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IN BRIEF

Era of trust starts: Suvendu ahead of first Cabinet meet

KOLKATA
Speaking in his home town of Kanthi in Purba Medinipur, West Bengal's newly sworn-in CM Suvendu Adhikari on Sunday said the "air of fear" in the State has ended and "trust has taken its place". » Page 4

Six new faces in U.P. Cabinet ahead of 2027 election

LUCKNOW
Ahead of the 2027 Assembly election, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday expanded the State Cabinet by inducting six new Ministers. » Page 3

Congress yet to name Kerala Chief Minister

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Uncertainty continued over who will be the Congress Chief Minister of Kerala, with the party high command yet to take the final call. » Page 4

EDUCATIONPLUS » PAGE 2 & 7

Vijay sworn in as CM, promises transparent, clean governance

Emotional supporters cheer actor-turned-politician; he vows to bring out a White Paper on State's finances, grants 200 units of free power, and sets up police units to curb drug offences and crimes against women; nine Cabinet members sworn in

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Ushering in a change in Tamil Nadu's bipolar Dravidian political landscape that has been in existence since 1967, Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam president and actor C. Joseph Vijay, 52, was sworn in as Chief Minister at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Chennai on Sunday morning.

Nine Cabinet members were sworn in along with him, with eight of them, including a woman, being first-time Ministers.

The Ministry is expected to be expanded after the floor test slated on or before May 13, when it is likely to evolve into the State's first coalition government.

Mr. Vijay, a Christian by faith, is the first member of a minority religious denomination to occupy the top constitutional post, previously held by 13 others since Independence.

As Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar administered the oath of office and secrecy to Mr. Vijay, emotionally charged supporters cheered their *Thalapathy* (commander), with some shedding tears of joy. The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, was seated next to Mr. Vijay on the dais.

New beginnings: Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar greeting Chief Minister and TVK chief C. Joseph Vijay during the swearing-in, in Chennai on Sunday. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Dressed in a black blazer, white shirt, and black trousers, Mr. Vijay took the oath of office from memory in a punchy style, while reading out only the oath of secrecy.

The Chief Minister signed three files on stage, delivering on some of his promises. He ordered the provision of 200 units of free electricity to domestic consumers whose bimonthly consumption does not exceed 500 units. The move is expected to cost the exchequer ₹1,730 crore annually.

The existing scheme of 100 units of free electricity would continue for domestic consumers whose bimonthly consumption exceeds 500 units.

With women's safety and the circulation of drugs being major election campaign issues, Mr. Vijay ordered the setting up of an elite "*Singa Penn* [Lioness] Special Force" for women's safety and an Anti-Narcotic Task Force to crack down on offences involving illegal drugs.

The special force would have 65 police stations in 37 districts and nine cities.

Mr. Vijay, thereafter, used the stage to launch a political attack on the previous DMK government, accusing it of leaving behind a ₹10-lakh-crore debt.

'Treasury emptied'

"The Treasury has been completely emptied and scraped clean. They have placed a burden that cannot even be lifted. It is in such a condition that we have taken up this responsibility. Only when you go inside and see will you understand the real condition of things – what exists, what doesn't, and the state everything is in. After examining all that, I want to release a White Paper," he declared.

"I want to take it forward from there." Assuring transparency in governance, Mr. Vijay declared there would be no separate power centres, but only one centre under his leadership.

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ED gets custody of Punjab Minister
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WAR IMPACT
'Maritime security is vital to Indian Ocean Region'
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T.N. POST-POLL PROCESS
Governor who forgot his job
His actions raise concerns about violation of norms
EDITORIAL » PAGE 8

HIGHS AND LOWS
RCB, CSK post wins; MI, LSG eliminated
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BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma was unanimously elected NDA leader at a meeting in Guwahati on Sunday. RITU RAJ KONWAR

Himanta elected NDA leader, to take oath as Assam CM tomorrow

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma will on Tuesday take oath as Chief Minister of Assam for a second successive term.

Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya invited him to form the new government after he led a Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance team to the Lok Bhavan to stake claim.

The formality followed Mr. Sarma's election as the leader of the NDA in the 126-member Assembly. The swearing-in ceremony of the new Council of Ministers is scheduled for Tuesday.

The newly elected members of the BJP and its regional allies – Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and Bodoland People's Front (BPF) – chose their leader in the morning. Union Minister J. P. Nadda and Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini were the central observer and co-observer, respectively, for the BJP Legislature Party meeting here.

Announcing Mr. Sarma's name as the unanimously elected NDA leader, Mr. Nadda said eight BJP legislators proposed his name. "We are grateful to the people of Assam for showing their faith in the NDA once again to take the State on the path of progress," he said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Ministers Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh, BJP president Nitin Nabin will attend the oath-taking ceremony, Mr. Nadda said. "All legislators voted for Himanta Biswa Sarma as their leader. AGP president Atul Bora and BPF leader Rihon Daimary supported the proposal. Later, we staked claim to form the government with the support of 102 MLAs," Mr. Nadda said.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 12

Cut fuel use, avoid foreign travel, urges PM amid global uncertainties

P. Laxma Reddy
HYDERABAD

Amid elevated global crude oil prices and an energy crisis triggered by the U.S.-Iran war, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday called for collective participation to help the country withstand global economic uncertainties, supply chain disruptions, and inflationary pressures.

He urged citizens to make "nationally responsible" lifestyle choices and promote the use of local products, asking "how can the nation progress if we depend on imports for everything". Mr. Modi appealed to people to avoid non-essential purchase of gold for one year to reduce pressure on foreign exchange outflows, and advised against going on foreign tours. He said conserving foreign exchange reserves was an act of patriotism, and urged people to avoid overseas vacations and destination weddings abroad. He pitched for domestic tourism and celebrations within the country.

He suggested reviving some of the practices adopted during the COVID-19, including work-from-home arrangements, online conferences and virtual meetings. In a 30-minute address here, he spoke about strengthening India's economic resilience and promoting responsible living. He made a call to reduce petrol and diesel consumption, promote use of Metro Rail and public transport, car-pooling, and railways for freight movement, besides wider adoption of electric vehicles.

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INBRIEF

L-G asks citizens to follow traffic rules, report violations

Pitching for safer roads and smoother traffic, Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) Taranjit Singh Sandhu on Sunday asked residents to follow rules and actively report violations through the Traffic Prahari app, which allows users to upload photos or videos of traffic violations. Contributors can earn up to ₹50,000 a month for helping improve traffic discipline. "In the creation of a well-managed Capital, I expect the combined support of all of you," the L-G said.

Registrations to open in June for 'Mahila Samriddhi Yojana'

The Delhi government is likely to start registrations for the 'Mahila Samridhi Yojana' for providing ₹2,500 monthly to eligible women in the national capital from June, official sources said on Sunday. A registration portal for the scheme, one of the poll promises of the Bharatiya Janata Party ahead of the February 2025 Delhi Assembly election, has been readied and is likely to start functioning from the first week of June, they said. PTI

CM unveils scheme for youth leaving institutional care at 18

Aftercare Scheme for Young Persons to provide assistance for higher education, skill development, employment opportunities; ₹3.5 crore earmarked for scheme in current financial year, says Gupta

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Sunday launched the Aftercare Scheme for Young Persons to provide continued support to youth leaving institutional care after they turn 18 by assisting them with higher education, skill development, and employment opportunities.

Ms. Gupta made the announcement during her visit to the Village Cottage Home in Lajpat Nagar, a facility run by the Women and Child Development Department, where she interacted with children.

Speaking on Mother's Day, she said the government has earmarked ₹3.5 crore for the scheme in the current financial year.

"The primary objective of the scheme is to provide continued support, guidance and opportunities to youth leaving institutional care so they can move towards independent, secure and dignified lives," said the CM.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta interacting with children at Village Cottage Home in Lajpat Nagar on Sunday. X/@GUPTA_REKHA

Asserting that the government's responsibility does not end with providing shelter and protection to children, she said the scheme will be implemented under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

Under the scheme, eligible beneficiaries will receive assistance for higher education and college studies along with access to skill development and vocational training programmes.

Monthly stipend

"The government will also focus on connecting young people with internships and employment opportunities. Financial support, mentoring, counselling, career guidance, support for independent living, and a monthly stipend have also been included," Ms. Gupta said.

She said the government's approach goes beyond institutional care and "focuses on preparing children for life".

Noting that nearly 150 to 200 young people leave child care institutions every year after turning 18, the CM said many struggle with continuing education, finding employment, and managing financial difficulties. "The new scheme has been designed to provide structured assistance to all such young adults," she said. The beneficiaries will be identified through need-based assessments and individual care plans.

Meanwhile, Delhi Social Welfare Minister Ravinder Indraj Singh announced a special five-day rescue campaign across the national capital, which starts from Monday, to rescue needy, helpless, and destitute individuals and shift them to Apna Ghar Ashrams for treatment, care, and rehabilitation.

Census 2027: 80% houses mapped in New Delhi district

Suruchi Kumari
NEW DELHI

With less than a week left for the completion of the first phase of Census 2027 in New Delhi district, enumerators have surveyed nearly 60,000 households through the House Listing Operations (HLO) mobile application and mapped around 80% of Census houses ahead of the May 15 deadline, according to official progress data accessed by *The Hindu*.

Enumeration data for nearly 60,000 households have been uploaded. FILE PHOTO

The house listing and housing census exercise began on April 16 across areas under the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) and Delhi Cantonment jurisdictions. It involves physical mapping and geotagging of structures, followed by a door-to-door survey conducted by enumerators.

The district has been divided into 586 House Listing Blocks (HLBs), each assigned to an enumerator and estimated to cover around 180-200 houses and a population of 600-800 people. Enumerators collect responses to 33 questions through the HLO. These include details related to construction material used in houses, sources of drinking water, cooking fuel, Internet connectivity, household composition and household amenities, among others.

The information is then verified by supervisors before being uploaded to the Census Management and Monitoring System (CMMS) portal. While enumeration data for nearly 60,000 households have been uploaded through the HLO application, supervisor verification has been completed for 55,202 households.

More houses identified

"When the exercise started, 571 HLBs were identified. However, as the door-to-door exercise progressed, more houses were identified and marked," said New Delhi district Census officer Kapil Chaudhary.

According to the May 8 progress report, 96,550 Census houses have been marked by enumerators in New Delhi district. Of these, around 77,000 houses, nearly 80%, have been mapped so far. Delhi Cantonment recorded the highest proportion of pending mapping work with over 70% of mapping still to be completed.

"For locked houses, enumerators make three visits before marking them absent, as per the rules," Mr. Chaudhary said.

He said the overall exercise remains on track and is expected to be completed within the deadline.

Two new projects to help ease traffic congestion in north-west Delhi: CM

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Sunday said the Railways has approved widening of the Haiderpur-Badli rail overbridge and an elevated loop between Shalimar Bagh and Sanjay Gandhi Transport Nagar, adding that the government will soon start work on these projects to reduce travel time and provide major relief to commuters.

"North-west Delhi corridors have long been burdened by heavy traffic. The projects will reduce congestion and improve connectivity," Ms. Gupta said.

She said the Delhi government is identifying traffic bottlenecks across the city and developing long-term solutions.

Attempts on to 'suppress' Janakpuri school rape case, alleges Bharadwaj

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Delhi president Saurabh Bharadwaj on Sunday hit out at the Delhi government, alleging a bid to "suppress" the incident involving the rape of a three-year-old girl by a caretaker inside a private school.

The incident took place on April 30. The accused was arrested the next day and granted bail on May 7.

When reached for comment, the Delhi government did not respond.

A senior police officer said, "We have collected strong evidence and plan to appeal against the bail order. We are consulting with public prosecutors on how to take the case forward."

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EDUCATIONPLUS

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Look beyond rankings

Three questions student should ask before choosing a university

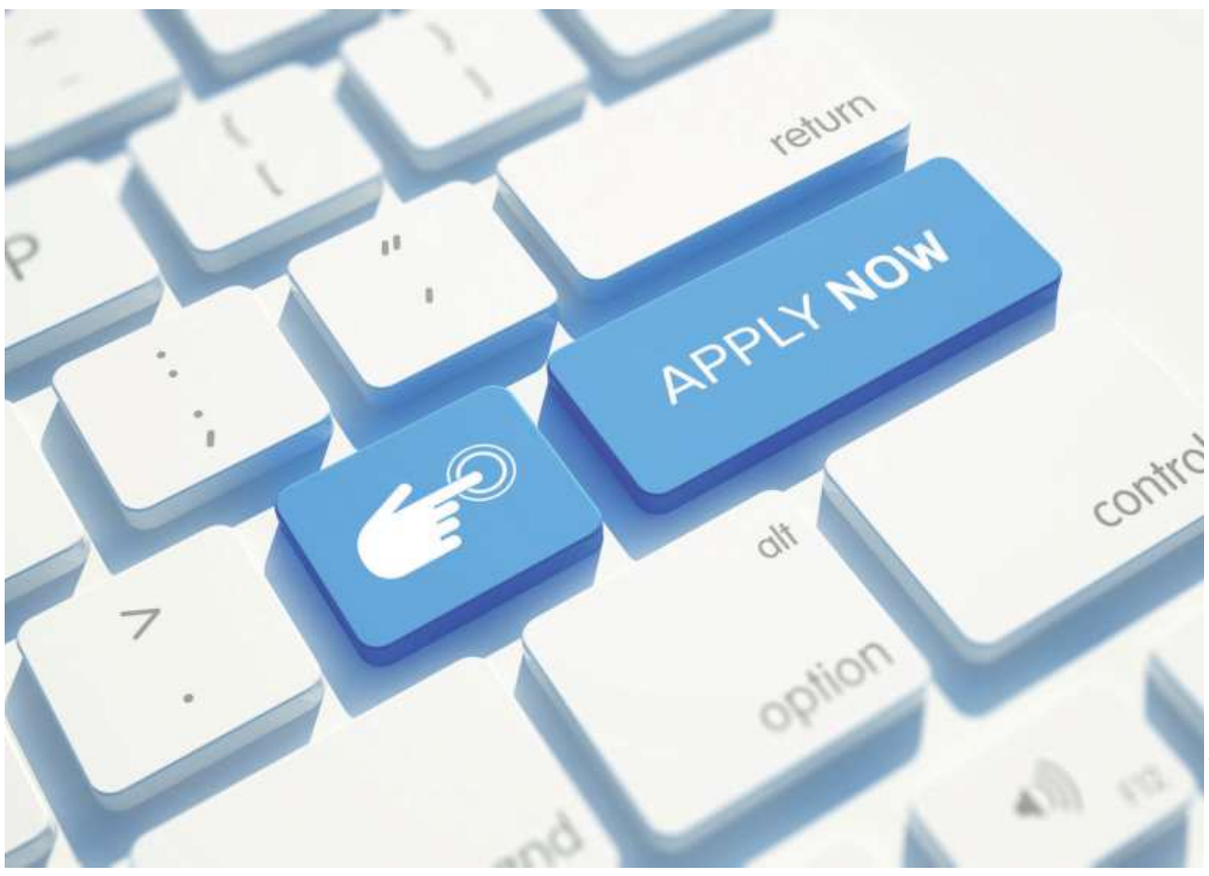
Geraint Rees

For generations, families choosing universities have relied on a familiar checklist: rankings, reputation and selectivity. The logic was straightforward: if an institution ranked higher, it was assumed to offer better preparation for the future. But the economy that today's students will navigate is different from the one their parents prepared for.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming industries and reshaping the skills people will need. In this new landscape, the real question is no longer "Which university is the best?" but "Which university will prepare me for a future that's still taking shape?" When choosing institutions, rankings appear to offer clarity in a crowded world. But this can be misleading.

Rankings can capture useful information about research strength and reputation, but they don't tell you how students actually learn or how well they adapt once they leave. A university can score highly on both and still run lecture-heavy courses with little room for independent inquiry.

According to the World Economic Forum, nearly 44% of workers' core skills will change by 2027. AI can already analyse datasets in seconds, generate code, summarise documents and automate tasks that once required years of training. But what machines still struggle with are the human skills of curiosity, creativity and judgment; defining new problems, bridging disciplines and making decisions with incomplete information. These depend on how students are educated, not just what they are taught. When evaluating universities today, three questions can help:



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

First, what do graduates actually go on to do? A university's true value is shown not just in the job they land at 21, but who they go on to become. Look beyond the university's own showcased alumni. Search LinkedIn for 10 recent graduates from the specific department or discipline you are considering, not the institution as a whole. Track where they are five years after graduation.

All this information is publicly available. Alumni networks, professional platforms such as LinkedIn and independent reports on graduate outcomes often reveal more about a university's influence than any marketing brochure. A pattern of adaptive, initiative-driven careers is a stronger signal than a list of famous names from decades past.

Second, what does the institution believe education is for? Some universities still treat education as a one-way transfer of knowledge within neatly defined boundaries. Others view it as developing thinkers who can navigate ambiguity, cross-disciplinary borders, and connect ideas. In an AI-driven world, the second approach is far more valuable.

Therefore, consider if a university rewards questioning or mastery of received wisdom. To assess this, read actual course syllabuses from the department you wish to join. Does the programme require a research project, ideally with an external partner or real-world brief? Are students encouraged to collaborate across fields, rather than remaining confined to a single subject?

Finally, what surrounds the university? Learning does not happen only inside lecture halls but also through engagement with industry, research organisations and communities. This too can be assessed before you apply. Look at whether the university has a technology transfer office with a documented track record of spin-out companies. Check whether faculty members appear on government advisory panels or in policy consultations. Consider the city or region: a university situated within an active technology or biomedical cluster will routinely connect students to live problems in ways that an isolated campus cannot, regardless of where both rank.

Universities that best prepare students for the future are embedded in vibrant innovation ecosystems: start-ups, research institutes, public agencies, creative industries. These partnerships give students the chance to work on real problems, not hypothetical ones, long before graduation. These experiences also cultivate an entrepreneurial spirit. Entrepreneurial spirit, in this sense, is not about business. It is an orientation: intellectual ownership rather than deference to authority, comfort with ambiguity rather than dependence on instruction, bias toward action rather than waiting for permission.

First filter

However, rankings are not worthless. They are a reasonable first filter and a way to identify institutions with research strength and global standing. But they should be the starting point, not the destination. Students who look at what graduates actually do, who read actual syllabi rather than summary descriptions, and who map the ecosystem around a university before accepting an offer are better placed before they even arrive.

The task is not to find the institution with the highest rank but to find the environment that will stretch students intellectually, expose them to diverse ways of thinking, and challenge them to engage with real-world issues. In the decades ahead, the universities that matter most will not simply be those with strong reputations but those that prepare students to not only navigate change but to drive it.

The writer is the Vice-Provost-Research, Innovation and Global Engagement, University College London, the U.K.

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Courtesy: Buddy4study,com

Six new faces inducted into U.P. Cabinet ahead of 2027 Assembly poll

BJP eyes caste balance as three Ministers hail from OBC groups, two from SC communities; two Ministers elevated to MoS (Independent Charge)

New entrants: Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with the newly inducted Ministers at Jan Bhavan in Lucknow on Sunday. ANI

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday expanded the State Cabinet by inducting six new Ministers and elevating two Ministers of State to the rank of Minister of State (Independent Charge).

Bhupendra Singh Chaudhary and Manoj Kumar Pandey took oath as Cabinet Ministers. Mr. Chaudhary is an MLC and earlier held the post of BJP State president. Mr. Pandey is the MLA from Unchahar, who switched to the BJP from the Samajwadi Party (SP) before the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

Krishna Paswan, Khaga MLA; Surendra Diler, Khair MLA; Kailash Singh Rajput, Tirwa MLA; and Hansraj Vishwakarma, MLC, were sworn in as Ministers of State. Ministers of State Ajit Singh Pal and Somendra Tomar have been made Ministers of State (Independent Charge).

This expansion of the Cabinet is likely to be the last before the next Assembly election coming up early next year. It is focused on the caste calculus, with three Other Backward Class (OBCs) leaders (Mr. Rajput, Mr. Chaudhary, and Mr. Vishwakarma), and two Scheduled Caste (SC) leaders (Mr. Paswan and Mr. Diler).

Governor Anandiben Patel administered the oath to the new Ministers.

The Cabinet expansion also drew cryptic comments from some Uttar Pradesh leaders.

"The height of fame is a fleeting spectacle; the branch you are sitting on might even break," former six-time Lok Sabha member and BJP leader Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh posted on social media platform X.

Meant to pass time: SP

Meanwhile, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday took a swipe at the Cabinet expansion, dismissing it as a mere exercise to "pass the time" and claiming that the Chief Minister's role under the BJP's rule has been reduced to a "courier messenger".

In a post on X, Mr. Yadav said, "*Samay bitaane ke liye karnaa hai kuch kaam* (Need to do something to pass the time)." "In any case, he has no role to play in the Cabinet expansion. A chit will come from over there, and here it will just be read out," he said in the post in Hindi.

Taking a jibe at Mr. Adityanath, he said under the BJP's rule, "CM" has effectively come to mean "courier messenger".

(With inputs from PTI)

In Kota, post-surgery complications claim another woman's life

Press Trust of India
KOTA

A 22-year-old woman died following complications after a Caesarean section at J.K. Lone Hospital in Rajasthan's Kota, while two other women developed kidney-related complications and were shifted to New Medical College Hospital (NCMH) after their condition deteriorated, officials said on Sunday.

Hospital authorities, however, maintained that the woman died due to cardiac complications and not due to post-surgical infection.

Meanwhile, the condition of three of the four women who developed complications after undergoing C-sections at the NMCH on last week remained critical. Twelve to 13 pregnant women underwent C-section surgeries at the hospital. Within eight to 12 hours of surgery, six of them developed complications. All six were shifted to the nephrology ward. One of the women, Payal, 26, died during treatment on May 5, while another, Jyoti Nayak, 19, died on May 7.

Timings
DELHI

MONDAY, MAY. 11			
RISE	05:33	SET	19:02
RISE	01:47	SET	13:22
TUESDAY, MAY. 12			
RISE	05:33	SET	19:03
RISE	02:17	SET	14:21
WEDNESDAY, MAY. 13			
RISE	05:32	SET	19:04
RISE	02:48	SET	15:23

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	38	26
Safdarjang	38	26
Palam	37	24

Delhi Palam Today
36°C The weather will be dry. Day will be very warm with moderate winds. Night will be pleasant.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
37°C The weather will be dry. Day willl be very warm and windy. Night will be pleasant.

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INBRIEF

Patnaik kicks off fortnight-long campaign on women's rights

Biju Janata Dal (BJD) chief Naveen Patnaik on Sunday attacked the ruling BJP over women's reservation, accusing the party of "indulging in propaganda" despite having made "no contribution" towards advancing women's rights. Addressing party leaders virtually during the launch of the BJD's fortnight-long 'Women's Rights Campaign' on Mother's Day, Mr. Patnaik said "empty vessels make the most noise", in an apparent swipe at the BJP's claims on women's empowerment. The former Odisha Chief Minister alleged that women were being reduced to a vote bank. The campaign will continue till May 25. PTI

Tejashwi attacks Bihar govt. over video of 'assault' by MLA

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Sunday hit out at the NDA government in Bihar for "not taking action" against a BJP MLA who allegedly assaulted a man after barging into his house. Referring to a viral video, Mr. Yadav said the MLA from Muzaffarpur assaulted a person by forcibly entering his house. He also criticised police action against protesting teaching job aspirants in Patna. "While there is no action against the MLA, the police baton-charged teaching job aspirants in the State capital, including women, on Friday. On top of it, over 5,000 protesters have been booked and several arrested," he said. PTI

End of fear, now era of trust: Bengal CM ahead of first Cabinet meeting

State will progress in an atmosphere of trust, Adhikari tells supporters in home town of Kanthi; Cabinet likely to set up inquiry panels into 'atrocities against women' during Trinamool's regime

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

West Bengal's newly sworn-in Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Sunday said the "air of fear" in the State has ended and "trust has taken its place".

He made the remarks while leaving his home town of Kanthi in Purba Medinipur district for Kolkata after receiving a rousing welcome from supporters following his swearing-in a day before.

"*Bhoy* (fear) out, *bhorsa* (trust) in. Prime Minister Narendra Modi*ji* has given the assurance. West Bengal will progress with the involvement of every stakeholder in an atmosphere of hope and trust," the Chief Minister told reporters before leaving for Kolkata.

After taking oath at the Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata on Saturday and completing official engagements, Mr. Adhikari travelled to Kanthi late at night after offering prayers at Kalighat Kali Temple.

Rousing reception: West Bengal's newly sworn-in Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari being welcomed by supporters in Medinipur. PTI

Portfolio allocation

He will chair his first Cabinet meeting on Monday at Nabanna, the administrative headquarters of the State. In the first Cabinet meeting, portfolios will be allocated to five Ministers who took the oath with the Chief Minister on Saturday. The Cabinet is likely to establish inquiry commissions into "atrocities against women" during the Trinamool Congress's regime. Mr. Adhikari will also hold three administrative meetings in Nabanna during the day.

He will first hold a review meeting with the top administration officials. After this, the Chief Minister is likely to hold a meeting with the District Magistrates in the afternoon.

Later, he will chair a meeting with the top officials of the State police force in the afternoon.

According to sources, the meeting will be attended by the Director General of the West Bengal police, the Commissioner of Police of Kolkata, and other high-ranking officials from various zones.

Security check

On Sunday, Kolkata Police Commissioner Ajay Nand and Howrah Police Commissioner Akhilesh Chaturvedi visited Nabanna and took stock of the security arrangements at the building.

Mr. Adhikari had said that his task is to rebuild West Bengal. "West Bengal has suffered a lot. Culture has been destroyed. Education has been lost. We will rebuild West Bengal. There are many responsibilities," he had said after taking the oath.

He will shift his Kolkata base to a State-run guest house in Alipore, an official said on Sunday. Until now, Mr. Adhikari had been staying at an apartment in Chinar Park on the northern fringes of the city.

(With inputs from PTI)

Uncertainty remains as Cong. yet to name Kerala Chief Minister

G. Anand
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Congress workers removing posters of various leaders in the State capital. NIRMAL HARINDRAN

Uncertainty continued over who will be the Congress Chief Minister of Kerala, with the party's high command yet to take a final call following marathon discussions with the State leadership in New Delhi on Saturday.

The delay has raised questions about whether the All India Congress Committee's (AICC) attempt to reach a middle ground between opposing factions has flatlined, at least temporarily.

Senior Congress leaders in Kerala said the outcome of the closed-door talks that Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and senior leader Rahul Gandhi held with V.D. Satheesan and Ramesh Chennithala, the two top contenders for the post, remained unclear as of Sunday. AICC general secretary K.C. Venugopal and Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president Sunny Joseph, an MLA-elect, were part of the discussions.

Party leaders said the KPCC was yet to receive any definitive word from the high command on the contentious Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leadership question, except a stringent direction to reduce public posturing and social media sabre-rattling over what has emerged as an acrimonious three-way leadership tussle.

The contest has threatened to deepen the factional fault lines within the party's State unit after the United Democratic Front's win. A KPCC insider said the AICC took exception to what it perceived as attempts by rival factions to strong-arm the high command into settling the leadership issue on their terms. Seemingly in deference to the directive, party workers owing allegiance to different factions took down some of the hoardings and posters put up in front of party offices.

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4 policemen suspended as Crime Branch begins probe into Odisha lynching case

Press Trust of India
BHUBANESWAR

At least four policemen were suspended and two home guards were disengaged from service on Sunday within hours of Odisha Police's Crime Branch beginning a probe into the lynching of a Government Railway Police (GRP) constable on May 7, officials said. In addition, inspector-in-charge of the Balianta police station Anil Kumar Parida has been attached to the Bhubaneswar headquarters while Rashmita Behera has replaced him, officials said.

Police Commissioner S. Dev Datta Singh said action was taken as the personnel allegedly failed to protect the constable's life despite reaching the spot on time. "The four police personnel and two home guards have been taken to task because they failed to protect the life of a man from the mob, even as they reached the spot on time. The Crime Branch has been probing the case," he told reporters after a review meeting.

The victim, GRP constable Soumya Ranjan Swain, was allegedly lynched by a mob after an accusation of attempted rape was raised by a woman. The police said 11 people have been arrested so far in connection with the incident.

The victim's father alleged that his son was beaten to death in the presence of police personnel.

'Order judicial probe'

Meanwhile, Opposition parties, including the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and the Congress, criticised the State government, with the BJD demanding a judicial probe and the Congress alleging "deterioration" in law and order.

The BJP, however, said the government acted swiftly after the incident.

'Party structure destroyed': Trinamool leaders blame I-PAC for election setback

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Days after suffering defeat at the hands of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the West Bengal Assembly election, a section of Trinamool Congress leaders appears to be searching for a target, with many blaming political consultancy firm I-PAC for the setback.

Senior Trinamool Congress leader and its Lok Sabha chief whip Kalyan Banerjee has alleged that dependency on I-PAC cost the party this election.

'Not accepted'

"I-PAC has completely destroyed the Trinamool Congress organisation. Abhishek's [party national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee] full dependency on I-PAC has not been accepted," Mr. Kalyan said in an interview with *Anandabazar Online*.

The party's association with I-PAC started ahead of the 2021 Assembly poll, when the firm was roped in to shape the party's campaign. Riding on the successful campaign projecting Mamata Banerjee as "Bengal's daughter", the party won 215 seats in the 294-member Assembly.

I-PAC also helped the party win 29 of West Bengal's 42 Lok Sabha seats in the 2024 general election.

Riju Dutta, a former party spokesperson who was recently suspended, also blamed the consultancy firm for the defeat. "I-PAC had been running the party for the past six months. *Didi* (Mamata Banerjee) and Abhishek Banerjee should take responsibility," Mr. Dutta said.

Several other leaders across districts, including former Rajganj MLA Khageswar Roy and Jalpaiguri leader Sourav Chakraborty, have also blamed I-PAC for the electoral setback.

SPOTLIGHT

The crumbling of Awadh

A recent CAG report has drawn attention to many monuments in Uttar Pradesh that have faced extensive encroachment. Heritage conservationists fear that without immediate intervention, the composite, syncretic legacy of Awadh will be lost

Mayank Kumar

Shahid Alam, 15, a Class 10 student, is worried. He must pay ₹50 to his group of street-cricket players to buy a tennis ball. "This is the second time the ball has disappeared into the jungle. We cannot go inside as it is locked," says Alam, who regularly plays cricket on the uneven ground outside the Imambara Shah Najaf in Lucknow. The jungle he is referring to is wild undergrowth around Qadam Rasool, an adjoining monument built by Nasir-ud-Din Haidar, the second King of Awadh. It was built in the 19th century on the banks of the Gomti river and is now almost collapsing.

Vineet Kumar, a Lucknavi, who is taking a tour of the Imambara Shah Najaf, says, "There should be a beautiful garden here. This is the tragedy with Lucknow, we are unable to save monuments. Now children are calling this historic place a jungle." The Imambara was built by the first king of Awadh, Ghazi-ud-Din Haidar, who built it as a token of his devotion to Hazrat Ali, who was the son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad. It is a replica of Hazrat Ali's shrine in Iraq.

A March 2026 report by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) documented Uttar Pradesh's Centrally protected monuments (CPMs), those sites under the jurisdiction of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). The report for 2024 stated that of 487 CPMs in the State, 31 are untraceable, only 31 monuments (6.4%) had "proper ownership documentation", and 96 monuments were encroached upon. There were also CMPs that were neglected, many needing structural alterations, and some bearing the results of "inappropriate conservation work".

Allahabad High Court lawyer Syed Mohammad Haider Rizvi, who is also a heritage enthusiast, says many who work in conservation are deeply concerned. "The CAG report is a formal indictment of institutional failure. Up to 31 monuments have simply disappeared in U.P., and yet the ASI continues to carry them on its official list. This means the government agency entrusted with our heritage cannot even locate what it claims to protect," Rizvi says. He adds that not having ownership documents is akin to a custodian who holds no deed to the property he guards.

Heritage groups are considering a mass awareness campaign in addition to intensifying judicial interventions. Rizvi has filed public interest litigations (PILs) in the High Court over encroachments on heritage sites, demanding their removal.

Conservationists feel that without a dedicated initiative by the government to protect and restore sites, it may not just be the monuments that are lost, but in time, a whole Awadhi culture.

In need of care: Shops and eateries encroaching the Chota Imambara in Lucknow. SANDEEP SAXENA

The heritage crisis

Umakant Mishra, an Unnao resident, is writing letters to authorities for removal of trespassers at monument sites in Lucknow and Agra. He says the fear among heritage preservationists is "the quiet, insidious practice of delisting monuments" on grounds of "ceasing to be of national importance". "This has been used as a tool to paper over failures of protection when negligence goes too far," he says.

The monuments that have been removed from the protected list after 2024 include the Qadam Rasul, Begum Kothi, Imambada Ghulam Husain Khan, and Chota Chhatar Manzil of Lucknow, considered markers of Awadhi civilisation.

There are instances of government structures like hospitals, police stations, municipal offices, schools, and other departments establishing offices within CPMs allegedly without legal sanction or ASI authorisation in multiple U.P. districts.

"The old Rohilla Fort in Saharanpur is under possession of the district jail. The Hussainabad Baradari in Lucknow has been encroached upon by everyone from the electricity department to the Jal Nigam, because it has no boundary wall," says Mishra.

Similarly, at the protected monument at Bhanakaur Kund that has Sanskrit inscriptions, in Mathura, a small temple has been constructed.

Nagar Panchayat Barasana had constructed structures and toilet blocks in prohibited and regulated areas, says Mishra.

The CAG team noticed during physical verification in Rani Mahal of Jhansi, that ASI itself was not complying with the provisions. "The circle office of the ASI Jhansi was located in the Centrally protected monument. They carried out changes to the structure of the monument: fitting air conditioners, electrical connections, and water pipes. Toilets were laid with ceramic tiles. These changes were not consistent with the original character of these monuments," noted the CAG report.

Encroachment galore

Heritage activists say in Lucknow, the Tomb of Mohammad Ali Shah (Chota Imambara), declared a protected monument by a Gazette Notification as far back as 1920, has had its gates encroached upon by shop owners. "The shops were allocated by the over 200-year-old Hussainabad and Allied Trust to locals in Chota Imambara, but they have sublet it to different people in contravention of the allotment conditions. Those people have encroached upon common areas too," says Rizvi.

The Trust is the custodian of Awadhi culture.

The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958, prohibits any individual from engaging in activities that may damage a protected heritage structure. Nor can any construction be undertaken within the protected area.

Wahid Ahmed runs an eatery within the Chota Imambara complex. He says his family has been running the place for three generations.

He is unaware that documentation is needed to run his shop there. "There are dozens like me in this place," he says.

The ASI, in its guidelines issued in January 2005 regarding the use of specific areas within protected monuments, stated that permission for organising cultural programmes in these areas may be granted only if the local ASI circle is completely assured that the event will not result in any harm to the monument.

To protect the Diwan-e-Aam at Agra Fort, the superintending archaeologist of the Agra circle requested the Director General of ASI in February 2023 to initiate a structural analysis by a qualified agency. They had suggested that access to this interior space in the fort be restricted to visitors under Rule 4 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Rules of 1959.

There was also a request to disallow large-scale events within the monument's grounds.

The CAG audit noted that permission was still granted to hold a programme commemorating the birth anniversary of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj on February 19, 2023, set against the backdrop of Diwan-e-Aam.

Demand for better laws

"The existing central framework is inadequate, under-enforced, and plagued by definitional gaps," says Rizvi. "We need a State heritage law with clear boundary demarcations, mandatory digitisation timelines, anti-encroachment provisions with teeth, and citizen grievance mechanisms," he adds.

The findings from the CAG report revealed that planning and documentation were inadequate, resulting in fragmented and incomplete conservation efforts. It observed that the ASI circles in U.P. had not prepared any mid-term or long-term plans for conservation and preservation of monuments. No SMPs were prepared by the circles for conservation of monuments, it noted.

The Lucknow circle of the ASI did not respond to *The Hindu's* list of e-mailed questions.

mayank.kumar@thehindu.co.in

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OUR BELOVED mother, Smt Krishna Arora, wife of the late Sh Sat Pal Arora passed away peacefully on 1st May 2026 at V 6/14 DLF Phase 3, Gurugram Haryana. Antim Ardas on Wednesday 13th May 2026 from 3.30 to 5 pm at Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurudwara, H Block, DLF Phase 1, Sector 26, Gurugram. Children: Radhey & Harish Dua; Rajni & Rajinder Arora; Nina & Jawahar Arora; Surinder Arora. rajinder@ishtihaar.com

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Panelists: Talmiz Ahmad
Former Ambassador to Oman, UAE & Saudi Arabia.
Distinguished Professor for International Studies, Symbiosis International University, Pune

Prof. Gulshan Sachdeva
Jean Monnet Chair, School of International Studies, JNU

Sunjay Sudhir
Former Ambassador to UAE & Maldives.
Distinguished Fellow IIM, Ahmedabad

Dr T C Karthikeyan
Professor on Politics & International Relations, Director - Centre for Public Policy & Administration, Saveetha School of Law

Moderator: Suhasini Haidar
Diplomatic Editor, The Hindu

Tea Break: 11:15 am – 11:30 am

Panel Discussion 2: 11:30 am – 12:30 pm

Topic: Impact of West Asia crisis on Economic Disruptions & Sustainability: Implications for India

Panelists: Sudha Meiyappan
Member, Economic Affairs Committee, SICCI

Col Rajeev Agarwal (Retd)
Senior Research Consultant, Chintan Research Foundation

Dr S Pandiaraj
Professor of International Law and Trade, Saveetha School of Law

Moderator: Kunal Shankar
Deputy Business Editor, The Hindu

Fireside Chat: 12:30 pm – 1:15 pm

Topic: India's Global Future: Leadership, Diplomacy & Sustainability in times of Conflict

Panelist: T S Tirumurti
Former Ambassador & Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, New York

In conversation with: Dr Stanly Johny
International Affairs Editor, The Hindu

Vote of Thanks: 1:15 pm – 1:20 pm

Wednesday, May 13, 2026
9:30 am Onwards
Kurinji Hall, SIMATS, Chennai

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi offering prayers as he visits the Art of Living Foundation International Centre. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Gelatin sticks found on Modi's convoy route in Bengaluru

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

In what could be dubbed a security breach during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bengaluru on Sunday, the police recovered a packet with two gelatin sticks abandoned along the Prime Minister's convoy route, minutes before it passed to reach the Art of Living Ashram.

Mr. Modi was in the city to attend the 45th anniversary celebrations of The Art of Living Foundation and the 70th birthday event of its founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

Gelatin sticks were found in a box along this route near Vaderahalli Gate. The police and local administration had cleared a few petty shops near the location, sources said. R. Srinivas Gowda, SP, Bengaluru South, said a constable and the anti-sabotage check team found a suspicious packet around 20 feet from the road during an area domination exercise.

The police have detained a suspect and have registered a separate case and are probing the source of the gelatin sticks.

Meanwhile, amid a tussle over leadership in the Karnataka government that has so far remained unresolved, Mr. Modi mocked the Congress on the issue.

"In Karnataka, during the last three years, instead of solving problems of the people, this [Congress] government is spending more time in solving internal disputes. It has not been decided how long this Chief Minister will remain or whether the other person will get power. The issue has been kept hanging," he said in an address to BJP workers and leaders at the HAL Airport, Bengaluru on Sunday.

Responding to Mr. Modi's attack, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar said that "all chairs in Karnataka are strong". "In Karnataka, no chair is shaky and all chairs are strong."

Young faces make a mark for Congress in Kerala poll

Around 30 young workers of the Congress emerged victorious in the Assembly election; the youngsters will see the party through at least for the next 15 years, says six-time former MLA

K.S. Sudhi
KOCHI

The crop of young Congress leaders, all first-time legislators, are impatiently waiting to kick-start their electoral politics in Kerala even as the elders of the party are grappling with the selection of its Chief Minister candidate.

Around 30 young workers of the Congress emerged victorious in the recent Assembly elections. This accounts for nearly half the seats won by the party and the MLAs-elect include leaders of the Kerala Students Union and the Youth Congress. Some of them emerged after a huge fight, defeating Ministers and veteran leaders.

While Youth Congress leader Abin Varkey defeated Health Minister Veena George, M.M. Naseer trounced Animal Husbandry Minister J. Chinchurani and Vidya Balakrishnan defeated Forest Minister A.K. Saseendran. V.S. Joy defeated former Minister K.T. Jaleel and Sudheer Sha Palode stopped D.K. Murali. Youth Congress State president O.J. Janeesh won the Kodungalloor seat. A.D. Thomas, a 30-year-old worker from Alappuzha, would be the baby in the new Assembly.

Young and ambitious: Youth Congress leader Abin Varkey defeated Health Minister Veena George in the Aranmula Assembly constituency. LEJU KAMAL

New leadership

While the average age of senior Congress leaders in the State was around 65 years, the new leadership is found to be younger by at least 20 years.

"Though the Congress had fielded many youngsters in 2021 too, it was this time that the largest number of youngsters emerged victorious," observes K. Babu, six-time MLA from Thripunithura who hung up his boots from electoral politics a few months ago.

"The organisational preparedness, favourable political climate, outrage against the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government, the consolidation of minority votes and support from the majority community did the magic. The youngsters will see the party through at least for the next 15 years," he said.

The infusion of fresh blood, says Benny Behanan, MP, into the organisation was the outcome of the decision of the central leadership of the party. Representation of youth and women was ensured on the candidates' list, he said. Mr. Behanan, who has been in electoral politics for nearly 45 years, observed that the average age of the new leaders was around 45 years. It's for the first time in recent years that the party and the Assembly are witnessing a surge in the number of women and youth leaders, he said. The young leaders easily connect with the youngsters. They also represent the aspirations and hopes of the new generation of voters, he observed.

While the average age of senior Congress leaders in the State was around 65 years, the new leadership is found to be younger by at least 20 years

'Surgical strike'

Mr. Thomas felt that the Congress's surgical strike to field the maximum number of youth and student activists brought rich dividends. The young candidates connected well with Gen Z and young voters and won the popular mandate, he added.

The party sources indicated that the selection of the Chief Minister candidate from among the claimants – AICC general secretary K.C. Venugopal, LoP V.D. Satheesan and senior leader Ramesh Chennithala may take some time.

Chakankar appears before SIT in Kharat case, says she will cooperate with probe

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Rupali Chakankar on Sunday appeared before the special investigation team (SIT) for questioning over her alleged association with self-styled godman Ashok Kharat, who is currently under arrest in several rape and sexual exploitation cases.

Ms. Chakankar, who resigned as the Maharashtra women's panel chief amid the controversy, said she would fully cooperate with the probe. Her questioning began around 12.30 p.m., sources said.

The Maharashtra government had set up the SIT to probe 12 cases of sexual assault and financial fraud registered against Mr. Kharat in Nashik and Ahilyanagar districts.

Ms. Chakankar also had to resign as the chief of the NCP women's wing after her alleged links to Mr. Kharat came to light.

An official said the NCP leader was called to record her statement before the SIT and was being questioned at the Maharashtra Police Academy in Nashik.

Use of bank account

The SIT was likely to ask her about her association with Mr. Kharat and about the alleged use of her sister's bank account by the accused 'godman'.

Referring to allegations made by activist Anjali Damania against her, Ms. Chakankar said, "I don't know who is saying what. But you will get answers to all your questions after completion of the inquiry."

Rupali Chakankar

Earlier, Ms. Damania had demanded that Ms. Chakankar be investigated, claiming that she had details of call records showing that the NCP leader made 177 calls to Mr. Kharat, including a conversation lasting 22 minutes in a single day.

Kharat in danger: Patole

Meanwhile, senior Congress leader Nana Patole claimed that Mr. Kharat's life could be in danger in prison. Talking to reporters, he alleged, "Four Ministers in the State Cabinet were connected to Kharat. We will write to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis seeking their removal."

Reacting to Mr. Patole's allegations, senior BJP leader and Revenue Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule said the Congress leader should reveal the names of the Ministers rather than providing incomplete information. He further assured that Mr. Kharat was safe in custody.

Signal, film made by Vizag director, goes to Cannes, academy

Paul Nicodemus
VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam -born filmmaker Sagi Sree Hari Varma's short film *Signal*, shot entirely on an iPhone in black and white, is set to be screened at the 79th Cannes Film Festival's Marché du Film, the festival's international film market, on May 15, 2026, and later at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Los Angeles on June 9, as part of the Gold Rising Programme's 10th Anniversary Opening Day.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Varma described the journey of *Signal* as surreal, and said that the project began as a proof-of-concept for a larger feature-length techno-horror film he has been developing over the past two years. "The short film was initially meant to help me pitch the feature version to studios and investors. We never imagined it would travel this far," he said.

The 2-minute, 54-second film, conceived as a "techno-horror theatrical experience", explores a world plunged into chaos after the collapse of digital connectivity. Made during Varma's participation in the CinemadaMare filmmaking fellowship in Italy, the film is led by Swedish actor Olivia Hoy and shot in a single take on an iPhone. In 2019, he became, by his account, the only Indian national selected for the Academy Gold Rising programme. He will also participate in a panel discussion alongside Oscar-nominated director Ted Melfi at the Academy screening on June 9.

Coastal paradise

Cloud surge: Grey clouds seen in the sky over the coastal Veli village in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday amid pre-monsoon conditions across the Kerala coast. NIRMAL HARINDRAN

Karnataka Planning Minister Sudhakar passes away at 66

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Karnataka's Minister for Planning and Statistics D. Sudhakar passed away in a private hospital in Bengaluru on Sunday from a lung infection.

He was 66. He is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter.

The Minister was on life support for over two weeks following the infection. According to a release, the Minister developed the infection when he underwent a knee operation. He was shifted to another hospital and was receiving intensive medical care there.

A medical bulletin from the hospital said he was declared dead at 3.15 a.m. on Sunday.

D. Sudhakar

The last rites will be conducted in Challakere of Chitradurga district on Monday.

The government has declared a holiday for schools, colleges, and government establishments on Monday and three-day mourning for Karnataka.

Mr. Sudhakar represented Hiriyur constituency in the Legislative Assembly.

Prominent leaders across party affiliations have condoled the death of Mr. Sudhakar.

AICC general secretary in charge of Karnataka Randeep Singh Surjewala said Mr. Sudhakar stood out for his smiling mannerisms, simplicity, and grassroots connect.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the political field had suffered a loss in Mr. Sudhakar's death. Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar said the State government would consider naming an irrigation project after Mr. Sudhakar.

10-year-old boy dies in leopard attack

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

A 10-year-old boy was killed in a leopard attack in Nagamale forests, near Malai Mahadeshwara Hills, in Chamarajanagar district, Karnataka, early on Sunday. The incident took place when the boy, a native of Bengaluru, was going to Nagamale with his family. The leopard is believed to have suddenly attacked the boy and dragged him away. His body was found about half an hour later, with his neck and other parts injured, according to locals. The Forest Department watchers reached the spot after receiving information.

A.P. plans 'perfection hubs' to help local products gain global brand recognition

V. Raghavendra
VIJAYAWADA

As part of its efforts to transform the products made in Andhra Pradesh into recognised global brands, the Andhra Pradesh government has initiated steps to develop Product Perfection Clusters (PPCs) in the Amaravati, Visakhapatnam and Tirupati economic regions and lined up a slew of enabling measures.

The idea behind the PPCs is to elevate local manufacturing to international standards by providing necessary support to industries, especially MSMEs, conforming to quality control standards, creating advanced logistics networks, doing international benchmarking and integrating it into the production cycles.

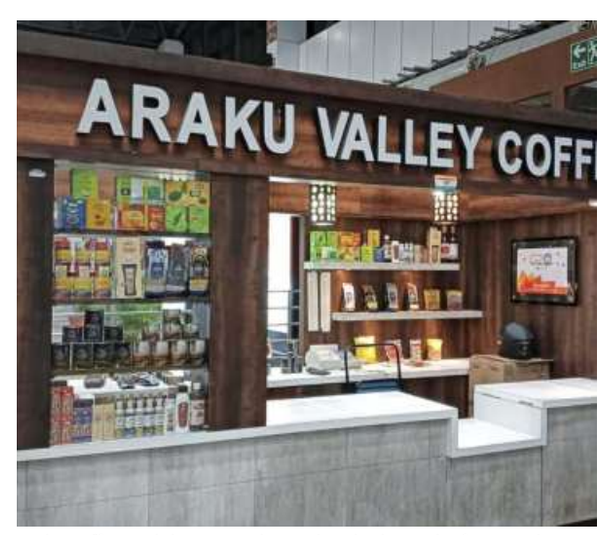
The government will act as a facilitator and infrastructure provider, and enforce quality standards, which are key to entering overseas markets.

It has already done logistics mapping that is aimed at making local products price-competitive abroad.

The products that have been identified include those from the agriculture and horticulture sectors, which make substantial contributions to the GSDP.

Funding resources

To make headway, the government has advised the District Collectors to explore ways to promote the products made in their districts as raw materials for global brands, and help in getting process, product and marketing audits done. Besides, it has ordered that all funding resources available under a host of schemes like the Raising & Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) to be mobilised. More importantly, the government wants to give assistance to the industries in sourcing advanced technologies from various countries.



Araku coffee and the 3,000-plus agri and tobacco leaf processing units in Guntur are highlighted as export strengths. FILE PHOTO

The products that have been identified are as diverse as gold jewellery to solid rocket propellants and pharmaceutical ingredients

Now, the products that have been identified across the State are as diverse as gold jewellery ornaments to solid rocket propellants and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) to cashew kernels.

Global recognition

The Tenofovir Alafenamide API manufacturing facilities of Hetero Drugs and Laurus Labs situated in the Jawaharlal Nehru Pharma City at Parawada in Anakapalli district, and the inverter AC-plus-compressor manufacturing units of Daikin, LG, Lloyd and Blue Star in Sri City are cited as examples of globally recognised PPCs.

A composite solid rocket propellant-cum-medium calibre ammunition manufacturing facility of Premier Explosives coming up at Sriharikota and ASIP Technologies - APACT Co. Ltd's semiconductor unit in the making at Tirupati are being showcased as national strategic assets.

The 3,000-plus agri and tobacco leaf processing units in Guntur district and Araku Coffee are highlighted as 'regional export strengths' and the Madhavamala wood craft units near Tirupati and the Chimakurthy black galaxy granite units are considered to have tremendous potential for scaling up to global standards.

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- M.Sc. in Sustainability
- M.Sc. in Green Hydrogen

Department of Mathematics & Statistics
- M.Sc. in Mathematics

School of Biosciences and Technology

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- M.Tech Biomedical Engineering
- M.Tech in Bioinformatics

Department of Life Sciences
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- M.Sc in Biological Science
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- M.Sc in Biochemistry
- M.Sc in Biomedical Science
- M.Sc in Zoology
- M.Sc. Computational Biology and Bioinformatics

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- M.Sc Food Science And Technology

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- M.Sc. In Medical Biotechnology
- M.Sc. in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics
- M.Sc in Industrial Biotechnology
- M.Sc Neuroscience with specialization in Cognitive Computing
- M.Sc Nanoscience and Technology
- M.Sc Medical Microbiology
- M.Sc. Medical Biotechnology (Specialization in Bioinformatics
- M.Sc. Public Health Administration

School of Medical & Allied Sciences

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- Master of Pharmacy (Pharmaceutics) (Approved by Pharmacy Council of India)
- Master of Pharmacy (Pharmacology) (Approved by Pharmacy Council of India)
- Master of Pharmacy (Regulatory Affairs) (Approved by Pharmacy Council of India)
- Master of Pharmacy (Pharmaceutical Analysis) (Approved by Pharmacy Council of India)
- MBA (Pharmaceutical Management)

School of Allied Health Sciences

Department of Allied Health Sciences
- Master of Physiotherapy in Cardio- Pulmonary Sciences
- Master of Physiotherapy in Sports Sciences
- Master of Physiotherapy in Musculoskeletal Sciences
- Master of Physiotherapy in NeuroSciences
- Master of Physiotherapy in Obstetrics and Gynaecology Sciences
- Masters of Optometry
- M.Sc. in Cardiovascular Technology
- M.Sc. in Medical Laboratory Technology (Medical Biochemistry)
- M.Sc. in Medical Laboratory Technology (Medical Microbiology)
- M.Sc. in Medical Laboratory Technology (Histology and Cytology)
- M.Sc. in Medical Laboratory Technology (Hematology and Transfusion Medicine)
- MBA in Healthcare Management
- M.Sc. (Yoga Therapy)
- Post Graduate Diploma in Medical Music Therapy

School of Agriculture

Department of Agriculture
- MBA (Agribusiness Management)
- M.Sc. (Agriculture) Agronomy
- M.Sc. (Agriculture) Entomology
- M.Sc. (Agriculture) Soil Science
- M.Sc. (Hort.) Fruit Science

School of Design

Department of Design
- M.Sc. In Fashion Design
- M.Sc. In Interior and Spatial Design
- M. Design in Interaction Design
- M. Design in Design Research and Insights

School of Education

Department of Education
- B.Ed. (approved by National Council for Teacher Education)
- M.Ed. (approved by National Council for Teacher Education)

School of Law

Department of legal Studies
- Bachelor of Law (LLB) (Hons) approved by Bar Council of India
- Master of Law (LLM) in Constitutional law and Governance
- Master of Law (LLM) in Corporate Law
- Master of Law (LLM) in Criminal Law and Criminal Justice
- Master of Law (LLM) in Environmental Law
- Master of Law (LLM) in Intellectual Property Law
- Master of Law (LLM) in Law and Emerging Technology

School of Media & Communication Studies

Department of Mass Communication
- M.A in Journalism and Mass Communication
- M.A in Journalism and Mass Communication (In association with India Today Media Institute)

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Department of Finance & Commerce
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- Master of Finance and Control
- MBA in Financial Management

School of Hospitality

Department of Hospitality
- Masters in Hospitality Management
- Masters in Culinary Management & Food Entrepreneurship
- MBA Hospitality and Service Management

Diploma Programs

School of Medical & Allied Sciences

Department of Pharmacy
- Diploma in pharmacy (D.Pharm) (Approved by Pharmacy Council of India)

School of Allied Health Sciences
- Diploma in Advanced Music Therapy

University Polytechnic

Department of Galgotias Polytechnic
- Diploma in Computer Science and Engineering
- Diploma in Computer Science and Engineering (Network Essentials)
- Diploma in Computer Science and Engineering (Web Designing)
- Diploma in Computer Science and Engineering (Cloud Computing and IT Infrastructure)
- Diploma in Computer Science and Engineering (Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning)
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- Diploma in Electrical Engineering
- Diploma in Electrical Engineering (Electric Vehicle)
- Diploma in Electrical Engineering (Renewable Energy)
- Diploma in Electronics and Communication Engineering
- Diploma in Mechanical Engineering
- Diploma in Mechanical Engineering (Electric Vehicle)
- Diploma in IC Manufacturing
- Diploma in Civil Engineering

Certificate Programs

School of Languages

Department of Languages
- Certificate in Japanese
- Certificate in French

School of Forensic Sciences

Department of Forensic Sciences
- Certificate course in Social Media Crimes
- Certificate course in Advanced crime scene management
- Certificate course in Forensic photography
- Certificate course in Graphology and personality profiling

School of Media & Communication Studies

Department of Mass Communication
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- Certificate Course in Events Management (In association with India Today Media Institute)
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A ND-NDE

No detours

A TVK government with aligned parties was the only viable post-poll outcome

The Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) and its leader C. Joseph Vijay, who was sworn in as Chief Minister along with nine Ministers from the party on Sunday, took the shortest and straightest route to power. Falling 10 seats short of the 118-seat majority mark, the TVK secured the support of four ideologically aligned parties – the Congress (five MLAs), CPI(M), CPI, and Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi, or VCK (two each) – with the IUML's two MLAs taking the tally to 121. The TVK had, soon after its formation, sought to position the Congress and the VCK as ideological partners; that it has now drawn support from them and the Left and the IUML, even though they contested within the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam-led coalition, is therefore not out of place. The alternative mooted by AIADMK leaders, and endorsed by some DMK leaders – an AIADMK government propped up by the DMK – would have been an immoral exercise. In any case, outgoing Chief Minister M.K. Stalin was against such a farcical twist. Meanwhile, by demanding written proof of 118 MLAs' support before inviting the TVK, the single largest party, to form the government, Governor Rajendra Arlekar ignored the Sarkaria Commission framework – which prioritises the single largest party with outside support next only to a pre-poll alliance – and the Supreme Court's ruling in *Rameshwar Prasad* (2006) that only the floor of the House can test a Ministry's strength.

The Congress, for its part, jumped at the offer opportunistically, pledging support to the TVK and committing to an alliance for local, Assembly and parliamentary elections. That it would so casually jeopardise a decades-old alliance with the DMK is unsurprising. The party contested the 2026 elections half-heartedly, divided at the top, and that ambivalence showed in its returns: in the 28 seats it contested, it polled just 28% of the vote – the second-lowest share within the DMK-led coalition; only the late-entrant DMDK did worse. It was also short-sighted, given that this alliance helped the INDIA bloc win all 39 Lok Sabha seats in Tamil Nadu in 2024. The Left and VCK lent support to the TVK while citing the need for a stable government and reiterating their partnership with the DMK against communal forces. The elections produced Tamil Nadu's first hung verdict in decades, and the response to it was a test of constitutional propriety and political character. Despite an avoidable delay, a TVK-led government has eventually taken charge. It is now incumbent upon Mr. Vijay to build on the foundations laid by Dravidian governments, under whose stewardship Tamil Nadu has emerged as one of the front-runners of the Indian economy by prioritising industrial development and socio-economic equity.

Cost to access

The opportunity cost of accessing medical care remains high

The Union Labour Ministry has announced that it will provide a free annual health check-up to workers aged 40 years or more, following an existing provision in the new Labour Codes. The programme will be implemented through the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC). For workers in hazardous conditions, such as handling toxic chemicals or operating heavy machinery, check-ups are mandatory; if illness is detected, ESIC hospitals and dispensaries will provide free treatment. India already has a few workers' health obligations on paper, including under the Factories Act 1948 (only within factories), the ESI Act 1948, and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSH) Code 2020. The new programme will be financed through the well-endowed ESI fund, although the government is still shoring up the number of beds and doctors available via PMJAY-empanelled facilities. At this time, operational evidence suggests that insured workers will be the main beneficiaries.

Commendable though the initiative is, its success is not guaranteed. At present, only around 31 crore of 94 crore workers are on the e-Shram portal, whose integration with ESIC is still in its early stages in many States. Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya also failed to address how a woman working in a garment home unit or as a domestic worker could access the longer maternity leave if she has no 'employer'. Annual check-ups for women also warrant specific medical staff needs whereas many ESIC camps are crowded and dominated by men. As with many of its predecessors, the programme does not address the opportunity costs of accessing health care, forcing workers to continue contending with lost wages. An ESIC facility may also refer a worker to another centre if it lacks the resources for specific tests, leading to repeat visits and added time and cost. The new programme focuses predominantly on non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. Heat-related illnesses are not explicitly recognised as occupational diseases under the ESI Act whereas construction and agriculture workers are most at risk of them. Waste-pickers and sanitation workers on the other hand face greater risk of infectious diseases such as hepatitis and leptospirosis. The scheme offers screening but does not mandate proactive vaccination. The government must meet workers where they are, through mobile occupational health units and – as the OSH Code 2020 stipulates for organised workers – at their places of work, and provide tokens to compensate them for time spent on check-ups. Otherwise, any scheme of this nature will not improve upon the already deficient system.

The Governor who forgot his job

Rajeev Dhavan

Senior Advocate of the Supreme Court of India

Sanjay Hegde

Senior Advocate of the Supreme Court of India

The Tamil Nadu Assembly election verdict of 2026 was decisive. The Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), contesting its first election, emerged as the single largest party with 108 seats in a House of 234. The ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) was reduced to 59. The All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) won 47. TVK founder, C. Joseph Vijay, had defeated the two Dravidian parties that had ruled Tamil Nadu uninterrupted for 59 years between them. The voter had spoken plainly. Lok Bhavan listened selectively.

Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar refused to invite the leader of the single largest party to form the government. Instead, he demanded signed letters from 118 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) before he would administer the oath. Mr. Vijay went to the Lok Bhavan three times, and each time he was sent back. Last-minute support from the Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) and the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) eventually took the tally to 121. The Governor then graciously consented. The swearing-in was fixed for May 10 and the Governor has further directed the Chief Minister to seek a vote of confidence on or before May 13. Every step of this exercise is constitutionally wrong. The errors are not minor. They go to the foundation of parliamentary democracy in the States.

What the Governor is required to do

The Governor's function on the morrow of an election is narrow and well settled. He is to identify the person most likely to command the confidence of the House and invite that person to be sworn in. He is not a returning officer. He is not an arithmetic tutor. He has no business demanding that a Chief Minister-designate produce a signed muster roll before allowing him to take the oath.

The Sarkaria Commission of 1988, the Venkatachaliah Commission of 2002, and the Punchhi Commission of 2010 were unanimous on the order of preference. The single largest pre-poll alliance comes first. The single largest party that stakes a claim and can form a stable government comes next. Pre-poll combinations command priority because the voter knows what he is voting for. This sequence has been honoured in the breach in Goa, Manipur, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and now Tamil Nadu. The breaches have been remarkably one-sided.

In Goa in 2017, Governor Mridula Sinha invited the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which had 13 seats in a House of 40, ahead of the Congress, which had 17. In the same year, in Manipur, the BJP with 21 seats was preferred over the Congress with 28. In 2018, in Karnataka (a House of 224), Governor Vajubhai Vala invited the BJP with 104 seats and gave it 15 days to assemble a majority, ignoring a written letter from a Congress-Janata Dal(S) post-poll alliance with 115.

In every one of those cases the BJP was the beneficiary of an expansive reading of gubernatorial discretion. In Tamil Nadu, where the BJP is not a contender and the Centre's preferred regional partner has been routed, the doctrine has suddenly contracted. The Governor now demands proof of an absolute majority before he will issue an invitation at all. This is not principle. It is partisanship dressed up as prudence.

> The Governor's actions during Tamil Nadu's post-election process raise concerns about violations of established democratic norms and conventions

There have been minority governments

The Governor seems to have forgotten that minority governments are a familiar feature of Indian parliamentary practice. On May 16, 1996, the BJP's Atal Bihari Vajpayee was sworn in by President Shankar Dayal Sharma and given 13 days to prove a majority he never possessed. He resigned on May 28 without facing a vote. Nobody suggested that he should not have been sworn in. P.V. Narasimha Rao governed for five years at the head of a minority Congress government and survived a no-confidence motion in July 1993 by a single vote. H.D. Deve Gowda and I.K. Gujral led minority United Front governments at the Centre. In 2004, the first ministry of the Congress's Manmohan Singh was a minority arrangement that ran a full term with outside support.

The constitutional test has never been the production of signatures in advance at Rashtrapati Bhavan/Lok Bhavan. The only testing ground is the floor of the House. A government continues so long as it has not lost a motion of no confidence. That is the essence of Article 164(2) and the convention that flows from it.

The Governor's demand that Mr. Vijay produce signed letters from a majority before being sworn in is, therefore, an invention. No provision of the Constitution requires it. No commission has recommended it. No precedent supports it. Anyone who wished to challenge Mr. Vijay's claim was free to bring a motion of no-confidence on the floor of the House. The MLAs would then have voted on the record, with their constituents watching. That is how parliamentary democracy is supposed to work.

Equally objectionable is the direction that a vote of confidence be taken on or before May 13. The convention is that a newly sworn-in Chief Minister addresses the House at its first session; the address is debated, and the government's majority is tested in the ordinary course. To compress this into 72 hours is to invite the conduct the anti-defection law was meant to suppress. A three-day deadline signals to disgruntled legislators, and to those willing to do business with them, that the window for horse-trading is open but short. It is an invitation, written in the Governor's own hand, to the kind of resort politics this country has seen too often.

The Karnataka episode of 2018 made this point unambiguously. The Supreme Court of India, hearing the matter at midnight, held that a 15-day window to prove a majority was an invitation to engineered defections. The remedy then was to compress the timetable to a single day. That remedy was tailored to a Governor who had wrongly invited a party that did not have the numbers. It cannot be inverted into a doctrine that the single largest party, which has staked its claim and produced support letters, must prove its majority within 72 hours of taking office.

What the Supreme Court must now say

The Court has had many opportunities, in *S.R. Bommai* (1994), *Rameshwar Prasad* (2006) and the Karnataka order of 2018, to lay down the law on gubernatorial discretion in government formation. It has, on each occasion, gone part of the way. The time has come to go all the way.

Three propositions must be settled. First, the Governor's task is to identify the person most likely to command confidence. He must follow the order of preference set out by the Sarkaria, Venkatachaliah and Punchhi Commissions. He has no power to demand pre-swearing-in proof of an absolute majority. Second, a minority government, like any other, falls only on the floor of the House. Third, the convention that the first session of a new Assembly tests the government's majority in the ordinary course should be replaced by requiring the Opposition to bring in a motion of no confidence if they so desire. Ordering a confidence vote is anathema. Minority governments will die before they are born. The only democratic way is a no-confidence vote with debate on why a government needs to be thrown out.

A sworn-in government must be allowed to debate and defend its record on governance, on the floor of the House. In a fresh House, the threat of dissolution is the strongest discipline against defection. An MLA who has just won a five-year term is reluctant to risk a fresh election. If a government is allowed to settle, prove its majority on the floor in the normal course, and govern, the cost of pulling it down rises sharply.

The Governors of India are appointed at the pleasure of the President of India. They are not elected. The least the country can ask is that they remember at whose pleasure they hold office, and whose mandate they are bound to respect. It is the voter's. Not the Centre's.

Advancing India-South Korea defence innovation ties

Tejas Bharadwaj

Senior research analyst in the Technology and Society Program at Carnegie India

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Research assistant in the Security Studies Program at Carnegie India

Since establishing diplomatic relations in 1973, India and South Korea have maintained defence ties. Their first formal agreement, the 2005 MoU on Defence Industry and Logistics, promoted cooperation in production, research and development, and procurement. Subsequently, they signed separate five-year memoranda of understanding on defence cooperation and defence research and development (R&D) in 2010.

The first enabled exchanges of expertise, training, visits and joint exercises, while the second focused on emerging technologies such as marine, electronics, and intelligent systems through links between India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the South Korean defence industry. In 2015, the partnership was elevated to a Special Strategic Partnership.

Furthermore, the 2020 Roadmap for Defence Industries Cooperation expanded engagements into key areas, such as land, naval, aero, and guided weapon systems, along with investments and technology transfer in India's defence industrial corridors. A notable outcome of this partnership is the K9 Vajra-T self-propelled artillery system, manufactured in India by Larsen & Toubro (L&T) and Hanwha Aerospace, South Korea under the 'Make in India' initiative, whose success led to a follow-on production contract.

The new platform

On April 20, 2026, at the India-South Korea Summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Lee Jae Myung, a new defence innovation platform called the Korea-India Defence Accelerator (KIND-X) was announced.

As part of the Joint Strategic Vision, KIND-X aims to connect businesses, incubators, investors, defence start-ups, and universities from both sides. KIND-X is not a new model of cooperation for India.

It mirrors similar defence industrial innovation bridges with the United States under INDUS-X (India-U.S. Defense Acceleration Ecosystem) and with France under FRIND-X (France-India Defence Startup Excellence). There have also been suggestions to create an INDUS-X-like model with South Korea. Drawing on these existing models, KIND-X is expected to be led by South Korea's Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA) and India's Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO). Both countries run defence innovation programmes to strengthen their defence start-up ecosystems, such as South Korea's specialised innovation enterprise system and India's Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX).

> KIND-X can help deepen bilateral defence research and development, co-production, and start-up collaboration

According to India's Ministry of External Affairs special briefing on April 20, 2024, KIND-X is expected to align with the 2020 Roadmap for Defence Industries Cooperation.

What can be unlocked

What can KIND-X unlock? KIND-X can emerge as the "defence innovation bridge", expanding defence R&D, innovation, co-development and co-production, involving startups, investors, universities, academia, and think tanks, essentially creating a joint defence innovation and industrial ecosystem from both countries. This may involve release of joint challenges and grants by DAPA and DIO for their respective startups to innovate defence technologies in the areas envisaged under the 2020 road map.

It may facilitate access to testing facilities through universities and laboratories in both countries, promote joint certification and standardisation processes, and support accelerator and incubator programmes connecting investors and innovators from both sides. It may also include workshops to help stakeholders navigate each other's markets and production systems. These workshops can address export control regimes, funding models for defence production, and intellectual property and licensing requirements related to technology transfer for co-production and co-development.

An annual summit, similar to the INDUS-X summit, could convene high-level representatives from defence ministries, industry, universities, think tanks, and academia in Seoul, New Delhi, and other industrial hubs. The KIND-X summit could also convene Track 1.5 dialogues to emphasise the strategic rationale for bilateral defence cooperation, foster networking, and periodically assess progress on deliverables under the initiative.

The success of KIND-X will depend on leveraging existing co-production ventures such as the K9 Vajra-T howitzers by L&T and Hanwha Aerospace to create templates for future defence projects. It will connect South Korea's innovation clusters in Changwon, Daejeon, and Gumi with India's defence corridors in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, and with aerospace hubs in Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad. Involving major firms such as Hyundai, L&T, Tata Advanced Systems Limited, Mahindra, Bharat Forge, Hanwha, LIG, and Kangnam, alongside start-ups and R&D ecosystems, can further expand linkages.

As an innovation bridge

The launch of KIND-X as a defence innovation bridge signals both governments' keenness to unlock their respective deep-tech innovation ecosystems to develop dual-use technologies. With deepening ties across other strategic sectors such as shipbuilding, artificial intelligence, space, critical minerals, and semiconductors, KIND-X can complement and draw on convergences in these sectors for defence.

Aligning with India's Defence Forces Vision 2047 and South Korea's Defence Innovation 4.0 strategy, and co-investing in emerging and future technologies will be key to making this initiative forward-looking. Potential areas under KIND-X include Artificial Intelligence platforms for military applications, autonomous weapon systems and robotics, joint development of satellites for space-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), Space Situational Awareness (SSA), communication and navigation, critical mineral supply chains, and defence semiconductor fabs. Given both countries' growing defence exports, KIND-X can emerge as an important facilitator.

The onus is now upon both defence ministries to curate tangible deliverables under KIND-X, clarifying its steering template, funding mechanisms and areas of joint innovation.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Political platform

Mamata Banerjee's opinion that a new 'united platform against the BJP' is to be created appears untimely. Her wishful thinking can only be attributed to the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in West Bengal. When she speaks of the new 'united platform', she intentionally or otherwise ignores the INDI Alliance formed by various Opposition parties solely to fight the BJP.

It is for her to recollect her own role in the said alliance. One is also not quite sure if she wanted the new platform in Bengal and Delhi only.

P.R.V. Raja,
Pandalam, Kerala

In Tamil Nadu

After a long impasse, prolonged uncertainty, and a gruelling wait, actor-politician C. Joseph Vijay secured the required support of MLAs to attain a simple majority and was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. There is both satisfaction and anxiety on his face as he assumes the immense responsibility of governing a State that has made significant developmental strides while also confronting serious challenges ahead. His biggest challenge will be fulfilling the many promises made in his election manifesto.

It remains to be seen how he will deliver on them without imposing additional taxes or increasing debt, especially when the scope for reducing expenditure through austerity measures appears limited.

People voted for him not only because of his contribution to Tamil cinema, but also because of the promises he made to women, youth, and the wider public.

The first year of his tenure will shed light on whether his performance is effective or disappointing.

M.Y. Shariff,
Chennai

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address and the full name.

The insidious return of separate electorates

Ziya Us Salam

Few communities would have a greater right to rue the ascendance of Hindutva politics on the national stage than the largest minority of the country. However, now it seems that all those who believe in a pluralistic polity too have grave cause for concern. It stems from the results of the Assam State Assembly elections. Of the 102 members in the ruling dispensation led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), none is a Muslim. While this is unsettling, it wasn't entirely unpredictable considering that, for the past five years, the Narendra Modi government has had the dubious distinction of not having a single Muslim Minister, or even an MP at the Centre. What is distressing now is the stark communal segregation in the State Assembly of Assam. While the ruling party has no space for the Muslims of the State, who comprise 34% of the population, the Opposition is going in the opposite direction. The leading Opposition party, the Congress, has 19 MLAs in the Assembly, 18 of whom are Muslims. Throw in another Muslim MLA of its ally, the Raijor Dal, which has two members in the House, besides two legislators of the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) and one from the Trinamool Congress, and you have a unique but disturbing spectacle of only Hindu MLAs on the treasury benches and the Opposition space being almost entirely occupied by Muslim legislators, all 22 of them. To even write about it seems ugly and distressing but that's the reality of new India, from religion-specific residential colonies in urban India and ghettoes in other social spaces to now, watertight segregation on the lines of religion in a State Assembly.

Dangerous precedent

For years we have heard, and experienced, that it is no longer possible, in most cases, for a Muslim to win from a largely Hindu-dominated constituency. For instance, in the general elections of 2024, most of the Muslim winning candidates of the Samajwadi party did so from seats with a sizeable Muslim population. Add to that the BJP's oft repeated emphasis on the 'winnability factor' for denying tickets to the largest minority. Now it seems we could be heading for the reverse. Hindus could be choosing only Hindu representatives. Worse, many are beginning to choose ones who are manifestly so. Hence, the victory of many BJP candidates riding to victory fuelled by hate speech, interspersed with visits to various temples. Hindus choosing Hindus. Muslim choosing Muslims. Parties giving tickets keeping the demographics in mind. These are the new roadblocks for a nation built on a common electorate transcending religion.

This takes one's mind back to the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 which introduced the concept of the communal electorate. As the British sought to quell the rising tide of nationalism and the demand for *Swaraj* (freedom), seats were reserved on the lines of religion for elections. While thousands of Indians protested, provincial elections based on separate electorates continued till the formation of the Constituent Assembly.

In fact, the provincial elections in 1946 were crucial as there were talks of the forming of a Constituent Assembly to frame the Constitution of a nation which was soon to be independent. At the same time, there was an increasingly vociferous demand for a separate state of Pakistan by the Muslim League.

Unsurprisingly but still disturbingly, Muslims were asked to vote for the Muslim League because "a vote for the League and Pakistan was a vote for Islam". The League's fight with the Congress was portrayed as a fight between Islam and *kufr* (non-belief). The lines of communal othering were never more distinct. Likewise, M.S. Golwalkar attacked nationalist Indians for "hugging to our bosom our most inveterate enemies (Muslims) and thus endangering our very existence." To be a nationalist, you had to be anti-Muslim, such was the belief among a section of right-wing Hindus. Much like many right-wing Muslims who equated a vote for the Congress with a vote against Islam. In the elections, the Muslim League swept the Muslim seats, winning 87% of them. The Congress, supposedly a representative of non-Muslims, won 90% of the general non-Muslim seats. The die was cast. The League emerged as the loudest Muslim voice. The Congress of the others. Never mind that Jinnah called Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan "an adversary", and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the "showboy of the Congress". One knows what happened the next year.

Beyond one's own voice

The Assam Assembly results with only Hindus in the ruling alliance and almost only Muslims in the Opposition fill all those sworn to the idea of India with trepidation. One cannot allow separate electorates to be sneaked in in disguise, delimitation or otherwise. True, the BJP has almost made it a policy decision to marginalise Muslims in representative politics but for the Congress to be whittled down to the position of being the sole spokesperson of Muslims is both unfair and incomprehensible. The repeat drubbing of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen in Bengal and the extremely limited success of Badruddin Ajmal in Assam speaks of a community looking for voices beyond its own. Almost only Muslims in the Opposition amounts to the political ghettoisation of the community. Muslims need a voice, but the voice has to come from across the political spectrum, not confined to a single party.

> Muslims need a voice, but the voice has to come from across the political spectrum, not confined to a single party

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Kerala's fiscal worries

Amid worries of an empty treasury, UDF has vowed efficient tax administration

STATE OF PLAY

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At his first press conference after the Congress-led United Democratic Front's (UDF) landslide victory in the 2026 Assembly elections, V.D. Satheesan, Kerala's Opposition Leader for the past five years, claimed that the UDF had "inherited" a virtually empty State treasury. A treasury so bare that, Mr. Satheesan quipped, a cat and her litter had made it their home. Humour aside, the state of Kerala's finances will be in sharp focus as the new UDF government takes office. The State's fiscal health and the Union's fiscal policies vis-a-vis Kerala have been a dominant theme that coursed through the 10-year-rule of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) in Kerala. It never strayed from the centre of LDF-UDF interactions, and has more often than not, shaped the discourse of Centre-State relations.

The tallest claims of the Pinarayi Vijayan government have been that it fast-forwarded development overcoming aggressively hostile Union government policies. Mr. Satheesan and the UDF have been vocal critics of the Left's fiscal policy, and what they called Mr. Vijayan's dismal failure in forcing the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government to cede the State's rightful share of financial resources. The UDF also bore down on the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB), a special purpose vehicle employed by the LDF government on coming to power in 2016 to mobilise funds for large-scale infrastructure projects. It questioned the LDF's KIIFB model, asserting that off-budget borrowings made through the KIIFB would hurl the State into a debt crisis. The UDF drew its ammunition from multiple reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General which warned that uncontrolled off-budget borrowings would land Kerala in a serious debt trap. The Central government also frowned on borrowings through the KIIFB, treating them as the State government's direct debt. In January 2023, the Opposition UDF published a white paper on the State's finances. The document accused the LDF government of plunging Kerala into a financial crisis and 'toxic debt' through mismanagement, unbridled spending and subpar tax collection.

Daunting challenge

K.N. Balagopal, the outgoing Finance Minister, has refuted Mr. Satheesan's claims about the UDF inheriting an empty treasury from the LDF. Kerala is now in a much better position financially, and multiple fiscal indicators, including the debt-to-Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) ratio, testify to this, according to him.

Nonetheless, reworking a fiscal landscape shaped on Left perspectives would be a daunting task for whoever takes charge as Kerala's new Finance Minister. The primary job would be to keep the treasury running smoothly. Kerala's financial model is marked by high expenditures on salaries, pensions and interest payments and hefty spending on social welfare. The limited space for improving own-tax revenues, negotiating the dynamics of Union fiscal policies with respect to the State's curtailed borrowing space, and the implications of the 16th Finance Commission awards pose challenges. While Kerala's divisible tax pool share has risen from 1.92% to 2.382%, the 16th FC has not recommended revenue deficit grants, sector-specific grants or State-specific grants. The Medium Term Fiscal Policy document had noted that Kerala faces fiscal stress from the "cessation of the goods and services tax (GST) compensation, revenue deficit grants, reduction in central share of taxes and declining assistance from Centrally Sponsored Schemes." Needless to say, mobilising additional revenue would be a prime responsibility of the new government to take the development juggernaut forward and fulfill the five guarantees in its election manifesto. For instance, the UDF will be expected to make good on its promise that the monthly social welfare pensions would be hiked to ₹3,000. Currently at ₹2,000, these pensions are paid out to approximately 60 lakh people. In his May 4 press conference, Mr. Satheesan promised "results" – robust financial management, efficient tax administration and measures to fill the treasury. At this juncture, it will not be amiss to speculate whether the new government would choose to publish a white paper on the state of the State finances. Perhaps, one would not be untimely given the nature of the claims that the people of Kerala have been hearing on the subject.

Prevalence of fake currency still a reality post-demonetisation

Gujarat accounted for more than half the value of counterfeit currency seizures between 2017 and 2024

DATA POINT

Sambavi Parthasarathy

On November 8, 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the demonetisation of ₹1,000 and ₹500 notes with immediate effect, stating that the move would serve as a major assault on black money, counterfeit currencies, and corruption. The days that followed the announcement saw public panic with long queues at ATMs and widespread economic disruption, particularly in the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME). While the jury is still out on the exercise's impact on eradicating black money and corruption, the latest 'Crime in India' report of the National Crime Records Bureau for 2024 shows that almost a decade later, the problem of fake currency still persists.

According to the data, over ₹54.61 crore worth of fake currencies were seized from various States in India. Currencies seized included about six lakh ₹500 notes and more than one lakh ₹2,000 notes – which the Reserve Bank of India decided to withdraw from circulation in May 2023 although it continues to remain a legal tender.

Chart 1 shows the value of counterfeit Indian currency seized by authorities over the last decade. A total of ₹638 crore worth of fake currencies have been seized since 2017, the year after demonetisation. The value of counterfeit notes seized in 2024 was also the third highest since 2016. In the year 2020, when COVID-19 broke out, seizures of ₹92 crore were seen. In 2022, two years after the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, counterfeit currencies valued at a whopping ₹382.6 crore were seized.

Data also points to an increase in counterfeit currencies of ₹500 notes and ₹2,000 notes **(Chart 2)**. The number of ₹500 notes seized by authorities in 2024 was almost four times the notes seized in 2016. The number of counterfeit ₹2,000 notes, introduced after demonetisation, increased almost twice than what it was in 2017.

Besides the data recorded by the NCRB on seizures by law enforcement authorities, data from Parliament showed that more than 11 lakh counterfeit notes of varying denominations, valued at a total of ₹40.26 crore, were detected and reported after they entered the banking system in the five-year period between 2020-21 and 2024-25. That is, an average of roughly two lakh counterfeit notes have been detected each year by the banks **(Chart 3)**.

A denomination-wise break up of these notes implies that new currencies like ₹200 and ₹500 which were reintroduced are also being counterfeited **(Chart 4)**. More than four lakh ₹500 notes belonging to the new series printed after demonetisation made up about 37% of these notes. Close to three lakh ₹100 notes accounted for 26% of the counterfeits reported in banks.

A State-wise breakup of counterfeit notes seized shows that Gujarat accounted for the highest value of fake money seized between 2017 and 2024 **(Chart 5)**. The value of fake currency seized in the State valued at ₹355.72 crore, accounted for more than half of the value of all the seizures in the country during this period. Maharashtra and Karnataka followed Gujarat, accounting for seizures of counterfeit currencies worth ₹100 crore and ₹50 crore respectively.

Data from the RBI also showed that as of May this year, over 174 billion notes were in circulation valued at a total of more than ₹42.12 lakh crore, an increase of about 137% compared to November 2016, when currency in circulation was valued at ₹17.74 lakh crore.

This indicates that the demonetisation exercise's other objective of bringing down currency transactions has also not had the desired impact.

Counterfeits creep up

The data for the charts were sourced from National Crime Records Bureau and Parliament Questions and Answers

As shown in Chart 1, the value of fake currency notes seized was the highest in 2022. Gujarat alone accounted for over 85% of the value of money seized by authorities that year across the country. The value of fake currency seized in 2024 is the third-highest since 2016, as shown in the chart

Chart 1: The value of fake Indian currencies seized every year. Figures in ₹ crore

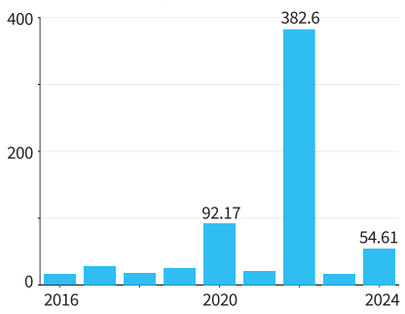


Chart 2: Denomination-wise share of fake Indian currency seized by authorities every year. Figures in %

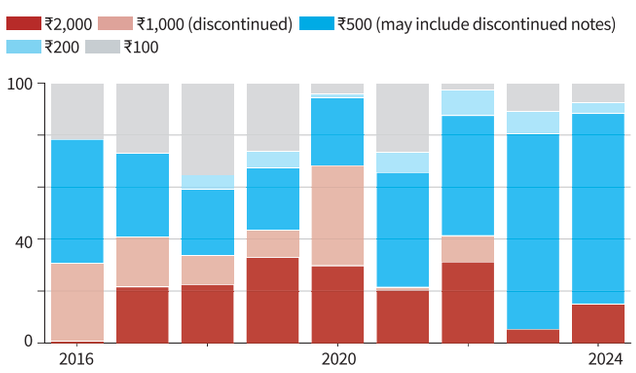


Chart 3: The value of counterfeit notes detected and reported in the banking system during the last five financial years. Figures in ₹ crore

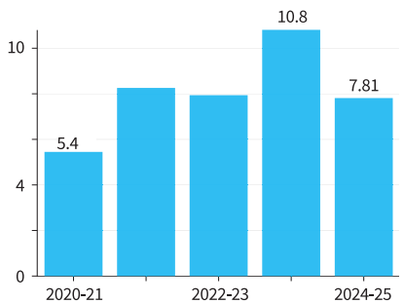


Chart 4: Denomination-wise counterfeit notes detected in the banking system

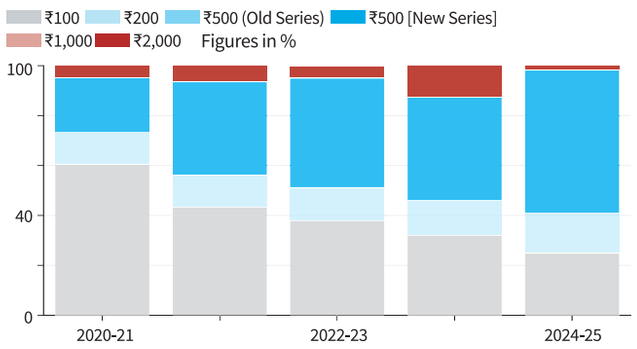
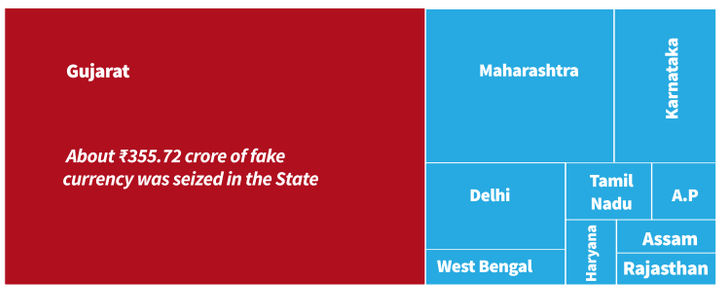


Chart 5: The Statewise share of the value of fake currencies seized by authorities in the 2017-2024 period

Only top 10 States which accounted for most seizures are displayed in the graph



Maharashtra and Karnataka followed Gujarat, accounting for seizures of counterfeit currencies worth ₹100 crore and ₹50 crore respectively in the 2017-2024 period

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 11, 1976

UGC proposal to give practical work to students

Madras, May 10: The University Grants Commission has proposed to reorient degree courses by combining two theoretical subjects with one practical subject. The subjects will be physics, chemistry, biology and public health or economics, commerce and Panchayati Raj or co-operative societies. Under this scheme, every student will have to undergo one year practical experience in the field or factory, said Dr. Malcolm S. Adiseshiah, Vice-Chancellor, University of Madras, here to-day.

The Vice-Chancellor, who inaugurated a two-week "Contact Seminar" for college teachers participating in a two-year correspondence course for diploma in higher education, said it was felt that the present system was too much urban oriented and needed to be given a rural bias. Madurai University had been selected as one of the universities in the south for introducing the new curriculum. The Board of Studies in Madras University, he said, was working out, a similar scheme to be tried in some of the colleges situated in rural areas. He wanted educators to study the function of evaluation system and combine various methods to judge the performance of students. At present 30 per cent of our students came from 20 per cent of our society and steps had to be taken to extend education on a wider basis. He wanted the organisers of correspondence courses to prepare a report so that similar courses could be organised for other college teachers.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 11, 1926

Water scarcity in Bangalore

Bangalore, May 11: To deal with the water scarcity due to the Besargatta tank failure, despite the expenditure of Rs. 2 lakhs on repairs, the Government have ordered immediate investigation by a board consisting of Messrs. V. Rangaswami Iyengar, Retired Director of Industries, J, Bhore, Chief Engineer, Seshachar, P.W.D, Secretary and S.R. Venkatasubbe Rao, Executive Engineer, Water-supply, the last as Secretary, and Sir M. Visveswarayya as President.

All the data and various schemes will be considered and report made.

Water scarcity continues as before.

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of people in Congo killed in militia attack

69 For more than 30 years, the mineral-rich eastern Democratic Republic of Congo has been a battleground between various armed groups, vying for control of its many mines. Armed men affiliated with the Codeco militia carried out attacks in several villages on April 28, local and security sources said. AFP

Number of small boat migrants to the U.K. since 2018

2 in lakh. The northern French coast is the main point of departure for migrants hoping to reach Britain, usually risking the journey in flimsy boats. At least 29 migrants died at sea attempting the crossing in 2025, according to an AFP tally based on official French and British sources. A further six people have died this year. AFP

People arrested in 'drug-free J-K campaign'

646 The ongoing 'Nasha Mukt J-K Abhiyan', one of the largest campaigns against drug abuse in the Union Territory, has also witnessed massive public participation, with 2,16,123 awareness events conducted across Jammu and Kashmir, involving more than one crore participants. PTI

Number of officials killed in Pakistan militant attack

15 The incident took place on Saturday in the northwest district of Bannu, where an explosive-laden vehicle approaching a police post was fired at by security personnel, leading to a blast, the police said. The impact of the explosion led to the collapse of the roofs of several houses in the vicinity. PTI

Average voter turnout in Haryana local body elections

25 in per cent. An average voter turnout of 25% was witnessed till 1 p.m. in the polling for the local body polls, including the municipal corporations of Ambala, Panchkula and Sonipat in Haryana on Sunday, officials said. The main contest is expected between the Congress and the BJP. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Governor's role in govt. formation

What does Article 164(1) say about the appointment of the Chief Minister? When does the Governor use discretionary powers? Which commissions recommended guidelines for government formation in a hung Assembly? Why has the conduct of Governors in hung Assemblies raised concerns?

EXPLAINER

Rangarajan R.

The story so far:
The Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) secured 108 seats, 10 short of a majority, in the recently concluded Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. After hectic parleys with smaller parties, letters of support from 120 members were provided to the Governor. The Governor then invited TVK chief C. Joseph Vijay to form the government, who was sworn in as Chief Minister.

What are constitutional provisions?
Article 164(1) of the Constitution provides that the Chief Minister of a State shall be appointed by the Governor, while other ministers shall be appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Chief Minister. When a single party secures a clear majority in the Assembly, the Governor invites the leader of that legislative party to form the government. If no party secures a majority, the Governor exercises his/her discretion in appointing the Chief Minister.

The Constitution does not prescribe any criteria for selecting the Chief Minister in the event of a hung Assembly. The Sarkaria Commission (1987), followed by the Punchhi Commission (2010), recommended the manner in which the Chief Minister may be appointed in case no party enjoys a majority in the Assembly. The order of preference indicated by these commissions is as follows – first a pre-poll alliance that enjoys majority; next the single largest party staking a claim to form the government with the support of others; then a post-electoral coalition of parties, with all partners in the coalition joining the government; and finally, a post-electoral alliance with some parties joining the government and the remaining parties supporting the government from outside.

Fresh start: Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Arlekar with Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay, on Sunday. PTI

What are the issues?
The recommendations of the above commissions and conventions require Governors to act in a bipartisan manner while selecting the Chief Minister in a hung Assembly. However, Governors have, on numerous occasions, appointed Chief Ministers without following any particular order.

For instance, after the Assembly elections in Goa (2017) and Manipur (2017), the Governors invited BJP-led post-poll alliances to form the government, even though the Congress had emerged as the single largest party. These governments later proved their majority in the Assembly. On the contrary, in Karnataka (2018), the Governor invited the BJP, as the single largest party, to form the government over a claim by the post-poll alliance of Congress and Janata Dal (Secular). In 2019, the Governor of Maharashtra appointed a BJP-led coalition government when there was uncertainty as to whether it enjoyed a majority. On both occasions, the Chief Ministers had to resign as they were unable to muster the required majority.

Under the Constitution, the Governor is the nominal head of the State executive and possesses certain discretionary powers in specific situations. The discretion vested in the Governor to select a Chief Minister in a hung Assembly is to enable him/her to appoint a government that would be stable and enjoy the majority in the Assembly. However, the conduct of Governors in several such situations has raised concerns that they often function more as agents of the Union government than as impartial constitutional heads of the States.

What can be the way forward?
In the current situation in Tamil Nadu, TVK was the only party to stake a claim to form the government. The Governor's office indicated that, since the claim was a post-poll alliance, it was essential to validate whether the formation enjoyed the majority support of 118 members. However, the constitutional requirement for a government is to have the support of the majority of members present and voting in the Assembly. The majority of 118 in the Tamil Nadu Assembly is based on the full strength of the 234-member Tamil Nadu Assembly and does not account for possible abstentions during the vote.

The Supreme Court in the *S. R. Bommai v. Union of India* (1994) had categorically held that the 'floor of the House' is the constitutionally ordained forum for testing the majority support enjoyed by a government. This was reiterated in the Rameshwar Prasad case (2006).

The use of discretionary powers by the Governors has been subject to various court pronouncements. Nevertheless, judicial differences in interpretation resulted in inconsistent application of these principles.

The recent Justice Kurian Joseph Committee report on Union-State relations, constituted by the earlier Tamil Nadu government, recommended incorporating a new schedule into the Constitution to codify the rules governing the Governor's use of discretionary powers. This may be considered to provide a constitutional basis for the use of such discretionary powers. It is imperative that the Governors exercise their discretionary powers in a bona fide manner.

(Rangarajan R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Polity Simplified'. He currently trains civil-service aspirants at 'Officers IAS Academy'. Views expressed are personal)

THE GIST

- The Constitution allows the Governor to exercise discretion in appointing a Chief Minister in a hung Assembly, but differing interpretations and past instances have raised concerns over the impartial use of these discretionary powers.
- The Supreme Court has held that the "floor of the House" is the constitutionally ordained forum to test majority support, while the Justice Kurian Joseph Committee recommended codifying rules relating to the Governor's discretionary powers.

What measures are needed to address Delhi's heat crisis?

What structural changes are required to reduce extreme heat? How can urban planning help?

Suksham Tanu
Amir Hyder Khan

The story so far:
Delhi and the NCR are facing longer and more intense heatwaves, with the city increasingly retaining heat even at night. Rapid urbanisation, concrete-heavy infrastructure, air conditioning, and shrinking green cover have turned the Urban Heat Island Effect into a deeper "heat re-trap".

Why is Delhi retaining heat?
This transformation is rooted in the city's material logic. Concrete, asphalt, steel, and glass dominate Delhi NCR's expansion. These materials absorb heat efficiently but release it slowly.

Roads, rooftops, and facades accumulate heat through the day and emit it at night, delaying cooling. Surface temperatures in dense areas reach 50-60°C on peak afternoons. These surfaces act as reservoirs, keeping the surrounding air warm well into the night. The city, in effect, stores the sun.

Glass-heavy architecture in areas such as Gurgaon and Noida worsens the problem by allowing solar radiation indoors, increasing reliance on air conditioning rather than reducing heat.

Vehicular activity adds constant thermal input. Corridors like NH-48 function as continuous heat sources, where engines and exhaust combine with heat-absorbing asphalt to create persistent hotspots. Over time, these form into thermal corridors that reshape the city's microclimate.

At the same time, Delhi struggles to release heat. High-density construction and narrow streets restrict airflow, while traditional cooling features – courtyards, shaded pathways, ventilation corridors – have largely disappeared. As a result, air stagnates and heat accumulates within the city's form.

How does cooling contribute to warming?
While interiors are cooled, heat is expelled outdoors. In dense neighbourhoods, this raises ambient temperatures by 1-2°C.

This produces a feedback loop: rising temperatures increase the demand for cooling, which in turn releases more heat outside. The city cools itself internally while warming externally.

The energy burden is also significant. Delhi's peak electricity demand has crossed 8,000 MW during the summer, with cooling accounting for a significant share. Nationally, cooling demand is projected to grow nearly eightfold by 2050, increasing pressure on power systems and raising the risk of outages during extreme heat.

How is heat affecting the economy and ecology?
Factories and warehouses operate within specific temperature limits; excessive heat reduces efficiency and affects machinery. Productivity declines by 2-3% for every degree rise above optimal levels, leading to delays and higher costs.

Supply chains are also slowing as transport hours shrink and storage conditions deteriorate.

At a broader level, India loses over $100 billion annually due to the decline in heat-related productivity.

Ecologically, the city has lost natural cooling systems. Shrinking green cover, degraded wetlands, and the loss of the Yamuna floodplains have reduced evapotranspiration. Without vegetation and water bodies, Delhi's ability to regulate temperature has weakened.

What measures are needed to address the crisis?
Addressing this crisis requires structural change in how cities are built and managed. Materials must shift toward high-albedo surfaces, cool roofs, and reflective coatings. Buildings need insulation and passive design strategies like shading and cross-ventilation.

Urban planning must restore airflow through ventilation corridors and better street orientation. Green and blue infrastructure – including urban forests, parks, and water bodies – must expand as essential cooling systems.

Reducing heat generated by human activity is equally important. Sustainable transport, electric mobility, and improved public transit can lower vehicular emissions. Energy-efficient appliances and district cooling systems can reduce heat discharge.

Equally critical is social protection. Affordable housing upgrades, subsidised cooling, and community cooling centres are necessary to protect vulnerable populations during extreme heat.

(Suksham Tanu is a sustainability and environmental studies enthusiast based in Dubai; Amir Hyder Khan is a final-year B.Arch student at Jamia Millia Islamia)

THE GIST

- Delhi and the NCR are increasingly retaining heat, with concrete, asphalt, steel, and glass turning the Urban Heat Island Effect into a deeper "heat re-trap".
- Addressing the heat crisis requires structural changes such as cool roofs, passive cooling strategies, ventilation corridors, green and blue infrastructure, and social protection measures.

CACHE

AI-enabled oversight layer for continuous electoral roll monitoring

SIR 2.0 exposed structural weaknesses in electoral roll revision processes; an AI-enabled oversight layer integrated with ECINet could continuously monitor electoral operations, detect anomalies and discriminatory patterns in real time, and strengthen transparency, neutrality, and accountability

Rajeev Kumar

Within 72 hours of the recently concluded Assembly elections, the Election Commission (EC) released detailed statistical reports and index cards showcasing the capabilities of ECINet, its digital electoral platform formally launched in its full-fledged professional version in January 2026. However, during the special intensive revision (SIR) for the same West Bengal elections, the EC neither disclosed the status of nearly 34 lakh appeals, including seven lakh deletion appeals, pending before the 19 Supreme Court-appointed tribunals, nor released comparable transparency reports, despite all relevant information being readily available within ECINet.

Reportedly, one tribunal headed by the former Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court disposed of 1,777 appeals, allowing all 1,717 citizen appeals for inclusion and rejecting all 60 EC appeals for deletion. Similar large-scale corrections may have occurred before the other 18 tribunals. In contrast, the EC reportedly included only about 1,607 voters before polling. Such selective disclosure and inconsistent transparency raise serious questions about the EC's functioning, neutrality, and suppression of equally significant information that could potentially influence electoral outcomes.

The absence of comparable transparency and status disclosures for SIR, despite reports of large-scale discrepancies and disenfranchisement, raises serious questions about selective disclosure and institutional double standards within the EC. As a constitutional authority, the EC commands the highest institutional dignity and trust. Equally, it must remain accountable, transparent, and open to objective scrutiny, especially when allegations of arbitrariness, bias, and large-scale exclusion of genuine voters emerge.

Against this backdrop, an independent AI-enabled oversight layer integrated with ECINet could continuously assess electoral roll revision processes, including neutrality, consistency, and procedural arbitrariness. The proposed AI watchdog framework is straightforward to implement, with a foundational operational model achievable within a few months and capable of continuous enhancement thereafter.

Matter of concern: SIR 2.0 exposed unprecedented chaos driven by ad hoc, ever-changing, and subjective SOPs that reportedly excluded millions of genuine voters from electoral rolls. ANI

Failures in SIR 2.0

SIR 2.0 exposed unprecedented chaos driven by ad hoc, ever-changing, and subjective SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) that reportedly excluded millions of genuine voters from electoral rolls and, in several cases, denied candidature rights. What began as an exercise to improve electoral accuracy by removing ASDD (absentee, shifted, duplicate, dead) entries and adding new voters instead resulted in widespread uncertainty, repeated verifications, prolonged appeals, and allegations of arbitrariness, discrimination, and bias.

The exercise relied heavily on inaccurate, incomplete, and non-searchable legacy SIR 2002-04 databases. Instead of correcting defects at the source, the burden of proof was shifted onto voters, forcing genuine citizens to repeatedly establish their eligibility despite long voting histories and valid documents. The process was further marked by uneven application of the logical discrepancy criteria across regions and voter groups, resulting in non-uniform outcomes for similarly situated voters. Minor mismatches in names, ages, or family details often led to exclusions, while opaque decision-making and the absence of reasoned orders fuelled allegations of arbitrariness and algorithmic bias.

The consequences were most alarming in West Bengal, where only about 1,600 inclusion appeals and merely six deletion cases were reportedly disposed of before polling, out of nearly 3.4 million pending appeals, even though inclusion appeals reportedly had a success rate exceeding 99%. Those excluded reportedly included electoral officials and prospective candidates. Notably, one such excluded individual, later cleared for inclusion, went on to be elected as an MLA.

In an unprecedented situation, 49 Assembly constituencies reportedly recorded victory margins lower than the number of voters awaiting disposal of inclusion appeals. The apex court observed that relief for many may come only in future elections and that post-election scrutiny may be necessary in constituencies where victory margins fall below the scale of discrepancies and pending appeals, raising serious concerns over electoral integrity and the possibility of post-election chaos. The situation reflects not merely administrative failure, but a deeper crisis of credibility in the electoral roll revision process itself.

These developments exposed deeper structural weaknesses in electoral roll management. They stood in sharp contrast to the EC's repeated commitment to "ensuring free, fair, transparent, accessible and peaceful elections" and its assurance that "no genuine voter is disenfranchised."

More significantly, this occurred despite ECINet reportedly being capable of handling three crore hits per minute and maintaining detailed operational data for every voter and transaction. Yet neutrality, consistency, and accountability continued to depend largely on opaque manual processes, administrative discretion, and post-facto correction. The SIR 2.0 experience, therefore, underscored the urgent need for a continuous, technology-driven oversight mechanism capable of monitoring processes, detecting anomalies, assessing institutional neutrality, and identifying discriminatory patterns in real time.

AI oversight for ECINet

As AI increasingly powers governance and large-scale public systems, electoral management too requires intelligent, continuously auditable oversight. Embedding an AI-enabled watchdog within ECINet offers a practical pathway to build a neutrality-aware electoral roll management system capable of safeguarding democratic participation and public trust.

Integrated directly with ECINet, the proposed AI layer would function as a continuous oversight and analytics engine. It would monitor system usage, track decision patterns, analyse voter-official interactions, and generate real-time indicators of neutrality, consistency, efficiency, and citizen satisfaction at booth, constituency, district, and State levels. Unlike post-facto reviews, it could continuously audit electoral roll revision processes using transactional and procedural data already available within ECINet, enabling early detection of irregularities before they escalate into large-scale disenfranchisement or administrative crises.

The system could automatically flag anomalies and discriminatory patterns, including unusual spikes in deletions, inconsistent application of SOPs, repeated rejection trends linked to specific officials, excessive grievance delays, abrupt policy shifts, bias arising from logical discrepancy filters, disproportionate exclusions due to minor spelling or family-data mismatches, and concentrated deletions in specific regions, castes, or communities. It could also compare outcomes across regions to identify differential treatment of similarly placed voters and enforce consistency in institutional communication by tracking announcements, circulars, deadlines, SOP revisions, and field instructions.

Further, continuous analysis of bottlenecks, software glitches, verification failures, grievance trends, and operational inefficiencies could support evidence-based refinement of SOPs, replacing ad hoc administrative responses with measurable corrective action. A foundational operational version of such an AI watchdog could be implemented within a few months and continuously enhanced thereafter.

Way forward

An AI-enabled watchdog integrated with ECINet could continuously monitor electoral operations, assess institutional neutrality, detect anomalies and discriminatory patterns, and flag inconsistencies or shifting eligibility criteria.

It could also standardise announcements, deadlines, and procedural updates, reducing confusion and non-uniform implementation across regions.

With ECINet already fully operational, AI-driven oversight could make SIR processes more transparent, neutral, accountable, and citizen-centric. Importantly, such a system would strengthen – not replace – constitutional authority through transparent audit trails, fairness metrics, evidence-based oversight, and measurable accountability, while reducing arbitrariness, opacity, and public distrust.

(Rajeev Kumar is a former Professor of Computer Science at IIT Kharagpur, IIT Kanpur, BITS Pilani, and JNU, and a former scientist at DRDO and DST)

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

Kailash is tied to his wife's apron strings

The director is looking for a marquee name to play the villain

S. Upendran

What is the meaning and origin of 'tied to someone's apron strings'? (D Aditya, Bengaluru)

In the past, an apron was something that a woman generally wore over her clothes while cooking; this was done in order to protect the dress that she was wearing. The original idiom was 'tied to one's mother's/wife's apron strings', and this is something that no man wants to be told. When you say that Hari is tied to his mother's apron strings, what you are suggesting is that he is controlled or dominated by his mother. He does everything she says. Later, when he gets married and is under his wife's thumb, he is said to be tied to his wife's apron strings.

This article argues that most men are tied to their mothers' apron strings all their lives.

According to scholars, the idiom has been around for well over four hundred years. In the past, a mother who had a small child at home used to tie a rope around him, which she then tethered to her apron strings. This was to ensure the child did not get into trouble by wandering off somewhere while she was busy cooking. The child was under the control of the mother.

How is the word 'marquee' pronounced? (N Jayalakshmi, Secunderabad)

This word of French origin can be used as a noun and an adjective. No matter how you use the word, the pronunciation is the same. The first syllable, 'marq', is pronounced like the word 'mark'; the following 'ee' sounds like the 'ee' in 'fees', 'bees' and 'knees'. The word is pronounced 'mark-EE' with the stress on the second syllable. It comes from the French 'marquise', meaning 'a large tent'. Even today, when used as a noun, 'marquee' means a big tent where a relatively large number of people can get together for a particular purpose – dinner, wedding reception, etc.

They had their daughter's reception in a marquee in their garden.

When used as an adjective, it refers to individuals. When you refer to someone as the marquee player in your team, you are suggesting that he is the player that spectators come to see – someone whose name attracts a lot of attention. In the 1970s, film producers wanted the likes of Dev Anand, Sivaji Ganesan and NTR in their films because these individuals had a huge fan base.

The director is looking for a marquee name to play the villain.

Is it okay to say, 'This is how it looks like'? (P Seetha, Ongole)

Careful users of the language would argue that the sentence sounds odd. It would be considered grammatically acceptable without the word 'like' at the end of the sentence.

Here's a photograph of how my son looks.

It is also possible to replace the 'how' with 'what'. In this case, you can include the word 'like' at the end of the sentence.

Here's a photograph of what my son looks like.

upendrankye@gmail.com

Word of the day

Truculent: defiantly aggressive

Synonyms: assaultive, hostile, irritable

Usage: *He gave a truculent reply instead of answering politely.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/truculent

International Phonetic Alphabet: /trʌkjʊlənt/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

A quiz to celebrate noted explorer, broadcaster Sir David Attenborough's 100th birthday

V.V. Ramanan

QUESTION 1
Sir David is known for the path-breaking 'Zoo Quest' in 1954, though he was not the original host and stepped in from the second episode. Where was that episode set in?

QUESTION 2
For which film set in India did he win the Best Narration/Voice Over honours at the 67th National Film Awards?

QUESTION 3
A legend known for his work with thousands of species around the world, the famed explorer has said he has a phobia for a common animal. Which animal?

QUESTION 4
What is the most significant contribution of Sir David to the world of international tennis?

QUESTION 5
Which cult comedy series, starring an actor who was rejected by Sir David for a BBC role, did he commission in the late 1960s?

QUESTION 6
Which Attenborough documentary was released directly alongside the COP26 climate summit?

Visual Question:
Name the prestigious award Sir David is holding, and what unparalleled technological record does he have as far as that award is concerned? GETTY IMAGES

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. In which famous Vatican chapel is the conclave held? **Ans: The Sistine Chapel**
2. What colour smoke signals that a new pope has been elected? **Ans: White smoke**
3. What title is given to the period when the papal throne is vacant? **Ans: Sede Vacante**
4. What famous Latin announcement declares the election of a new pope? **Ans: "Habemus Papam"**
5. What is the official residence where cardinals stay during a conclave? **Ans: Casa Santa Marta**
Visual: The present papal coat of arms bears the Latin motto "In Illo uno unum." What does this expression mean in English? **Ans: "In the One, we are one"**
Early Birds: Tom Alan Faith | Piyali Tuli | Lalchand Bhutani | Tito Shiladitya | Prodosh Mitra

From Page One

Vijay sworn in as CM, vows clean governance

"As I said before, I will not touch even a single paisa of public money. I do not need it. You know that very well. This Vijay will not do wrong, and he will not allow wrongdoing – no matter who it is. Even those who are with me in my government will not be spared. If anyone thinks, 'We have won, now let us play our game,' erase that thought right now, this very minute," he said.

"As far as Tamil Nadu is concerned, if I need to meet someone, I will not cover my face and meet them secretly or indirectly. Whatever I do, I will do openly," he said, appealing to people to give him time to fulfil his promises.

Himanta to take oath as Assam CM tomorrow

Mr. Nadda added that the new government would adhere to the Centre's "new culture" of being proactive, responsive, and accountable.

The Assam election was held in a single phase on April 9. The BJP overcame the challenge from a Congress-led front of six parties to bag 82 seats, 18 more than the simple majority mark, while the AGP and BPF won 10 seats each.

The Congress managed 19 seats, the fewest since 2016, while its ally Raijor Dal and the minority-based All India United Democratic Front won two seats each. The remaining seat went to the Trinamool Congress.

For the first time in Assam, the Treasury and the Opposition benches would be divided on religious lines. All the successful NDA candidates are followers of Hinduism and indigenous faiths, while all but two of the 24 Opposition members are Muslims.

PM urges people to cut fuel, avoid foreign travel

Mr. Modi said patriotism was not limited to sacrificing one's life for the country but also meant discharging responsibilities towards the nation during difficult times. Stressing that safeguarding national interests was not the responsibility of any one government or party, he said every citizen, party and organisation should work together to help the country overcome global challenges. He sought the support of the media in this regard.

Referring to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war on the global economy, the Prime Minister said supply chains had been severely disrupted, and prices of food, fuel and fertilizers had risen internationally. Despite these pressures, he said, the Centre was shielding farmers from the burden of rising fertilizer prices through subsidies. He said that fertilizer bags costing nearly ₹3,000 in the international market were being supplied to farmers for less than ₹300.

Calling for a stronger implementation of the 'Vocal for Local' campaign, the Prime Minister appealed to the people to prioritise locally manufactured (Swadeshi) products, including daily-use items such as shoes, bags and accessories. He asked families to cut down consumption of edible oil, stating that it would benefit both the country's economy and public health.

Expressing concern over excessive use of chemical fertilizers, the Prime Minister said the practice was damaging soil health and increasing import dependence. He urged farmers to reduce chemical fertilizer usage by up to 50% and gradually shift towards natural farming practices.

He encouraged the use of solar-powered irrigation pumps instead of diesel-run sets for agriculture.

"There is a situation where we are even forced to import cooking oil. We must achieve self-sufficiency in edible oils," Mr. Modi said.

Manipur Naga bodies urge PM to rein in Kuki groups

Civil society groups say recent attacks on Kuki villages amounted to cross-border military invasion and not an ethnic clash as drones, rocket launchers and other military-grade weapons were used

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Three Naga civil society organisations in Manipur have petitioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking his "personal and urgent intervention" to check a "sustained campaign of violence and territorial aggression" by Kuki groups against Naga villages in the hill districts of the north-eastern State.

Urging the Centre to rein in the Kuki armed groups operating under the Suspension of Operations (SoO) arrangement, the organisations sought the Prime Minister's help to expedite an inclusive and honourable settlement of the Indo-Naga peace process based on the Framework Agreement. The Centre signed this agreement with the National Socialist Council of Nagalim, also called the NSCN (Isak-Muivah).

The memorandum, copies of which were released to the media on Saturday evening, was signed by Ng Lorho, president of the United Naga Council; Ch Priscilla Thumai, president of the Naga Women's Union; and Th Angthesh-ang Maring, president of the All Naga Students' Association, Manipur.

Manipur Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam and others inspect the violence-affected area at Z. Choro village on Sunday. ANI

The signatories alleged that Myanmar-based extremists of the Kuki National Army-Burma (KNA-B), aided by the SoO groups, have launched repeated attacks on Naga villages in Ukhrul, Kamjong, and other hill districts of Manipur.

May 7 attacks

They claimed that the May 7 attacks on Z. Choro, Namlee-Wanglee, and Kaka villages, in which many houses were burnt and residents displaced, amounted to a cross-border military invasion rather than an ordinary ethnic clash.

The three organisations said that the use of drones, rocket launchers, and other military-grade weapons, along with reports that scores of armed cadres crossed the India-Myanmar border, pointed to a well-coordinated foreign-backed assault.

The memorandum accused the government of failing to uphold the spirit of the 2015 Framework Agreement, which recognises the political rights of the Naga people. It argued that the continued accommodation of Kuki extremist groups, despite alleged attacks on Naga settlements, undermines the credibility of the peace process and the Centre's constitutional responsibility under Article 355 to protect the States against external aggression.

The organisations called on the Centre to immediately launch operations to evict members of the KNA-B, People's Democratic Force (anti-junta Myanmar group), and SoO cadres from Naga areas; guarantee that no administrative arrangement would affect the Naga ancestral territories; restore free movement along Manipur's highways; and institute a time-bound judicial inquiry into the recent attacks and alleged security lapses.

Asserting that the Centre's "continued appeasement of Kuki armed groups" constitutes a "proxy war against the very people with whom it signed the historic Framework Agreement", the organisations requested Mr. Modi to help take the peace process with Nagas to its "logical and acceptable" conclusion.

"The Naga people have chosen the path of peace," they said, adding that a just political settlement was essential for securing both the eastern frontier and India's national security.

2 arrested for using fake orders to free prisoners in Mizoram

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The racket secured the release of 17 prisoners booked under serious criminal offences

The police in Mizoram arrested two people, including an ambulance driver, for allegedly masterminding an operation to release prisoners from a district jail using fake court documents.

According to a statement issued by the State police on Saturday, the forgery racket secured the release of 17 prisoners booked under serious criminal offences, including the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, and the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Act, 1985. These prisoners were released from the Lunglei district jail.

The case came to light on April 27 when the Additional District and Sessions Judge filed a first information report at the Lunglei police station after two under-trial prisoners appeared before the court, despite being officially shown as released on bail.

The two produced release orders purportedly issued by the Lunglei district court and the Gauhati High Court (which covers Mizoram), claiming that they had been discharged on a bond of ₹50,000.

They sparked suspicion after failing to appear at hearings on the scheduled dates. The police subsequently found that 17 prisoners fraudulently secured release from the district jail between January 30 and March 18, using forged court orders. A probe led to the identification of 15 people involved in the racket.

While the Lunglei police rearrested 11 of these prisoners and sent them back to jail, another was found to have died after being released from prison. The hunt for the remaining prisoners was ongoing, the police said.

Two of the accused arrested have been identified as Jeremiah Lalthanglua, 25, a resident of the State's capital, Aizawl, and C. Lalrinthluaii, 31, a private ambulance driver attached to the district jail. The police said Jeremiah, whose wife was lodged in the Lunglei jail, used the services of a lawyer to obtain forged release documents prepared on computers inside the district jail and a printing shop in Lunglei town.

The jail authorities reportedly released the prisoners after accepting the forged court orders as genuine.

Marandi seeks NIA probe into 'extortion network'

The Hindu Bureau
PATNA

The Leader of the Opposition in the Jharkhand Assembly, Babulal Marandi, on Sunday wrote a letter to Chief Minister Hemant Soren, seeking a probe by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) into the alleged nexus between the police and criminals, with reference to allegations by gangster Prince Khan of Wasseypur in Dhanbad.

Mr. Marandi demanded the removal of Dhanbad Senior Superintendent of Police Prabhat Kumar.

"Recently, gangster Prince Khan released videos on social media regarding the Dhanbad police, coal theft and extortion network, which have cast serious doubts on the credibility of the State," the former Chief Minister said.

Paper leaks, fake degrees, recruitment fraud: ED probes ₹4,000-crore scams in education sector

Devesh K. Pandey
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate is currently investigating alleged scams of nearly ₹4,000 crore in the education sector. The cases involve paper leaks, alleged fake admissions, scholarship frauds, fake degree rackets and recruitment scams. The agency has attached assets currently worth ₹1,500 crore and arrested several high-profile accused across States.

The latest case involves entities linked to Al-Falah Group, in which the agency recently re-arrested Group chief Jawad Ahmad Siddiqui for his alleged role in the use of forged papers to acquire land in Delhi.The ED filed a prosecution complaint after provisionally attaching 54 acres of land along with buildings, worth about ₹139.97 crore. It quantified the total proceeds of alleged crime in the case at ₹493.24 crore.

The ED has attached assets currently worth ₹1,500 crore in various cases across States.

The agency has alleged that the institutions in question projected expired NAAC accreditations as valid to induce admissions. The university was also shown as recognised under Section 12(B) of the University Grants Commission Act. Besides, there were alleged irregularities in obtaining approvals and certifications.

Teachers' scam

In the alleged Primary Teachers' scam in West Bengal, the agency has attached properties worth ₹151.26 crore. Seven people, including former Education Minister Partha Chatterjee and his aide Arpita Mukherjee, were arrested. It also attached assets worth ₹3.65 crore linked to MLA Chandranath Sinha.

The second case from the same State pertains to the hiring of assistant teachers (Classes IX-XII). The ED froze assets worth ₹238.8 crore. On April 3, 2025, the Supreme Court upheld the Calcutta High Court's cancellation of 25,000 appointments. In the "Group C and D Staff" recruitment scam in West Bengal, attachments rose to ₹247 crore.

Last year, the ED started investigating alleged financial irregularities worth ₹2,000 crore in the construction of over 12,000 classrooms and semi-permanent structures for Delhi government schools during the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) tenure from 2015 to 2023. Former Ministers Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain are under the scanner.

The agency is also probing the alleged fraudulent blocking of seats in private engineering colleges in Karnataka.

Scholarship fraud

Multiple cases of alleged scholarship fraud have also been pursued by the agency. In Himachal Pradesh, private institutions allegedly siphoned government scholarships intended for Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Other Backward Class, and minority students.

A similar scam was unearthed in Uttar Pradesh, where the Hygia Group allegedly claimed Central and State scholarships by forging student data. In Karnataka's Mahadevappa Rampure Medical College, ₹33.34 crore in stipend funds meant for postgraduate medical students were allegedly misappropriated between 2018 and 2024. The ED attached ₹5.87 crore in immovable assets and seized properties worth ₹85 lakh.

In August 2025, a fake NRI quota racket linked to medical admissions across multiple private colleges came under the scanner. Such instances involving over ₹23 crore were also identified in West Bengal and Odisha.

CII says private sector capex grew by 67% in September 2025

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

India's private sector capital expenditure grew 67% to ₹7.7 lakh crore in September 2025 in comparison to September 2024, according to data sourced by the industry body Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

This comes at a time when officials in the Finance Ministry have publicly lamented that the private sector is not investing enough.

The CII also called on Indian industry to aid the economy during the ongoing West Asia crisis by cutting fuel usage over the next two quarters, providing MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) a payment guarantee, and front-loading their capital investment plans for the current financial year, among other steps. "The 67% jump in private capex to ₹7.7 lakh crore is, by some distance, the most important signal yet that India's investment cycle has decisively turned," Chandrajit Banerjee, director-general of CII, said.

"Manufacturing has committed close to ₹3.8 lakh crore, led by metals, automobiles and chemicals, while services have put in ₹3.1 lakh crore led by trading, communications and IT/ITeS."

Difference of opinion

Mr. Banerjee added that with capacity utilisation increasing to 75.6%, order books expanding at over 10% year-on-year and bank credit growth close to 14% in the second half of FY26, private enterprise is committing capital at scale, and across sectors, "in a manner not seen in well over a decade".

Push to private capex

Private capital expenditure rose by 67% year-on-year to ₹7.7 lakh crore in September 2025

SOURCE: CONFEDERATION OF INDIAN INDUSTRY

This data, however, is at odds with what the Central government seems to be observing. Earlier this month, Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) V. Anantha Nageswaran pulled up the private sector for not investing enough.

"Post Covid, if you look at BSE 500 or NSE 500 companies, corporate profits grew at 30.8% per annum," Mr. Nageswaran had noted while addressing the second annual Isaac Centre for Public Policy Growth Conference organised by Ashoka University on May 2. "But still, our overall capital formation rates from the private sector have been disappointing," he said.

"Corporates and the second or third generation entrepreneurs chose to accumulate those cash profits and probably set up family offices elsewhere rather than investing in real assets on the ground," the CEA had added.

Fuel-related steps

That said, the CII seems to be sufficiently buoyed by the investment data to call on the Indian private sector "to step forward and shoulder its share of the national burden during the ongoing period of global stress".

Towards this, it recommended five steps that could be taken that would benefit the economy and the government's finances.

The first step, it said, was for the ₹10 per litre Central excise cut on petrol and diesel to be progressively rolled back in tranches over six to nine months as crude prices stabilise.

According to the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, the Centre is foregoing about ₹14,000 crore a month due to the excise duty cuts it implemented in March 2026.

As its second step, the CII called on its member companies to commit to a 3-5% reduction in fuel and power consumption over the next two quarters through process optimisation, efficient logistics, fleet electrification and accelerated renewable power purchase agreements.

Domestic players

"Larger member corporates could commit to a voluntary 45-day MSME payment guarantee, backed by aggressive use of the TReDS platform and supply-chain finance, to ease working capital pressure on small enterprises during this volatile period," the industry body proposed as its third step.

The fourth measure Indian industry could take is to further ring-fence its supply chains and opt for deeper import substitution.

As the fifth step, the CII called on industry to front-load FY27 investments in manufacturing, energy transition and digital infrastructure, exercise voluntary price restraint on essential inputs, and scale up internship intake over the next 12 months under the PM Internship Scheme.

"Taken together, these five suggestions could add up to industry's concrete partnership offer to the government in recent memory," Mr. Banerjee added.

M.P. govt. forms panel to probe boat tragedy

Press Trust of India
BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh government on Sunday constituted a one-member judicial commission to probe the Bargi dam cruise boat tragedy that claimed 13 lives, a senior official said.

The commission was formed under the chairmanship of retired High Court judge Sanjay Dwivedi, a senior official said.

It will probe the causes of the accident, examine whether adequate rescue and relief measures were taken, and fix responsibility. The commission will also make provisions for the audit and certification of boats, cruise, and water sports activities.

CM selection a democratic process, says Chennithala

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI/ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala on Sunday hit out at the BJP amid ongoing deliberations over the selection of Kerala's next Chief Minister, saying the grand old party does not function on instructions from Nagpur.

Mr. Chennithala, who is among the main contenders for the Chief Minister's post along with V.D. Satheesan and K.C. Venugopal, defended the time taken by the Congress leadership to arrive at a consensus, noting that only five days had passed since the declaration of the Assembly election results.

"We are not a party that acts on directions from Nagpur. Congress functions in a completely democratic manner," he told reporters in New Delhi.

The senior leader said the party high command had held discussions with all leaders concerned and would announce a decision at the earliest.

"Five days is not a big delay. The selection of the Chief Minister is a process. The AICC has a process for everything. We do not have a system where Modi and Amit Shah together decide everything. Decisions are taken... through democratic means," he said.

Cong. betrayed DMK in its greed for power: Modi

Prime Minister says Congress is a parasitic party that needs to piggyback on another party to stay relevant; he mocks the party's delayed efforts to form a govt. in Kerala days after election victory

Sharath S. Srivatsa
BENGALURU

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday accused the Congress of "betraying" and "backstabbing" the DMK in Tamil Nadu in its "greed for power". The Congress recently broke from its alliance with the DMK to form a government with the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), which emerged as the single-largest party in the Tamil Nadu Assembly election.

Addressing a BJP rally at the HAL airport here on Sunday, he said, "The Congress had a relationship with the DMK for 25-30 years. The 10 years of Congress rule before 2014 was due to the DMK's guarantee. The DMK was always working for the good of the Congress, and on several occasions it had bailed the Congress out of trouble."

The Prime Minister said, "As election results came different (from what they expected), the Congress found an opportunity to backstab the DMK."

Hitting out: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other BJP leaders during a public meeting in Bengaluru on Sunday. SUDHAKARA JAIN

Allies betrayed

Calling the Congress "a parasite party", he said, "In the very first opportunity, it will betray even its allies. It [Congress] needs another party to piggyback on to remain relevant."

He said, "We are in power for 12 years and in 21 regions; BJP/ NDA governments have been formed. We work on the mantra of development. Look at the Congress that had over 400 seats in Parliament 40 years ago. In the last three elections, they are not even reaching 100 seats."

Terming the result of recent elections a "historic event", Mr. Modi said: "At a time of global instability, Indian voters have sent out a message for stability. They have sought speed. They have rejected scam, but sought solution. They have voted for a party with nationalistic vision."

Mocking the Congress for the delay in forming a government in Kerala, Mr. Modi said: "In Tamil Nadu, the process was on. In Kerala, they have got majority. At least form the government there. The Congress's ecosystem is silent on Kerala. They are unable to find a solution - whether to have a two and half years (power-sharing arrangement) or five Chief Ministers for five years."

He said what had happened on leadership issue in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan was playing out in Karnataka. It was the turn of Kerala now. He said that in Himachal Pradesh, the Congress government does not have money to pay salary to its employees, and in Telangana, farmers are forced to commit suicide. "Wherever the Congress government is there, the Treasury is being looted or there is fight over the loot," he alleged.

Mr. Modi said: "For BJP, public service is paramount, and that is why 25 crore poor people have come out of poverty. Our model is of good governance; that is why BJP is re-elected." On growth of BJP, he said: "BJP had three seats in West Bengal two elections ago, and today it has managed to come to power with over 200 seats. In Kerala, we have gone up from one to three seats... That day is not far away when BJP/ NDA will grow beyond three seats to form the government."

Urging citizens to remain patient, Mr. Modi said: "West Asia conflict has thrown challenges. War is impacting globally and India is also getting influenced. I am urging the people that as the country is expanding on capabilities, we have to expand our patience too..."

Environment clearance to Nicobar Project lacked adequate study: Congress

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress has demanded that the report of the High-Powered Committee on Great Nicobar project be made public. GETTY IMAGES

The ecological assessments cited by the Union government to clear the Great Nicobar Island Development project do not fulfil the statutory requirements, Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh said in a letter to Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav on Sunday. He demanded that the report of the High-Powered Committee (HPC), constituted on directions of the National Green Tribunal (NGT), be made public.

Mr. Ramesh was addressing the government's claim in a "frequently asked questions" document released on May 1, 2026, which stated that the project's potential ecological impacts had been "comprehensively identified, assessed, and effectively managed" through a robust mechanism.

The environment clearance was given using baseline data collected "over a few days and weeks at best" and these were grossly inadequate, he said. "These reports are an insult to science and make a mockery of the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) process. All my efforts to locate the comprehensive studies, detailed assessments and robust EIA and Environmental Management Plan (EMP) relied on in the FAQs have failed," Mr. Ramesh said.

The law mandates comprehensive EIA studies for port projects, particularly in ecologically sensitive regions such as the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Citing a 2009 Office Memorandum of the Ministry, the Congress leader emphasised that port projects exceeding five million tonnes per annum on the islands must undergo detailed assessments, including multi-season baseline studies, modelling, and field verification.

According to Mr. Ramesh, such studies must account for seasonal variations in biodiversity and ecological processes, requiring data collection across at least two to three seasons. He also referred to the Ministry's sector-specific EIA manual, which prescribes multi-season data for physical, chemical and biological parameters.

Further, he pointed to provisions under the Island Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, 2019, which require comprehensive EIAs for projects located along eroding coastlines. He said satellite mapping by ISRO in 2021 had already categorised significant portions of the Galathea Bay shoreline as eroding, underscoring the need for detailed assessments. Mr. Ramesh recalled that in 2015, then Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar had rejected a proposal to allow rapid EIA studies for coastal projects, stating that single-season data was insufficient to capture environmental impacts.

ED secures custody of Punjab Minister Sanjeev Arora

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has secured seven-day custody of Sanjeev Arora, Industries Minister in the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Punjab, in connection with an alleged money-laundering case.

Mr. Arora was produced before a Gurugram special court late on Saturday after being arrested by the agency. The case is an offshoot of an inquiry into suspected violations of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) by Hampton Sky Realty Limited (HSRL), where Mr. Arora had previously served as chairman and managing director (CMD).

Industries Minister Sanjeev Arora (right), who was arrested by the ED in an alleged money-laundering case. FILE PHOTO

HSRL statement

In a statement on Saturday, HSRL said it had faith in the legal process and was fully cooperating with the statutory authorities, and would continue to do so. Stating that every export was verified by independent authorities outside the company's control, it denied the charges, stating that the company was a victim of "supplier-side fraud".

Last Month, under FEMA, the ED searched HSRL premises and found that the company had allegedly shown mobile phone sales worth ₹157.12 crore from May 12 to October 27, 2023. The firm also allegedly exported goods worth ₹102.5 crore to two United Arab Emirates-based entities – Fortbel Telecom FXCO, and Dragon Global FZCO.

According to the investigating agency, HSRL, in connivance with its directors, employees, and other associated persons, generated fake purchase invoices via a network of shell entities and then the "bogus" exports were used for remittance of foreign exchange from abroad to India under "false pretences".

The funds received in the HSRL account were allegedly transferred to multiple shell and intermediary entities.

Based on the information gathered by the ED, a case was registered with the Gurugram police against HSRL, Mr. Arora, his son Kavya Arora, Hemant Sood, Chander Sekhar, Findoc Finvest Private Limited (FFPL), and other known persons. Then, the agency took up investigation into the alleged money-laundering angle.

During the FEMA inquiry, the agency found that Fortbel Telecom FZCO was a "related" entity of Fortbell Gadget Private Limited (FGPL). The two UAE-based companies were "beneficially owned" by Rahul Agrawal, a former employee of Findoc Group's associated entity. FGPL was "beneficially owned" by Mr. Sood and Mr. Sekhar, who were linked to HSRL through FFPL.

'Bogus' invoices issued

The ED alleged that many supplier entities linked to HSRL were "non-existent" or shell/dummy firms with no financial capacity. They issued "bogus" invoices without the actual supply of goods.

Several of them were either non-filers of income tax returns, reporting negligible income, and/or had their GST registration cancelled or suspended after a brief period of operation.

Under FEMA, the ED recorded statements of Mr. Arora's son and some others, based on which it alleged that he was controlling HSRL's operations during the period under probe.

Probing the suspected shell entities, the ED identified SK Enterprises, whose Delhi-based "proprietor" Kamal Ahamad allegedly turned out to be a daily wage labourer. The firm, whose GST registration was suspended later, had allegedly received about ₹27 crore from HSRL.

The agency claimed SK Enterprises was managed by Azhar Haider, who had paid close to ₹2 lakh to Mr. Ahamad. Mr. Haider was the proprietor of Global Traders, which also received over ₹2.5 crore from HSRL. When confronted, he denied supplying any goods or services to HSRL and SK Enterprises.

Instagram blocked Rahul's posts due to Ministry rules: Cong.

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday claimed that Instagram has "blocked" Rahul Gandhi's reel and photo post featuring him and actor-politician Vijay due to the rules of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), even as government sources denied the charge.

Sources in the Ministry clarified that it had nothing to do with the action and it was because the platform's internal system mistakenly flagged the post for blocking.

Mr. Gandhi was in Chennai on Sunday to attend the oath-taking ceremony of Mr. Vijay as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and later shared pictures with him on social media.

Sources in the Ministry clarified that Meta's internal system mistakenly flagged the post

In a post on X, Congress leader and Mr. Gandhi's aide Srivatsa claimed that Instagram has "blocked Mr. Gandhi's reel and pictures post featuring him and Thalapathy Vijay at today's swearing-in ceremony". The viral reel had gathered 12 million views in less than an hour, while the picture post had already reached 46 million people, Mr. Srivatsa said.

"Meta cites no reason as to why his account has become inaccessible...," he said.

Eight MoUs inked during Jaishankar's Trinidad visit

Press Trust of India
PORT OF SPAIN

India and Trinidad and Tobago have signed eight agreements in sectors including tourism, healthcare, infrastructure and Ayurveda during External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's two-day visit to the Caribbean nation, according to an official statement.

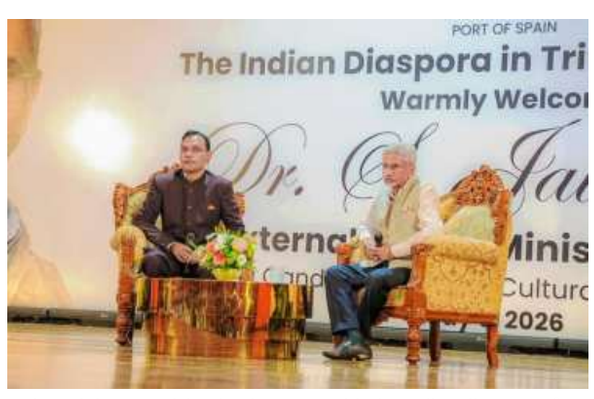
Mr. Jaishankar, who visited the Caribbean nation on May 8 and 9, held talks with Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar and other senior leaders on expanding bilateral cooperation and reviewed progress on announcements made during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Trinidad and Tobago last year, the External Affairs Ministry said in a statement.

India-Trinidad pact to help diaspora trace ancestral roots: Jaishankar

Press Trust of India
PORT OF SPAIN

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said here on Sunday that an archival cooperation agreement between India and Trinidad and Tobago would help members of the Indian diaspora trace their ancestral roots and reconnect with families, as he underlined New Delhi's efforts to preserve the legacy of the Girmitya community.

Girmitya refers to Indian indentured labourers transported by the British to colonies in Fiji, South Africa, Mauritius, and the Caribbean between the 19th and early 20th centuries. Addressing a gathering at the historic Nelson Island on Saturday, Mr. Jaishankar recalled the arrival of the first Indian indentured labourers in Trinidad and Tobago 180 years ago. He paid tribute to their "fortitude, determination and resolve" in building new lives under difficult circumstances.



Union Minister S Jaishankar interacts with the Indian diaspora of Trinidad and Tobago in Port of Spain on Sunday. PTI

He said the immigrants had carried with them their traditions, faith and way of life, adding that it was fitting for such history to be preserved as a heritage site.

Mr. Jaishankar said Prime Minister Narendra Modi attached high importance to creating a database of the Girmitya community and conducting research on its legacy.

He said India was working towards establishing a dedicated Girmitya Studies Centre on Mr. Modi's directions.

Referring to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the National Archives of India and Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Jaishankar said he hoped the agreement would help many people in the Caribbean nation in "tracing their ancestral roots and reconnecting with their families in India".

He also noted that the Indian High Commission in Trinidad and Tobago was receiving a growing number of applications for Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) cards after Mr. Modi announced the extension of OCI eligibility up to the sixth generation.

Party worker found dead in Hooghly was murdered, says TMC; BJP denies involvement

Press Trust of India
KOLKATA

A Trinamool Congress (TMC) panchayat member was found dead in West Bengal's Hooghly district on Sunday, with the party claiming that the death raised the toll of its workers killed in post-poll violence to six.

The deceased, Sahadeb Bag, was a member of the Nokunda gram panchayat under Goghat I block, the party said. The TMC shared a photograph on social media showing the body, alleging that Bag was murdered.

A police officer said the body was found in a field in the morning. "We are examining all possible angles, including personal enmity, business rivalry linked to tenders and political factors," the officer added.

The TMC named five other 'victims of post-poll violence', but the police said only 3 such deaths confirmed so far

The BJP's Goghat unit denied any role and said Bag may have been killed over personal disputes or intra-party rivalry.

Separately, TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee alleged that more than 60 shops were set on fire by "BJP-backed miscreants" in Khejuri, Purba Medinipur, calling the incident "barbaric". "What unfolded in Khejuri's Nijkasba GP, Hijli Sharif is nothing short of barbaric," he wrote on social media, alleging that shops owned by both Hindus and Muslims were targeted.

Police said the fire broke out on Saturday night and was doused by firefighters who reached the spot.

The TMC named five other "victims of post-poll violence", but the police said only three deaths had been confirmed so far as linked to such attacks.

Investigators said the other deaths remain under scrutiny and have not yet been officially classified as post-poll killings, pending further evidence available.

Officials said inquiries were continuing, and no arrests had been announced yet.

INBRIEF

Amid uncertainty, foreign investors pull out ₹14,231 cr.

Foreign investors continued to pare their exposure to Indian equities, withdrawing ₹14,231 crore so far this month driven by persistent global macroeconomic uncertainties. With this, the total outflow of foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) from the equity market has crossed ₹2 lakh crore in 2026, which is higher than the ₹1.66 lakh crore pulled out during the entire 2025, according to data with the NSDL. The FPIs were net sellers in all months of 2026, except February. They withdrew ₹35,962 crore in January before turning net buyers in February, when they invested ₹22,615 crore, the highest monthly inflow in 17 months. PTI

PIL plea in SC seeks review of wages of priests, temple staff

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking direction to the Centre and State governments to constitute a judicial commission or an expert committee to review the wages and other benefits given to priests, sevadars and temple staff in state-controlled temples. "Petitioner also seeks a declaration that priests and temple staff are 'employee' under Section 2(k) of the Code on Wages, 2019... once the state assumes the administrative, economic and financial control over temples, an employer-employee relationship arises and denial of dignified wages to priests... violates the right to livelihood guaranteed under Article 21," it said. PTI

'Maritime security is of primordial importance to Indian Ocean Region'

Any disruption in the Indian Ocean will have a deep impact on the economy across the region, says Sanjiv Ranjan, Secretary-General of the Indian Ocean Rim Association; India chairs the 23-nation grouping; a summit marking its 30th anniversary is expected to be held next year, he adds

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Navigating maritime security in the wake of the war in West Asia will be at the top of the agenda as India chairs the 23-nation Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), with a leaders' summit expected next year, says the organisation's Secretary-General Sanjiv Ranjan.

In addition to raising the profile of the IORA, the government is expected to focus on the specific challenges arising from the war in West Asia, including the violence in the region and the Hormuz Strait blockades by Iran and the U.S.

Last week, Mr. Ranjan had co-hosted the Indian Ocean Dialogue in Delhi, which was attended by Ministers from India, Mauritius and Yemen, besides representatives from both Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, he said while bilateral differences are not discussed at the grouping, the Gulf war has raised issues of "primordial importance" for the IOR countries.

"The increasing realisation from the contemporary situation is that maritime safety and security is of primordial importance for our energy security, our food security, [and] many livelihoods, which are involved as a result of the developments in Indian Ocean littoral areas," he said, referring to all countries with coastlines on the Indian Ocean.

Two-day dialogue

Delivering a keynote address to the two-day dialogue, Mauritius Foreign Minister Dhananjay Ramful said that the "ideal of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace" has been negated and "war has come" to the ocean. Mr. Ramful called the U.S.'s sinking of the Iranian naval ship *IRIS Dena*, in which 100 sailors were killed in March, as "outrageous" and also expressed concern over retaliatory Iranian attacks using Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBMs) on the U.S.'s Diego Garcia base on Mauritius's Chagos Islands.

"They might not have reached their target, but they have nonetheless breached our comfortable status quo. They have introduced in our region of the Indian Ocean an intent of aggression hitherto unknown," Mr. Ramful added.

IORA Secretary-General Sanjiv Ranjan says member countries have seen fuel prices rise considerably due to war. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

According to the IORA charter, "bilateral and other issues likely to generate controversy and be an impediment to regional cooperation efforts will be excluded from deliberations". However, they will discuss the "socio-economic" impact of the conflict in talks on eight priority areas: maritime safety and security, trade and investment, fisheries management, disaster risk management, tourism, cultural exchanges, blue economy and women's economic empowerment, Mr. Ranjan said.

"Without a doubt, any disruption in the Indian Ocean will have a deep impact on the economy across the region. The tourism sector is affected badly especially due to airline disruptions. Fuel prices in many of our member countries have increased considerably, some have had to shut down offices and schools. In the long term, inflation, agricultural output and productivity – impacted due to fertilizer shortages – will all hurt the region. A big worry is that [due to the war] situations where fisherman are unable to go out to the sea for fishing will affect livelihoods," Mr. Ranjan told *The Hindu*.

The IORA Summit in 2027 will mark the organisation's 30th anniversary, said Mr. Ranjan, adding that the last time such a summit had been held was in 2017, when Indonesia marked the IORA's 20th anniversary in Jakarta. In the run-up to that, India will host the Senior Officials Meeting, in June this year, while the IORA Council of Ministers would meet towards the end of 2026.

Series of meetings

The Indian Ocean dialogue, which was a "track 1.5" conference for officials, academics and experts, co-hosted by the IORA and the Ministry of External Affairs and organised by the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), will kick off a series of meetings expected over the coming year, as India seeks to recharge the IORA.

The grouping was formed in 1997 with former South African leader Nelson Mandela amongst those leading it. However, the IORA has not received the relevance that other regional groupings have, such as the now-defunct SAARC, BIMSTEC, SCO or Quad, over three decades.

In addition to its salience in India's MAHASAGAR maritime policy and Indo-Pacific strategy, the IORA is less contentious for India as Pakistan has never been admitted to its ranks. Pakistan had requested membership in the early 2000s, but the fact that it refused to grant India "MFN status" for trade violated the IORA charter that calls for "sovereign equality" or equal treatment of all states, according to officials.

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) currently comprises 23 member states, including Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

Laughter in the Bar: S-G launches books on comic tales from courts

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

At the launch of two books authored by Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta about humour in the courtroom, Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant on Sunday said the top law officer must now turn his gaze to the Indian judicial system for his third book.

The CJI said there was "no dearth of comic tales from our own region. In fact, I am certain we have enough material in Delhi itself to fill a library!"

The Chief Justice said he would be more than happy to contribute to such an effort as he would be less tight-lipped after retirement.

Home Minister Amit Shah spoke at the launch of the books titled *The Bench, The Bar and The Bizarre* and *The Lawful and The Awful*, which was attended by Supreme Court and High Court judges, law officers, senior advocates, and others.

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Home Minister Amit Shah at the release of books by Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta. @AMITSHAH/X

The CJI said he flipped through the books and wondered how Mr. Mehta spared the time to write amid his busy schedule.

"So I tried to solve this mystery! I have two running theories. Either Tushar Bhai has successfully petitioned the Almighty for a 25th hour in the day and kept that order strictly for himself, or he has discovered that the best time for comedic writing is while Court No. 1 is taking too long to read a file during a hearing. My money's on the latter!" the Chief Justice said.

The CJI said the books were replete with hilarious anecdotes and incidents Mr. Mehta had collected after raiding law libraries, sifting through old case files and digging out obscure trial records that "read more like sitcom scripts than sombre documents".

"He presents baffled witnesses, judges with a flair for the dramatic, and lawyers caught in the crossfire of their own hysterical missteps... The courtroom is where theatre meets law, and everyone has a starring role," the CJI said.

Chief Justice Kant lightly remarked that Mr. Mehta's deliberate omission of the Indian Bench from his book was probably not just editorial discretion, but actually his "heightened survival instinct".

"You see, Tushar Bhai knows that if he wrote about our quirks, his next 'mentioning' would have been outrightly rejected in Court No. 1 [Chief Justice of India's courtroom] without the scope of a review petition!" Chief Justice Kant said.

Webinar on allied health and nursing to be held today

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Future Career Conversations series, jointly organised by SRM Institute of Science & Technology and *The Hindu*, continues to provide students and professionals with insights into emerging academic disciplines and evolving career opportunities.

The seventh webinar in the series, titled "Allied health & nursing: the backbone of modern healthcare", will be held online at 4 p.m. on Monday.

With the growing demand for quality healthcare services, allied health and nursing professionals are playing an increasingly significant role in strengthening healthcare systems across the world.

From patient care and diagnostics to rehabilitation and preventive healthcare, these professionals form the foundation of modern medical services.

As the healthcare sector evolves through technological advances, changing patient needs, and expanding global opportunities, the demand for skilled and specialised professionals in allied health sciences and nursing rises in India and abroad.

Emerging opportunities

The panel discussion will explore emerging career opportunities, the increasing global demand for healthcare professionals, existing skill gaps, the integration of technologies such as robotics and AI-based patient monitoring in healthcare delivery, work conditions and policy support, as well as opportunities for career progression and specialisation in allied health and nursing.

The panel will feature Dr. Helen Shaji J. C., Dean, SRM College of Nursing, SRMIST; Dr. D. Jagadeswaran, Dean - Allied Health Sciences, SRM Medical College Hospital & Research Centre, SRMIST; Mary Marjeri, Chief Nursing Officer, Naruvi Hospitals, Vellore; and Dr. Rashmi Shukla, Senior Scientist, Division of Genetics, Department of Paediatrics, AIIMS, New Delhi.

The session will be moderated by Meenakshy S., Principal Correspondent, *The Hindu*. To register, visit https://newsth.live/THSRMNE or scan the QR code.

Congress flags granting J&K L-G powers over telecom

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

J&K Congress chief Tariq Hameed Karra on Sunday termed the recent move to enhance Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha's powers in the Union Territory's telecommunications sector as "another dent on the democratic governance mechanism of the elected government in J&K".

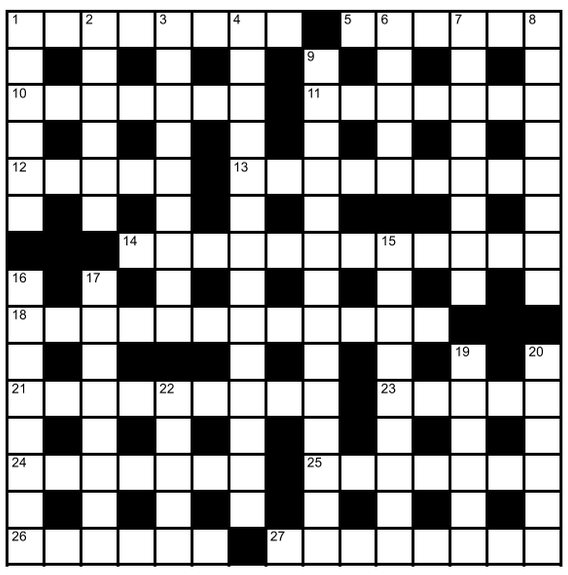
Mr. Karra said for years, promises were made about restoration of trust, democratic empowerment and strengthening of institutions in J&K. "But such moves only reinforce the feeling that despite an elected setup, real authority continues to remain concentrated elsewhere. Democracy cannot be restored politically while governance continues to be centralised administratively," he said.

TH CROSSWORD + 14790

(set by Dr. X)

Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at *https://thehindu.com/crosswords*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Displays anxiety about lout at centre following husband (5,3)
5 Stumble over daughter's three-legged stand (6)
10 Novel released around end of year (7)
11 See 3 Down
12 Constant stench in estuary (5)
13 Rugged mesomorph wins easily (5,4)
14 Reading about extremely terse Republican's meddlesomeness (12)
18 Manage to crush confident barbarian in a game (8,4)
21 Actress playing flirtatious role is naughty to be sure, close to perfect (9)
23 Join teleconference to secure information of military value (5)
24 One chanting is emotional, having finally lost love (7)
25 Attacking cartel after receiving assistance (7)
26 Proceed with Mafia boss to have small boy sponsored at baptism (6)
27 Beginning to train hard by playing tennis, becoming most lean (8)

Down

1 Squat to acquire primarily attractive hip and buttock (6)
2 Crazy person from northern state (6)
3/11 What inexperienced boxer might do to show resolve (5,4,4,3)
4 Government official and corrupt treasurer deny stealing cash at first (14)
6 Checks earthenware in small boxes (5)
7 Piano for fellow? Great present (8)
8 Bird in spot on exotic tree by lake (8)
9 Dregs of society face home truths unhappily (4,2,3,5)
15 Princess captivated by tenor in fantastic performance (9)
16 Concealing distress, remains inside (8)
17 Removed passage in document (8)
19 Sick artiste giving up ultimately injurious habit (6)
20 Pale after onset of bacterial disease (6)
22 Musical form with recurring theme playing in star's latest party (5)

SUDOKU

	6			9	2		4	
	2		5					
	7	1		8				
5					7			3
		6				5		
2			8					1
				2		8	9	
					5		2	
	1		4	6			3	

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

	P	E	D	A	L	S		T
	R		O		I		B	
S	O	I	L		C	O	L	L
	N		L		E		E	
C	O	U	S	I	N		E	N
	U				C		D	
E	N	E	R	G	E	T	I	C
			E				N	
C	A	M	P	S		A	G	R
	V		O		E		H	
P	O	R	R	I	D	G	E	
	I		T		I		A	
A	D	V	E	N	T	U	R	E
	E		R		O		T	
	D	E	S	I	R	E		C

	T	A	P	P	E	D		
	E		I					
C	O	L	L	E	C	T	I	N
	E		N		R		N	
E	N	C	L	O	S	E	D	
	D		Y		L		R	
S	E	N	S	E				
	N				U			
A	G	R	E	E	M	E	N	T
	H		M				O	
B	E	A	S	T	S			
	A		A		W		I	
F	A	C	T					
	S				U		E	
C	Y	C	L	E	D			

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

9	4	1	5	6	8	7	2	3
2	6	5	7	3	4	1	9	8
7	8	3	9	1	2	5	4	6
4	5	6	8	9	1	3	7	2
8	3	9	2	7	6	4	1	5
1	7	2	4	5	3	8	6	9
3	9	4	6	8	7	2	5	1
5	1	7	3	2	9	6	8	4
6	2	8	1	4	5	9	3	7

FAITH

Perumal, the only refuge

One struggles through life chasing all the impermanent things and prays to God for achieving those goals. A parallel thread of yearning courses through at the same time, as one also seeks spiritual wisdom if not wealth. One need not look beyond the three charama slokas (verses), rendered by Narayana Himself, throwing light on spiritual wisdom, said Tirukkudanthai Dr. Venkatesh. These are Sri Krishna Charama Sloka, Sri Rama Charama Sloka and Sri Varaha Charama Sloka. At the Kurukshetra war, when Arjuna was in a confused state of mind, Sri Krishna preached the Bhagavad Gita., held to be an essence of the Vedas. In Chapter 18, Krishna says, "Abandon everything, just surrender to Me alone. I shall liberate you from all sins and grant you moksha in this very birth. Do not worry." When Vibhishana surrenders to Rama at the banks of the Sethu (Tirupullani), despite being the brother of Ravana, the enemy, Rama says, "To anyone who seeks refuge in Me just once, declaring, 'I am yours', I shall give protection against all types of beings. This is my vow," He avers. Unconditional surrender to Perumal as the ultimate refuge, brings divine protection and unconditional assurance to every creature. During *Pralaya* (dissolution of the universe), when Sri Varaha rescued Bhudevi, She asks Varaha when and how He will rescue their children born and struggling in *samsara*. Sri Varaha responds, "Any creature (human and others) with sound mind, healthy body and the physical element in perfect harmony (at a young age), remembers Me as the only refuge and surrenders unto Me, I shall remember them at the time of their death and take them to Sri Vaikunta, granting moksha."

The elusive choice in absence of collaterals

Santosh Agarwal

Expansion of access to unsecured credit has been largely led by two key catalysts over the last few years - India's maturing credit bureaus along with data-and-technology-led digitalisation. Both have helped lenders access structured consumer data at scale for underwriting and strengthen distribution capabilities, paving the way for high growth of personal loans.

Till a decade ago, personal loans were restricted to a few segments, with large sections of the population relying on collateral-based secured loans like gold loans or loans against property in times of need for funds. Today, loans against mutual funds, used cars etc., are also options as collateral-based loans. But for many without collaterals, personal loans remain the only elusive choice.

While access to personal loans has grown exponentially, some nuances remain. Personal loans, being collateral free or unsecured, work on the fundamentals of creditworthiness more than any other form of loan. By factoring in multiple aspects, lenders evaluate the delinquency risk and lend accordingly.

Pledging collateral benefits both parties. For lenders, it serves as a safeguard in the event of default, while for borrowers, it enables access to relatively relaxed loan terms such as lower interest rates and higher loan amounts. On the contrary, for unsecured loans, the borrower is the security. The borrower's financial and credit health is vetted thoroughly to understand the risk involved, drawing on multiple data-points across the financial ecosystem.

Products like unsecured personal loans, cash-flow-based business loans, overdraft facilities, consumer durable loans, etc., are prime examples of loans without collateral.

For instance, in cash-flow based lending, lenders view transaction patterns, money inflow and outflow, and business bank statements to determine financial stability and creditworthiness. Same is the case with personal loans, where the borrower's repayment patterns, income patterns, and financial stress signals are assessed. This approach allows even asset-light borrowers to access funding.

Lenders usually evaluate two parameters – capacity to repay and intent to repay the loan. Your income determines your capacity to repay a loan whereas parameters like the credit score and credit profile are put under the lens for assessment of intent to repay the loan. Lenders analyse the likelihood of getting their money back by factoring in all these signals. Access to personal loans becomes relatively easier when the borrower showcases a stronger credit profile and stable income.

A credit profile of a borrower equips lenders with essential financial information, including repayment history, credit utilisation, debt obligations, etc. Borrowers reflecting consistent, timely repayments in their credit reports are seen as low-risk and are more likely to receive easy approval and better terms, while irregular repayment patterns trigger caution and stricter lending conditions.

A CIBIL score of 760+ is preferred by lenders especially when approving an unsecured loan. A higher credit score typically translates into lower interest rates and more favourable loan terms. Maintaining it requires consistent repayment behaviour and a well-managed credit profile.

Income stability and a steady bank balance is another factor that lenders look at closely.

With better access to financial data and more refined risk models, lenders can take informed calls without relying solely on collateral. That said, the trade-off still remains.

In the absence of collateral like gold, the risk for lenders is higher. Consequently, the lending rate is usually higher as compared to secured loans. Additionally, the loan amount offered for unsecured loans may also be lower than secured loans, where the loan amount depends on the cost of the collateral.

Ultimately, the choice between secured and unsecured credit must align with a borrower's needs.

(The writer is CEO, Paisabazaar)

Wait unworthy: The middle-class waiting child, who has been faithfully paying premiums into the whole life endowment or money-back policies for two to three decades, receives something far smaller than expected. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Should you really await your second 'marshmallow'?

A money-back policy does not match a retirement goal; a whole life endowment plan does not match a child's education needs; does the promise match the goal of your wait?

WHAT'S IN STORE?

Vaishali R Venkat

Life is a labyrinth brimming with twists and turns. It is never linear; no single pattern; no one-size-fits-all map; but it unfolds like stars scattered across the sky. And so for our third child, we spoke about last week, who is waiting for its second marshmallow there is no single clear outcome.

Caught in the maze of uncertainties in life, the promise of the second marshmallow may unfold in many ways. Perhaps the marshmallow arrived, and the child savoured the candy, finding it much like the first. Perhaps the candy melted before it reached the child's lips. Or perhaps it never arrived at all, and the person who promised the second one never returned, leaving the child waiting for Godot.

One wait but three different destinies. And at the outset, there is simply no knowing which path the child would eventually land upon. Without much ado, let us first understand who this mysterious third child is. The shocking part: the third child is in fact not a child at all, but the middle-class dreamer waiting for the right time, the right opportunity, the right job, the right salary, the right investment option, or the right what not. Likewise, in the real world of money, the wait has taken many forms, and not all of them have ended well. Let's unwrap each destiny...

> Is this financial wait truly worth it? Simply ask yourself: will the time you spend waiting match the promised returns?

> What exactly am I waiting for: a specific corpus amount, a target return, a salary increase, debt clearance or financial security?

The eternal wait

Across the country, millions of ordinary people entrusted their hard-earned savings to Ponzi schemes or fraudulent chit fund companies that promised very high returns. They saved month after month; year after year. They were not greedy or reckless. They were simply the third child who believed every word of the so-called 'promise'. They kept saving for children's education, daughters' marriage or a dignified old age.

Then one black morning, the office shutters came down. The phone went unanswered. The agent absconded. The company collapsed, and the night-fliers disappeared into the dark. In one blow, both marshmallows vanished. The second marshmallow, the promised returns, and the first one, the principal amount, as well were snatched from the toiling hands.

When it melts

This time, the marshmallow agent returned promptly, but melted on the way. The middle-class waiting child who has been faithfully paying premiums into the whole life endowment or money-back policies for two to three decades received something far smaller than expected. Inflation had quietly gobbled up the returns, and when the marshmallow finally arrived, it was never whole. Just a peanut.

The fruitful wait

Not every wait ends in tears. Those who patiently held Sovereign Gold Bonds, stayed invested in index funds or ETFs through market crashes, or quietly let their EPF/VPF compound decade after decade found the second marshmallow as expected.

What was never asked

Before waiting faithfully, the child never asked a few crucial questions. First, is my current environment stable enough for me to wait, or should I grab or ignore the opportunity? Second, for whom exactly am I waiting for, and are they reliable enough to keep the promise? This awareness will help one stay away from honeyed promises and night-fliers. Third, what exactly am I waiting for: a specific corpus amount, a target return, a salary increase, or debt clearance? Fourth, is this financial wait truly worth it? Simply ask yourself one honest question: will the time you spend waiting match the promised returns? Fifth, am I prepared for every outcome of the wait? If the marshmallow (the expected fruits of the wait) never comes, will it ruin my life, or can I muster the courage and rely on other backups? If it melts on the way, can I absorb the loss and accept its sour taste? And if at all it arrives whole, do I really know what to do with it?

Sixth, does the promise match the goal of your wait? A money-back policy does not match a retirement goal. A whole life endowment plan does not match a child's education needs. An EPF/VPF does not match an emergency fund. Gold does not match the goal of wealth creation. The marshmallow may be sweet. But, was it the one you were actually waiting for? Ask. The Gaza child never asked these questions because hunger gave it no time. The Washington child never bothered to ask because abundance made the wait itself unnecessary. Alas! The third child never asked simply because nobody told it to. So, ask before you wait. Because, not every marshmallow is worth the wait, and not every wait is blessed with a marshmallow.

(The writer is an NISM & Crisil-certified Wealth Manager and certified in NISM's Research Analyst module)

Pros and cons of bank deposits

THINKINVESTOR

All banks expose you to credit risk, but the possibility of defaults are lower compared with, say, investing in a corporate FDs

Venkatesh Bangaruswamy

Creating a goal-based portfolio by diversifying the sources of returns requires you to rely heavily on bank deposits for your bond allocation. In this article, we discuss the concerns that many individuals have relating to investing in bank deposits.

Consider first the benefits of bank deposits. You know the maturity value of the deposit when you make the investment. This visibility of cashflows provides stability to your portfolio. Also, bank deposits can compound your investment value, moderating reinvestment risk. This is the risk that if interest were paid every year on the deposit, you may have to reinvest the income at a lower rate should interest rates decline during the life of the investment. But the above benefits have associated costs. Interest income is taxed at your marginal tax rate, substantially reducing post-tax return on the deposit. Also, bank deposits have credit risk- the possibility that a bank may default on the repayment of your deposits at maturity. Most individuals resort to three ways of moderating the perceived credit risk. One, they place their deposits with banks that they are comfortable with. This could be ones with which they have a long-standing banking relationship. Two, they may choose RBI-designated systematically important banks. At present, these are HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and SBI. And three, they invest in multiple banks, holding deposits of less than five lakh with banks that do not fall under one and two above. This is because deposits up to five lakh are guaranteed by the deposit insurance and credit guarantee corporation in the event a bank defaults. Note that most banks do not require that you have a savings account to create a fixed deposit. Deposits created without a savings account are typically referred to as standalone deposits or digital deposits. Nevertheless, spreading your deposits across multiple banks can make your investment process cumbersome.

It is best to keep your deposits in 3-5 banks. True, all banks expose you to credit risk, but the possibility of defaults are lower compared to, say, investing in a corporate FDs. Note that direct investments in government bonds may not be optimal, for two reasons. One, government bonds expose you to high reinvestment risk. And two, they may be unavailable for the tenure you want at the time you want to make the investment. Finally, if your primary concern is lower post-tax return on bank FDs, think of that as a cost for stable returns.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)

Personal Loans

Rates and Charges — Loan amount 5 lakh, Tenure 5 years — Loan amount 1 lakh, Tenure 5 years — (% of loan amount)

Name of Lender	Interest Rate (%)	EMI (Rs)	EMI (Rs)	Processing fee
HDFC Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	2,124 onwards	Up to Rs 6,500
Tata Capital	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Flat Rs. 99
State Bank of India	10.00-15.00	10,624-11,895	2,125-2,379	Up to 1.50% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 15,000)
ICICI Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	2,124 onwards	Up to 2%
Bank of Baroda*	10.15-18.00	10,660-12,697	2,132-2,539	Up to 2% (Max. Rs 10,000)
Axis Bank	9.60 onwards	10,525 onwards	2,105 onwards	Up to 2%
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 5%
Bank of India	10.85-16.15	10,834-12,199	2,167-2,440	Up to 1% (Min. Rs 250; Max. Rs 15,000)
Canara Bank	9.70-15.15	10,550-11.934	2,110-2,387	0.50% (Rs 1,000 - Rs 5,000)
Punjab National Bank	10.25-16.80	10,685-12,373	2,137-2,475	Up to 1%
HSBC Bank	9.75 onwards	10,562 onwards	2,112 onwards	Up to 2%
Federal Bank	11.75 - 18.99	11,059 - 12,968	2,212 - 2,594	Up to 3%
Union Bank of India	8.90 - 12.65	10,355-11,287	2,071-2,257	Up to 1% (Max. Rs 7,500)
Bajaj Finserv	10.00-30.00	10,624-16,177	2,125-3,235	Up to 3.93%
Punjab & Sind Bank	9.60-13.85	10,525-11,595	2,105-2,319	0.50%-1%
Indian Overseas Bank	10.25 onwards	10,685 onwards	2,137 onwards	Up to 0.75%
UCO Bank	9.95 - 13.20	10,611-11,428	2,122-2,286	Up to 1% (Min. Rs 750)
IDFC FIRST Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	2,124 onwards	Up to 3.5%
Bank of Maharashtra	8.75-13.55	10,319-11,518	2,064-2,304	Up to 1% (Max. Rs 10,000)
Central Bank of India	9.85-11.65	10,587-11,034	2,117-2,207	Up to 1%
IndusInd Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards	Up to 3.5% (2% for instant personal loans for limited period)

*Interest concession of 0.10% to customers opting for group credit life insurance.

Car Loans

Rates and Charges — Loan amount 5 lakh, Tenure 5 years — (% of loan amount)

Name of Lender	Interest Rate (%)	EMI (Rs)	Processing fee
Union Bank of India	7.50-10.00	10,019 - 10,684	Up to Rs 1,000
Punjab National Bank	7.60-10.70	10,043 - 10,797	Up to 0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 1,500)
Bank of Baroda	7.60 - 11.35	10,043 - 10,959	Up to Rs. 2,000
Canara Bank	7.45-11.45	10,007 - 10,984	0.25% (Rs 1,000 - Rs 5,000)
Bank of India	7.60-12.55	10,043 - 11,262	Up to 0.25% (Rs. 2,500 - Rs. 10,000)
UCO Bank	7.35-10.00	9,983 - 10,624	0.5% (Max. Rs 5,000)
State Bank of India	8.90 - 9.85	10,355 - 10,587	Rs 750 - Rs 1,500
IDBI Bank	7.75-9.30	10,078 - 10,452	Rs 2,500
Bank of Maharashtra*	7.45-11.75	10,007 - 11,059	0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 15,000)
Indian Overseas Bank	7.55-12.00	10,031 - 11,122	NIL
ICICI Bank	8.35 onwards	10,222 onwards	Up to 2%
HDFC Bank	8.15 onwards	10,174 onwards	Up to 0.5% (Rs. 3,500 - Rs. 8,000)
Karnataka Bank	8.01-11.51	10,141 - 10,999	Up to 0.60% (Rs. 2,500 - Rs. 11,000)
Punjab and Sind Bank**	7.50-14.00	10,019 - 11,634	0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 15,000)
Indian Bank	7.50-9.65	10,019 - 10,513	Rs. 1,200
IDFC FIRST Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	Up to Rs. 10,000
Central Bank of India	7.60-9.20	10,043 - 10,428	0.50%(Rs. 2,000 - Rs. 20,000)

*0.25% interest rate concession for existing home loan borrowers and other existing customers having at least 6 months of relationship with the bank.
**Concession of up to 50% on processing fee for PSB Apna Vahan Sugam

Rates and charges as on May 6 — **Source: Paisabazaar.com**

JERUSALEM

Israel deports two foreign activists seized from Gaza-bound aid flotilla

REUTERS

Israel deported on Sunday two foreign activists seized and detained from a Gaza-bound aid flotilla, in what a rights group described as an "attack" on a civilian mission. Spanish national Saif Abu Keshek and Brazilian Thiago Avila were among dozens of activists aboard a flotilla intercepted by the Israeli Navy off Greece on April 30. AFP

LONDON

Starmer says his government is a 10-year project despite calls to quit

REUTERS

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer vowed to fight on, describing his government as a "10-year project" despite calls for him to quit after his party's drubbing in the recent local elections. Mr. Starmer's Labour Party suffered the worst losses for a governing party in more than 30 years, while the Reform UK made significant gains. REUTERS

BUNIA

At least 69 people killed after raids by militia at villages in DR Congo

AFP

A militia attack killed at least 69 people in Democratic Republic of Congo's Ituri province, sources said. Two ethnic groups — Hema and Lendu — have been locked in combat in the mineral-rich region. Armed men linked to Codeco militia, which claims to support the Lendu, raided several villages, killing at least 69 people. AFP

DAMASCUS

Former Assad-era official charged with 'war crimes' in landmark trial

AFP

Syria's judiciary brought charges on Sunday against former security official Atif Najib for acts amounting to "war crimes" in 2011 against protesters in Daraa, the cradle of uprising. A court in Damascus last month opened landmark trials of former senior figures, including ousted leader Bashar al-Assad, who is being tried in absentia. AFP

Iran responds to U.S. proposal as drones target Gulf nations

Tehran seeks to end the war on all fronts, including in Lebanon, state TV says; the UAE and Kuwait report drones in their airspace while one hit a ship off Qatar; Supreme Leader issues new directive

Associated Press
DUBAI

Iran has sent its response to the latest U.S. ceasefire proposal via Pakistani mediators and wants negotiations to focus on permanently ending the war, Iran's state-run media said on Sunday. Pakistan confirmed receiving it.

Iran seeks to end the war on all fronts, including in Lebanon, where Israel fights the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group, and to ensure the security of shipping, its state TV said. Washington's latest proposal addressed a deal to end the war, reopen the Strait of Hormuz and roll back Iran's nuclear program, an issue that Tehran would rather discuss later.

Water wars: The American military says it has turned back over 60 commercial vessels since it began the blockade of Iranian ports. AFP

Trump's latest threat

U.S. President Donald Trump on Sunday accused Iran of "playing games" and laughing at America, but said it soon would be made to stop – without commenting directly on Iran's reply.

"Iran has been playing games with the U.S., and the rest of the World, for 47 years," Mr. Trump said on his Truth Social platform. He also accused Tehran of "laughing at our now GREAT AGAIN Country" but added: "They will be laughing no longer!"

Iran's new Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, "issued new directives for the continuation of operations and the powerful confrontation with the enemies" while meeting with the head of the joint military command, the state broadcaster reported.

Meanwhile, the fragile ceasefire was tested when a drone ignited a small fire on a ship off Qatar and the UAE and Kuwait reported drones entering their airspace. The UAE blamed Iran. No casualties were reported, and no one claimed responsibility.

Mr. Trump has reiterated threats to resume full-scale bombing if Iran does not accept an agreement to reopen the strait. Iran has largely blocked the strategic waterway that's key to the global flow of oil, natural gas and fertilizer since the war began, rattling world markets.

The U.S. in turn has blockaded Iranian ports and on Friday struck two Iranian oil tankers it said were trying to breach the blockade. The American military said on Sunday that it has turned back 61 commercial vessels and disabled four since the blockade began on April 13.

Nuclear issue

Another sticking point in negotiations is Iran's highly enriched uranium.

An Iranian military spokesperson said its forces were on "full readiness" to protect nuclear sites where uranium is stored, state media reported. "We considered it possible that they might intend to steal it through infiltration operations," Brig. Gen. Akrami Nia told the IRNA news agency.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday that the war isn't over because the enriched uranium needs to be taken out of Iran. "Mr. Trump has said to me, 'I want to go in there,' and I think it can be done physically," he said.

(With inputs from AFP)

Israeli strikes kill three people in Gaza: medics

Reuters
CAIRO/GAZA

Israeli strikes killed at least three Palestinians in Gaza on Sunday, including two members of the Hamas-run police force, health officials said, in violence that underscored the fragility of a U.S.-brokered ceasefire.

Medics said an airstrike killed one person in the Maghazi refugee camp, while another killed the head of the criminal police force in Khan Younis, Wessam Abdel-Hadi, and his aide, according to Gaza's Hamas-run Interior Ministry.

Persistent violence

"Although the ceasefire came into effect several months ago, the occupation continues to target the police officers to cause chaos among the people of the same nation," a mourner in Khan Younis said.

At least 850 Palestinians have been killed since the truce came into effect, local medics say, while Israel says militants have killed four of its soldiers over the same period. Israel and Hamas have blamed each other for truce violations.

14 police personnel killed in Pakistan suicide attack

Associated Press
PESHAWAR

The death toll from a suicide attack on a security post in northwest Pakistan rose to 14 police officers, authorities said on Sunday. A self-proclaimed breakaway group of the Pakistan Taliban has claimed the attack.

A suicide bomber and several gunmen detonated an explosives-laden vehicle near the post in Bannu, a district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan, late on Saturday, said senior police official Sajjad Khan.

The attack triggered an intense shootout, and some officers were killed in the exchange, while others died later after the building collapsed.

Rescuers conducted an hours-long search operation using heavy machinery to retrieve bodies from under the rubble, Mr. Khan said, adding that three police officers were wounded in the attack.

Meanwhile, hundreds gathered on Sunday at the police headquarters in Bannu to attend the funerals of the slain officers. Uniformed colleagues stood in silence as coffins draped in the national flag were carried past grieving families. Some relatives broke down upon seeing the coffins, as a Muslim cleric led funeral prayers under tight security.

Solemn respects: Funeral prayers for the police officers killed in a car bombing and shootout in Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. AP

President Asif Ali Zardari condemned the attack and offered condolences to the victims' families. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also condemned the attack.

President levels charge

Mr. Zadari said, "Terrorists operating from sanctuaries in Afghanistan under the Taliban administration and supported externally are targeting civilians and law enforcement personnel in Pakistan." He also vowed to target "their facilitators and sponsors."

Security forces have launched an operation to track down the perpetrators.

A newly formed militant group, Ittehad-ul-Mujahideen Pakistan, claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement. While the group claims it was formed by splinter factions of the Pakistani Taliban, known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), authorities have accused it of being a front for the TTP.

Pakistan has witnessed a surge in militant violence in recent years, much of it blamed on the TTP, a separate group but an ally of the Afghan Taliban, who returned to power in Afghanistan in 2021.

Islamabad often accuses Afghanistan's Taliban government of providing sanctuary to the TTP, a claim that Kabul denies.

Putin suggests Ukraine war is coming to an end

Reuters
MOSCOW

Russian leader proposes former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder as mediator

A U.S.-mediated ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine appeared under serious strain on Sunday, with both sides trading blame for weekend attacks.

Russian officials had on Saturday sent mixed signals with Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov saying peace in Ukraine was a "very long way" away but President Vladimir Putin suggesting the war was "coming to an end".

Mr. Putin said that he thought the Ukraine war was coming to an end, remarks that came just hours after he had vowed victory in Ukraine at Moscow's most scaled-back Victory Day parade in years.

"I think that the matter is coming to an end," Mr. Putin said. He also said he would be willing to negotiate new security arrangements for Europe, and that his preferred negotiating partner would be Germany's former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder.

Meanwhile, the three-day pause announced on Friday by President Donald Trump, as part of a broader U.S.-led push for peace that has so far failed to end the more than four-year-old war, seems to have had little effect, with attacks being reported from both sides.

Three killed

Three people were killed in Russian drone strikes on areas near the front line, and more than 200 battlefield clashes had taken place since Saturday, Ukrainian officials said. They accused Russia of violating the U.S.-brokered deal, which also included a swap of 1,000 prisoners of war from each side.

Russia's Defence Ministry also accused Ukraine of flouting the ceasefire, saying it had downed 57 Ukrainian drones over the past day and "responded in kind" on the battlefield.

Earlier this week, Russia and Ukraine had each announced separate ceasefires, starting on Friday and Wednesday respectively, but quickly accused one another of breaking them.

According to the Interfax news agency, Kremlin adviser Yuri Ushakov announced that U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner will visit Moscow "soon enough" to continue diplomatic discussions.

Separately, Germany on Sunday dismissed a suggestion by Mr. Putin that Mr. Schroeder could coordinate talks with the European Union to secure a peace deal in Ukraine.

Evacuation of hantavirus-hit vessel begins in Canary Islands

Agence France-Presse
GRANADILLA DE ABONA

Occupants of a cruise ship struck by a deadly hantavirus outbreak that has sparked international alarm began flying home from Spain's Canary Islands on Sunday in a complex repatriation operation.

Three passengers from the *MV Hondius* have died, while others have fallen sick with the rare disease, which usually spreads among rodents.

No vaccines or specific treatments exist for hantavirus, which is endemic in Argentina, where the ship departed in April. But health officials have stressed that the risk for global public health is low and played down comparisons to a repeat of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The final flight to evacuate most of the ship's nearly 150 passengers and crew will leave on Monday, Spanish Health Minister Monica Garcia said.

Passengers wearing blue medical suits began disembarking the Dutch-flagged vessel onto smaller boats to reach the port of Granadilla on Tenerife. The evacuees then boarded a Spanish Army bus and travelled to Tenerife South airport in a convoy with Civil Guard vehicles.

The evacuees changed into new protective equipment before boarding their repatriation flight.

"The operation is going very well," World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

All passengers are asymptomatic and underwent a final medical assessment before their disembarkation, Ms. Garcia said.

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ON THE RAMPAGE

Urvil smashes joint-fastest fifty in IPL history, ties with Jaiswal

R. RAGU

Chennai Super Kings' Urvil Patel equalled the record for the joint-fastest fifty in IPL history during the match against Lucknow Super Giants on Sunday. He reached the milestone off 13 balls to tie Rajasthan Royals' Yashasvi Jaiswal's mark against KKR in 2023. Urvil's 13-ball sequence read: 1-6-6-6-6-6-4-6-1-0-6-1-1.

CRUNCH TIME

The tournament starts for us now: Kings' fast-bowling coach Hopes

R.V. MOORTHY

The IPL 2026 playoffs are just a little over two weeks away, but Punjab Kings appears to be making a fresh start. "For us, the tournament starts now. We are about three weeks of good cricket away from giving ourselves a chance to win the title," said Punjab Kings' fast-bowling coach James Hopes.

CLEAR FOCUS

Three big games for the players and DC franchise, says Bell

R.V. MOORTHY

We have got three big games for the individuals and franchise. It is really important that we come with the expectation of winning all of them. That is the focus of the team. We are proud to represent DC, and the players will do everything for the badge and fans — Delhi Capitals' batting coach Ian Bell.

TERRIFIC COMBINATION

Gill-Sudharsan pair equals record for second-most century stands

SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

GT openers Shubman Gill and Sai Sudharsan have equalled RCB's legendary pair of Virat Kohli and Chris Gayle for the second-most century stands in the IPL. Gill and Sudharsan registered their ninth century partnership during the game against RR on Saturday. At the top is the RCB duo of A.B. de Villiers and Kohli (10).

Bhuvneshwar and Krunal put RCB on top, show MI the door

The veteran seamer scalps four to restrict the five-time champion to 166 for seven; the all-rounder produces a fighting fifty to steady the holder in a tricky chase; Bosch's four-wicket haul in vain; the result also eliminates LSG from the playoffs race

IPL-19

Anish Pathiyil
RAIPUR

It had been 10 long years since the Raipur crowd had the chance to engage in an IPL game at the Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh Stadium. In an era of 200-plus strike rates and 230-run chases, the local fans were treated to a gripping contest where the bowlers called the shots.

Bhuvneshwar Kumar's four-wicket haul and Krunal Pandya's fighting fifty helped defending champion Royal Challengers Bengaluru eke out a two-wicket win over Mumbai Indians on Sunday to move to the top of the IPL 2026 table.

Bhuvneshwar struck thrice in the PowerPlay to handicap the visiting side early after Rajat Patidar won the toss and opted to bowl on a hard, black soil pitch. After forcing Ryan Rickleton to balloon a catch off the splice, the pacer brought out the knuckleball to get rid of Rohit Sharma, who had smashed two sixes against Josh Hazlewood at the other end, before nicking off Suryakumar Yadav first ball

Naman Dhir and Tilak Varma needed some time to get set on the pitch, which offered some uneven bounce, but eventually put together an 82-run stand. Tilak's gritty half-century, where he prioritised finding the gap over muscling the ball, helped MI cross the 150-run mark. But once he was bowled by a pinpoint yorker from Bhuvneshwar, the lower-order couldn't provide a final flourish.

Chasing a modest target of 167, the ball seemed to be in the home side's court. But Deepak Chahar struck twice in his opening spell, removing Virat Kohli and Devdutt Padikkal. When Patidar skied a catch to the 'keeper off Corbin Bosch on eight, the game was back in the balance.

Krunal was promoted to No. 5 to steady the ship. The southpaw released the pressure with the advent of spin as he took down anything bowled too full with a combination of sweeps and shots down the ground.

Despite Bosch putting MI on top with three quick wickets, Krunal persevered through recurring bouts of cramp to take the team close, before Bhuvneshwar returned to strike a crucial final-over six to seal a stunning win. The result also meant both MI and Lucknow Super Giants were eliminated.

Standout performers: Bhuvneshwar proved his mastery yet again before Krunal sparkled in the chase. EMMANUAL YOGINI

SCOREBOARD

MUMBAI INDIANS
Ryan Rickelton c Patidar b Bhuvneshwar 2 *(4b)*, Rohit Sharma c Jitesh b Bhuvneshwar 22 *(10b, 2x4, 2x6)*, Naman Dhir b Rasikh 47 *(32b, 5x4, 2x6)*, Suryakumar Yadav c Kohli b Bhuvneshwar 0 *(1b)*, Tilak Varma b Bhuvneshwar 57 *(42b, 3x4, 2x6)*, Will Jacks c Bethell b Shepherd 10 *(10b, 1x4)*, Raj Bawa c Patidar b Hazlewood 16 *(14b, 1x4)*, Corbin Bosch (not out) 5 *(5b)*, Deepak Chahar (not out) 1 *(2b)*; Extras (lb-3, w-3): 6; Total (for seven wkts. in 20 overs): 166.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-4 (Rickelton, 0.6 overs), 2-28 (Rohit, 2.5), 3-28 (Suryakumar, 2.6), 4-110 (Naman, 12.3), 5-132 (Jacks, 15.2), 6-155 (Tilak, 17.6), 7-161 (Bawa, 18.6).

RCB BOWLING
Bhuvneshwar 4-0-23-4, Hazlewood 4-0-33-1, Rasikh 4-0-42-1, Shepherd 3-0-18-1, Krunal 3-0-26-0, Suyash 2-0-21-0.

ROYAL CHALLENGERS
Jacob Bethell c Tilak b Bosch 26 *(27b, 2x4)*, Virat Kohli c Bawa b Chahar 0 *(1b)*, Devdutt Padikkal **(Impact Player for Suyash)** c Rickelton b Chahar 12 *(11b, 1x4, 1x6)*, Rajat Patidar c Rickelton b Bosch 8 *(8b, 1x4)*, Krunal Pandya c Tilak b Ghazanfar 73 *(46b, 4x4, 5x6)*, Jitesh Sharma c Naman b Bosch 18 *(12b, 1x4, 2x6)*, Tim David c Rickelton b Bosch 0 *(1b)*, Romario Shepherd c Tilak b Bawa 4 *(11b)*, Rasikh Salam (not out) 3 *(2b)*, Bhuvneshwar Kumar (not out) 7 *(2b, 1x6)*; Extras (lb-4, nb-1, w-11): 16; Total (for eight wkts. in 20 overs): 167.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-10 (Kohli, 0.4), 2-24 (Padikkal, 2.6), 3-39 (Patidar, 5.1), 4-94 (Bethell, 12.1), 5-131 (Jitesh, 15.5), 6-131 (David, 15.6), 7-149 (Krunal, 17.6), 8-157 (Shepherd, 19.3).

MUMBAI INDIANS BOWLING
Chahar 4-0-33-2, Bumrah 4-0-20-0, Bosch 4-1-26-4, Jacks 2-0-13-0, Ghazanfar 3-0-32-1, Bawa 3-0-39-1.

Toss: RCB; **PoM:** Bhuvneshwar.
RCB won by two wickets off the final delivery.

Next assignment

RCB: May 13 vs. KKR Raipur, 7.30 p.m.

MI: May 14 vs. PBKS Dharamshala, 7.30 p.m.

Points table

	M	W	L	NR	PTS	NRR
Royal Challengers	11	**7**	4	0	**14**	1.103
Sunrisers Hyderabad	11	**7**	4	0	**14**	0.737
Gujarat Titans	11	**7**	4	0	**14**	0.228
Punjab Kings	10	**6**	3	1	**13**	0.571
Chennai Super Kings	11	**6**	5	0	**12**	0.185
Rajasthan Royals	11	**6**	5	0	**12**	0.082
Kolkata Knight Riders	10	**4**	5	1	**9**	-0.169
Delhi Capitals	11	**4**	7	0	**8**	-1.154
Mumbai Indians (E)	11	**3**	8	0	**6**	-0.585
Lucknow Super Giants (E)	11	**3**	8	0	**6**	-0.907

E: Eliminated

Urvil's stunning onslaught takes CSK past LSG despite a late scare

Tarun Shastry
CHENNAI

On a day when the sound of the whistle reverberated across the city and beyond, striking an unmistakable chord with the masses, hope and belief found renewed expression at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium.

At the heart of it stood Urvil Patel, whose breathtaking assault lit up the arena as Chennai Super Kings got past Lucknow Super Giants in a crucial IPL 2026 clash on Sunday.

Urvil's stupendous knock (65, 23b, 2x4, 8x6) powered CSK to a five-wicket victory as the host chased down a formidable target of 204 despite a late scare.

The foundation was laid by openers Sanju Samson (28, 14b, 3x4, 2x6) and skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad (42, 28b, 3x4, 2x6), who came out with intent and raced to 35 without loss in the first three overs.

Boundaries flowed freely before spinner Digvesh Rathi struck by castling Samson, though not before the batter had smashed him for a boundary and a towering six.

What followed, however, was sheer carnage.

The turning point arrived in the fifth over, bowled by Avesh Khan. Ruturaj set the tone with a massive hit over long-on before Urvil completely seized control, dismantling the attack with three monstrous sixes as 25 runs came off the over.

Digvesh was not spared in the next either. Urvil tore into the leggie, launching three more deliveries into the stands and drilling another through extra cover for four as CSK plundered another 25-run over to storm to 97 for one at the end of the PowerPlay.

Mohammed Shami was the next to bear the brunt of Urvil's fearless strokeplay as the batter raced to a stunning half-century – the joint-fastest in IPL history – while the host surged past the 100-run mark in just the seventh over.

Against the run of play, left-arm spinner Shahbaz Ahmed provided brief respite in the 10th over, dismissing Urvil to a thunderous ovation from a packed Chepauk crowd.

He then accounted for the well-set Ruturaj, but the damage had already been done.

Earlier, Josh Inglis produced a sensational blitz (85, 33b, 10x4, 6x6) to lay a strong platform. However, Jamie Overton pulled things back with figures of three for 36.

Late contributions from Shahbaz (43 n.o., 25b, 3x4, 3x6) and Himmat Singh (17, 12b, 1x4, 1x6) lifted LSG to 203 for eight.

But on a memorable night at Chepauk, it was Urvil's bat that whistled the loudest.

Standing tall: Urvil's sensational hitting put CSK on the ascendancy. R. RAGU

SCOREBOARD

LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS
Josh Inglis c Samson b Overton 85 *(33b, 10x4, 6x6)*, Mitchell Marsh c Brevis b Kamboj 10 *(10b, 1x6)*, Nicholas Pooran c sub (Sarfaraz) b Noor 1 *(3b)*, Rishabh Pant b Overton 15 *(12b, 2x4)*, Aiden Markram run out 6 *(7b)*, Akshat Raghuwanshi c Urvil b Overton 18 *(18b, 1x4)*, Shahbaz Ahmed (not out) 43 *(25b, 3x4, 3x6)*, Himmat Singh b Kamboj 17 *(12b, 1x4, 1x6)*, Mohammed Shami run out 0 *(1b)*, Avesh Khan **(Impact Player for Inglis)** (not out) 0 *(0b)*; Extras (lb-2, nb-1, w-5): 8; Total (for eight wkts. in 20 overs): 203.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-77 (Marsh, 5.1 overs), 2-92 (Pooran, 6.2), 3-112 (Inglis, 9.1), 4-115 (Pant, 9.4), 5-130 (Markram, 12.1), 6-147 (Akshat, 14.2), 7-197 (Himmat, 19.4), 8-197 (Shami, 19.5).

SUPER KINGS BOWLING
Akeal 4-0-49-0, Mukesh 4-0-45-0, Kamboj 4-0-47-2, Noor 4-0-24-1, Overton 4-0-36-3.

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS
Sanju Samson b Digvesh 28 *(14b, 3x4, 2x6)*, Ruturaj Gaikwad b Shahbaz 42 *(28b, 3x4, 2x6)*, Urvil Patel c Avesh b Shahbaz 65 *(23b, 2x4, 8x6)*, Kartik Sharma c Akshat b Avesh 20 *(20b, 1x4)*, Dewald Brevis b Digvesh 10 *(12b, 1x4)*, Shivam Dube (not out) 15 *(7b, 2x6)*, Prashant Veer **(Impact Player for Mukesh)** (not out) 17 *(12b, 2x6)*; Extras (lb-2, w-9): 11; Total (for five wkts. in 19.2 overs): 208.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-45 (Samson, 3.4), 2-126 (Urvil, 9.2), 3-149 (Ruturaj, 12.5), 4-169 (Brevis, 15.6), 5-169 (Kartik, 16.1).

SUPER GIANTS BOWLING
Shami 4-0-37-0, Prince 4-0-36-0, Digvesh 4-0-45-2, Avesh 4-0-44-1, Shahbaz 3-0-30-2, Markram 0.2-0-14-0.

Toss: CSK; **PoM:** Overton.
Super Kings won by five wickets with four balls to spare.

Next assignment

May 15: LSG vs. CSK Lucknow, 7.30 p.m.

Kings lock horns with beleaguered Capitals

S. Shrivathsan
DHARAMSHALA

After displaying an air of invincibility during the first half of its trek to Mount IPL 2026, Punjab Kings has lost its way to a degree. Following three back-to-back defeats, PBKS, presently navigating a rocky road, is on the hunt to get back on the right path.

The current setting - where the playoff challengers are going the extra mile - means that Shreyas Iyer and Co. still have acres to cover in the rest of the journey.

Confronting the top-two aspirant next is a beleaguered Delhi Capitals side that has been on a directionless travel for a while now.

The picturesque HPCA Stadium, PBKS' second home, will serve as the battlefield for the clash of the out-of-form northern outfits on Monday. With the Dharamshala deck likely to be a heaven for the willow-wielders, both sets of batters will be expected to rack up a mountain of runs.

Having been at the peak of their prowess during the seven-game unbeaten streak, 'PowerPlay'ers Priyansh Arya and Prabhsimran Singh are experiencing a blip.

Key match-up

While the high-intent openers will be itching to get back among the runs, they may have to deal with the pedigree of pacers Mitchell Starc and Lungi Ngidi. How Priyansh and Prabhsimran handle the moving ball and well-directed short deliveries could prove vital.

After the travails against Gujarat Titans and Sunrisers Hyderabad, not losing a cluster of wickets in the opening six overs will be high on the batting department's agenda. But the presence of latest centurion Cooper Connolly and Shreyas must provide it assurance.

For Capitals, it is about keeping a sliver of playoff hope alive. Down on morale, DC can take some confidence from the assault it launched on the hapless PBKS bowling attack last time around. The Axar Patel-led team would not mind a repeat of that boundary-filled show. It will, however, aim to reverse the result.

Think-tank: Shreyas and Ponting would hope that their side can arrest the slide. R.V. MOORTHY

Today's match

PUNJAB KINGS vs DELHI CAPITALS

Dharamshala, 7.30 p.m.

HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played: **35**
PBKS **18** | DC **17**

PREVIOUS MEETING
PBKS won by six wickets, 2026

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 & JIOHOTSTAR

Arsenal survives VAR drama

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Arsenal moved closer to the Premier League title in controversial fashion as a hugely contentious decision to disallow Callum Wilson's stoppage-time goal handed the leader a vital 1-0 win against West Ham on Sunday.

Leandro Trossard struck with a deflected effort seven minutes from full-time before West Ham was denied a last-gasp equaliser for Pablo's foul on Gunners keeper David Raya, whose fumble was fired home by Wilson.

Pablo had his arm across Raya's chest in the incident but the contact was minimal, with West Ham also claiming fouls by Declan Rice and Trossard at the same moment.

The results: Premier League: Crystal Palace 2 (Sarr 34, Mateta 77) drew with Everton 2 (Tarkowski 6, Beto 47); Burnley 2 (Anthony 8, Flemming 58) drew with Aston Villa 2 (Barkley 42, Watkins 56).
Nottingham Forest 1 (Anderson 88) drew with Newcastle 1 (Barnes 74); West Ham 0 lost to Arsenal 1 (Trossard 83).
Serie A: Verona 0 lost to Como 1 (Douvikas 71).

Pumped up: Trossard is over the moon after his strike deflected in off a defender for Arsenal's winner. AFP

INBRIEF

Jorge Martin clinches French Grand Prix

Jorge Martin overtook MotoGP championship leader Marco Bezzecchi on the penultimate lap of the French Grand Prix to secure victory on Sunday. Italian rider Bezzecchi seemed to be heading for his fourth win of a season which is only five races old when Spaniard Martin nipped in front of him on the 26th lap.

Neeru and Vivaan win trap mixed team bronze

Neeru Dhanda and Vivaan Kapoor claimed a bronze in the trap mixed team event as India ended its campaign at the ISSF World Cup Shotgun on a positive note in Almaty on Sunday. Neeru and Vivaan shot 24 out of the first 30 targets in the final and despite matching the top Italian pair of Silvana Stanco and Mauro De Filippis, they had to miss out on a better medal, having finished second to the silver winning Italians in qualification. Taiwan's Kun-Pi Yang and Wan-Yu Liu won a second World Cup gold with a World record score of 36 in the final.

Mehidy claims five wickets as Bangladesh gains slender lead

Off-spinner Mehidy Hasan claimed five wickets as Bangladesh regained control of the first Test against Pakistan in Dhaka on Sunday. Mehidy finished with five for 102 to help the host dismiss Pakistan for 386 and take a 27-run first-innings lead on a rain-affected third day. Bangladesh then moved to seven for no loss at close of play.

The scores: Bangladesh 413 in 117.1 overs & 7/0 in 1.5 overs vs. Pakistan 386 in 100.3 overs (Awais 103, Imam 45, Fazal 60, Agha 58, Rizwan 59, Mehidy 5/102).

Six Indian under-15 boys enter finals in Asian boxing

Indian boys delivered a solid performance in the under-15 semifinals at the Asian Boxing Championships in Tashkent, with six advancing to the finals and seven finishing with bronze.

The results: U-16 (semifinals): 33kg: Yash Kumar bt Kiyan Iqbal (UAE) 5:0; **35kg:** Zhaksylyk Yermekuly (Kaz) bt Rohit Pothina 5:0; **37kg:** Sastha Vasanth Ashok Kumar bt Aziretali Sanzharbekov (Kgz) RSC second round; **40kg:** Jasurbek Khayrullaev (Uzb) bt Nitin 3:2; **43kg:** Samir Bohra bt Adizbek Ilkhombekov (Uzb) 4:1; **46kg:** Mansur Abdukhamitov (Uzb) bt Nongpokngamba Meitei Oina 3:2; **49kg:** Sardor Omonboev (Uzb) bt Parshant 5:0; **52kg:** Sudarsan Vasudeva Chandak bt Amirmahdi Shad (IRI) RSC first round; **55kg:** Nurislam Baktubayev (Kaz) bt Harshvardhan Jeena 5:0; **58kg:** Mohd Yasser bt Seyyedariyamohammad Mousa (IRI) 5:0; **64kg:** Hyeonseok Yoo (Kor) bt Dev 4:1; **67kg:** Ronak Parag Lokhande bt Mukhammadali Berdikulov (Kgz) RSC first round; **70+kg:** Ibrokhim Mirzakarimov (Uzb) bt Sushant Jayani RSC first round.

Galatasaray crowned Turkish champion again

Galatasaray secured its fourth consecutive Turkish league title on Saturday after a 4-2 home win over Antalyaspor. The club is four points ahead of Fenerbahce with one match remaining.

Parth and Daksh step up with the bat for Young Friends

Half-centuries from Parth Kumar Bali and Daksh Drall helped Young Friends Cricket Club defeat SB Youth Cricket Club by 153 runs in the 51st all-India Tyagmurthi Goswami Ganesh Dutt memorial cricket tournament at S.G.T.B. Khalsa College ground in New Delhi on Sunday.

The scores: Young Friends 308/7 in 40 overs (Parth Kumar Bali 87, Daksh Drall 70, Deep Thakur 45, Yajurr Gupta 3/50) bt SB Youth 155 in 31.2 overs (Karn Kashyap 39, Kartikey Naudiyal 30, Deep Thakur 4/15).

LIVE TELECAST

Bangladesh vs Pakistan: 1st Test, day 4, FanCode, 9.30 a.m.
IFL: Sony Sports Ten 5 & LIV, 6.30 p.m.
IPL: Star Sports 1 & JioHotstar, 7.30 p.m.
ISL: Sony Sports Ten 2 & FanCode, 7.30 p.m.

Sreeshankar leaps to gold with a creditable 8.04m

Tejas, returning from an ankle injury, clocks the fastest time in 110m hurdles in his first domestic meet of the season; Adarsh takes the honours in the high jump with an effort of 2.27m

ATHLETICS

K. Keerthivasan
CHENNAI

Having already breached the qualification marks for the forthcoming 2026 Commonwealth Games and Asian Games, the Indian Athletics Series-6 served as a platform for Murali Sreeshankar to assess his preparedness for the big events.

At the Nehru Stadium here on Sunday, the 27-year-old from Kerala produced a creditable 8.04m effort in his fourth attempt to clinch gold, ahead of P. David, who managed 7.77m in his sixth and final attempt.

Earlier, Tejas Shirse, the country's top 110m hurdler and National record holder, clocked the fastest time in his first domestic meet of the season, winning in 13.43 seconds – just 0.02 seconds shy of his National mark.

Both Tejas and M. Krishik (13.44) of Reliance cleared the qualification mark for the Asian Games.

Tejas, recovering from an ankle injury, was pleased with his performance. "I had an ankle injury this January while training. I think I fought my hardest battle during this injury because I went to Europe (Poland) and my performance was really bad as I was competing with the injury.

"I trained for just three weeks and to clock 13.43 in that time is a really great achievement for me," he said.

Late in the evening, 24-year-old Adarsh Ram of Tamil Nadu cleared 2.27m while winning the men's high jump before attempting 2.30m in a bid to surpass the National record of 2.29m held by Tejaswin Shankar.

However, he failed to clear the height in all three attempts.

Proving a point: Tejas produced a fantastic effort in the high hurdles. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The results (winners):
Men: 100m: A. Krishna Prakash (Ker) 10.82s; **B:** Rohan Ghosh (WB) 10.59; **C:** B. Karan (TN) 10.64; **D:** P. Sandosh (TN) 10.61; **E:** R. Manav (Rlys) 10.49; **F:** Eeshan Mendis (Mah) 10.77; **G:** Sadanand Kumar (Jhr) 10.65; **H:** Eugene Shelton (TN) 10.70; **I:** Mahendra Santa (Odi) 10.63; **J:** Mohamed Haonif (TN) 10.61; **K:** Pranav Pramod Gurav (Rel) 10.32.

110m hurdles: A. Aravinth Arumugam (TN) 14.20s; **B:** Dhanush Adithan (Rlys) 14.30; **C:** Rathish Pan (Rel) 14.10; **D:** Tejas Shirse (Rel) 13.43.

Javelin: Arshdeep Singh (Pun) 77.04.

400m hurdles: A: Murad Simran (Guj) 50.98s; **B:** Pranam Devendra S (Kar) 53.42s; **C:** Aryan Prajwal Kashyap (JSW) 51.95s; **D:** Subhas Das (Navy) 50.93; **E:** T. Santhosh Kumar (NCOE, Thiruvanthapuram) 49.47.

5000m: Abhishek Pal (Rlys) 13:57.01; **long jump:** Murali Sreeshankar (Ker) 8.04m; **shot put:** S. Kumaran (TN) 17.66m.

Women: 100m: A: S. Akshaya (TN) 12.01s; **B:** Mariya Nivetha P Part (TN) 12.06; **C:** Prakruthi Roopa Rao (Kar) 12.07; **D:** Kiruthika (TN) 12.04; **E:** Srabani Nanda (Odi) 11.67; **F:** Giridharan Ravikumar (TN) 11.51.

400m hurdles: A: A. Shravani Bhate (Kar) 1:02.78s; **B:** Shravani Sachin (Mah) 59.99; **C:** Lovely Rajput (UP) 1:01.34; **D:** R. Anu (Rel) 56.95.

5000m: Aarti Pawara (Mah) 17:06.69; **long jump:** A. Sherin (JSW) 6.07m; **high jump:** Abhinaya Shetty (JSW) 1.71m; **discus:** Nidhi Rani (Har) 58.82m.

Pole vault: Baranica Elangovan (TN) 4.10m; **shot put:** Krishna Jayasankar (TN)) 16.96m; **triple jump:** I. Ilango (TN) 13.52m.

Memorable win: Ankita, Deepika and Kumkum were at their best. WORLD ARCHERY

Indian women stun China for recurve gold

ARCHERY

Sports Bureau

The Indian trio of Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat and Kumkum Mohod upstaged World Cup Stage-1 champion and host China, consisting of Zhu Jingyi, Huang Yuwei and Yu Qi, 5-4 in the final to claim the recurve women's team gold medal at the Archery World Cup Stage-2 in Shanghai on Sunday.

Riding on their inspiring 5-1 upset win over 10-time Olympic champion Korea in the semifinals, the team clinched a gold after five years. Both Deepika and Ankita were part of the team (also including Komalika Bari) that had beaten Mexico to secure the top honour at Guatemala City in 2021.

India, comprising two Olympians and a 17-year-old rookie (Kumkum), won the first set before China caught up and the two teams were eventually tied 4-4. In the shoot-off, the Chinese scored 8, 9, 9 and the Indians responded with 9, X, 9 to record a 28-26 win and script a morale-boosting performance ahead of the Asian Games.

Deepika, who had picked up an individual bronze at the same venue last year, said she successfully overcame a distraction in the final.

"I did not shoot well then (Shanghai 2025). I am heading in a good direction," Deepika told World Archery.

In the women's recurve individual event, Simranjeet Kaur, who achieved her career-best performance by reaching the semifinals, lost to Korean Olympic medallist Kang Chaeyoung 0-6 in the last-four and another Korean Jang Minhee 4-6 in the bronze medal match.

Dominant Kerala Blasters rolls past Mohammedan SC

ISL

M.R. Praveen Chandran
KOCHI

Kerala Blasters extended its unbeaten run to five matches with a dominant 3-1 win over Mohammedan Sporting Club in the India Super League (ISL) football at the Jawaharlal Nehru International stadium here on Sunday.

After conceding the lead against run of play in the first half, Blasters bounced back through goals from Francisco Feuillasier (44), Victor Bertomeu (59) and substitute S.M. Sreekuttan (74) to take full points.

Roy Mahitosh stunned Blasters with a 25-yard piledriver to give Mohammedan the short-lived lead in the 42nd minute.

With the win, Blasters took its points tally to 14 from 12 matches and is placed eighth in the table.

Mohammedan's three match unbeaten streak ended with this loss and it remains at the bottom of the table with three points.

Blasters dominated Mohammedan in the first half largely through the ingenuity shown by Kevin Yoke on the left flank. Mohammedan survived through captain Padam Chettri's brilliance under the bar. Chettri made three good saves to thwart Blasters' strikers in the first half.

On target: Blasters' Bertomeu scores the second goal against Mohammedan. THULASI KAKKAT

Searing run

However, Mohammedan scored against the run of play when Mahitosh dispossessed Ferddy Lallamawa and made a searing run and ended it with a long ranger which brushed the near post and went in.

Blasters drew level within two minutes when Yoke threaded a pass between three defenders for Francisco to score.

Bertomeu headed Blasters ahead in the 59th minute through a precise centre from Yoke.

Sreekuttan looked ungainly when he headed a cross from Yoke wide in the 72minute.

However, Sreekuttan made amends when he chipped the ball in from a Bertomeu's cross to complete the tally in the 74th minute.

The results: Kerala Blasters 3 (Feuillasier 44, Bertomeu 59, Sreekuttan 74) bt Mohammedan SC 1 (Mahitosh 42).

At Guwahati: NorthEast United 4 (Jairo 5, 45+1, Renthlei og-70, Lalbiakdika 90) bt Chennaiyin 1 (Renthlei 81).

Punia makes a strong comeback by reaching 92kg freestyle final

WRESTLING

Y.B. Sarangi
NANDINI NAGAR (U.P.)

An 86kg silver medallist at the 2019 World championships and 2022 Asian Games, Deepak Punia made a strong comeback by reaching the 92kg freestyle final on the opening day of the Senior Open Ranking wrestling tournament on the Nandini Nagar Mahavidyalaya campus here on Sunday.

Looking in good shape, Punia – who was stranded at the Dubai International Airport with Sujeet Kalkal due to severe flooding in April 2024 and could not make it to the Asian Olympic qualifier in Bishkek – gave dominating performances to beat Rahul 10-0, Sachin Kumar 11-0, Abhishek (who withdrew due to an injury), Rahul Hooda 'by fall' and Raja 11-0 to set up a title clash with Vansh.

The biggest upset of the day happened when former Asian bronze medallist and Asian under-23 champion 24-year-old Anirudh Kumar lost to a lesser known Rohit in a 125kg round of 16 bout. Anirudh got past Harsh and Pushpender before suffering an 8-4 defeat. Rohit fell to Shubham 3-4 in the quarterfinal, ending Anirudh's chances of making it to the repechage round and fighting for a bronze.

In fine fettle: Punia on way to winning his quarterfinal bout against Statemate Hooda. SANDEEP SAXENA

Incidentally, the tournament, which was scheduled to be held in 2023 but was stopped because of the wrestlers' protest, returned to the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) calendar at the same venue.

The playing arena, which was supposed to attract all the attention because of Vinesh Phogat's comeback from retirement before the ace wrestler was considered ineligible, received a massive number of entries as wrestlers participating here stand to get a chance to participate in World championships and Commonwealth championships selection trials.

Following a delayed start of two hours, altogether 593 freestyle wrestlers from 10 weight categories went through their bouts through the day and late into the evening before the federation decided to conduct bouts up to semifinals and hold the medal matches on Monday morning.

Efficacy claims the feature event

RACING

BENGALURU: S. Attaollahi-trained Efficacy (Shreyas S Up) won the Capricorn Stud Plate (1,300m), the feature event of the races held here on Sunday (May 10). The winner is owned by Mr. Daulat Chhabria, Mr. Maloji Baburao Bhosale & M/S. A.G. Bloodstock LLP.

THE RESULTS:

1. ROYAL CHALLENGE PLATE (1,500M): MAKOTO (M. Rajesh K) 1, Agape (Akshay K) 2, Dr Colchester (Arul J.H) 3 and Double Scotch (Jagadeesh) 4. 5, 5-1/2 and 1-1/4. 1m, 34.87s. ₹25 (w), 11, 10 and 46 (p), SHP: 25, THP: 133, FP: 39, Q: 19, Trinella: 1,269/960, Exacta: 4,008/890. Favourite: Agape. Owner: Mr. Babu Krishna Kishore. Trainer: V. Narayana Gowda.

2. RAZEEN PLATE (DIV. II), 1,400M: REFINED AGGRESSION (Trevor) 1, Dr Ash (M. Rajesh K) 2, Agrador (Antony) 3 and My Solitaire (Jagadeesh) 4. 10-1/2, 4 and 8-3/4. 1m, 25.44s. ₹13 (w), 11, 15 and 12 (p), SHP: 55, THP: 47, FP: 119, Q: 113, Trinella: 136/29, Exacta: 1,357/953. Favourite: Refined Aggression. Owners: M/s. Blazing Saddles(PF), Mr. K. Manoj Kumar & Manjri Horse Breeders' Farm Pvt Ltd. Trainer: Prasanna Kumar.

3. AGUMBE PLATE (1,200M): SENOR CHERIE (Antony) 1, True Punch (Suraj) 2, Felisa (Pavan) 3 and La Mcqueen (Aleemuddin) 4. Not run: Silicon Star. 3, 3/4 and Shd. 1m, 13.47s. ₹32 (w), 16, 17 and 14 (p), SHP: 51, THP: 47, FP: 109, Q: 52, Trinella: 244/105, Exacta: 4,095/1,504. Favourite: Senor Cherie. Owner: M/S. Cherie Sports Pvt Ltd. Trainer: Faraz Arshad.

4. MOTHER'S DAY TROPHY (1,500M): AQUASTIC (Yash) 1, Sunshine (Suraj) 2, Maana (Antony) 3 and Storm Shadow (Neeraj) 4. 3-1/2, 3/4 and Lnk. 1m, 31.19s. ₹140 (w), 23, 10 and 15 (p), SHP: 38, THP: 39, FP: 310, Q: 49, Trinella: 463/229, Exacta: 2,448/1,648. Favourite: Sunshine. Owner: Mr. S. Pathy. Trainer: S. Attaoliahi.

5. CAPRICORN STUD PLATE (1,300M): EFFICACY (Shreyas S) 1, Lux Aeterna (Trevor) 2, Promiseofthefuture (Pavan) 3 and Victoria Doresaani (L.A. Rozario) 4. 4-1/4, 3/4 and 2. 1m, 18.90s. ₹23 (w), 13, 10 and 10 (p), SHP: 30, THP: 39, FP: 80, Q: 44, Trinella: 118/45, Exacta: 497/386. Favourite: Promiseofthefuture. Owners: Mr. Daulat Chhabria, Mr. Maloji Baburao Bhosale & M/S. A.G. Bloodstock LLP. Trainer: S. Attaollahi.

6. RAZEEN PLATE (DIV. I), 1,400M: PRINCE OF WALES (Antony) 1, Glorious Strides (Darshan) 2, Valiant Stream (Akshay K) 3 and El Rey (Trevor) 4. Not run: Unforgettable Star. Hd, 5 and 9. 1m, 25.30. ₹37 (w), 11, 12 and 11 (p), SHP: 37, THP: 46, FP: 316, Q: 116, Trinella: 271/77, Exacta: 550/281. Favourite: Valiant Stream. Owner: M/s. Rapar Galloping Stars LLP rep. by Mr. Rajendran. Trainer: Prasanna Kumar.

Jackpot: ₹10,049; Runner-up: 946; Mini Jackpot: 8,090; Treble (i): 174; (ii): 1,861.

Gukesh finishes sixth; Niemann pips Caruana to the title

CHESS

Press Trust of India
WARSAW

World champion D. Gukesh had to be content with a sixth-place finish while Hans Moke Niemann of the United States kept his nerve towards the end to win the Super rapid and blitz, a part of the Grand Chess Tour.

Gukesh ended his stint with 17 points out of a possible 36 that included nine rapid and 18 blitz games. With each rapid game win worth two and blitz one point, Gukesh scored nine points in rapid and eight points in blitz.

Niemann.

Gukesh's three victories on the last day came against Wesley So of United States, Niemann and Duda while most notable of his four losses was against Sindarov who won the personal battle against the Indian by 2-1 margin out of the three games played between them here.

Niemann won the last two rounds to finish on 22.5 points, enough to clinch the trophy as well as the first prize of $50,000. In the final round, Niemann beat Radoslav Wojtaszek of Poland.

Final standings: 1. Hans Moke Niemann (22.5); 2. Fabiano Caruana (22); 3. Wesley So (21); 4. Vladimir Fedoseev (18); 5. Firouzja Alireza (17.5); 6. D. Gukesh (17); 7-9. Duda Jan-Krzystzof, Javokhir Sindarov; Maxime Vachier-Lagrave 16.5 each; 10. Radoslav Wojtaszek (12.5).

How three daughters were shaped by their mothers' sacrifices

For Lalremsiami, Udita Duhan and Jyoti, their mothers weren't merely parents; they were their first fans and fiercest defenders who protected fragile dreams from a world of 'shoulds' and 'coulds'

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Anirudh Velamuri

While every athlete fights two battles - one on the field and one beyond it - the latter is often far harder for women athletes in India. Here, a girl choosing sport is frequently viewed as an act of rebellion long before it is recognised as ambition.

And before the applause, selections, and the national jersey, there is often a mother standing quietly in the background - protecting fragile dreams from judgment and carrying the emotional weight of a future few others were willing to believe in. For many women athletes, a mother is not merely a parent; she is the first fan, fiercest defender, and the heartbeat behind every victory.

She is also sometimes the only parent.

In the heart of a nation where a daughter's future is often measured by the grace of her domesticity rather than the strength of her stride, their mothers became quiet revolutionaries. They were the silent vanguard, absorbing the weight of society's expectations - the endless "shoulds" - so their daughters could pursue the possibilities of "could."

On the occasion of Mother's Day this year (May 10), *The Hindu* spoke with Lalremsiami, Udita Duhan, and Jyoti - three hockey players who are all trailblazers in their own way. But this time, the conversations were less about what they achieved with a hockey stick in hand and more about the support system that allowed them to pick it up in the first place.

This is the story of three daughters, three mothers, and the quiet strength that shaped champions.

Defying circumstance

Udita's love for sport came from her father, Jasbir Singh, a policeman who loved playing handball. But the fire that eventually turned her into the defensive lynchpin of the Indian hockey team truly ignited only after his passing.

"When I was in school, handball coaches would come for a few days. At the same time, hockey practice used to happen, where boys and girls used to play. I used to like watching them running. I got bored when my coaches didn't come, so I went and talked to my mom about shifting to play hockey," she recalls.

"My journey truly started after my father passed away. I had always jokingly told him that when I become an international player and bring medals for India, then I will come to our town as the Deputy Superintendent of Police and get him to salute me."

"When my father died, I didn't get to meet him one last time. When I went home and saw my mother for the first time, she hugged me and said: 'Now I am your father as well as your mother.'"

> No one else saw how much she struggled. As a single mother, she had to bear a lot of things for her children. She had to hear a lot from outside if her kids got up to any nonsense
> **JYOTHI**

Those words became a promise. And Geetha Devi spent the years that followed living up to every syllable of it.

What followed was not merely the rise of an athlete, but the survival of a dream that could easily have been extinguished.

"After my father passed, people asked my mother what the kids would get by playing sports when they did not have a father. I was 16 or 17 years old then and they would talk about me getting married in a few years etc."

Udita's mother refused to surrender her daughter's future to fear, convention, or gossip.

"She is a strong pillar in my life, she took care of all that and told everyone that she knew what was best for us. That is the biggest motivation and strength for me. That was a turning point."

Today, the bond between mother and daughter thankfully doesn't bear the scars of everything they survived together.

"When my father was alive, I had a regular relationship with my mother. I used to get beaten, too! But after he passed, it has become a lot friendlier. We share everything with each other, take each other's advice on things and talk a lot. She is like my proper best friend now."

Proudest moment

Udita has since won numerous medals for India - from the Asian Champions Trophy and Asia Cup to the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games. Yet, for all the podium finishes and national celebrations, her proudest moment did not arrive under stadium lights.

"In 2018, when I won the (Asian Games) silver medal with India, I came back home and the first thing I did was put the medal around my mother. And after that, I took her to our village. I saw the faces of my relatives, who then gave her the respect she never got. That remains my proudest moment."

"I also promised my mother then that... we were living on rent then, I didn't have place at home for all my relatives to sit. I had tears in my eyes as did my mother. I promised her that I would get her a big house and I have kept my word too."

Even years later, when setbacks threatened to break her spirit, it was her mother who held the pieces together. In 2024, after India failed to qualify for the Olympics and injuries relentlessly chipped away at her confidence, Udita found herself standing on the verge of walking away from hockey altogether.

"My body was not working. I kept getting injured, which irritated me. I wanted to go to the Olympics, but it didn't happen. I wanted a medal in the Asia Cup, but it did not happen. I wanted a gold medal in the Asian Games, but it did not happen. She motivated me a lot at that time, thankfully, and helped me stay with the sport."

And perhaps that is why Udita understands, with brutal honesty, how fragile destiny can be.

"If she had listened to our relatives, I would've been married and living in a village with my kids. I would've been working as a housewife or had some small job."

Instead, one woman's decision to pick courage over conformity gave India a prolific matchwinner.

Confidant and cheerleader

"She has never seen me play live, she has only seen me on TV. Sometimes, even that is not possible, as not everything is televised in hockey," Lalremsiami says about her mother Lalzarmawii.

What began as a mother trying to understand her daughter's passion slowly evolved into someone who now experiences every match as though she were out there on the field herself.

"When she watches a match that we lost, she can't eat properly as she is very stressed. She often tells me how her body pains after watching a game and that she can't walk properly, even though she hasn't done anything."

For Lalzarmawii, hockey became an emotional extension of the affection she has for her daughter. She never tried to coach Lalremsiami tactically, but there were moments when a mother's fear overpowered everything else.

"Since I run in Penalty Corners, I get injured a lot. She used to call me and tell me not to go next time because of that. I had to explain to her that it is my role in the team, and that is when she stopped saying it," the 26-year-old explains.

Lalremsiami's rise through the ranks was swift and unmistakable. She was part of the junior team that won silver at the 2018 Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires. That same year, she represented India at the Commonwealth Games and the Women's World Cup, before helping the national side clinch silver at the Asian Games.

In 2019, she received the Asunta Lakra Award for Upcoming Player of the Year (Women - Under 21) from Hockey India - recognition that seemed to signal the beginning of an even brighter future.

Then tragedy arrived without warning.

> Things were very difficult for my mother to manage. She was very emotional and that is when we started talking more
> **LALREMSIAMI**

While representing India at the FIH Series Finals in Hiroshima, Lalremsiami's father, Lalthansanga Hmar Zote, passed away suddenly. She was only 19. She bravely chose to stay back with the team instead of returning home immediately. Life thereafter changed irrevocably.

"Things were very difficult for my mother to manage. She was very emotional and that is when we started talking more."

For Lalremsiami, hockey had never just been about passion. It was also about possibility, about building a future strong enough to support her family financially. Seniors at her academy had spoken about stable jobs in the Railways, about opportunities sport could create, and she clung to those hopes.

Even before the academy, though, there had been her mother quietly nurturing a dream she barely understood.

"Even before I joined the academy, I used to play hockey and practice dribbling when at home. At that time, my mother didn't know anything about hockey, but I found it very sweet that she would take good care of my hockey stick at home. She didn't know what it meant to me, but still, she supported me with all her heart."

Lalremsiami laughs when speaking about the one thing that continues to frustrate her.

"My mom can't sit still, and that irritates me. She has to keep working and working. She can't sit comfortably. Even when she walks, she does it very fast. Always fatafat fatafat (fast fast) in life. But that's her habit; no one can stop her!"

And perhaps that restless energy is precisely what carried their family through its darkest years.

Broken days to unbroken resolve

Jyoti's father, Narender Singh, passed away in a road accident in 2009 when she was barely 10 years old. In that single moment, childhood shifted shape - and the weight of an entire household fell on her mother, Saroj.

"My mother helped me as soon as I started playing hockey. She worked very hard for everything, like shoes and clothes. She made every possible effort to provide me with the best. If I needed something, she would arrange it," Jyoti says, while admitting that they weren't well off financially back then.

There were days when survival itself felt like negotiation. On one such occasion, Saroj broke down in a classroom, unable to pay her daughter's school fees. It was a moment that could have ended many stories. Instead, it altered Jyoti's forever.

Former India captain Pritam Siwach, who witnessed the incident, stepped in and offered young Jyoti a place at her hockey academy in exchange for her schooling. At first, hockey meant little to Jyoti. It was yet another unfamiliar world, another demand on an already stretched life. But something about the sight of girls running freely across the field, sticks slicing through the air and ambition alike, slowly pulled her into a rhythm she didn't yet have words for.

What truly shaped her, however, was not the sport itself, but the woman who carried her through it.

"I have seen my mother walking three to four kilometers just to save ten rupees. She used to wake up at 4 a.m. and sleep at 10 p.m., managing all the work outside and taking care of her three children. I've never seen anyone as hardworking as her."

There was no pause in Saroj's life, no luxury of fatigue. Only motion: relentless, necessary, and uncelebrated.

"No one else saw how much she struggled. As a single mother, she had to bear a lot of things for her children. She had to hear a lot from outside if her kids got up to any nonsense. She still had so much patience. It's something I really liked about her."

That patience became an inheritance. Not in wealth, but in character; in the discipline that would later define Jyothi's own journey. Yet behind every ambition she chased was a simpler, more personal dream: to give her mother rest. To let Saroj finally stop needing to work.

That dream, heartbreakingly, remained incomplete.

"She worked till the very end. We tried to get her to stay at home. She worked even 10 to 15 days before she passed away."

Even now, what lingers is not just loss, but unfinished love.

"She had two wishes. One was to travel and visit holy places, and I used to think that there is a lot of time in life, I can make it happen for her sometime later. Her other desire was to wear gold bangles. She used to say that if all her kids got government jobs, she would take one gold bangle from each and wear them. I forever regret not fulfilling these two wishes."

In the end, Jyoti's story is not only about a hockey player shaped by hardship. It is about a mother who carried an entire world on her shoulders - and a daughter who is still, in many ways, trying to carry her mother's dreams across every field she steps on to.

THE GIST

- On Mother's Day, Indian hockey players Lalremsiami, Udita and Jyoti reflect on the sacrifices their mothers made to keep their sporting dreams alive in the face of grief, financial hardship, and societal pressure – among others
- Udita credits her mother, Geetha Devi, for protecting her hockey career after her father's death, resisting pressure from relatives to let her chase her dreams
- Lalremsiami recounts how her mother, Lalzarmawii, emotionally lived every match with her and quietly supported a sport she initially knew little about, even after tragedy struck their family
- Raised by a single mother, Saroj, who worked until her final days, Jyoti's career was built on her mother's relentless sacrifice
- For these three players, hockey was never just a game; it was a way to provide for their families and validate the "quiet revolutions" their mothers started in small villages and rented homes, and amidst financial difficulties

> After my father passed away, people asked my mother what the kids would get by playing sports when they did not have a father. I was 16 or 17 years old then and they would talk about me getting married in a few years etc. If my mother had listened to our relatives, I would've been married and living in a village with my kids. I would've been working as a housewife or had some small job
> **UDITA DUHAN**

Study reveals how psychedelics dissolve the brain's hierarchy

New neuroimaging research suggests that multiple psychedelics affect the brain in a similar way, revealing something like the 'core signature' of the psychedelic experience

Anirban Mukhopadhyay

For decades, people using psychedelics have described a feeling where the line between 'me' and the world vanishes. While it is clear these drugs cause intense shifts in vision and thought, scientists have struggled to pin down exactly what the brain is doing.

A new multi-centric study published in *Nature Medicine* on April 6 has suggested the answer is not found in a single centre such as the thalamus or amygdala but that it arises from a total reorganisation of how different brain areas talk to one another.

To find a reliable pattern, researchers from Canada, the U.K., and the U.S. pooled 11 global datasets into a library of 500 fMRI scans – images that track changes in blood flow to show which parts of the brain are working. This included 267 people under the influence of LSD, psilocybin, DMT, mescaline or ayahuasca.

Previously, labs used software to clean data skewed by factors such as head moving during scanning, often producing contradictory results. To fix this, the team took the raw data and ran them through a single, common processing system to ensure they were comparing apples to apples for the first time.

The brain is a building with a strict chain of command. At the 'bottom' are frontline workers – the regions that handle raw sensory input. At the 'top' are the parts responsible for abstract thought, memory, and internal sense of self. Usually, these two don't talk to each other directly. UC BERKELEY NEWS/YOUTUBE

Chain of command

The team had to figure out which brain changes were caused by the drugs and which were arbitrary differences between people or MRI machines. Instead of the usual statistical methods, the team used Bayesian modelling. It works like a fair judge who doesn't simply declare guilty or innocent: it says exactly how confident it is and automatically prefers results based on hundreds of volunteers than those based on a handful.

This let the researchers filter out the quirks and focus on the brain patterns that reliably appeared across every drug and lab.

University of Ottawa neuroscientist Sergio Perez-Rosal said "moving away from overconfident 'yes' or 'no' claims towards a more nuanced, uncertainty-aware conclusion represents a rare kind of epistemic humility" – meaning the scientific honesty to admit exactly what we don't know, especially in the fledgling field of consciousness studies.

To understand the findings, it helps to see the brain as a building with a strict chain of command. In our normal, everyday state, the brain has a hierarchy. At the bottom are frontline workers, the brain regions that handle raw sensory input. At the top are the high-level managers – the parts of the brain responsible for abstract thought, memory, and our internal sense of self. Usually, these two groups don't talk to each other directly. They are separated by layers of filters that keep our raw senses from overwhelming our complex thoughts.

'Change how information flows'

The analysis found that psychedelics essentially collapse this ladder, instead increasing cross-talk, i.e. the thinking regions and the sensory regions begin exchanging information directly. And this collapses the neural boundary that usually defines 'you' as distinct from the world.

"What surprised us most is that psychedelics don't just affect specific spots, they change how information flows across the entire brain," Manesh Girn, a neuroscientist at the University of California, San Francisco, and first author of the study, said.

"The usual hierarchy between 'high-level' thought and 'bottom-up' perception starts to dissolve. Inner and outer experience begin to blur."

While in a normal state, the brain operates like a city of segregated neighborhoods, where signals stay in their own lanes and travel only along established routes, psychedelics dissolve these boundaries. Dr. Girn said this is best described as a city where new, direct highways suddenly open up.

"This connects neighborhoods that usually you have to move through multiple smaller neighborhoods to get to," he said. "Now, you can get from A to C without needing to go through B."

> What surprised us most is that psychedelics don't just affect specific spots, they change how information flows across the entire brain
>
> **MANESH GIRN**
> Neuroscientist at the University of California, San Francisco

Out of ruts

While the study offered the most robust map to date of the brain under psychedelics, Michiel van Elk, a cognitive psychologist at Leiden University said scientists must look closer at the tools used to draw it. He said psychedelics act on serotonin receptors, which naturally regulate the tension of blood vessels. Since fMRI tracks blood flow to guess where the brain is active, a drug that changes vessel tension could create a measurement artifact.

Without using other techniques beyond fMRI, he argued, it remains unclear if these new highways are a reliable signature of neuronal firing or simply a side effect of how the drugs affect our blood.

Beyond the laboratory, in clinics, where psychedelics have been gaining traction as a therapeutic intervention, this study provides a vital biological clue for why these drugs might work as medicine. Akanksha Dadlani, a psychiatrist at Stanford University, said the flattened hierarchy found in the scans could explain how psychedelics "loosen the rigid patterns of thought" seen in depression.

"By temporarily breaking down the brain's strict chain of command, the drugs may allow patients to step out of long-held mental ruts."

'Powerful tool'

However, Dr. Dadlani and Professor Perez-Rosal both cautioned that a change in wiring is only a catalyst, not a magic bullet. The drug may physically open a door by rewiring the brain's shortcuts. Prof. Perez-Rosal added that the actual healing will depend on how that experience is integrated into the patient's life afterwards.

Matthew Wall, a neuroscientist and imaging expert at Imperial College London, said the real advance is that by unifying the most data to date, the study has established new baselines for how psychedelics trigger cross-talk.

While the study used healthy volunteers, Dr. Wall said, "identifying this clear neural signature provides a solid foundation for understanding how psychedelic treatments may work in clinical practice."

Ultimately, the study offers something more subtle than clinical promise: a rare glimpse into the mechanics of human awareness. For Dr. Girn, the work shows how psychedelics can be a "powerful perturbational tool" to break down the fundamental structures of experience, letting researchers understand how they are usually maintained.

(Anirban Mukhopadhyay is a geneticist by training and science communicator from New Delhi. anirban.genetics@south.du.ac.in)

THE GIST

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A new multi-centric study published in *Nature Medicine* on April 6 has suggested the answer is not found in a single centre such as the thalamus or amygdala but that it arises from a total reorganisation of how different brain areas talk to one another

The analysis found that psychedelics essentially collapse the hierarchy in the brain and increase cross-talk, i.e. the thinking regions and the sensory regions begin exchanging information directly

BIG SHOT

A drone view shows water buffaloes wading through shallow waters at the Chibayish marshes in Dhi Qar province, Iraq on May 7. After years of drought that left large swathes of Iraq's historic marshes cracked and empty, rising water levels are beginning to revive the wetlands, drawing buffalo herders and fishers back to areas once abandoned. REUTERS

WHAT IS IT?

Homogeneous accretion

Vasudevan Mukunth

For years, scientists debated whether earth formed from the materials available in its neighbourhood or if its ingredients included a significant mix of 'pebbles' from the outer solar system. According to a new study in *Nature Astronomy*, earth fed almost exclusively on materials in the inner solar system.

The authors, from ETH Zürich, analysed 10 sets of chemical 'fingerprints' left by ancient stars on meteorites and rocky materials. Scientists have typically only looked at one or two of these systems at a time, leading to conflicting results.

Some studies have suggested earth was 6% outer solar system material while others claimed it was as high as 40%. To resolve this, the authors of the new study used a statistical method called Bayesian latent factor analysis to examine all 10 fingerprints together across various meteorite groups and planets.

The analysis revealed that earth's composition of isotopes lined up with that of non-carbonaceous bodies in the inner solar system. The alignment held across all 10 fingerprints, suggesting that earth's building blocks were consistent throughout its formation — a process called homogeneous accretion.

The study also predicted that the compositions of Mercury and Venus would follow the same chemical trend, but with more extreme values due to their distance from the sun. The finding could simplify scientists' understanding of how planets form while also suggesting the inner solar system was a distinct, well-mixed reservoir of planets' construction materials.

An artistic rendition of earth forming in the early solar system. IMAGE CREATED WITH CHATGPT

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to **science@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Daily page'