PSG can win Ligue 1 if rival Lens drops points while race for a Champions League spot heats up



PARIS, May 7: The Ligue 1 title race is nearing conclusion and Paris Saint-Germain could be crowned champion against Brest if second-placed Lens drops points against Nantes.

PSG leads Lens by six points and both have three games left, including their showdown in Lens on Wednesday. That match was rescheduled from April 11 to aid PSG's quest for a second straight Champions League title. PSG reached the final on Wednesday after eliminating Bayern Munich.

Next-to-last Nantes will be relegated to Ligue 2 unless it beats Lens on Friday. All other games are on Sunday.

The race for third place and an automatic Champions League spot is shaping up as a two-way contest between Lyon and Lille, who are separated by two points.

Key matchups
Third-placed Lyon travels to mid-table Toulouse with forwards Endrick, Afonso Moreira and Roman Yaremchuk all in good form.

Fourth-placed Lille arguably has a tougher game at Monaco, which is in sixth place and strong at home. Fifth-placed Rennes needs Lyon and Lille to slip up to maintain its slim chances of finishing third.

Rennes hosts a Paris FC which has been revitalized since coach Antoine Kombouaré took charge, losing only once in nine games to move well clear of relegation trouble.

Marseille's chaotic season has left a tense dressing room which is reportedly at breaking point heading into the game at Le Havre.

Coach Habib Beye has failed to turn things around despite doubling the amount of training sessions, and third place is out of reach for a Marseille which must avoid a fifth defeat in seven games.

At the bottom, Auxerre hosts Nice with both sides fighting to avoid relegation.

Auxerre is in 16th place, which is the relegation-promotion playoff spot. But Auxerre can move into

15th on goal difference with a victory over Nice.

Players to watch
Winger Mousa Al-Tamari scored a brilliant angled volley last Sunday and is in a rich vein of form in a slick Rennes attack.

Rennes teammate Esteban Lepaul is the league top scorer and needs one goal to reach 20 in a comeback season after being released by Lyon a few years ago.

English forward Mason Greenwood is stuck on 15 league goals having not scored since March 7.

Lively striker Elye Wahi's goals in recent weeks have given Nice a decent chance of staying up.

Out of action
Lyon will be missing five regulars against Nantes.

Goal-scoring wingers Florian Thauvin and Allan Saint-Maximin are being rested as a precautionary measure, coach Pierre Sage said.

Mali midfielder Mamadou Sangaré, Saudi Arabia right back Saud Abdulhamid and all-action midfielder Adrien Thomasson are all suspended. PSG right back Achraf Hakimi remains sidelined with a hamstring injury.

Marseille duo Nayef Aguerd (groin) and Hamed Traoré (thigh) are both out for the remaining games.

Off the field
Female soccer fans of Bordeaux have complained of being subjected to abusive body searches carried out by security officials before a fourth-tier game at Bayonne on Saturday.

The Ultramarines supporters group posted a statement on X to say several women reported "humiliating and degrading acts" during pat downs when entering the stadium.

"We take these abuses very seriously and will not let them go unpunished," said the Ultramarines, the club's most longstanding supporters group.

The incidents were reported to Her Game Too, an organization advocating for the protection of female sports fans in stadiums. (AP)

Nottingham Forest takes a 1-0 lead to Aston Villa in Europa League semifinal

BIRMINGHAM, May 7: Nottingham Forest makes a short trip to Birmingham with a 1-0 advantage against Aston Villa in the second leg of their Europa League semifinal on Thursday.

Both clubs hope to contest their first European final in decades. For Nottingham, it has been 46 years. The relegation-threatened Premier League club won the European Cup, the precursor to the Champions League, under the great Brian Clough in 1979 and 1980.

Forest has been unbeaten in its last 10 games in all competitions but it remains unclear if key attacking midfielder Morgan Gibbs-White will play after suffering a facial injury on Monday in a 3-1 win against Chelsea in the Premier League.

Villa, the European champion in 1982, has reached its second semifinal in Europe in three seasons. It sits fifth in the English top flight and stands a good chance of qualifying for the Champions League again after advancing to the quarterfinals last season.

Villa needs to snap a three-game losing streak at Villa Park to progress. In the other semifinal, the Bundesliga's Freiburg needs to overturn a one-goal deficit from a 2-1 defeat to Braga in the opening leg in Portugal.

Freiburg has enjoyed its best European campaign while Braga hopes to advance to the final again after it lost to domestic rival Porto 1-0 in 2011.

The final is in Istanbul on May 20. In the third-tier Conference League, Crystal Palace is in control of its semifinal against Shakhtar Donetsk after winning 3-1 in the Ukrainian team's exile in Krakow, Poland, last week.

If Palace advances in its maiden European campaign, English clubs will compete in all three European finals. (AP)

Surface Tension: DC batters face stern Varun-Narine test

NEW DELHI, May 7: Unable to negotiate tricky batting tracks or defend big totals on belters, there seems no comfort even on home turf for Delhi Capitals when they take on Kolkata Knight Riders in a must-win IPL game here on Friday.

Delhi Capitals, currently in seventh position with eight points from 10 games, need to win all four of their remaining games to reach 16 points and sneak into the playoffs.

The eighth-placed KKR need to win all five of their remaining matches to leapfrog to 17 points in order to remain relevant.

In this backdrop, what becomes important is the surface on which DC will play the game.

It is understood that to counter the threat of spin twins Sunil Narine and Varun Chakravarthy, DC is likely to opt for a batting belter and will be playing on Pitch No.6, the track on which they scored 264 but failed to defend against Punjab Kings.

The reason for picking such a track is lack of faith in the batting line-up which was reduced to 9 for 6 on a slightly seaming surface against the Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

On a slowish surface where the ball gripped, the DC batters failed to come to terms with Rashid Khan of Gujarat Titans, and Akeal Hosen and Noor Ahmed of the Chennai Super Kings.

Sunil (Economy Rate of 6.80) and Varun (Economy Rate 8.88) can make life miserable for the likes of Pathum Nissanka, Sameer



Rizvi, and Karun Nair to name a few.

Making things worse for Delhi is premier spinner Kuldeep Yadav (10 matches, 7 wickets at ER 10.36), who is going through his worst IPL season right now.

In such a situation, the only escape route for a distinctly mediocre team with no apparent 'Plan B' is to play on a flat deck.

It would give the non-performing home batters a chance to pile up a big score. Later, the team would expect that Mitchell Starc and Lungi Ngidi, who suffered a concussion during the game against Punjab, would seal the deal with the ball.

The only advantage DC will have is that KKR's pain point is also its top order performance.

The two main batters at the top, skipper Ajinkya Rahane (205 runs at Strike Rate 131.42) and Angkr-

been in horrible touch even in the nets, defied logic. Nitish Rana, despite all his experience, can't seem to play the short ball.

The Indian pacers like Mukesh Kumar, T Natarajan and "Bara-mullah's Dale Steyn" Auqib Nabi Dar have had economy rates of 11, 11.18 and 13.42 respectively.

None of the DC bowlers' wicket tally has touched double figures with skipper Axar Patel's nine scalps at an economy rate of 8.25 being the best.

Teams:

Delhi Capitals: Axar Patel (captain), KL Rahul (wk), Pathum Nissanka, Sameer Rizvi, Karun Nair, Nitish Rana, Ashutosh Sharma, Abhishek Porel (wk), Kuldeep Yadav, Vipraj Nigam, Sahil Parakh, Mitchell Starc, Lungi Ngidi, Kyle Jamieson, David Miller, Tristan Stubbs, Mukesh Kumar, T Natarajan, Auqib Nabi Dar, Rehan Ahmed, Tripurana Vijay, Dushmantha Chameera, Madhav Tiwari, Ajay Mandal, Prithvi Shaw.

Kolkata Knight Riders: Ajinkya Rahane (captain), Angkrish Raghuvanshi (wk), Tim Seifert (wk), Finn Allen, Rovman Powell, Cameron Green, Rinku Singh, Varun Chakravarthy, Sunil Narine, Karik Tyagi, Vaibhav Arora, Navdeep Saini, Tejasvi Dahiya (wk), Ramandeep Singh, Sarthak Ranjan, Rahul Tripathi, Prashant Solanki, Matheesha Pathirana, Daksh Kamra, Rachin Ravindra, Anukul Roy, Saurabh Dube, Umran Malik, Manish Pandey.

Match Starts: 7.30 pm. (PTI)

Women upset Korea to assure India's first medal; men crash out of Archery World Cup



SHANGHAI, May 7: India endured a mixed day at the Archery World Cup Stage 2 as the women's recurve team assured the country's first medal with a stunning semifinal win over record 10-time Olympics champions South Korea, but men suffered a disappointing opening-round exit against Bangladesh here on Thursday.

The women's team of seasoned Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat and teenager Kumkum Mohod defeated a new-look Korean side 5-1 in the semifinals to set up a gold medal clash against second seed China on Sunday.

But there was embarrassment for the men's recurve team as veteran Tarundeep Rai, Dhiraj Bom-madevara and Yashdeep Bhoge failed to win a single set in a below-par 2-6 defeat to Bangladesh.

However, the Indian women's team maintained composure throughout a demanding day in which they won three consecutive matches.

The fourth-seeded Indians started strongly in the semifinal, shooting four 10s from six arrows and dropping just two points to take the opening set with a superb 58.

The Koreans looked unsettled and managed only 55 after shooting an 8.

India slipped slightly in the second set with an 8 but still managed to tie at 56-56 and move 3-1 ahead.

Needing just two more points to seal the match, the Indians again shot 58 in the third set, while the Koreans faltered under pressure and managed 56, handing India a memorable straight-set victory.

But the win came against an inexperienced Korean line-up which was fielded as part of their preparations for the Asian Games in Japan, less than four months away.

The Korean team featured two debutants in Lee Yunji and Oh

Yejin, while reigning world champion Kang Chaeyoung was the only experienced archer in the side.

Olympic champions An San and Lim Sihyeon, along with last year's Shanghai gold medalist Lee Gahyun, were absent.

Earlier, the Indian women trio showed resilience to recover from a slow start and beat Uzbekistan 6-2 (53-56, 57-54, 55-54, 55-51) in the opening round.

Their toughest test came in the quarterfinals, edging past Vietnam 5-4 (28-25) in a tense shoot-off.

India began poorly with a 53 in the opening set after three 8s, allowing Vietnam to take a one-point lead.

But the Indians bounced back strongly to level the scores at 2-2 as Vietnam slipped to 49 following two 8s and a 6.

The Indians then moved 4-2 ahead by dropping just two points in the third set before losing the fourth set by one point (55-56) after another costly 8 forced the contest into a shoot-off.

Under pressure, the Indians responded brilliantly, dropping just two points from three arrows to clinch the shoot-off 28-25.

In contrast, the men's team produced a forgettable performance against Bangladesh.

The Indian trio, who had qualified as the eighth seed, struggled for consistency and failed to win a single set in four rounds.

In the opening set, India shot three 8s and managed only 52, while Bangladesh shot 55 to take a 2-0 lead.

India again lacked composure in the second set and another seven pushed them to 54. Bangladesh also shot poorly but managed to tie the set 54-54 and extend their lead to 3-1.

The third set was another low-quality affair with both teams shooting 53 each. (PTI)

Hockey India announces U18 men's, women's squad for Australia series

BHOPAL, May 7: Hockey India on Thursday announced the 24-member Indian U-18 Men's and Women's squads for the upcoming home series against Australia from May 15 to 20.

The four-match series, to be played at SAI Bhopal, is a critical part of the teams' preparations for the Men's and Women's U-18 Asia Cup to be held at Kakamigahara, Japan, from May 29-June 6.

The squad members were selected after a week of rigorous evaluation during the national coaching camp, where the initial group of 42 players was narrowed down based on match fitness and tactical adaptability.

Forward Ketan Kushwaha has been named captain of the Indian U-18 men's team, while the Indian U-18 women's side will be led by Sweetie Kujur.

"After a productive week in the camp, we have identified the 24 players whom we believe are ready for international exposure. These matches against Australia are not just practice games as they are a vital test of our match temperament and tactical discipline."

"Ketan is a natural leader, and I am keen to see how this group handles the pace and pressure of the Australian style before we head to the U-18 Asia Cup in Japan," said Sardar Singh, coach of men's side.

U-18 Men's Squad

Goalkeepers: Sawan Kumar, Ayush Rajak, Vishal Bada; Defenders: Ansh Bahutra, Ashish Tani Puri, Arman Soreng, Deepakprakash Toppo, Karan Gautam, Karan Dhanuk; Midfielders: Premchand Soy, Rahul Yadav, Varinder Singh, Romit Pal, Arjandeep Singh, Gursimranpreet Singh, Arshidip Singh, Avi Manikpur; Forwards: Akash Deep, Ketan Kushwaha (Captain), Shaikh Ali, Gaze Khan, Prahalad Rajbar, Siddharth Ben, Jaysan Kandulna

U-18 Women's Squad

Goalkeepers: Mahak Parihar, Harry, Khili Kumar; Defenders: Sagan Sanga, Nilam Topno, Rubina Bakla, Kiran Ekka, Divya Yadav, Sulochani; Midfielders: Shruti Kumari, Diya, Harshita, Rashmeen Kaur, Laminganbi Akojam, Nancy Saroha, Tongbram Lanchenbi Devi, Sneha Davde; Forwards: Nousheen Naz, Sweetie Kujur (Captain), Priyanka Minz, Sandeepa Kumari, Nammi Geetashree, Princess Priya Ekka, Pushpa Manjhi. (PTI)

T20 Mumbai League to be held from June 1-13

MUMBAI, May 7: India skipper Suryakumar Yadav and IPL stars like Shreyas Iyer will be in action when the T20 Mumbai League returns for its fourth season on June 1 here at Wankhede Stadium.

Ajinkya Rahane, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shivam Dube are also set to compete in the event which will conclude on June 13. The inaugural women's tournament will also be held simultaneously.

The player auction was held earlier this month with 363 women cricketers along with men's players going under the hammer as three teams -- Sobro Mumbai Falcons, Thane Sky Risers and Aakash Tigers -- collectively spending Rs 1.47 crore to pick 50 players.

"The men's and women's competitions will be conducted simultaneously marking a significant step in the Mumbai Cricket Association's vision to create a high visibility platform for cricketing talent across categories," Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) said in a release.

MCA president Ajinkya Naik said that the tournament featuring eight men's teams and three women's sides will help further strengthen and solidify Mumbai's cricketing ecosystem.

The men's competition will also feature Sarfaraz Khan, Shardul Thakur, Tushar Deshpande, Ayush Mhatre, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Musheer Khan, Suryansh Shedge and Abhigyan Kundu, adding strong domestic and emerging talent to the league. (PTI)

Super Rapid and Blitz: Gukesh stays in hunt after Sindarov win, So draw

WARSAW (POLAND), May 7: D Gukesh made quite an impact, signalling that his preparations for the World Championship are on track by first defeating his title challenger, Javokhir Sindarov, in the fifth round and then holding American Grandmaster Wesley So to a draw in the Super Rapid and Blitz event on the Grand Chess Tour.

After defeating Uzbekistan's Sindarov, Gukesh played out a quick draw with Wesley So to move to six points with three rounds still to go in the Rapid event. The win against Sindarov earned the Indian two points, while the draw fetched him one.

So is the joint leader on nine points alongside fellow American Hans Niemann. The duo is followed by Vladimir Fedoseev, who is a point behind, while Gukesh is tied on six points with Fabiano Caruana, Jan-Krzysztof Duda and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave as he looks to climb further up the standings in the remaining rounds.

Gukesh was in full flow as he matched Sindarov move for move in what was the first clash between the two ahead of their World Championship meeting in December.

Interestingly, both Gukesh and Sindarov entered the fifth round after defeats in their previous



games. The Indian had gone down to Radoslaw Wojtaszek, while Sindarov lost to Wesley So.

Playing with the black pieces, Gukesh opted for the Caro-Kann Defence, while Sindarov chose an unconventional setup. The opening soon led to a dynamic position, exactly the kind of game Gukesh likes.

The Indian then won a pawn, though white had sufficient compensation. In his attempt to press for more, Sindarov launched an attack that completely backfired.

The Uzbek Grandmaster had earlier played grand the significance of the clash ahead of the World Championship, but his play suggested he was under considerable pressure against Gukesh.

As things progressed, Gukesh gobbled up another piece that Sin-

darov sacrificed and once the queens got traded, the result was never in doubt. Gukesh wrapped up the first win against his future challenger in 52 moves.

The Grand Chess Tour was conceptualised by legendary former world champion Garry Kasparov, and R Praggnanandhaa is among India's main contenders following D Gukesh's withdrawal.

Results (Round 6) Wesley So (USA, 9) drew with D Gukesh (Ind, 6); Alireza Firouzja (Fra, 4) lost to Hans Moke Niemann (USA, 9); Fabiano Caruana (USA, 6) drew with Duda Jan Krzysztof (Pol, 6); Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo, 8) beat Radoslaw Wojtaszek (Pol, 3); Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 6) beat Javokhir Sindarov (Uzb, 4). (PTI)

Julian Metherell named as next MCC president

LONDON, May 7: The Hundred franchise London Spirit Chairman Julian Metherell will take over as the President of Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) for a three-year tenure from October this year, succeeding former England batter Ed Smith.

Metherell has been a member of the MCC for the past 40 years and joined its Committee following approval from members at the 2025 AGM. He was nominated as the new president by Smith.

Founded in 1787, the MCC is the owner of

the iconic Lord's Cricket Ground and the guardian of the laws that govern the game.

Metherell, the founder and Chief Financial Officer of energy company Genel Energy, had successfully led the MCC's negotiating team throughout England and Wales Cricket Board's (ECB) sales process to find an investment partner for a 49 per cent stake in the London Spirit franchise.

When the franchise transferred to its new owners in October last year, Metherell became Chair of London Spirit.

"I am deeply honoured to take on the role of MCC President, following in the footsteps of many of my cricketing idols. I have a long connection with MCC and I have many cherished memories at Lord's," said Metherell, who also followed a career in finance with Goldman Sachs's UK-based investment banking division.

"This is a really exciting time to be involved with MCC, especially as it starts a new era of ownership of a professional cricket team and I am looking forward to driving forward both the Club and London Spirit," he added. (PTI)

Adding variety to bowling is the only way to stay ahead of batters in IPL: Krunal Pandya

LUCKNOW, May 7: Royal Challengers Bengaluru all-rounder Krunal Pandya said the insane hitting power of modern day batters in the IPL is forcing the bowlers to evolve rapidly and add more variety to their craft to stay competitive.

Pandya has been witnessing this transformation since 2016, and understands that the league has evolved into a high-intensity power driven spectacle.

"If you follow the IPL closely over the last 10 years, the striking ability of batters has changed drastically. Today, power-hitting is constantly evolving. The new-age batters coming in have an insane ability to clear the ropes with ease," Pandya said on JioStar.

"So as a bowler, I have realised that you have to add variety to your bowling arsenal. You must stay one step ahead of the batter. That is how bowling bouncers and yorkers came into the process,"

added Pandya, who has so far taken nine wickets this season and has crossed the century wicket mark overall in the IPL.

Pandya, who had earlier played for Mumbai Indians and Lucknow Super Giants, said he has managed to stay relevant in a competition tailor-made for batters, relying on bouncers despite being a spinner.

"It was not that I suddenly woke up one day and started bowling bouncers as a spinner. It was a very well thought out plan, understanding what a bowler does psychologically to a batter.

"Being a batter myself helps me think like a batter. I always try to stay one step ahead of the batter in terms of thought process and then focus on how to execute my skill," he added.

The 35-year-old said bowling to quality batters like Heinrich Klaasen and Shreyas Iyer can be daunting but reading



the situation and adapting to it helped him stay with them.

"My approach depends on the situation. Sometimes I need to attack, other

times I need to choke the runs. My main thought is always about bowling the best possible delivery for that moment.

"Heinrich Klaasen loves taking on

spinners. Against batters like him, the better balls you bowl, the more dot balls you create, and the higher your chances of forcing a mistake. You can't just keep attacking mindlessly.

"Sometimes, when a dangerous batter is at the crease, you have to go for the wicket and take a risk. It all depends on the game situation," he added.

Pandya said against players like Iyer, who is comfortable against spin, his focus was on targeting their weaker scoring areas.

"Shreyas Iyer is also a very good player of spin. Against quality batters like him, where the margin for error is small, my thinking is always the same: how can I make them hit their weaker areas?"

"For example, if a batter scores easily over covers, how can I force him to hit over mid-wicket? If he likes to slog sweep, how can I make him hit over long

off? That has been my game plan against most batters, including Shreyas," he added.

Pandya added that on small grounds like the Chinnaswamy Stadium where the margin for error is minimal, he preferred to take the boundary size out of his mind, focusing on delivering his best possible ball.

"On grounds like Wankhede or Chinnaswamy, especially Chinnaswamy, the boundaries are small. So, I tell myself that if I bowl a bad ball, it will go for a six, whether it is 80 meters or 50 or 60 meters.

"Sometimes that creates a negative thought when the boundary is small. So, I take the boundary size out of my mind. I know that if I bowl a good ball, the batter won't be able to hit it even 30 yards. So, I think that way: if I bowl my best ball, they won't be able to hit me even on a small ground," he said. (PTI)