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CONG SLAMS CENTRE FOR NOT REVISING INCOME LIMIT OF OBC CREAMY LAYER



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82 KILLED IN ISRAELI STRIKES ON GAZA AS AID FAILS TO ARRIVE



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BIG WIN AGAINST NAXALS AS TOP-MOST LEADER KILLED

■ Nambala Keshav Rao, considered backbone of the movement, among the 27 Naxals neutralised in an encounter with security forces

AGENCIES
NARAYANPUR (CHHATTISGARH)

Topmost leader and the backbone of the Naxal movement, Nambala Keshav Rao alias Basavaraju, and 26 other dreaded Maoists were killed by security forces in a fierce encounter in the dense forests of Abhujmad in Bastar region of Chhattisgarh on Wednesday.

Police said the gunfight took place in dense forests of Abhujmad on the tri-junction of Narayanpur-Bijapur-Dantewada districts.

The operation was launched two days back following intelligence inputs about the presence of Central Committee and Politburo members of the CPI (Maoists) as well as senior Maad Division cadres and PLGA (Peoples' Liberation Guerrilla Army) members.

So far, bodies of 27 Naxalites and a large number of weapons have been recovered from the spot. A member of the District Reserve Guard (DRG), a unit of Chhattisgarh Police,

was also killed in the action while some others sustained injuries, police said.

Home minister Amit Shah said this was for the first time in three decades of India's battle against Naxalism that a general secretary-ranked leader has been neutralised by the security forces.

"A landmark achievement in the battle to eliminate Naxalism. Today, in an operation in Narayanpur, Chhattisgarh, our security forces have neutralised 27 dreaded Maoists, including Nambala Keshav Rao, alias Basavaraju, the general secretary of CPI-Maoist, the topmost leader, and the backbone of the Naxal movement," Shah wrote on X.

Applauding the "brave security forces and agencies for this major breakthrough", the home minister said he was glad to share that after the completion of Operation Black Forest, 54 Naxalites have been arrested and 84 others have surrendered in Chhattisgarh. ■ P3

OPERATION BLACK FOREST

- Gunfight took place in dense forests of Abhujmad on the tri-junction of Narayanpur-Bijapur-Dantewada districts..
- Basavaraju carried a reward of Rs 1 crore on his head in Chhattisgarh.
- 54 Naxalites have been arrested and 84 others have surrendered in Chhattisgarh, Telangana, and Maharashtra in Operation Black Forest.
- With the latest action, 200 Naxalites have been killed in separate encounters in Chhattisgarh so far this year.



Nambala Keshav Rao

- Of them, 183 were eliminated in the Bastar division, which includes districts of Bijapur, Narayanpur, Dantewada and Kondagaon.



"Proud of our forces for this remarkable success. Our Government is committed to eliminating the menace of Maoism and ensuring a life of peace and progress for our people"
- Narendra Modi Prime Minister

India expels Pak High Commission staffer

Second case in a week

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

India on Wednesday expelled a Pakistani official working at the Pakistan High Commission on charges of involvement in espionage, in the second such expulsion in a week, people familiar with the matter said.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the staffer at the Pakistan mission has been declared "persona non grata" for indulging in activities not in keeping with his official status and that he has been given 24 hours to leave India.

The charge d'affaires of the Pakistan high commission, Saad Warraich, was issued a demarche or a formal diplomatic protest on this issue, it said in a statement.

"Charge d'Affaires, Pakistan High Commission, was issued a demarche to this effect today. He was asked to

strictly ensure that none of the Pakistani diplomats or officials in India misuse their privileges and status in any manner," it said.

Though the MEA did not divulge the specific charges against the Pakistani national, it is learnt that they are related to a case of espionage being probed by the Punjab Police.

New Delhi had last week expelled a Pakistani official for allegedly indulging in espionage.

At least 12 people were arrested in India on charges of espionage in the last two weeks, with the investigations pointing to an alleged Pakistan-linked spy network operating in north India.

Those arrested included Haryana resident Jyoti Malhotra, whose YouTube channel (Travel with JO) and Instagram accounts have 3.77 lakh subscribers and 1.33 lakh followers respectively. Another woman arrested in the case is Punjab resident Guzala.

Pak airspace to remain shut for Indian flights



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has decided to extend the closure of its airspace for Indian flights by another month, a media report said on Wednesday. Pakistan banned its airspace for India last month after steps taken by New Delhi in the wake of the Pahalgam terrorist attack on April 22. The ban was imposed for a month until May 23.

DETAILS ■ P11

Waqf not essential part of Islam: Centre to SC



NEW DELHI: The Central government on Wednesday told the Supreme Court that Waqf is an Islamic concept, it is not an essential part of Islam and Waqf boards discharge secular functions.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, told a bench of Chief Justice of India BR Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih Waqf Board does not touch upon any religious functions.

"Waqf is an Islamic concept. But it is not an essential part of Islam. Waqf is nothing but just charity in Islam," said Mehta, adding that charity is recognised in every religion, and it cannot be regarded as an essential tenet of any religion.

DETAILS ■ P2

SC slams Ashoka Prof, says comments 'dog-whistling'

Grants interim bail

NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH

The Supreme Court on Wednesday granted interim bail to Ali Khan Mahmudabad, a professor at Ashoka University, who has been arrested by the Haryana police for a controversial social media post on Operation Sindoor.

His post was seen as critical of the Indian armed forces, especially of two women officers who addressed the media—Colonel Sofia Qureshi and Wing Commander Vyomika Singh.

The court allowed Mahmudabad to go free on interim bail for now but refused to stay the investigation by the police. Hearing the petition, a bench of Justice Surya Kant and Justice NK Singh questioned the timing and tone of the professor's comments, calling it an attempt to seek "cheap publicity" during a sensitive time for the country.

"This is dog-whistling," the bench observed, referring to the use of double-meaning words that can stir controversy.

The apex court also ordered the formation of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) within 24 hours to probe the matter. This team will include three senior IPS officers, but none of them should be from Haryana or Delhi. One officer must be a woman. The court said this was important to understand the full meaning of the language used in Mahmudabad's post.

While granting bail, the court placed several restrictions on Mahmudabad. He cannot talk about the case in public or on social media, and cannot comment on the recent Pahalgam terror attack or India-Pakistan tensions. The court also ordered him to surrender his passport.

Mahmudabad was arrested on May 18 and sent to 14-day judicial custody by a Haryana court on Tuesday. ■ P3



Border Security Force (BSF) personnel demonstrate how they foiled a major infiltration bid in the Samba sector during Operation Sindoor, in Samba on Wednesday. ANI REPORT ■ P2

Alarm bells ring as drones spotted over Kolkata skies

SUPROTIM MUKHERJEE
KOLKATA

Kolkata Police and the Army are investigating the reports that several drone-like objects were recently spotted hovering over the night sky in Kolkata.

On Wednesday, senior police officials said that they were investigating the matter from all angles, including the possibility of espionage.

At least 8-10 such objects were found flying over the Hastings area, the Vidyasagar Setu and Maidan on Monday night, they said.

The Centre has also sought a report from the West Bengal Government over the incident, a senior bureaucrat



in the state administration said.

"Reports of drone sightings over Kolkata have been received and are currently under investigation. Efforts are underway to ascertain the veracity of this event. Further information will be shared as facts are established. In the interim, the Media is urged to refrain from speculation," Himanshu Tiwari, Public Relations, Eastern Command, MoD said in a statement.

The police sources said that the flying objects, having similarities to the drones, were first spotted by personnel at the Hastings Police Station. "These drone-like-objects were seen flying from the direction of Maheshtala in South 24 Parganas district late on Monday. They hovered over the Hastings area, the Second Hooghly Bridge (Vidyasagar Setu) and Fort William (the army's Eastern Command headquarters)," a police officer said. ■ P3

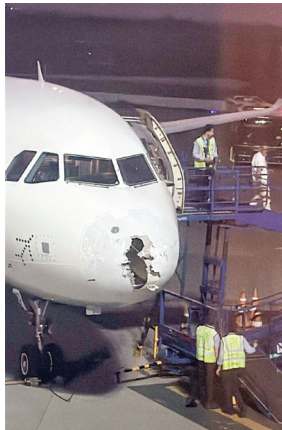
Srinagar-bound IndiGo aircraft caught in hailstorm

Over 200 passengers were on board

TDG NETWORK
SRINAGAR

A Srinagar-bound IndiGo flight from Delhi with more than 220 people on board experienced turbulence on Wednesday due to inclement weather, prompting the pilot to report the "emergency" to air traffic control at Srinagar. The aircraft later landed safely here and has been grounded, officials said.

Videos of the moments of turbulence have emerged on social media in which panic-stricken passengers



IndiGo flight 6E-2142 travelling from Delhi to Srinagar encountered intense turbulence during its journey. (Weather Monitor X)

could be heard making religious supplications as the plane swayed.

One passenger claimed ■ P3

Kannada writer Banu Mushtaq wins Booker Prize

AGENCIES
LONDON

Indian writer, women activist Banu Mushtaq scripted history by winning the International Booker prize for the short story anthology, Heart Lamp in 2025. It is the first short-story collection and a Kannada book to win the honour.

Originally written in Kannada, the stories in Heart Lamp were translated into English by Deepa Bhashti. She was also honoured with the Interna-

tional Booker Prize along with writer Mushtaq.

As per the Booker Prize website, Heart Lamp is a collection of 12 short stories chronicling the everyday lives of women and girls in patriarchal communities in southern India. The collection of 12 stories spans more than 30 years, written between 1990 and 2023.

Mushtaq is the author of six short-story collections, a novel, an essay collection and a poetry collection.

Holding expertise in the Kannada, the writer has



Banu Mushtaq, author of 'Heart Lamp' holds the trophy after winning the International Booker Prize, in London.

won major awards for her literary works, including the Karnataka Sahitya Academy and the Daana Chintamani Attimabbe

awards, as per The Booker Prizes website.

Heart Lamp is the first book-length translation of Mushtaq's work into Eng-

lish. Following her win, Mushtaq becomes the second Indian writer to win the International Booker Prize, while Heart Lamp book is the first winner to be translated from Kannada.

As for Deepa Bhashti, she is a writer and literary translator based in Kodagu, southern India. Her published translations from Kannada include a novel by Kota Shivarama Karanth and a collection of short stories by Kodagina Gouramma, as stated by ■ P3

CONG SLAMS CENTRE FOR NOT REVISING INCOME LIMIT OF OBC CREAMY LAYER

Why no revision for 8 years despite multiple demands, asks Congress MP Manickam Tagore

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Congress MP Manickam Tagore on Wednesday slammed the Centre for not making an upward revision in the income limit to determine the OBC non-creamy layer, which currently remains at Rs 8 lakh.

The Congress MP said that this “neglect” affected “lakhs of families who are denied rightful access to education and job opportunities due to an outdated income cap”.

“Despite multiple demands, the income limit to determine the OBC non-creamy layer remains at Rs 8 lakh -- unchanged since 2017. As per the response from the Minister of Social Justice (dated 13 May 2025), there is no proposal under consideration even now. Why is there continued discrimination towards BCs? Inflation and income levels have risen over the years,

CONG’S POSERS TO CENTRE

- The Congress MP said that this “neglect” affected “lakhs of families who are denied rightful access to education and job opportunities due to an outdated income cap”.
- “Despite multiple demands, the income limit to determine the OBC non-creamy layer remains at Rs 8 lakh -- unchanged since 2017.
- As per the response from the Minister of Social Justice (dated 13 May 2025), there is no proposal under consideration even now. Why is there continued discrimination towards BCs?



but the criteria for availing OBC reservation benefits have not been updated. This neglect affects lakhs of families who are denied rightful access to education and job opportunities due to an outdated income cap. Why is the Government ignoring OBC welfare? Why no revision for 8 years?” Tagore posted on X.

Meanwhile, in a matter pertaining to reservations

for OBCs in Maharashtra, the Supreme Court orally remarked that reservations in the country are akin to a railway journey, where those who are already inside the train are now resisting the inclusion of others.

“Reservation business in this country has become like a railway. Those who have entered the coach, entered the bogey, they don’t want anyone else to enter.”, the

top-court judge said, implying that such are the claims made by the petitioner before it.

Senior Advocate Gopal Sankarnarayanan, appearing for the petitioner, argued that the assessment of social backwardness is relevant for constitutional reservations under Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution of India. However, he contended that this criterion has nothing to

TMC leaders behind Murshidabad violence targeting Hindus, says BJP citing probe report

SUPROTIM MUKHERJEE
KOLKATA

The BJP on Wednesday took on the Trinamool Congress citing the report of a probe committee set up by the Calcutta High Court to look into the recent violence in West Bengal’s Murshidabad district. BJP leaders from Kolkata to Delhi cited the report which says that violence during and after the anti-Waqf protests against Hindus was carried out at the behest of some Trinamool Congress leaders. The report says that local councillor Mehbub Alam was seen with the miscreants who identified and burnt down houses belonging to Hindus. It also cites eye-witness accounts which say that the local MLA came and saw the violence and then went away.

Citing the panel’s report



on the violence that was triggered by anti-Waqf protests last month, the BJP demanded that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee take action against the concerned Trinamool leaders.

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters in New Delhi, BJP national spokesperson and Rajya Sabha MP Sudhanshu Trivedi also demanded Banerjee to apologise for the “misdeeds” of her party leaders.

Citing the panel report on the violence that was triggered by anti-Waqf protests last month, the BJP demand-

ed Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee take action against the Trinamool leaders.

BJP national spokesperson and Rajya Sabha MP Sudhanshu Trivedi also demanded Banerjee to apologise for the “misdeeds” of her party leaders.

Senior BJP leader Amit Malviya said: “This may be the most damning indictment yet of the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC. The report on the Murshidabad riots squarely blames her party — and its elected representatives, including the local councillor and MLA — for abetting the violence and doing nothing to control the situation. Their acts of commission and omission emboldened the police and civil administration to remain passive as Hindu homes burned.”

“What makes this report

even more significant is its source: a committee appointed by the Calcutta High Court, comprising a member of the NHRC and officials from the West Bengal Legal and Judicial Services. It carries institutional weight and credibility. This entirely demolishes Mamata Banerjee’s oft-repeated claim that “outsiders” were responsible. The unvarnished truth is this: the Murshidabad riots were orchestrated by the TMC to engineer demographic attrition of Hindus in this sensitive border district.

Mamata Banerjee is a blight on Bengal’s legacy. Her politics violates the very spirit behind the creation of West Bengal — a homeland for Bengali Hindus, not a playground for vote-bank violence,” he wrote on social media site X.

Rahul cornered again: Inner circle’s advice backfires post ‘Op Sindoor’

AJIT MAINDOLA
NEW DELHI

Once again, Rahul Gandhi, the top leader of the Congress party, has been caught in a political trap — this time over ‘Operation Sindoor’ and the ceasefire issue — due to his close circle of advisors. The fallout has not only isolated Congress politically but also exposed internal divisions, as some party leaders took divergent stances on the issue, causing further turmoil. If these trends continue,

Congress could witness a resurgence of dissent similar to the “G-23” scenario. This group had emerged during 2021-2022 out of frustration with constant electoral defeats and the sidelining of experienced leaders. The core grievance then, as now, was that Rahul Gandhi avoided consulting experienced voices on crucial matters, instead relying on inexperienced, close advisors — weakening the party strategically and electorally. Past decisions like slogans

on Rafale, “Chowkidar Chor Hai,” and questioning air and surgical strikes lacked consensus within the party. Senior leaders had expressed reservations, but Rahul Gandhi’s inner circle prevailed, leading to significant losses in the 2019 general elections and subsequent state polls. This pattern remains unchanged, with the same advisors now diverting Rahul’s focus toward caste politics — a direction not unanimously supported within the party. However,

dissenting voices remain silent. The recent Pahalgam attack has drastically altered the country’s political narrative. Prime Minister Narendra Modi made strategic moves at a time when the opposition was still celebrating Rahul Gandhi’s push for caste census. While the public was enraged over the Pahalgam incident, the government executed Operation Sindoor, catching both terrorists and the opposition off guard.

Photo of Punjab NSUI chief with Pak Army officer sparks row, BJP demands probe

TDG NETWORK
CHANDIGARH

A controversy has erupted after a photo of Punjab NSUI president Isharpreet Singh Sidhu with a Pakistani Army officer surfaced online. The Punjab BJP has lodged a formal complaint with Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav, demanding action against Sidhu and a thorough investigation into his alleged links with Pakistan’s intelligence agency ISI. In its complaint, the BJP asserted that national interest must come first and called

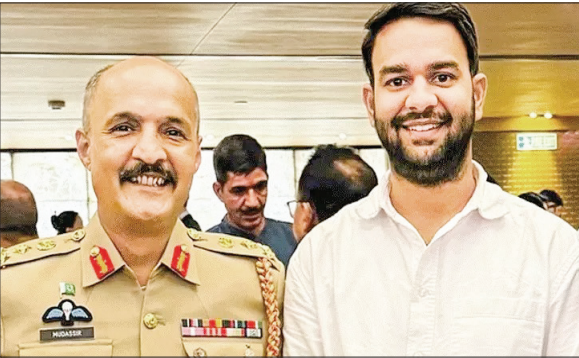
for strict action if any anti-national association is found. The party said Sidhu’s ties with Pakistan’s ISI must be investigated thoroughly.

Reacting to the controversy, Isharpreet Singh Sidhu acknowledged that he had shared the photo in question and clarified that the Chinese Embassy organized the event. He added that several people were in attendance at the event.

Sidhu further stated that the photo being circulated was taken on September 24, 2024, at Le Meridien Hotel in New Delhi during a

program hosted by the Chinese Embassy. According to him, the event was attended by himself, former Indian Youth Congress president B.V. Srinivas, military officers from India and other countries, Indian government representatives, political leaders, businesspersons, think-tank members, and media personnel.

He said he had posted a total of four photos from the event on his Instagram account. However, he alleged that BJP’s state secretary of the youth wing, Kulbir Singh (Ashu Amba), selectively



picked two images and deliberately omitted the other two to create a misleading impression. Sidhu claimed that this was a deliberate attempt to falsely portray connections with the Pakistani

embassy.

BJP’s complaint to DGP highlights three key points:

1. Security Concerns Raised by BJP Youth Wing Leader

Kulbir Singh Ashu Amba,

BSF foiled 50 infiltration bids during Op Sindoor: DIG Mand

TDG NETWORK
SAMBA

The Border Security Force (BSF) foiled a major infiltration bid by 45-50 terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir’s Samba district on May 8, using heavy mortar fire to destroy enemy posts after Pakistan attempted to facilitate the infiltration along the International Border (IB) under the cover of ceasefire violations, BSF officials said.

According to Deputy Inspector General (DIG) SS Mand, the BSF effectively responded to the shelling, destroyed enemy posts, and prevented the terrorists from entering Indian territory. The BSF official also added that the forces were well prepared and responded with heavy bombardment to stop the infiltration facilitated by Pakistan.

“Our brave soldiers have inflicted great losses on



them. We got intelligence that a large group is trying to infiltrate. We were ready for them and we detected them on 8 May. They were a group of 45-50 men... They were advancing to our location... We assessed the situation and since our scenario was war-gamed, we inflicted heavy bombardment on them... As expected, they retaliated with heavy fire from their posts... We opened up with heavy and accurate fire on them. That was a major factor. They were seen running away from their posts. We sorted them out in 1.5 hours...” DIG Mand said.

Mand added that BSF officers were present alongside soldiers at forward posts, which played a key role

in boosting troop morale. He also praised the role of women soldiers, saying, “Our women troops stood shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts, carrying out all duties effectively. We are truly proud of them.”

He further added, “Our officers were present with the soldiers on the forward posts. This was a major factor in the morale of our troops being very high... We decimated their bunkers and degraded their fire capacity... Our jawans are still very energised and if the enemy takes any action again, we will retaliate with ten times more force... BSF has these clear orders... Our women soldiers stood shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts and executed all orders and duties effectively... We are really proud of our women troops...”

Offence of money laundering made out: ED to court in Herald case

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Rouse court on Wednesday heard the opening arguments by Enforcement Directorate (ED) on cognisance of its complaint against Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and other accused in a money laundering case linked with National Herald.

In the opening submissions Additional Solicitor General (ASG) S V Raju submitted that an offence of money laundering in this case is made out in this case. He also submitted that there was a proceeds of crime. It was also submitted that there was continuing criminal activity for generation of proceeds of crime which constitutes the offence of money laundering.

After hearing the opening submitted by ASG S V Raju and Special Counsel for ED Zoheb Hosain, the Special Judge listed the



matter for remaining arguments from July 2 to July 8. Special judge Vishal Gogne listed the matter for day-to-day hearing on the point of cognisance of ED’s Prosecution complaint against Gandhi and other accused persons. The court listed the matter in July after hearing the submissions of defence counsel who urged for a hearing in July in view of voluminous documents running to 5000 pages.

During the hearing, the court raised certain queries related to the Shares of AJL (Associated Journal Limited) and whether the company’s shareholders are the owners of its assets. The special counsel for ED

submitted it by referring to the predicate offence that donors of the Congress party were cheated. They donated to the party. The office bearers gave a loan to a company engaged in commercial activities.

The court asked, “Are wrongful acts ascribed to individuals but not parties (Congress)? Or is the party a victim? Zoheb Hossain submitted that the Donors of the party are victims. The court also put a query regarding shares, assets. Are assets owned by company or shareholders? Who owns the property as on today? You come back, the Court asked ED’s special counsel Hossain.

Diversions tactics: Jairam on multi-party outreach



rorism and terrorist attacks, China, Pakistan... Why are you not calling a special session of Parliament?”

He said that since April 22, Congress and other opposition parties have been demanding an all-party meeting.

“Two meetings were held, but the Prime Minister was not present. Later, LoP Rahul Gandhi and Kharge wrote to the Prime Minister to convene a special session of Parliament to discuss political issues arising out of this (Pahalgam attack),” he added.

On BJP MP Sambit Patra’s statement ‘Rahul Gandhi giving oxygen to Pakistan’,

He said that since April 22, Congress and other opposition parties have been demanding an all-party meeting.

“Two meetings were held, but the Prime Minister was not present. Later, LoP Rahul Gandhi and Kharge wrote to the Prime Minister to convene a special session of Parliament to discuss political issues arising out of this (Pahalgam attack),” he added.

On BJP MP Sambit Patra’s statement ‘Rahul Gandhi giving oxygen to Pakistan’,

Ramesh said, “Terrorists who were involved in Pahalgam attack should be caught... China has given oxygen to Pakistan. It could not have fought this war without the help of China. We have raised a question about this partnership.”

Firing salvos at the BJP, the Congress leader said, “Who gave a clean chit to Jinnah and praised him? Jaswant Singh had praised him.”

Atal Bihari Vajpayee had taken out the Lahore bus yatra. Who had gone for breakfast with Nawaz Sharif? It was Narendra Modi.

“You are sending the MPs, but also catch the Pahalgam terrorists,” he said.

state secretary of the BJP Youth Wing in Punjab, wrote to DGP Gaurav Yadav citing serious national security concerns.

He referred to a previous statement by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who had alleged that Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi visited Pakistan at the ISI’s invitation and reportedly took 90 youths to events hosted by the Pakistani Embassy. Amba described these revelations as alarming from a national security perspective.

2. Call for Background

Probe of NSUI and IYC Leaders Ashu’s letter demanded a detailed investigation into the background, foreign engagements, and any possible links between NSUI chief Isharpreet Sidhu and former Indian Youth Congress president B.V. Srinivas with the Pakistani embassy. He emphasized the need to ascertain if any suspicious or controversial activities took place during or after their tenures, especially keeping national interest in mind.

3. Concerns Over Anti-India Propaganda Targeting

Youth Ashu warned that efforts to radicalize Indian youth through anti-India propaganda and psychological warfare are increasing. He urged the DGP to initiate a comprehensive inquiry into the role of such political figures and organizations. If any unlawful or anti-national connections are found, Ashu called for strict action in accordance with national law.

The BJP has attached a copy of the photograph and a written complaint to the DGP, pressing for a formal investigation into the matter.

BHAKRA MANAGEMENT BEGINS WATER SUPPLY UNDER NEW CYCLE

Haryana share increased

NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH

The Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) on Wednesday began releasing water to Haryana, Punjab, and Rajasthan from the Bhakra-Nangal Dam under the new annual water-sharing cycle beginning at 1pm on May 21.

According to data released by BBMB, 17,000 cusecs of water was released for Punjab, 10,300 cusecs for Haryana, and 12,400 cusecs for Rajasthan. Haryana will now continue to receive its allocated quota of water until May 20 next year.

On April 29, Punjab slashed the supply to only 4,000 cusecs from Nangal Dam for Haryana instead of the agreed 8,500 cusecs. Haryana raised objections and demanded the full 8,500 cusecs. As the issue remained unresolved, the matter was taken to the High Court. Despite the High Court's orders, Punjab did not release the full amount of water. The next hearing in this case is scheduled for May 22.

However, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann firmly stated that Punjab will not share even a drop of extra water beyond its allocated share. The BBMB's new water allocation, decided on May 15, gives Punjab 17,000 cusecs, Rajasthan



12,400 cusecs, and Haryana 10,300 cusecs. This cycle will continue until May 20, 2026.

As BBMB released water, Mann addressed Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) workers who had been protesting at the dam for over a month to stop any excess water from being sent to Haryana. "Water is being given as per the new schedule, but Haryana must use it carefully. Punjab has no extra water to share," Mann said, praising the protestors and calling it a "victory for Punjab."

"This is the first time Punjab has used 91% of its share. The previous governments did not fully use our water. The AAP government is making sure not to give away even a drop that belongs to Punjab," Mann said. He visited the dam for the fourth time this month to monitor the situation.

While the BBMB approved the request with support from Delhi and Rajasthan, Punjab opposed the move and AAP workers blocked the dam to stop any extra water release.

Punjab officials pointed

out that during the last cycle, Haryana used 16.48 lakh cusecs of water, more than its allotted 15.06 lakh cusecs. Despite this, Haryana kept asking for more water, which Punjab refused.

However, the increase in the flow of water has come as a major relief to several districts in Haryana as due to the reduced water supply from Punjab, many parts of Haryana, especially the districts of Sirsa, Rohtak, Mahendragarh, Charkhi Dadri, and Bhiwani, faced severe water shortages. Around 51 water treatment plants in the state reportedly dried up.

Now that BBMB has restarted the supply under the new schedule, officials hope the water crisis in Haryana will ease within a day or two.

Meanwhile, a related case was heard in the Punjab and Haryana High Court on May 20. The union government, BBMB, and Haryana presented their arguments, and the Punjab government asked for more time to file its reply. The next hearing is scheduled for May 22.

Centre to depute CISF at Bhakra Dam

NEERAJ MOHAN
CHANDIGARH

The Central Government has decided to send the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) to guard the Bhakra Dam in Punjab's Nangal, as tensions rise between Punjab and Haryana over water sharing.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has approved the deployment of 296 CISF personnel at the dam. This decision comes after the Punjab government deployed its own police force at the dam and reduced Haryana's water supply from 8500 cusecs to just 4,000 cusecs, which created a serious crisis for Haryana's irrigation and drinking water needs. The Board has been directed to promptly complete all necessary arrangements for the CISF deployment, including providing accommodation, transportation, communication equipment, and security apparatus.

The Home Ministry's order to the Director (Security) of the Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB), also mentions that the cost for each CISF jawan will be about Rs 2.90 lakh per year, adding up to a total annual cost of Rs 8.58 crore. The order has been marked as

"Most Urgent" and directed the Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) to arrange accommodation, transport, communication systems, and other basic facilities for the CISF force quickly.

The Bhakra Dam, built on the Sutlej River and managed by the BBMB, is one of India's biggest dams. It provides water for farming in Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan, drinking water to several towns, and electricity through hydropower. However, the sharing of this water has been a long-standing issue between Punjab and Haryana.

This issue dates back to 1966, when Haryana was carved out of Punjab. Since then, both states have fought over water division. A major point of conflict has been the Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) canal. Haryana wants the canal completed so it can receive its share of river water, while Punjab says it doesn't have any extra water to share and needs it for its own farmers.

With Punjab deploying its own police at the dam, there were concerns about a possible clash. Now, the Centre has stepped in by sending CISF, a neutral force, to take over security and maintain security.

Polls promise: Cong pledges Rs 2,500 to women in Bihar

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Ahead of the crucial Bihar assembly polls later this year, the Congress on Wednesday announced its first guarantee titled 'Mai Bahin Maan Yojana' promising Rs 2,500 per month support for women. The announcement was made in Patna by state unit chief Rajesh Ram and Mahila Congress chief Alka Lamba at a press conference.

While announcing the first guarantee, the party leaders said that 'Mai Bahin Maan Yojana', which promises Rs 2,500 per month to women if 'Mahagath-

bandhan' (Grand Alliance) comes to power in Bihar in assembly polls later this year.

The Congress had earlier made similar promise in Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana.

The party had made promise in Haryana and Maharashtra, too. However, it lost elections in both the states.

The Congress is also planning various programmes of Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and former party chief Rahul Gandhi in Bihar in the coming days. Rahul Gandhi had last week visited Darbhanga and Patna during a day-long visit.

Congress, which is part of the Mahagathbandhan (Grand Alliance) is in alliance in the state with Lalu Prasad Yadav-led Rashtriya Janata Dal and other parties in the state.

The polling for the 243-member assembly is scheduled to take place in October or November later this year. The Congress is looking to regain its lost ground in the state. The party had contested on 70 seats in 2020 assembly polls and could manage to win only 19 seats, while its alliance partner RJD emerged as the single largest party by winning 75 seats in the state.



IUMI, MP ET Mohammed Basheer, BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj, BJD MP Sasmit Patra and Shiv Sena MP Shrikant Shinde arrive at IGI airport to leave for UAE, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone taking India's message against terrorism to the global stage. ANI

Alarm bells ring in Kolkata

CONTINUED FROM P1

Such flying objects were also seen over Park Circus area in the eastern part of the metropolis before disappearing, he said.

The Special Task Force (STF) and the Detective Department of Kolkata Police have already initiated an investigation, he said.

"We are probing the matter from all angles, including the possibility of espionage," the officer said.

Meanwhile, CM Mamata Banerjee has directed ad-

ministrative and police officials in the northern part of the state to stay vigilant for cross-border threats in the strategically sensitive area. Banerjee also asked the officials to stay vigilant for potential flooding due to heavy rain.

The CM chaired a high-level administrative meeting during her ongoing three-day visit to north Bengal.

During her visit, she said the region, which shares international borders with Nepal, Bhutan and

Bangladesh, is "highly sensitive". She directed the police and administration to intensify patrolling to prevent any infiltration bid, especially of anti-national elements.

"Even though the BSF is deployed, State administrative officials must also remain vigilant," she said. Banerjee also cautioned the officials against the spread of misinformation and fake news, stating that updates should only be sent through the government during any crisis.

Big win against Naxals as top-most leader killed

CONTINUED FROM P1

garh, Telangana, and Maharashtra.

"The Modi government is resolved to eliminate Naxalism before the 31st of March 2026," he said.

Basavaraju was in his early 70s, officials said.

Hailing from undivided Andhra Pradesh, Basavaraju was the brain behind several major attacks

on security forces in Chhattisgarh.

He was associated with the banned movement since the 1970s and elevated to the top post in CPI (Maoist) seven years ago, when Naxal activities in their stronghold Bastar region were appearing to be wearing out, officials said.

A resident of Jyannapeta village in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh, Basavaraju holds a BTech degree from the Regional Engineering College, Warangal, and was seen as an enigmatic leader of the outlawed Naxal outfit.

Known by the aliases of Prakash, Krishna, Vijay, Umesh and Kamlu, he joined the armed movement as a ground-level organiser. He was considered to have developed expertise in imparting military training and triggering explosives and landmines.

Basavaraju's age and looks are still a matter of speculation, with security agencies suggesting he was around 71 years of age.

They have only a bundle of old photos from his youth. Basavaraju carried a reward of Rs 1 crore on his head in Chhattisgarh. The governments of other states, including Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Telangana, have also announced rewards, an official said.

With the latest action, 200 Naxalites have been killed in separate encounters in Chhattisgarh so far this year. Of them, 183 were eliminated in the Bastar division, which includes districts of Bijapur, Narayanpur, Dantewada and Kondagaon.

Kannada writer wins Booker Prize

CONTINUED FROM P1

The Booker Prizes website.

The Chief Minister of Karnataka, Siddaramaiah, also congratulated the writer Mushtaq for winning the International Booker Prize 2025 on Wednesday. Taking to his X handle, the Karnataka CM wrote,

"Heartfelt congratulations to Kannada's pride, author Banu Mushtaq, who has been awarded the International Booker Prize. This is a moment of celebration for Kannada, Kannadigas, and Karnataka. Banu Mushtaq, who embodies and writes with the true values of this land, which is harmony, secular-

ism, and brotherhood, has raised the flag of Kannada's greatness on the international stage and brought honor to all of us."

He also congratulated writer Deepa Bhashti for the English translation of 'Heart Lamp'.

"I wish that she continues to write with strength and spirit for a long time, spreading the essence of Kannada across the world. On behalf of all Kannadigas, I also extend congratulations to the talented writer Deepa Bhashti, who translated Banu Mushtaq's Booker Prize-winning work Hridaya Deepa into English 'Heart Lamp'," added Deepa Bhashti. Max

Porter, Chair of the International Booker Prize 2025 judges praised the book and called it a "joy" to listen to the "evolving appreciation" of the book from the different perspectives of the jury.

"This was the book the judges really loved, right from our first reading. It's been a joy to listen to the evolving appreciation of these stories from the different perspectives of the jury. We are thrilled to share this timely and exciting winner of the International Booker Prize 2025 with readers around the world," said Max Porter as quoted by The Booker Prizes website.

IndiGo aircraft caught in hailstorm

CONTINUED FROM P1

that the nose of the plane was damaged but there was no official word on it.

"Indigo flight 6E2142 enroute Delhi to Srinagar experienced bad weather (hail storm), emergency reported by Pilot to ATC SXR (Srinagar)," an official of the Airport Authority of India said here.

He said the flight landed safely at Srinagar at 6.30 PM.

"All aircrew and 227 passengers are safe and the flight is declared AOG by the airline," he said.

'Aircraft on ground' (AOG) refers to a plane that is grounded and unable to fly due to technical issues.

"I was in the plane and heading back home from

Srinagar...It was a near-death experience...the nose of the plane is damaged," Owais Maqbool Hakeem (@owaismaqbool) posted on X.

"The Nose and Right side of the plane was damaged ... And we were not allowed to see much as airforce police was there," Hakeem claimed in another post.

STORM HITS DELHI-NCR, LIFE THROWN OUT OF GEAR



ED RAIDS INSTITUTIONS LINKED TO KARNATAKA HOME MINISTER

Congress attacks BJP, says action undertaken at PM's behest

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday condemned the Enforcement Directorate searches at educational institutions linked to Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara, alleging that the probe agency's actions were being undertaken at the behest of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and reflect the politics of vendetta.

The ED is conducting searches at educational institutions linked to the Karnataka minister at Tumakuru and on the outskirts of Bengaluru, official sources said.

The searches were underway at Sri Siddhartha Medical College and Sri Siddhartha Institute Of Technology in Tumakuru and Sri Siddhartha Institute Of Medical Sciences in Nelamangala on the outskirts of Bengaluru.

BJP NERVOUS AT STATE'S PROGRESS: CONG

- In a post on X, Congress general secretary in-charge of communications Jairam Ramesh said, "The INC condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the ED raids on the Home Minister of Karnataka."
- "Dr. G. Parameshwara is one of the senior-most political leaders of the country who has made great contributions to the cause of education, particularly that of the weaker sections of society."
- "The ED actions undertaken at the behest of the prime minister himself reflect the politics of harassment, vendetta, and intimidation of which he is the master," he said.



The reasons for the searches are not yet known.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary in-charge of communications Jairam Ramesh said, "The INC condemns, in the strongest pos-

sible terms, the ED raids on the Home Minister of Karnataka. Dr. G. Parameshwara is one of the senior-most political leaders of the country who has made great contributions to the cause of educa-

tion, particularly that of the weaker sections of society." "The ED actions undertaken at the behest of the prime minister himself reflect the politics of harassment, vendetta, and

intimidation of which he is the master," he said. The BJP is clearly nervous and worried by the achievements of the Karnataka government over the past two years, he said. "We will not be silenced. We will continue to hold the PM to account for his multiple failures on multiple fronts," Ramesh said. While Chief Minister Siddaramaiah did not wish to make any comments on ED searches stating he was not aware of it, Congress General Secretary in-charge of Karnataka Randeep Singh Surjewala, while pointing out that Parameshwara was a tall Scheduled Caste leader, said the raids appear to be a desperate attempt to coverup the corruption of previous BJP governments and stifle the voice of those who champion the voice of the oppressed.

NEP row: TN moves SC against Centre for withholding funds

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Tamil Nadu government has filed a petition before the Supreme Court against the Government of India for allegedly withholding funds after the state government decided not to implement the New Education Policy, 2020. In the petition, the Tamil Nadu government has sought the release of more than 2000 crores under Samagra Siksha Scheme.

The state government has urged the SC to fix a timeframe and sought the recovery of the amount with a future interest at the rate of 6% per annum on the principal sum. The state government has also asked SC to declare Union Government's action of withholding funds under the Samagra Shiksha Scheme to implement NEP as "unconstitutional, illegal, arbitrary and unreasonable." The state government, led by



Earlier, CM MK Stalin had announced that they would go before the Supreme Court to seek funds for the State

CM MK Stalin, has also asked the apex court for a declaration that the National Educational Policy, 2020 and the PMSHRI Schools Scheme are not binding on Tamil Nadu. The DMK government also asked the SC to direct the defendant to continue to

comply with and perform its statutory obligations of paying to the Plaintiff State grants in aid of revenues for implementation of obligations under The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2010, including but not limited to paying the Defendant's share of 60% of expenditure in accordance with law before the commencement of every academic year and within the time frame. Earlier, CM MK Stalin had announced that they would go before the Supreme Court to seek funds for the State. The Tamil Nadu government has accused the Central government of trying to push Hindi "sideways" through the NEP, despite the state's longstanding resistance to such policies. The government has strongly opposed implementing the NEP, raising concerns over the three-language formula and alleging that the Centre wants to "impose" Hindi.

Loot will be exposed: Congress attacks KCR over Kaleshwaram project probe

TDG NETWORK
HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) Chief Mahesh Kumar Goud on Wednesday stated that the Congress party was elected to power on the promise of exposing corruption that occurred during the Bharat Rashtra Samithi's (BRS) tenure after summons were issued by the PC Gosh Commission to former Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) and others.

The summons were related to alleged irregularities in the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP) during the BRS' 10-year rule in Telangana. Goud said, "People voted us (Congress) to power because we promised that the loot and corruption that happened in 10 years of



BRS tenure would be exposed." He confirmed that the current Congress-led state government had constituted a commission to investigate the alleged corruption in the Kaleshwaram project. Goud emphasised that KCR and others involved in the alleged corruption should explain their version of events. The TPCC Chief stressed that those found guilty should be pun-

ished, and the people of Telangana demand accountability. "Telangana government has thus constituted a commission to look into the irregularities of the Kaleshwaram project. The commission has KCR and others who are part of this loot. They should come and explain their version. People are demanding that all the corrupt people should be punished," the TPCC chief added. Meanwhile, Bharatiya Rashtra Samithi MLC K Kavitha criticised the PC Ghose Commission for summoning former Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao to investigate irregularities in the Kaleshwaram project during the BRS regime. In a post on X, Kavitha emphasised that Kaleshwaram was built for the welfare of farmers and asserted that it is part of a "calculated political conspiracy" against KCR.

Tirumala: TTD member alleges irregularities by previous state govt in Tulabharam service

TDG NETWORK
TIRUMALA

Bhanuprakash Reddy, member of the TTD (Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams) board, has alleged irregularities in the Tulabharam service at the Tirumala temple committed by officials from the previous government.

He demanded that the government initiate an inquiry against those who misused devotees' faith in this sacred service. Reddy expressed concern that there was a lack of transparency in the handling and utilisation of the funds collected through



He emphasised that such activities are inappropriate for the temple, both from a security and spiritual standpoint.

this service in the past. He urged the TTD governing body to conduct a thorough investigation and

take strict action against those responsible. He also stated that the TTD may soon form a

special internal inquiry committee to investigate this matter. Additionally, he mentioned that a report would be submitted to the central government regarding the increasing air traffic over the Tirumala temple. He said that the rise in air traffic above the Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple premises has caused concern among devotees, and the TTD is taking this matter very seriously. He emphasised that such activities are inappropriate for the temple, both from a security and spiritual standpoint.

5 killed as SUV collides with bus in Karnataka

TDG NETWORK
VIJAYAPURA

Five people lost their lives after a SUV collided with a private bus near Managuli, in Karnataka's Vijayapura, police said on Wednesday. According to Managuli Police, four people travelling by SUV and one person in the bus died on the spot in the collision. The injured were immediately rushed to the hospital. Police has registered a case relating to the incident. Further details awaited. In a separate incident on Tuesday, at least four people lost their lives and around 17 others were injured in a collision between a cement-loaded truck and a bus under the Parigi police station limits in Vikarabad

district of Telangana. The mishap occurred around 1:45 am on Monday when the bus, carrying passengers returning from a wedding reception in Shahbad, rammed into the truck. The bodies of the deceased were shifted to the government hospital for post-mortem examination (PME), and the injured were shifted to various hospitals for treatment. According to Vikarabad Superintendent of Police, K. Narayana Reddy, said, "This accident took place early this morning around 1:45 am between a cement-loaded truck and a bus. The bus was carrying people who were returning from a reception to Shahbad. Four people died, and around 17 others were injured.

Naidu dismantling democratic norms: YSRCP's Jagan slams TDP rule in Andhra

TDG NETWORK
VIJAYAWADA

In a closed-door meeting with YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) public representatives from five districts, former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and YSRCP President YS Jagan Mohan Reddy launched a scathing attack on the ruling Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government, calling it a "demonic era" and accusing Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu of dismantling democratic norms.

Addressing party representatives from Ramachandrapuram Municipality (Konaseema), Parvathipuram Municipality (Parvathipuram Manyam), Yelamanchili Mandal (Palakollu, West Godavari), Ramagiri Mandal (Raptadu, Sri Sathya Sai), and Greater



Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation, Jagan said the state was witnessing an unprecedented collapse of democratic values.

"We are currently living in a demonic age. Under Chandrababu Naidu's regime, morality in politics has completely collapsed. Random cases are being filed, and arrests are being made indiscriminately. But we should not fear these cases or jails. Only those who can withstand this can survive and engage

in politics today," he said. Jagan alleged that in recent local body by-elections, the TDP resorted to unethical tactics to claim victory without a majority.

"In the recent local body by-elections, TDP has stooped to new lows to claim victory even without having a majority. They are suppressing opposition and declaring positions for themselves without any democratic mandate. Within just one year, people have developed a strong resentment toward the alliance government. None of the promises made during the elections have been fulfilled. That's why people detest Chandrababu now. In the next election, he will be booted out like a football," Reddy further said. He gave assurance that

if they come to power, the party cadre will receive the highest priority. "For the first time in the state's history, we are witnessing the creation of manufactured witnesses.

A person with no connection to a crime is picked up, labelled as an 'approver,' and coerced into saying whatever they want. Based on this, someone else is arrested.

This dangerous precedent has been set by Chandrababu. In Jagan 2.0, the party cadre will receive the highest priority. I see and acknowledge the struggles you're facing. Write down the names of those who have wronged you, no matter which book you use; record them. Our government will return, and we'll show them the real movie.

Six killed after fourth floor collapses during renovation in Mumbai

TDG NETWORK
THANE

At least six people were killed in the Shri Saptashringi building in Kalyan, after its fourth floor collapsed during renovation on Tuesday.

Kalyan SDO Vishwas Digambar Gujar said, "On the fourth floor of Shri Saptashringi building in Kalyan, flooring work was going on. During the renovation work, the slab of the fourth floor collapsed, taking with it slabs of all the subsequent lower floors like cards.

11 people were trapped in the rubble. Fire brigade and other teams rushed to the spot and started with the rescue work. Five people have been rescued and six people

This building will soon be demolished because its condition has deteriorated with time.

have died in the accident." Gujar further said that the family members' luggage had to be removed and the building evacuated. "Clearance work is going on. There were a total of 52 families living here. This building will soon be demolished because its condition has deteriorated with time.

Respect local language, says K'taka CM after SBI manager refuses to speak in Kannada

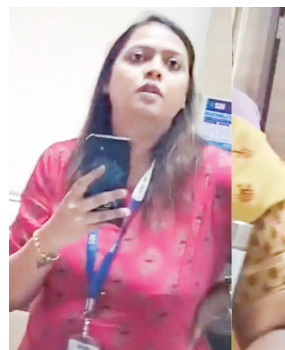
TDG NETWORK
BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday strongly criticised the State Bank of India (SBI) branch manager in Surya Nagara, Anekal Taluk, Bengaluru for refusing to communicate in Kannada, despite the customer's request.

Siddaramaiah called on the Ministry of Finance to enforce language sensitisation training for bank employees nationwide, emphasising that respect-

ing local languages is key to serving people with dignity.

In a social media post on X, Siddaramaiah wrote, "The behaviour of the SBI Branch Manager in Surya Nagara, Anekal Taluk, refusing to speak in Kannada & English and showing disregard to citizens, is strongly condemnable. We appreciate SBI's swift action in transferring the official. The matter may now be treated as closed." The post further added on X, "However, such incidents must not recur. All



bank employees must treat customers with dignity and make every effort to speak in the local language. I urge the Finance Ministry and Dept of Financial Services to mandate cul-



tural and language sensitisation training for all bank staff across India. Respecting local language is respecting the people." The Video of the manager refusing to speak in

Siddaramaiah called on the Ministry of Finance to enforce language sensitisation training for bank employees nationwide, emphasising that respecting local languages is key to serving people with dignity.

Kannada was viral on Social media and sparked further reactions from Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya, who stressed the importance of banks communicating with customers in Kannada.

Surya wrote on X, "This behaviour by SBI Branch Manager is simply not acceptable.

If you are doing customer interface work in Karnataka, especially in a sector like banking, it is important

to communicate to customers in the language they know. Being adamant like this is simply not right."

"I have time and again raised this issue of mandatorily posting local staff or staff who know the local language in banking operations, both inside and outside Parliament.

Just a few weeks ago, at a Public Accounts Committee meeting, I had raised this issue to the DFS Secretary who assured me action will be taken to follow a office notification that makes this requirement of

local language knowledge compulsory.

Looks like this still isn't being enforced properly," he added. Surya further wrote, "I urge the concerned at SBI to immediately implement the DFS policy that mandates local language requirement.

I have spoken to concerned authorities to take action against this manager who has behaved in this manner. Banks working in Karnataka should serve customers in Kannada. Period."

Gusty winds, hailstorm and heavy rain relieve Delhiites from scorching heat

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi witnessed gusty winds, heavy rain and hailstorm on Wednesday, with the fall in temperature providing relief to people from the scorching heat of the past few days. The winds and rain also lead to the uprooting of trees in some areas.

Adjoining areas of Delhi also witnessed rain and gusty winds. Ghaziabad experienced gusty winds,

heavy rainfall and lightning. Heavy rain accompanied by thunderstorm lashed several parts of Karnal in Haryana.

Many domestic and international flights to Delhi airport from various airports have been halted or diverted due to weather conditions in Delhi, airport sources said.

Indigo said that its flight 6E2142 operating from Delhi to Srinagar encountered sudden hailstorm en route.

"The flight and cabin crew followed established proto-



col and the aircraft landed safely in Srinagar. The airport team attended to the customers after arrival of aircraft prioritizing their wellbeing and comfort. The aircraft will be released post necessary inspection and maintenance," the airline said in a statement.

Some people came out of their residences to venture in rain and experience the change in weather. The rain brought down the temperature by 14 degrees Celsius.

From 37 degrees Celsius at 7.30 pm, it dropped to 23 degrees Celsius at 8.30 pm at Palam, IMD officials said.

Delhi Fire Service received more than 25 calls after the weather change, most of them related to fallen trees. No casualties have been reported so far, according to DFS. An India Meteorological Department (IMD) official said earlier in the day that a cloud mass will enter North Delhi and move south-southeastwards,

triggering a dust storm and strong winds. The official said winds will blow at speeds of 50-60 kmph, gusting up to 70 kmph, along with light rainfall during the next one hour.

"Cloudmass entering into North Delhi is likely to move south-southeastwards across Delhi, causing a dust storm and strong winds 50-60 kmph gusting to 70 kmph with light rainfall during the next one hour," the official said.

HC HEARS SUBMISSIONS MADE ON BEHALF OF PATKAR IN LG SAXENA DEFAMATION CASE

The counsel for LG Saxena strongly opposed the plea, saying that it was aimed at delaying the trial.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court heard submissions on behalf of social activist Medha Patkar in a case challenging the trial court's order, which denied permission to call additional witness Nandita Narrain for examination in a case against incumbent LG VK Saxena.

The hearing took place on Tuesday, where Medha Patkar's counsel argued that there is no bar on calling for the examination of a witness not named in the list of witnesses. Justice Shalinder Kaur, after hearing the arguments on behalf of Patkar, listed the matter on May 26.

The bench will hear the arguments by the counsel for Saxena against the appeal. Another petition challenging Medha Patkar's sen-



tencing has also been adjourned for May 26. She was convicted and sentenced in a Defamation case filed by VK. Saxena.

Meanwhile, arguing for Medha Patkar, her counsel argued that there is no bar to calling for the examination of a witness who was not listed in the list of witnesses. It was also submitted that there was no delay on the part of the petition, Patkar. It was further argued

The counsel for LG Saxena strongly opposed the plea, saying that it was aimed at delaying the trial.

arbitrarily and at such a late stage, trial courts would become never-ending, as litigants could continuously bring in new witnesses whenever it suits them, thereby prolonging proceedings indefinitely," the court had said on March 18.

The court had further said that the judicial process cannot be held hostage to such tactics, especially in a case that has already been pending for two decades.

The counsel for LG Saxena strongly opposed the plea, saying that it was

aimed at delaying the trial. This case has been pending since 2000. Patkar filed a defamation case against incumbent LG VK Saxena in 2000. Medha Patkar moved an application stating that Nandita Narrain supported her allegations of defamation. It was stated that Nandita Narrain is a relevant witness in the present case. It was also stated the complainant Medha Patkar has examined three witnesses so far and on November 29, 2024, the Court had granted her time to examine whether there is requirement to examine any other witness.

On the other hand, advocate Gajinder Kumar, counsel for LG Saxena, had argued that the application was at a belated stage to delay further the trial, which has been pending for the past 24 years.

IYC protests against Malviya over 'morphed' image of Rahul

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Indian Youth Congress on Wednesday staged a protest here against BJP IT cell head Amit Malviya over an alleged defamatory post against the party and its leader Rahul Gandhi.

Youth Congress' Delhi unit president Akshay Lakra, who led the demonstration, said, "We are protesting against Malviya, who shared an edited photo in which Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi's face was combined with that of Pakistan Army chief Asim Munir." The demonstrators, wearing the masks of Malviya and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, raised slogans against both the leaders.



"We want to protest outside the house of the external affair minister and question him regarding the country's international relations, but the police are stopping us," Lakra said.

There was no immediate reaction from the BJP.

The Youth Congress in Bengaluru on Wednesday filed a complaint against Malviya and Journalist Arnab Goswami for their defamatory posts. In a statement, the Youth Congress' legal department said an FIR has been lodged under non-bailable sections against Malviya and Goswami for a false conspiracy to defame Rahul Gandhi and link the Congress with Turkey.

HC quashes marital rape case against husband

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Saying the law doesn't recognise the concept of marital rape, the Delhi High Court has quashed an order directing prosecution of a man for performing "unnatural" sex with his wife.

The court noted Section 377 of IPC penalising such acts won't apply in a marital relationship particularly when the allegation of consent was missing.

Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma was dealing with the man's plea against a trial court order which directed framing of Section 377 (punishment for unnatural offences) charge against him for allegedly performing oral sex with his wife.

The verdict said the law did not recognise the concept of marital rape.

"There is no basis to assume that a husband would not be protected from prosecution under Section 377 of IPC, in view of exception 2 to Section 375 of IPC since the law (amended Section



The high court noted the wife did not specifically allege if the act was performed against her will or without her consent.

375 of IPC) now presumes implied consent for sexual intercourse as well as sexual acts, including anal or oral intercourse within a marital relationship," it said.

The high court noted the wife did not specifically allege if the act was performed against her will or without her consent.

"The essential ingredient of lack of consent - central to

constituting an offence under Section 377 of IPC post-Navtej Singh Johar (case) between any two adults - is clearly missing. Thus, there is not only a lack of prima facie case, but even the threshold of strong suspicion is not met," the court said.

The top court in the Navtej verdict de-criminalised consensual sex among adults, including those from the same sex. "No prima facie case is made out against the petitioner for the offence under Section 377 of IPC. The impugned order directing the framing of charge is, therefore, unsustainable in law and is liable to be set aside," the court added.

The court further said acts such as anal intercourse or oral sex were included within the ambit of offence of rape under the Section 375(a) of IPC and there was no basis to assume that the petitioner would not fall within the immunity granted to husbands under the "exception" to the offence of rape.

Musical event at Anand Vihar station to honour armed forces

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The second season of Namohar Unplugged Musical Friday will begin on May 23 at the Anand Vihar Namohar Station, offering commuters and music lovers a refreshing start to their weekends with live performances by emerging artists every Friday at 6 pm.

Organised by the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC), the musical evenings are free and open to the public, according to a NCRTC statement. The first event of the season will be dedicated to the nation and the bravery of the Armed Forces, with all performances centred around patriotic themes, it stated. "The initiative aims to create a moment of collective pride while providing a platform for young and upcoming musicians from schools, colleges, and independent circuits across the NCR," it read.

Assembly to display portraits of Savarkar, Dayanand Saraswati, Malviya

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The portraits of Veer Savarkar, Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati and Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya will soon adorn the Delhi Assembly premises, Speaker Vijender Gupta announced on Wednesday.

Gupta chaired a meeting of the General Purposes Committee, which passed the resolution to honour the "national icons".

According to a statement from Gupta's office, the Committee resolved to install their portraits within the premises of the Delhi Vidhan Sabha in recognition of their enduring contributions to India's freedom struggle, social reform and educational renaissance.

The decision was taken based on a proposal submitted by General Purposes Committee member Abhay Verma, who stated that honouring them with



portraits within the Assembly complex would be a fitting tribute to their lasting legacies and would serve as a source of inspiration for future generations, reinforcing the values of patriotism, service and democratic ideals, the statement added.

The Committee's decision not only honours the immense contributions of Savarkar, Saraswati and Malviya, but also reflects the Assembly's collective resolve to preserve democratic ideals and promote a deep-rooted sense of national pride, cultural heritage and civic responsibility among the people of Delhi, the statement quoted Gupta as saying.

Man held for dacoity-murder in Ashok Vihar

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A 33-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly providing arms and ammunition in a dacoity and murder case in Delhi's Ashok Vihar area, an official said on Wednesday.

The accused, identified as Manoj alias Rocky, was apprehended from Ghaziabad on May 15, he said.

Manoj had been evading arrest since his name surfaced during the probe into the daylight robbery



and murder of a man who was carrying Rs 16.5 lakh in cash.

"Manoj had supplied arms and ammunition to his associate, Faiyaz alias Alan,

who was directly involved in the February 25 incident. The victim had been shot in the chest with a pistol and later declared dead at the hospital," Deputy Com-

missioner of Police (Crime) Harsh Indora said. Soon after the incident, Manoj went underground, frequently changing locations and using a SIM card registered in someone else's name to evade surveillance. His last known address was in Ghaziabad, though his permanent address is in Hapur district, the officer added.

Based on local intelligence and technical surveillance, police located Manoj in Ghaziabad and arrested him.

"During interrogation, the accused disclosed that

he had provided arms and ammunition to Faiyaz, who carried out the fatal attack. He has been arrested under relevant sections of the BNS," Indora said.

Manoj is also facing trial in a previous case of robbery and murder registered at Dwarka North police station. In that case, he was released on bail in 2022 and was facing trial.

He is also previously involved in a 2016 case of attempted theft and hurt registered at the same police station, the DCP added.

Woman held for cyberstalking after suspecting husband of affair

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A 26-year-old woman has been apprehended for allegedly impersonating and stalking another woman by creating a fake social media account using her photographs, police said on Wednesday.

The accused, a resident of Ghazipur in Uttar Pradesh, was allegedly driven by suspicion over her husband's past acquaintance with the complainant.

The woman stole pictures from the victim's social media handle and used them to create a fake account in her name, Deputy Commissioner of Police (North) Raja Ban-

thia said in a statement.

The complainant, a 30-year-old woman from Delhi, had approached the cyber police of north Delhi with a complaint that an unknown person had created a fake social media profile impersonating her and was attempting to contact her friends and colleagues through it, he said.

Based on her complaint, an FIR was registered and further investigation was taken up during which police obtained details of the fake account and conducted a technical analysis.

"Surveillance revealed that the SIM card linked to the fake account was issued in Ghazipur in Uttar Pradesh.

ONLY WORK OF CONGRESS LEADERS IS TO LOWER ARMY'S MORALE: FADNAVIS SLAMS WADETTIWAR

Congress leaders do not see the difference between things; for them, there is no difference between drones used by farmers in the fields and combat drones: Fadnavis

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday slammed Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar over his statement criticising the Central government.

Condemning Wadettiwar's statement, the Chief Minister stated that the only work of Congress leaders is to lower the "army's morale."

Addressing a press conference, CM Fadnavis stated, "As I have said earlier, what can be said to fools? Congress leaders do not see the difference between things; for them, there is no difference between drones used by farmers in the fields and combat drones. So, what answer should be given to such people? The only work of Congress leaders is to lower the army's morale."

Earlier today, Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar



criticised the Central government for not being transparent on whether the Indian forces sustained any loss or casualties after the border tensions flared up following the Pahalgam terror attack.

He mentioned that "questions are being raised" about any loss to the Indian forces, saying that he has heard that Pakistan used cheap China-made drones while India responded with costly missiles.

"There are discussions that they (Pakistan) launched 5,000 China-

made drones, and the value of each drone was Rs 15,000. To destroy each drone worth Rs 15,000, we launched missiles worth Rs 15 lakh. This was a part of China's tactic, these are the discussions, however I don't know the truth," Wadettiwar said during a press conference.

He further alleged that India agreed to a cessation of hostilities only on the directions of the United States, but the people deserve to know whether any Rafale fighter jets were downed or not. "Now questions are

being raised about the damage done to us. You (Centre) shook hands on the directions of US, the Pakistani soldier we had was given back, now to ask questions regarding this what is so wrong with it in a democracy? That we should know how many casualties there are, how many soldiers are hurt, how many Rafales have been downed," the Congress leader mentioned.

Demanding that the Centre clarify that Operation Sindoor was beneficial for India while also being honest about any losses to our side, he said, "There are also discussions that our three-four Rafale jets were shot down, the government should give a clarification that there were no losses and that we benefited from this (Operation Sindoor), that this is the truth, we damaged Pakistan this much."

"After a battle, I don't think it is weakness to talk

about this. This is the first time in India that after a war the party is taking out a victory rally, there are doubts in people's mind about this BJP government," he added.

In response to the Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people were killed, India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7, in which precision strikes destroyed terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Jammu Kashmir (PoK) and eliminated nearly 100 terror operatives at key bases in Pakistan. India responded effectively to subsequent Pakistani aggression and pounded its airbases.

On May 10, an understanding regarding the cessation of hostilities between India and Pakistan was announced. India has said that the agreement on stopping military action was done bilaterally and Pakistan DGMO had reached out to his Indian counterpart.

Cong shares Pakistan's delusion: BJP hits back at Opposition remarks

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Bharatiya Janata Party spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla on Wednesday attacked Congress leaders for their comments on Operation Sindoor, India's response to the Pahalgam terror attack, accusing the party of behaving like the Public Relations department of the Pakistani forces.

"The incoming drones sent by Ghulam Ahmad Mir and Vijay Wadettiwar make it seem that the Congress party is behaving more like DG ISPR (Inter-Services Public Relations). It looks like the Congress party has taken the onus on themselves to create content for Pakistan since Pakistani YouTubers' and influencers 'shops have been shut down in India," Poonawalla attacked Congress during a press conference in Delhi.

The remarks came amidst Wadettiwar claiming that India used missiles worth Rs 15 lakh to shoot down Pakistan's China-made drones only worth Rs 15 thousand. Ghulam Ahmad Mir had claimed that Op-



eration Sindoor was merely a "minor activity" during a public meeting.

The BJP spokesperson accused the party of being propagating Pakistan's narrative, and "sharing the delusion" that the Pakistan army won during the increased hostilities at the border. "Congress is clearly assisting Pakistan to propagate its narrative. Congress shares Pakistan's delusion that the Pakistan army won," he said. Poonawalla further challenged the Congress to show how the party had responded post the 26/11 terror attacks, adding, "Why don't they tell the world the big moves they made after 26/11? 'Sena ka apman, yahi Congress party ki ban chuki hai pehchan; maano Congress aur Paki-

stan do shareer ek jaan."

Earlier, Congress' Wadettiwar alleged, "There are discussions that they (Pakistan) launched 5,000 China-made drones and the value of each drone was Rs 15,000. To destroy each drone worth Rs 15,000, we launched missiles worth Rs 15 lakh. This was a part of China's tactic, these are the discussions, however I don't know the truth."

India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7 as a decisive military response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people were killed. Indian Armed Forces targeted terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, leading to the death of over 100 terrorists affiliated with terror outfits like the Jaish-e-Mohammed, Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizbul Mujahideen. After India's strike on terror infrastructure, Pakistan responded with cross-border shelling across the Line of Control (LoC) and Jammu and Kashmir, as well as attempted drone attacks targeting civilian areas along the border regions.

Modi Govt misusing Governors a dangerous assault on federalism: Rahul

ANAND SINGH
NEW DELHI

Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday came out in support of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK leader MK Stalin saying that the Modi government is misusing Governors to stifle those voices and obstruct elected governments and dubbed it a dangerous assault on federalism and it must be resisted.

In a post on X, Rahul Gandhi said, "India's strength lies in its diversity — a Union of States, each with its own voice."

He said, "The Modi government is misusing Governors to stifle those voices and obstruct elected state governments. This is a dangerous assault on federalism and it must be resisted."

He made the remarks while responding to the post of Sta-

lin that he had put on May 15 saying while condemning the Union Government's Presidential reference, which attempts to subvert the Constitutional position already settled by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the Tamil Nadu Governor's case and other precedents.

Earlier this week, Stalin had wrote to the Chief Ministers of non-BJP ruled states regarding the questions raised



by the President of India before the Supreme Court and committed to preserving our federal structure and state autonomy, to unite in the up-

coming legal battle.

Stalin had urged the non-BJP ruled state CMs and said, "At this crucial juncture, I had called upon all State Governments and leaders of regional parties, who are opposed to the BJP and committed to preserving our federal structure and state autonomy, to unite in the upcoming legal battle."

He had said that he was writing to them to personally request to oppose this reference sought by the President before the Supreme Court.

"We must evolve a coordinated legal strategy before the Court and present a united front to preserve and protect the basic structure of the Constitution, as upheld by our Supreme Court in its historic judgement. I look forward to your immediate and personal intervention in this vital issue," Stalin had added.

All parties, people stand united on issue of national concern: Minister on all-party delegation

TDG NETWORK
PATNA

After one group of all-party delegation left on their visit to five East Asian Countries for Operation Sindoor's global outreach, Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan noted that all political parties and people stand united on the issue of national concern.

Speaking to reporters, Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan (Lalan) Singh said, "All political parties and people stand united on this issue of national concern. A joint delegation of members from all political parties is being sent to partner countries. They will present India's stand to the world..."

Earlier today, echoing a united stance against terrorism, NCP-SCP MP Supriya Sule asserted that the members of all party delegations are representing India, not

any political party, during their visit to foreign countries as part of an outreach against Pakistan's support for terrorism on the global stage.

Addressing a press conference, Sule, who is a member of one of the all-party delegations visiting various countries to showcase In-



dia's continued fight against terrorism, said, "... We are not going on behalf of the party. We are going to other countries on behalf of India.

PM Modi to inaugurate first-ever Rising Northeast Investors' Summit in Delhi

TIKAM SHARMA
NEW DELHI

The maiden 'Rising Northeast Investors' Summit 2025' is scheduled to take place on May 23 and 24 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. The two-day summit is being organized by the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) in collaboration with FICCI and Invest India. It will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and aims to spotlight the Northeast Region's geostrategic advantages, rich natural resources, skilled workforce, and access to captive markets both within the region and in neighboring countries.

An official from DoNER stated, "The Northeast is fast emerging as a new frontier for business opportunities. This summit provides an ideal platform to forge



partnerships, explore investment possibilities, initiate greenfield manufacturing ventures, and understand the potential of the region for business expansion." The summit aims to position the Northeast as a rising hub for manufacturing and services. It will also offer insights into the policy framework and a range of incentives available for companies targeting emerging markets in the ASEAN and BBN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal) regions, helping them to explore cross-border ventures. In the lead-up to the

event, roadshows were held in seven major Indian cities to showcase the investment prospects of the Northeast and engage potential investors.

"The summit is expected to become a premier platform for networking with key stakeholders including industry leaders and policymakers," the official added. "It will create valuable opportunities for exploring joint ventures, MoUs, and business tie-ups through G2B and B2B meetings during the event." Over 2,000 high-level delegates, including policymakers, industry leaders, investors, multilateral agencies, and start-ups will participate. Discussions will focus on more than nine priority sectors including agriculture and food processing, textiles and handicrafts, entertainment and sports.

Delhi HC hears Celebi's claims of unfair security clearance revocation

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday heard in detail, the challenge filed by Turkish firm Celebi Airport Services against the revocation of its security clearance by the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS).

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, representing Celebi, stated that the company's extensive operations in India,



employing over 10,000 personnel across multiple airports over the last 17 years.

Rohatgi argued that Celebi's security clearance, originally granted in 2022 under

Rule 15 for a five-year term, was abruptly revoked without prior notice or a hearing, violating the principle of procedural fairness.

He argued that the lack of transparency surrounding the reasons for this decision, suggesting that the Turkish shareholding might have influenced the government's stance. He asserted that Celebi's workforce consists of Indian nationals and that

the firm is not politically affiliated with the Turkish government. Rohatgi during arguments stated that, "You have violated every aspect of Rule 12, affecting my business and contracts, which are now facing cancellation. The Ministry of Home Affairs has removed us, leaving us with no recourse. The decision only targets the company, while the employees remain unchanged.

Yogi reviews progress of Backward Classes and Disabled Empowerment schemes

TDG NETWORK
LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday held a review meeting with the Backward Classes Welfare Department and the Disabled Empowerment Department at his official residence in Lucknow, focusing on welfare and empowerment initiatives.

The Chief Minister reviews the progress of ongoing



schemes to ensure timely implementation of welfare

programmes. He also emphasised transparency, efficiency,

and the need for departments to work in coordination, underscoring his administration's focus on inclusive and responsive governance. Reflecting this broader vision of safeguarding societal values and public welfare, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday described Operation Sindoor as a symbol of India's self-respect, the honour of the 'sindoor' worn by Indian women, and a guarantee of safety for future generations.

Indian Navy inducts historic ship 'Kaundinya' built using ancient techniques

TDG NETWORK
KARWAR

The Indian Navy inducted INSV Kaundinya, a ship reconstructed using ancient shipbuilding techniques, into its fleet at the Karwar Naval Base on Wednesday.

The ceremony was led by Union Minister of Tourism and Culture, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, and was attended by Vice Admiral Rajaram Swaminathan, Controller of Warship Production and Acquisition (CWP&A), Rear Admiral KM Ramakrishnan, Flag Officer Karnataka Naval Area, and other dignitaries.

According to a release, INSV Kaundinya is a stitched sail ship, based on a 5th century

CE ship depicted in the paintings of Ajanta Caves. The project was initiated through a tripartite agreement signed in Jul 2023 between the Ministry of Culture, the Indian Navy, and M/s Hodi Innovations, with funding from the Ministry of Culture.

Following the keel laying in September 2023, the vessel's construction was undertaken using a traditional method of stitching by a team of skilled artisans from Kerala, led by master shipwright Shri Babu Sankaran. Over several months, the team painstakingly stitched wooden planks on the ship's hull using coir rope, coconut fibre and natural resin. The ship was



launched in Feb 2025 at Goa.

Speaking at the event, Union Minister of Tourism and Culture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said, "It is a historic and important day. India's ancient maritime capabilities and ship-building skills have been revived. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Economic Advi-

sor, Sanjeev Sanyal, was the first to research this. Reconstructed from a 5th-century Ajanta painting, the ship was built using the ancient stitching technique. No screws have been used in its construction and has been built by the only remaining family who know this art. This is not just

an ancient technique of ship-building, but a resurgence of Indian history. I feel blessed to be here. Such a legacy ship can be used for tourism in the future." The Indian Navy played a central role in the project, overseeing the design, technical validation, and construction process. With no surviving blueprints of such vessels, the design had to be inferred from iconographic sources. The Navy collaborated with the shipbuilder to recreate the hull form and traditional rigging, and ensured that the design was validated through hydrodynamic model testing at the Department of Ocean Engineering, IIT Madras, and internal technical assessment.

Delhi Metro services partially hit after storm; delays on Red and Yellow Lines

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) on Wednesday said that services have resumed normally on the Pink Line but continue to be affected on parts of the Red and Yellow Lines due to overhead equipment (OHE) damage caused by strong winds and rain in the national capital.

In a post on X, DMRC said, "Metro Service Update:

1. Train services on Pink Line are running normal now. 2. Due to OHE breakdowns, train services are

regulated and operating on a single line on the following sections of Red and Yellow Line:

* Red Line: Dilshad Garden to New Bus Adda

* Yellow Line: Vishwavidyalaya to Samaypur Badli."

"Services on remaining sections of these lines are running through both Up and Down Lines but are little delayed," DMRC said in their post on X, adding, "Services on all other lines which are not impacted by this windstorm are running normal." Earlier in the day, DMRC had said that

metro operations were affected in some parts of the Red, Yellow and Pink Lines due to damage to overhead equipment and external objects falling onto the tracks following heavy rain and hailstorms in parts of Delhi.

Areas near Shaheed Nagar, Jahangirpuri and Nizamuddin stations were among the worst affected.

"Due to sudden windstorm, there has been some damage to OHE or external objects falling/coming on to metro tracks at certain locations," DMRC had said in a statement.

STOCK INDICES BACK IN GREEN; SENSEX UP 410 POINTS

The indices had slumped in the past three sessions, possibly due to profit booking.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

After three straight session losses, Indian stock indices soared on Wednesday, possibly due to buying at relatively lower levels.

The indices had slumped in the past three sessions, possibly due to profit booking.

Going ahead, investors now await further updates on India-US trade deal negotiations. US, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal earlier this week had “good discussions” with US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick about expediting the first tranche of the India-US Bilateral Trade Agreement.

On Wednesday, Sensex closed at 81,596.63 points, up 410.20 points or 0.51 per cent, while Nifty closed at 24,813.45 points, up 129.55 points or 0.52 per cent. Barring Nifty consumer durables, all sectoral indices were in the



On Wednesday, Sensex closed at 81,596.63 points, up 410.20 points or 0.51 per cent, while Nifty closed at 24,813.45 points, up 129.55 points or 0.52 per cent. Barring Nifty consumer durables, all sectoral indices were in the green. Nifty Pharma and Nifty Realty were the top movers.

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Nifty India Defence jumped 3.4 per cent. Gold, a key indicator of the financial sector, was trading

at USD 3,318 per ounce, up USD 30 or 0.9 per cent.

Sensex is now over 4,000 points below its all-time high of 85,978 points.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Invest-

ments Limited said markets exhibited a broadly positive undertone today. However, overall sentiment remained confined within a narrow range, indicating risk of “sell on rallies” strategy in the near future amid escalating uncertainty around India - US trade negotiations. There is a growing perception that India may not derive the anticipated benefits initially projected during the peak of the tariff war, which has since de-escalated,” Nair said. “FIIs turned net sellers due to the concerns over the re-

cent US credit rating downgrade, tax cut plans in the US that could significantly widen the fiscal deficit, and its effect on the upcoming Fed policy next month. This change in stance hints at an increased probability of emerging risk-averse sentiment in the near term,” Nair added.

For Indian stock markets, key monitorables going ahead are Q4 GDP numbers and global cues. The official GDP data for Q4 2024-25 is scheduled to be released on May 30 by the National Statistics Office, along with the annual GDP for 2024-25.

During the April-June, July-September, and October-December 2024 quarters, the country's economy, in real terms, observed a growth rate of 6.7 per cent, 5.6 per cent, and 6.2 per cent, respectively. As per the second advance estimates of NSO, the country's economy is projected to grow at 6.5 per cent in 2024-25.

GOLD RALLIES RS 1,910 TO RS 98,450/10 G

NEW DELHI: Gold prices rebounded by Rs 1,910 to Rs 98,450 per 10 grams in the national capital as rising global uncertainties triggered a fresh wave of safe-haven buying.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 96,540 per 10 grams on Tuesday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity appreciated by Rs 1,870 to Rs 98,000 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) on Wednesday from the previous day's close of Rs 96,130 per 10 grams.

“A weak dollar supported gold prices. Investors are also evaluating sovereign risk after Moody's downgraded the US credit rating due to fiscal deficit concerns,” Abans Financial Services' Chief Executive Officer Chintan Mehta said. The downgrade has heightened uncertainty

around the long-term stability of US finances, prompting investors to seek safe-haven assets like gold, Mehta said.

In addition, silver prices climbed Rs 1,660 to Rs 99,160 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) on Wednesday. The white metal had finished at Rs 97,500 per kg in the previous market close.

On the global front, spot gold rose USD 21.79 or 0.66 per cent to USD 3,311.76 per ounce.

“Gold edged higher on Wednesday reclaiming the USD 3,300 level amid rising geopolitical tensions and US fiscal concerns,” Saumil Gandhi, Senior Research Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Meanwhile, investor jitters stemming from ongoing uncertainty regarding tariff policies and an upcoming crucial vote on President Donald Trump's

RUPEE FALLS 1 PAISA TO CLOSE AT 85.59

Mumbai: The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled for the day down by 1 paise at 85.59 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, on dollar demand from importers and foreign banks as well as surge in crude oil prices.

Forex traders said market sentiment soured under pressure from rising US Treasury yields and persistent foreign fund outflows. However, positive domestic markets and a weak US dollar index cushioned the downside.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.65 and moved between an intra-day high of 85.53 and a low of 85.70 against the greenback.

NSE MD meets Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Managing Director and CEO of the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) Ashish Kumar Chauhan on Wednesday met the Union Finance Minister and committed to supporting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Viksit Bharat 2047 vision.

Posting on X, NSE MD and CEO Chauhan thanked the finance minister for the meeting and vowed to be an enabler and contributor to the government's mission. “Thank you for your time Hon'ble FM @nsitharaman ma'am. Your steadfast leadership, resolve and commitment unto Viksit Bharat 2047 under PM @narendramodiji inspires us all. We @NSEIndia are resolute to be an enabler and contributor to your vision and mission,” Chauhan wrote on X.

It was not immediately



known what they might have discussed during the meeting.

Last week, the NSE reached a significant milestone: It became the largest unlisted company in India with over 1 lakh shareholders. This achievement reflects strong investor interest and confidence in the exchange's role in India's financial ecosystem.

NSE reported a 17% YoY increase in consolidated total income, reaching Rs 19,177 crore in FY25. The exchange's net profit rose

by 47% to Rs 12,188 crore in FY25.

NSE contributed Rs 59,798 crore to the Indian exchange through various levies, including STT, stamp duty, SEBI fees, income tax, and GST. Separately, NSE is awaiting the SEBI clearance of its much-awaited IPO. NSE's IPO papers are under review. Market regulator SEBI had flagged key issues, which include the high compensation given to key managerial personnel, technology, and ownership in the clearing corporation.

‘First tranche of India-US bilateral trade deal likely before July’

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

India and the United States are poised to sign the first tranche of the much-anticipated Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) before July, according to sources who spoke to ANI.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal is currently in the United States, leading negotiations with American officials.

“Good discussions with Secretary Howard Lutnick towards expediting the first tranche of India-US Bilateral Trade Agreement,” Minister Goyal posted on social media platform X yesterday, signalling positive momentum in the talks.

Sources revealed that a round of meetings with the United States Trade Representative has already concluded.

Officials from both nations have discussed various issues related to goods trade, with India pushing



for concessions on labour-intensive exports such as leather and textiles.

Service sector issues have also featured prominently in the discussions.

“We want to increase our exports and preserve what we are already exporting,” a source familiar with the negotiations told ANI. “The BTA with the US will be a win-win deal for both countries.”

The sources indicated that India remains protective of sensitive sectors, particularly agriculture and dairy products.

A key Indian demand is a full exemption from the 26 per cent tariff imposed on

certain goods.

“Negotiations are proceeding on a very positive note, and we expect to conclude the agreement before the sunset clause set by the US, which expires on July 8,” one of the sources added.

The India-US trade deal would mark a significant milestone in economic relations between the world's largest and fifth-largest economies, potentially opening new avenues for bilateral commerce and investment.

For the fourth consecutive year in 2024-25, the US was India's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade val-

For the fourth consecutive year in 2024-25, the US was India's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade valued at USD 131.84 billion. India had a trade surplus of USD 41.18 billion in goods in 2024-25.

ued at USD 131.84 billion. India had a trade surplus of USD 41.18 billion in goods in 2024-25.

During the recent meeting between President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in February, the two leaders resolved to expand trade and investment to make their citizens more prosperous, nations stronger, economies more innovative, and supply chains more resilient.

They resolved to deepen the US-India trade relationship to promote growth that ensures fairness, national security and job creation. To this end, the leaders set a bold new goal for bilateral

trade - “Mission 500” - aiming to more than double total bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030.

Beyond the US talks, sources mentioned that trade negotiations with the European Union are also underway, and they expect an early harvest.

Sources said trade negotiations between India and the European Union are progressing faster, and both sides are considering concluding the talks for an early harvest trade agreement this year. The Indian official team from the Commerce Ministry will be in Brussels this week for the next round of negotiations on the trade agreement with the EU.

Reflex Renewables & Infrastructure loss narrows to Rs 5 crore in Q4

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Reflex Renewables & Infrastructure on Wednesday reported narrowing of consolidated net loss to Rs 5.02 crore in the March quarter.

The company reported a consolidated net loss of Rs 10.84 crore in the quarter ended on March 31, 2024, according to a BSE filing. Total income rose to Rs 24.98 crore during the quarter from Rs 20.34 crore in the same period a year ago.

During FY25, the loss widened to Rs 36.39 crore from Rs 34.42 crore a year ago. The board also decided “withdrawal/cancellation of rights issue of an aggregate issue size of up to Rs 160



The company reported a consolidated net loss of Rs 10.84 crore in the quarter ended on March 31, 2024, according to a BSE filing. Total income rose to Rs 24.98 crore during the quarter from Rs 20.34 crore in the same period a year ago.

crore, which was approved by the board of directors, in

its meeting held on May 22, 2024”.

Oil India Q4 results: Net profit falls 8% to Rs 848 cr

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Oil India Ltd, the nation's second-largest state oil explorer, on Monday reported 8 per cent drop in March quarter net profit on lower crude oil production. Net profit in January-March 2021 at Rs 847.56 crore, or Rs 7.82 per share, was lower than Rs 925.65 crore, or Rs 8.54 a share, profit in the same period a year back, the company said in a statement. The firm got USD 59.80 for every barrel of crude oil in the quarter, up from USD 5.18 a year back. But oil production fell by 5.28 per cent to 0.72 million tonne in January-March 2021.

Gas output was almost at 0.649 billion cubic me-



ters. Turnover rose to Rs 3,909.61 crore in the fourth quarter of 2020-21 scal year from Rs 3,583.72 crore a year back. Lower oil prices led to net profit in 2020-21 drop to Rs 1,741.59 crore from Rs 2,584.06 crore in the previous financial year.

Average crude oil price realisation in 2020-21 was USD 43.98 per barrel as compared to USD 60.75 during 2019-20, a 27.61 per cent decline resulting from demand disruption caused by COVID.

GDP for FY 2025 to settle at 6.3%: SBI

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

India's economy is expected to maintain a stable growth trajectory in the current fiscal year, with GDP projected to settle at 6.3 per cent with Q4 FY25 growth at between 6.4 and 6.5 per cent, according to an SBI Research report. The report signals continued economic resilience amid evolving global and domestic challenges.

The SBI research adds that despite rising global uncertainties, including trade disruptions and policy volatility, India's economic momentum remains largely resilient.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), however, has projected 6.5 per cent GDP growth for the fiscal year 2024-25.

SBI report notes that the GDP growth projections in its report are based on its in-house nowcasting model using 36 high-frequency indicators. The model reflects a slight moderation in activity, with fewer indicators showing acceleration compared to the third quarter.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected India's GDP at 6.2 per cent in FY25 and 6.3 per cent in fiscal 2026, driven by strong private consumption, even as global growth slows to 2.8 per cent in 2025.



Domestic positive factors such as easing household inflation expectations and above-average monsoon forecasts support demand and agricultural growth prospects.

Domestic positive factors such as easing household inflation expectations and above-average monsoon forecasts support demand and agricultural growth prospects.

However, the report points out that the concerns such as dip in Index of Industrial Production (IIP), slowing corporate GVA (Gross Value Added) and EBITDA (Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation) margins, and weaker capex momentum across several states persist.

It added that while external

risks are mounting, India's growth trajectory appears relatively stable, though cautious optimism is warranted in the short term, the report added.

It is to be noted that the March edition of the Monthly Economic Review of the Ministry of Finance added that the performance of the economy in the past quarters was driven by strong agricultural and service sector performance on the supply side and a steady increase in consumption and core merchandise and services exports on the demand side.

IndiGo posts highest Q4 profit of Rs 3,068 crore

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

InterGlobe Aviation, the parent of the country's largest airline IndiGo, on Wednesday posted its highest-ever fourth quarter profit after tax of Rs 3,067.5 crore, mainly helped by strong air travel demand.

The company's profit after tax in the three months ended March 2025 jumped

62 per cent from Rs 1,894.8 crore in the year-ago period. Its board has recommended a dividend of Rs 10 per equity share.

In the fourth quarter of the 2024-25 fiscal, IndiGo's capacity increased 21 per cent to 42.1 billion while the number of passengers carried rose 19.6 per cent to 31.9 million, according to a release. Total income rose to Rs 23,097.5 crore in the



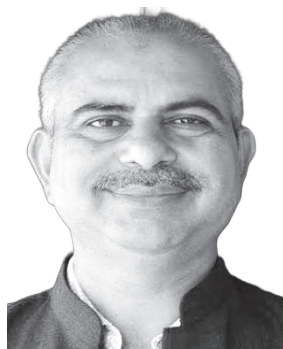
fourth quarter of the 2024-25 financial year from Rs 18,505.1 crore in the same period a year ago.

“Driven by strong demand for air travel and execution of our strategy, for the financial year ended March 2025,

RAJIV WAS WISER AFTER LONG STINT IN OPPN, DESTINY HAD OTHER DESIGNS

OPINION

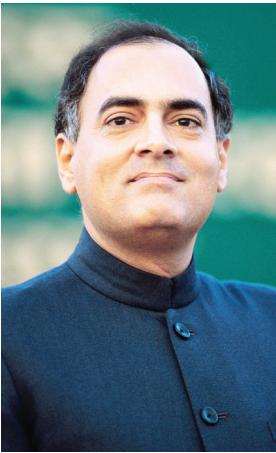
RASHEED KIDWAI



Rajiv Gandhi met a violent end whose unexpected rise to the post of the country's top executive was brought about by another act of violence — his mother's assassination at the hands of her own security guards who pumped 36 bullets into her body. Like Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984, death was on Rajiv Gandhi's mind on May 21, 1991. He had some kind of premonition about his impending end. Journalist Neena Gopal, had interviewed Rajiv Gandhi moments before the former Prime Minister was killed by an LTTE suicide bomber on that fateful night at Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu. In her book, The Assassination of Rajiv Gandhi (Penguin), Gopal remembers asking Rajiv whether he felt his life was at risk. "Rajiv responded with a counter-question: 'Have you noticed how every time any South Asian leader of any import

risers to a position of power or is about to achieve something for himself or his country, he is cut down, attacked, killed... look at Mrs [Indira] Gandhi, Sheikh Mujib, look at Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, at Zia-ul-Haq, [S.W.R.D.] Bandaranaike..." Gopal says that within minutes of making the statement that hinted that he was aware he was a likely target of dark forces at play, Rajiv himself would be gone. One of Rajiv's actions as Prime Minister was to send Indian armed forces to Sri Lanka to end militant insurgency in the neighbouring country. The Prime Minister had been advised by the Indian High Commission in Colombo, military commanders and intelligence agencies to undertake such a risky and adventurous mission. Many Indian soldiers lost their lives but the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) couldn't be tamed. The army was called back. But, by then, the LTTE had become a sworn enemy of Rajiv. Gopal insists there were hundreds of intercepts between April 1990 and May 1991 that showed the LTTE's intention to kill Rajiv. She has quoted Col. Hariharan, who had a small army of Jaffna Tamils keeping an eye on the LTTE for him, as saying that he was taken

aback when he was given a cassette to listen to and, from what his code-breakers told him, that a plot was afoot to eliminate Rajiv. Some of the intercepted messages were: "Rajiv Gandhi avarunde mandalai addipodalam", "Dump pannidungo" and "Maranai vecchidungo". An approximate translation would be: blow Rajiv Gandhi's head off, eliminate him, kill him. On 21 May 1991, Rajiv Gandhi boarded a helicopter for a whirlwind tour of the coastal areas of Bhadrak, Angul, Gunupur and Paralakhemundi in Orissa before crossing over to Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh. Uma Gajapati Raju was the Congress nominee there. Rajiv was a great votary of getting young professionals into politics, and he had made a special effort to get her a ticket. That evening, keen to catch up on his sleep, Rajiv toyed with the idea of not going to Sriperumbudur. He was extremely hungry, and Raju invited him to her house for dinner, but he resisted the offer. His party expected an extra bit from him. Sharing his thoughts with a party functionary, he said, 'I will catch up on my sleep at leisure with Rahul, Priyanka, Sonia around. Margetham Chandrashekar [the Congress candidate from Sriperumbudur] is an old friend of mama [Indira Gandhi],' thereby overruling the suggestion that the former Prime Minister should not visit the constituency at night. As Rajiv left for the airport, Raju sent Rajiv pizza, idlies and some sambhar-rasam. Rajiv boarded the plane,



but there was a change of plan after a technical snag was discovered. It was decided to have a night halt at Visakhapatnam after all. While he was driving down to the circuit house, a constable came hurrying after to inform him that the plane was now ready to take off. When the flight took off, a hungry Rajiv discovered that the food had been left in the car. When the thalaivar (leader) reached Sriperumbudur, there was little that could be described as security arrangements. Constables from the Tamil Nadu police watched curiously as Rajiv mingled freely with the crowd. Rajiv's personal security attendant, Pradeep Gupta, made a feeble bid to keep the mob from touching him. The senior state Congress leaders, ranging from G.K. Moopananar to Margetham Chandrashekar, were sitting on the dais about 100 yards away. Rajiv began briskly walking on the red carpet accepting garlands from one and all. Death stopped him when he heard a poem being recited by a young girl, Kokila, who was part of the suicide squad. His assassin, Dhanu,

moved closer to him carrying a garland made of sandalwood. An edgy Rajiv sensed something unusual, signalling to Constable Anusuya to regulate the crowd. But by then Dhanu had bent, pretending to touch Rajiv's feat and triggering off the RDX strapped all around her. Ironically, at the time of the blast, a chorus at the public meeting was still singing, 'Rajiv Gandhi's life is our life, if not for Indira Gandhi's son, there is no life for anyone.' Rajiv Gandhi's biggest drawback was having to become prime minister of India at the age of 40. He had no apprenticeship nor was he associated with the decision to anoint him as prime minister on October 31, 1984 hours after his mother's assassination. Rajiv had no prior ministerial experience or interest in politics till 1980 when his younger brother Sanjay died in an air crash. When politician 'Dumpy' Akbar Ahmed suggested Rajiv's name from Amethi after Sanjay's death, author Gill quoted Indira as saying, "Do not be silly. His [Rajiv] politics is not like ours." [The Dynasty – A Political Biography of the Premier Ruling Family of Modern India, S.S. Gill, HarperCollins 1996]. Indira's friend Pupul Jayakar has written about how Indira told her that Sanjay was very frugal, but Rajiv and his wife "need certain comforts". [Indira Gandhi – A Biography, Pupul Jayakar, Viking 1988] Soon after becoming prime minister, Rajiv had a trio – cousin Arun Nehru, Doon School buddy Arun Singh

and his finance minister V P Singh as his close advisors and aides. There was euphoria to recreate India, 'break the mould' and change the system. Rajiv wanted to reform the Congress from "Brokers of power and influence who dispense patronage to convert a mass movement into a feudal oligarchy." Rajiv was relying heavily on V P Singh to liberalize the economy and clean up the business environment. Rajiv visited the USA in June 1985. The young prime minister had a scintillating performance at the National Press Club, USA which made a magical impact on him. It was a solo performance televised live, unprompted by any aide. Then came The Bofors scandal that had erupted after a report on Swedish radio that claimed that the arms manufacturer had paid bribes to secure the contract. One after another, Arun Nehru, Arun Singh and V P Singh fell out with Rajiv. The political management was back to mavericks like R K Dhawan, M F Fotedar, Buta Singh, Lalit Suri, Captain Satish Sharma and Sitaram Kesri. Rajiv became peevish and cynical. Just as Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi had diminished with advancing years, it happened to Rajiv towards the end of his prime ministerial stint in 1987-89 when allegations of kickbacks and scandals eroded his credibility. A 15-month long stint in the opposition ranks had made Rajiv more mature and wiser. However, destiny had other designs. Rajiv was assassinated while attempting a political comeback.

Summer memories of Allahabad

OPINION

HIMANSHU DHULIYA



Summer is the season when nature manifests its anger, with some sweet relief in shape of melons, cucumber and mangoes. Though some retreat to vacations to colder latitudes but the large majority have to slug the heat to make the ends meet. The summer is in full bloom, the monsoons are awaited, the temperatures are being monitored. The birds search for water in streets and doorsteps of concrete structures! The dogs gasp with elongated tongues, the world moves on! Summer brings many memories. I was staying in a multi-storey apartment in Mumbai, it was Saturday and I was at home. Work was in progress in the flat opposite to mine. The pre-

vious occupant had vacated the flat and it was being prepared for the new occupant and therefore a mason and one helper were in the flat. Occasionally they would press the door bell and request for water to be filled in their plastic bottle and our domestic help would oblige; this was going on for few days, and our help therefore was a little irritated. When the door bell rang for the second time on that day she gave water but told them firmly that water was also available in the taps of the house where they were working. I was hearing this and quickly told her that it was O.K.; may be they expect clean, cold water from our residence and the matter ended. I was aware how in Vishakhapatnam I would read regularly the fatality count on account of 'Heat stroke', most who died were poor labourers working on roadside without shade and who did not have the freedom to stay secure at home. Now I am in Goa and here too the summer heat and humidity is sapping. However, many memories of the summers spent in the heat waves of Allahabad come rushing;

though all seasons visit Allahabad, but the city is famous for its summer! My Mother returning home by rickshaw after her examination duties, would insist that an urn full of water be given to the 'Rickshawala' and she would ensure that a piece of 'gur' (jaggery) is also given as it was her belief that in hot weather when one was sweating one should not drink cold water empty stomach. Water serving points (*piau*) were available at street corners as it was the custom of the city. The summer began soon after Holi and ended close to Diwali, May to August were the hottest period. At that time Air conditioners were non-existent in middle class homes, later we could afford water coolers; but not in all rooms. In summers we would lie on the floor and the solitary USHA fan was our source of survival; the fan is still serviceable! The heat in Allahabad was a challenge, we were always cautioned to guard against the dreaded 'loo' (the heat wave peculiar to summer seasons in eastern UP) and covered our head with a soft towel when venturing out, the agony was aggravated by the fact that the movement was slow, either on cycle or on rickshaw; scooter came later which was a relief. Sometimes I would see a solitary person on the road between High Court and Circuit House on a cycle with his head covered fighting the heat wave and opposing hot wind and trying to make way, his move-

ment ahead would be very slow and from a distance it would appear the cycle was stationary on the road. During the afternoons the only shops open would be of 'Paan/bidi/cigarette'. My Father also suffered in summers along with other lawyers as there was no change in the dress regulation, he was tied down by the black coat and what accompanies Lawyers' uniform and was sweating all the time, there were white sweat marks perennially under the arms of his coat. Maybe the court rooms were air conditioned/air cooled or 'khus-khus' was put but the travel to 'High Court' was full of hot air and slowness of 'Rickshaw' made it even more treacherous. Most Government offices had coolers for the officers and 'Khas-Khas' mats for the staff, casual staff was recruited during the period to water the vertical 'Khas-Khas' mats fixed to the doors and the windows which cooled the air and the very smell/aroma of Khus-Khus was refreshing (I miss those days). Reading occupied much of our time during vacations; *Nandan*, *Parag* (children's magazines) when children and weekly/fortnightly magazines such as *Samtabik Hindustan*, *Dharmayug*, *Illustrated weekly*, when grown up. We graduated to reading *Premchand* and *James Hadley Chase* soon. 'Panna' (a drink made of raw mangoes, fresh mint and sugar/jaggery) was available at home

and 'Kissan's' orange and lemon squash and 'Rasna' were also there, Coke was a luxury. Water was cooled in a big 'Ghara' (a big earthen container) which was filled in the morning, it was supplemented by a few 'surahi' (a slim earthen container-*Pitcher*). Water purifiers and filters were non-existent. 'Surahi' was carried during journeys on train and often purchased at the station and whilst disembarking either handed over to a fellow passenger or broken by throwing out of the train. It was a common belief and experience that the water of 'Surahi' was the sweetest (or was it the water of Jamuna in Allahabad which was sweet?). In the evenings when the sun had set but the warmth persisted we would look out for the Ice-cream vendor of the famous local 'Rita ice-cream'. During that era each town and city had its local brand of ice-cream and the big brands monopoly had not set in. Sometimes we friends would go to swim at the enclosed 'coral club' swimming pool. Cucumber the thick and thin variety were relished after application of liberal salt and red chilly, the 'Kharbujas' (melon) of Allahabad are to be found nowhere else, green in colour from inside and yellow-green pattern outside, always sweet, we made juice out of it when 'mixies' arrived. Mangoes would be sucked passionately; at least 5 to 6 in one go; the small

desi variety. Allahabad is blessed with huge tamarind trees which not only provide shade but sweet and sour fruit which was strewn on the road struck by wind or bird or children throwing stones to pluck the ripe and raw fruit. On certain occasions we were treated to the famous 'thandai' (a beverage made of milk and dry fruits). Clothes most preferred were half pants/T-shirts and the universal white lose kurta-pyjamas. The vegetables grew despite the heat and 'lauki, tinda parbal' were available in good numbers and variety. These were grown in 'kachar' (sandy region close to river). My mother would invariably shop for the vegetables and fruits on her return from college from the road adjacent to Government Press and behind the AG Office, where fresh vegetables and fruits of the season were available. At night, the fruits and vegetables from the 'kachar' were carried on camels' back to the mandi for sale the early next day. It was a picturesque sight to see the camels in one line slowly moving towards their destination as the cycles and rickshaws plied alongside. Most camels were loaded with 'water melons' on both sides. Many years have passed since I left the historic city but I remember it for many reasons and one is its distinct summer- the fragrance of the 'heated earth' is deeply etched in my heart and mind.

PERSPECTIVE

BEYOND BOUNDARIES: THE MULTIFACETED PROGRESS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

No society can ever be imagined without women. It will not be a fallacy to remark that women are the warp and woof of any social setup. The transformation of women's progress in India across various fields, including the military, Airforce has been significant and multifaceted which indeed hammers at the old ossified stronghold of patriarchy. It was a goosebump moment for the countrymen when two women officers Colonel Sofiya Qureshi of the Army and Wing Commander Vyomika Singh from the Indian Air Force briefed the media about Operation Sindoor in New Delhi on May 7, 2025. However, it cannot be forgotten that the entry of women in the Indian Army has had a chequered history. Here's a comprehensive overview of how women have evolved their roles and status in different sectors, particularly focusing on education, employment, politics, Administrative services, health, social rights, sports, arts, technology, Airline and the armed forces: There has been a notable increase in female enrollment in primary, secondary, and higher education. Government initiatives and scholarships have played a crucial role in reducing dropout rates among girls. Focus on STEM: More women are pursuing degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and various programs encourage girls to enter these fields. Women's participation in the workforce has significantly increased, especially in urban areas. They are taking on roles in diverse IT, healthcare, education, and finance sectors. Entrepreneurship Growth: The rise of women entrepreneurs is notable, with numerous government schemes supporting female-led businesses and providing access to loans, training, and mentorship. In modern day politics women leaders play key roles. Unlike the figurehead office bearers in the past they have become quite assertive and articulate and their voices in the corridors of politics are not just heard but respected too. Women's representation in politics has considerably improved with women occupying prominent portfolios in government, including ministers and members of parliament. Reserving seats in local governance has empowered women to participate in decision-making. Initiatives aimed at developing leadership skills among women have resulted in more women entering political spheres and advocating for policy changes. Nowadays women's access to healthcare has improved, with government programs focusing on maternal and reproductive rights and awareness campaigns addressing women's health issues. Focus on Mental Health is also there as mental health matters the most for all individual. Increasing awareness about mental health and support systems has empowered women to seek help and advocate for their mental well-being which was considered a taboo in the past. The introduction of laws to protect against domestic violence, harassment, and discrimination has strengthened women's rights. Campaigns and movements have raised awareness about these laws and encouraged women to assert their rights. It is also heartening to witness that Social movements advocating for women's rights have transformed societal attitudes, promoting gender equality and challenging stereotypes. Women athletes have gained recognition and support, breaking records and stereotypes in various sports. Initiatives focused on promoting women's sports have led to increased participation and visibility. Women in arts and entertainment are making significant contributions, with more female directors, writers, and artists gaining recognition for their work, challenging traditional narratives. Increasing digital literacy among women has empowered them to leverage technology for education and entrepreneurship. Programs aimed at training women in tech skills are gaining momentum. Innovation Leadership-Women are leading innovative projects in technology and startups, contributing to economic growth and advancements in various sectors. Women have made significant strides in the Indian Armed Forces, with policies allowing them to serve in various capacities. They can now serve in combat roles, which was previously restricted to men only. India has the highest number of women pilots in the world. Women take on leadership positions within the military, including officer rank in various branches. The induction of women into the Indian Air Force as pilots has been a groundbreaking development. Initiatives to provide equal training and opportunities for women in the military have encouraged more women to pursue careers in defence services, contributing to national security. The transformation of women's progress in India reflects a broader societal shift towards gender equality and empowerment. While challenges remain, particularly in traditional sectors, the ongoing efforts to promote women's rights, education, and representation continue to pave the way for future generations. Including women in the military and air force exemplifies a critical shift in recognising their capabilities and essential roles in all facets of national service.

INDIRA VASHISHTA CARENA

Naxalism began in 1967, rooted in peasant revolt; Basavaraju’s death in 2025 marks a major blow to the insurgency.

THE RISE AND FALL OF INDIA’S MAOIST INSURGENCY

Naxalism, a left-wing extremist movement in India, originated with the Naxalbari uprising in 1967. This revolt, sparked in the village of Naxalbari in West Bengal, was a peasant protest against exploitation by landlords, particularly targeting the landowning class and moneylenders. The peasants, who mainly worked on tea plantations and estates, had endured centuries of oppression. The immediate cause was the brutal beating of a share-cropper, who had tried to till land from which he had been illegally evicted. This incident on March 25, 1967, catalyzed a widespread peasant revolt.

The roots of the uprising were sown in the years prior to 1967 by cadres of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M), a splinter group of the Communist Party of India (CPI). The CPI-M believed that a true socialist revolution in India could only come through an armed uprising by workers and peasants. Charu Mazumdar, one of the key leaders, recognized the moment as an ideal revolutionary situation, drawing inspiration from the Chinese Communist Revolution, the Vietnam War, and the Cuban Revolution. Along with leaders like Kanu Sanyal and Jangal Santhal, Mazumdar led the armed peasant uprising, which started on May 25, 1967.

The revolt quickly met the heavy hand of the state, with police forces using violence against the protesters. Despite this, the movement spread across the region, with peasant committees seizing land, food, and arms. Violent clashes occurred, including the police opening fire on May 25, 1967, which killed several civilians. By June, the movement had spread to nearby areas, including Kharibari and Phansidewa, while workers in the Darjeeling tea gardens supported the cause. However, by July, the Indian government sent paramilitary forces to quell the uprising,



resulting in arrests and deaths of key leaders.

Naxalism’s ideological foundation was further solidified through Charu Mazumdar’s writings, including the Historic Eight Documents, which outlined the Maoist-inspired principles of the movement. These documents argued that the Indian state was a bourgeois institution and denounced Soviet-style revisionism, promoting instead a protracted people’s war to overthrow it. Naxalism was further fueled by ideological rifts within the CPI-M, which itself had splintered due to differing views on revolution, particularly following the Sino-Soviet split.

Thus, Naxalism began as a reaction to the brutal exploitation of peasants, inspired by Maoist ideology and fueled by ideological battles within the communist movement in India. It would go on to become a significant and enduring insurgency, particularly in rural and tribal areas across the country.

DECLINE IN NAXAL-AFFECTED REGIONS

The number of districts affected by Naxalism has decreased significantly. In 2014, there were 126 such

districts; by 2025, this number has reduced to 18, with only 6 districts being severely affected. This reduction is attributed to sustained security operations and development initiatives in these regions

GOVERNMENT’S COMMITMENT

The Modi government has set a target to eradicate Naxalism by March 31, 2026. Home Minister Amit Shah has expressed confidence that, except for a small pocket in Chhattisgarh, the country is largely free from the Naxal menace.

DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Complementing security measures, the government has focused on development in Naxal-affected areas. Efforts include the opening of bank branches and ATMs, establishment of post offices with banking services, and recruitment of tribal youths into security forces. Additionally, infrastructure projects like the introduction of state-run bus services in previously inaccessible areas have been implemented to integrate these regions into the broader economy.

In summary, the Modi gov-

ernment’s multi-pronged approach—combining aggressive security operations with targeted development programs—has led to a significant weakening of Naxalite influence in India. While challenges remain, particularly in certain pockets of Chhattisgarh, the overall trajectory indicates a substantial decline in Naxalism across the country.

MAJOR COUNTER-INSURGENCY OPERATIONS

A notable operation occurred on May 21, 2025, when security forces neutralized 27 Naxalites, including Nambala Keshav Rao (alias Basavaraju), the General Secretary of the CPI (Maoist), in the Abujhmad forests of Chhattisgarh’s Narayanpur district. This marked the first time in three decades that a leader of such high rank within the Naxalite hierarchy was eliminated. Union Home Minister Amit Shah hailed this as a “landmark achievement” in the fight against Naxalism.

Earlier in May, Operation Black Forest, a 21-day campaign in the Karreguttalu Hills along the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border, resulted in the deaths of 31 Naxalites.



In the late sixties and early seventies, the Naxalbari uprising ignited a fire in the hearts of both the urban youth and the rural masses. (CPIML.org)



Naxalite members – officially the Communist Party of India (Maoist) – April 2007. Agnecies

This operation is considered one of the largest anti-Naxal campaigns undertaken by Indian security forces

WHO WAS BASAVARAJU

Nambala Keshav Rao alias Basavaraju, the powerful general secretary of CPI (Maoist) killed in an encounter along with 26 others on Wednesday, had masterminded several major attacks on security forces in Chhattisgarh and his death is a big blow to the armed



Basavaraju is one of the 26 Naxals killed in the encounter in Abujhmad, Chhattisgarh on Wednesday.

movement, said officials. Hailing from Andhra Pradesh, Basavaraju, who carried a reward of Rs 1 crore on his head in Chhattisgarh, had been associated with the banned movement since 1970s and was elevated to the top post in CPI (Maoist) seven years ago, they said.

He was among the 27 dreaded Naxals killed by security forces in Chhattisgarh’s Bastar region. The

position due to his deteriorating health condition and age-related issues.

Ganpathy was holding the position since 2004 when the Community Party of India (Maoist) was formed with the merger of the CPI (Marxist-Leninist) (People’s War) and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) to lead the armed movement.

Since 2018, Maoists had executed several deadly at-

tacks in Bastar, including in Tekalgudem (Bijapur) where 22 security personnel were killed in 2021, the 2020 Minpa ambush (Sukma) wherein 17 security personnel lost their lives and Shyamgiri attack (Dantewada) in April 2019 in which BJP MLA Bhima Mandavi and four security personnel were killed.

A resident of Jiyannapeta village in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh, Basavaraju holds a BTech degree from the Regional Engineering College, Warangal, and was seen as an enigmatic leader of the outlawed Naxal outfit.

Known by the aliases of Prakash, Krishna, Vijay, Umesh and Kamlu, he joined the armed movement in the 1970s as a ground-level organizer, a police official said. In 1992, he was elected as a member of the central committee of the erstwhile Communist Party of India Marxist-Leninist People’s War, when Ganapathy became its general secretary, he said.

Before being elevated as general secretary, he headed the Central Military Commission (CMC) of Maoists for several years, police said.

Considered an expert in imparting military training and handling explosives and landmines, cadres of Basavaraju’s team were equipped with sophisticated weapons. A three-layered ring of armed cadres he kept around him in forests had so far made him untraceable by security forces, they said. Basavaraju’s age and looks is still a matter of speculation with security agencies suggesting he was around 71 years of age. They just have a bundle of old photos of him of his young age.

For the last few years, security forces have been consistently carrying out intelligence-based operations in interiors of Bijapur and Sukma to target Central Committee and Polit Bureau members of Maoists and they finally succeeded in eliminating Basavaraju in dense jungles and tough terrain, which had kept him and his team safe so far, a police officer said on the condition of anonymity.

Polit Bureau is the topmost decision-making body of CPI (Maoist) and Basavaraju was a member of it. Wednesday’s

encounter was part of an operation launched three days ago to corner Central Committee and Polit Bureau members of the banned outfit, the officer said.

The encounter took place following 70-hour-long combing by security forces in dense forests of Abujhmad.

Personnel belonging to the District Reserve Guard (DRG) from four districts -- Narayanpur, Dantewada, Bijapur, and Kondagaon -- were involved in the operation based on intelligence inputs about the presence of Central Committee and Polit Bureau members of CPI (Maoist), as well as senior Maad Division cadres and PLGA (Peoples’ Liberation Guerilla Army) members, he said.

DRG is the frontline anti-Naxal unit of the state police.

A large cache of weapons was recovered during the anti-Naxal operation, he said.

One DRG member was also killed, while a few other personnel sustained injuries during the encounter, the officer said.

Accused of plotting multiple Naxalite attacks, Basavaraju carried a reward of Rs 1 crore on his head in Chhattisgarh. However, governments of other states, including Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Telangana, had also announced rewards of different amounts on him, he said.

“Basavaraju was trained in guerrilla warfare by Maoist leader Ganpathy’s friend and first general secretary Sita Ramaiah. Basavaraju was chief commander of the central military wing during Ganpathy’s tenure as general secretary,” said Dr Girishkant Pandey, a security expert and principal at a government college in Nawagarh (Bemetara district).

“Basavaraju had no experience in running the organisation politically and therefore after his elevation as general secretary, the Maoist movement slowed down,” opined Pandey. Security forces have achieved a major success by killing this top Naxal commander after penetrating his security cover. Now the Naxalite outfit has no senior leader in the 40 to 50 age group, he added.

Compiled by Radhika Vashisht



Naxalites patrol in the Abujhmad forests in the central state of Chhattisgarh, India, 2007. Agencies

CHHATRIS OF GANGARSAULI: ECHOES OF HISTORY IN MORNING LIGHT



Prakash Chandra Sharma

Traveling is not just visiting places, but also living and learning every moment. “Jo Beet Gaya Hai Wo Ab Daur Na Aayega”, which means whatever passes shall never come back. My series of continuous journeys to explore the unique art-culture-tradition of the country and the state has reached Gangarsauli village this time. While going from Bharatpur to Govardhan Ji via Kumher, the huge beautiful dome-shaped chhatra built outside Gangarsauli village seems to be humming this song from the film ‘Tahalka’ repeatedly for years.

“Jo Beet Gaya Hai Wo Ab Daur Na Aayega”.

While going to Govardhan Ji, as soon as we left Kumher town, the magnetic attraction of these chhatris, which looked like the huge army of a Chhatrapati king from a distance and were displaying the valour of the past, forced us to deviate from our pre-planned travel route. Now, with the curiosity to know about those chhatris which looked as firm and steadfast as the Himalayas, we left the main road and proceeded on a rough-paved path. As we were coming closer to the chhatris, it felt as if the chhatris were calling us like an old aunt to tell us the story of some forgotten history. On the way, we stopped the car and wanted to know about the chhatris from a shepherd. He told us that he was from the same

Gangarsauli village but expressed his ignorance about the chhatris.

After walking for about a kilometer, we were standing in the courtyard of chhatris which were as huge as the Himalayas. In a room-like hut near the courtyard, an old Mahatma was meditating in a meditative state. We went into the room and bowed down to the Mahatma and expressed our curiosity about the chhatris. The old Mahatma first tested us with his crooked eyes and asked us to first go around the chhatris and then again got engrossed in meditation.

The attraction of the glimpse of the morning sun:

The main dome of the chhatris seemed to be spreading the rosy glow of the morning sun on the huge platform made of red stone. After circumambulating the platform, we entered the main dome through the eastern gate. The main dome was in the shape of a lotus leaf in which Lord Shiva was seated with his family. It seemed as if these idols were storing hundreds of years old history in themselves. Coming out of the dome, we once again went near the Mahatma and bowed down overwhelmed. This time the old Mahatma gestured us to sit on the sackcloth kept nearby and started narrating the tale of history on his own.

THE STORY OF BRAVERY OF KING SURAJMAL:

It was about 300 years ago on 18 May 1754. The mighty King Surajmal ruled over the Kumher-Bharatpur princely state. The Bharatpur princely state never accepted subordination to the Mughals. Independence and valor were their golden shining stars. This thing used to



prick like a needle in the eyes of the Mughal emperor Alamgir-II who was sitting on the throne of Delhi. At the same time, the proximity of Maharaja Surajmal and Bengal's Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula was also a thorn in Delhi's eyes. To fulfill his imperialist evil intentions, Alamgir-II planned to attack Kumher. The Mughal and their allies'

army marched to Kumher under the leadership of Mughal commander Imad-ul-Mulk. Among the allies, Har Govind Nattani of Jaipur state, Khanderao Holkar of Indore and Raghunathrao of Marathas, along with their armies, laid siege to the fort of Kumher on 20 January 1754. This military siege lasted for 5 months. The brave



warriors of both sides were eager to display their bravery by waving their arms. It was the day of 24 March 1754. The sun of Chait removed the dark blanket of the night of Maws and knocked hard on the earth. The first part of the day was about to end. Then the young Holkar chieftain Khanderao Holkar ordered his army to be alert. Khanderao himself rode in an open palanquin to inspect his army. Khanderao Holkar was moving ahead courageously, boosting the morale of the soldiers. The entire atmosphere was trembling with the frenzy of war and the noise of the war bugle. The trumpeting of elephants and the dust flying from the hooves of horses had filled the atmosphere with frenzy. The time of testing the brave warriors of both the armies had come near.

Here, the valiant king Surajmal, who loved his people, had taken command. The army of Kumher had barricaded the fort of Kumher. Also, cannons were placed on the bastions of all the four directions of the fort. The morning sun had just set its camp in the

second hour after crossing the first hour when Maharaja Surajmal issued an order to fire the cannon in the north direction. The gunner set fire to the cannonball and immediately went away. Sparks like sparklers started coming out of the fuse and after a few moments a cannonball came out with a bang. It was as if the angry clouds had thundered and attacked the battlefield. The cannonball covered an unseen distance of 5 kilometers in a moment and destroyed the palanquin of Khanderao Holkar who was inspecting the army in this Gangersoli village. Khanderao merged into the five elements there itself. The old Mahatma raised his eyes for the first time in the story and said that brother, where you are sitting right now, at this very historical place, a cannonball fired from the turret of Kumher fort had fallen on Khanderao's palanquin. It was here that Khanderao Holkar's last rites were performed with due rituals by his father Malhar Rao Holkar. Along with Khanderao Holkar,

his nine wives also became sati. But on the advice of Khanderao's father Malhar Rao, his first wife Ahilyabai Holkar who was pregnant at that time was not allowed to become sati. The news of the death of King Khanderao of Indore due to the cannon fire from Kumher fort had soon reached Maharaja Surajmal.

The generous hearted Maharaja Surajmal sent a condolence message to his father Malhar Rao through the royal priest Rupram Katra and expressed deep sorrow over the incident. At the same time, the diplomatic acumen of Maharaja Surajmal transformed the mutual enmity into friendship. On 18 May 1754, both the sides declared the end of the war by ending the enmity and the siege of Kumher was lifted. At the place where Khanderao Holkar attained divinity, Maharaja Surajmal built these magnificent chhatris in honour of King Khanderao.

Maharaja Malhar Rao Holkar also died early due to the grief of losing his son and then the people-loving, generous Queen Mother

Ahilyabai Holkar took the reins of governance in her hands. She established Mahasi as her new capital and renovated many old temples. She also got the Somnath temple, which was destroyed many times by the enemies, rebuilt. This time was called the golden age of the popular rule of India. We were extremely overwhelmed, amazed and left with a choice after listening to this unprecedented story. We bowed down to the sage and took his permission to proceed further. The sage said that the great deeds that have made India's history famous in the world, our future generations will create the future of a glorious India through the same great deeds.

Sitting in the car, we proceeded on our journey with our consciousness devoid. After going a little further, when we looked back from the car window, it seemed as if the umbrellas were humming again-

“Jo beet gaya hai wo ab daur na aayega”.

The writer of this article is a Senior Journalist and an author.

Timangarh Fort, Karauli: A forgotten marvel of Rajasthan

TDG NETWORK
JAIPUR

Timangarh Fort stands as a silent guardian of centuries-old secrets, in Rajasthan's Karauli district, a monument to the state's lesser-known yet immensely rich heritage. Unlike its more famous forts—Amer, Mehrauli, or Chittorgarh—Timangarh remains a largely forgotten structure, hidden away from the glare of mainstream tourism. Yet, for those who seek stories in stone, echoes in ruins, and heritage unspoiled by crowds, Timangarh Fort is a treasure trove of history, art, and architecture waiting to be rediscovered.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Timangarh Fort, also known as Timan Garh, derives its name from King Timanpal, a ruler believed to have governed the region in the 12th century. The fort's origins are said to go even further back, with some legends tracing its existence to ancient times, although verifiable historical references primarily date to the period of Rajput rule.

Located around 40 kilometers from Karauli town, the fort was of strategic importance due to its position near the old trade routes that connected western India with the heartland. Over the centuries, the fort changed hands multiple times—passing through the Mauryas, Guptas, Pratihars, Mughals, and Rajput clans, each leaving behind a mark of their era.

ARCHITECTURAL SPLENDOR

Spread across a vast area and constructed using local sandstone, the fort is a stunning example of medieval military architecture fused with Hindu, Mughal, and Jain stylistic elements. Even in its current dilapidated state, Timangarh reveals much of its former grandeur.

The Fort Walls and Gates

The fort is surrounded by massive stone walls, with several bastions and gateways still intact. The outer wall, though weathered by centuries, reveals remarkable craftsmanship. Large stone blocks interlock without mortar, a testament to the engineering skills of the era.

One of the most fascinating features is the fort's series of gates, adorned with carvings of floral motifs, animals, and religious symbols. These gates once served not just as defense mechanisms, but as symbols of authority and grandeur. The main entrance, though now partially broken, would once have welcomed kings, saints, traders, and invaders alike.

TEMPLES AND SCULPTURAL ART

Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of Timangarh Fort is the sheer number of temples and shrines that once existed within and around its premises. Archaeological remains suggest that the fort complex contained over 200 temples, many of which were destroyed, de-

faced, or dismantled during invasions.

Despite this destruction, one can still find scattered idols, lintels, carved pillars, and temple plinths throughout the fort. These structures are adorned with intricate stone carvings depicting scenes from Hindu epics, celestial beings, flora-fauna motifs, and Jain iconography.

A few partially standing temples still exude spiritual energy and craftsmanship. Some even feature underground sanctums and circular shikharas, indicating the influence of Gupta and post-Gupta architecture. Many of these structures remain undocumented, making Timangarh an unexplored archaeological paradise.

LEGENDS AND LOCAL BELIEFS

The locals revere Timangarh as more than just an old fort. Folklore abounds about its mystical powers and cursed history. One popular legend claims that the fort was cursed to remain in ruins forever because of an act of betrayal during one of its final sieges.

Another fascinating belief is that idols and artifacts “emerge” from the ground overnight. Villagers claim to have found beautifully carved statues and temple parts after heavy rains. This phenomenon has led to rampant, unauthorized excavation and idol theft, something that threatens the fort's historical integrity.

Many also speak of hidden tunnels and secret chambers



within the fort—some supposedly connecting to nearby hills and temples. Though largely unverified, these tales add to Timangarh's allure as a site of mystery and forgotten glory.

NEGLECT AND PRESERVATION CHALLENGES

Despite its historic and archaeological significance, Timangarh Fort suffers from severe neglect. No substantial restoration or conservation project has been undertaken, and most of the site lies in ruins, overrun by wild vegetation and encroached upon by time.

Vandalism, illegal excavation, and theft of artifacts have been persistent problems. Statues and carvings

of immense historical value have reportedly been stolen and smuggled over the years. The lack of a proper tourist or heritage management plan has left this gem exposed to decay.

A site of this scale and historical richness deserves to be protected, documented, and promoted, not only for its cultural value but also for the potential to revive rural tourism and local economy in the Karauli region.

CULTURAL AND TOURISM POTENTIAL

Timangarh Fort has immense potential to be developed as a cultural tourism hub. Its scenic surroundings, architectural features, and the mysterious aura make it ideal for heritage walks,

archaeological expeditions, photography tours, and educational field trips.

The strategic location of Timangarh Fort enhances its appeal, as it lies in close proximity to several other prominent attractions in the region. Among these is the revered Kaila Devi Temple, one of the most important Shakti Peethas in Rajasthan, drawing thousands of devotees annually. Not far from the fort is the Karauli Palace, a stunning example of Rajput architecture adorned with intricate frescoes and royal grandeur. The spiritually significant Mehandipur Balaji Temple, known for its exorcism rituals and deep-rooted faith, also lies within accessible distance. Additionally, the Dev Giri Temple, nestled in serene surroundings, offers both spiritual solace and scenic beauty. Together, these sites form a culturally rich and spiritually charged travel circuit, making a visit to Timangarh Fort not just a historical journey, but a holistic exploration of Rajasthan's

vibrant heritage. These can easily be clubbed into a circuit that blends spiritual tourism with heritage exploration.

Further, Timangarh's rich iconography and temple remnants make it a significant site for Indologists, archaeologists, and art historians. A detailed survey and restoration effort could uncover invaluable information about medieval temple architecture and regional socio-religious practices. Reaching Timangarh Fort requires some planning due to its remote location, but the journey is well worth the effort. The nearest town is Karauli, situated approximately 40 kilometers from the fort. For air travelers, the Jaipur International Airport, around 180 kilometers away, serves as the closest major airport. The nearest railway station is Hindaun City, which is well connected to major cities and provides a convenient rail route to the region. From Karauli, the fort can be accessed by local taxis or private vehicles. However, it's important to

note that the final stretch of the road leading to the fort is rough and unpaved, requiring a sturdy vehicle and preferably the assistance of a local guide for a safe and informative visit. Timangarh Fort is more than just stones stacked together; it is a silent storyteller, narrating tales of valor, devotion, artistry, and resilience. It embodies the layers of history that Rajasthan has witnessed—from early dynasties and Rajput kingdoms to invasions and decline.

Yet, despite its potential and importance, it remains cloaked in obscurity—visited by a handful of history buffs, neglected by institutions, and fading slowly into the sands of time.

To preserve Timangarh is to honor not only our past but also the invisible hands that carved, built, worshipped, and lived within its walls. Rajasthan's history is not just about the grand and popular, but also about these hidden jewels waiting patiently to be rediscovered.

PAKISTAN EXTENDS AIRSPACE BAN ON INDIAN FLIGHTS BY ONE MONTH

The ban was imposed for a month until May 23, as under International Civil Aviation Organisation rules

AGENCIES
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has decided to extend the closure of its airspace for Indian flights by another month, a media report said on Wednesday.

Pakistan banned its airspace for India last month after steps taken by New Delhi in the wake of the Pahalgam terrorist attack on April 22.

The ban was imposed for a month until May 23, as under International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) rules that airspace restrictions cannot be imposed for more than one month at a time.

Quoting sources, Geo News reported that the decision to extend the ban is expected to be announced on Wednesday or Thursday, and a Notice to Airmen (Notam) will be issued. The development comes amid heightened tensions between the two neighbours



following India's precision strikes under 'Operation Sindoor' on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir on May 7 in response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people.

The Indian military has been maintaining that Pakistan pleaded for stopping the military actions after India hit eight military installations in Pakistan on early May 10 in response to Pakistan's attempts to target

Indian military bases.

This is not the first time Pakistan has imposed such restrictions. Pakistan closed its airspace for Indian flights during the 1999 Kargil conflict and the 2019 Pulwama crisis. In retaliation for the Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people—mostly Hindu tourists—India launched strikes on Pakistani military installations. The attack, which India blamed on Pakistan-backed militants, prompted a swift

response. On May 10, Indian forces targeted eight Pakistani military sites after Pakistan attempted to strike Indian military bases. Pakistan, while denying involvement in the Pahalgam incident, requested a halt to escalating hostilities.

Amid rising tensions, Pakistan closed its airspace to Indian flights—an action consistent with past conflicts such as the 1999 Kargil War and the 2019 Pulwama crisis. In a reciprocal

move, New Delhi banned Pakistan-registered aircraft, including military planes, from Indian airspace starting midnight on April 30. It remains uncertain whether India will extend or modify this airspace restriction.

The airspace closures have disrupted flight routes, particularly affecting services from North India to regions such as Central Asia, the Caucasus, West Asia, Europe, the UK, and North America. Airlines are now forced to take longer flight paths, leading to increased fuel consumption and higher operational costs. These changes are also complicating payload management for many carriers.

Industry insiders estimate that the rerouting could push international airfares up by 8-12 percent for Indian carriers. The situation has introduced significant logistical and economic challenges for airlines, passengers, and cargo services alike.

Pakistan, China agree to deepen trade

AGENCIES
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan said today it had agreed to deepen trade and investment with China, days after the end of a deadly conflict with India that Beijing urged should be resolved through dialogue.

Arch rivals India and Pakistan agreed to a ceasefire on May 10, after four days of fighting, the worst in nearly three decades.

Tensions escalated between the nuclear-armed neighbours after an attack in Indian Kashmir on April 22 that killed 26 men.

India blames Pakistan for the attack but Islamabad has denied any involvement.

Pakistan's foreign minister Ishaq Dar met his counterpart Wang Yi in Beijing yesterday. China welcomes and supports efforts by Pakistan and India to handle their differences through dialogue and to achieve a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire, Wang Yi said on Tuesday. Wang told Dar that China will support Pakistan in safeguarding its

Tensions escalated between the nuclear-armed neighbours after an attack in Indian Kashmir on April 22 that killed 26 men.

national sovereignty and territorial integrity, according to a statement from the Chinese foreign ministry. Apart from maintaining close communication, the two countries agreed to more cooperation in trade, investment, agriculture, industrialization, and other sectors, Pakistan's foreign ministry said. Separately, Pakistan's foreign ministry said that Dar and Wang held another meeting with acting foreign minister of Afghanistan Amir Khan Muttaqi in Beijing. The leaders decided to extend the China-Pakistan economic corridor to Afghanistan and cooperate further for China's global infrastructure programme, the Belt and Road Initiative.

China, Pak, Afghanistan meet in Beijing, decide to expand CPEC

AGENCIES
BEIJING/ISLAMABAD

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is set to be expanded to Afghanistan with the foreign ministers of the three countries agreeing on it as part of broader efforts to boost "trilateral" cooperation.

The announcement on expansion of CPEC was made following a meeting among Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, his Pakistani counterpart Ishaq Dar and Afghanistan's Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Beijing, according to a Pakistani readout.

India has been severely critical of the CPEC as it passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. New Delhi is also opposed to China's Belt and Road initiative as the project includes the CPEC. The trilateral meeting took place days after the interim Taliban gov-

ernment recently warmed up to India. The meeting between the foreign ministers of the three countries was held also in the backdrop of Islamabad's persistent criticism of the interim

the meeting between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, and Acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan Amir Khan Muttaqi. The



The foreign ministers of China, Pakistan and Afghanistan held informal trilateral talks and agreed to extend the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Taliban government for failing to crackdown on militant groups operating from Afghan soil waging a war against Pakistan. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning in her media briefing in Beijing termed as "unofficial"

three countries for a long time had a trilateral foreign ministers' mechanism which has not been convened for some time amid growing differences between Islamabad and Kabul over forcible repatriation of thousands of Afghan refugees by Pakistan.

Taiwan's ruling party expels 5 members accused of Chinese spying

AGENCIES
TAIPEI

Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te's party expelled on Wednesday (May 21) five members accused of spying for China, including a former aide to the self-ruled island's national security chief.

Beijing and Taipei have been spying on each other for decades, but experts say the threat to Taiwan is greater given the risk of a Chinese invasion. The Democratic Progressive Party said its Central Evaluation Committee had agreed unanimously to expel the five members to

"safeguard party discipline and national security".

"The current international situation is grim, and Taiwan is facing threats from the Chinese Communist Party," the DPP said in a statement.

"The actions of those involved in the (spying) cases

not only violated the laws of our country, but also clearly violated the discipline and core values of our party."

Among the five accused are a former aide to National Security Council chief Joseph Wu when he was foreign minister, as well as a person who had worked for

Lai when he was vice president and then president, the semi-official Central News Agency reported.

The DPP did not say if the five had been charged and no one in the Taipei District Prosecutors Office was immediately available to comment.

82 killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza as aid fails to arrive

AGENCIES
DEIR AL-BALAH, GAZA

Israeli strikes continued to pound the Gaza Strip Wednesday, despite a surge in international anger at Israel's widening offensive. The attacks killed at least 82 people, including several women and a week-old infant, according to the Gaza Health Ministry and area hospitals.

Israel began allowing dozens of humanitarian trucks into Gaza on Tuesday, but the aid has not yet reached Palestinians in desperate need.

Jens Laerke, the spokes-

person for the U.N.'s humanitarian agency, said no trucks were picked up from the Gaza side of Kerem Shalom, the Israeli border crossing with southern Gaza.

U.N. spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric said Tuesday that although the aid had entered Gaza, aid workers were not able to bring it to distribution points, after the Israeli military forced them to reload the supplies onto separate trucks and workers ran out of time.

The Israeli defense body that oversees humanitarian aid to Gaza said trucks entered Gaza Wednesday

morning, but it was unclear if that aid would move deeper into Gaza for distribution. The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said its staff had waited several hours to collect aid from the border crossing but were unable to do so on Tuesday.

A few dozen Israeli activists opposed to Israel's decision to allow aid into Gaza while Hamas still holds Israeli hostages attempted to block trucks carrying supplies Wednesday morning, but were kept back by Israeli police.

A group of diplomats came under fire while visiting Jen-



Palestinians carry the bodies of their relatives including children who were killed in an Israeli army airstrike in Deir al-Balah, Gaza. Agencies

PERFORMANCE



A lion dance troupe prepares for a performance at the Erawan Shrine, Bangkok, Thailand. Agencies

Six killed in school bus bombing in SW Pakistan

AGENCIES
QUETTA

A suicide car bomber struck a school bus in southwestern Pakistan on Wednesday, killing five people — including three children — and wounding 38 others, officials said, the latest attack in tense Balochistan province.

The province has been the scene of a long-running insurgency, with an array of separatist groups staging attacks, including the outlawed Balochistan Liberation Army, or BLA, designated a terror group by the United States in 2019.

A local deputy commissioner, Yasir Iqbal, said the attack took place on the outskirts of the city of Khuzdar as the bus was taking chil-

dren to their military-run school there.

Troops quickly arrived at the scene and cordoned off the area while ambulances transported the victims to hospitals in the city. Local television stations aired footage of the badly damaged bus and scattered debris. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack but suspicion is likely to fall on ethnic Baloch separatists, who frequently target security forces and civilians in the region.

Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi condemned the attack and expressed deep sorrow over the children's deaths. He called the perpetrators "beasts" who deserve no leniency, saying the enemy had committed

an act of "sheer barbarism by targeting innocent children."

Officials, who initially reported that four children were killed but later revised the death toll to say two adults were also among the dead, said they fear the toll may rise further as several children were listed in critical condition. The three killed students were girls who attended the Army Public School in Khuzdar, officials said. The U.S. Embassy and UNICEF also condemned the attack on X. "The murder of innocent children is beyond comprehension," the embassy wrote. "No child should ever fear going to school. We stand with those in Pakistan working to end this violence."

Shehbaz: Promoting Army Chief to Field Marshal was my decision

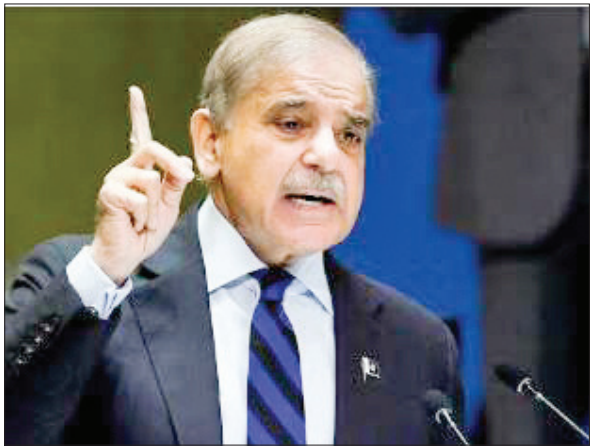
AGENCIES
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Wednesday that it was his decision to promote Army chief Gen Asim Munir to the rank of field marshal for his role in the recent conflict with India.

The decision to promote Gen Munir was taken at a cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz on Tuesday.

Munir is the first army general since General Ayub Khan to be elevated to the highest military rank in Pakistan. General Khan was conferred the rank of Field Marshal in 1959. During a conversation with a select group of journalists, Shehbaz talked about the four-day conflict with India and other issues, Geo News reported.

He said it was his decision to promote the army chief. He added that he consults his elder brother and former three-time premier Nawaz Sharif on such crucial decisions. Shehbaz asserted that war only results in one party's victory and the other's loss. "Only



lasting peace can guarantee a secure future," he said. India and Pakistan reached an understanding on May 10 to end the conflict after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes.

Regarding talks between Islamabad and New Delhi, Shehbaz said that whenever discussions on terrorism take place, they will be held by the national security advisers of both countries.

He said India is not willing to involve any third country in the dialogue process.

India has always maintained that the Kashmir issue is a bilateral matter with Pakistan, and there is no space for

any third party.

Prime Minister Shehbaz also said that Pakistan will raise four key points in any future dialogue with India: Kashmir, water, trade, and terrorism. He suggested that holding talks in a third country could be a good decision. He also claimed that Israel "extensively supported India" during the conflict with Pakistan. Dunya News reported that in the same interaction, Shehbaz said that Pakistan and India have returned to a position of peace as an agreement has been reached between the Directors General of Military Operations (DG-MOs) of both countries.

in, a city in the Israel-occupied West Bank, according to the Palestinian Authority. The diplomats were on official mission to observe the humanitarian situation in Jenin when shots rang out.

An aid worker, who did not want to be named for fear of reprisal, said a delegation of about 20 regional, European and Western diplomats were standing near the entrance of the Jenin refugee camp when they heard gunshots Wednesday, she said. No one was injured, she added.

The Israeli military said the delegation "deviated from the approved route"

and Israeli soldiers fired warning shots to distance them from the area. The military apologized and said they will contact all of the countries involved in the visit.

Footage shows a number of diplomats running for cover as rapid shots rung out. European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said firing even warning shots was unacceptable and called on Israel to investigate. The Italian government of Premier Giorgia Meloni also demanded an explanation, saying that its vice consul was among those who came under fire.

PUTIN VISITS RUSSIA'S KURSK REGION AFTER UKRAINE FORCES DRIVEN OUT

AGENCIES
KURSK

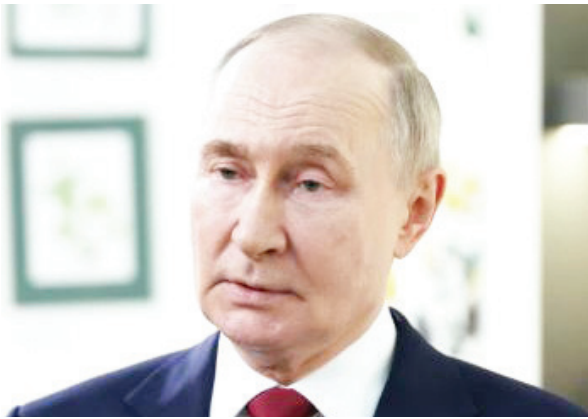
President Vladimir Putin visited Russia's Kursk region for the first time since Moscow claimed that it drove Ukrainian forces out of the area last month, the Kremlin said Wednesday.

Putin visited the region bordering Ukraine the previous day, according to the Kremlin.

Ukrainian forces made a surprise incursion into Kursk in August 2024 in one of their biggest battlefield successes in the more than three-year war. The incursion was the first time Russian territory was occupied by an invader since World War II and dealt a humiliating blow to the Kremlin.

Since the end of 2023, Russia has mostly had the advantage on the battlefield, with the exception of Kursk.

Putin has effectively rejected recent U.S. and European proposals for a ceasefire. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Wednesday accused Kyiv's



allies of seeking a truce "so that they can calmly arm Ukraine, so that Ukraine can strengthen its defensive positions."

North Korea sent up to 12,000 troops to help the Russian army take back control of Kursk, according to Ukraine, the U.S. and South Korea. Russia announced on April 26 that its forces had pushed out the Ukrainian army. Kyiv officials denied the claim.

Ukraine says it stopped Russian attacks in Kursk

The Ukrainian Army General Staff said Wednesday that its forces repelled 13 Russian assaults in Kursk.

Its map of military activity showed Ukrainian troops holding a thin line of land hard against the border but still inside Russia.

Putin's unannounced visit appeared to be an effort to show Russia is in control of the conflict, even though its full-scale invasion of its neighbor has been slow and costly in terms of casualties and equipment.

Video broadcast by Russian state media showed that Putin visited Kursk Nuclear Power Plant-2, which is still under construction, and met with selected volunteers behind closed doors.

Many of the volunteers

Ukraine's surprise thrust into Kursk and its ability to hold land there was a logistical feat, carried out in secrecy, that countered months of gloomy news from the front about Ukrainian forces being pushed backward by the bigger Russian army.

wore clothes emblazoned with the Russian flag and the Latin letters "Z" and "V", which are symbols of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"What you are doing now during this difficult situation for this region, for this area, and for the country, will remain with you for the rest of your life as, perhaps, the most meaningful thing with which you were ever involved," Putin said as he drank tea with the volunteers.

Ukraine's surprise thrust into Kursk and its ability to hold land there was a logistical feat, carried out in secrecy, that countered months of gloomy news from the front about Ukrai-

nian forces being pushed backward by the bigger Russian army.

Kyiv's strategy aimed to show that Russia has weaknesses and that the war isn't lost. It also sought to distract Russian forces from their onslaught in the eastern Donetsk region of Ukraine.

The move was fraught with risk. Analysts noted that it could backfire and open a door for Russian advances in Ukraine by further stretching Ukrainian forces that are short-handed along the roughly 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line.

The incursion didn't significantly change the dynamics of the war.

Russia denies stalling peace talks, says no decision yet on venue

AGENCIES
MOSCOW

Russia on Wednesday rejected Ukrainian and European accusations it was trying to drag out the peace process around Ukraine, but said that no decision had yet been made on a venue for talks when asked if they could be hosted by the Vatican.

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Monday "it would be great" for Russia and Ukraine to hold ceasefire talks at the Vatican, saying it would add extra significance to the proceedings.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said on Tuesday that Pope Leo had confirmed to her that he was willing to host the next round of negotiations.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia welcomed "the readiness and efforts of all parties who want to contribute to a speedy settlement", but nothing had been decided



yet about where the next meeting should be held.

Moscow had not received any specific proposals from the Vatican, he said.

The warring sides met in Istanbul last week for their first face-to-face negotiations since March 2022 and agreed a swap of 1,000 prisoners on each side, but Russia did not agree to an immediate, unconditional ceasefire that Ukraine was seeking.

President Vladimir Putin spoke by phone to Trump on Monday and said Russia and Ukraine

would work on a memorandum relating to a peace accord, prompting new accusations from Kyiv and European governments that Moscow was stalling and had no serious interest in peace.

Peskov rejected that. "Nobody is interested in delaying the process. Everyone is working dynamically. We will keep you informed. Of course, most of this work is being done in a discreet mode, and it should not, for obvious reasons, be open to the public," he said.

Ukraine pitches tougher Russia sanctions plan to EU as US wavers

AGENCIES
KYIV

Russian President Vladimir Putin visited the Kursk-II nuclear power plant on Tuesday, his first visit to the western Kursk region since Russian forces ejected Ukrainian troops from the area last month.

State television showed Putin meeting volunteers and local officials accompanied by the Kremlin's first deputy chief of staff.

Russia said in late April it had ejected Ukrainian troops from the region,

Among 40 pages of recommendations were calls to adopt legislation to speed up seizing assets from individuals, and send them to Ukraine.

ending the biggest incursion into Russian territory since World War Two.

But in an attempt to inflict pain on Russia off the battlefield, Ukraine will ask the EU next week to consider big new steps to isolate Moscow.

A previously unreported

Ukrainian white paper, seen by Reuters, calls for seizing Russian assets and bringing in sanctions for some buyers of Russian oil.

The paper asks the bloc to take a more aggressive and independent position on sanctions as uncertainty hangs over the United

States's future role.

Among 40 pages of recommendations were calls to adopt legislation to speed up seizing assets from individuals, and send them to Ukraine.

And make sanctions apply more forcefully beyond EU territory, including targeting foreign companies that use technology to help Russia.

Such secondary sanctions, which could hit big buyers such as India and China, would be a major step Europe has so far been reluctant to take.

After speaking to Putin on Monday, U.S. President Donald Trump opted not to impose fresh sanctions on Russia, dashing hopes of European leaders and Kyiv.

Trump told Ukrainian and European leaders after the call he wanted to give talks time to take place, a person familiar with the conversation told Reuters.

The EU and Britain imposed additional sanctions against Russia on Tuesday anyway, saying they still hope Washington will join them.

Trump selects concept for \$175 billion 'Golden Dome' missile defence system

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump has announced the concept he wants for his future Golden Dome missile defence program — a multilayered, USD 175 billion system that for the first time will put US weapons in space.

Speaking Tuesday from the Oval Office, Trump said he expects the system will be "fully operational before the end of my term," which ends in 2029, and have the capability of intercepting missiles "even if they are launched from space."

It's likelier that the complex system may have some initial capability by that point, a US official familiar with the programme said.

Trump, seated next to a poster showing the continental US painted gold and with artistic depictions of missile interceptions, also announced that Gen. Michael Guetlein, who currently serves as the vice chief of space operations, will be responsible for overseeing Golden Dome's progress.



ress.

Golden Dome is envisioned to include ground- and space-based capabilities that are able to detect and stop missiles at all four major stages of a potential attack: detecting and destroying them before a launch, intercepting them in their earliest stage of flight, stopping them midcourse in the air, or halting them in the final minutes as they descend toward a target.

For the last several months, Pentagon planners have been developing options — which the US official described as medium, high and "extra high" choices, based on their cost — that include

space-based interceptors. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to detail plans that have not been made public.

The difference in the three versions is largely based on how many satellites and sensors — and for the first time, space-based interceptors — would be purchased.

The Congressional Budget Office estimated this month that just the space-based components of the Golden Dome could cost as much as USD 542 billion over the next 20 years. Trump has requested an initial USD 25 billion for the programme in his proposed tax break bill now moving through

Congress.

The Pentagon has warned for years that the newest missiles developed by China and Russia are so advanced that updated countermeasures are necessary.

Golden Dome's added satellites and interceptors — where the bulk of the programme's cost is — would be focused on stopping those advanced missiles early on or in the middle of their flight.

The space-based weapons envisioned for Golden Dome "represent new and emerging requirements for missions that have never before been accomplished by military space organizations," Gen. Chance Saltzman, head of the US Space Force, told lawmakers at a hearing Tuesday.

China and Russia have put offensive weapons in space, such as satellites with abilities to disable critical US satellites, which can make the US vulnerable to attack.

Last year, the US said Russia was developing a space-based nuclear weapon that could loiter in space for

long durations, then release a burst that would take out satellites around it.

Trump said Tuesday that he had not yet spoken to Russian President Vladimir Putin about the Golden Dome program, "but at the right time, we will," he told reporters at the White House.

In a joint statement earlier this month, China and Russia called the Golden Dome idea "deeply destabilising in nature," warning it would turn "outer space into an environment for placing weapons and an arena for armed confrontation."

There is no money for the project yet, and Golden Dome overall is "still in the conceptual stage," newly confirmed Air Force Secretary Troy Meink told senators during a hearing Tuesday.

While the president picked the concept he wanted, the Pentagon is still developing the requirements that Golden Dome will need to meet — which is not the way new systems are normally developed.

Adviser to ex-Ukrainian president killed near American School in Spain

AGENCIES
SPAIN

An adviser to former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich was shot to death Wednesday outside the American School of Madrid, where at least one of his children was enrolled, Spanish authorities and witnesses said.

Andrii Portnov, 51, was shot at 9:15 a.m. (0715 GMT) as students were arriving, Spain's Interior Ministry said.

Portnov was a former politician tied closely to Yanukovich, the pro-Moscow president of Ukraine from 2010 until he was ousted in a popular uprising in 2014 after shelving plans to bring the country

Andrii Portnov, 51, was shot at 9:15 a.m. (0715 GMT) as students were arriving, Spain's Interior Ministry said.

closer to the European Union and instead deepened ties with President Vladimir Putin's Russia. Yanukovich's ouster in February 2014 followed a brutal crackdown on anti-government protesters, with dozens of people killed, many by police snipers.

Portnov was deputy head of the presidential office in that period and was involved in drafting legislation aimed at punishing participants of the uprising. Ukrainian authorities opened a treason case against him,

which was later closed, and he also was the subject of U.S. sanctions involving corruption in Ukraine.

Ukrainian officials did not immediately comment on Portnov's killing.

Witnesses said Portnov was shot several times in the head and body by more than one gunman when he was getting into a Mercedes Benz registered to him, police said. The unidentified assailants then fled on foot, and local media reported police helicopters later flew over a nearby park.

UN child rights body condemns mass starvation of Gaza children

AGENCIES
GENEVA

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child strongly condemned Israel's ongoing obstruction of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the Committee expressed grave concern over reports indicating that more than 14,000 babies could die within hours if life-saving supplies are not allowed into the besieged Strip.

The Committee urged the international community to exert immediate pressure on the Israeli occupation authorities to ensure the sustained and unimpeded delivery of essential food

Citing data from UNICEF and the World Health Organisation, the Committee stated that more than 11 weeks of blocked humanitarian access have exacerbated the food security crisis in Gaza.

and medical aid.

Citing data from UNICEF and the World Health Organisation, the Committee stated that more than 11 weeks of blocked humanitarian access have exacerbated the food security crisis in Gaza.

Over 50 children have already died from starvation, with many more at imminent risk. The Committee

warned that if the blockade persists, additional child deaths are inevitable, and up to 71,000 children under the age of five could suffer from acute malnutrition within the next year.

It added that the right to food is a fundamental human right, intrinsically linked to the right to life, and is therefore non-derogable under international law.

'Maybe one day': Trump's eldest son Don Jr hints at White House bid

AGENCIES
DOHA

President Trump's oldest son, Don Jr., said Wednesday he could run for president "maybe one day," after previously denying he was considering a White House bid.

Asked during an economic forum in Doha, the capital of Qatar, if he would consider entering a presidential race

to succeed his father, Don Jr. first chuckled before suggesting it was possible.

"It's an honor to be asked and an honor to see that some people are OK with it," he said during a panel discussion at Bloomberg's Qatar Economic Forum as some in the audience applauded. "You never know," he added.

Donald Trump Jr, 47, is an



But on Wednesday, Don Jr. didn't rule out a White House run. "I don't know, maybe one day, you know — that calling is there," he told the forum.

executive vice president at The Trump Organization, his family's luxury real estate conglomerate, and a vocal proponent of his father's right-wing MAGA political

agenda.

In March, left-leaning website Mediate reported that Don Jr. was "seriously considering a run for president in 2028,"

which he denied at the time.

But on Wednesday, Don Jr. didn't rule out a White House run. "I don't know, maybe one day, you know — that calling is there," he told the forum.

"I think my father has truly changed the Republican Party. I think it's the America First party now, the MAGA party, however

you want to look at it," he added.

"For the first time ever, the Republican Party actually has a bench of America First fighters," he continued, according to the Reuters news agency.

The Trump Organization has been run by the president's two eldest sons, Don Jr. and Eric, since his 2016 election win.

'RAJA SHIVAJI' TO BE RELEASED IN MAY 2026

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The release date of Riteish Deshmukh, Sanjay Dutt and Abhishek Bachchan-starrer 'Raja Shivaji' has been announced. The film will hit the theatres on May 1, 2026 in Marathi, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam. Riteish has directed 'Raja Shivaji', which also stars Genelia Deshmukh, Mahesh Manjrekar, Fardeen Khan, and Bhagyashree. Maestros Ajay-Atul and legendary cinematographer Santosh Sivan have come on board to enhance the musical and cinematography of the film, which is currently in production across Mumbai and Wai in Maharashtra.



Sharing on what audience can expect from the film, Riteish in a press note said, "Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is not just a historical figure -- he is an emotion that lives in the hearts of millions. To be able to tell a part of his extraordinary story is both an honour and a great responsibility.

I'm deeply grateful to Jyoti Deshpande and Jio Studios for placing their faith in this vision. Releasing the film on Maharashtra Day feels especially meaningful, and with a cast we could only dream of, we feel truly fortunate. We hope audiences across languages connect with the spirit of Raja Shiv-

aji as deeply as we have." Jyoti Deshpande, President - Jio Studios (Media & Content Business - RIL) said, "Raja Shivaji is more than just a film -- it's a celebration of Swarajya and what that means to every Indian. This vision could only be brought to life by someone who holds the story close to his heart, and Riteish, along with Genelia, has done just that with passion and purpose. Our goal is to bring the awe-inspiring life of Shivaji Maharaj, one of the greatest heroes to be born on the Indian soil, from India to the world. Backed by an ensemble of some of the finest talents from across industries, this film is one of the most ambitious ventures we've undertaken."

Don't want animosity between Paresh and Akshay: Suniel Shetty

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Actor Suniel Shetty, one-third of the iconic trio of the 'Hera Pheri' franchise, says he doesn't want any animosity between his co-stars Akshay Kumar and Paresh Rawal after the latter decided to quit the film midway. Audiences were waiting to see Babu Bhaiya (Rawal), Raju (Kumar), and Shyam (Shetty) return in the third part of the popular comedy franchise, set to be directed by Priyadarshan. 'Hera Pheri 3' was yet to be officially announced. The film's future is now uncertain following Rawal's sudden departure from the project last week. Ac-



cording to reports, Kumar -- who also serves as a producer on 'Hera Pheri 3' -- has sued Rawal for his actions. Shetty said while he is sad about Rawal stepping away from the film, he wouldn't want things to sour between his co-stars. "I am heartbroken, (but) I believe it all will fall into place... At the same time, I am clueless because I heard (about) it

through the media. I hope things can be mended. And even if the film doesn't happen, I wouldn't want any animosity between Paresh and Akshay," Shetty told PTI in an interview here. The 63-year-old actor will next be seen in the period drama "Kesari Veer", alongside Sooraj Pancholi and debutante Akanksha Sharma. In the film, which follows the story of brave

warriors who fought to save the Somnath temple from invaders in the 14th century, Shetty plays a warrior named Vegdaji Bhil. Directed by Prince Dhiman, "Kesari Veer" is produced by Kanubhai Chauhan of Chauhan Studios. It also marks Shetty's return to the period drama genre, after JP Dutta's "Umrao Jaan" (2006). Period films are difficult to make, he said, adding producers need to have enough knowledge about the subject. "He (the producer) has to be clear that he has the right theme that he puts together, because there are too many aspects that go into making a period film.

Web series 'Pratishod' to be out on WAVES OTT on May 24

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Web series 'Pratishod', which stars Sudha Chandran, Satyakam Anand, and Aditi Sanwal among others, is all set to be out soon on WAVES OTT. The show will be released on May 24. As per a press note, 'Pratishod' is loaded with crime, mystery, and high-voltage drama. It revolves around the "murder of a woman and the intense investigation led by her daughter to uncover the truth." Filmmaker Ajay K. Pannalal directed the show, which also stars Raj Shar-



ma, Ashutosh Kaushik, Varun Joshi, Priya Gupta, and Shreya Khanna. On what audience can expect from the show, director Ajay K. Pannalal in a press note said, "Pratishod is not just a murder mystery--it's a layered emotional story that reflects the fight for justice,

truth, and closure. We've crafted it to keep viewers engaged and guessing right till the end." Creative Director and Producer Puneet Kumar Kanodia added, "This story is close to my heart--it explores how personal loss can become a powerful force for justice. I'm proud of the team's efforts in bringing this story to life. Streaming on WAVES OTT adds more meaning, as it's a commendable initiative by the Government of India and a progressive step by Prasara Bharati. WAVES OTT opens up new doors for original Indian storytelling, and Pratishod fits right into that vision."

BRAIN PICKING



I don't like men who treat women like arm candies
— SONAM KAPOOR
(Indian Actress)

Emmy nominated 'Cheers' actor George Wendt passes away at 76

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON DC

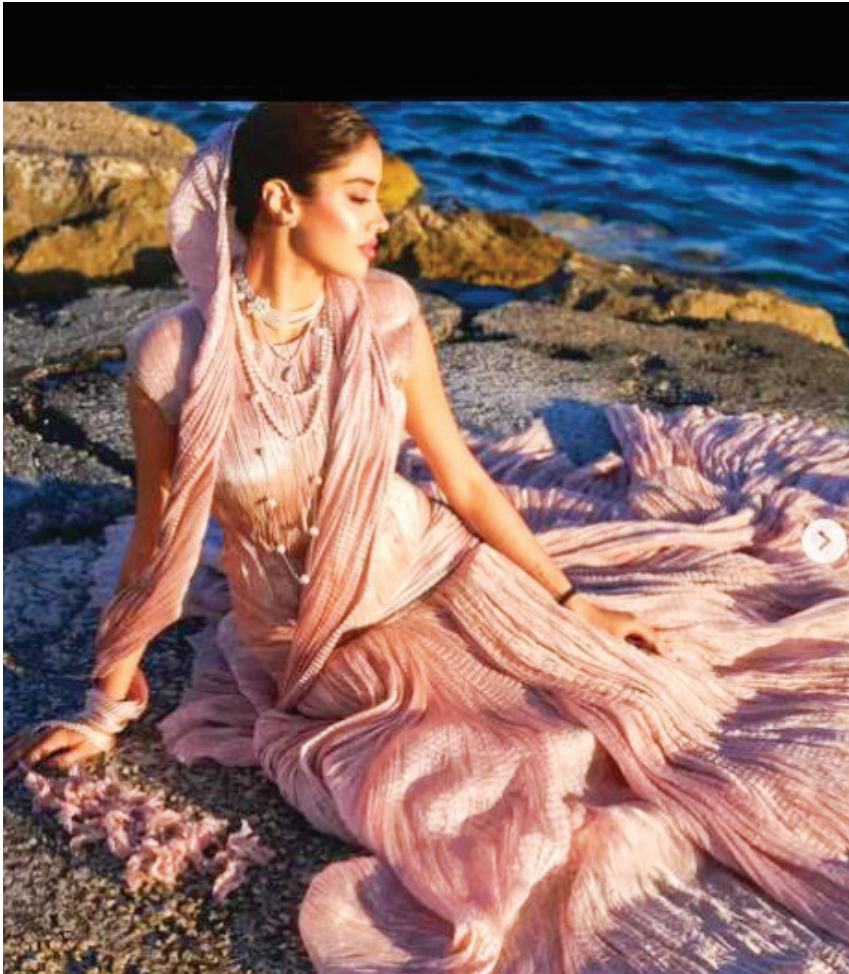
Actor and comedian George Wendt, who earned six consecutive Emmy nominations for his performance as Norm Peterson on 'Cheers', passed away on Tuesday, reported Variety. He was 76 years old. As per the outlet, Wendt's death was confirmed by his publicist, Melissa Nathan. She released a statement asking for privacy for the actor's family during this tough time. "George was a doting family man, a well-loved friend and confidant to all of those lucky enough to have known him. He will be missed forever. The family

has requested privacy during this time," as quoted by Variety. After starting as a comedian, Wendt became a television actor after he landed his breakout role of Norm Peterson, whose regular first line, "Afternoon Everybody", became one of the fan-beloved motifs of



the series, as per the outlet. Wendt earned six Emmy nods in the supporting actor in a comedy series category during his tenure as one of the main cast members across all the seasons of 'Cheers', reported Variety. He reprised his role in 'Cheers' spinoffs 'The Toltellis' and 'Frasier'. Tributes quickly poured in after his family confirmed that the "Cheers" star passed away on Tuesday. His co-star Ted Danson shared a statement as quoted by Variety and wrote, "I am devastated to hear that Georgie is no longer with us. I am sending all my love to Bernadette and the children.

Cannes red carpet looks



URVASHI RAUTELA

Style Architect: @naodado @paroleparis @annatourepr

JANHVI KAPOOR

Looking ethereal in a rose-hued Tarun Tahiliani ensemble. The outfit, woven from real tissue fabric

ADITI RAO HYDARI

A shimmering ombré bodycon gown by Rahul Mishra, accessorised with jewels from Chopard.



HONDA X-ADV 750 & REBEL 500 LAUNCHED IN INDIA!

SYED SHIRAZ SHAH

Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) has launched the X-ADV 750, an amalgam of an adventure motorcycle and a maxi-scooter, and its much awaited cruiser motorcycle, the Rebel 500, as well. I'll give you the low-down on each in this story.

X-ADV 750: ENGINE & TRANSMISSION

The Honda X-ADV 750 comes with a 745cc liquid-cooled, SOHC, 8-valve, parallel-twin engine, which Honda claims has been tuned to deliver "strong low to mid-range performance that makes it ideal for city cruising as well as adventure touring." Well, that's something we'll find out when we get to review this crossover of a two-wheeler. For now, here are the claimed power and torque figures: 43.1 kW at 6,750 rpm and 69 Nm at 4,750 rpm. All those numbers would be channelled to the road via Honda's now famous Dual Clutch Transmission (DCT). The X-ADV 750 features RBW (Ride By Wire) and there are four default riding modes—Standard, Sport, Rain, and Gravel—each adjusting power delivery, engine braking, and traction control accordingly. There is an additional "User" mode too (taking the total count

& SUSPENSION

Honda claims that the X-ADV is built on a tough tubular steel frame, which has been engineered to withstand a variety of road conditions with ease. The suspension comprises a USD fork (41 mm) and a monoshock. Strangely, Honda hasn't mentioned in the press release that the X-ADV in India comes with the same Showa SFF-CA fork as it does abroad, which is adjustable for rebound and pre-

load. However, they have mentioned that the monoshock is adjustable for preload. Similarly, though the press release mentions that the X-ADV rides on 17-inch (front) and 15-inch (rear) wire-spoke wheels, it doesn't state whether the tyres are tubeless. I will give the benefit of doubt to Honda and hope that the vehicle being sold in India is specced exactly the same as the model sold internationally. The braking setup, thankfully, seems to be the same top-

are radially mounted. Brilliant! The rear consists of a 240 mm rotor and a single piston caliper. Dual-channel ABS is of course standard.

X-ADV 750: PRICE AND AVAILABILITY



voice commands) complete the "essential-goodies" list. The Honda X-ADV 750 has been priced at Rs. 11.90 lakh (ex-showroom Gurugram, Haryana). It will be available exclusively through BigWing dealerships across India. Bookings are now open to India with a 471cc liquid-cooled, 8-valve, parallel-twin engine that produces 34 kW of peak power at 8,500 rpm and 43.3 Nm of peak torque at 6,000 rpm. A six-speed transmission is used to harness that power and torque supposedly in a manner befitting the Rebel's cruiser styling. The company claims that the powertrain character has been focused towards "a torque-heavy bottom-end output, with smooth and linear delivery



Photos: HMSI

The X-ADV 750 features RBW (Ride By Wire) and there are four default riding modes—Standard, Sport, Rain, and Gravel—each adjusting power delivery, engine braking, and traction control accordingly. There is an additional "User" mode too (taking the total count of riding modes to five, then) that allows the rider to tailor the aforementioned parameters (power delivery, etc.) as per his/her preference.

REBEL 500: CHASSIS & SUSPENSION

The Rebel 500 has a tubular steel frame, a conventional telescopic fork, and Showa dual shock-absorbers. The braking setup here comprises a 296 mm disc at the front and a 240 mm unit at the rear, and, yes, dual-channel ABS is standard. Dunlop tyres round up the package with a 130/90-16 front and 150/80-16 rear.

Honda says that the Rebel 500 has been designed to be a slim motorcycle with a low seat height of just 690 mm making it easy to ride and unintimidating to manage at low speeds. You can count on me to verify that properly...

The lights all around are LEDs while the instrument cluster consists of an inverted LCD. Also, Honda says that the bike will be offered in India only in Standard variant in a single Matt Gunpowder Black Metallic colour with seats for both

rider & pillion.

REBEL 500: PRICE AND AVAILABILITY

The Honda Rebel 500 has been priced at Rs. 5.12 lakh (ex-showroom Gurugram, Haryana), and it will be available exclusively through BigWing Topline dealerships in Gurugram, Mumbai, and Bengaluru. Bookings are now open with deliveries commencing from June 2025 onwards. Like the X-ADV 750, you may book this one online too.

The braking setup here comprises a 296 mm disc at the front and a 240 mm unit at the rear, and, yes, dual-channel ABS is standard. Dunlop tyres round up the package with a 130/90-16 front and 150/80-16 rear.



of riding modes to five, then) that allows the rider to tailor the aforementioned parameters (power delivery, etc.) as per his/her preference. Then there's cruise control as well.

X-ADV 750: CHASSIS

notch affair. The front comprises two 296 mm rotors and four-piston calipers that

visibility daytime running lights (DRLs) that also incorporate the turn indicators, and a 5-inch full-colour TFT display featuring Honda RoadSync app connectivity (call and SMS alerts, turn-by-turn navigation, music, and

with deliveries commencing from June 2025 onwards. You may also book the X-ADV online via Honda BigWing India's official website.

REBEL 500: ENGINE & TRANSMISSION

The Honda Rebel 500 comes

throughout the rev-range." Honda also claims that "its stubby exhaust provides a suitable cruiser soundtrack." Again, I shall see whether all of that is true (or not) as and when I get to ride it.



W2RC 2025 Round 3: South African Safari Rally | Hero MotoSports Team Rally Wins Stage 1

SYED SHIRAZ SHAH

Hero MotoCorp's motorsport team, Hero MotoSports Team Rally, has concluded the first special stage at the South African Safari Rally 2025, which is essentially the third rally of the total five that FIM World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC) has in its calendar this year. Dakar in January was the first round followed by Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge in February, whereas the current rally (18-24 May) will be followed by BP Ultimate Rally Raid in September, and Rallye Du Maroc in October. In the opening stage of the current rally, Ross Branch

led the charge for the team by crossing the finish line with the fastest time overall, bringing his first stage win this season. His teammates, Nacho Cornejo and Tobias Ebster (the team's newest recruit), also rode great and finished 6th and 9th overall, respectively. Tobias delivered stellar performance in the Rally2 class as well, claiming 2nd position in the category, finishing less than a minute behind the leader (Edgar Canet, Redbull KTM Factory Racing). Yesterday's first stage was a loop around Sun City, stretching across a total of 555 km, including a 260 km special. Unlike previous rounds, no time bonuses were planned for the motorcycle opener, placing



Photo: Hero MotoCorp

greater emphasis on pure performance and consistency. The riders faced a fascinating mix of terrain with sandy tracks, typical savannah stretches, the region's characteristic "black turf," and dominant hard-packed surfaces. This diverse blend of soil textures challenged them with its unpredictable grip levels. There were a lot of deep muddy sections owing to heavy rains in the recent week. Looking ahead, Stages 2 and 3 have been combined into a two-day marathon stage, with today marking the first leg. Riders will tackle a total of 620 km today, including 352 km of timed special, without any overnight assistance from their support

crews. They will camp in a remote bivouac, fully self-reliant until the end of Stage 3. The route will lead competitors into the vast savannah, featuring long, fast tracks and scattered off-piste sections that will test both navigation and strategy. With wide open terrain and limited reference points, riders must rely entirely on their roadbooks and instincts to stay on track and gain valuable time. At the close of yesterday's Stage 1, all three Hero riders sat comfortably in the overall top-10 rankings: Ross leading the board, Nacho at 7th, and Tobias at 9th. Tobias also holds 2nd position in the overall Rally2 standings.

THE RISE OF THE PHYGITAL MINDSET: THINKING BEYOND SCREENS AND REAL LIFE



THE NEXT
ABHISHEK ANAND

We've spent over a decade trying to separate the two worlds. Physical. Digital.

Offline was for presence. Online was for scale.

We were taught to pick one. Build offline credibility or scale online influence. Host real-world events or digital webinars. Design store experiences or optimize landing pages.

But something changed. Especially post-pandemic, and even more so in how we now live, work, learn, and shop.

The innovators stopped choosing sides.

They started blending both.

This is the emergence of the Phygital Mindset—and it's becoming the defining lens for building anything meaningful in the hybrid age, let's talk in today's article.

WHAT DOES "PHYGITAL" REALLY MEAN?

Phygital is not just a marketing term anymore. It's a thinking framework.

It's the ability to see physical and digital as extensions of the same experi-

ence, not isolated channels. It's about designing for fluidity, not format.

For a consumer, it's the ability to move from scrolling on Instagram to walking into your pop-up store, scanning a QR code to access AR content, and joining your community online.

For a teacher, it's turning the classroom into an experience center and the screen into a continuous learning hub.

For a founder, it's knowing that real conversations build trust—and digital touchpoints keep it alive.

It's no longer either/or. It's everything/and.

WHY PHYGITAL THINKING IS THE NEXT COMPETITIVE EDGE

People don't just live in one world anymore. Your customers, students, and employees move across physical and digital constantly.

The brands and experiences that win now are those that match that movement.

Think about it:

- Nike combining AR experiences with physical store drops.
- Apple using in-store con-

versations to build digital product ecosystems.

- Smart campuses where lectures are offline, assignments are online, and discussions are hybrid.
- Small businesses running physical workshops while nurturing audiences through WhatsApp and Instagram.

What looks like innovation on the outside is actually just phygital empathy—the ability to meet people where they are, across dimensions.

BUILDING WITH THE PHYGITAL MINDSET

When we started designing Generative Crafts, a lot of our conversations weren't about tools or templates. They were about presence.

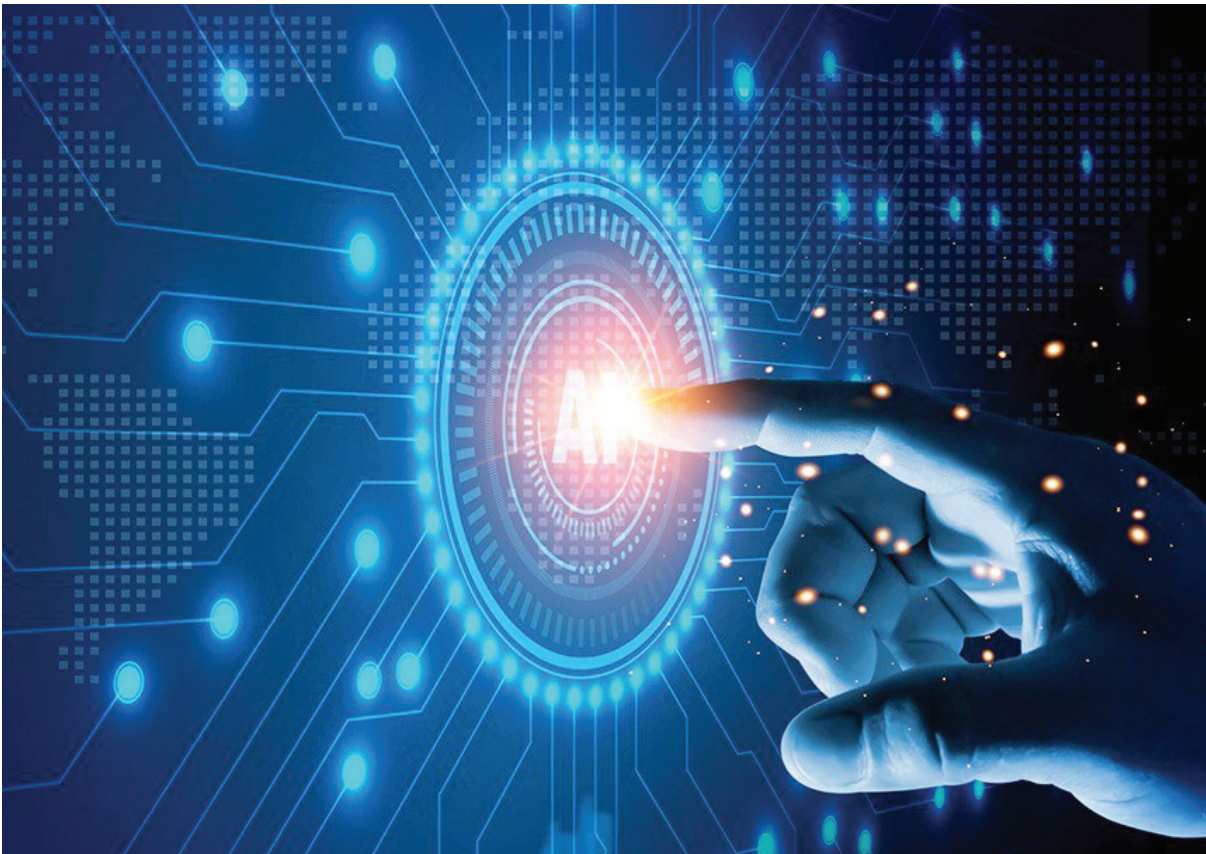
How do we build an experience that feels tactile—even if it's digital? How do we make tech feel human, and creativity feel connected?

We realized something simple but powerful: Phygital isn't about technology. It's about intentionality.

It's about asking:

- Can this product come to life with a human touch? Can this physical event have a digital afterlife?
- Can this in-person insight be scaled through content?
- Can we design for continuity—not just contact?

Every founder, product designer, or educator today should be building like this.



Not because it's trendy, but because it's what the world expects—often without realizing it.

PHYGITAL MINDSET VS DIGITAL-FIRST MINDSET

A lot of us grew up with the "digital-first" philosophy. It served us well for a long time.

But the Phygital Mindset goes deeper.

Digital-first asks: "How do I digitize this process?"

Phygital asks:

"How do I humanize this experience—across any medium?"

It's not just about screens. It's about sensation. It's about emotion.

The most powerful digital tools now are the ones that make you feel something real. And the most impactful physical moments are the ones that continue digitally—with memory, interaction, and scale.

Where This Matters Most

(and Fastest)

Phygital design is already reshaping industries:

Education – Learning environments are blending interactive classrooms with asynchronous digital feedback and AI-powered tutoring.

Retail – In-store experiences have become data-driven, while online shopping mimics the exploration of physical browsing through AR and 3D previews.

Work – Hybrid isn't just about Zoom meetings and

office desks. It's about rethinking onboarding, culture, rituals, and collaboration across space.

Creative Industries – Artists, designers, and storytellers are experimenting with mediums that exist both on walls and on web3.

THE NEXT MINDSET SHIFT

The next great companies won't be "digital" or "offline."

They'll be dimensionally fluent.

They'll have teams that

think in both layers, strategies that operate across experiences, and cultures that value presence in every form.

The future isn't just virtual. It's viscerally real—because it blurs the line between tactile and technological.

FINAL THOUGHT: DON'T JUST BUILD ONLINE. BUILD EVERYWHERE.

The brands we remember? They don't just inform us—they move us.

The teachers who shaped us?

They didn't just explain—they engaged.

And the companies we trust?

They don't just market—they meet us—in stores, in pixels, in our lives.

That's the essence of the phygital mindset.

Not building for one reality. But building for all of them.

And if you're still separating physical from digital in your strategy—You might just be missing where the real world is heading.

Abhishek Anand is the Founder of Skill Bud Technologies and writes "The Next," a weekly column decoding the convergence of innovation, identity, and impact. He's also a keynote speaker on phygital thinking and digital transformation. When he's not writing, he's experimenting with ways to blend tech and touch—one experience at a time.

How much can India target to leverage from AI underwriting for inclusive lending?



ROHIT ARORA

Generative AI is reckoned as a tool. It is moot to wonder of the use-cases from either an Indian or a banking context. There certainly are several benefits, but what matters is the amount of potential to upscale traditional banking or insurance by leveraging Gen-AI. A recent EY report claims Gen-AI could boost productivity in the Indian financial services context by as much as 34%. By 2030, this number jumps to 38% and in banking operations alone it is a whopping 46%.

A study by Boston Consulting Group revealed that advancements such as Gen-AI could improve small business lending by 40%. That, if advancements such as Gen-AI can be paired and a system created to drive capital. To a country with the highest number of smartphones, digital penetration, and success stories such as Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and mobile; tools such as Gen-AI can be upscaled to qualitatively improve banking, lending, and even insurance penetration.

GLOBAL CONTEXT, LOCAL DYNAMISM

Globally, the demand for Gen-AI among banks and insurance companies increased. A study by Visa and Uplink revealed a 50% reduction in operating and credit costs from using AI-powered credit assessments. A small business finance technology company based out of Utah, United States, reported that five new banks had adopted an intelligent lending platform last month. The optimism

among banks to adopt such technologies has increased - survey by Provenir observing two-thirds planning to invest while another by Zest projected a higher interest at 80%. India could also leverage such platforms for economic benefit and to democratize finance for small business lending. Democratizing finance to countless small business individuals not only paves way for their financial aspirations, but also helps reach out meaningfully to communities that banks and insurance companies interact with.



What appeals Gen-AI is the ability to collaborate with a multitude of enterprises to engage with behavioural data. For instance, by collaborating with payment aggregators, we can understand how small businesses operate and improve their creditworthiness. Such data with non-personally identifiable information could make underwriting better for businesses and smarter for lenders. Additionally, with Agentic-AI and AI bots, a platform that puts together insights in minutes can help save time, reducing cost of underwriting, and provisioning better outcome to borrowers.

A SYSTEM WITH RISKS & GUARD-RAILS

While Gen-AI has made ripples across other industries, the one question that limits its use-case in BFSI domains has been the management of risk. A survey from KPMG released last week indicated concerns about data, custom-

er reaction, regulatory scrutiny and costs that kept some institutions on the fence. However, and on a positive note, a quarter of those surveyed banks reported of revenue increases linked to their AI implementation. So, despite the outlook on risk, many Gen-AI projects reported revenue increment.

Indeed, regulators too are now scrutinizing AI-driven lending for transparency, explainability, and even consumer protection. There is also concern that with AI models trained on biased historical data, there is the

risk of possibly reinforcing very financial exclusion they aim to solve.

While risk assessment is truly necessary, not having a Gen-AI approach could mean a loss of opportunity to an inspiring small business. Generative AI opens a new frontier for banks—not just in operational efficiency, but in customer experience, product innovation, and even intelligent automation. The key is not to view Gen-AI as a risk to be avoided, but as a capability to be harnessed responsibly. With the right safeguards, Gen-AI can coexist with regulatory expectations, data governance standards, and internal compliance protocols.

Rather than relying on outdated risk models that treat AI as a black box, banks and insurers have the opportunity to build AI-aware risk infrastructure tools that offer real-time monitoring, traceability of outputs, and even controlled deployment

environments. There are many platforms that can offer dynamic data handling. Besides, solutions can also be tailor-made to ensure human-in-the-loop oversight, explainability features, and access-level management to enable specific institutional-level Gen-AI deployments. These could be based on use cases such as automated document summarization, intelligent customer query handling, compliance report generation, or cashflow and inventory scrutiny. That and much more without compromising on risk-control.

Forward-looking platforms that combine generative capabilities with embedded governance are already enabling early movers to scale with confidence. In this context, risk management isn't a blocker—it becomes a strategic enabler. For banks willing to evolve their frameworks, Gen-AI represents not just a technology shift, but a competitive advantage in a digitally transformed financial ecosystem.

A good practice could be to evolve toward a hybrid "AI+human" underwriting model. The future of AI underwriting depends not just on technological advancements but also on ethical AI practices, responsible data governance, and collaborative policymaking. If done well, India could spin the world's next biggest case study – turning SME lending from aspirational reality to a goldmine of economic might.

To Indian banks and insurance companies, a Gen-AI strategy should be a competitive differentiator. A lending platform that can embed AI-driven credit engine can optimize approval rates, reduce processing times from days to minutes, and ensure personalized loan offerings... The result? A frictionless lending ecosystem where Indian MSMEs can secure financing – a gap as huge as \$530 billion.

The author is CEO and Co-Founder, Biz2X and Biz2Credit

How is the convergence of technology and social collaboration the key to building engaged, high-performing organizations?



CHARU KUNWAR

Organizations are transitioning from traditional office setups to digitally enhanced workplaces, driven by employees' desires for more than basic communication tools. Today's workforce craves meaningful engagement, seamless collaboration, and a culture that nurtures innovation and inclusion. To build high-performing teams, organizations must leverage technology while fostering human connections through social collaboration. However, merely adopting technology isn't enough—engagement thrives in a thoughtfully designed environment blending collaborative tools and social interaction. This synergy boosts coordination, productivity, and job satisfaction, creating workplaces where employees feel valued and empowered.

The role of technology in modern workplaces

Technology has revolutionized modern workplaces, enhancing efficiency and fostering stronger team connections. Companies that integrate digital communication tools report a 20-25% boost in employee engagement and satisfaction, driven by increased transparency and reduced inefficiencies. Google exemplifies this through its Google Workspace, enabling seamless global collaboration. Its 'gPause' program, offering both in-person and virtual mindfulness exercises, has improved team cohesion and increased productivity.

Social collaboration as a catalyst for engagement

Social collaboration goes beyond digital platforms, creating an interactive and participative workplace culture where employees actively share ideas, solve problems, and contribute meaningfully. When employees feel heard and valued, they are more likely to stay motivated and committed, which directly supports employee retention and long-term performance. Many organizations have successfully implemented social collaboration strategies to foster inclusivity and boost employee morale. For instance, Starbucks and Adobe encourage Employee-Generated Content (EGC), allowing employees to share work experiences and employee-led community initiatives to the world.

Similarly, Buffer organizes team retreats in different global locations, blending work, team-building activities, and personal storytelling to enhance collaboration among remote employees. These initiatives demonstrate that fostering a culture of openness and engagement not only strengthens internal communication but also improves employee satisfaction and productivity. It also helps boost morale, reinforce positive workplace behavior, and enables leaders to identify and address challenges more quickly, creating a more resilient organization that can adapt to change with agility.

Technology meets workplace collaboration

The synergy of technology and social collaboration is reshaping the modern workplace, fostering innovation, teamwork, and efficiency. Organizations leverage social intranet platforms, AI-powered team analytics, and digital collaboration tools to promote

transparency and inclusivity. Virtual workspaces, real-time communication apps, and interactive brainstorming tools empower employees to connect, share ideas, and make swift decisions, regardless of location.

This convergence also plays a key role in maintaining engagement and productivity across dispersed teams, ensuring that collaboration thrives even in remote or hybrid environments.



Moreover, digital collaboration enhances flexibility, strengthens workplace relationships, and improves overall performance. By seamlessly integrating technology with social engagement strategies, organizations create dynamic, productive cultures that drive business success while ensuring employees remain engaged, informed, and empowered in an evolving work environment.

Challenges and considerations

Despite the advantages digital collaboration offers, organizations must still contend with certain challenges that can hamper efficiency and the well-being of employees. Digital fatigue is perhaps the most notable of these challenges. The incessant flow of virtual meetings, e-mails, and notifications may bombard employees, leaving them feeling exhausted and

promoting disengagement and reduced productivity. Companies need to have well-structured digital policies, limit unnecessary meetings, and encourage employees to take breaks from work so as to avoid burnout and sustain their motivation.

Also high on the agenda of technology-oriented workspaces are security and data privacy. Greater reliance on the cloud and virtual collaboration tools makes organizations prioritize cybersecurity measures. Proper investment geared toward securing communication channels, encrypting data, and training all employees on cybersecurity is an approach that safeguards the organization with regard to sensitive business information during digital collaboration.

Another challenge is fostering true interpersonal connections in a work-from-anywhere, digital-first environment. Though a technology-driven workflow can enhance efficiency, the depth of face-to-face interaction can never be replaced. Thus, companies must provide occasions for in-person meetings, team-building events, and informal social interactions that strengthen workplace relationships with some level of camaraderie.

Final words

As organizations evolve, leaders must continually refine their strategies to ensure technology enhances, rather than replaces human interaction. While digital tools play a vital role in boosting efficiency and connectivity, high-performing workplaces foster collaboration, trust, and engagement. The key lies in striking the right balance—leveraging technology to streamline operations while creating space for meaningful interpersonal connections.

The author is Executive Director & Group Head – Human Resources at Lighthouse Canton.

SURYAKUMAR’S UNBEATEN 73* TAKES MI TO 180/5 AGAINST DELHI CAPITALS

AGENCIES
MUMBAI

Right-hand batter Suryakumar Yadav's unbeaten 73* helped the five-time champions Mumbai Indians to reach 180/5 in their 20 overs against Delhi Capitals at the Wankhede Stadium here on Wednesday.

The Delhi-based franchise needs to chase a target of 181 runs to remain in contention for the playoffs.

Earlier, Delhi Capitals stand-in skipper Faf du Plessis won the toss and elected to bowl first.

Batters Ryan Rickelton and Rohit Sharma came to open the innings for the Mumbai side, but failed to give a good start as the right-hand batter Rohit Sharma (5) returned to the pavilion in the third over.



Delhi Capitals' Mustafizur Rahman and teammates celebrate the wicket of Mumbai Indians' Rohit Sharma during their Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025 match, at Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Wednesday. (ANI Photo)

Following Rohit's departure, right-hand batter Will Jacks joined Rickelton. Both put on a partnership of 25 runs before Jacks (21 runs off 13 balls) was dismissed in the sixth over by right-arm pacer

Mukesh Kumar. After Jacks' dismissal, Suryakumar Yadav came out to bat. The Hardik Pandya-led side touched the 50-run mark in the sixth over. At the score of 58, the Mum-

bai side lost their third wicket as Rickelton was sent back to the dressing room in the seventh over by left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav. This was spinner's 100th IPL wicket. The Mumbai-based fran-

chise completed the 100-run mark on the first ball of the 14th over as Suryakumar took a single on the bowling of Mustafizur Rehman.

At the score of 113 in the 15th over, Tilak Varma (27 runs from 27 balls) was dismissed by Mukesh Kumar.

MI skipper Hardik Pandya (3) was the fifth one to get dismissed in the 17th over at the score of 123.

In the 19th over, Suryakumar completed his fifty in 36 balls. In the same over, the Mumbai franchise brought up their 150 runs as Naman Dhir slammed a maximum on the bowling of Mukesh Kumar. After the completion of the first innings, the Mumbai side finished at 180/5 with Suryakumar Yadav (73* runs off 43 balls) and Naman Dhir (24* runs from 8 balls) unbeaten on the crease.



GT vs LSG: A battle of pride, momentum, and big hits

SUNIL YASH KALRA
NEW DELHI

IPL 2025 has reached its final and most thrilling stretch — every game now is a step closer to the grand finale. On Thursday, the stage is set for a high-octane clash as Gujarat Titans, already through to the playoffs, take on the eliminated but unpredictable Lucknow Super Giants at the Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad.

There's no denying it — GT has been one of the standout teams of the season. With 9 wins in 12 matches, they currently sit atop the points table. Their last win? A resounding 10-wicket demolition of Delhi Capitals, powered by an explosive 205-run unbeaten opening stand between Shubman Gill and Sai Sudharsan — the third-highest opening partnership in IPL history!

The Titans are not just looking to win — they want momentum. Two league games remain, and a clean finish would ensure they enter the playoffs not just as contenders, but as table-toppers with confidence and rhythm. For Lucknow, things haven't gone according to plan. Narrow defeats



early in the season and a crushing loss to Hyderabad in their previous game have officially knocked them out of playoff contention. But that doesn't mean they're out of the fight. Often in cricket, a team with no pressure becomes the most dangerous one, and that's what makes this clash spicy.

Former India all-rounder Noel David, who features on the Cricket Predicta Show powered by IxBAT, weighed in: "Gujarat Titans have the most balanced side this season — strong with both bat and ball. But I won't write LSG off. When there's no pressure, teams can play with freedom — and that makes Lucknow a dangerous unit."

Noel also praised Shubman Gill's sublime form and Rashid Khan's guile with the ball, calling GT the favorites — but warned that "if Luc-

know's top order fires, anything can happen."

The Narendra Modi Stadium, with its massive 1.32 lakh seating capacity, is a modern-day fortress for big T20 nights. The pitch here usually favors batters, especially in the second innings. Of the 40 IPL matches played here, 22 have been won by teams chasing. Average scores hover around 170-175, and fans could witness another run-fest, but quick bowlers can still make an impact in the powerplay overs.

In the six encounters between these two sides, GT leads 4-2, a stat that should give them confidence. But if IPL has taught us anything, it's this: form, stats, and history can flip in a matter of overs. Lucknow might be out of the playoffs, but pride is on the line — and they'll be playing for that, if nothing else.

Nagal bows out of French Open qualifying

AGENCIES
PARIS

India's top singles player Sumit Nagal bowed out of the French Open singles qualifying following a 2-6 4-6 defeat against lower-ranked Jurij Rodionov in the second round, here Wednesday.

Nagal, ranked 170th, lost to the 225th-ranked Austrian in one hour and 29 minutes at the Roland Garros. He had beaten American Mitchell Krueger in the first round. Nagal will miss the singles main draw of a



Grand Slam after appearing in all four in 2024. After losing the first set and trailing 2-4 in the second, Nagal got an opportunity to bounce back in the seventh game. He grabbed the chance by getting the break back.

He again fell back in the next game, losing the first two points to be 0-30 but managed to hold, making it 4-4. Serving out to stay in the match, Nagal dropped serve in the 10th game to make an exit.

Naushad Moosa appointed men's national football team head coach

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

The All India Football Federation (AIFF), on Tuesday, appointed Naushad Moosa as the head coach of the India U-23 men's national team, as per the official website of AIFF.

Moosa will take charge of the team on June 1, when they begin their camp in Kolkata, with the long-term aim of preparing the Indian team for the Asian Games 2026 in Aichi and Nagoya, in Japan, in line with the plans laid out to the federation by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.

While performing well in the Land of the Rising Sun remains the long-term goal, on a more immediate basis, Moosa's team will face Tajikistan on June 18 and Kyrgyz Republic on June 21 in two exposure matches in Dushanbe.



AIFF Deputy Secretary General Satyanarayan M said, "In discussions with Manolo Marquez, we concluded that the federation needs to develop the U23 team with more emphasis. The best of these players are all training 10 months a year, and we are thankful to the clubs for the readiness with which they are available for national team duty," as quoted from the official website of AIFF.

"However, some of them are not getting much game-time, which is where we are

looking to bridge the gap by playing exposure matches against other competitive international teams of the same age group, during the international windows," he said.

"We want to thank North-East United FC for cooperating in releasing Naushad Moosa for the international windows," he added.

As per the preparation plans for the Asian Games next year, the federation plans to utilize the FIFA International Windows in September, October, November, and March to arrange short training camps of around 10-14 days for the India U23s, which would also include matches against other U23 teams from around Asia, with longer camps being planned ahead of the June 2026 FIFA International Window, when there are no club matches.

Record-breaking Indian athletics team heads to Asian Championships

RUPINDER SINGH
NEW DELHI

Team India athletics team departs tomorrow for the Asian Athletics Championships in Korea. A flurry of national records in the recent past promises a great performance from the Indian athletics team in Korea from 27 to 31 May 2025.

India's star athlete Neeraj Chopra is giving the championships a miss, but Sachin Yadav in his absence is expected to be on the podium against Olympics champion Arshad Nadeem. The other national record came in the Doha Diamond League with Parul Chaudhary clocking 913.10 seconds. Parul is expected to win two medals in the 3000m steeplechase and 5000m. In steeplechase, she is up



against Olympics medallist Xavi representing Bahrain, and that may help her set a new national record too. Middle distance runner Mohammad Afsal recently set a national record in the UAE athletics gala clocking 1:46.61. The men's 4x100m team, which set a national record recently, will be involved in a tough battle with China and Japan for the medals. Indian women Jyothi Yarraji in 100m hurdles.

It was only a matter of time: Former coach of Neeraj Chopra

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

It was only a matter of time before Neeraj Chopra broke through the elusive 90m barrier, according to his former coach Klaus Bartonietz, who described the double Olympic medalist as a highly attentive and creative athlete constantly seeking to refine and improve his craft.

Chopra opened his season in stunning fashion as he sent his spear to 90.23m in the Diamond League in Doha last week to finally enter the elusive 90m club. "It was just a matter of

time (that he would breach the 90m mark)," Bartonietz told PTI when asked about his former ward's latest achievement.

Chopra and Bartonietz, a German bio-mechanics expert, shared a highly fruitful five-year partnership during which the Indian javelin star collected a host of accolades, including a historic Olympic gold at Tokyo and a silver at the Paris Games last year. "Neeraj is a very responsive athlete, very attentive, and trustful. That trust places a responsibility on you as a coach to always be at your best," Bartonietz said.

Flintoff's son part of Lions squad for India A series

AGENCIES
LONDON

Andrew Flintoff's 17-year-old son Rocky and fit-again pacer Chris Woakes were on Wednesday named in England Lions squad for the two four-day games against India A at home.

The series begins in Canterbury on May 30 while the second game will be played in Northampton from June 6.

The two red ball games precedes India's five Test series in England. Rocky, who was also part of the A team in Australia earlier this year.

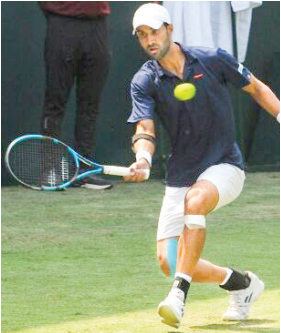
Bhambri-Galloway pair goes out of Geneva Open

AGENCIES
GENEVA

Second seeds Yuki Bhambri and Robert Galloway suffered a first-round exit at the Geneva Open following a tough battle against the German team of Jakob Schnaitter and Mark Wallner, here Wednesday.

The Indo-American pair lost 6-7(3) 4-6 to the unseeded rivals in the Round of 16 at the Euro 5,96,035 clay-court tournament, which is the last in the run-up to the French Open, the clay-court major.

Bhambri and Galloway split Euro 3,240 as prize money but no points were awarded since it was a



first-round loss. Last week, Bhambri and Galloway had ended runners-up at the Bordeaux Challenger, his best performance since the clay-court season began.

He lost in the first rounds at Monte Carlo (with Alexei Popyrin), ATP 500 in Munich, Madrid Masters and Rome Masters.

Kevin De Bruyne plays last home game

AGENCIES
MANCHESTER

Kevin De Bruyne ended his previous home game for Manchester City on a high note, with them defeating Bournemouth to catch up on a spot in the Champions League next season and both teams ended up with 10 men.

City were shocked by Crystal Palace in Saturday's FA Cup final and desperately needed to win against the Cherries to ensure they end the season in the top five of the Premier League in an otherwise calamitous season. Pep Guardiola's side are



third, well placed going into Sunday's final game of the season at Fulham, where a draw should see them into Europe's premier table for a third successive season.

While all eyes were on Kevin De Bruyne on his final appearance at Etihad Stadium, a huge roar greeted the

return from injury of Rodri, who last featured back in September.

Striker Omar Marmoush opened the scoring with a sensational 30-yard strike which swerved and crashed into the net via the post.

Kevin De Bruyne, however, was smelling a goal and

ought to have scored when Marmoush passed the ball to him a few yards out with an empty net to shoot at, but to the shock of everybody present, he seemed to scoop his attempt onto the crossbar.

Bernardo Silva prodded in a second but City displayed their frailties at the back between goals, with Evanilson stretching out a foot at a cross and thudding the post.

Substitute Nico Gonzalez whipped in the third, and while Dan Jebbison scored a late consolation, the defeat ruined Bournemouth's ambitions of qualifying for Europe next term.

Both teams had men sent

off as last man Mateo Kovacic was sent off for grabbing Evanilson, and Lewis Cook was also sent off for a lunge on Gonzalez.

Guardiola has stated this season has not been good enough for his team, losing their four-year grip on the Premier League trophy, being eliminated early from the Champions League and stunned by Palace at Wembley.

Few would have forecast at the beginning of the season that City would not only miss out on any significant silverware but also struggle to qualify in the Champions League positions.

Man United and Tottenham clash in all-English Europa League final

AGENCIES
BILBAO

Manchester United and Tottenham will meet in an all-English final in the Europa League on Wednesday, with both clubs hoping to end a dismal season on a high note.

The trophy will offer some relief for the winner, while the loser is likely to face a fresh wave of criticism.

United is unbeaten in the Europa League — Europe's second-tier club competition — this season but is down in 16th place in the Premier League, one spot ahead of Tottenham.



Tottenham was beaten in the 2019 Champions League final by Liverpool, and has not lifted a trophy since the 2008 English League Cup. United picked up its last silverware in the 2024 FA Cup. More than 50,000 English fans were expected

in Bilbao. The Basque city was filled with supporters from both clubs in the buildup for the final.

Many were without tickets, but the atmosphere outside Athletic Bilbao's San Mames Stadium was mostly peaceful.