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## Happening today

● **MYANMAR PRESIDENT** Min Aung Hlaing will embark on an official visit to India and is scheduled to hold talks with PM Narendra Modi on June 1.

● **US DEFENSE** Secretary Pete Hegseth will address the Shangri-La Dialogue with his remarks to focus on the Trump administration's Indo-Pacific strategy.

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## INSIDE PAGE 3

**CENSUS FROM AUG 1 IN BENGAL, SUVENDU SAYS NO POLITICS IN IT**

## STRONG EL NINO, INDIAN OCEAN CONDITION ALSO NOT FAVOURABLE

# Decade's driest monsoon looms: Met cuts estimate to 90% of 50-yr average

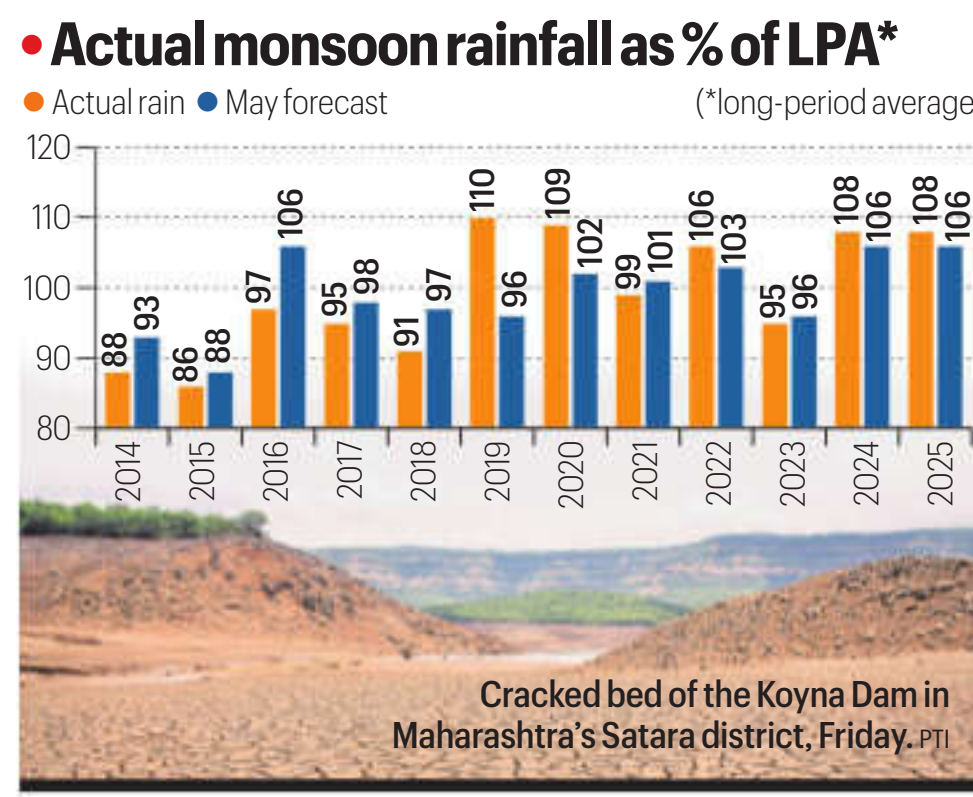
Silver lining: Foodgrain stocks ample, reservoir levels adequate

**Amitabh Sinha & Anjali Marar**  
New Delhi, Bengaluru, May 29

INDIA IS staring at the driest monsoon season in a decade, with the Met office Friday making a downward revision its earlier forecast and predicting only 90 per cent rain this season. In April, in its first forecast for this year's monsoon, India Meteorological Department (IMD) had said the country was likely to get 92 per cent of the long-

period average (LPA) rainfall during the four-month season. The LPA, revised every 10 years, is the average rainfall over the 50-year period 1971-2020, which is considered the baseline, or normal. Its current value is 89 cm for the rainy season — June to September — across the country as a whole. The latest forecast is the lowest by IMD in the last 20 years. If this holds, India could be in for the driest rainy season

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Cracked bed of the Koyna Dam in Maharashtra's Satara district, Friday. PTI

## ADDRESSES CONCERNS OVER DELAY

# Bail to verdict: SC pushes High Courts to speed up justice

Directs judgment be delivered within 3 months of matter being reserved, uploading of bail plea order the same day

**Express News Service**  
New Delhi, May 29

## E. EXPLAINED

### Flags litigant's right

ADDRESSING CONCERNS over undue delay in pronouncement of judgments reserved by judges, the Supreme Court issued directions Friday to all high courts to pronounce verdicts within three months of hearing the case and to "display extra promptitude" in cases of personal liberty and bail.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said the directions were intended to strengthen the judicial administration and ensure timely delivery of judgments.

Among the key directions, the Supreme Court said that

The SC has held that delay in pronouncing verdicts after hearing them is not only against the provisions of law but an infringement of the right to personal liberty guaranteed by the Constitution. The SC guidelines give litigants a right to seek redress against delays.

bail applications should be heard and the order should preferably be pronounced and uploaded the same day. If it is re-

## NATION PAGE 6

### NEET LEAK: PROBLEM WON'T END UNTIL ACCOUNTABILITY IS FIXED, SC TELLS NTA

served, it should be pronounced the next day and uploaded on the website.

The Supreme Court also called for reasoned judgments pronounced in open courts to be uploaded on the High Court website within 24 hours.

The directions came on a petition filed by four convicts serving life sentences whose criminal appeals had been reserved by the Jharkhand High

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

# Sharp rise in obesity, diabetes in five years since 2019, shows latest health survey

Proportion of obese women jumps 6.7 percentage points; 4.4 for men

## Men and women who were overweight or obese

CATEGORY	2023-24 (NFHS-6)	2019-21 (NFHS-5)
Women (15-49 yrs) overweight or obese	30.70%	24%
Men (15-49 yrs) overweight or obese	27.30%	22.90%

**Harikishan Sharma**  
New Delhi, May 29

ADULT OBESITY in India is rising fast, with the proportion of men and women in the 15-49 age group who were overweight or obese up by 4.4 and 6.7 percentage points, respectively, in five years between 2019 and 2024, according to the National Family Health Survey-6 (NFHS-6), released by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Friday.

The NFHS-6, conducted in 2023-24 by the Union Health Ministry with the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai as the nodal agency, covered around 6.79 lakh households across 715 districts in all States and UTs, except Manipur. It provides

"vital evidence" on population, health, nutrition and family welfare indicators.

As per the survey, the percentage of women who were overweight or obese increased to 30.7 per cent in 2023-24 from 24 per cent in 2019-21. The obesity was higher in urban areas than rural areas. In urban areas, 42.8 per cent women were reported overweight or obese, while the figure was 25.5 per cent in rural areas.

The percentage of men who were overweight or obese also increased to 27.3 in 2023-24 from 22.9 in 2019-21. In rural areas, 23 per cent men were reported obese, while in urban areas the figure was 36.3 per cent.

Like the spike in adult obesity, the burden of high blood

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## NEGOTIATIONS TO END WEST ASIA CRISIS

# Making 'final determination' on Iran deal to open Hormuz, extend ceasefire: Trump

US President in White House huddle with aides; Tehran says deal not final

**Aamer Madhani & Michelle L Price**  
Washington, May 29

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump said Friday he's holding a White House Situation Room meeting with his advisers as he looks to make a "final determination" on moving forward with a deal to extend the Iran ceasefire and reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Iran said the deal has not been finalised.

Trump confirmed the high-level talks the day after *The Associated Press* and other news outlets reported that US and Iranian negotiators had come to terms on a tentative agreement. The deal would extend the fragile ceasefire by 60 days as new talks are held on Iran's disputed nuclear programme.

Trump wrote on social media that "Iran must agree that they will never have a

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Iranians walk past a billboard of the late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in downtown Tehran. AP

# Hormuz crisis: Build LPG stock for at least 30 days' demand, Govt tells OMCs

**Sukalp Sharma**  
New Delhi, May 29

THE LPG supply squeeze due to the West Asia crisis has underscored the requirement to have more LPG storage in the country, and the government has asked public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs) — Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum, Hindustan Petroleum — to work on a plan for LPG reserves

## POLITICS PAGE 8

### INDIA TRUSTED PARTNER, ONLY 1% OF TRADE DEAL TALKS LEFT: GOR

to meet at least 30 days of demand in addition to their regular commercial stocks.

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

# In signal to contractors, Rly tells Faridabad station developer can't reduce project scope

50% payment, Deepak Builders proposed reducing scope of station citing 'safety and restoration work'

**Dheeraj Mishra**  
New Delhi, Faridabad, May 29

IN A decision that sends a clear message to contractors, the Northern Railway has turned down a proposal for reducing the scope of the station redevelopment project being executed under the flagship Amrit Bharat station scheme.

Ludhiana-based contractor Deepak Builders and Engineers India Ltd had in November 2025 proposed to do away with the originally-planned through-roof (canopy covering the entire station), reduce the width of the concourse or pathways between platforms, and cut down on the number of lifts



Faridabad station redevelopment work almost 50% complete. DHEERAJ MISHRA

and escalators, from the Rs 240-crore project. This was deliberated upon for almost six months before the Northern Railway finally turned it down on May 16.

The Northern Railway has asked the contractor to submit a detailed planning as per original plan, but assured it of all possible help including

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## Business as Usual

By EP UNNY



## U.P. BRIDGE BEING BUILT COLLAPSES, 6 WORKERS DIE

P 6

## RPL TRADING CASE

# Relief for RIL: SC sets aside SEBI order to pay Rs 447 cr, upholds Rs 25-cr fine

**Express News Service**  
New Delhi, May 29

THE SUPREME Court Friday set aside the Securities and Exchange Board of India's (SEBI) finding of fraud and manipulation by Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) in trading Reliance Petroleum Limited (RPL) futures to make unlawful gains.

While it upheld the Rs 25 crore penalty on RIL, the bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and

R Mahadevan set aside the regulator's disgorgement order of Rs 447.27 crore with 12 per cent interest.

The March 24, 2017 order of the SEBI had been upheld by the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) on November 5, 2020.

The bench said, "We have reached the conclusion that SAT, in its majority judgment, committed an egregious error in passing the impugned judgment insofar as the question of

fraud under regulations 3 and 4 of PFUTP Regulations (SEBI Prohibition of Fraudulent and Unfair Trade Practices relating to Securities Market)."

It also ordered that the Rs 250 crore deposited by RIL during the pendency of the case, in accordance with its earlier direction, be returned. The court, however, upheld the Rs 25 crore penalty on RIL "for alleged violation of the disclosure

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

# Heavy rain and 88 kmph squall wreak havoc in Kolkata and south districts, at least 7 dead

**Sweetly Kumari**  
Kolkata, May 29

HEAVY RAIN accompanied by strong winds lashed Kolkata and other parts of south Bengal on Friday afternoon, leaving at least seven people dead and causing widespread damage. Flight operations were also hit, with several aircraft diverted or delayed.

The weather office said a squall passed over Alipore in Kolkata district from the north-



Dozens of trees were uprooted in Friday's storm in Kolkata. PARTHA PAUL

westerly direction with a maximum speed reaching 88 kmph at 2.45 pm.

A squall also passed over Dum Dum in North 24 Parganas district with a maximum speed of 74 kmph at 2.29 pm. The squalls were accompanied by heavy thunderstorms.

Chief Minister Suvenud Adhikari announced compensation of Rs 4 lakh each for the families of those who died.

He said at a press briefing,

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● AT 81 CASES, INCLUDING 38 NOT LODGED BY NIA, THE NIA COURT IN DELHI IS HEARING 8 TIMES THE NUMBER RECOMMENDED BY THE TOP COURT

# 5th judge since 2022, 43 NIA cases: SC order on speedy UAPA trials & a reality check

**Nirbhay Thakur**  
New Delhi, May 29

EARLIER THIS month, the Supreme Court directed the setting up of exclusive NIA courts to enable timebound disposal of UAPA trials. "If there are more than 15 trials pending within the jurisdiction of a particular High Court... two courts will be set up. Whereas, where trials exceed 25, three courts will be set up," a Division Bench comprising

Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi ordered.

This followed a Court order that judges presiding over NIA courts not be burdened with additional work.

If a court stands as a stark contrast to this, it is the one headed by Special NIA Judge Prashant Sharma at Patiala House Court in Delhi. The most sensitive NIA cases are heard in the Capital, which has just one other NIA court be-

sides Justice Sharma's.

Appointed on November 20, 2025, Justice Sharma is the fifth judge to head the Patiala House NIA court since September 2022. Its four previous presiding judges spent an average of 11 months each in the post.

There are 43 NIA cases pending before the court being tried under the UAPA — ranging from terrorism and cross-border conspiracy to radicalisation — apart from others involving money laundering and other charges.

## ● NIA COURT PENDENCY

- Only 18 of 53 designated NIA courts have no pending cases.
- Only 3 of 53 designated NIA courts deal exclusively with NIA cases.
- Jharkhand (28), Delhi (19), J&K (16), West Bengal (13), Chhattisgarh, Kerala and TN (8 each), Assam and Gujarat (6 each) rank the highest in terms of cases pending for at least 5 yrs, or more
- Chhattisgarh: Highest number of cases under trial at 73, with 4 NIA dedicated courts.
- J&K, with 71 cases, has only 1 court; as does Jharkhand with 52 cases
- Delhi, with 44 cases and 2 NIA courts; West Bengal, with 38 cases and 3 courts



Of these 43 cases, in seven, Judge Sharma is hearing arguments afresh, with the accused and the NIA having almost completed their arguments before the previous judges were transferred. One of these cases was registered in 2017.

In these seven cases, it is the second or third time that hearings are being held afresh, and involve 87 accused, with arguments on charges against 32 still pending.

At 81 cases, including 43 under the UAPA and 38 not

lodged by the NIA, the NIA court headed by Judge Sharma is hearing eight times the number recommended by the Supreme Court (10 per judge). Over 2017, 2018 and 2019, the average disposal time of a case in this NIA court was seven, four and three years, respectively (against the Supreme Court's "expectation" of one month). Eight cases in all were disposed of in this period.

On an average, Justice Sharma has held 19 hearings in these NIA cases, with a total of

132 hearings across the 43 cases. A defence counsel for some of the accused told *The Indian Express* on the condition of anonymity: "The frequent transfer of judges causes delay... The process is prolonged especially in complex cases with a large number of accused persons." Since getting bail in terror cases is extremely difficult, a delay also means longer incarceration as an undertrial.

Special Public Prosecutor

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Police investigation is in progress where hooch tragedy in Hadapsar allegedly claimed many lives on Friday. ARUL HORIZON

## Spurious liquor leaves at least 14 dead in Pune

Chandan Haygunde & Sushant Kulkarni  
Pune, May 29

AT LEAST 14 people have died after consuming spurious liquor in Pune in the last three days. Several others, who too are suspected to have consumed the same liquor, are undergoing treatment at different hospitals, police said. The state government has ordered a CID probe. Three officers of Hadapsar police station have been suspended.

Among the deceased, 10 were residents of Phugewadi-Dapodi areas of Pimpri-Chinchwad under Pune district. Police said they died between May 26 and May 28 after consuming spurious country liquor. Probe revealed they consumed hooch at an illegal liquor den in Pawar Wasti in Dapodi.

Usha Netke, who lost her brother Sachin, said, "He slept off yesterday around 10 pm. He got up around midnight and was sweating profusely. After a while, he fell asleep. He didn't get up in the morning. We admitted him to YCM hospital, where he was declared dead."

At least four other victims of Phugewadi-Dapodi are undergoing treatment at the Medi-point Hospital, Aundh, and YCM Hospital, Pimpri, stated a press release issued on Friday.

The remaining four victims were residents of Sasane Nagar in Hadapsar area of Pune city.

## 'TET must for in-service teachers': SC rejects plea seeking review of order

Ananthkrishnan G  
New Delhi, May 29

THE SUPREME Court on Friday dismissed petitions seeking review of its 2025 ruling, which made Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) mandatory for even those teachers who joined service prior to the enactment of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, but extended the time for this till August 31, 2028.

A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Manmohan said "service of teachers cannot come at the cost of the educational future of children" and reiterated that TET is not only a mandatory eligibility requirement but also a constitutional necessity flowing from the right to quality education under Article 21A.

The SC in its September 1, 2025 order in Anjuman Ishaat-e-Taleem Trust vs State of Maharashtra held that the RTE Act "ought to apply to all minority institutions, whether aided or unaided". It also held that in-service teachers...recruited prior to enactment of the Act, and having more than five years to retire on superannuation, should qualify TET within 2 years, i.e. by August 31, 2027, failing which they would not be entitled to continue in service. The court also held that irrespective of the length of service remaining, any teacher aspiring for promotion

## HC upholds TRAI order fixing 12 mins of ads per hr

Sohini Ghosh  
New Delhi, May 29

THE DELHI High Court on Friday upheld the 2012-2013 regulation over broadcast and cable services that fixes 12 minutes of ads per hour, with a 10-minute cap on commercial advertisements and a 2-minute cap for self-promotional ads.

A division bench of Justices Anil Kshetrapal and Amit Mahajan disposed of 17 petitions, filed by entertainment channels, news broadcasters, regional channels among others, chal-

lenging the regulation by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) as being violative of Article 14 (right to equality) and Article 19 (right to free speech). The regulation was brought in in 2012 and amended in 2013.

The verdict comes after over a decade since the first petition was moved in 2013, and the last petition in 2021. The broadcasters had pointed out their primary revenue source is ads and the time ceiling interferes with it, and undermines the broadcasters' economic viability.

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## Verdict within 3 months: SC to HCs

Court in 2022 but the verdicts were pronounced three years later. While deciding their plea, the Supreme Court chose to address what it described as a wider institutional issue affecting courts across the country.

In May 2025, the Supreme Court had taken note of a report in The Indian Express that highlighted how the Jharkhand High Court pronounced verdicts in 75 criminal appeals in a week, following a rap from the top court.

The Court said that orders in cases seeking bail or suspension of sentence should be communicated to the jail authorities

as soon as it is pronounced, and that the undertrial or convict must be released, preferably the same day or at most the next day.

It also said that if a judgment in a criminal appeal or a death reference is reserved and the appellant is in custody, then a clarification can be sought by the parties within seven days of the date of reserving the judgment.

The bench also said that at the end of every month, an automated list of reserved judgments that remain pending must be generated and placed before the Chief Justice of the High Court, with a copy to the bench con-

cerned. If a judgment is not delivered in three months of reserving the order, the Registrar General must place the matter before the Chief Justice, who is then required to bring the delay to the notice of the bench concerned within two weeks, the top court said.

Crucially, where a judgment remains pending despite these steps, the SC said the case must be reassigned to another bench for a fresh hearing.

A similar string of directions, aimed at improving access to justice were issued in a 2001 case, Anil Rai v. State of Bihar, in

the war's accomplishments more modestly.

"We're in a position where we could substantially set back their nuclear programme, not just during the term of this President but over the long term," Vance said, adding that it would be "very, very good" for Americans.

Baghaei, however, said Friday that Iranian officials were "focused on the end of war and are not discussing the details of the nuclear plan at this point."

Iran also wants any deal to include a truce between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah militants in Lebanon, where fighting has intensified despite a nominal ceasefire.

The Islamic Republic has 440.9 kg of uranium that is enriched up to 60% purity, a short, technical step from weapons-grade levels of 90%, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Iran has long maintained its nuclear programme is peaceful and has not publicly committed to giving up the stockpile. It's believed to be buried under three nuclear sites that were badly damaged by US strikes last year.

Trump returned Friday to his on-and-off demand for the removal of the cache as part of a deal. The material would be

unearthed by the US, in coordination with Iran and the IAEA, "and destroyed," he posted.

The proposed memorandum makes clear that Iran would not be able to impose tolls on the Strait of Hormuz and that it would have to remove all mines from the vital waterway within 30 days, according to a US official who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The US would gradually lift its blockade on Iranian ports and would also agree to relax sanctions, allowing Iran to sell more of its oil. Baghaei said Iran and Oman, which lie on opposite sides of the strait, would manage it and "adopt mechanisms" for transit through it, "based on their own national interests and the interests of the international community."

The two nations' foreign ministers discussed the issue by phone earlier Friday, according to Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who wrote on X that he had expressed solidarity "in the face of any threat."

On Wednesday, Trump had warned Oman, a US ally, not to enter into any agreement with Iran to share control of the strait or the US will "have to blow them up."

ASSOCIATED PRESS

## Trump

nuclear weapon or bomb." He said the strait must be reopened for international navigation and all sea mines destroyed.

Iran's main negotiator said it has "no trust in guarantees or words," only actions, underscoring lingering distrust after the US and Israel have twice attacked Iran over the past year while it was engaged in nuclear negotiations.

"No step will be taken before the other side acts," Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf wrote on X. "We do not gain concessions through talks, but through missiles."

Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei later told a state broadcaster that the agreement "has not been finalized yet."

On Thursday, US Vice President JD Vance suggested negotiators were trying to strike general terms on Iran's nuclear programme, with the specifics to be hammered out in the ensuing talks.

Trump and his team said from the start of the conflict that a prime objective was to ensure that Iran can never have a nuclear weapon, but Vance framed

## Faridabad station

reasonable space for timely completion of the project.

Railway sources said at least two other contractors had proposed a similar reduction of scope of development after emerging as the lowest bidder and winning the contract. "Had the proposal gone through, it would have downgraded the originally conceived airport look of the station," said a source, who did not wish to be named. Further, it has sent a signal to contractors they cannot bid low, get a project, and then attempt to scale it down.

On May 16, the Northern Railway zone informed Deepak Builders that descope of Faridabad station that it sought was not feasible in the view of future passenger growth, *The Indian Express* has learnt. The company had cited safety and restoration work in its proposal to scale down the scope of the project.

When contacted, a senior executive in Deepak Builders

and Engineers, told *The Indian Express*, that the company was not getting enough blocks to complete the redevelopment work; hence it proposed to reduce the scope of work. Blocks refer to temporary suspension of train movement on specific sections for construction works.

Deepak Builders is executing the project under an Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) contract. The company was awarded the work in 2022.

Sources said the removal of the entire through-roof of about 22,950 sqm — bigger than an international cricket ground — was proposed on the grounds of safety and restoration concerns. The reason cited for compressing the concourse between platforms 1 and 4 was that the contractor was not getting enough space for undertaking construction activities with trains operating continuously, said the sources.

On March 25, *The Indian*

## 7 dead

"Between this storm and various other factors, such as electrocution, railway incidents, house collapses, and lightning, a total of seven people have lost their lives. We all know that no monetary compensation can ever replace a lost life. However, on behalf of the government, we are announcing a compensation of Rs 4 lakh each for these seven families. District magistrates, along with local MLAs, have been instructed to ensure this compensation reaches the families as swiftly as possible."

"The Home Secretary, the Disaster Management Secretary and all other government de-

partments are actively monitoring the situation, and the police and district magistrates have been instructed to complete postmortems and other necessary formalities," he said, adding that the deaths were reported from South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas, Howrah, Hooghly, Paschim Medinipur, and Purulia.

On the damage caused by the storm, the chief minister said, "Overall, reports of uprooted large trees and various other damages have come in from several districts across the state, including Howrah, North 24 Parganas, Hooghly, Paschim Medinipur, and Purulia. In Kolkata, too, trees fell on cars, and some people have been injured."

He added that those injured

*Express* sent a detailed questionnaire to Northern Railway on the proposed descope of the Faridabad project. The Ministry of Railways responded on May 27 and said the work will be carried as per the original scope of the contract. "No descope is envisaged at this stage in respect of the ongoing Faridabad station redevelopment work and the work is planned to be carried as per the original scope of the contract," it said.

Such de-scoping of the project after awarding it to the contractor could have raised questions on the fairness of the tender and could be understood as giving favour to a party in a competitive bid, said a source. The descope was pitched as entailing savings of almost Rs 24 crore to the Railways, but sources said these works are actually valued at a much higher price as per current market rate and the contractor was likely to benefit from a scaling down of the works. Sources said that Railways have already made payment of almost 50 per cent of the project cost (Rs 117 crore) to the contractor.

would also be given compensation, which will be announced at a later date, and that he had directed officials to ensure they get prompt medical treatment.

Noting largescale uprooting of trees in various parts of Kolkata and adjacent Salt Lake, which affected traffic and, in some instances, damaged properties, the chief minister said, "Many environmentalists have been raising questions regarding the maintenance of these large trees in Kolkata. I have instructed the Chief Secretary to hold discussions with the Forest Department, Environment Department, and the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) to find protective measures, as this season of natural calamities has just begun and will recur at vari-

"There may be a case where one matter may take more than one month to conclude. But we are expecting that, on an average, one NIA case is concluded in a month. For this, you need to have day-to-day hearing," the apex court said. It also directed that NIA courts "should exclusively deal with UAPA or other related trials and that such Presiding Officers should not be entrusted with any other cases."

The Bench passed these directions while hearing a suo motu case registered in January, to oversee the creation of special courts to tackle the pendency of

which the Supreme Court noted that delivering judgments long after arguments had concluded could affect public confidence in the judicial process.

The Court had directed the Chief Justices of HCSto monitor reserved judgments and ensure lists of pending reserved matters were periodically prepared. It also held if a judgment remained pending for more than 3 months, a party could move an application seeking an early pronouncement. However, if six months lapsed without a judgment, the litigant could approach the CJ seeking reassignment of the case to another bench. However, implementation varied across high courts, and delays continued to surface.

## LPG stock

Petroleum Ministry Joint Secretary Sujata Sharma told reporters Friday: "We are working on the strategic reserves. Oil marketing companies have been asked to work out (a plan) to have LPG reserves for a minimum of 30 days with them, and they are working on it."

Sharma said the proposal is still at an early stage and declined to comment on a timeline for these reserves to be created.

Whether this additional storage will be in underground caverns, as in case of strategic crude oil reserves, or in overground tankage will also be worked out by OMCs depending on cost considerations and feasibility.

The move to expand storage capacity for LPG, which is used as a cooking fuel by over 33 crore Indian households, comes at a time when LPG has been the most impacted energy segment because of the West Asia war and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. While India has strategic petroleum reserves for crude oil, it has none for LPG and LNG. A bulk of the available stocks for crude oil also are commercial stocks with refiners.

The contractor had, in its November missive, proposed to reduce the width of concourse from 72 meters to 15 meters for some parts between platform 1 and platform 4, removal of through roof, 50 per cent reduction in lifts in concourse area and reducing five escalators in both foot over bridges (FOBs). This could have adversely affected the total passenger evacuation time from the platform in case of peak demand. The reduction of one escalator from the platform reduces the evacuation capacity by 90 passengers per minute and creates congestion on the platform for public movement during peak hour traffic.

The removal of the through roof was proposed keeping in view the various maintenance issues and expeditious restoration of services during and after any probable accident or mishap.

Deepak Builders and Engineers India Private Ltd has been awarded three more station development works under the Amrit Bharat Station scheme: Ludhiana Junction, Jalandhar Cantt and Delhi Cantt stations.

ous times. They will look into how to build better protection."

Around 36 trees were uprooted in and around Kolkata, KMC sources said.

Portions of the overhead shades of the Sahid Kshudiram Metro station in south Kolkata were blown away by the winds, leading to rainwater gushing into the platform and affecting services on the 'Blue Line' section.

Personnel from the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) and the state disaster management group were pressed into service to clear the city's thoroughfares with tree cutters and bulldozers.

Reports of waterlogged roads were also received from some parts of the city.

har-e-Taiba chief Mohd Hafeez Saeed for alleged terror funding.

- A 2020 case against an alleged al-Qaeda module operating across West Bengal and Kerala.
- A 2021 case pertaining to alleged publication and dissemination of an "ISIS-linked" digital magazine.
- A 2021 case against gangster and designated terrorist Lawrence Bishnoi and 19 others, over allegations of running a vast trans-border empire involved in contract killings and extortion.
- Two 2023 cases against Sukesh Chandrashekar pertaining to allegations of a Rs 200-
- A 2017 case against Lask-

## Monsoon

since 2015, when the overall seasonal rainfall happened to be 86 per cent of the LPA.

In the last two decades, there have been only two other occasions — 2009 and 2014, apart from 2015 — when seasonal monsoon rain have remained below 90 per cent of LPA. This year looks all set to join that group. IMD's updated forecast Friday showed there was a 60 per cent chance that the seasonal rainfall would be below 90 per cent of LPA. The IMD did not say what prompted the downward revision in its forecast. However, more recent assessments of the emerging El Niño in the equatorial Pacific Ocean, and of the Indian Ocean Dipole could be the possible reasons.

Since its previous forecast in April, more information about the emerging El Niño has become clear. El Niño, a largescale ocean-atmospheric interaction in the equatorial Pacific Ocean that influences weather patterns worldwide, is known to suppress rainfall over the Indian region.

There are predictions that this year's El Niño, which could persist well into the next year, could develop into one of the strongest ever. The possibility of emergence of an El Niño has been known for the last few months, but forecasts made for this phenomenon during March and April usually suffer from a greater degree of uncertainty, something that is referred to as spring barrier.

The information coming about El Niño now is considered more accurate and robust. Recent forecasts suggest the formation of a strong El Niño.

"With these limitations (spring barrier) and the understanding back then regarding the intensity of the emerging El Niño, we made calculations of the monsoon forecast to be around 92 per cent in April. However, we have downgraded the forecast keeping in view two things — emergence of moderate-strong El Niño earlier in the season than anticipated. In ad-

## SC relief for RIL

requirements under the 2001 SEBI circular in respect of position limits". The case has its origins in RIL's March 29, 2007 decision to raise funds for the completion of various projects to the extent of Rs 87,000 crore by selling shares of its listed subsidiary, RPL. It was decided to sell 5 per cent of its RPL shareholding, which roughly equated to 22.5 crore shares. The decision to sell the shares was based on the premise that RPL's shares were overvalued.

From November 6, 2007 to November 29, 2007, RIL sold 20.29 crore shares out of the proposed 22.5 crore shares in the cash segment of NSE and BSE, out of which 2.25 crore shares were sold in the last 10 minutes, between 3.21:40 pm and 3.30 pm on November 29.

RIL realised Rs 4,500 crore from the sale of the shares in the cash segment and Rs 513 crore from the futures segment

dition, the transition of the Indian Ocean Dipole from neutral to positive is expected only during the latter-half of the monsoon season. All put together, we arrive at 90 per cent of LPA this year," said a senior IMD official.

The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) refers to the temperature differential of surface waters between Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea side. If the latter is warmer, that is considered a "positive IOD" and heralds a better monsoon that may offset, to some extent, the adverse impact of a strong El Niño.

IMD said Friday the El Niño was expected to be weak in June, moderate in July and August and strong in September. This would mean that most of the monsoon season would pass off when the El Niño phase is weak or moderate. However, its actual impact on the rainfall cannot be quantified.

As for IOD, the IMD's earlier assessment was it would transition from a neutral state to positive state during monsoon season, which could counter some of the effects of the El Niño. But on Friday, the IMD said IOD was likely to remain neutral through the entire monsoon season.

This year, therefore, looks all set to end an unusually good run of monsoon seasons for India. Five of the last seven years, including the last two years, had produced more than 100 per cent rainfall. The other two years, 2021 and 2023, were also not bad, bringing in 99 and 95 per cent rains respectively.

While low rainfall is, no doubt, a reason for concern, it might not bring immediate pain. India's foodgrain stocks are in a comfortable state, following a good harvest last year. The impact of El Niño is likely to be felt only in second half of the monsoon season, by which time the kharif sowing season should be over. The major reservoirs of the country have sufficient amounts of water right now because of ample rains last year. Lack of adequate rain is expected to push temperatures up. IMD said the country was likely to see less than 92% rain in June.

through the 12 agents, totalling an aggregate amount of Rs 5,013 crore.

The SEBI later concluded that by employing 12 agents to take separate positions within their Open Interest limits on its behalf, by executing separate agreements with each of them, and cornering 93.63 per cent of the November Futures of RPL, RIL acted in a fraudulent manner while dealing in RPL scrip.

The market regulator said an analysis of the trading strategy/pattern adopted by RIL in the cash market during November 2007, and specifically on November 2, 2007 being the expiry day of the November Futures of RPL, revealed a manipulation of the last half an hour settlement price, which was a violation of the SEBI Act, 1992, read with the PFUTP Regulations.

On appeal, the SAT found no error in the SEBI order.

## Sharp rise in obesity

sugar is also climbing among those aged 15 years and above, the survey shows. The proportion of men reporting high or very high (>140mg/dl) blood sugar levels or taking medicine to control it increased to 20.9 per cent in 2023-24 from 15.6 per cent in 2019-21. The figure was higher in urban areas — 23.9 per cent of men reported battling high or very high blood sugar levels or being under medication to control while it was 19.7 per cent in rural areas.

The proportion of women reporting high blood sugar levels was lower compared to men but it has increased sharply from 2019 to 2024. As per the survey, 17.8 per cent of

women reported having high or very high blood sugar levels or taking medicine to control it, up from 13.5 per cent in 2019-21.

In 2023-24, 21.9 per cent of urban women and 16.2 per cent of rural women reported having high or very high blood sugar levels or taking medicine to control it. The rate of caesarean-section deliveries has also been rising — particularly in private healthcare facilities.

The proportion of births at a private health facility delivered by caesarean section rose to 54.1 per cent in 2023-24 from 47.4 per cent in 2019-21. For public health facilities, it increased to 16.9 per cent from 14.3 per cent.

crore extortion racket.

- A 2022 case against Omas Salam, the then chairman of the now banned Popular Front of India (PFI), of alleged "transnational conspiracy" to raise funds and of holding "radicalisation" training camps.
- A 2022 case against Canada-based Arshdeep Datta, of alleged involvement with the Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF).
- A 2023 case related to ethnic violence in Manipur.
- A 2024 case involving human trafficking and cyber-slavery allegations. WITH INPUTS BY VINEET BHALLA

ENUMERATION TO BE WRAPPED UP BY FEBRUARY

## Census from August 1, CM says 'not linked to politics'

Census extremely necessary as TMC gov't had changed state's demography by encouraging infiltration: Suwendu

Atri Mitra  
Kolkata, May 29

ACCUSING the previous TMC government of changing West Bengal's demographic composition by "encouraging infiltration," Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari on Friday said the Census was "extremely necessary" and should not be linked to politics.

"Because of the Census, a large number of Bangladeshis have already fled the country, as you can clearly see. At this moment, those who are being held in various holding centres will not be able to produce the necessary and valid documents," the chief minister said at a press conference after chairing a meeting on the first phase of the Census at the state secretariat, Nabanna. The CM said the survey will begin from August 1 and will continue till February next year.

Accusing the previous TMC government of delaying the Census in the state, Adhikari said, "The previous government did not start the Census process for political reasons. The then chief secretary was

also waiting for a political concurrence. Because the previous government did not undertake any Census-related work, other states have moved much further ahead while we have fallen behind."

The chief minister dismissed fears and questions surrounding the enumeration process.

"The Census has no connection with politics. It is a Constitutional obligation... There is no reason for the legitimate citizens of this country or state to be afraid," he said, urging people to cooperate with officials to ensure the smooth conduct of the enumeration process.

Laying out the schedule of the Census process in the survey, the chief minister said that for the first time, the entire Census process will be conducted digitally.

According to the CM, the first phase of self-enumeration will continue until August 15, during which ordinary residents can self-enumerate online.

To ensure that there is no confusion or problems arising among the general people regarding the Census, special helpline numbers and a website are



CM Suwendu Adhikari at a meeting of principal census officers, in Kolkata on Friday. ANI

being launched by the state and the Centre. The nationwide toll-free number that will remain active is 1855. In addition, a landline number is also being launched: 033-2335 9503. For any information, citizens can directly visit the official website: [www.westbengal.census.gov.in](http://www.westbengal.census.gov.in).

Adhikari said Census Director Rashmi Komal would oversee the entire exercise in the state. Government employees engaged in the enumeration process will collect data using a dedicated mobile app and upload the information directly to a central server.

Gov't paves way for CBI to probe GTA teachers' recruitment scam

Express News Service  
Kolkata, May 29

THE CENTRAL Bureau of Investigation (CBI) will investigate the alleged irregularities in teachers' recruitment in the Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA).

Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari has decided to withdraw the case, which the West Bengal government had filed in the Supreme Court challenging the Calcutta High Court's order for a CBI probe into the matter.

"If the state withdraws from the Supreme Court case, the High Court's order will remain in force. In accordance with that order, the CBI investigation will begin," said an official.

On Friday, the decision was taken during Chief Minister Adhikari's special meeting at Nabanna with administrative officials regarding the development of the Hills.

As allies in the BJP-led NDA coalition, the chief minister had also invited Bimal Gurung and Roshan Giri to the meeting. Darjeeling MP Raju Bista also attended the meeting as a public representative.

Launching an attack on the previous government, Adhikari said, "We want the people in the Hills to receive civic services. In the last financial year (2025-26), Rs 180 crore was allocated for the Hills. But no work was done. In the 2026-27 financial year as well, Rs 170 crore has been allocated for the Hills. That money, too, could not be used. We have told the GTA's principal secretary, Shama Parvin, to speak with the local MPs and MLAs at the earliest and carry out the necessary work accordingly," the CM said.

Stating that Rs 1,000 rupee package announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2021 for tea workers in the Hills will now be implemented, Adhikari said, "the Centre has said it can provide Rs 300 crore for the current financial year. That money will be used for the welfare of tea workers," he added.



## Dilip Dhoom!

Panchayat Minister Dilip Ghosh rides a superbike outside Eco Park in New Town on Friday. ANI

THE MINISTER shared his bike ride experience on X. "Today, I rode a Honda BigWing superbike. It is a high-speed 1800cc, 6-cylinder motorcycle. The bike is extremely comfortable and offers incredible speed," he wrote, adding, "With the BJP government now clearing roads and footpaths from encroachments, the younger generation will no longer face difficulties in riding these motorcycles."

THE VIDEO of the minister's bike ride went viral, with a section of internet users dubbing him 'Dabangg Dilip'. However, the viral moment also brought its fair share of scrutiny. Motorcycle enthusiasts quickly pointed out that the premium bike has staggering price tag of Rs 53 lakh. Several netizens raised questions about the minister's safety, asking why he chose to ride without a helmet. ENS

## 'Want to bring back Tatas to Singur, signal Bengal is friendly to investors'

Press Trust of India  
Kolkata, May 29

SEEKING TO recast the political and industrial legacy of Singur, West Bengal BJP president Samik Bhattacharya on Friday said the state government wants the Tata Group to return to the Hooghly township, describing it as both an economic necessity and a powerful signal that the state is again open for business.

In an interview with PTI on the BJP government's industrial vision after the party's victory in the state, Bhattacharya said bringing the Tatas back to Singur would help erase what he called the "wrong message" sent to investors after the Nano project was forced out of the state nearly two decades ago.

"We want the Tatas to come back, and that too in Singur. We want to send a message to the entire country and the world that West Bengal is investor-friendly and is ready to welcome investments," he said.

The remarks come at a time when the newly installed BJP government is preparing a fresh land policy that it believes will form the backbone of a renewed industrialisation drive



State BJP chief Samik Bhattacharya. PTI

in a state that was once India's manufacturing powerhouse but has steadily lost ground over decades.

Referring to the controversy surrounding the Nano project's exit from Singur in 2008 following the anti-land acquisition movement spearheaded by Mamata Banerjee, Bhattacharya said the dismantling of the Tata Motors plant had become a defining image of Bengal's hostility towards industry.

"The scene of Tata leaving Bengal and the infrastructure being dismantled sent a very wrong message -- that industries were unwelcome in Ben-

gal. Subsequently, the cut-money culture, syndicate raj and institutionalised corruption worsened the situation. We want to correct that perception," he said.

Asked whether a Tata return to Singur would amount to a "prayaschitta" (atonement) for what he described as the mistakes of the previous regime, Bhattacharya said the departure of Tata Motors had inflicted lasting damage on the state's investment climate. "We want Tatas to return to Singur or Bengal in any form, be it automobile or any other sector. They are one of the oldest and most respected and trusted groups of our country," he said.

The BJP leader argued that industrial revival in Bengal cannot take place without a fundamental overhaul of land acquisition policies. "We did not have a comprehensive land policy. Mamata Banerjee had declared that the government would not acquire even an inch of land for industry, and companies would have to purchase land directly. Industries can't go door to door acquiring land under such an absurd and flawed policy," he said.

## CID probes 'fake signature' charge in TMC MLAs' letter of support to Shobhandeb for LoP post

Atri Mitra  
Kolkata, May 29

THE CRIMINAL Investigation Department (CID) of West Bengal Police is probing the allegations of fake signatures of TMC MLAs in its letter to the Assembly Secretariat for backing Shobhandeb Chattopadhyay as the Leader of Opposition -- a Cabinet Minister-rank post.

At the centre of the controversy is the TMC MLA from Chowringhee, Nayna Banerjee, whose signature in the support letter has come under the scanner, among others.

The state Assembly secretariat has filed a complaint at Kolkata's Hare Street police station, alleging that Nayna Banerjee's signature, which she signed after taking oath as the MLA, did not match the one in the letter of support for Shobhandeb Chattopadhyay.

In its probe, the CID has so far questioned several TMC MLAs, including Nayna Banerjee, Bolpur MLA Chandranath Sinha, Belegghata MLA Kunal Ghosh, and Canning-East MLA Baharul Islam.

On Thursday evening, a team of CID officials visited Nayna Banerjee's Taltala residence. According to sources, the CID team included a videographer who took a photograph of her PAN card.

"I am a five-time MLA. This is insulting to me. I have informed the Leader of the Opposition about the entire matter," she said after the CID team's visit.

Meanwhile, Shobhandeb refused to comment on the matter. "I will not say anything on this matter without speaking to Nayana Banerjee," he said.

According to the sources, several MLAs, whose signatures were in the letter of support to Shobhandeb for the LoP post, were not present in the Assembly that day.

As doubts were raised about the authenticity of the signatures, the Assembly Secretary filed a complaint with the police, prompting the CID to start an investigation.

Sources said that the CID team is taking signatures of several MLAs to verify their authenticity.

## 3 months to mend habits, then fine for violators: Govt cracks down on littering

Sweetie Kumari  
Kolkata, May 29

IN A significant move against littering, the state government is set to impose strict fines from September 1 for throwing plastic waste or garbage on roads.

Minister Agnimitra Paul, Minister for Urban Development and Municipal Affairs, has said that a pilot project will be launched on Saturday in 10 municipalities to improve the waste management and cleanliness system, and spread awareness.

"We are focusing on ensuring that civic services are not disrupted in municipalities where councilors have resigned and where administrators are absent. If people take photos upon seeing garbage anywhere and

### IN A NUTSHELL

- Gov't to raise awareness for three months
- Pilot project to begin in 10 municipalities, including Howrah
- Action to be taken from September 1
- Fines may range from Rs 50 to Rs 5,000

send them, the staff concerned will also be required to take action on it. The project will be inaugurated on May 30."

The minister said that cleanliness must be maintained by involving the police, administration, and the general public. Paul added, "When our people go abroad, to malls... they be-

have like civilised individuals. But upon stepping on to the streets here, they throw away plastic and chip packets. This will not be allowed. Keeping our cities clean is a shared responsibility for all of us. We will give three months... People must improve their habits during this period. After that, from September 1, fines will be levied."

Under the plan, dustbins will be installed at a distance of every 100 meters. Even after this, if anyone throws garbage on the road or in a public place, a fine will be imposed from September 1. Fine may vary across cities, based on the respective municipal corporation. For instance, fines ranging from Rs 50 to Rs 1,000 can be imposed for littering on the road.

### READING BETWEEN THE HEADLINES

## Detention centres: How citizenship politics is fuelling Hindutva's expansion in the East

Vikas Pathak  
New Delhi, May 29

WITHIN WEEKS of coming to power for the first time in the state, the Suwendu Adhikari-led BJP government in West Bengal has made it amply clear that countering undocumented immigration from Bangladesh is going to be its priority.

This issue has been a major concern in Assam ever since the days of the Assam agitation of 1979-85. The BJP, for which the matter has been a core ideological plank for decades, gradually became a major force in Assam and Assamese identity became aligned with the party, largely because of shared concern regarding illegal immigration by Bengali-speaking Muslims from the neighbouring country.

With the BJP government in Bengal now following a similar template, a specific kind of Hindutva is seen to be taking root in the eastern and north-eastern states, except Odisha. If the rise of Hindutva in north and central India was related to a great extent to restoring temples purportedly converted into mosques during medieval times, the BJP's rise in the east is closely associated with illegal immigration.

One exception in the region is Tripura. "In Tripura, too, im-

migration of Bangla-speaking people has been a major concern for the tribal population of the state, but the BJP has not made it a big issue because the large majority of them are Hindus, who are now the majority in the state," political scientist Sajjan Kumar told The Indian Express. "After 1971, there was massive immigration of Bengali-speaking Hindus into Tripura, and only 31.8% of people in the state are now tribals. The BJP needs the Bengali votes and plays down this issue there. Tribals have shifted to the Tipra Motha of Pradyot Bikram Manikya Deb Barma in the state."

On May 23, the Adhikari government ordered the establishment of holding centres in all districts across Bengal. "In this connection, it is requested to take initiative/appropriate action for setting up of holding centres in the district for apprehended foreigners as well as for the released foreign prisoners awaiting deportation/repatriation in accordance with the MHA guideline under reference," read the order.

During its first Cabinet meeting, the Bengal government had decided to allocate land to the Border Security Force (BSF) for the fencing of the border with Bangladesh.

However, the CM made it

If Hindutva in north India is preoccupied with mandir-masjid politics, in the east it is concerned about illegal immigration



A pile of luggage at the Hakimpur border outpost in North 24 Parganas as undocumented migrants attempt to cross over to Bangladesh. ANI

clear that non-Muslims would not suffer. "Those covered under the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) are safe here. However, those who are not protected by the CAA and are illegal infiltrators will be arrested by the police and handed over to the BSF for deportation. Our policy is to detect, delete, and deport," Adhikari said. Addi-

tionally, all district police forces, especially in border areas, have been placed on high alert and instructed to identify illegal immigrants.

Towards the end of March, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said "infiltration" through Assam had "almost come to an end" after the BJP came to power there, adding that West

Bengal has now emerged as the "last remaining route through which infiltrators enter India and disperse across states". Winning Bengal was important, he emphasised, because the border had become a national security matter.

Rabi Ranjan Sen who teaches history at Katwa College in Bardhaman and heads the RSS-associated Vidya Bharti in Bengal recalled that the ABVP had made illegal immigration a national issue from the days of the Assam agitation. "When I joined the ABVP in Kolkata in 1991, the organisation used to flag the issue in Bengal. But since the Sangh Parivar had a small presence here at that time, the issue could not come up the way it has now," he told *The Indian Express*.

The issue could not acquire centrality because of the huge clout that Kolkata-based intellectuals enjoyed in setting the political discourse in Bengal, Sen added. The idea of a Bengali sub-nationalism, wherein the entire region where Bangla is spoken (West Bengal as well as Bangladesh) is imagined as a single entity held together by cultural and linguistic links, has had some traction among Kolkata's intellectuals over the decades, according to Sen.

However, that changed over the last few years. The allega-

tions of "extortion" against TMC workers across the state, as well as the perception that Mamata Banerjee was sharpening identities, including Muslim identity, gradually turned things in favour of the BJP. Sen said Kolkata remained the last bastion to be breached and the fact that Samik Bhattacharya as state BJP president was able to communicate with the city's elite in their own idiom, while Adhikari came across as an aggressive counter to the TMC, ensured that the BJP breached Kolkata, too, this time.

It is clear that the Adhikari government is deploying the Assam template in the state and that large parts of eastern India are evolving a new Hindutva model, where detecting illegal Muslim immigrants is the prime concern of the government. The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) will also be talked about aggressively to reassure illegal Hindu immigrants from Bangladesh that they can become Indian citizens and insulate themselves from the government's crackdown on "infiltrators". The CAA permits non-Muslims who escaped persecution in Bangladesh, Pakistan or Afghanistan on or before December 31, 2014, to apply for Indian citizenship, but keeps Muslims out of its ambit.

## HC grants interim protection to actor

Kolkata: The Calcutta High Court on Friday granted interim protection to actor Parambrata Chatterjee from any coercive step by the police over an alleged social media post by him following the 2021 Assembly polls. An FIR was lodged against him on May 21 here, claiming that a social media post by Chatterjee on the day of 2021 poll results amounted to instigation of violence. PTI

**भारतीय खाद्य निगम**  
**Food Corporation of India**  
16-20, Barakhamba Lane, New Delhi-110001  
Phone : 011-43527462  
**VACANCY NOTICE**  
The Food Corporation of India invites applications for engagement of one Advisor (Information Technology) on short term contract (STC) basis. The application form, terms and conditions for appointment and the procedure for submitting application may be seen at <http://fci.gov.in>. Last date for receipt of application is 30 days from the date of publication of Notice in the Employment News.  
**Deputy General Manager (Estt.)**

**IEL**  
**INDUSTRIAL ENERGY LIMITED**  
(A Joint Venture Company of Tata Power & Tata Steel)  
Plant: CIO PH7, The Tata Power Company Ltd, At IEL Power House#7 Site, Inside Tata Steel Works, Jamshedpur  
Registered Office: CIO The Tata Power Company Limited, Corporate Center, A Block, 34, Sant Tukaram Road, Camac Bunder, Mumbai 400 005, Tel : (022) 67171061 Fax: (022) 671711004  
Corporate Identity Number (CIN): U74999MH2007PLC167623, e-mail: [indlenergy@gmail.com](mailto:indlenergy@gmail.com), Website: [www.tatapower.com](http://www.tatapower.com)  
**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
This is to inform all concerned personnel, local authorities, district administration and residents of nearby areas that the **Steam Blowing** activity will be carried out at the 1x120 MW BFG COG based (Waste Gas Recovery) Power House#7 of the Industrial Energy Limited project as part of the final commissioning process of the new unit. This project is being executed by Tata Power Projects Ltd.  
Steam Blowing is a standard and mandatory process during the commissioning of any power plant. It ensures internal cleanliness of the boiler and associated steam pipelines by removing welding slag, rust, and foreign particles that could damage turbine blades during operation.  
The purpose of this essential activity is to ensure the internal cleanliness of the boiler and associated steam pipelines by removing any debris or foreign materials before the plant begins commercial operations.  
• **Activity Period:** The steam blowing will commence from 03-June-2026 to 30-June-2026, between the hours of approximately 0700 hrs and 2100 hrs daily.  
• **Location:** Power House#7, Industrial Energy Limited, Infront of Sakchi Police Station, Sakchi, Jamshedpur  
• **Noise Warning:** This process involves high-velocity steam discharge ("puffing" blows) which will generate an intermittent, loud noise, similar to a jet engine, for short durations (5-20 minutes per blow).  
• **Safety Assurances:** All necessary safety precautions and engineering standards are being strictly followed under the supervision of qualified personnel. The sound is a temporary and normal part of power plant commissioning.  
We regret any inconvenience caused to the local community and appreciate your cooperation and understanding during this critical phase of the project.  
For further detail on the process or any concerns, please contact the IEL-Project Contract Administration Department at 8987582449 or email: [jaigopalsoni@tatapower.com](mailto:jaigopalsoni@tatapower.com)

### EASTERN RAILWAY

E-Tender No.: 94\_2026-27\_103\_2026-27 dated 27.05.2026.  
Following e-Tender is invited online by Divisional Railway Manager, Eastern Railway, Howrah, New DRM Building, Near Rail Museum, Howrah-711011 from Tenderers having experience of Similar Nature of work and required financial capabilities including those registered with Irrigation/CPWD/ SEB/MES or any public sector undertaking for the following work under Sr. DEN/C/Howrah. Sl. No. 1, E-Tender No.: 94\_2026-27. Description of work: (i) Howrah Division - Renewal of Channel Sleeper by H-Beam Sleeper - 752 Nos. in section Sainthia-Nalhati (Br. No. 174-UP-110.608-110.791 km - 520 Nos.), Bandel-Katwa (Br. No. 83-UP-54.714-54.835 km - 232 Nos.), (ii) Howrah Division: TBSR (H-Beam) - 1450 Nos. in section Seoraphuli-Gohhat (Br. No. 6-DN-931-953 km - 36 Nos.) UP 931-953-36 Nos. BR No. 26-UP-32.322 32.356 km - 56 Nos.), Bandel-Saktigarh - (Br. No. 94-DN -44.658-44.733 km - 145 Nos., Br. No. 100-DN 46.719 -46.794 km - 145 Nos., Br. No. 94-Rev-44.658-44.733 km - 145 Nos. Br. No. 100-REV 46.719-46.794 km - 145 Nos.), Bandel-Katwa - (Br. No. 12-UP-0.703-7.133 km-96 Nos. Br. No. 20-UP 11.821-11.922 km-165 Nos., Br. No. 51A-UP-32.203-32.249 km-77 Nos. Br. No. 51-DN-32.203 32.249 km-63 Nos.) Katwa-Azimgarj (Br. No. 180A-UP-114.369-114.411 km-82 Nos. Br. No. 217-DN-130.666-130.837 km -159 Nos.) Katwa-Azimgarj-Br. No. 230-DN-139.005-139.056 km - 100 Nos. **Approx. Cost** : ₹ 6,58,81,475.24; **Earnest Money** : ₹ 13,17,600/- **Sl. No. 2, E-Tender No.** : 103\_2026-27. Description of work: (i) Begampur provision of FOB stairs at Begampur (BPAAE) station. (ii) Provision of 6 m wide FOB with lifts at all platforms at Hind motor (HMZ) station under AEN/Liluah. **Approx. Cost** : ₹ 6,77,52,824.84; **Earnest Money** : ₹ 13,55,100/- **Sl. No. 3, E-Tender No.** : 104\_2026-27. Description of work: (i) Extension of one Foot Over Bridge at Prantik station in the jurisdiction of SSE/W/Bolpur Shantiniketan under AEN/Bolpur Shantiniketan. (ii) Extension FOB at Kopai station in the jurisdiction of SSE/W/Bolpur Shantiniketan under AEN/Bolpur Shantiniketan. (iii) Extension FOB at Mallapur station in the jurisdiction of SSE/W/Bolpur Shantiniketan under AEN/Bolpur Shantiniketan. (iv) Nalhati Proposal for extension of existing FOB towards western side at Nalhati station under Sr. DEN/A/Howrah. **Approx. Cost** : ₹ 8,32,92,068.67; **Earnest Money** : ₹ 16,65,900/- **Cost of Tender Form** : Nil for each. **Completion Period**: 12 months for each. In case the date of closing mentioned in the Notice Inviting Tender is declared a holiday/band/strike on any account, the date of closing tender online will not be changed as the application in the website of IREPS does not permit submission of any offer after closing date and time of the tender. However, opening of tender will be done next working day. **Closing date and time of tender** : 19.06.2026 at 14.00 hrs. The details of tender are available at website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) Tenderers are requested to submit their offer online on the above website. No manual offer will be accepted.  
HWH-111/2026-27  
Tender Notice is also available at websites : [www.er.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.er.indianrailways.gov.in) / [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)  
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### AMARAVATI DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED (ADCL)

(CIN Number : U9300AP2015SG010593), Email : [cdcm.amaravati@gmail.com](mailto:cdcm.amaravati@gmail.com)  
Block 4, APCRDA Project Office, Rayapudi Post, Tolluru (M), Amaravati, Guntur (Dist.), A.P. - 522237

#### E-PROCUREMENT - REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

NIT No. 414/IPD/ADCL/2026 Date: 29.05.2026

**Name of Assignment:** Request for Proposal for Engagement of PMC for Construction Supervision and Project Management of Lump Sum Contract (%Tender) Works including DLP of 2 Years for works of : (1) Package XXXVII: Flood Protection and Strengthening of Inspection of Right Bank of River Krishna E1 Road (Karakatta) from Ch.0+300 to Ch.2+480; (2) Package XXXVIII: Flood Protection and Strengthening of Inspection of Right Bank of River Krishna E1 Road (Karakatta) from Ch.2+480 to Ch.4+990; (3) Package XXXIX: Flood Protection and Strengthening of Inspection of Right Bank of River Krishna E1 Road (Karakatta) from Ch.4+990 to Ch.7+200; (4) Package XXXX: Flood Pumping Station-2 (8400 Cusec Capacity) at Undavalli Village; (5) Package XXXXIII: 2 Lane Bridge including Shiplock & Regulator for Kondaveetivagu and Guntur Channel; and (6) Package XXXXVIII: Construction of Roads, Drains, Water Supply, Sewerage, Utility Ducts for Power & ICT, Waterline, STP & Avenue Plantation compatible with Trunk Infrastructure Layouts for Land Pooling Scheme Layout in Zone-11 at Undavalli Village in Amaravati, Capital City of Andhra Pradesh.

The above bid can be downloaded on AP e-procurement portal from Dt. 30.05.2026 @18:00 Hrs to Dt. 22.06.2026 @15:00 Hrs. Due date for submission of Bid is Dt. 22.06.2026 @16:00 Hrs. Technical Bid opening is on Dt. 22.06.2026 @16:00 Hrs. For further details please refer to 'Tender' section of [www.approcurement.gov.in](http://www.approcurement.gov.in) and [www.adcl.in](http://www.adcl.in) **Sd/- Chairperson & Managing Director**

### MAA MANIKESHWARI UNIVERSITY

11001/68/2627 No. 1698/MU Date: 29.05.2026

#### RECRUITMENT NOTICE

Maa Manikeshwari University invites applications in both physical and online mode through HIMS portal from Indian citizens having eligibility as per the UGC Notification, New Delhi, dated 18th July 2018, for appointment to the posts of Assistant Professor/ Associate Professor/ Professor against regular sanctioned vacant posts in the departments of Anthropology, Botany, Chemistry, Commerce, Education, Economics, English, Geography, History, Mathematics, Odia, Physics, Political Science, Sanskrit, Sociology and Zoology of this University as directed vide Letter No. 5322/HE, Dated 31.01.2026 of Department of the Higher Education, Government of Odisha, Bhubaneswar. The online application form and department wise reservation details will be made available on the University website <https://kalahanduniversity.ac.in/> and HIMS Portal from 01.06.2026 onwards. For details of the terms and conditions, guidelines for applying etc. Please visit the University website.  
**Application open date:** 01.06.2026  
**Application closing date:** 05.07.2026  
**Closing Date for receipt of Printed copy of the application:** 15.07.2026

Sd/-  
**REGISTRAR**  
Maa Manikeshwari University  
Bhawanipatna  
OIPR-11001/1182/26-27/0003

### KOLHAPUR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, CITY WATER SUPPLY DEPARTMENT

#### E Tender (mahaetenders.gov.in) Extension

Tender Notice No	Work no.	Publish date	News paper name	Extension no.
07/2026-27	9	30/04/2026	Indian Express / Daily sakal	4th

Due to no Response for the above work, date Extension is being given From Date 01/06/2026 to Date 04/06/2026. The Terms & Conditions of Earlier Tender will be same.

sd/-  
Hydraulic Engineer

### Department of Water Resources, Government of Odisha

32001/303/2627 "e" Procurement Notice No. ACEDC-BBSR-03/2026-27

1. Name of the Works: Total 07 (Seven) Nos. Drainage work.  
2. Estimated Cost: Rs. 135.09 lakh to Rs. 336.36 lakh  
3. Period of Completion: 11 (Eleven) months  
4. Date and time of availability of bid document in the portal: From 11.00 hours of Dt. 02.06.2026 to 18.00 hours of Dt. 17.06.2026.  
5. Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal: 18.00 hours of Dt. 17.06.2026.  
6. Date of Opening of Technical Bid: 18.06.2026 at 11.00 hours  
7. Name and address of the Officer inviting Bid: Additional Chief Engineer, Drainage Circle, Unit-8, Bhubaneswar-751012. e-mail Id: [se drainagebbsr12@gmail.com](mailto:se drainagebbsr12@gmail.com).  
8. The update notification will be intimated to the participated bidders to their registered e-mail & to their registered mobile number through an autogenerated text message by e-procurement system. On such intimation, individual bidder needs to log in to their ID through DSC to know the uploaded summary, i.e. details of opening of financial bid, lottery date time, venue, acceptance of bid etc.

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal of Odisha Government <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. All information, notices, addendum, corrigendum cancellation notice etc. if required, will be published in this portal.

Sd/-  
Additional Chief Engineer  
Drainage Circle, Bhubaneswar  
OIPR- 32001/32409/1/26-27/0002

### S. E. RAILWAY - TENDER

e-Tenders are invited by Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/G/Kharagpur-721301, S.E. Railway for and on behalf of President of India for the following work before 12.00 hrs. on the date mentioned against items: Sl. No. & Tender Notice No.; Description of work; Tender Value; Bid Security/ E.M.D. : (1) 114-ELC-G-KGP-26-27-06, dated 27.05.2026; Electrical work for development of new passenger halt station named Nilkuntia between Raghunathbari-Rajgoda in Panskura-Haldia section; ₹ 27,99,222/-; ₹ 56,000/-; (2) 114-ELC-G-KGP-26-27-07, dated 27.05.2026; Electrical work for: (i) Provision of wash room cum changing room, rest room etc. for female employees at work place (Sr. Section Engineer/PW/Kolaghat, Sr. Section Engineer/PW/Panskura & Sr. Section Engineer/W/Kolaghat office) and (ii) Construction of Ladies Changing room and Malkhana at RPF Post/Tamluk; ₹ 14,58,019/-; ₹ 29,200/-; Cost of Tender Document: Nil for both. **Completion Period** : 06 months for both from the date of issue of Letter of Acceptance. **Date of Submission** : Upto 12.00 hrs. of 17.06.2026 for both. **Date of Opening**: 17.06.2026 for both. Interested Tenderers may visit website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) for full details, description and specification of the tender and submit their bids online. In no case manual tenders for these works will be accepted. **Tender** : Prospective bidders may regularly visit [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) to participate in all tenders. (PR-24)

### CENTRAL RAILWAY Pune Division

Open E-Tender Notice No. DRM-W-PA-E-Tend-2026-NE-05 dt. 29.05.2026  
Divisional Railway Manager (Works), Central Railway, Pune for and on behalf of the President of India, invites Open E-tenders through website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) for the work:- "Hiring and setting of 10 HP sludge Diesel pumps 26 Nos. mud pumps at required locations to facilitate pumping arrangement during monsoon at 13 Nos. subway locations for 3 monsoons in monsoon periods under jurisdiction of Sr. DEN/NE/Pune section. LHS/LC No 33, 34, 39, 46C, 52, 56, 57C, 60, 65, 69, 70, 72 & 78 = 13 location (26 Pumps) - Adv Cost- 15584400.00, EMD- 3177000.00. **Tender closing date and time of aforesaid e-tender:** Upto 15 Hrs. of 12.06.2026. The prospective tenderers are requested to visit the website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) for details of tenders & corrigendum, if any. Tenderer may participate in above E-tender electronically through website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) only & submission of manual offers against E-tender are not allowed. Manual offers, if submitted, shall neither be opened nor considered. For further enquiry, may contact: Divisional Railway Manager (Works) Office, Central Railway, Pune on Phone No. 020-26105309. Tenderer who wants to be present at the time of Opening of tenders, he/she may do so. **DRM (Work), Pune**  
34 **Travel safely, Avoid footboard travelling**

### Karnataka Bank Ltd.

Your family Bank, Across India.

Head Office, Mangaluru - 575 002 CIN : L85110KA1924PLC001128

ASSET RECOVERY MANAGEMENT BRANCH Phone/Fax : 033-22268580  
Premises 0711-0333 Plot No. CBD 100/3, Mobile : 8950402018, 9632026760  
New Town, Kolkata-700156 Website : [www.karnatakabank.bank.in](http://www.karnatakabank.bank.in)  
West Bengal E-mail : [kolkata.arm@ktkbank.com](mailto:kolkata.arm@ktkbank.com)

#### SALE NOTICE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 read with provision to rule 9(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to public in general and in particular to Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the secured Creditor, the Symbolic Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Karnataka Bank Ltd., the Secured Creditor on 11.07.2025, will be sold on "As is Where is", "As is What is" and "Whatever there is" on 17.06.2026, for recovery of Rs. 1,45,23,686.25 (Rupees One Crore Forty Five Lakhs Twenty Three Thousand Six Hundred Eighty Six and Paise Twenty Five Only) under PS Overdraft Account No. 5987000600001001, along with future interest from 01.05.2026 Plus Costs, due to the Karnataka Bank Ltd, Narendrapur - Kolkata Branch, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Block II, AKSHARA PEARL, 200 N.S. ROAD, NARENDRAPUR, KOLKATA - 700103 the Secured creditor from : (1) M/s. Goutam Kumar Kundu Proprietorship of Late Mr. Goutam Kumar Kundu- Since deceased, Represented by Legal heirs: (a) Mrs. Gita Kundu (b) Mrs. Priyanka Kundu (2) Mrs. Gita Kundu W/o Late Goutam Kumar Kundu (3) Mrs. Priyanka Kundu D/o Late Goutam Kumar Kundu, all (1), (2), and (3) are residing at: Ward No. 25 of Rajpur- Sonarpur Municipality, Post Office Rajpur, PS.- Sonarpur, District- South 24 Parganas, West Bengal- 700149 being borrowers/ guarantors/co - obligants.

The reserve price will be Rs. 2,02,00,000.00 (Rupees Two Crore Two Lakhs only) including TDS and the earnest money deposit will be Rs.20,20,000.00 (Rupees Twenty Lakhs Twenty Thousand Only).

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY:

All the part & parcel of Residential Property measuring 6 Cottah 3 Chittak 0 Sq.ft. Equivalent to 6.1875 Cottah or 4455 Sq.Ft. situated at Mouza Rajpur, Corresponding to ward no 17 of Rajpur Sonarpur Municipality, J.L. No. 55, R.S. Dag No. 653, Khatian No. 653, Khatian No. 178, ADSR Office- Sonarpur, District- South 24 Parganas, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Road, P.O. Rajpur, PS. Sonarpur, Kalitola, Kolkata, West Bengal- 700149, with building/shed constructed thereon, belonging to Goutam Kumar Kundu- Since deceased, Represented by Legal heirs: (a) Mrs. Gita Kundu (b) Mrs. Priyanka Kundu. Boundaries: East: Road West: Land of Dag No. 653, North: Land of Dag No. 653 South: Land of Dag No. 653

(The borrowers / mortgagor's attention is invited to the provisions of Sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured asset).

(This Notice shall also serve as Notice under Sub Rule (1) of Rule (9) of Security Interest Enforcement Rules-2002 to the Borrower/Guarantors)

For detailed terms and conditions of sale, please refer to link in Karnataka Bank's Website ie., [www.karnatakabank.com](http://www.karnatakabank.com) under the head "Mega Auction on 17.06.2026".

The E-auction will be conducted through portal <https://bankauctions.in/> on 17.06.2026 from 11:30 A.M to 12:30 P.M with unlimited extension of 05 minutes. The intending bidder is required to register their name at <https://bankauctions.in/> and get the user Id and password free of cost and get online training on E-auction (tentatively on 16.06.2026) from M/s.Aclosure, 605A, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Maitrivanam, Ameerpet, Hyderabad-500038, Contact No.040-23836405, Mobile 8142000809, E-mail:info@bankauctions.in.

For Karnataka Bank Ltd  
Chief Manager & Authorised Officer

### Karnataka Bank Ltd.

Your family Bank, Across India.

Head Office, Mangaluru - 575 002 CIN : L85110KA1924PLC001128

ASSET RECOVERY MANAGEMENT BRANCH Phone/Fax : 033-22268580  
Premises 0711-0333 Plot No. CBD 100/3, Mobile : 7959046636  
New Town, Kolkata-700156 Website : [www.karnatakabank.bank.in](http://www.karnatakabank.bank.in)  
West Bengal E-mail : [kolkata.arm@ktkbank.com](mailto:kolkata.arm@ktkbank.com)

#### SALE NOTICE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 read with provision to rule 9(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to public in general and in particular to Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the secured Creditor, the Symbolic Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Karnataka Bank Ltd., the Secured Creditor on 05.07.2024, will be sold on "As is Where is", "As is What is" and "Whatever there is" on 17.06.2026, for recovery of Rs. 7,78,408.92 (Rupees Seven Lakhs Seventy Eight Thousand Four Hundred Eight and Paise Ninety Two Only) under PS Overdraft Account No. 5307000600002021, along with future interest from 01.05.2026, plus costs, due to the Karnataka Bank Ltd, Memari Branch, GROUND FLOOR, DESHBANDHU PALLY, WARD 12, NEAR NEW BUS STAND, MEMARI, Purba Bardhaman, West Bengal- 713146, the Secured creditor from : (1) M/s Saha Brick Field represented by its Partners a) Mrs. Mira Saha W/o Shyamapada Saha, b) Mrs. Susmita Saha W/o Milan Kanti Sil, c) Mrs. Sudipta Sinharay W/o Adityanarayan Sinharay (2) Mrs. Mira Saha W/o Shyamapada Saha, Both (1) and (2) addressed at: Satgachia, Memari - 713422. (3) Mr. Milan Kanti Sil S/o Manoj Kumar Sil, (4) Mrs. Susmita Saha W/o Milan Kanti Sil, Both (3) & (4) are addressed at : 6/1, Beharilal Das Pramanik Lane, Howrah - 711011. (5) Mr. Adityanarayan Sinharay S/o Amitabh Sinharay (6) Mrs. Sudipta Sinharay W/o Adityanarayan Sinharay. Both (5) & (6) are addressed at : Bohar, Memari - 713430, being borrowers/ guarantors/co - obligants.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY:**

1) All That Part and Parcel of Residential Property at Mouza-Satgachia, J.L. No. 81, LR Khatian No. 3957 and 3960, LR Plot No. 506 admeasuring 7 decimals with 2 Storied Building admeasuring 2442.75 sq.ft. belonging to Mrs. Sushmita Saha & Sudipta Sinharay.

**Boundaries:**  
East : Pond being Plot No. 511 West : Panchayat Road  
North : House of Paritosh Ghosh South : Plot No. 513  
The reserve price will be Rs.35,24,000.00 (Rupees Thirty Five Lakhs Twenty Four Thousand only) and the earnest money deposit will be Rs.3,52,400.00 (Rupees Three Lakhs Fifty Two Thousand Four Hundred Only).

2) All That Part and Parcel of Residential Property at Mouza-Satgachia, J.L. No. 81, LR Khatian No. 3957 and 3960, LR Plot No. 506 admeasuring 19 decimals, belonging to Mrs. Sushmita Saha & Sudipta Sinharay.

**Boundaries:**  
East : Power House West : Panchayat Road  
North : Property of Balam Ghosh and Mahitosh Ghosh South : Plot No. 506  
(The borrowers / mortgagor's attention is invited to the provisions of Sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured asset).

(This Notice shall also serve as Notice under Sub Rule (6) of Rule (8) of Security Interest Enforcement Rules-2002 to the Borrower/Guarantors)

For detailed terms and conditions of sale, please refer to link in Karnataka Bank's Website ie., [www.karnatakabank.com](http://www.karnatakabank.com) under the head "Mega Auction on 17.06.2026".

The E-auction will be conducted through portal <https://bankauctions.in/> on 17.06.2026 from 11:30 A.M to 12:30 P.M with unlimited extension of 05 minutes. The intending bidder is required to register their name at <https://bankauctions.in/> and get the user Id and password free of cost and get online training on E-auction (tentatively on 16.06.2026) from M/s.Aclosure, 605A, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Maitrivanam, Ameerpet, Hyderabad-500038, Contact No.040-23836405, Mobile 8142000809, E-mail:info@bankauctions.in.

For Karnataka Bank Ltd  
Chief Manager & Authorised Officer

### OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, U. P. LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Badshah Bagh, Gokaran Nath Road, Lucknow-226007  
Ph. No. 0522-2741899, Email ID: [upldb@rediffmail.com](mailto:upldb@rediffmail.com), Website: <https://upldb.up.gov.in>

L. No. 359/UPLDB/RGM-IVF/2026-27, Date: May 29, 2026

#### NOTICE FOR INVITATION OF CUSTOM GE-M BID

Uttar Pradesh Livestock Development Board (U.P.L.D.B.) is a society registered under the Society Registration Act, 1860 established as per Govt. of India directives has invited online Custom GeM Bid# GEM/2026/B/7584153, Dated: 27.05.2026 for implementation of In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) programme in the State of Uttar Pradesh. For this an Ultrasound Machine, ultrasound Probe with all attachments and needle guiding system for bovine OPU is to be procured and installed at IVF Laboratory, Chak-Ganjaria at Niblet, Jahagirabad, Barabanki, U.P. as per the details given below:

Custom GeM Bid No. & Date	Tendered Items/Instruments (As per details given in the GeM Bid documents)	Earnest Money (Rs.) (Refundable)	Last Date & time for submission	Opening of GeM Bids (Technical bids)
Custom GeM Bid# GEM/2026/B/7584153, Dated: 27.05.2026	Ultrasound Machine, ultrasound Probe with all attachments and needle guiding system for bovine OPU with accessories	30,000.00	12.06.2026 upto 03:30 P.M.	12.06.2026 03:30 P.M. onwards

The complete GeM Bid details have been uploaded on GeM portal as per information given in the above table. Any corrigendum/amendment in the GeM Bid document shall be uploaded on GeM portal only. UPLDB reserves the right to cancel any or all the GeM-Bids without assigning any reason and decision of UPLDB shall be final and binding.

Dr. Pramod Kumar Singh  
Chief Executive Officer

### DIRECTORATE OF MINES & GEOLOGY

#### STEEL AND MINES DEPARTMENT, GOVT. OF ODISHA, BHUBANESWAR

30001/30/2627

Heads of Department Building, Unit-V, Pin-751001  
Tel No.: 0674-2391537, Fax No.: 0674-2391684  
Email ID: [directormines1@orissaminerals.gov.in](mailto:directormines1@orissaminerals.gov.in)

Date: May 29, 2026

#### Notice Inviting Tender

"Invitation of bids for grant of Mining Lease for Iron Ore, Bauxite, Aluminous Laterite, Limestone and Manganese Mineral and for grant of Composite Licence for Bauxite Mineral"

In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 10 (B) and Section 11 of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 and in accordance with the Mineral (Auction) Rules, 2015 as amended from time to time notified thereunder, the Government of Odisha has identified:

- 8 mineral blocks (2 blocks of Bauxite, 1 iron Ore, 1 Iron Ore & Aluminous Laterite, 2 blocks of Iron Ore & Manganese, 1 block of Manganese & Dolomite, and 1 block of Limestone) for Electronic Auction and hereby invites tenders for the purposes of grant of Mining Lease.
- 3 mineral blocks of Bauxite for Electronic Auction and hereby invites tenders for the purposes of grant of Composite Licence.

Accordingly, financial bids are invited in digital format only and technical bids are invited both in digital and physical format from eligible bidders. Eligibility conditions, date and time for participating in the electronic auction are provided in the Tender Document. Detailed Tender Documents along with timelines, notifications, updates and other details for the e-auction process for the mineral blocks are available in electronic form only and can be downloaded from the website of MSTC Limited: (<https://www.mstccommerce.com/auctionhome/mlc/n/>). Interested and eligible bidders can register themselves on the above website. On successful registration, eligible bidders will obtain login ID and password necessary for participation in the e-auction process. Model Tender Document and Mineral Block Summary are available free of cost on the website of MSTC Limited. The block specific Tender documents are available for purchase on the e-auction portal of MSTC Limited from Monday, June 01, 2026. Last date for purchase of Tender Document after payment of a tender fee on website of e-auction platform provider is Monday, July 06, 2026 and the last date for submission of the bid is Monday, July 13, 2026 on or before 17:00 hours (Indian Standard Time). The Price of Tender Document is exclusive of applicable GST. GST is payable under the Reverse Charge Mechanism. All blocks are put up for auction as virgin blocks.

#### List of Mineral Blocks for Auction

Sr. No.	Name of Block	District	Mineral	ML/ CL	Price of Tender Document
1.	Karlapat Bauxite Block	Kalahandi	Bauxite	ML	5,00,000
2.	Nunapaimali Bauxite Block	Rayagada	Bauxite	ML	5,00,000
3.	Patamunda - B Manganese & Iron Ore Block	Sundargarh	Manganese & Iron Ore	ML	5,00,000
4.	Kendujhi-Parulipada Manganese & Dolomite Block	Kendujhar	Manganese, & Dolomite	ML	5,00,000
5.	Jaldihri Tantigram Iron Ore & Aluminous Laterite Block	Sundargarh	Iron Ore & Aluminous Laterite	ML	5,00,000
6.	Gadadharpur Iron Ore Block	Kendujhar	Iron Ore	ML	5,00,000
7.	Barpada South Iron & Manganese Ore Block	Sundargarh	Iron Ore & Manganese	ML	5,00,000
8.	Behera Banjipali Limestone Block	Bargarh	Limestone	ML	2,00,000
9.	Tikirimali-Budharajamali Bauxite Block	Rayagada	Bauxite	CL	5,00,000
10.	Tikriguda-Maliguda Bauxite Block	Rayagada	Bauxite	CL	5,00,000
11.	Nangalmahimali Bauxite Block	Rayagada	Bauxite	CL	5,00,000

Sd/-  
Director of Mines & Geology, Odisha  
OIPR- 30001/30028/1/26-27/0002

### बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा Bank of Baroda

#### SILIGURI REGIONAL OFFICE

HOMELAND BUSINESS CENTRE 4th FLOOR, 3rd MILE SEVOKE ROAD SILIGURI, WEST BENGAL-734008

#### E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

ANNEXURE-A  
SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES  
"APPENDIX- IV-A [See proviso to Rule 8 (6) & 9(1)]

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) & 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the borrower(s), Mortgagor(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Bank of Baroda, Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" basis for recovery of dues in below mentioned account/s. The details of Borrower/Mortgagor/Guarantor/s/Secured Asset/s/Dues/Reserve Price/E-auction date & Time, EMD and Bid Increase Amount are mentioned below:

Sr/ Lot No.	Name & address of Borrower/s / Mortgagor / s	Detailed description of the immovable property with known encumbrances, if any	Total Dues	Date & Time of E-auction	Reserve Price EMD amount Bid Increase Amount	Status of Possession (Symbolic / Physical)	Property Inspection date & Time
01.	M/s. Maa Kamakhya Rice Mill	Exclusive charge by way of Equitable Mortgage of All that piece or parcel of total land and building measuring 1.19 acres classified as "Rice Mill", out of which land measuring 0.86 Acres, recorded in R.S. Khatian No. 58/25 corresponding to L.R. Khatian No. 545, Part of R.S. Plot No. 1063 corresponding to L.R. Plot No. 1832, held under the State of West Bengal, situated within Mouza Oodlabari, Pargana Changmari, J.L. No. 25(old) 20(New), Touzi No. 84, within Oodlabari Gram Panchayat Area, Police Station Mal, District Jhalpaiguri in the name of Mr. Girdhar Gopal Singh and land & building measuring 0.33 Acres, recorded in R.S. Khatian No. 58/25 corresponding to L.R. Khatian No. 545, Part of R.S. Plot No. 1063 corresponding to L.R. Plot No. 1832, held under the State of West Bengal, situated within Mouza Oodlabari, Pargana Changmari, J.L. No. 25(old), 20(New), Touzi No. 84, within Oodlabari Gram Panchayat Area, Police Station Mal, District Jhalpaiguri in the name of Mr. Ranjit Singh. The property is bounded as under: In the North - Land of Shri Tapan Kumar Mitra. In the South - Land of Shri Tapan Kumar Mitra. In the East - Land of Shri Dilip Oraon. In the West - 15 Feet wide pucca road.	Rs.1,48,99,997.01 (Rupees One Crore Forty-Eight Lakh Ninety Nine Thousand Nine Hundred Ninety Seven and One Paise only) up to 12-12-2024 + Unapplied interest + other cost thereon.	22-06-2026 Time 2.00pm to 6.00pm	Rs.4,45,24,800.00 Rs.45,24,800.00 Rs.25,000.00	Physical	18-06-2026 3:00pm - 5:00pm Mobile 7602322200 (with prior appointment)

For detailed terms and conditions of sale, please refer/link to the websites link <https://www.bankofbaroda.bank.in/e-auction.htm> and online auction portal <https://baanet.com> Also, prospective bidders may contact the authorized officer on Mobile 7602322200

Date: 29-05-2026  
Place: SILIGURI  
Authorised Officer  
Bank of Baroda

The Indian Express - For the Indian Intelligent.

I look at every side before taking a side.

Inform your opinion with insightful perspectives.

The Indian Express JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

indianexpress.com



Hear better. Live better.



SPECIAL FOCUS ON HEARING AIDS



ADVERTORIAL

# Superhuman Sound: Inside Starkey's Omega AI Revolution

INTERVIEWS

# Omega AI and the Future of Hearing Healthcare in India

**Brandon Sawalich, President & CEO of Starkey, on the role India plays in the future of hearing technology - and what 'superhuman' really means.**

Starkey, America's only privately owned hearing technology company, has just unveiled Omega AI - a flagship product and the most intelligent hearing aid they've ever made. At the helm is Mr. Brandon Sawalich, a leader who has steered Starkey from a traditional hearing-aids manufacturer into a global technology and wellness powerhouse. In a conversation with Indian Express, Sawalich speaks about DNN 360, India's outsized role in Starkey's ambitions, affordability, and why the ear - not the wrist - is the next frontier in wearable technology.



**BRANDON SAWALICH**  
President & CEO, Starkey

### What makes Omega AI a meaningful step forward for everyday hearing?

At Starkey, we know hearing is not just a luxury or convenience; it is essential to overall health and well-being. Our newest flagship technology, Omega AI, features DNN 360, the world's first deep neural network-powered directionality system. This advanced AI technology helps tackle the single biggest struggle people with hearing loss face: hearing clearly in noisy environments. What makes it truly remarkable is that DNN 360 doesn't just process sound - it predicts the next acoustic adaptation before it happens, similar to how the healthy human brain filters out unwanted noise, helping the user focus on the sounds they want to hear. The result is up to 28% better speech intelligibility in challenging environments and an 8 dB signal-to-noise improvement. That is why we say Omega AI is technology so intelligent, it is superhuman.

### How is Omega AI different from previous Starkey products like Edge AI or Genesis AI?

Every generation of Starkey technology has been a giant leap at the time of its release, and Omega AI is no exception. Starkey being a privately-held technology company gives us an extraordinary advantage, allowing us to pivot quickly to keep up with science and focus on the needs of patients and professionals, rather than the demands of shareholders. Our advanced development team is working on technology that isn't yet scientifically possible, so that the moment it becomes possible, we are already there. Omega AI introduced advanced technology and many first-to-world features, including the industry-first TeleHear AI feature, which uses generative AI to resolve common hearing issues in real time with 93% predictive accuracy, and LED indicators that double as a find-my-hearing-aid tool. Each breakthrough is a testament to Starkey's continued leadership, not just in the hearing industry, but in the technology space. We are setting the speed of innovation - and we intend to keep it that way.

### How will Omega AI improve real-life listening for people across diverse lifestyles, including in India?

Omega AI is fully customisable for every lifestyle and listening environment. Your hearing care provider can programme the device to your precise audiological profile. For those living active lives - and India has 1.4 billion people who do - the upgraded waterproofing, tested to last 10 times longer than previous coatings, and the 20x stronger shell resin make Omega AI incredibly durable. Our Edge Mode+ is a

**"The ear is the new wrist. Hearing aids are no longer single-use sound amplifiers - they are multi-function wellness tools."**

game-changer for on-the-go adjustments: with a simple gesture or tap, users get DNN-powered real-time tuning for both comfort and speech clarity. Whether you are navigating a noisy Delhi metro, a bustling Mumbai marketplace, or a quiet boardroom in Bengaluru, Omega AI adapts intelligently.

### How is Starkey keeping Omega AI reliable, upgrade-ready and future-proof for all users?

Future-proofing begins with the hardware itself. Omega AI is built on the most advanced processor available, paired with the latest Bluetooth capabilities and 51 hours of battery life between charges - the industry benchmark. Pairing Omega AI with the My Starkey app allows users to receive and install firmware updates the moment they are released, without a clinic visit. They can quickly upgrade their own devices to keep up with the newest available firmware and enjoy the latest capabilities. In a market like India, where customers have always valued long-term reliability and value, this is a huge advantage.

### How is Starkey preparing its ecosystem for rising expectations around wellness, connectivity and comfort?

Starkey has consistently led the industry in Healthable innovation - a term we coined to describe hearing aids that do far more than amplify sound. We were the first to integrate onboard sensors into a hearing aid, and still the only company to offer fall detection and alerts. With Omega AI, we introduce Balance Builder, a My Starkey app feature that delivers at-home exercises to improve stability and coordination, and an industry-first automatic respiratory rate monitor that tracks breathing passively in the background - giving users and their families advance warning of potential health changes. Starkey turned single-use devices into multi-function wellness tools that improve lives and give loved ones and caregivers peace of mind.

### Where is Starkey's technology headed in the next five years, and which upcoming trend excites you most personally?

I always say that in five years, Starkey will be ten years ahead. In 2018, when we introduced Livio AI - the industry's first AI-powered hearing aid - I declared that 'the ear is the new wrist.' Today, every major hearing company is chasing the health-monitoring capabilities Starkey pioneered. The technology leaps of the last five years alone have been monumental. What excites me most is the convergence of AI, biometric sensing and ambient computing inside a device smaller than a fingertip. The future possibilities are almost beyond imagination, but Starkey is already working on them. We are legacy built, future driven.

### What significance does India hold for Starkey - not just as a market, but as a hub for technology, innova-

### tion and manufacturing?

India holds enormous strategic significance for Starkey for many reasons. Indian consumers are among the most tech-savvy in the world. They have adopted AI technologies faster than many other markets, and they actively seek out the most innovative products rather than settling for the familiar. That openness to new ideas and technology creates a tremendous opportunity for us. Beyond the consumer market, we have a rapidly growing team in India focused on app development and next-generation technology features. The innovative culture embedded in India's tech ecosystem - in cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Pune - makes it an ideal location for deeper exploration into the technologies of the future. India is not just a market we serve; it is a market we are building with.

### India has a vast population with varying income levels. Does Starkey plan to offer products catering to lower-income groups?

The short answer is yes. Hearing loss does not discriminate by income, and neither should access to quality hearing solutions. I am excited to share that there are new, accessible options coming to the India market very soon. I cannot say more at this stage, but I encourage the Indian market to watch this space closely. Starkey's mission has always been to connect people back to their lives through better hearing - and that mission does not carry an income threshold.

**"In five years, Starkey will be ten years ahead. We are already working on technology that isn't yet scientifically possible."**

### How do you see the global hearing aid industry shaping up amid rapid technological innovation - with Starkey in the driving seat?

I am confident that Starkey will continue to lead the trajectory of this industry. We have introduced first-to-world technology with every product release for the past eight years, and we are not slowing down. Our exclusive partnerships and collaborations with leading technology companies give us an incredible advantage in bringing new ideas to market faster than anyone else. And being privately held means our decisions aren't just based on quarterly earnings cycles - we can invest heavily in long-term R&D and make bold decisions when the science demands it. The industry will follow; Starkey will lead.

### What is Starkey doing to ensure hearing care professionals and users worldwide - especially in India - feel consistently supported?

What has always made me proud of Starkey is that our brand, mission and culture are evident in every one of our 29 global facilities. When I visit Starkey India, I feel at home - because the same purpose that drives our team in Eden Prairie, Minnesota drives our colleagues in India. That purpose is creating caring products that connect people through better hearing. Our mission is to serve our customers better than anyone else. That purpose and mission aren't just taglines; they resonate deeply with our more than 6,000 employees worldwide. It's how we run this company every single day and that consistency is what keeps hearing care professionals and patients trusting Starkey, in India and everywhere else.

India's hearing healthcare industry is entering a new phase with the launch of Omega AI, the latest artificial intelligence-driven hearing solution from Starkey, powered by its most advanced G3 Gen AI Neuro Processor. As awareness around hearing wellness grows, advanced technology is reshaping how people experience communication, lifestyle, and overall wellbeing.

In this exclusive interaction, Mr. Akhil Chauhan, Managing Director of Starkey India & South Asia, shares his views on technology, awareness, accessibility, AI innovation, and the future of hearing healthcare in India.



**AKHIL CHAUHAN, MD**  
Starkey India & South Asia

### With the launch of Omega AI in India, how is Starkey redefining hearing healthcare in India and South Asia?

Omega AI is much more than a product launch for us. It represents a major advancement in hearing healthcare innovation. Powered by Starkey's most advanced G3 Gen AI Neuro Processor, the device can automatically understand different listening environments and make real-time adjustments to create a natural and personalized hearing experience. What makes Omega AI different is that it goes beyond traditional hearing correction. It combines intelligent sound processing, wellness tracking, fall detection, and smart connectivity in one compact and discreet device. For millions across India and South Asia living with hearing challenges, this technology can significantly improve communication and quality of life. At Starkey, we believe Indian consumers deserve access to the same advanced hearing technology available globally, and Omega AI reflects that commitment.

### India still faces a major gap in hearing awareness and early diagnosis. What are the biggest shortcomings of the hearing healthcare ecosystem today?

The biggest challenge is awareness. Many people still associate hearing loss only with old age or severe deafness, so mild and moderate hearing problems often remain untreated for years. Accessibility is another concern. Advanced hearing care services and audiologists are concentrated mainly in metro cities, while Tier 2, Tier 3, and rural regions remain underserved. Then there is social stigma. Many individuals hesitate to use hearing aids because they fear judgment or embarrassment. Hearing health should be treated just like eye care or any other aspect of overall wellness. The positive side is that awareness is gradually improving, especially among younger and health-conscious consumers.

### Despite rapid technological advancement, hearing aid adoption in India remains low compared to global markets. What factors are influencing this trend?

One major reason is delayed action. Hearing loss develops gradually and usually without pain, so people often ignore it for years before seeking professional help. Affordability also remains an important factor. Premium hearing solutions are still considered expensive by many families, while insurance coverage for hearing healthcare remains limited. At the same time, awareness about modern hearing technology is still relatively low. Many consumers continue to imagine hearing aids as bulky devices, whereas today's solutions are sleek, rechargeable, discreet, and highly intelligent. The industry must continue educating consumers that hearing aids are not only medical devices - they are lifestyle solutions that improve communication, confidence, productivity, and emotional wellbeing.

### Omega AI introduces next-generation artificial intelligence into hearing solutions. How do you see AI

### transforming hearing correction and lifestyle enhancement?

Artificial intelligence is completely transforming the hearing experience. Omega AI can automatically identify environments such as restaurants, meetings, traffic, offices, or quiet spaces and instantly optimize hearing without manual adjustments. AI is now doing much more than improving sound clarity. It is turning hearing aids into smart wellness devices. Features such as fall detection, wellness tracking, caregiver alerts, and smartphone integration provide greater safety and convenience, especially for senior citizens. This technology allows users to remain socially active, independently, and connected with family and friends. We believe hearing devices are evolving into wearable wellness technology, and AI will continue driving this transformation in the coming years.

### Indian consumers today are becoming increasingly technology-savvy and aspirational. How receptive is the market towards premium AI-enabled hearing solutions?

The Indian consumer today is far more aware and aspirational than before. People are already comfortable using smart devices, digital healthcare tools, and wearable technology in everyday life. We are seeing growing interest in premium hearing solutions, especially among professionals, entrepreneurs, and active senior citizens who value both technology and lifestyle benefits. Design also plays an important role. Modern hearing devices are smaller, more comfortable, and nearly invisible, which reduces hesitation among first-time users. Once consumers experience the comfort and convenience of AI-powered hearing technology, they quickly understand its value. Demand for premium hearing solutions in India is steadily increasing.

### From a business perspective, how important is India in Starkey's growth strategy?

India is one of Starkey's most important growth markets globally and a key focus area for South Asia. Under the visionary leadership of Mr. Brandon Sawalich, President & CEO, Starkey continues to focus on innovation, accessibility, and expanding advanced hearing healthcare into emerging markets like India. The country has rising healthcare awareness, increasing acceptance of advanced technology, and enormous long-term potential. At the same time, hearing healthcare remains underpenetrated, creating opportunities for both business growth and meaningful social impact. Our focus is not only expansion but also improving hearing healthcare standards across the country through awareness programs, technology adoption, and stronger accessibility.

### Accessibility and affordability continue to be concerns. How is Starkey India bridging this gap in Tier 2 and Tier 3 markets?

Expanding access remains one of our top priorities. We are strengthening our presence across smaller cities and towns through partnerships with clinics, audiologists, and regional healthcare providers. We are also conducting awareness initia-

tives in regional languages to educate people about hearing health and early diagnosis. Affordability is equally important, which is why we continue exploring flexible EMI options through authorised dispensers to make advanced hearing solutions more accessible. At Starkey, our mission is simple - "To Serve Our Customers Better Than Anyone Else." That mission guides every decision we make, whether it is innovation, service quality, accessibility, or customer support.

### The conversation around hearing health is shifting from "medical necessity" to "quality of life and wellness." How important is this change?

This shift is extremely important for the future of the industry. When hearing care is viewed only as a medical issue, people often delay treatment because of fear or hesitation. But when hearing health becomes connected with confidence, relationships, social interaction, career growth, and emotional wellbeing, people become far more open towards solutions. Good hearing improves everyday experiences - whether it is conversations with loved ones, workplace communication, travel, or entertainment. As awareness grows, hearing devices will increasingly be viewed as wellness and lifestyle products rather than something associated with stigma.

### What role do audiologists, hearing care professionals, and awareness initiatives play in improving hearing healthcare outcomes?

Audiologists and hearing care professionals remain central to the industry. Technology is important, but counselling, fitting, guidance, and long-term support are equally critical for successful outcomes. Awareness initiatives encourage people to identify hearing problems early and seek professional help before the condition worsens. At Starkey India, we continue investing in training programs, educational initiatives, and professional partnerships because meaningful progress requires strong collaboration across the ecosystem.

### What is your long-term vision for the Indian hearing industry?

I believe the future of hearing healthcare in India is extremely promising. Over the next few years, we will see wider adoption of AI-powered hearing devices, remote hearing care services, and more personalized hearing solutions. I also hope hearing screening becomes as routine as regular health check-ups because early diagnosis and awareness can make a significant difference in people's lives. Most importantly, society must stop viewing hearing loss as a stigma. Better hearing ultimately leads to better communication, stronger relationships, and improved quality of life.

### Reflecting on your 18-year journey with Starkey India, what have been your biggest learnings and what drives you and your team every day?

My biggest learning has been that trust and consistency are the foundation of long-term success. Building a strong healthcare organization in India requires patience, commitment, and meaningful relationships. Over the years, I have personally witnessed how hearing technology can transform lives, and that continues to motivate our team every day. I am incredibly proud to lead such a committed, passionate, and purpose-driven team at Starkey India. Their dedication and relentless efforts have helped us earn the "Great Place to Work" certification for the second consecutive year - a recognition that truly reflects our culture, values, and people-first approach. I would also like to sincerely thank our business partners for their continued trust, collaboration, and staunch support. Their shared commitment and partnership have been invaluable in helping us touch more lives, deliver better hearing experiences, and bring greater happiness to every end user.

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Seven arrested in Hyderabad lawyer's murder

Nikhila Henry  
Hyderabad, May 29

POLICE HAVE arrested seven persons, including educationists Mujahid Alam Khan alias Baba and his father Mahaboob Alam Khan, for allegedly plotting the murder of Hyderabad-based lawyer Khaja Moizuddin. The Khans run well-known educational institutions in Hyderabad.

Senior lawyer Khaja Moizuddin (63), died after he was mowed down by a speeding SUV outside his house in Masab Tank area of Hyderabad Saturday morning. He was rushed to a private hospital, where he succumbed to severe injuries.

Hyderabad Police Commissioner V C Sajjanar said, "Probe revealed that long-standing disputes existed between the family of the accused, Mujahid Alam Khan, and the deceased, Advocate Khaja Moizuddin, relating to Waqf properties' management issues in Malakpet and Lakdikapul, Hyderabad. Several civil, criminal and Waqf Tribunal cases have been pending between them for many years."

During a press conference in Hyderabad Friday, Sajjanar said, "The accused believed that due to the active involvement of the deceased in legal proceedings against them, they were suffering continuous legal setbacks and humiliation. Bearing a grudge against the deceased, accused Mujahid Alam Khan and Mahmood Alam Khan conspired to eliminate him." The alleged contract killing was executed for Rs 15 lakh.

Mujahid Alam Khan and Mahaboob Alam Khan are alleged to have conspired along with their close aides, Hassan Ali alias Chaous and Muneer, to execute the plan through Kishan alias Pappu, police said.

NEET PAPER LEAK ROW

SC stresses accountability, govt says PM supervising situation

Express News Service  
New Delhi May 29

HEARING PLEAS in connection with the cancellation of NEET-UG 2026 over allegations of paper leak, the Supreme Court on Friday quizzed the National Testing Agency (NTA), which said the matter is being monitored by none other than Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself. The court, however, said that the problem will not end unless accountability is fixed.

"The real problem won't stop till actual accountability is fixed. Not in terms of so and so will be liable, it will be effective when we know which individual shoulders the responsibility. Unless you identify the specific duty bearers, it will be difficult," said Justice PS Narasimha presiding over a two-judge bench. He said in a situation of the given nature, unless the responsibility is identified, it will only remain a case of the committee holding meeting after meetings.

The bench asked the Centre to file an affidavit indicating how and in which manner the process of conduct and conclusion of the examination, year after year, will be done. It said the affidavit to be filed within six weeks and posted the matter for hearing in the second week of July.

The bench also comprising Justice Alok Aradhe said NTA must learn from bodies like the UPSC on conducting competitive exams. "We have... created and established world-class institutions. UPSC, for example, with the amount of conduct of the preliminary exams and other things, (has) never been (in) a situation like this. We need to



CBI Special Director Manoj Shashidhar (left) and NTA Director General Abhishek Singh ahead of a parliamentary standing panel meeting held to review the NEET leak probe, in Delhi on Friday. ANI

learn..." Justice Narasimha said. The judge said "the problem with most of our institutions is ad hocism. So much so you will have the best of the officers working and everybody will depend on that. It is a phenomenon everywhere in our country..."

Stating that "we will keep monitoring this for some time", Justice Narasimha said, there is something called "institutional memory. It's not the individual who has the capability; it's the institution which should have the capability. That's what you need to prepare, irrespective of people coming, irrespective of people going... There must be something to evolve over the existing practices." The bench also interacted with former ISRO chairman K Radhakrishnan, who is the head of the Monitoring Committee set up by the SC in 2024 to recommend measures to strengthen the NEET exams. "You were also part of the expert committee... How much monitoring has happened about the implementation? Have you been holding regular meetings," Justice Narasimha asked.

Radhakrishnan answered in the affirmative following which the judge asked, "Then how did this failure occur...?" Justice Narasimha said: "Despite your monitoring on the basis of the high-powered committee's recommendation, if this incident (NEET paper leak) has happened, then there is something wrong with the original recommendation (or) there would not have been effective monitoring. How has it happened?"

Radhakrishnan said the high-level panel of experts had given 60 recommendations for 2025 and 2026 exams, and 35 for the long-term. He said most of the recommendations had been implemented while a few were in the process of being implemented. He said in 2025, the NEET-UG was conducted almost satisfactorily but for power failures at some centres. Radhakrishnan said it had also recommended steps "to strengthen NTA which was really outstretched (itself) to conduct all the tests assigned to it. This has happened recently," The court asked: "What was

that which was not in the contemplation of the HPC that led to this?" Radhakrishnan said the "Committee contemplated all possible problems. The question was really the question paper preparation". "There are certain protocols, certain practices to be followed... Many are implemented. A few are yet to be done," he said while assuring the court that "at the moment, these are being taken care of" and "for the re-Neet that is going to be held on June 21, these are going to be taken care of". "Our target is to see the reforms implemented," he said.

Justice Narasimha said what has happened is "traumatic" for lakhs of students who spent years preparing for NEET. "We shouldn't disappoint our youngsters, it's very traumatising so much investment of emotions and time... It's the most sensitive thing," Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said, "We are dealing with youth and the government is seriously concerned about the concerns of the youth." He said Radhakrishnan "did not very adversely say certain things because the investigation is on". Also, some new mechanisms have been put in place for the June 21 exams. "Not divulging but it is monitored at the highest possible executive level," Mehta said, adding, "the Hon'ble Prime Minister is personally supervising it".

Mehta said there are also certain new things which were found by the panel. "They have identified the areas and suggested measures. Some of the measures are in the process of being implemented for the test which is scheduled on June 21."

From now on, AI will do 85% translation of NEET papers, testing agency tells top court

Vidheesha Kuntamalla  
New Delhi, May 29

DAYS AFTER the CBI found that an arrested NEET-UG 2026 subject expert had not only helped set the leaked May 3 question paper but had also translated portions of it, the National Testing Agency (NTA) told the Supreme Court that in future, it would use "AI-based tools" for "at least 85% of the translation work in order to minimise human intervention... and lower the probability of any security compromise".

In its affidavit filed before the Supreme Court ahead of Friday's hearing on pleas seeking the restructuring or replacement of the NTA, the agency outlined a sweeping overhaul of examination security, administration, and technology going forward, even as it defended its handling of the cancelled NEET-UG 2026.

The proposal on the use of AI in translation — which is one of several steps listed by NTA in the affidavit as part of its "way forward" — is significant because the CBI probe into the paper leak has found that one of the arrested subject experts, Manisha Gurunath Mandhare, was involved in setting questions and translating the paper. Mandhare, a Biology expert from Pune's Modern College of Arts, is learnt to have translated questions in both the Botany and Zoology sections, which gave her access to a wider portion of the paper than previously known.

Another arrested expert, retired Chemistry lecturer P V Kulkarni of Dayanand Junior

**The expert panel has recommended transition of NEET-UG from pen & paper to computer from next year, with multi-session and multi-stage testing, the NTA told court**

College in Latur, allegedly translated the paper into Marathi.

The affidavit states the "Randomization & Rotation Policy" is being "further institutionalised for engagement of paper setters, moderators, vetters, translators, proof-readers, etc", and "background checks/antecedent verification of such functionaries as well as of the officials involved in high-stakes exams of NTA shall... be rigorously undertaken". The NTA presented a detailed account of reforms implemented under the supervision of the High-Powered Steering Committee (HPC) headed by former ISRO chairman K Radhakrishnan. The HPC was constituted by the Ministry of Education in November 2024 after a High-Level Committee of Experts submitted 101 recommendations on exam reforms. According to the affidavit, the HPC continues to function and monitor the implementation of those recommendations. The NTA affidavit submitted that less than three weeks before NEET-UG 2026, the HPC had reviewed preparations, and suggested an "elaborate set of pre-

examination, during-examination and post-exam measures".

Despite a "full security protocol" having been followed for the exam, on May 7, the agency received inputs alleging malpractice, the affidavit said. The exam was subsequently cancelled and the matter referred to the CBI. The re-exam on June 21 would be held under a "further strengthened SOP framework, with multi-layer authentication, surveillance and inter-agency coordination", the NTA told the court. The affidavit noted that "only NEET(UG) 2026 was conducted in Pen & Paper (PPT) mode", while "all other major NTA exams are already in Computer Based Test (CBT) mode".

The expert committee has "specifically recommended transition of NEET(UG) from PPT to CBT mode, along with the introduction of multi-session and multi-stage testing", the NTA informed the court.

"The transition will be implemented from the next examination cycle in consultation with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare", it said. The NTA told the court it plans to develop "at least 1,000 Secure Testing Centres in reputed Government institutions", adopt "cloud-based infrastructure/AI-ML/blockchain", and develop "international cooperation and collaboration". Surplus funds available with NTA were being deployed to strengthen exam security through "advanced cyber-security systems and next-generation firewalls", among others, the agency said.

HC to Google: Pay Rs 30L damages to company for trademark infringement

Sohini Ghosh  
New Delhi, May 29

THE DELHI High Court has directed Google LLC to pay damages of Rs 30 lakh in a trademark suit by sanitaryware brand Hindware after the court found that the AdWords programme of Google allowed a tool which leads to infringement.

Justice Mini Pushkarna, in an order dated May 22, observed: "Google cannot be permitted to shrug off responsibility by making available a tool (keyword planner tool) that leads to infringement, and then turning around to claim that the said tool was not mandatory." Google AdWords Programme is a paid referencing and keyword advertising service on their search engine.

The court also held that Google cannot invoke the safe harbour provision as an intermediary, noting: "... it has been admitted by Google that it allows use of trademarks as keywords in order to seek out users interested in the goods or services covered by the registered trademark... Google is an active participant in use of the trademarks of proprietors. The trademarks are monetised by Google

by using the same as keywords for displaying the paid advertisements on the SERP (search engine results page)... The Ads Programme of Google encourages the users to use various search terms, including, trademarks as keywords for display of the advertisements to the target audience. Thus, Google cannot seek the benefit of exemption under Section 79 of the IT Act."

Observing that the "conduct of Google" in selling trademarks as keywords takes "unfair advantage" of Hindware's trademark, the court observed that the same is "contrary to honest practices in industrial and commercial matters". The court ruled that Google's actions of "selling or trading off the plaintiff's trademark to the direct rivals or competitors of the plaintiff, without permission, as well as without sharing the profits with the trademark proprietor, is evidently dishonest."

Hindware, in its trademark suit, had alleged that competing brands in the sanitaryware space had purchased its registered trademark space to appear as a result when consumers searched for 'Hindware Sanitary', or 'Hindware Sanitaryware' or 'Hindware Sanitary Ware India'.

6 workers die in under-construction bridge collapse in UP, asst engineer suspended

Manish Sahu  
Lucknow, May 29

SIX WORKERS were crushed to death after a concrete slab from an under-construction bridge over Betwa River in Uttar Pradesh's Hamirpur collapsed early Friday, after a storm that lashed the district. An investigation has been ordered and an assistant engineer suspended, officials said.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath took cognisance of the tragedy and ordered compensation of Rs 5 lakh for the next of kin of the deceased, and Rs 50,000 aid for the injured. The incident occurred around 3 am between Parsani and Kandaur villages. The deceased were identified as Lokendra (22), Kuldeep Nishad (19), Sawant Yadav (28) and Sabhajeet (30) from Banda, and Pushpendra Singh Chauhan (34) and Rajesh Pal (42) from Hamirpur, police said.

After rescue operations, police said three men were pulled out alive from under the debris. "During preliminary inquiry, it was found that the victims were working when one of the slabs collapsed on them," said Hamirpur Additional Superintendent of Police Arvind



The site of Hamirpur bridge collapse on Friday. PTI

Kumar Verma.

Officials said the IMD and the district administration Thursday evening issued warnings regarding strong winds, storms and rain. Early Friday, as per the MeT department, strong winds reaching 100 kmph, heavy rain and thunderstorms impacted 20 districts, including Lucknow, Varanasi and Prayagraj.

The 800-metre-long bridge has been under construction since 2024 and is intended to connect Mora Kandaur and Kandaur villages in Kurara block of Hamirpur district. It was being built by a private contractor engaged by the Uttar Pradesh State

Bridge Corporation. Mithlesh Kumar, Joint Managing Director (Civil) of the Corporation, said Assistant Engineer Gajendra Chaudhary has been suspended and a departmental inquiry ordered against Deputy Project Manager Dileep Kumar, posted in Hamirpur, over the incident.

He said the department has also constituted a three-member committee to probe the collapse: "The committee has been tasked with examining the circumstances surrounding the incident and determining the cause of the collapse."

Officials said roughly 60% of the bridge had been completed at the time of the accident. Sup-

porting pillars had already been erected and five concrete slabs had been placed. Following the incident, police officers, firefighters and district administration officials rushed to the site and immediately launched rescue operations amid difficult weather conditions.

Teams from the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) later joined the operation, bringing heavy equipment and rescue personnel to help search through the debris. In a post on X, the CM said instructions were issued to the district administration to swiftly carry out relief and rescue operations in coordination with the SDRF. He wrote: "The loss of lives in a tragic accident on the Betwa River in Hamirpur district is extremely heartbreaking and heart-rending. My condolences are with the bereaved families... I pray to Lord Shri Ram that the departed souls attain a place at His divine feet and the injured recover swiftly."

Hamirpur Sadar MLA said that the collapse had raised serious questions and asserted that strict action would be taken against those found responsible after completion of the investigation.

WITH PTI INPUTS

Driver from Bengal killed, cop injured in Manipur truck attack

Jimmy Leivon & Sukrita Baruah  
Imphal, Guwahati, May 29

A TRUCK driver from West Bengal was killed and a police constable was injured when a convoy of goods trucks moving with security cover on the Imphal-Ukhrul road was attacked by "unknown armed miscreants" on Friday.

The attack was carried out around 10 am along National Highway-202 between Leingangchong and TS Kasom in an area under Litan Police Station in Ukhrul district.

The convoy was heading towards the Ukhrul district headquarters. The driver was identified as Nitish Kumar, 57, from West Bengal's Hooghly district. The injured police constable was 35-year-old Disingam Maringmei from Imphal West district.

According to an official in Ukhrul, a set of trucks carrying goods such as rice and fuel had been stranded in Imphal East's Yaingangpokpi for the last couple of days because of the enforcement of a blockade by Kuki groups preventing their

onward movement amid heightened tensions in Manipur's hill areas between the Naga and Kuki-Zo communities.

"On Friday, the RAF was brought in and used teargas to disperse the crowd. From there, the trucks moved forward with security cover from the police and BSF. However, during this movement, the convoy was ambushed," said the official.

Calling the incident an "ambush carried on goods vehicle by unknown armed miscreants", Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh issued a condemnatory statement.

"Ambushing a goods vehicle and taking the life of a driver, who plays a crucial role in ensuring the uninterrupted supply of essential items across the state, is one of the most cowardly acts and is intended to further aggravate the tense situation prevailing in the area. The ambush seemed to be carried out by vested interest groups with ill motives to derail the initiatives of the state government to restore peace and normalcy in the state," the CM said.

On SC Collegium list, a woman advocate, judges who probed Justice Varma cash row

Apurva Vishwanath, Sohini Ghosh & Omkar Gokhale  
Mumbai, New Delhi, May 29

SENIOR ADVOCATE V Mohana became only the second woman to be recommended by the Collegium for direct elevation from the Bar to the Supreme Court, after Justice Indu Malhotra. Should Mohana join Justice Malhotra on the Bench, she would be the 12th woman to become a Supreme Court judge in its 76-year history.

Chennai-born Mohana has practised for nearly four decades in the Supreme Court, building a reputation as a lawyer who took on constitutional, civil and criminal matters and served as amicus curiae in several significant cases. Among her most noted appearances was the landmark litigation on permanent commission for women officers in the Indian Army.

the Bench with a classmate from Coimbatore Law College, Justice K V Viswanathan, also appointed directly from the Bar. They were part of the first batch of the five-year law course from 1983 to 1988.

Mohana may have a five-year tenure as Supreme Court judge, till June 2031. The Supreme Court has only one woman judge currently, Justice B V Nagarathna, who is in line to become the first woman C.J.I. The other women judges who have had a tenure of over five years in the SC are Justices Ruma Pal and R Banumathi.

Justice Sachdeva

Currently the Chief Justice of Madhya Pradesh High Court, Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva's parent HC is Delhi.

Justice Sachdeva, 62, enrolled with the Bar Council of Delhi in 1988, and has practised in district courts, the Delhi HC



(L-R) V Mohana, Chief Justices Sanjeev Sachdeva, Arun Palli, Shree Chandrashekhara and Sheel Nagu

and the Supreme Court. He was standing counsel for the Bar Council of India and senior panel counsel for the Union of India for over a decade, before being designated a Senior Advocate by the Delhi HC in July 2011. In 2013, Justice Sachdeva was elevated as an Additional Judge of the Delhi HC. Transferred to the Madhya Pradesh HC in 2024, he was appointed its Chief Justice in July 2025.

In April this year, Justice Sachdeva initiated suo motu contempt proceedings against a BJP MLA and mining baron for

allegedly attempting to contact a sitting judge in a mining case. He also ordered the removal of 102 web links "misusing" livestreamed court proceedings.

If appointed, Justice Sachdeva would have a tenure of over three-and-a-half years in the SC, retiring in December 2029.

Justice Arun Palli

He is the Chief Justice of the J&K and Ladakh HC; his parent HC is Punjab and Haryana. His elevation to the SC would bring Punjab and Haryana's representation in the SC to three, in-

cluding CJ Surya Kant and Justice Augustine George Masih.

Justice Palli, 62, is a fourth-generation lawyer who began his practice at the Punjab and Haryana HC in 1988. He served as Additional Advocate General for Punjab from September 2004 to March 2007, before being designated as Senior Advocate in 2007. He was elevated as a judge of the Punjab and Haryana HC in December 2013 and took charge as Chief Justice of the J&K and Ladakh HC in 2025.

In December 2025, he dismissed a PIL by PDP president

Mehbooba Mufti seeking repatriation of undertrial prisoners from jails outside J&K, recording that the petition appeared to be "for the explicit purpose of garnering political advantage".

If appointed, Justice Palli will serve 3 years and 4 months, retiring in September 2029.

Justice Shree Chandrashekhara

Justice Chandrashekhara, whose parent HC is Jharkhand, is the Chief Justice of the Bombay HC. He was part of the three-member committee constituted by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to probe allegations of cash seizure against Allahabad HC judge Justice Yashwant Varma.

If appointed, Justice Chandrashekhara would become the first SC judge from Jharkhand. Ranchi-born Justice Chandrashekhara, 61, did his LLB from the Campus Law Centre, University of Delhi, in 1993, and

enrolled as an advocate in December that year. He practised civil and criminal matters for nearly 19 years, appearing for both the government and private entities. He became an Additional Judge of the Jharkhand HC in 2013, was confirmed as a Permanent Judge in June 2014, and served as Acting Chief Justice of the Jharkhand HC in December 2023.

He was transferred to the Bombay HC in July 2025 and sworn in as its 49th Chief Justice on September 5. His Bench upheld the 2018 verdict acquitting all 22 accused in the Sohrabuddin Sheikh encounter case and quashed charges against the last four accused in Malgaon blasts case. His Bench also set aside MMRDA penalty notices related to BKC plots, ordering refunds of over Rs 700 crore to entities, including Reliance Industries. It also allowed the felling of 45,675 mangroves

for the proposed Versova-Bhayandar coastal road project.

If appointed, Justice Chandrashekhara will serve 3 years and 11 months as an SC judge, retiring in May 2030.

Justice Sheel Nagu

He is the Chief Justice of the Punjab and Haryana HC, with the Madhya Pradesh HC his parent court. He was also part of the panel that investigated the allegations against Justice Varma.

Justice Nagu, 61, enrolled as an advocate in 1987 and practised on the civil and constitutional sides at the Madhya Pradesh HC. He was elevated as an Additional Judge of the HC in May 2011 and confirmed as a permanent judge in May 2013. He was sworn in as the 36th Chief Justice of the Punjab and Haryana HC on July 9, 2024.



## Going Natural

**UNION MINISTER** Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday announced that the Agriculture Ministry will launch a month-long campaign — “Khet Bachao Abhiyan” — from June 1 to promote balanced use of fertilisers and encourage natural farming practices among farmers across the country. The announcement was made on the concluding day of the two-day National Khari Conference, attended by agriculture ministers from 20 states. Gujarat Governor Acharya Devvrat, who is known for practising and advocating natural farming, gave a presentation on fertilisers and natural farming at the conference — perhaps the first occasion when a state Governor participated in the programme.

## Austerity Mode

THE KRISHI Bhawan, which houses offices of several ministries such as Agriculture, Food, Rural Development, Fisheries & Animal Husbandry and Panchayati Raj, has switched to energy-saving mode following PM Narendra Modi's appeal to reduce fuel consumption and conserve energy. The Ministry of Agriculture, it is learnt, has directed its officials to switch off unnecessary lights and reduce excessive use of air conditioners during office hours. Some of the senior officials are leading by example, using only one tubelight/bulb in their rooms and limiting the use of cooling systems to just one AC.

## ABVP endorses CBSE's move on 3-language policy

*New Delhi:* The ABVP has thrown its weight behind the CBSE's decision to make three languages, including at least “two native Indian languages”, compulsory for Class 9 students from July 1, with its national general secretary Virendra Singh Solanki stating that the opposition to the move was a result of a “subverted mindset”. The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) began its three-day national executive council meeting in Bhubaneswar on Friday by endorsing the CBSE's move. **ENS**

# In new Assam House, BJP refrain: ‘Cong represents one community’

## Opposition calls it ‘divisive’ talk

**Sukrita Baruah**  
Guwahati, May 29

THE ASSAM Assembly elections threw up a House that has never been as starkly disparate along communal lines as now. The effect is showing — in debates, in the language used by the ruling BJP, and in the choices made by the Opposition Congress.

Of the 126 seats in the Assembly, the NDA holds 102, including the BJP's 82, and 10 each of its allies AGP and BPF (Bodoland People's Front). All the seats NDAMLA won were where ethnic Assamese, Hindu and tribal voters form the bulk of the population. The Opposition holds only 24 seats — 19 won by the Congress, 2 by the Rajiv Dal, 2 by the AIUDF and 1 by the Trinamool Congress. Only two of them are Hindu MLAs, Joy Prakash Das of the Congress and Akhil Gogoi of the Rajiv Dal. The rest are Muslim leaders, who won from seats where minority voters are dominant.

True to his word, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who often targets Bengali-origin Muslims in Assam, brought the Bill to introduce the Uniform

Civil Code (UCC) in the very first Session of the new Assembly. Any pushback from the Opposition, which does not have the numbers to even try stalling the Bill, was projected by the BJP and Sarma as proof of where the Opposition's loyalties lay.

When it was his turn to speak on the Bill at the tail end of a five-hour debate in which over 30 MLAs participated, the CM said the Opposition was “not representative” of popular opinion.

“The composition of the Assembly itself proves that the Congress does not represent Assam in the totality of its communities and religions today. It only represents a particular religious community... And if you look at their opposition to the UCC, you will see that they have only opposed it from the lens of a particular community. They have not opposed it from the perspective of Hindu people, Christian people or tribal people.”

Sarma added: “Today, we are seeing in the Assembly a secular party like the Congress, which 150 years ago spoke about equal rights and duties, representing a particular religious community only. They



MLAs during the first session of the 16th Assam Assembly. ANI

spoke about the Quran and Shariat but not once did the Bhagwad Gita, Ramayan and Mahabharat leave their mouths.”

Multiple Opposition MLAs argued during the debate that existing laws make the UCC redundant. “There are already strong laws in the country against child marriage and for women's rights. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act is in place across the country and the Assam government itself has arrested thousands of people on the basis of this... tri-

ple talaq has been made a punishable offence. For polygamy, the Assam Assembly passed an Act last year... When these laws are in place, what can be the political motive of bringing in a UCC?” said Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Wazed Ali Choudhury.

The Opposition also demanded public consultation, with leaders of different religions and communities, before introducing the UCC, and raised concerns about infringement of personal liberty with the regulations on live-in relationship. Some MLAs pointed to Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution, and said the freedom of religion and to manage religious affairs protected the practice of personal law.

Choudhury said: “The attempt to impose one set of rules in a multi-religious and multi-cultural society like ours goes against the core values of the Constitution... Personal laws haven't come up overnight, they have been developed and established over ages.”

The Trinamool Congress's Sherman Ali Ahmed opposed certain sections of the UCC Bill as “violating the Quran”, adding: “The Quran should not be violated, that is guaranteed under Articles 25 and 26. A section violates the Quran by dic-

tating whom I marry...” Ahmed also opposed the stipulations regarding divorce.

The Congress's choice of Choudhury as CLP chief reflects strategic balancing by the party too given the House composition. For Deputy CLP, the party picked its sole Hindu MLA, Joy Prakash Das.

With all its biggest leaders having lost in the Assembly elections, including Congress Assam president Gaurav Gogoi and Leader of the Opposition Debebrata Saikia, Choudhury is the party's senior-most state legislator now. A five-time MLA, he currently represents the Biring Jarua constituency.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Das said Sarma's statements about the Opposition in the Assembly were “an attempt to build on a narrative.”

“It is true that they (the NDA) got 102 MLAs, and we got 19. But if an MLA wins, it does not mean that all sections of the people in that seat are with him. There are seats in Upper Assam, like Dulaijan and Bihpuria, where we lost by small margins... Now Sarma is trying to divide Assam in the Assembly itself. His work is to divide people,” Das said. Another Congress leader admitted the statistics in the Assembly were “not favourable” for the party.

# Buzz around new Karnataka Cabinet as Siddaramaiah and son meet Rahul

## Shivakumar also meets Congress high command; new CLP leader today

**Manoj CG**  
New Delhi, May 29

WITH SIDDARAMAIAH having stepped down as Chief Minister of Karnataka to pave the way for the smooth elevation of DK Shivakumar, the focus on Friday shifted to the second part of the well-choreographed transition in the southern state — formation of the new Cabinet. Both Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar were in Delhi but made it a point to meet the Congress leadership separately with their wishlists.

They did, however, have lunch together to paint a picture of unity. Siddaramaiah met Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and later Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge along with his son Yathindra, an MLC. He introduced Yathindra to Rahul. The signals were clear. He also met AICC general secretary (organisation) KC Venugopal. Siddaramaiah is said to be seeking a berth for his son and loyalists in the new Cabinet, including the post of Deputy Chief Minister.

Top sources in the party said

the party high command does not have a problem in inducting Yathindra in the Cabinet.

Siddaramaiah has already declined a Rajya Sabha nomination offered by the party leadership. He also said that he wants to remain in Karnataka and is not keen on a central role, which the party high command had suggested to him.

A meeting of the Congress legislature party will be held in Bengaluru on Saturday to elect a new leader. Venugopal and AICC general secretary in charge of the state Randeep Singh Surjewala will oversee the exercise.

The Congress high command heaved a sigh of relief after Siddaramaiah met the top leadership and thanked them for having given him the opportunity to lead the state for eight years. That he brought his son along signalled that the transition would be smooth and trouble-free. “It was a very pleasant meeting. They discussed multiple political issues,” said Surjewala after Siddaramaiah's meeting with Gandhi. Asked if the transition will be smooth in Karnataka, he said, “Absolutely.



Congress leader Siddaramaiah with Karnataka Deputy CM DK Shivakumar, state Minister KJ George, and MLC Yathindra Siddaramaiah in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

There is no hurdle in the smooth tradition of power in the state.”

The leadership, too, praised Siddaramaiah. “His public life has consistently reflected dignity, compassion and a deep commitment to social justice. From humble beginnings to serving Karnataka twice as Chief Minister, he remained steadfast in his commitment to equality, harmony and the welfare of the marginalised. Karnataka and the Congress remain grateful for his contributions to public life. Wishing him good health and the very best in his continued service to people,” Kharge said.

Noting that he has been a hugely dominant figure in Karnataka's politics for over four

decades, Congress communication head Jairam Ramesh said, “The dignity with which he has been participating in the transition of power in the state has enhanced his stature immeasurably. He will be fondly remembered as he begins a new innings in his public life.”

After Siddaramaiah, Shivakumar met Gandhi and Kharge and then had a discussion with Venugopal. The focus of the discussions revolved around Cabinet formation. Shivakumar is said to be not keen on having Deputy Chief Ministers but sources in the Congress said the party will have to balance caste, regional and factional equations.

## Stormy scenes at Cong strategy meeting for Punjab elections

**Man Aman Singh Chhina**  
Chandigarh, May 29

A MEETING of the Congress' central leadership with its Punjab unit ahead of 2027 Assembly elections saw stormy scenes with verbal duels, charges and counter charges taking place.

The meeting was convened at the residence of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, where former party chief Rahul Gandhi and AICC general secretary KC Venugopal were present.

The results of local body polls gave ammunition to former CM Charanjit Singh Channi whose strongholds Chamkaur Sahib and Morinda saw the Congress emerging victorious. The party, though, suffered a drubbing in Gidderbaha, considered a bastion of state chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring.

It is learnt that Channi raised the question of poor performance in Gidderbaha. Warring is learnt to have raised the absence of Channi from Punjab for a prolonged period. It is also learnt that Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa left the meeting midway. Congress general secretary in charge of Punjab, Bhupesh Baghel, meanwhile, told reporters, “We have to move forward unitedly in Punjab...”

# Rajya Sabha polls in June, BJP weighs Delhi role for Biren

**Deeptiman Tiwary**  
New Delhi, May 29



After almost two years of ethnic conflict in Manipur, Singh had to resign as CM in February 2025.

NEXT MONTH, when 23 MPs join the Rajya Sabha, one of them could be former Manipur CM N Biren Singh. Sources in the BJP said Singh's name was being seriously considered by the central leadership and he could be the one candidate coming from Manipur.

Of the 23 seats falling vacant in June in the Upper House, four each are from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Gujarat, three each from Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, and one each from Meghalaya, Manipur, Jharkhand, and Arunachal Pradesh.

“We have heard about it. But the central leadership has not yet directly communicated anything to him,” a source close to Singh told *The Indian Express*.

ABJP leader in Delhi too confirmed developments around such a possibility. “It is being discussed, but the final call will be taken by the top leadership,” the leader said. Sources said there was a need to placate an unseated CM and keep two party heavyweights in Manipur invested in separate geographic locations as far as possible.

After almost two years of ethnic conflict in Manipur, Singh had to resign as the CM on February 9, 2025. The state was then put under President's Rule. A year later, much to the chagrin of the former CM, his rival Y Khemchand Singh was made the CM. Sources said both at the time of his resignation and when the BJP central leadership chose Khemchand that Biren Singh had been promised that Delhi would take care of him and his political career would not be

jeopardised. The party gave him due importance even when there was President's Rule in the state, with Union Home Minister Amit Shah regularly engaging with him on issues related to the state. When the announcement of Khemchand becoming the CM was to be made, Shah chose Singh to do the honours, sources said. “He had even been asked to give two names for the post of Chief Minister before the central leadership took a call on Y Khemchand Singh. Although his candidates were not selected, his key aides in the party were accommodated in the Khemchand cabinet,” said a BJP leader from the state.

However, the party is also aware of the pitfalls of having two political heavyweights in the state, especially when they are not known to be on great terms. When Biren Singh as CM was facing rebellion within the party through 2024-25, Khemchand's was the most prominent voice.

In November 2024, Khemchand Singh openly criticised Biren Singh for refusing to resign amid the law and order crisis and unrest in the state. “I asked him to resign a couple of times, but he is not putting down his papers,” he said.

# Delhi HC declines to order unblocking of Cockroach Janta Party's X account

**Sohini Ghosh**  
New Delhi, May 29

WHILE DECLINING to immediately order unblocking of the X account of Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), the Delhi High Court orally remarked that the “entire activity” appears offending and the court has to “draw a distinction between a particular tweet and the entire account.”

It also relegated CJP founder, Abhijeet Dipke, to a review committee to challenge the blocking order passed against the account in India.

Dipke had moved court challenging the blocking of the CJP's X handle, which was withheld in India on May 21 after a direction from the Centre following inputs that raised “national security concerns”. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) asked X to withhold the account under Section 69(A) of the IT Act, 2000.

While senior advocate Akhil Sibal, appearing for Dipke, insisted that the court pass directions to unblock the account and can further direct to keep alleged objectionable tweets blocked, Justice Purushendra Kaurav refused. He orally remarked, “Normally, we pass interim or final orders after hearing the other side...”

Sibal pointed out that in past cases, the court has ordered for unblocking of entire accounts while keeping select posts, which are purportedly objectionable, blocked.

Justice Kaurav orally remarked, “In those cases and this case, there seems to be a slight difference... In those cases, some tweets were found to be offending. In this case, it seems that the entire activity per se perhaps is slightly offending. Therefore, we have to draw a distinction between a particular tweet and the entire account.”

THE SATIRICAL ONLINE PLATFORM REFLECTS THE YOUTH'S DISSATISFACTION WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT, BUT ALSO THE OPPOSITION'S FAILURE TO COME ACROSS AS AN ALTERNATIVE

# Cockroach Janta Party can't be swatted away: Why parties must heed Gen Z discontent



WHEN AN indignant Dilliwalla, whose family was associated with the freedom struggle, told me he would never vote for an outfit that called itself Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), he was summing up the dilemma of an older India compelled to adjust to a rapidly changing younger India, with all that it brought in its wake.

Here was a thinking individual who followed politics, a successful entrepreneur who had just crossed 60, inclined against the BJP for the very reasons outlined in the CJP's “manifesto” but unwilling to support it. In a week, the CJP became a sensation with over 20 million followers on Instagram, overtaking the following the BJP and the Congress had built over several years. This

made even the international media sit up and take note. This could be just another social media flash in the political pan, but it's worth reflecting on why it struck a chord.

Just earlier this month, actor C Joseph Vijay came to power in Tamil Nadu, sweeping aside an entrenched party like the DMK, with the Opposition AIADMK also failing to emerge as the alternative. All thanks to Gen Z and an even younger Gen Alpha, 12 to 16-year-olds who influenced the voting choice of adults in their home.

“My teenage granddaughter compelled my wife to vote for Vijay,” said the editor of a daily in Tamil Nadu. “And in home after home in Tamil Nadu, children prevailed on their parents and grandparents to vote for Vijay and remember, many of them will be first-time voters five years down the line.”

Elections are increasingly being influenced, in small or big measure, by social media. That is why a rapper, Balendra Shah, is Nepal's Prime Minister today. That is also one reason

why Sheikh Hasina, whose father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman created Bangladesh, was ousted from power and is in exile in India.

## What CJP stands for

India is a large and diverse country and it is not easy to pull off a Nepal or a Bangladesh here. But it will be a mistake to dismiss the CJP as a foreign conspiracy. This is not to say that the government of the day should not be vigilant about the possibility of forces that may try to use or fuel such a phenomenon, particularly when the global reordering of power blocs is taking place.

The CJP highlights dissatisfaction with the establishment, and this is also reflected in its manifesto and anthem. That it should come soon after the BJP's impressive victory in West Bengal, unseating a leader such as Mamata Banerjee, is a reminder that the ruling party has to go beyond making madrasa students in the state sing Vande Mataram.

More importantly, the on-



Councillors carrying posters of cockroach during a protest over the NEET controversy during the House meeting of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi earlier this week. PRAVEEN KHANNA

line phenomenon highlights the failure of the Opposition parties to come across as alternatives for Gen Z. Those who flocked to an unknown, faceless Boston-based Abhijeet Dipke did not gravitate to the handles of the Congress, the AAP, the TMC, or the RJD.

These parties too flagged the NEET-UG paper leak and called for Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation. They also took exception to Chief Justice of India Surya Kant's com-

ments in which he used the word “cockroach”. The CJI later clarified, “What I had specifically criticised were those who have entered professions like the Bar (legal profession) with the aid of fake and bogus degrees. Similar persons have sneaked into the media, social media, and other noble professions as well, and hence, they are like parasites. It is totally baseless to suggest that I criticised the youth of our nation.”

There is a fatigue with existing political parties and their ways of functioning; there is boredom with the language they use, and a deep dissatisfaction with their inability, and lack of desire, to address the challenges that confront the youth today.

It is early days yet to know whether the Cockroach Janta Party will convert itself into a movement on the ground or register itself as a party and contest elections as the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) did.

Though Dipke says 94% of the CJP's followers are Indians, Instagram does not provide any breakdown by nationality. It would be difficult to say how many of the self-proclaimed “cockroaches” are mere spectators or entertainment-seekers and how many seriously seek change. Had the word cockroach not been used to describe the new party, would it have provoked as big a reaction as it did?

Social media thrives on the sensational, the dramatic, and the irreverent. It has little time for nuanced opinions, which is also an integral part of political functioning. Having said that,

the CJP has moved so far with finesse, using satire and humour — a deadly weapon — to lampoon without personalising the attack. It has also raised five demands, including calls for ensuring judicial independence and ensuring 50% reservation for women in Parliament.

Dipke, who says he first conceived of the idea of the satirical online platform on May 16, has faced casteist attacks and was trolled when he revealed, in response to a question on reservation, that he was a Dalit. That, he said, should say it all.

There have been signs of growing disaffection among the upper caste, the middle class, and the urban youth about narrowing economic opportunities amid the OBC-isation of the polity and the cross-party agreement on a caste census, which is expected to help the OBCs. This angst came to the fore again with the 2026 UGC norms on the promotion of equity, which were brought to prevent discrimination against OBCs and Dalits. For the moment, the Supreme

Court has stayed these guidelines. The caste composition of the CJP's followers is not known, but it will have a bearing on the future strategy of Dipke and his team.

Much will also depend on how the BJP, good at directing a discourse, handles the situation. Will it take further steps to put down this online upsurge as it did initially by getting CJP's “X” handle suspended? Or will it, in the words of Shashi Tharoor, allow the pressure cooker to let off steam and take steps that defuse the situation?

Can a “party” formed online influence voter choices? It may be a new way of creating a political narrative without even forming a formal political organisation. Therein may lie the import of the Cockroach Janta Party. Established political parties will have to come to terms with these new realities. So will the rest of us.

(Neerja Chowdhury, Contributing Editor, *The Indian Express*, has covered the last 11 Lok Sabha elections. She is the author of *How Prime Ministers Decide*.)

'Hold polls outside peak season': Tourism industry writes to Goa CM

Pavneet Singh Chadha Panaji, May 29

THE TOURISM industry stakeholders in Goa have written to the chief minister requesting that the assembly elections in the coastal state be scheduled ideally at the end of February next year, "outside the peak tourist months", arguing that elections in December would disrupt the "economic lifeline" of tourism and hurt Goa's status as a premier global destination.

In a letter to CM Pramod Sawant, the Travel and Tourism Association of Goa (TTAG) said the scheduling of elections during peak tourist season is a matter of grave concern, and the grapevine suggests they will be held in December. The assembly polls in Goa are expected to be held early 2026.

Jack Sukhija, president, TTAG said: "... As you are aware, December represents the zenith of Goa's tourism calendar."

The association said it is advocating "for the postponement or rescheduling of the election dates..."

# India a trusted partner, only 1% of trade deal talks left: Gor

Shubhajit Roy New Delhi, May 29

SERGIO GOR, US Ambassador to India, said Friday that Washington expects that a bilateral trade deal with India will be signed in "next few weeks and months". He indicated that only "1 per cent" of the deal was left to be concluded and Indian and US negotiators were working on it.

Describing Secretary of State Marco Rubio's recent four-day visit to India as "substantive", Gor, speaking at the US-India TRUST Initiative event at IIT Delhi, said, "Just last week, India had sent a team to Washington DC to finalise the last 1 per cent of that trade deal. Next week we will welcome a US delegation here to continue those talks."

"We fully expect that the trade deal will be signed over the next few weeks and months," he said.

Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs, made similar remarks Friday. "We had a trade team which visited the US in April... and now we are expecting a



US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor addresses the US-India TRUST Initiative event at IIT Delhi, Friday. PTI

team from US to visit India next week, where negotiations will be taken forward. So far, we have had a positive and constructive engagement," Jaiswal said.

Earlier, the Commerce Ministry had said that a high-level US trade delegation was scheduled to visit from June 1-4 to iron out the remaining clauses of the proposed bilateral agreement.

Gor said there was limitless potential to take forward the US-India relationship. "The importance of India is now... not

only economically but strategically to the world."

The envoy said the TRUST (Transforming the Relationship Utilizing Strategic Technologies) initiative, launched during PM Narendra Modi's visit to Washington earlier this year, was helping deepen cooperation in critical and emerging technologies such as AI, semiconductors, quantum computing, biotechnology, energy and space.

Underlining the exponential trajectory of the economic relationship, Gor noted that bi-

lateral trade in goods and services had skyrocketed from just USD 20 billion to over USD 220 billion in the past two decades. He said the US is focusing on partnerships with countries it considers trusted collaborators in emerging technologies, noting that "India's one of those partners".

He also highlighted India's inclusion in the Pax Silica initiative, a technology and supply-chain network led by the US.

"The reason India was in the first top 10 countries around the world to join this is that we trust this place. We trust the people here, we trust the technology, we trust your government," the Ambassador said. He said India is joining "a network of trusted ecosystems and resilient supply chains" covering technologies such as AI, semiconductors and quantum computing.

On artificial intelligence (AI), he said major American technology companies are increasing investments in India. He also flagged cooperation in space, citing the recent launch of the NASA-ISRO NISAR mission and India's participation in the Axiom-4 mission.

# AAP storms into Punjab civic bodies; Cong second, SAD trails independents

Kanchan Vasdev Chandigarh, May 29

THE AAM Aadmi Party (AAP) on Friday coasted to victory in the Punjab civic body elections, winning 958, or 48% of 1,977 wards. Hailing the win, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said people had "defeated the politics of hatred and supported developmental politics".

The Congress finished second with 397 seats and the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) fourth with 192, behind independents at 251. The BJP came a distant fifth, but the party managed to increase its tally from 49 to 172, increasing its footprint across Punjab's urban and semi-urban landscape. The BSP won seven wards. Out of eight municipal corporations, the AAP won five: Barnala, Batala, Moga, Mohali, and Bathinda. Barnala is the home turf of newly appointed state BJP president Kewal Dhillion.

The Congress had a clear majority in Kapurthala, while the BJP won Abohar. In Pathankot, no party was able to get a majority, but the BJP emerged as the single-largest party.

The results are a big boost for the AAP months before the state votes in the crucial Assembly elections in early 2027. Punjab is one of the three Opposition-ruled states/Union Territories in north India along with Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.

Though the urban civic polls are seen as a virtual semi-final before the Assembly polls, in the past, the party that has swept the elections has gone on to be voted out of power in the state. In 2015, the SAD-BJP alliance won 1,420 urban wards while the Congress bagged just 356. However, barely two years later, the Congress stormed to power with 77 of 117 Assembly seats, while the SAD-BJP alliance was reduced to 18.

The pattern repeated last time too. In the 2021 municipal polls, the Congress bagged 1,516 seats across municipal corporations, councils, and nagar pan-



AAP workers celebrate in Bathinda, Friday. GURMEET SINGH

chayats. But months later, in early 2022, the AAP stormed to power with 92 Assembly seats and the Congress fell to 18.

Mann said people had endorsed his government's work, including "free power to the domestic sector, availability of daytime power supply to farmers, free treatment at Aam Aadmi clinics and rejection of divisive politics".

Referring to BJP as the "ED (Enforcement Directorate) party", the CM said ED raids in Punjab and the arrest of Cabinet Minister Sanjeev Arora had failed to influence voters. "People have rejected them completely. They are at number five. Even their former alliance partner SAD has failed to deliver. The AAP alone has won more seats than these four parties combined," he said.

"The people of Punjab have replied to the 'ED party'. 'ED politics' will not work in Punjab," said AAP leader and Delhi's former Deputy CM Manish Sisodia.

For the Congress, while there were isolated pockets of success, its inability to convert Lok Sabha election momentum — it won 7 of 13 parliamentary constituencies — into a strong grassroots organisation will be of concern. Congress insiders said factional rivalries had weakened the party in several towns. At a meeting in New Delhi with the Congress high command, state Congress leaders are learnt to have engaged in a blame game over the party's poor performance.

Among the pockets where the party performed well was former CM Charanjit Singh Channi's bastion Chamkaur Sahib, where the party won 11 of the 13 seats. In Kapurthala, Congress MLA Rana Gurjit Singh steered the party to victory with 31 of 50 seats. His son and Independent MLA Rana Inder Par-tap Singh also saw his candi-dates dominate the Sultanpur Lodhi municipal council. However, the AAP swept Gidderbaha, the home turf of Punjab Congress chief and Ludhiana MP Amarinder Singh Raja Waring, winning 17 of the 19 wards.

However, Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa claimed the results were along "expected lines", saying urban local body polls in Punjab usually favour the ruling party. "The real contest remains between the AAP and the Congress. That is what will happen in the Assembly elections too," he said.

The BJP aggressively campaigned in urban areas of Punjab, hoping to build on the momentum generated by its Assembly election win in West Bengal. Its expanded footprint and wins in Abohar and Pathankot are likely to propel it forward in the lead-up to the Assembly polls. SAD spokesperson Parambans Singh Romana said the Akalis still retain support in urban Punjab despite the setback. "The ruling party used every tactic to win these elections. They rejected nomination papers and used ballot boxes. We are Assembly election ready," he alleged.

## ON AGENDA: DISCUSSIONS WITH PM ON STRENGTHENING TIES, INDUSTRY INTERACTIONS IN MUMBAI

# Myanmar President's India visit starts today

Shubhajit Roy New Delhi, May 29

MYANMAR PRESIDENT U Min Aung Hlaing is set to begin his India visit, his first to the country since he took over last month, on Saturday.

He will hold bilateral talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday, after visiting Bodh Gaya in Bihar over the weekend. He will also travel to Mumbai on Tuesday.

Hlaing, the former chief of the military junta government, was elected President on April 3 through a parliamentary vote — five years after the elected government was ousted in a coup.

Ministry of External Affairs' official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on Friday that



U Min Aung Hlaing was elected Myanmar President on April 3 through a parliamentary vote

Hlaing, who was scheduled to arrive in India to participate in the International Big Cat Alliance Summit on June 1, which has since been deferred, will now pay an official visit to the country from May 30 to June 3.

He will be accompanied by a high-level delegation compris-

## E. EXPLAINED

### Why Myanmar matters

INDIA SHARES a long land border with Myanmar as well as a maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal. Four northeastern states — Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram — share a boundary with the southeast Asian nation. This makes it important for India to engage with Myanmar's leadership for security and defence domains, despite the human rights concerns and other challenges there.

ing several Cabinet ministers, senior officials and business leaders. "During his visit to New Delhi, President U Min Aung Hlaing will hold discussions with Prime Minister Modi on June 1 on further strengthening the historical and civilisational ties between the two countries. He will also participate in a business forum," the MEA spokesperson said.

"Regarding border security, connectivity, and other issues, all matters that form part of the gamut of relations between Myanmar and India will come up for discussion. Our idea is to take our friendly, civilizational ties forward," Jaiswal said.

During his Mumbai visit, Hlaing will hold business and industry interactions besides

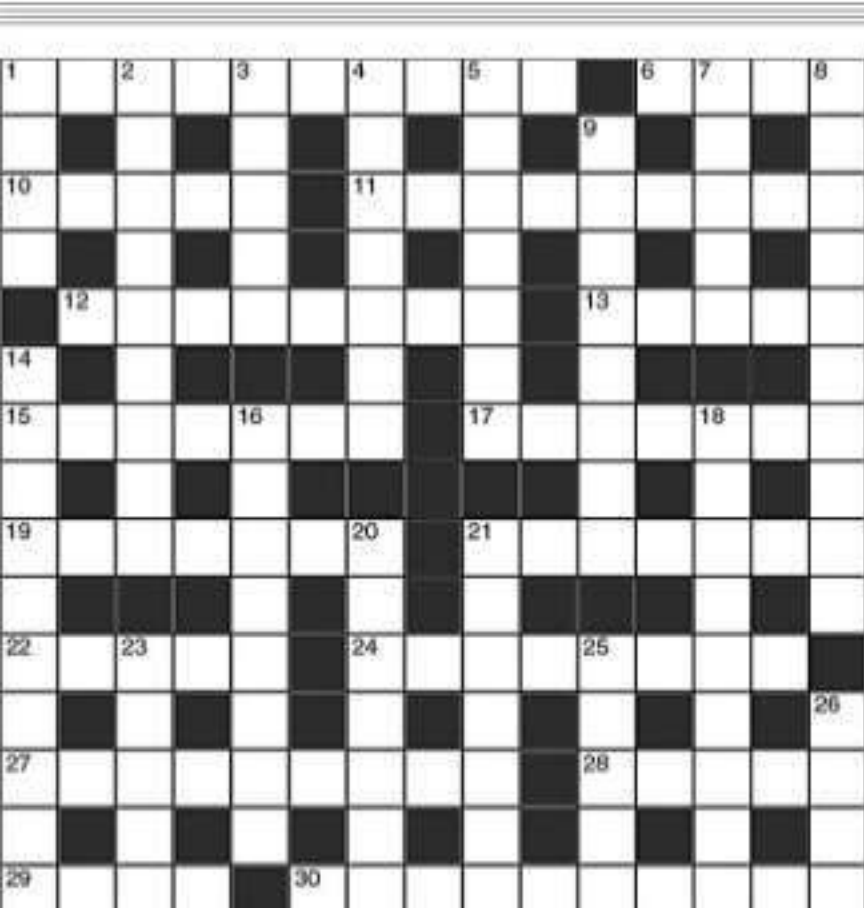
site visits.

On strategic objectives behind the visit, the MEA spokesperson said that "Myanmar lies at the confluence of India's Neighborhood First, Act East and MAHASAGAR policies. The official visit of President U Min Aung Hlaing to India is expected to further strengthen and deepen the multi-faceted relations between the two countries".

Officials said India shares a long land border of over 1,643 kms with Myanmar as well as a maritime boundary. This makes it important to engage with Myanmar's leadership for security and defence domains, officials said, despite the challenges and the human rights concerns there.

## CROSSWORD

## 6002



- ACROSS**
- 1 Use fingers to eat a plum in the break (10)
  - 6 Sign on the staff (4)
  - 10 Teachings that follow closely on a degree (5)
  - 11 A ruinous craft (9)
  - 12 Trampled on Oriental in mad rush (8)
  - 13 Game pie has nothing in it (5)
  - 15 Dames in confusion look younger (7)
  - 17 It's pressed into service for distribution by air (7)
  - 19 Appear on stage again or make another record (2-5)
  - 21 Main roads? (7)
  - 22 Finished with a dish from Italy (5)
  - 24 Writer is about to approve a colour (3,5)
  - 27 Capital sum for headmaster (9)
  - 28 Academic appointment taken by the president (5)
  - 29 Line of status (4)
  - 30 It means a lot of extra work in the theatre (5,5)
- DOWN**
- 1 Obligated to be called a servant (4)
  - 2 Balls — and bats — can be part of it (5,4)
  - 3 Song performed by little Sarah in the afternoon (5)
  - 4 They are made to scale (7)
  - 5 Hardy girl has time for a bit of artistic piecework (7)
  - 7 Hen's bed (5)
  - 8 Enthusiasm experienced by a novice poker player? (5,5)
  - 9 Standards are judged by them (8)
  - 14 Could it be described as an abrasive publication? (5,5)
  - 16 Recent uproar about an actor's appearance (8)
  - 18 Do competitors rocket into the lead in it? (5,4)
  - 20 To do so can brighten a room from either end (7)
  - 21 Not only is it swift it looks like one (7)
  - 23 Single issue of new coins (5)
  - 25 They may be used for storing stretchers (5)
  - 26 Berliner's odd bits of cheese (4)

**SOLUTIONS CROSSWORD 6001 ACROSS:** 1 Petunia, 5 Calve, 8 Direction, 9 Dip, 10 Awry, 12 Articles, 14 Canape, 15 Fervid, 17 Stitches, 18 Asia, 21 Egg, 22 Faculties, 24 Sonic, 25 Dialect **DOWN:** 1 Padua, 2 Tar, 3 Nick, 4 Apiary, 5 Consider, 6 Ladyloves, 7 Exposed, 11 Running in, 13 Specific, 14 Cosssets, 16 Fenced, 19 Asset, 20 Plea, 23 Ice

## JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective circles below. Select the letters in the shaded circles and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

The \_\_ teach much which the \_\_ never know. - Ralph Waldo Emerson (5,,4)

BAETA

SRWOM

ISSUED

FTYYPI

ANSWER: The years teach much which the days never know.

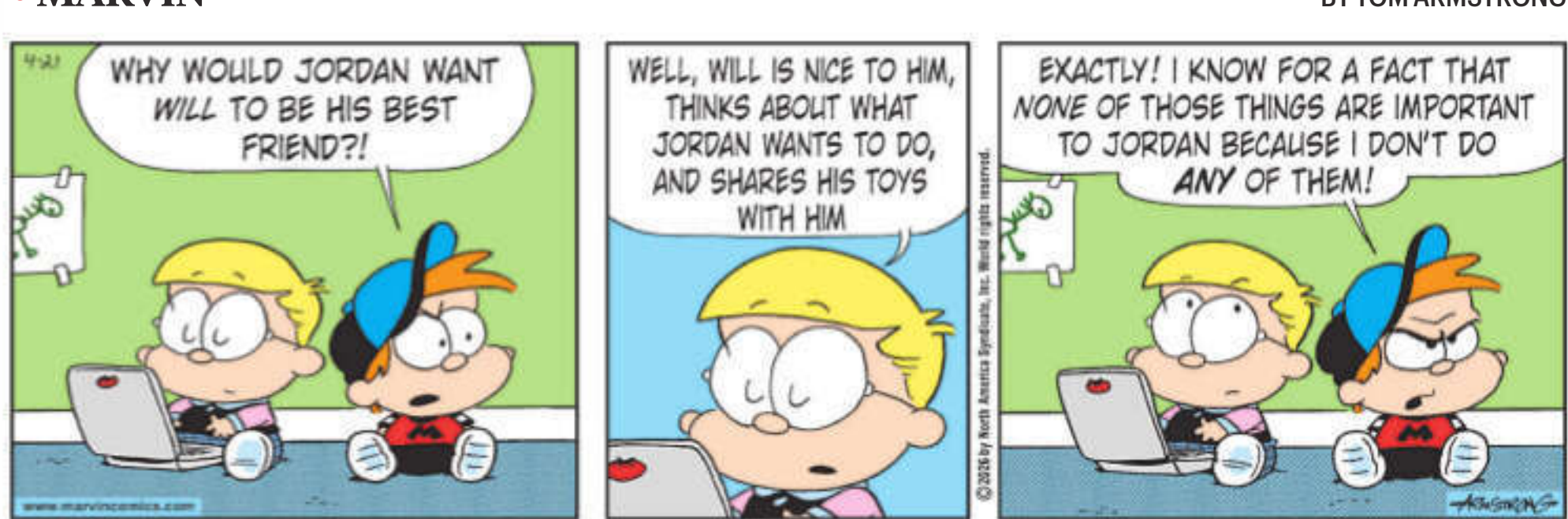
**SOLUTIONS:** Abate, Worms, Disuse, Typify



## CALVIN & HOBBS



## MARVIN

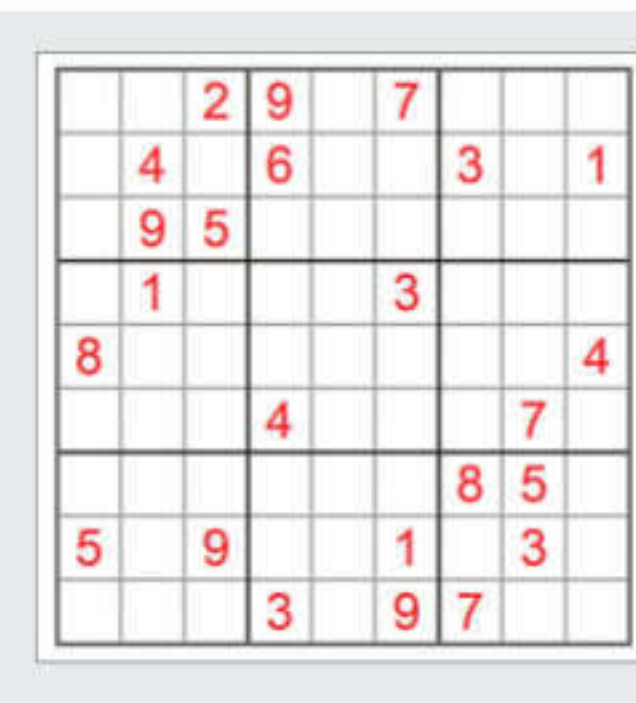


**DIFFICULTY LEVEL 4s INSTRUCTIONS**

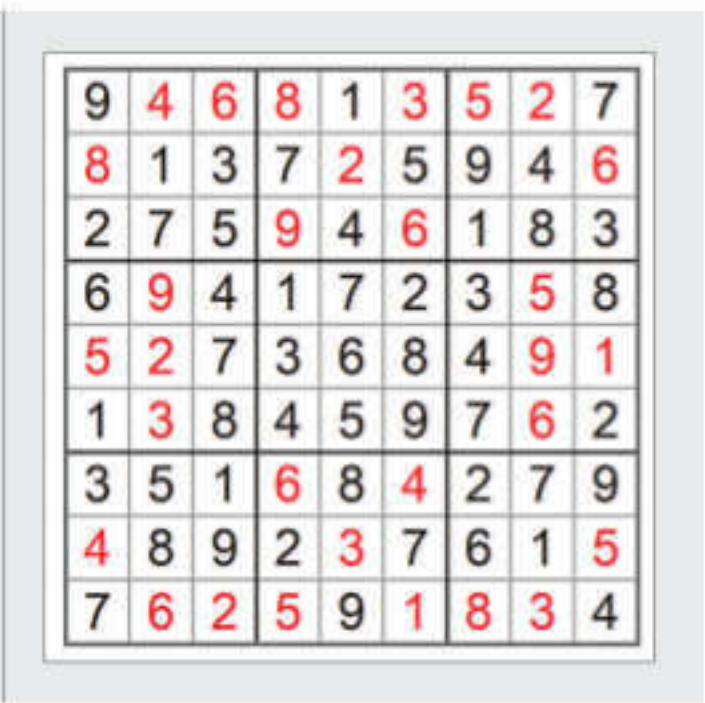
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

**DIFFICULTY LEVEL**

1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius



## SUDOKU 6334



## ROYAL STARS

BY GEORGIA NICOLS

- ARIES (MAR 21 - APR 20):** It is a great day to do something different. You might unexpectedly have to travel. Discussions about politics, religion and racial issues will be intense but you're sympathetic. Tonight: Explore and learn.
- TAURUS (APR 21 - MAY 21):** Double-check banking issues, because something unexpected could impact your assets. Today you might feel compassion for those who are less fortunate. Look for new resources to try a new approach to something. Tonight: Check your finances.
- GEMINI (MAY 22 - JUNE 21):** Your partner might catch you off guard today by saying or doing something you least expect. They will probably express themselves with passion. Tonight: Listen and cooperate.
- CANCER (JUNE 22 - JULY 23):** Your work routine might be interrupted today. Pet owners also might be surprised by something. This is also an excellent day for creative work or coming up with new approaches to medicine or something that is health-related. Tonight: Get better organised.
- LEO (JULY 24 - AUG 23):** This is a lovely day to chat with others. Surprise invitations might come your way. Artists will flourish because they are in touch with their muse. Parents should be aware that issues related to your kids are unpredictable. Guard against accidents. Tonight: Play.
- VIRGO (AUG 24 - SEP 23):** Your home routine might be interrupted today. A minor breakage could occur or a small appliance might break down. Someone unexpected might appear at your door. Be patient with parents and bosses if plans suddenly change. Tonight: Relax at home.
- LIBRA (SEP 24 - OCT 23):** Pay attention to everything you say and do today because this is an accident-prone day for you. However, bright, clever ideas also might spring up in your mind. You might see new places and meet new faces. Tonight: Lively discussions.
- SCORPIO (OCT 24 - NOV 23):** Keep an eye on your money and assets today. Of course, you might find money or you might lose money. Be smart and protect what you own against loss, theft or damage. You might be tempted to spend on luxury things. Tonight: Check banking.
- SAGITTARIUS (NOV 24 - DEC 22):** Today the Moon is in your sign, which makes you feel impulsive, excited and up for an adventure. You might attract people to you who are different from your usual crowd. You also might feel sympathetic toward children. Tonight: You win.
- CAPRICORN (DEC 23 - JAN 20):** Something going on behind the scenes might disrupt your work or your health today. It might even affect your pet. Meanwhile, relations with those who are closest to you are warm and helpful. Tonight: Enjoy privacy.
- AQUARIUS (JAN 21 - FEB 19):** Friendships are important to you, and you especially love to meet a new character. You'll be drawn to unusual people. Alternatively, someone you know might throw you a curveball. Stay lighter on your feet and be ready for sudden changes. Tonight: Be friendly.
- PISCES (FEB 20 - MAR 20):** People will notice you more than usual. Some might know intimate details about your private life. Relations with a parent or a family member might surprise you. Someone might do something you least expect. Tonight: You're admired.

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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to [explained@indianexpress.com](mailto:explained@indianexpress.com)

TELECOM

## The row over new Airtel priority tier for postpaid users

Soumyarendra Barik  
New Delhi, May 29

THIS MONTH, Bharti Airtel launched a new 'Priority Postpaid' service that will offer all its postpaid customers more consistent connectivity during periods of network congestion. This launch of this preferential service tier — using a technology called 5G "network slicing" — has triggered debate. Should premium users (read postpaid users) be allowed preferential access to network resources? Here's a look at how 5G network slicing works and whether it violates the net neutrality principle.

What is 5G network slicing?

Network slicing is one of the defining features of standalone 5G networks. Instead of operating as a single network, where all users compete for the same pool of resources, a telecom operator can divide the network into multiple virtual "slices", each configured for a specific purpose. Think of it as creating lanes on a highway. While the road remains the same, certain lanes can be reserved for vehicles with particular requirements.

In telecom networks, one slice can be optimised for ultra-low latency applications, another for industrial automation, another for customers seeking a more reliable consumer broadband experience, and so on.

Globally, operators in markets such as the US, UK, Singapore and South Korea have already deployed network slicing for enterprise and mission-critical applications.

So how is this different from, say, paying for a broadband plan that offers greater speed?

5G network slicing is different. A premium broadband plan usually gives users access to a higher maximum speed under normal conditions, but all customers still use the same underlying network.

Network slicing changes how the network itself allocates resources. During periods of congestion, a user on a dedicated 5G slice can be given preferential access to capacity, while others may experience slower speeds or higher latency. In effect, broadband plans sell more bandwidth, whereas network slicing can provide a higher quality of service even when the network is under strain.

So, does network slicing violate net neutrality?

Net neutrality is the principle that all internet traffic should be treated equally, without discrimination based on content, platform, service or user category. Around a decade ago, India adopted some of the world's strongest net neutrality protections.

"As per my understanding of current Net Neutrality regulations, creating plans with higher speeds does not violate Net Neutrality, as long as you don't prioritise speeds for specific apps, services or sectors, or price access to different apps, services or sectors differently," Nikhil Pahwa, founder of MediaNama, who played a key role in the successful campaign for net neutrality in 2015, said on social media platform X.

Critics argue that Airtel's plan creates a fast lane for customers willing to pay more, potentially undermining the principle of equal access. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on IT has begun examining whether the service breaches the non-discrimination principle embedded in India's telecom framework. Airtel, however, maintains that the service is fully compliant with net neutrality rules because it does not prioritise any specific application, website or content provider. Reliance Jio has also argued that network slicing can be compatible with net neutrality provided it remains application-agnostic and does not degrade service for other users.

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DIPLOMACY

## Quad's struggle to find momentum, as members pursue disparate objectives

EXPERT EXPLAINS  
MAJ GEN G G DWIVEDI (RETD)  
WAR VETERAN, PROFESSOR OF STRATEGIC INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AT LAL BAHADUR SHASTRI INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT

THE RECENT Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) held in New Delhi among the foreign ministers of Australia, India, Japan and the United States came as an assurance that the grouping remains relevant.

The Indo-Pacific has emerged as the world's strategic and geo-economic centre of gravity today. It hosts critical sea lanes, carrying over 50% of global trade and energy flow. China's rise, its coercive mari-

time behaviour, and technological dominance have created shared concerns among the Quad partners.

While the rationale behind the Quad has been compelling, it continues to grapple with a central question — is it a strategic force multiplier or merely a mechanism for consultative dialogue?

What is the Quad?

After the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004, India, Japan, Australia, and the US came together in an informal arrangement to coordinate disaster relief operations. In 2007, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, commonly known as the Quad, kicked off. However, it never really picked up momentum, and while it was revived in 2017, the Quad has, at best, sputtered along since.

The major reasons for this are that the four constituents don't always have the same aims, and China strenuously opposes the grouping. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi even compared the Quad to sea foam, saying it will simply dissipate over time.



(From left) Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio during the Quad meet.

Beijing argued that the Quad's purpose is mainly to target China. After the recent meeting on May 26, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a presser, "We do not support the formation of exclusive cliques or bloc confrontation. No cooperation should undermine mutual trust and cooperation among regional countries."

What do members want from it?

For Australia, Beijing's intimidating posturing means it has to expand strategic outreach and security partnerships, but it remains heavily dependent on China economically.

India needs to balance China in view of their shared border and the security calculus. It is also strongly opposed to China's design of carving out a unipolar Asia, but Delhi remains wary of compromising its strategic autonomy.

Tokyo views Quad as an essential security imperative, given the tensions in the South China Sea due to Beijing's apparently expansionist designs.

For the US, the Quad is perceived as the pillar of its Indo-Pacific strategy and the mechanism to balance out China without military confrontation. In fact, Washington perceives the Quad as a networked security architecture that substantiates American primacy in Asia. Under Donald Trump, however, the US seems to be leaning towards a bilateral deal with Beijing.

These different priorities explain why the Quad's progress has been incremental rather than decisive. The security cooperation remains constrained, lacking a NATO-like collective defence mechanism, and there is no binding treaty obligation.

What happened at this meeting?

The Quad Foreign Ministers meeting on May 26 attempted to break fresh ground. It focussed on maritime security, resilient supply chains, critical minerals and energy security amid geopolitical uncertainties.

Important initiatives were unveiled for enhanced maritime surveillance coordination, an energy security framework and co-

operation on critical minerals, to reduce dependence on China and the consequent vulnerabilities of supply chains.

The grouping also announced its first joint project — the development of port infrastructure in Fiji — signalling forward movement from dialogue to concrete deliverables.

What is the way ahead?

The Quad's future lies in strategic clarity among all members. To ensure organisational depth, the Quad needs to move towards permanent institutional architecture, alongside enhanced military operability, synergised technology partnerships and strengthened maritime capacity building in the Indo-Pacific.

The real test of Quad is not whether it becomes an Asian NATO, but whether the four democracies, with varying interests, can sustain strategic cooperation in the era of great power competition.

FULL REPORT ON [WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM](http://WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM)

ECONOMY

## Why inflation rate is not the same as affordability

GRAPHS, DATA, PERSPECTIVES  
BY UDIT MISRA  
WEEKLY ECONOMIC AND POLICY INSIGHTS USING DATA

THE US and Israel's war on Iran and the resultant spike in prices of crude oil and other products critical to the smooth functioning of the global economy have made inflation the main worry for policymakers.

Between June 3 and 5, the Monetary Policy Committee of India's Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will deliberate on this matter. On its part, the Union government has as yet shielded average consumers in India from the full effect of the rise in international prices.

But while policymakers are focused on containing the inflation rate, average consumers in India focus more on affordability. The notion is best captured in the worries of several consumers, who bemoan that "once prices go up, they never come down".

In other words, consumers are often more worried about the cumulative effect of past price increases on their household budgets and overall affordability than just the inflation rate in a particular month. This difference between the two ideas is also at the heart of the so-called "affordability crisis" in the US and the cost-of-living crisis in the UK. In both countries, affordability, more than just the inflation rate, is also leading voters to change their political choices.

What's the difference between inflation and affordability?

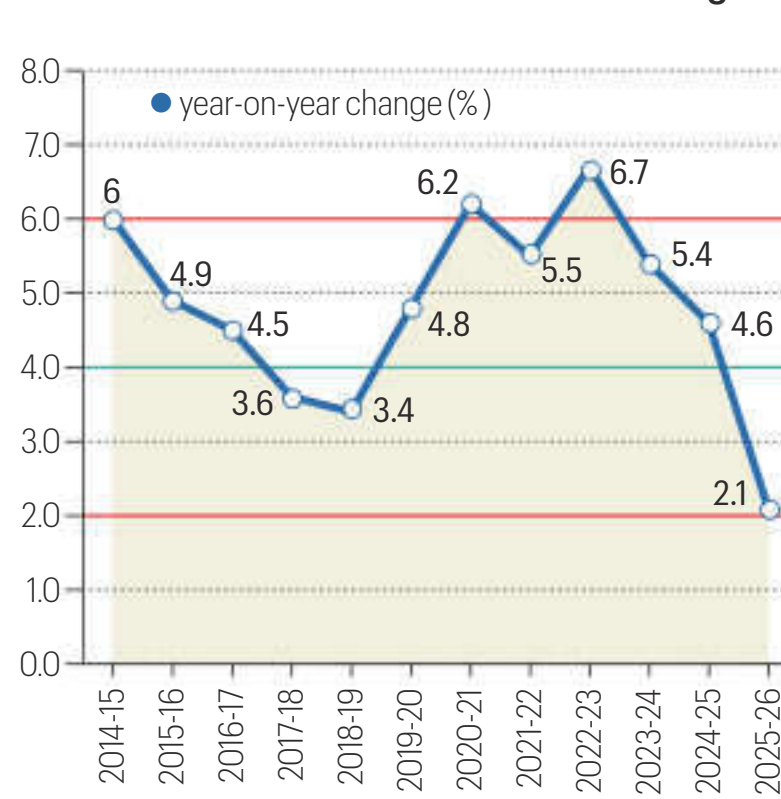
The inflation rate is the rate at which the general price level rises from one year to another.

Every country has chosen a representative basket of goods and services that its consumers use, and it tracks how the prices for this basket move. The year-on-year increase in this general price level is called the "headline" inflation rate, the one commonly referred to in policy debates.

As chart 1 shows, since the RBI adopted a policy regime to target a specific level of inflation in 2016, India's inflation rate has been within the RBI's comfort zone of 2% to 6% (red lines), even if it stayed above the

Inflation within comfort zone

Chart 1: India's retail inflation rate has largely remained within RBI's 2% to 6% comfort range



SOURCE: CMIE, INDIAN EXPRESS RESEARCH

target rate of 4% (green line). More importantly, over the past three years, the RBI has successfully brought down the inflation rate from almost 7% to around 2%.

The worry for policymakers now is that the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz is likely to push up the inflation rate for the current financial year (2026-27) closer to 5%.

The consumers, on the other hand, are more bothered about affordability, which, in turn, depends on two broad factors:

- The cumulative effect of repeated inflation spikes on the general price level
- The growth in their incomes relative to the rise in the general price level

In other words, consumers effectively care more whether they are better-off or worse-off in "real" terms — that is, after the effect of inflation is neutralised both from prices and incomes.

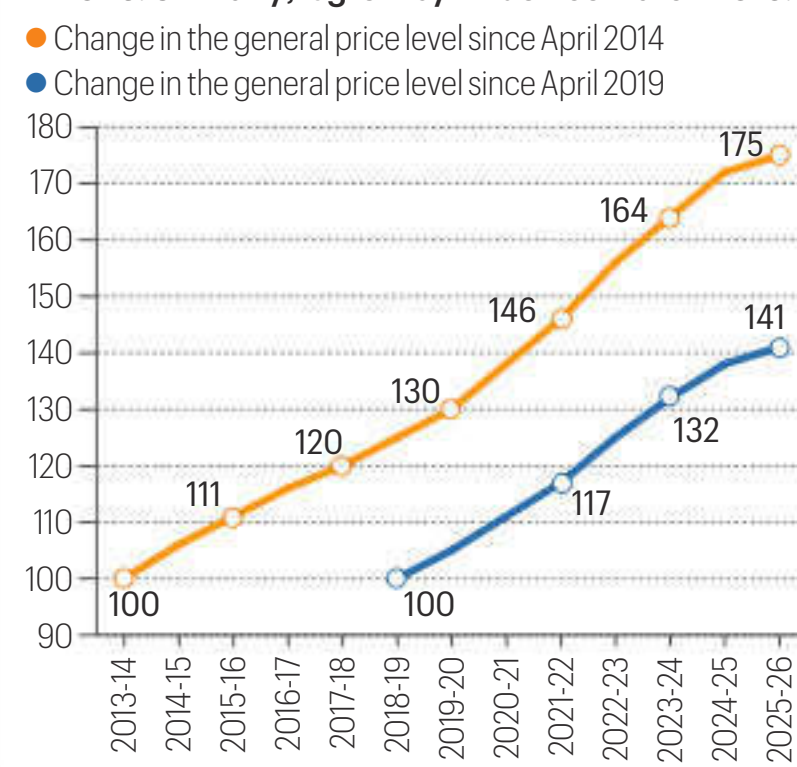
How to know where you stand in real terms

Did your income growth keep pace with the increase in the general price level? Chart 2 provides a simple test.

Let's assume the general price level as of March-end 2014 (the end date for finan-

Rise in general price level

Chart 2: Assuming price level was 100 in 2014, applying annual inflation rates shows it reached 175 in 2026. Similarly, it grew by 41% since March 2019.



cial year 2013-14) was 100, around the beginning of the first term of the current NDA government. If one then applies the annual inflation rates to this, one can arrive at the price level at the end of March 2026. As the data show, it is 175. In other words, a basket of goods and services that cost Rs 100 to consumers in March 2014, cost Rs 175 at the end of March 2026.

One way to assess whether one is better-off or worse-off is to compare incomes. If their income has gone up by 75%, then one is exactly where one was 12 years ago in "real" terms. If their income has grown by a lesser degree, then one is worse-off, and if the income has grown by a higher percentage, then one is better-off to that extent.

Similarly, the general price level has grown by 41% between March 2019 and March 2026. Calculations can accordingly be made for those who started working at the start of April 2019 (around the second NDA term), albeit the key number is 41% in this case.

What about the rest of India?

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) releases

Out of step

From the end of March 2018, growth in incomes of the salaried and the self-employed lagged behind the rise in the price level.

While daily wages of casual labour grew relatively faster, they earn the lowest in absolute terms.

TECHNOLOGY

## How ACs catch fire, and the role temperature plays in it

Pratyush Deep  
New Delhi, May 29

RETIRED IAS officer and the first chairman of the Competition Commission of India (CCI), Dhanendra Kumar, 80, died in a fire after a suspected air conditioner (AC) blast at his Delhi home on Thursday.

The incident is the latest in a series of AC-related fire accidents reported in the National Capital Region this summer.

Just this week, a split AC reportedly exploded and triggered a fire on the 15th floor of a residential tower in Ghaziabad's Indirapuram. And, earlier this month, nine people were killed in a blaze at a residential complex in East Delhi's Shahdara, where initial reports also pointed to an AC blast as a possible trigger.

The incidents call attention to a disturbing pattern increasingly unfolding in Indian cities every summer. With higher average temperatures every year and rising AC sales nationwide, the likelihood of such incidents is increasing.

How do ACs catch fire?

Continuously running an AC, coupled with the high atmospheric temperatures during summer, can lead to overheating.

This overheating can degrade an AC's insulation, melt internal components,

and ignite combustible materials inside the unit.

Another major reason is short-circuiting, which occurs when the flow of electric current in a circuit takes an unintended path. This is not always dangerous, but when a large amount of current is flowing, it can, in turn, generate a great amount of heat. This can melt wires and lead to a fire.

The Delhi government's Department of Fire Services states: "About 60% fires are of electric origin on account of electric short circuit, overheating, overloading, use or non standard appliances."

According to an official from the Delhi Power Department, house fires are commonly caused by short circuits in electricity meters, switchboards, or due to loose, poor-quality or faulty wiring.

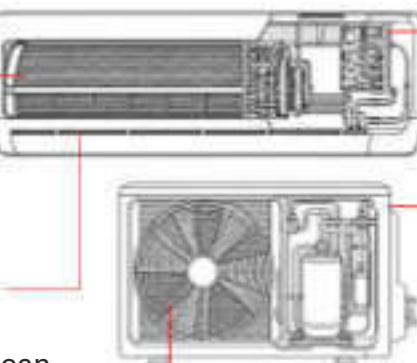
"In AC units, fires usually occur due to gas leakage or overheating in the compressor, which is in the outdoor unit. However, in the Delhi incident, the suspected explosion occurred in the indoor unit of the AC, which is uncommon. Sometimes, if there is a spark caused by faulty wiring in a closed room along with a gas leak, it can ignite and lead to an explosion," the official said.

Is an inverter AC safer?

In an AC, a compressor (the external box unit with a fan in split ACs) performs

Common causes of ACs overheating

- Blocked air filters:** Dirty filters restrict airflow, causing the AC to overheat
- Short circuits:** Faulty wiring or electrical issues can cause sparks and ignite the unit



- Gas leaks:** Refrigerant leaks can create pressure build-up and pose fire hazards
- Compressor:** A damaged compressor can overheat and malfunction

**Overuse:** Running ACs for long hours during summers can overheat components

SIMPLE SAFETY PRACTICES

- Regular maintenance
- Clean dust on air filters, since it can hinder air flow and put pressure on the system
- Secure indoor/outdoor wiring connections, ensure that the circuit breaker and fuse are in good condition
- Set temperature between 24-26 degrees Celsius. Low temperature settings can stress the machine
- Install a stabiliser if electricity frequently fluctuates

a crucial function. It is responsible for circulating a substance called refrigerant gas through the unit. Refrigerants absorb heat from indoor spaces and then release it outdoors. A non-inverter AC uses a

fixed-speed compressor that runs at full speed until the room reaches the target temperature, then shuts off completely. When the temperature rises, it turns back on at full speed.

During extreme heat and prolonged use, this creates higher electrical and mechanical stress, which can overheat components such as the compressor, capacitor or wiring. If the unit is old, poorly maintained, or exposed to voltage fluctuations, it can lead to short circuits and fires — often referred to as "AC blasts".

On the other hand, an inverter AC regulates the compressor speed gradually instead of constantly switching on and off. While this variability reduces stress in the system, it's not foolproof. Fires can still occur due to overheating of electronic circuit boards, faulty wiring, refrigerant leakage, poor installation, voltage fluctuations or lack of maintenance.

What are some signs of a safety risk?

According to Haier, some common signs of a potential blast include unusual noises from the unit, frequent cycling on and off, inconsistent cooling of the room, and burning smells/smoke. Professional services should be called in to fix these issues.

WITH INPUTS FROM ALOK SINGH AND RISHIKA SINGH

The Indian EXPRESS

~ FOUNDED BY ~

RAMNATH GOENKA

IN 1932

BECAUSE THE TRUTH  
INVOLVES US ALL

## On fertiliser, Centre and states must align policy

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi wants Indian farmers to cut consumption of chemical fertilisers by 25-50 per cent, in order to conserve precious foreign exchange as well as protect the long-term fertility of Indian soils. However, the governments in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra are doing the opposite. All three — many more may follow — have decreed that manufacturers and suppliers of subsidised fertilisers such as urea and di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) cannot sell nutrient products where no government subsidy or price controls are in place. In other words, fertiliser companies can sell only those products whose usage is being discouraged by the Modi government. They have been banned from selling any bio, nano, water-soluble and liquid speciality fertilisers or micronutrients and bio-stimulants.

The ban orders are not only an example of the Centre and states working at cross purposes, but also of ease of doing business going into reverse. Most of the non-subsidised nutrient products being marketed by the likes of Ifco, Coromandel International and Yara Fertilisers are applied in low doses for high-value crops such as grapes, apple and pomegranate. Moreover, they are notified under the Centre's Fertiliser Control Order after field trials for bio-efficacy and toxicology conducted by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. What incentive would companies have now to innovate and introduce such products that can deliver nutrients more efficiently either straight into the plant's root zone via drip irrigation or onto leaves by foliar application? If the Modi government is serious about weaning away farmers from urea and DAP — whose applied nutrients are more prone to volatilisation, leaching or locking in soils than being available for uptake by crops — it should crack down on states that are sending contrary signals to the industry and farmers alike.

India has enough land, water and sunshine for growing crops. But that's not the case with fertilisers, where it is overwhelmingly import-dependent. In 2025-26, the country's imports of fertiliser inputs and products were valued at about \$27.2 billion. The unresolved West Asia conflict and closure of the Strait of Hormuz could result in that bill even surpassing the 2022-23 high of \$33.4 billion post Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The current crisis is both a moment of reckoning and an opportunity to transform the existing product-specific fertiliser subsidy regime into an expanded PM-Kisan 2.0 direct income support programme. When fertiliser prices are market-determined, farmers will start using the right nutrients in the required quantities for their crops. And they will be enabled even more when guaranteed a minimum income per acre per crop.

## Meanwhile, Israel goes on with its wrecking ball

IN A clear violation of the October 2025 Donald Trump-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, Benjamin Netanyahu said on Thursday that he had ordered the military to take control of 70 per cent of Gaza, where the population is crammed into the little territory that remains habitable. That Israel was not abiding by the ceasefire had long been evident from its continued strikes on Gaza even as West Asia was engulfed by the Iran war. Yet it is difficult not to wonder if Netanyahu's decision to escalate further, at this particular moment, serves his political objectives ahead of the country's first elections since Hamas's horrific October 7, 2023 terror attack.

The past few weeks have not gone Netanyahu's way. Tel Aviv has largely been sidelined in the talks between Tehran and Washington aimed at ending a war that the US and Israel jointly initiated. Trump and Netanyahu's tense phone call a few days ago underscored their differing approaches to Iran, an inevitable divergence given the war's growing unpopularity in the US and the mounting political costs for the Trump administration. Netanyahu's apparent pursuit of eternal war follows a familiar script: Prolong conflict for political self-preservation and to defer domestic accountability for the October 7 security failure. In more than two years, Israel has failed to achieve its stated objective of destroying Hamas, even as it has killed at least 75,000 civilians and reduced Gaza to dust and ashes.

When Trump emerged as the unlikely peacemaker in Gaza, there was a sense of optimism about resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict. Announcing his 20-point plan and the “Board of Peace”, the US president had declared: “The people of Gaza have suffered long enough. The time is NOW.” Since then, however, Israel's repeated violations of the ceasefire have effectively shredded the plan, while the peace board is yet to receive any of the billions of dollars pledged by donors. Peace in Gaza requires Israeli restraint and an institutional credibility capable of assuaging Palestinian fears. Netanyahu's latest order does precisely the opposite. And the one man who claims he can make the Israeli PM do “whatever I want him to do” has turned a blind eye.

## With a little help from Paul McCartney

AT THE age of 83, Paul McCartney has produced his 18th solo LP. Is this what human striving looks like in the age of the algorithm? No doubt McCartney's creative energy has always been close to superhuman: It is evident in the sheer depth, volume and imaginative leaps of the Lennon-McCartney songbook as well as the prodigiousness of the musician's post-Beatles output. But long before AI-generated music started sneaking onto Spotify playlists, McCartney was combining this immense talent with hard work to create an important chunk of the music on which the technology was trained.

The lesson here is twofold. The first applies specifically to this moment in history when it seems like the machine is poised to take over every creative bastion — witness the fear whipped up by the allegations that a Commonwealth Prize recipient this year used AI. The anxiety is understandable: Technology can now “write” books, “compose” music, “paint” pictures and “make” films. As it gets more sophisticated, what was once passable may even become genuinely interesting. Yet, McCartney's persistence in doing what he has always done reminds us that creativity is not so much about the outcome as it is about the process itself.

The second lesson is that perseverance matters as much as ability. In Peter Jackson's documentary *The Beatles: Get Back*, which covers the making of *Let It Be*, the Fab Four's final studio album, the viewer watches the band almost break up. In the end, it's not just alchemy that keeps them together; it's also McCartney's stubborn belief in the work itself, in the insistence that they show up, regardless of personal and creative differences to “go through the bad bit and get to the good bit”.

# India, US: From estranged to engaged to restrained democracies

IT WAS an American diplomat, Dennis Kux, who famously termed the United States and India “estranged democracies” during the Cold War era. The historic India-US civil nuclear energy agreement, authored by President George Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, was seen as converting them into “engaged democracies”. That honeymoon is not viewed any longer as having lasted more than a decade. President Donald Trump, it is widely believed, has downgraded a “strategic partnership”, what President Barack Obama called the “defining partnership of the 21st century”, to a purely transactional relationship.

The recent visit of US Secretary of State Marco Rubio is being interpreted as an attempt to reduce the transactionalism and return to a more “strategic” relationship based on “geopolitical” convergence. However, it bears mentioning that even this “convergence” of interests is defined by transactionalism.

The fact is that the so-called India-US strategic partnership was always based on a transactional foundation. Several quid pro quos defined the terms of negotiations of the nuclear deal. India's willingness to sign on to “A New Framework for the US-India Defence Relationship” in June 2005 was the key that opened the door to negotiations on a nuclear deal.

The framework established a Defence Policy Group that would, as the agreement stated, “expand two-way defence trade between our countries. The United States and India will work to conclude defence transactions, not solely as ends in and of themselves, but as a means to strengthen our countries' security, reinforce our strategic partnership, achieve greater interaction between our armed forces, and build greater understand-

ing between our defence establishments.”

The intention was to secure an opening-up of the Indian defence market to US business, reducing India's dependence on Russia. Going beyond this commitment, India was required to reduce dependence on oil imports from Iran and Venezuela. The US establishment drove a hard bargain that finally required a presidential veto to get the agreement signed. Credit must go to Bush for taking a long-term view of India's economic rise and restricting the element of transactionalism in the partnership.

Bush viewed India's rise as a global public good and in itself serving US strategic interests. Trump upended that perspective when he made the relationship mainly transactional. Whatever the rhetoric that now fills up new documents signed by the two governments, the fact is that the US establishment is no longer willing to give India a free pass.

This in itself is understandable. What has come to hurt the relationship is the fact that the US has taken steps un mindful of the consequences for India. The unilateral actions on the trade front, the support to Israel in destabilising the Gulf, pushing oil and gas prices up and reducing access to these, and the new relationship with Pakistan all have adverse geopolitical and geo-economic consequences for India.

The weaponisation of trade, finance and energy flows by the US, with its allies playing second fiddle, has deeply hurt Indian economic interests, impacting India's economic rise, and as a consequence, its national security and global standing. Barely two years ago, the New Delhi establishment was celebrating India's emergence as the world's third-largest econ-



SANJAYA BARU

Whatever the rhetoric that now fills up new documents signed by the two governments, the fact is that the US establishment is no longer willing to give India a free pass

## Go gently into the night, Bashir sahab



RAKSHANDA JALIL

I KNEW Bashir Badr as a child. He was my grandfather's student and was unfailingly kind to us children when we visited our grandparents' home in Aligarh, offering us toffees in little tin boxes and chocolates in shiny wrappers, and on one memorable occasion, even taking us to watch a movie at the city's iconic Tasveer Mahal.

Writing this, I am reminded of another luminous memory from those halcyon days of Bashir Badr reciting his poetry at university *mushairas* at the Kennedy Hall.

Long before I could fully understand the import of his words, it was his *tarrannum*, the slightly nasal twang with which he recited his poetry, and the unfailingly cheerful look he seemed to sport on the dais as though he quite enjoyed being a poet, that made an impact on my young mind.

This sher in particular wafts through my mind redolent with the scents of summers past as childhood memories often are: *Meri mutthi mein hain kuchh sookhe se phool/Jinki khushbhuain hawa chura le gayi* (In my hand I hold some dried flowers/Whose fragrance has been stolen by the breeze).

It might not be an exaggeration to say that Bashir Badr was the last of the great modern Urdu poets from India along with Shahryar and Nida Fazli.

Modern in tone and sensibility, accessible in metaphors and images yet grounded in a rigorous classical tradition, he was equally popular on the *mushaira* circuit as he was admired through the beauty of the written word.

Born in Ayodhya in 1935, he had been suffering from a prolonged illness and hadn't been seen or heard in public for some time. Yet, such is the impact of his powerful yet simple words that his poetry has consistently remained relevant.

Honoured with the Padma Shri and awarded by the UP Urdu Academy four times and once by the Bihar Urdu Academy, he was also bestowed with the Meer Academy Award.

A teacher of Urdu for 17 years at Meerut College, he was away from the limelight for many years yet remained a voice of our time. In a life marked by hardship where success was tardy and setbacks many, he once rued that life had dealt him a poor hand: *Zindagi tu ne mujhe qabr se kum di hai zameen/Paanv phailaauun to deewaar mein sar lagta hai* (Life, you've given me even less space than a grave/When I stretch my legs my head strikes the wall).

When his house was looted and burnt down in the horrific communal riots of 1987 in Meerut, he left the city and built a new life in Bhopal.

He also found a wellspring of courage and compassion from deep within to tell his countrymen: *Saat sanduqon mein bharkar dafn kar do nafratein/Aaj insaan ko mohabbat ki zarurat hai bahut* (Stuff all the hatred in seven boxes and bury it deep/Today, humans need love more than anything else).

And also: *Naye daur ke naye khaab hain naye mausamon ke gulaab hain/Ye mohabbaton ke charaagh hain inhein nafraaton ki hawa na de* (These are new dreams of a new age, new roses of a new season/These are lamps of love; don't stir them with the breeze of hatred).

Whether it was a political statement or a personal one, there was always a simplicity and a directness in his poetry as here: *Na tum hosh mein ho na hum hosh mein hain/Chalo mai-kade mein waheen baat hogi* (Neither are you in your senses, nor am I Let's go to the tavern; we will talk there)

And then there is this sher, my personal favourite: *Ujaale apni yaadon ke hamare saath rahne do/Na jaane kis gali mein zindagi ki shaam ho jae* (Leave the light of your memories with me/Who knows when the night might fall).

Go gently into the night, Bashir sahab, in the light of happy memories.

Jaleel is a Delhi-based writer, translator and literary historian

## Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, the superhero Bihar never had



PRITHISH RAJ

I GREW up in a very small town in Bihar. A town termed “rural” by English newspapers and “*pichhda*” by the Hindi ones. We had basic facilities, but to dream big, you had to leave home, sometimes as early as 10 years old. While one had a choice of Engineering, Medicine and the ultimate Bihar thirst trap — civil services — sports was a distant dream, often killed in examination halls and coaching centres. There were several reasons, and a major one was the lack of a sporting hero. Maharashtra had cricketering god Sachin Tendulkar and hockey's magician Dhanraj Pillay, Delhi had wrestling king Sushil Kumar, Haryana and Punjab had sporting heroes for every generation. Neighbouring Bengal had the prince of cricket, Sourav Ganguly; UP had magical hockey striker Mohammed Shahid, Odisha had Dilip Tirkey, South India produced sporting heroes in bulk with the likes of Rahul Dravid, P T Usha, and Anil Kumble.

Bihari kids of the 2000s and 2010s were huge sports fans and claimed MS Dhoni, but in truth, they had no sporting hero of their own. By the early 2010s, Bihar had all kinds of heroes: Revolutionaries, civil service officers, poets, journalists, academics, criminals, scamsters, fraud politicians, but not a sporting one. Given the history of Bihar, especially the years rife with crime and corruption, a sporting hero would probably have been good for the youth.

In 2026, when the world had shrunk enough to fit on a smartphone screen, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi emerged. The 15-year-old isn't just the talk of the town but the global cricket conversation. And guess what? He is from Bihar. And he is selling jerseys and filling stadiums. A sportsperson who is Bihar's own, unlike others who had to move to different states to move up the ladder. Not that this makes them any less Bihari, but you get the gist. Now, a kid in Bihar can look up to Sooryavanshi and think, “I can get there”. For parents, he can become a point of reference.

Growing up, sporting excellence stories would happen in faraway lands. Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore won a silver medal at the Olympics, Abhinav Bindra won a gold, and Vijender Singh won a boxing medal. It all looked out of reach. With the partition of Bihar and Jharkhand, the neighbouring state got all the sports centres; all that Bihar was left with was a broken ecosystem. When Shreyasi Singh, now a minister in the Bihar government, won a medal at the 2018 Commonwealth Games, there was a brief spark. When I started my career in sports journalism, I waited for when I would write a story about Bihar and lace it with local references and metaphors. With Sooryavanshi around, I believe the wait will soon be over. The beauty of having sporting heroes you can relate to is that they make greatness feel attainable, not aspirational. Sooryavanshi didn't just break records — he broke the ceiling. The superhero we never had is here, and he is just getting started.

The writer is senior sub-editor, The Indian Express. [prithish.raj@expressindia.com](mailto:prithish.raj@expressindia.com)

## 40 YEARS AGO

May 30, 1986



### Barnala rules out resignation

SURJIT SINGH Barnala said he had no intention of stepping down as Punjab CM and party president, as the two offices had been bestowed on him by the “*panth*”. Instead of demanding his ouster for the police action in the Golden Temple complex and exploiting a religious issue, the dissidents should have resigned from the Vidhan Sabha if they felt hurt, Barnala said, addressing a huge conference organised by the Sangrur District Akali Dal.

### PM on emigration from Punjab

PRIME MINISTER Rajiv Gandhi has assured Congress (I) legislators from Punjab that all possible steps would be taken to stop migration from the state. The Centre is fully

aware of the situation, he said. The Prime Minister heard the views of various groups of Punjab Congress (I) legislators and the Pradesh Congress (I) president, Beant Singh, on the situation in the state. Beant Singh and Gurbinder Kaur Brar, leader of the Congress (I) group in the state assembly, met the PM separately.

### Imbroglia in Congress-I

CONGRESS-I VICE president Arjun Singh said that the publication of the text of Congress-I working president Kamalapati Tripathi's April 22 letter to PM Rajiv Gandhi had created a new situation and therefore the process of consultations on “action to be taken on the matter has been set in motion.” Talking to reporters, Singh declined to elaborate on the proposed action. He refused to say whether

the consultations he had with other senior party colleagues were about the action to be taken against the working president or on the contents of his letter to Gandhi. “I will not qualify action at this stage,” he said.

### Doctor shot as others quarrel

A YOUNG doctor from JP hospital was shot dead outside his house in Munirka in a dispute between other people. Dr Swarandeeep Singh (22), an intern in the ENT department, came down after some people quarrelled with the woman living on the first floor below. As the doctor noted their car number, they shot him dead. He was murdered outside F-9 block almost opposite Jawaharlal Nehru University minutes after the ill-fated family had finished celebrating the success of his younger brother in the class X examination.



# A democracy must worry about fake voters, but much more about excluded citizens


 FAIZAN MUSTAFA  
AND MADHAV ANAND

IN *INDIRA Nehru Gandhi v Raj Narain* (1975), Chief Justice A N Ray made a strange distinction. Democracy, he held, may be part of the basic structure, but free and fair elections could not themselves be elevated to that status. But post-Emergency, in *Mohinder Singh Gill* (1978), the Court held that without periodic free and fair elections, democracy ends. In the *Gujarat Assembly Election Reference* (2002), it went further: Democracy and free and fair elections, the Court said, are “inseparable twins”. Free and fair elections fundamentally depend on the independence and absolute neutrality of the Election Commission of India (ECI) as an umpire, and therefore the onus is on ECI to win over the trust of independent observers and the Opposition. Here, what matters is public perception, not law or court judgments.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi in their historic 124-page judgment has upheld the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Bihar. No one can question the judgment’s positivistic and legalistic interpretation of the black-letter laws. But in terms of consequences, which Justice Ray denied formally in 1975, the present judgment risks diluting in practice if ECI is not a neutral umpire. The problem with the SIR judgment is not that it values electoral integrity too highly but that the court did not examine the all-important issue of whether we have got such rolls after SIR. There are reports pointing to inconsistencies, and significant inaccuracies even in the revised rolls.

Justice Surya Kant correctly held that no constitutional democracy can function with duplicate, fictitious or fraudulent entries. But the judgment did not raise the equally important possibility of genuine citizens being pushed out of the democratic process in the name of so-called “purification”. Did the petitioners not bring to the Court some living persons who had been shown as dead? But the judgment simply stated that no rolls can be perfect

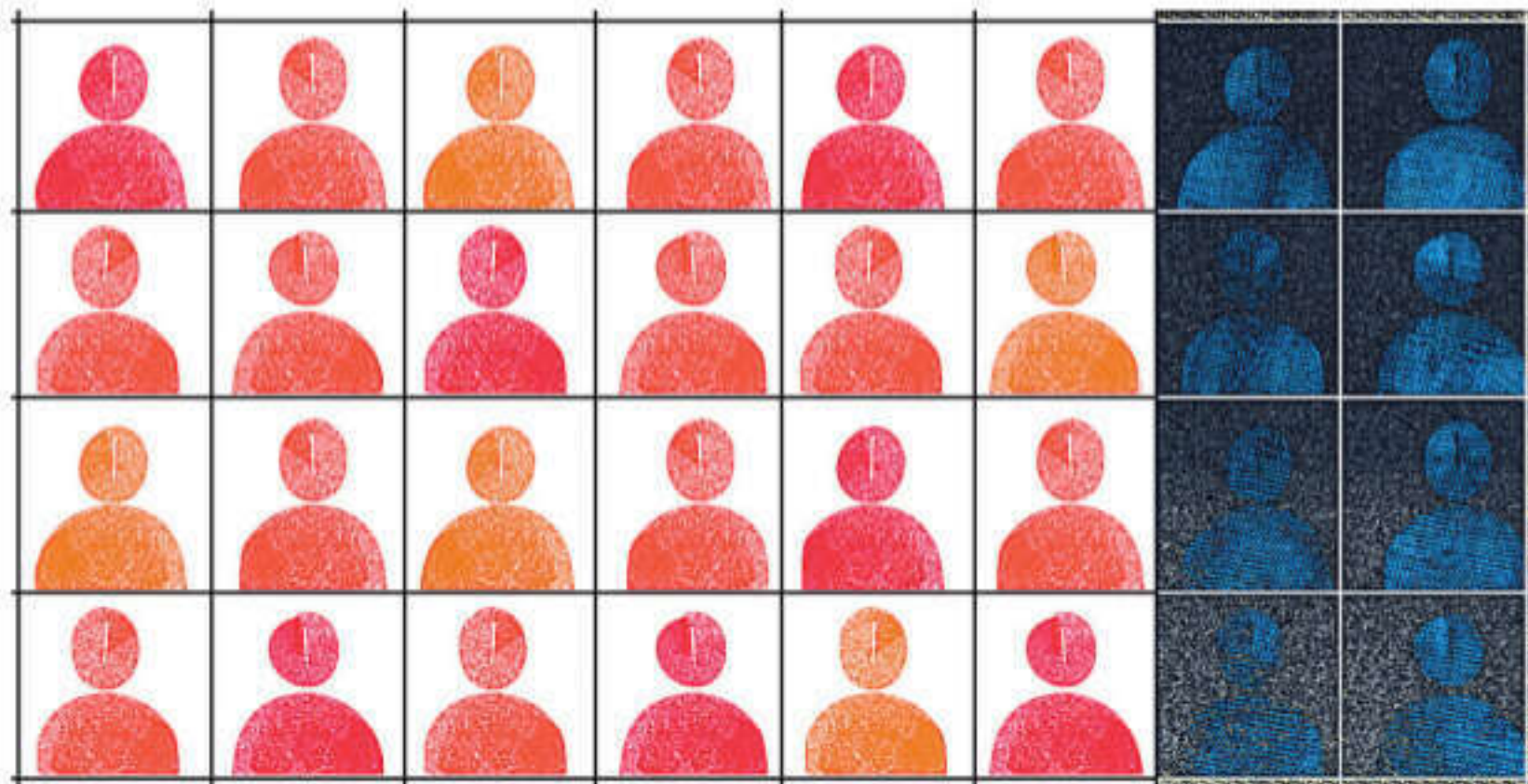


ILLUSTRATION: C R SASIKUMAR

and that there was sufficient transparency in exclusion and opportunities of appeal.

Without asking the ECI to show concrete reasons, the Court accepted its justification for the statewide exercise. Section 21(3) of the Representation of the People Act contemplates special revision in “any constituency or part thereof” and Justice Surya Kant, applying the well-known rules of statutory interpretation, correctly held that “any” here would mean “all”.

Justice Surya Kant’s interpretation of Article 324 and 327, too, is absolutely correct as the ECI neither becomes powerless the moment Parliament enacts a law nor becomes so powerful as to go against the statute. The CJI rightly held that Parliament itself through Section 21(3) has preferred to give the ECI extremely wide powers as to SIRs through non-obstacle clauses by using the words “in such manner” and “as it [the ECI] may think fit”.

The judgment upheld documentary compliance as though the burden is socially neutral. Marginalised citizens lacking documents and minorities facing heightened bureaucratic suspicion do not stand on equal footing with more privileged groups. The ECI’s huge victory in the judgment was the Court upholding its list of 11 documents, but then the petitioners had argued that nearly 37 per cent of adults in Bihar lacked even one of the prescribed documents. For marginalised commu-

nities, this is even more concerning. The judgment also did not seriously consider the ground realities of massive confusion, administrative inconsistency, rushed timelines, and the enormous discretion vested in low-level local officials. Evidence of BLOs filling forms themselves, missing acknowledgments, and lakhs of forms being submitted without documents find no mention in the judgment because issues were framed purely in legalistic terms and not in terms of the impact when such powers are exercised.

Ideally, the scale of exclusion itself should have invited deeper constitutional scrutiny. The final roll reportedly stood at around 7.42 crore electors. This was substantially lower than official population projections that suggest Bihar would have approximately 8.22 crore eligible voters. Yet, the judgment concluded that the “post-exercise data” did not reveal disenfranchisement so “widespread or systemic” as to establish constitutional infirmity.

If the citizenship concerns were so marginal in practical outcome, why did they become so central to the architecture of the exercise itself? But this approach reduced constitutional scrutiny to aggregate numbers alone. The deeper issue was not simply how many voters were excluded, but who was really excluded. The SIR was justified as necessary to identify illegal immigrants and preserve electoral integrity. The ECI did

**The CJI’s assurance that exclusion from the electoral roll does not formally divest citizenship offers limited comfort as a few states have started denying benefits to the excluded people**

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Karnataka transition

CONGRESS RISKS repeating in Karnataka the very culture of drift that weakened it nationally (‘A new Karnataka CM, a tired Congress script’, *IE*, May 29). Leadership change alone cannot conceal deeper failures of governance. Bengaluru — India’s technology capital — continues to reel under flooding, traffic paralysis, water scarcity and overstretched civic infrastructure despite the state’s strong revenues. City planning remains hostage to bureaucratic fragmentation and factional politics.

Havya Garg, Chandigarh

BY SUCCESSFULLY managing the change from Siddaramaiah to D K Shivakumar, the party leadership has shown greater maturity and decisiveness (‘A new Karnataka CM, a tired Congress script’, *IE*, May 29). Unlike the instability witnessed earlier in states like Punjab, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, the Karnataka shift appears orderly and controlled. However, the challenge for Congress has only begun. Siddaramaiah remains a towering figure in state politics with a strong support base among backward classes, Dalits and minorities.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

### Athlete, administrator

THE EDITORIAL on Raja Randhir Singh fittingly highlighted his contribution to Indian sport as both athlete and administrator (‘Consensus builder, and a bridge’, *IE*, May 29). His role in strengthening shooting infrastructure and India’s sporting presence globally laid the groundwork for future champions. It is impossible to discuss India’s rise in shooting without recalling Olympic medallists like Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore and Abhinav Bindra, who emerged from an ecosystem gradually shaped by such pioneering efforts. Singh’s legacy deserves recognition as part of India’s larger sporting transformation.

Harsh Pawaria, Rohtak



RAM MADHAV

LAST SUNDAY, lakhs of tribal people from more than 500 different tribes travelled to the national capital. Their demand was for “de-listing”, a constitutional process by which tribals who have converted to Christianity or Islam would be denied ST status and the benefits that accrue from it, and an amendment to Article 342 to that effect. In the 1960s, a tribal Congress MP, Kartik Oraon, first raised the issue. His contention was that those who adopted Christianity or Islam automatically cease to be tribal because they no longer follow tribal customs and traditions. He demanded the exclusion of converted tribals from the ST list. He presented a memorandum of a JPC to PM Indira Gandhi, supported by 235 MPs, with a proposed amendment to Article 342. It read: “3. Notwithstanding anything contained in Paragraph 2, no person who has given up tribal faith or faiths and has embraced either Christianity or Islam shall be deemed to be a member of any Scheduled Tribes.”

Indira Gandhi didn’t pay much attention to the issue. In the past two decades, the Janjati Suraksha Manch has championed the cause. Oraon, who served as a minister in Indira Gandhi’s government, documented that barely 10 per cent of converted tribals were appropriating nearly 70 per cent of reservation

**In matters relating to the ST converts, the vagueness in the constitutional provisions has led to courts taking suggestive positions rather than issuing definitive orders**

benefits. As the number of converted tribals has grown — around 20 per cent today — resentment among the non-converted, too, is growing. Their argument is that converts are enjoying the benefits of both ST reservations and minority welfare programmes. At the root of this problem is a constitutional anomaly. In 1950, at the time of the enactment of the Constitution, two separate orders for SCs and STs were promulgated. The Scheduled Castes order, in paragraph 3, categorically stated that “Notwithstanding anything contained in paragraph 2, no person who professes a religion different from Hinduism shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste.” Unfortunately, the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 remained vague on the definition of a tribe. Resenting this, in 2010, tribal leaders submitted a memorandum signed by 27.67 lakh tribals from 26,253 villages to President Pratibha Patil, demanding the de-listing of converted tribals from the ST category.

Since there is constitutional clarity in the matter of the SCs, the courts have repeatedly said that the SC status cannot be extended to those not belonging to Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism. In matters relating to the ST converts, the vagueness in the constitutional provisions has led courts to take

# Who gets ST benefits, who shouldn’t? Debate continues

suggestive positions rather than issue definitive orders. In 2004, the Supreme Court held that although it cannot be concluded that “merely by change of religion (a) person ceases to be a member of a Scheduled Tribe”, it insisted that the matter needs to be examined case by case.

The core issue is whether, like SCs, STs can also have a clear definition. An advisory committee constituted in 1950 for the “revision of the lists of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes” vaguely stated that STs are characterised as such “because of the life led by them”. However, the Justice P B Lokur Committee, constituted in 1965-66, identified “primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large and backwardness” as the basis for identifying STs.

The current demand rests on the reports of Oraon’s JPC and the Lokur Committee, besides the Supreme Court’s observations. This is not against any religion or conversion. The converted SCs and STs have full access to the welfare programmes available under the minority category. This demand is primarily to ensure that the traditional tribal population is not denied its legitimate rights under the Constitution’s ST provisions.

The writer, president, India Foundation, is with the BJP



SUGATA SRINIVASARAJU

A POWER transition is underway in the Congress government in Karnataka: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has tendered his resignation, and D K Shivakumar looks likely to take over. Whatever the rivalry between the two, the transition has taken place as smoothly as turning a page. That was quite unexpected and quite uncharacteristic of Siddaramaiah.

Siddaramaiah has never responded well to losing power. He has demonstrated restlessness and recklessness when he has been denied power or lost it. This first became apparent in 1996 when he was part of the JD(S). This trait resurfaced in 2023, when he checkmated Shivakumar to wrest the CM’s chair,

even though it was the latter who had led the party to a stellar victory.

Siddaramaiah seems less driven by ideology or principles, although his aggressive political branding tells a very different story. Every time he contested or led the JD(S) or Congress in an election, the claims of his wide social base were exposed by his vote share as a candidate or what he was able to get for his party. The BJP grew manifold despite Siddaramaiah’s active presence in Karnataka politics. Even when Congress won big in 2023 with the novelty of “guarantee” welfare, the BJP’s vote share remained intact. A question that continues to circle, therefore, is why he surrendered so meekly this time.

Beyond these power games and interpersonal rivalries, the transition signifies some other fundamental shifts in the larger political terrain. Congress cannot

settle for Shivakumar as the face of change, but he may lead the transition to a more universal game that the party is not entirely unfamiliar with. It is not a question of choice now; it is about the winds of political circumstance.

This universal game may not be about relying on anachronistic caste identity politics alone, but about building broader demographic coalitions, like the one we saw form suddenly and accidentally in neighbouring Tamil Nadu with Joseph Vijay’s vic-

**The imagination that a particular leader like Siddaramaiah or a party commands a bulk of caste votes has become a fallacy**

tory. This is also a response to the broader coalition-building that the BJP has successfully done by foregrounding the Hindu vote and creating political capital around the majority community, but strategically dispensing welfare capital to all communities.

Mandal politics has suddenly become outmoded. The imagination that a particular leader like Siddaramaiah or a party commands a bulk of caste votes has become a fallacy, because the big castes have not stopped splintering as people have become more conscious of their sub-caste inheritances. In the age of sub-caste politics, caste as a category does not yield the same dividends as before. It can only be a contributing factor. Therefore, the exit of Siddaramaiah, the decline of Nitish Kumar, and the dismantling of Lalu Prasad symbolise a new politics, which is

emerging as a new demographic is taking control of the political field. Shivakumar fits the transition perfectly because he is label-free, unlike Siddaramaiah.

As Shivakumar moves in, Congress may consider refining his pragmatic style into something more winnable by 2028, when Karnataka goes to the polls. Unlike Shivakumar, who has the image of an unabashed businessman, networker and money manager, Siddaramaiah branded himself as a rooted socialist, unflinchingly secular, and a saviour of backward communities. Those labels may now become glorious artefacts in an uncurated museum of politics, and wait in the margins to be fact-checked by history.

Srinivasaraju, a senior journalist, is author of *The Conscious Network: A Chronicle of Resistance to a Dictatorship*

# Delimitation can bring more female-urban participation



SHAMIKA RAVI

AFTER THE 2026 Census, the Lok Sabha could expand from 543 to 816 seats. Most of the discussion has focused on how the new seats will be distributed across states. We add a complementary question, drawing on our analysis of all the 2,171 parliamentary constituency (PC) elections held in India since 2009: How will delimitation affect voter participation?

The 2024 general elections saw a turnout of 65.8 per cent — the second-highest of any Indian general election. However, urban turnout has been lagging. The fully built-up constituencies of Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and the NCR are touching turnout floors of 55 to 60 per cent, well below the national average. The rural-urban turnout gap, 4.4 percentage points in 2009, has gone up to 11.6 points in 2024.

Two changes have reshaped the geography of Indian voting. First, the long-observed pattern that big constituencies vote less than small ones — the “size penalty” — has vanished in the average data. In 2009, a 2-million-electors seat turned out 11 percentage points lower than a 1-million-electors seat. By 2024, that gap is just 1.4 points.

Second, the divergence in Indian voting now runs along urban-rural lines, with a sharp gendered twist. The woman voter in a large rural constituency is the most engaged — turnout around 75 per cent at two-million-electors seats. The woman voter who lives in a large urban area is the least engaged — turnout falls to about 64 per cent. As constituencies grow toward 3 million electors — a frontier several Mumbai, Delhi, and Bengaluru seats are approaching — our model projects the rural-urban gap to widen to 22 percentage points for women and 16 for men.

The polling station is the third piece of the picture. Booth crowding has always been more severe in urban constituencies than in rural ones. The EC’s station expansion between 2019 and 2024 brought modest relief at the urban end. But between 2019 and 2024, the rationalisation slipped: Stations grew only 1.3 per cent against 7.2 per cent growth in electors, pushing up urban crowding. The resulting 1.28-percentage-point national turnout decline is fully accounted for by this renewed booth crowding. Booth crowding deters male voters strongly — it explains 19.5 per cent of the male size penalty in our data — but has little direct effect on women’s turnout (3.4 per cent). For them, mobilisation works through different channels: Campaign, household and time-of-day flexibility, and direct engagement with collectives.

Why does all this matter for delimitation? Because the size penalty looks like it has disappeared on average, but at high urban shares, it has not. Our model predicts that a 2-million-electors urban constituency turns out at about 65 per cent; at 1 million electors, it predicts a turnout of about 74 per cent. Splitting a 2-million-electors urban PC into two 1-million-electors PCs would raise the turnout by roughly 9 percentage points per half. This is the strongest empirical case for the 543-to-816 expansion.

What should the delimitation agenda then look like? Put the new seats where they will actually raise turnout. The biggest gains are in the band of urbanisation that runs through the suburbs of Bengaluru, Mumbai, NCR, Hyderabad, Pune, Ahmedabad and Chennai — constituencies that are 75 to 90 per cent urban, which have grown 46 per cent in electorate since 2009 (well above the 35 per cent national average) and where voters are turning out at the lowest rates. Targeted shrinkage of these large urban PCs is where the model predicts the largest turnout gains.

Build the polling station capacity alongside. A ratio of below 900 voters per booth — the level achieved after the 2018 rationalisation — has to be locked in. Bring urban women into the participatory fold. The rural channels that have historically mobilised women — panchayat networks, anganwadis, self-help groups — do not extend to cities like Mumbai or Bengaluru. The right urban tools include women’s canteen schemes, urban self-help-group networks under the National Urban Livelihoods Mission, women-only polling booths, and mobilisation by women councillors elected under the 74th Constitutional Amendment’s reservation provisions for urban local bodies.

The next delimitation will also be the moment at which the Nari Shakti Vandana Adhiniyam (the Women’s Reservation Act) comes into force. Delimitation that creates smaller urban constituencies in the band where female turnout is currently the lowest, layered with women candidates on the ballot under the new reservation, and paired with the operational and engagement infrastructure that brings urban women to the polling station, can substantially close the urban turnout gap among women voters.

As India urbanises rapidly, the share of the electorate in metropolitan PCs will continue to rise. Whether that rising urban share translates into a falling national turnout, or into a renewed wave of female-urban participation, will be decided by what the Delimitation Commission chooses to do.

The writer is member, EAC-PM

# In Siddaramaiah exit, a transition and label-free politics

## TALKS SEEK TO FORGE PEACE AND DISARM IRAN-BACKED HEZBOLLAH IN LEBANON

# Israeli troops push deeper into Lebanon amid US talks

Ground forces cross Litani River, 30 km into north

Associated Press  
Jerusalem, Beirut, May 29

ISRAELI TROOPS entered a southern Lebanese village early Friday, pushing deeper into the country as Lebanese and Israeli military officials began direct talks at the Pentagon over the deadly conflict.

The entrance of Israel's troops into the village of Dibbine, near the town of Marjayoun, came as Israeli airstrikes killed at least six people.

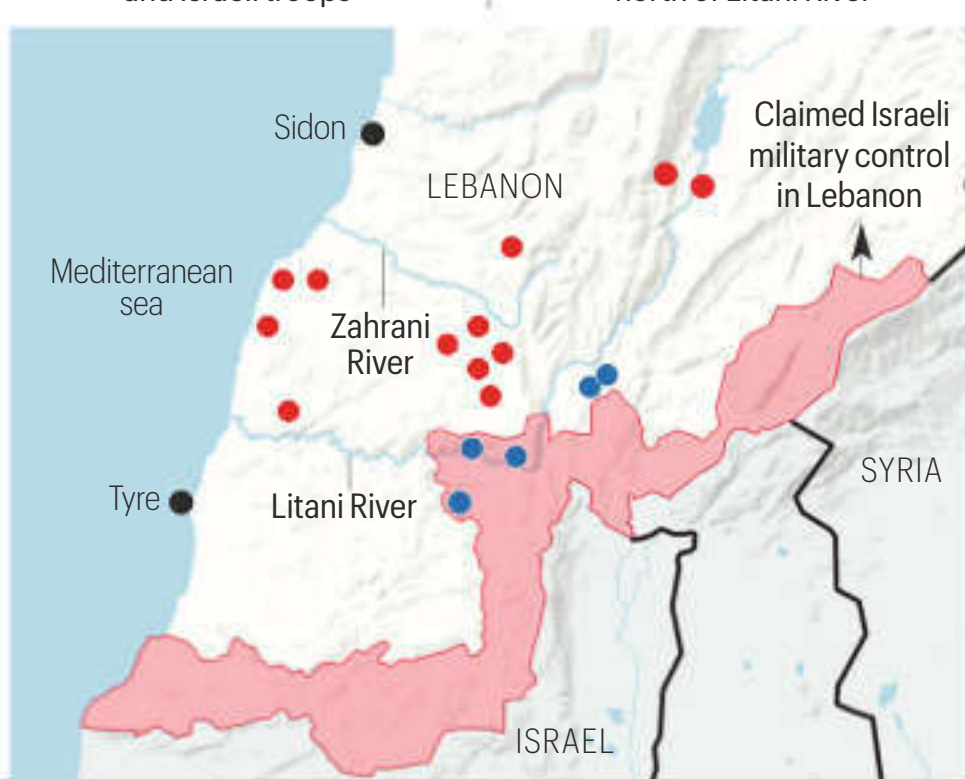
Five were killed in an airstrike on the villages of Deir Qanoun al Nahr and Abbasiyah, while a municipal policeman was killed in the village of Ebba, state media reported.

In Washington, a six-member Lebanese military delegation was meeting on Friday with Israeli military officials in the first direct military talks between the two countries in decades. A nominal ceasefire went into effect on April 17.

A senior Lebanese military official told *The Associated Press* Friday that the Lebanese

### FORCES PUSH NORTH, ORDER EVACUATIONS

Fighting between Hezbollah and Israeli troops  
Civilian evacuations urged north of Litani River



delegation, led by the army's head of operations Brig. Gen. George Rizkallah, would be to make it comprehensive.

The official added the Lebanese delegation will request the reactivation of the committee monitoring the enforcement of an earlier US-brokered ceasefire that halted the war between Israel and Hezbollah in late 2024.

Another Lebanese official, who is briefed throughout the day about the ongoing talks at

the Pentagon, also said the delegation would seek the comprehensive implementation of the ceasefire and a stop to ongoing hostilities.

He said implementation would be followed by talks at a later date on matters such as deploying the Lebanese army along the border and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon.

Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because

they were not authorized to speak to the media about the ongoing talks in Washington.

President Joseph Aoun's office said he received a call Friday from US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and they discussed the situation in Lebanon and the latest developments in the Middle East.

Aoun's office said that the president told Rubio that efforts should concentrate on implementing the ceasefire as it is "the essential entry point for transitioning to any other issues."

The military said this week it had expanded ground operations beyond a security zone its troops have occupied since April 16. During a visit to the Israel-Lebanon border on Friday, Netanyahu said troops had pushed even further, past the Litani River that cuts east-west around 30 km (19 miles) into southern Lebanon.

"Our forces have crossed the Litani and advanced to controlling positions," Netanyahu said in remarks to military personnel, according to excerpts released by his office. "We are operating in Beirut, in the Bekaa (Valley), across the entire width of the front, and are dealing Hezbollah a crushing blow."

—WITH REUTERS INPUTS

# Netanyahu pushes for 70% control of Gaza; 'escalation' says Hamas

Reuters  
Gaza, Cairo, May 29

HAMAS SAID on Friday that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's declaration that his country would expand its area of control in Gaza was a dangerous escalation, as European states and residents of the Palestinian territory also voiced alarm at the plan.

Under a ceasefire deal in October Israel's military was to remain in control of 53% of Gaza, but Netanyahu said on Friday that it would expand that area to an initial 70%, without laying out details or a timeline.

The Palestinian militant group, which triggered two years of devastating warfare in Gaza with its October 7, 2023, attack on Israel, described his comments as a plan for ethnic cleansing and forced displacement of Palestinians.

"Any attempt to impose a new reality of occupation in Gaza is null and illegitimate," said Ismail al-Thawabta, head of the Hamas-run Gaza government media office, adding that Netanyahu's statement "represents a dangerous escalation".

More than eight months into the ceasefire, and with global attention fixed on the war in Iran, Gaza's underlying conflict

remains stubbornly unresolved with continued Israeli attacks, little aid reaching civilians and the risk of major new violence.

Israel has already expanded its area of control in Gaza from the 53% lying behind a "yellow line" mapped into the ceasefire deal up to around 64%, with an area it has designated as restricted in maps shared with aid groups.

Last year's deal brokered by US President Donald Trump established a Board of Peace to oversee a phased ceasefire, and was ratified by the United Nations Security Council.

However, many of the toughest areas of dispute including the disarmament of Hamas, a full Israeli withdrawal and the make-up of a Gaza government were postponed to later in the process. The Board of Peace negotiators have been talking to both sides on the disarmament issue.

Israel and Hamas have repeatedly accused each other of violating the truce. Israeli strikes in Gaza have killed more than 900 Palestinians since the start of the truce while Palestinian militant attacks have killed four Israeli soldiers. Israel's military and the prime minister's office did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

## BRIEFLY

### UNITED STATES

# US Treasury prepares to make Trump face of a new \$250 bill



Scott Bessent unveils the \$250 bill bearing Trump's likeness. FILE

TREASURY SECRETARY Scott Bessent said on Thursday his agency had been working on a mock-up of a \$250 note bearing the face of President Trump in preparation for an addition to the nation's paper currency that would for the first time include portrait of a living president. "I don't think that there's anything untoward about having the person who is the US President of on the 250th anniversary bill," Bessent said. Trump has pushed for creation of a \$1 coin bearing his image and having his signature added to currency this year. NYT

### CHINA

# Former Shaolin Temple head gets 24-yrs for graft

SHI YONGXIN, former abbot of China's Shaolin Temple was sentenced to 24 years in prison for crimes including embezzlement and bribery, state media reported Friday. Shi, 60, was charged in March this year. A court in Henan handed the sentencing, saying Shi abused his roles to embezzle, misappropriate, and take and give bribes of around \$44.33 million. REUTERS

### CANADA

# Man accused of aiding 14 suicides to plead guilty

A CANADIAN man accused of selling a legal but potentially deadly chemical online to 14 people who took their own lives is expected to plead guilty on Friday to aiding their suicides, allowing him to avoid a murder trial. Kenneth Law, 60, is scheduled to appear on Friday morning at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice in Newmarket, Ontario, north of Toronto. REUTERS

## NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

### PAKISTAN

# 11 arrested over 'anti-army' posts on social media

ELEVEN SOCIAL media activists in Pakistan's Punjab province have been arrested for content targeting the army and inciting unrest among the public, an official said on Friday. "The arrested suspects are involved in spreading provocative content... against state institutions," he said. PTI

### NEPAL

# 5 honoured for contributions to the Himalayas

NEPAL ON Friday felicitated five for their contributions in work related to conservation of the Himalayas Pasang Dawa Sherpa received the International Everest Award for his 31 Everest ascents, while Priya Adhikari, Tenzing David Sherpa and Pournima Shrestha for mountaineering achievements. PTI

# 8 held on suspicion of arson after Kenya girls' school fire

Associated Press  
Nairobi, May 29

POLICE IN Kenya have arrested eight female students on suspicion of arson, authorities said Friday, after a fire destroyed a dormitory at a boarding school, killing 16 children and injuring dozens of others. The motive is still unknown.

Police held 30 students overnight for questioning. Authorities said school administrators would face disciplinary action for safety violations after an exit door was found to be locked during the panicked rush to escape the building. At least 79 people were injured.

Education Minister Julius Ogamba said two teachers were aware that students were planning something but failed to take appropriate action, without elaborating.

A full day after the blaze, some parents said they had still not been told whether their children were under arrest or just being questioned.

"We have not even been told about the eight that police have arrested," a parent, who spoke on condition of anonymity be-



Parents gather outside Utumishi Girls Academy after a dormitory fire in Gilgil, Kenya, on Friday.

cause of fear that her daughter could be victimized, told *The Associated Press*. "We are just here and no one is giving us any information."

Education Minister Ogamba said the school's board of management had been dissolved and the principal would face disciplinary action for failing to comply with safety regulations.

"In particular, there was congestion in the dormitory and one exit door was locked, contrary to the prescribed safety requirements," he said.

# WHO chief arrives in Congo, says Ebola spread can be stopped

Associated Press  
Kinshasa, May 19

THE HEAD of the World Health Organization has arrived in Congo's capital, Kinshasa, to support efforts against an outbreak of a rare type of Ebola virus, as medical personnel struggle with a lack of equipment, a distrustful population and armed groups in region.

The World Health Organization said Friday authorities have reported 906 suspected cases and 223 suspected deaths.

"To come here is to really show to the community that they're not alone," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters at the airport late Thursday.

"Pushing orders from my comfortable office in Geneva is easy, but I'm asking my colleagues to work with the community and I am asking communities to protect themselves," he added. The outbreak "can be

stopped," he said, but is "very complex."

Challenges like the high number of people displaced by armed conflict in the region and food insecurity are complicating efforts to stop the spread of the virus, Tedros said.

Containment has been particularly difficult because the disease likely spread for weeks before it was first identified in mid-May. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has said three of its volunteers in Ituri province died after they were believed to have contracted Ebola doing unrelated health work on March 27 — more than a month before the first suspected death cited by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

Meanwhile, the outbreak continues to spread faster than the response, despite health facilities becoming more organized and the arrival of more equipment.

## Ebola Vaccines Under Development

Global health agencies are racing to find vaccines, treatments and tests for a rare Ebola strain in eastern Congo.

### OUTBREAK

The Bundibugyo strain has caused 906 suspected cases and 223 suspected deaths in Congo.

There are no approved vaccines or treatments for this strain.

### LEADING VACCINE

The main candidate is an IAVI-developed single-dose shot, seen as the most promising option.

It uses the same platform as Merck's approved Ebola vaccine.

### SECOND VACCINE

Oxford University and the

Serum Institute of India are also developing a vaccine candidate.

The WHO says doses could be ready within months for testing.

### SURVIVOR-DERIVED OPTIONS

Researchers are also studying antibodies taken from Bundibugyo survivors.

One candidate showed strong protection in animal studies.

### ANTIVIRAL DRUGS

Gilead's experimental drug obeldesivir is being considered after exposure. REUTERS



A screen grab of the explosion of the unmanned Blue Origin's New Glenn rocket during a test on a launchpad in Cape Canaveral, Florida, on Friday. REUTERS

# Bezos' Blue Origin rocket explodes on launch pad during engine test

Reuters  
Cape Canaveral, May 29

AN UNCREWED Blue Origin New Glenn rocket exploded on a Florida launchpad during a test on Thursday, in a major setback for Jeff Bezos' space venture as it seeks to narrow the gap with Elon Musk's IPO-bound SpaceX.

Video posted by NASASpaceflight, which livestreams launches from Florida, showed the towering New Glenn rocket igniting on the pad at about 2100 ET (0100 GMT on Friday) before erupting into a massive fireball that billowed skyward, sending a towering plume of flames and smoke into the air.

Blue Origin was preparing the rocket for its fourth launch, which was due to deliver 48

Amazon Leo satellites into low-Earth orbit, part of efforts to build a broadband constellation to rival Musk's Starlink network.

Amazon Leo satellites were not integrated on the rocket at the time of the incident, a source familiar with the matter said, asking not to be named due to its sensitivity.

The explosion marks the latest setback for the long-delayed New Glenn, which is supposed to play a central role in delivering lunar landers and cargo under NASA's Artemis lunar exploration missions.

It comes just two days after NASA awarded Blue Origin a \$188 million contract to land rovers on the moon's surface, and less than a week after SpaceX - years ahead in development - carried out a largely suc-

cessful test of its next-generation Starship rocket.

Blue Origin confirmed it had experienced an "anomaly" during a hot-fire test, where a rocket engine is fired up while anchored to the ground. "Very rough day, but we'll rebuild whatever needs rebuilding and get back to flying. It's worth it," Bezos said in a post on X.

NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman said the agency would work with Blue Origin to support an investigation of the incident. "Spaceflight is unforgiving, and developing new heavy-lift launch capability is extraordinarily difficult," Isaacman said on X.

Isaacman also said that NASA would provide information on any impacts to its Artemis and Moon Base programs.

# Russian drone hits Romania housing block; NATO vows to defend territory

Reuters  
Galati, May 29

NATO ACCUSED Moscow on Friday of reckless behaviour and pledged to "defend every inch of Allied territory" after Romania said a Russian drone had crashed into an apartment block in the alliance member state during an attack on neighbouring Ukraine.

Romania's defence ministry said a woman and a child suffered minor injuries in Galati near the border with Ukraine overnight after radar tracked a Russian drone entering Romanian airspace.

Russia's TASS news agency cited Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov as saying President Vladimir Putin had been informed about the incident.

The US ambassador to NATO, Matthew Whitaker, condemned the "reckless incursion" in a post on X and pledged the US "will defend every inch of NATO territory." The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

"Russia's reckless behaviour is a danger to us all," NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte said on X after speaking by phone to Romanian President Nicusor Dan, whose country is in both the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union.

"I affirmed that NATO stands ready to defend every inch of Allied territory," he said, without making any mention of triggering NATO's mutual defence clause. "We will continue to enhance our readiness to deter and defend against any threat, including from drones."

## JAPAN'S POPULATION FELL TO 123 MILLION IN 2025, MARKING ITS BIGGEST DROP SINCE 1920, WITH OFFICIALS PROJECTING IT WILL SHRINK FURTHER TO 87 MILLION BY 2070.

# Japan's population is crashing at a record pace; empty cradles foretell a harder future

Javier C. Hernández, Pablo Robles & Kiuko Notoya  
Tokyo, May 29

JAPAN'S POPULATION fell by more than 3 million over the past five years, according to official statistics released on Friday, a drop that underscores the depths of the country's accelerating demographic crisis.

The population stood at 123 million in 2025, according to preliminary census results, down from 126.1 million in 2020. It is the biggest decrease since the government began collecting census data in 1920.

Japan's population peaked in 2008 at 128 million, and it is projected to fall to 87 million by 2070.

The country is now roughly the same size it was in 1989.

For decades, the Japanese authorities have tried to make up for the rapidly aging population by encouraging young people to have more children. But the effort has fallen short, leaving the country with one of the world's lowest birth rates. For each new birth, there are two deaths.

Japan is a harbinger of the demographic headwinds that will soon buffet other developed countries. The shrinking population is already constraining Japan's economic growth, putting pressures on its health care system and causing labor shortages.

The census data shows that the demographic crisis has now reached almost every part of Japan. All but two of the country's 47 prefectures reported population decreases in 2025, and the rate of decline is accelerating.

Among the hardest hit areas were the northern prefectures of Akita and Aomori, where the population shrank by about 8 percent from 2020 to 2025. Those areas are home to some of Japan's oldest residents, and young people have left at a rapid rate because of stagnant wages and harsh winters.

The Japanese countryside is hollowing out as the population ages and young people



Shoppers crowd at the Ameyoko shopping district, which is Tokyo's biggest street food market shopping on December 29, 2022. FILE

leave to seek jobs in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya and other cities. In some rural areas, schools are

being converted into nursing homes and community centers. Millions of homes are

vacant; government offices and hospitals are downsizing; and train lines are shutting down.

Opening Japan's doors more widely to foreigners could help offset the declines. But the government has long taken a cautious approach to immigration, and nationalist politicians and commentators have gained influence recently with a "Japan First" agenda.

"Japan has now reached a level where this kind of decline is not reversible in the short- or medium-run," said James Raymo, a professor of sociology at Princeton University who studies Japan. "It simply will not happen in the absence of mass immigration."

There were a few bright spots in the census, including Okinawa, a subtropical chain of islands in the south, where the population grew slightly. Okinawa has Japan's highest fertility rate, with women there giving birth to an average of 1.5 children in their lifetimes, compared with 1.1 nationally.

Japan's biggest cities are managing to stave off demographic decline — for now. The population of the Tokyo metropolitan area, which includes Tokyo and the surrounding prefectures of Kanagawa, Saitama and Chiba, rose slightly to 37 million in 2025. The area now accounts for roughly 30 percent of Japan's total population.

Tokyo, a vibrant hub of business, politics and culture, is now about 20 times denser than the rest of Japan — and one of the world's densest cities. (Tokyo's population rose more than 1 percent to 14.2 million in 2025.) The growth has been fueled in large part by an influx of students and young workers looking for jobs and educational opportunities.

Japan's woes are likely to worsen in the coming decades. It will probably become increasingly difficult to find workers to staff schools, hospitals, police departments and train stations. The country could lack young people to pay taxes necessary to support retirees. NYT

INDIA'S GROWTH OUTLOOK REMAINS POSITIVE: RBI'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR FY26

## RBI: War could pose headwinds to growth & inflation in short run

'Elevated valuations in tech sectors may undergo reassessment, raising the risk of corrections in markets'

George Mathew  
Mumbai, May 29

WITH THE monetary policy review a week away, the Reserve Bank of India on Friday said the West Asia conflict and risks such as higher energy prices, supply chain disruptions, financial market volatility, global trade uncertainty and weather disruptions could affect growth and inflation in the short term.

In a highly uncertain global environment, continuous assessment of the evolving developments is warranted to frame the appropriate policy response on an ongoing basis, the central bank said.

"Lingering geopolitical tensions and supply chain disruptions may pose near-term risks to corporate earnings and the performance of loan portfolios," the RBI said in its Annual Report for 2025-26.

However, India's growth outlook remains positive, it said. Considering various factors, and on the assumption that the adverse impact of the West Asia conflict would remain contained in the near-term, real GDP growth for 2026-27 is projected at 6.9% with risks tilted to the downside, the report said.

The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee kept the main repo rate unchanged at 5.25% in the April review.

However, the rupee remains volatile at 95 against the dollar and capital outflows continue unabated amid the US-Iran conflict. The government's decision to hike fuel prices is likely to put upward pressure on inflation.

While the ongoing geopolitical tensions are likely to exert pressure on the availability and prices of key inputs, particularly fertilisers, the government's continued efforts in ensuring adequate availability of fertiliser and other key inputs through diversified sources and buffer management are expected to mitigate these potential concerns, the RBI said.

The central bank said geopolitical risk has re-emerged as the dominant drag on global growth in 2026. "The adverse impact of outbreak of the conflict in West Asia in end-February 2026 is reflected in the forecasts of global growth and inflation," the RBI said.

With continued geopolitical tensions, inflation faces upside risks globally, the RBI said. "The surging energy prices and disruptions in key shipping routes could intensify supply-side pressures." The RBI also said elevated valuations in technology sectors may undergo reassessment, raising the risk of corrections in equity markets.

FULL REPORT ON  
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM



The RBI has projected FY27 real GDP growth to be at 6.9%. REUTERS

## RBI plans 'kill switch': How it can stop scams

ENS Economic Bureau  
Mumbai, May 29

THE RESERVE BANK OF India is exploring the possibility of introducing a 'kill switch' mechanism that would allow users at the receiving end of a potential digital scam to immediately stop all financial transactions from their accounts.

Besides, it has also proposed a 'switch on' and 'switch off' facility for all digital payment modes. It would help bolster consumer confidence and contribute towards con-

trolling frauds in digital payment transactions, the RBI Annual Report said.

The proposal for a 'kill switch' — being examined by the government and the RBI — envisages, among other possibilities, an emergency button integrated into payment applications of lenders that could instantly freeze all banking operations when a user suspects they are being targeted by fraudsters.

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## Bank fraud nos down; amount up 46% in FY26

ENS Economic Bureau  
Mumbai, May 29

THE AMOUNT involved in fraud cases reported by the banking sector shot up by 46% to Rs 48,021 crore during FY2026 as against Rs 32,803 crore in the previous year.

However, the number of fraud cases dipped to 10,114 from 23,722 a year ago, the Reserve Bank of India's Annual Report said.

Of this public sector banks accounted for Rs 35,709 crore in FY 26 as against Rs 23,617 crore last year and private sector Rs 11,399 crore (Rs 8,927 crore), the RBI said.

Data pertaining to FY26 includes fraud classification in 314 cases amounting to Rs 30,199 crore, pertaining to previous financial years, reported afresh during the current financial year after re-examination and ensuring compliance with the judgement of the Supreme Court, dated March 27, 2023, the RBI said.

Amount involved in advances of banks shot up to Rs 40,774 crore in 8,640 fraud cases as against Rs 30,367 crore (7,924 cases) in the previous financial year.

"Frauds reported in a year could have occurred several years prior to the year of reporting," the central bank said.

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## Govt dials fund managers for gig workers' safety net

Ravi Dutta Mishra  
New Delhi, May 29

THE CENTRAL government is consulting fund managers to bring social security schemes for gig workers, a labour ministry official said on Friday, about a month after several parts of north India witnessed protests demanding a minimum wage while citing rapidly rising cost of living.

"A huge part of our workforce is now getting absorbed in the gig and platform economy, and the potential is immense. Today, around 1 crore workers are employed in this sector, and the potential is to reach around 2.5 crore workers by the end of the decade. The government is focusing more towards this sector," Ashutosh AT Pednekar, Joint Secretary and Director General (Labour Welfare), said.

He said that the government is in the process of operationalising various social security schemes related to accident and maternity for platform workers.

"We are in the process of creating various schemes and engaging with several fund managers to ensure the schemes are operationalised," Pednekar said.

He also said that the Code on Social Security rules under the new labour code has already been notified on May 8.

"We are in the process of operationalising the Code, based on the rules through various mechanisms like the National Social Security Board for gig and platform workers, which is being operationalised. The board will look at unorganised workers," he said.

According to Eternal's (Zomato and Blinkit's parent company) Q3FY25 shareholder

### • UNCERTAIN WAGES

ETERNAL'S Q3FY25 shareholder letter says that average monthly earnings for delivery workers of Zomato and Blinkit — who logged in at least eight hours a day and 26 days a month — were Rs 27,726 in 2024, excluding fuel costs (which is a big expense for workers)



It reflects the gig-style nature of the job, workers say that those types of average earnings are only possible when they do 10-14-hour shifts

HOWEVER, ETERNAL'S then-CEO Deepinder Goyal had said that in 2025, the average delivery worker on Zomato worked just 38 days in the year and 7 hours per working day. Though he said that letter, average monthly earnings for delivery workers of Zomato and Blinkit who logged in at least eight hours a day and 26 days a month were Rs 27,726 in 2024, excluding fuel costs (which is a big expense for workers who drive hundreds of kilometres a day).

However, Eternal's then-CEO Deepinder Goyal had said that in 2025, the average delivery worker on Zomato worked just 38 days in the year and 7 hours per working day.

Though he said that reflects the gig-style nature of the job, workers say that those types of average earnings are only possible when they do 10-14-hour shifts. Besides, much of the earnings are tied to incentives that companies offer workers for meeting certain targets on a given day.

In the case of platforms like Zomato and Swiggy, for instance, that means completing a set number of deliveries in a scheduled amount of time, without rejecting a single order.

One cancellation makes workers ineligible for any in-

centive, irrespective of the number of hours they put in. Platforms like Swiggy also deduct worker earnings for rejecting orders, this paper had earlier reported.

About the e-Shram portal, Pednekar said that it already has the database of aggregators and "we can understand, on a real-time basis, the benefits which the worker can or has availed".

"Just like the UPI and Aadhaar changed the digital landscape in India, the e-Shram has the potential of changing the way the benefits are given to workers, along with the portability of benefits, which is a challenge worldwide, including India," he said. Workers' protests in Noida turned violent in April with clashes with police and torching of vehicles.

Since the start of this year, workers' protests have been going on across industrial hubs, even before the energy crisis deepened after the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

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## MSCI rebalancing sees markets slumping 1.5% in late trade

Akash Mandal  
Mumbai, May 29

THE REBALANCING of the MSCI's Global Standard index, that came into effect on Friday, triggered a late sharp selloff in the Indian stock markets, causing the benchmark indices to slump around 1.5%.

India's weightage on the marquee global index fell marginally to 12.3% from 12.4% earlier as the changes took effect.

Despite the weightage being broadly stable, such index rejigs trigger short-term pressure on the market as global investors rebalance their portfolios based on the changes. The MSCI Global Standard index is a benchmark that is tracked by global investors, and thus inclusions and exclusions can lead to a sharp change in flows.

In the latest set of changes, the likes of Federal Bank, Multi Commodity Exchange of India, National Aluminium, and Indian Bank were added to the Global Standard index, while Hyundai Motor India, Jubilant Foodworks, Kalyan Jewellers, and Rail Vikas Nigam were chopped off.

According to Nuvama Quantitative and Alternative Research, the excluded stocks

### • BALANCING ACT

INDIA'S WEIGHTAGE on the marquee global index fell marginally to 12.3% from 12.4% earlier as the changes took effect

DESPITE THE weightage being broadly stable, such index rejigs trigger short-term pressure on the market as global investors rebalance their portfolios

THE MSCI Global Standard index is a benchmark that is tracked by global investors, and thus inclusions and exclusions can lead to a sharp change in flows

are expected to trigger passive outflows between \$136 million and \$281 million, while the inclusions are seen attracting inflows between \$209 million and \$491 million.

According to IIFL Finance, 27 stocks are expected to see outflows of up to \$20 million, 16 stocks may witness outflows between \$30 million-\$50 million, and 8 stocks may see outflows between \$50 million-\$80 million.

"The MSCI rebalancing is expected to generate significant trading activity during the closing auction session. Invest-

tors should expect elevated volumes and sharp price movements in stocks affected by the index changes," the firm said.

As these changes came into effect, the BSE's Sensex index, which was down around 0.4% or 338.66 points, tanked 843 points during a 10-minute window to eventually end the session down 1,092.05 points or 1.4% at 74,775.74.

The NSE's Nifty 50 index also saw a similar slump, ending the session down 1.5% at 23,547.75.

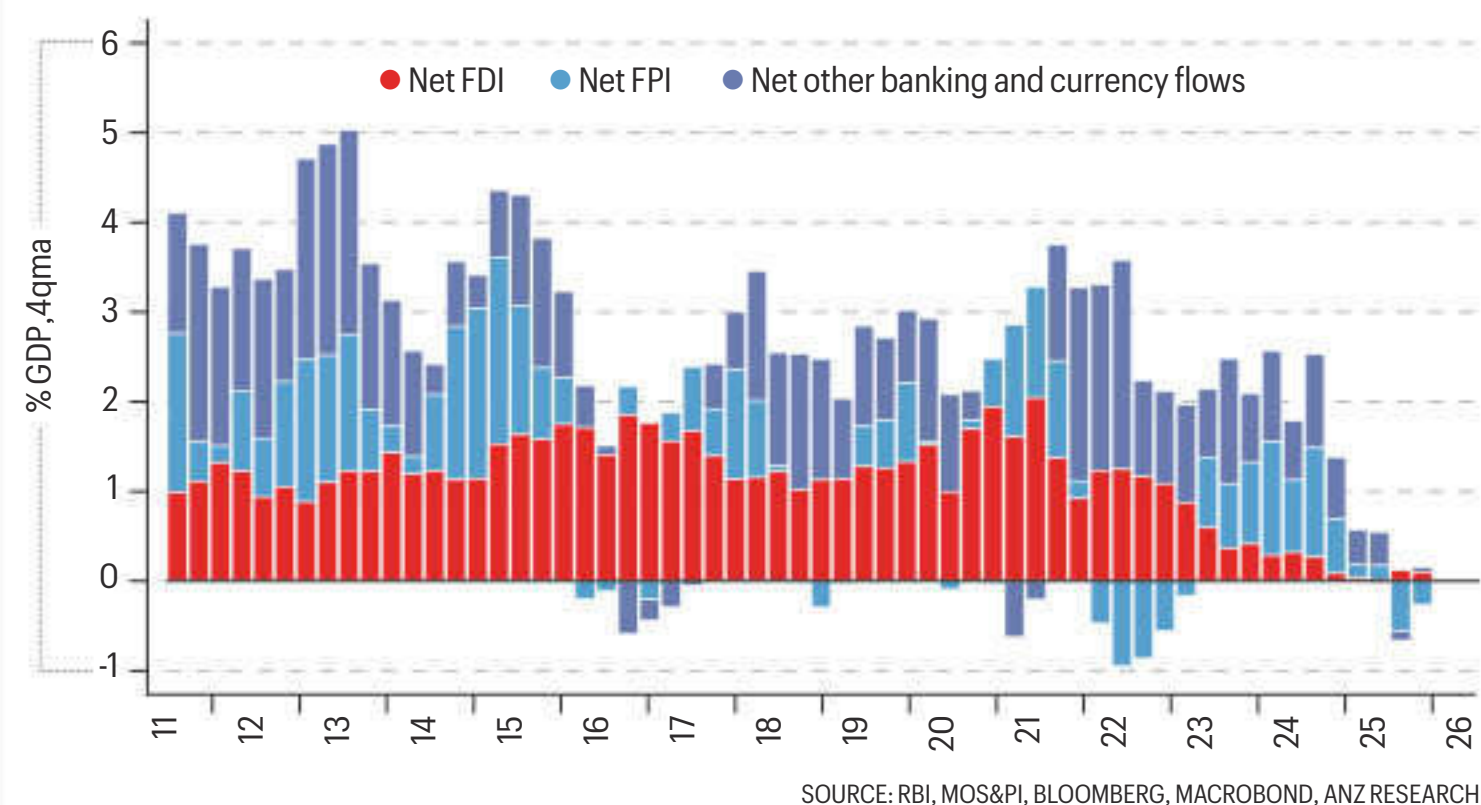
"The pressure intensified during the final hours of trade after the MSCI Global Standard Index rebalancing came into effect, triggering heightened volatility in select stocks amid expected passive fund flow adjustments and portfolio rebalancing activity," said Siddharth Khemka, head of research of wealth management at Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

Among other changes, big names such as Hindustan Unilever, Bajaj Finance, and TCS saw their weightages trimmed on the Global Standard index. These stocks could see passive outflows between \$140 million and \$204 million, according to IIFL Capital.

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### • DRYING FINANCIAL FLOWS INTO INDIA

Net financial account flows under FDI, FPI and other banking and currency categories have all dried up. And it all started well before the war in West Asia disrupted the crude oil flow. According to ANZ Research, tight global financial conditions and concentrated global growth driven by the technology supercycle led to India's current balance of payments stress.



SOURCE: RBI, MOS&PI, BLOOMBERG, MACROBOND, ANZ RESEARCH

## FPIs sell \$3.45 bn of equities in May

Akash Mandal  
Mumbai, May 29

GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS and lingering uncertainty over a possible peace agreement between the US and Iran muted investor sentiment towards emerging markets, including India, even as crude oil prices continuing to hover near the \$100-a-barrel mark.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) sold Indian shares worth

around \$3.45 billion during the month of May, extending the trend of capital outflows, but the pace of share sales slowed compared to the previous two months.

According to National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL) data, this was much lower than the \$6.47 billion and \$12.72 billion worth of Indian stocks they had dumped in the previous two months, with most of the challenges caused by the

West Asia war already largely factored into the markets by investors. Meanwhile, IT stocks gained on AI-related optimism.

The pace of the selloff by FPIs slowed down as the month progressed, with investors now increasingly getting used to the constant news flow out of West Asia, with the focus now also on corporate earnings.

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### • BRIEFLY

#### Central Bank pays 6% interim dividend

Mumbai: Central Bank of India has paid the 4th interim dividend of 6% for FY2025-26. With this, the bank's cumulative interim dividends declared stands at 12% including interim dividends aggregating to 6% declared for the first three quarters. ENS

#### Govt amends CSR norms, provides more leeway for cos

New Delhi: In a significant move, the government has allowed companies to

invest up to 10% of their CSR funds in zero coupon zero principal instruments issued by not for profit organisations through a social stock exchange. PTI

#### IndiGo mulls hedging fuel costs after loss

New Delhi: IndiGo said it will consider hedging fuel costs to protect margins after posting a quarterly loss on Friday, as soaring crude prices driven by the Iran war have pushed up jet fuel prices and squeezed airlines globally. Jet fuel is typically the largest expense for airlines worldwide, and sharp price swings can erode profitability for carriers. REUTERS

### • MARKETS

Sensex 74,775.74 -1092.06 -1.44%	NIFTY 23,547.75 -359.40 -1.50%	Gold ▼ ₹1,56,463	US Dollar ▼ ₹95.00
		Silver ▲ ₹2,63,350	Oil ▼ \$97.52

NOTE: GOLD, SILVER RATES AS PER INDIA BULLION AND JEWELLERS ASSOCIATION (IBJA) DATA. GOLD PER 10G, SILVER PER 1KG; CRUDE OIL (INDIAN BASKET) AS OF MAY 28, 2026

• THE SAN FRANCISCO-BASED COMPANY WAS VALUED AT \$380 BILLION AS RECENTLY AS FEBRUARY

## How Anthropic leapfrogged arch rival OpenAI to \$1 trillion valuation

Soumyarendra Barik  
New Delhi, May 29

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) startup Anthropic has raised \$65 billion in funding, catapulting its valuation to within touching distance of the coveted \$1 trillion mark, and making it the world's most valuable AI start-up — leapfrogging arch rival OpenAI.

The funding marks a dramatic rise for the San Francisco-based company, which was valued at \$380 billion as recently as February. Anthropic's latest valuation now exceeds that of rival OpenAI, which was last valued at around \$852 billion post-money following its March fundraising.

While both companies develop frontier AI models, their

strategies have diverged. OpenAI has focused on consumer adoption, building a massive user base around ChatGPT and expanding into search, productivity and multimodal AI.

Anthropic, founded by former OpenAI executives, has positioned Claude as an enterprise-first platform, with a strong emphasis on coding, business workflows and AI safety. Claude has gained traction among software developers and large corporations, helping Anthropic establish a lucrative foothold in the enterprise market.

The latest valuation suggests investors increasingly believe Anthropic has taken the lead in the commercial AI race. Rapid enterprise adoption, ex-



Anthropic, founded by former OpenAI executives, has positioned Claude as an enterprise-first platform. REUTERS

### The OpenAI vs Anthropic rivalry

Like every era of technology has produced key protagonists — Apple vs Samsung, Boeing vs Airbus, Windows vs MacOS — OpenAI and Anthropic have emerged as the two key com-

panies in the AI space, amid competition from the likes of Google and Meta. Much of the competition between the two companies is primarily a factor of the contrasting approach they have taken to AI development, and the relationship between founders — OpenAI's Sam Altman and Anthropic's Dario Amodei. Before starting Anthropic in 2021, Amodei spent years working at OpenAI, where he served as its Vice President of Research, and also led the development of large language models like GPT-2 and GPT-3. As he experienced AI's ability to scale exponentially, he began to feel that development of the technology had to be done more responsibly, with safety and se-

curity at its core. In 2020, he left OpenAI over differences about the company's approach to safety. He, along with his sister Daniela and a group of former OpenAI employees, started Anthropic a year later.

In a podcast in 2024, Amodei said that the real reason for leaving OpenAI was that "it is incredibly unproductive to try and argue with someone else's vision."

A small circle The connections between the two companies are not unique. As *The Indian Express* recently explained, the world's most consequential artificial intelligence research is being conducted by a strikingly small circle of scientists who studied mostly

under the same mentors, taught in the same rooms and kept recruiting from each other's labs.

After the e-commerce website eBay acquired the fintech company PayPal in 2002, a close-knit group of former PayPal founders and employees — that included Peter Thiel, Elon Musk and Reid Hoffman — went on to found or fund many of Silicon Valley's most influential companies. Their ventures include YouTube, LinkedIn, Tesla, Yelp, SpaceX and Palantir. OpenAI was founded by Elon Musk (who later left the board), Altman, Ilya Sutskever, Greg Brockman, Wojciech Zaremba and John Schulman. Thiel was the main backer and mentor of Altman, providing a large part of the \$5 million that made up Altman's initial venture fund. When

OpenAI launched in 2015, Thiel was one of the founding investors pledging \$1 billion.

The most notable startups founded by OpenAI alumni include the San Francisco-based Anthropic. It has rapidly grown to become OpenAI's biggest rival. Additionally, the themes central to the divide between the companies have also appeared within OpenAI in the recent past. Its co-founder and chief scientist, Ilya Sutskever, left OpenAI in May 2024 after he was reportedly part of a failed 2023 coup to replace Altman, stemming from concerns about safety in the development of AI. However, OpenAI employees rallied behind Altman, leading to his reinstatement.

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## HISAR TO BERLIN YOUR FOOD IS ON ITS WAY

On the streets of the German capital is a familiar gig: Indians, astride electric bikes, delivering food as they race against the clock. With Germany emerging as a favoured destination for young Indians, ADRIJA ROYCHOWDHURY on the journey they make — a life far away from home, with a career pitstop as a *fahrer* (driver) or *kurier* (courier)

AT 11, Mihir hurriedly drinks his morning cup of *chai* and lines up three mobile phones in front of him. The first has the Uber Eats app open, the second Wolt and the third Lieferando, the only platform where he is legally employed as a food delivery worker. The sunlight, soft and unfiltered, bounces off his apartment walls, though a lingering chill remains. “*Aaj nahin banegi order* (It is not the best day to get orders),” he says, looking out of the window.

The two years that he has spent in Germany hasn’t softened the Haryanvi in his Hindi and he has been making do with rudimentary German, but he already considers himself a Berliner. “There is something about Berlin. I feel free...,” says Mihir. The 25-year-old, who arrived in Germany in May 2024, recently completed a Master’s degree in tourism and hospitality from a private university in Berlin and is currently on a job-seeker visa. But that was simply a route he took. All he wanted was to work in Germany.

Since August 2024 last year, he has been working as a *fahrer* (rider) or *kurier* (courier), as delivery workers are called in Germany. As Germany’s platform economy expands, migrant workers have become its most visible workforce, with Indians and other South Asians prominent in food-delivery jobs in cities such as Berlin.

On a weekday afternoon, many of them turn up at the bustling Simon-Dach-Straße, the central Berlin street that’s lined with cafés, bakeries and brunch spots. As they sit astride their electric bikes, waiting for orders, some thumb through their phones, others trade jokes and swap stories of their day on the road.

While there is no official data on Indians as gig workers in Germany, Aju John, a Berlin-based lawyer who researches migration and platform economies, says, “One can be certain that more than 90% of the food delivery workers in Berlin at least are recent migrants. Of that, 50% are Indians and another 25-30% Bangladeshis or Pakistanis,” he says.

### This way to Berlin

While the conservative Christian Democratic Union government under Friedrich Merz has steered Germany away from its traditional “open door” stance towards migration, it has simultaneously worked to promote legal immigration in a bid to address labour shortages in sectors such as logistics, hospitality, healthcare and engineering.

Programmes such as the Opportunity Card, or *Chancenkarte*, which allows non-European Union job seekers to live in Germany for up to a year while searching for employment, have made Germany accessible to young migrants from India.

The number of Indians in Germany has gone up from 86,000 in 2015 to 280,000 in the beginning of 2025. According to a statement by DAAD, the German organisation that supports academic exchange, as of 2025, Indian students (49,483 of them in 2024-25, up from 20,819 in 2018-19) were the largest international community in the country.

Like Mihir, many choose the student route to enter Germany’s labour market. Unlike countries such as the US or UK, where international education often requires high tuition fees and expensive private universities, Germany’s public universities charge little or no tuition fees even for foreign students. But they have stringent entry requirements and so, many enrol in the newer private universities, some of which operate in a loosely regulated space.

Germany’s relatively easier post-study work options help too. International students are allowed to work part-time for up to 20 hours a weeks.

**49,483**

INDIAN STUDENTS IN GERMANY IN 2024-25, UP FROM 20,819 IN 2018-19

### WHAT ATTRACTS INDIANS TO GERMANY

**1** Easier and quicker visa processing when compared to Canada, USA, Australia and the UK

**2** German language proficiency are relaxed when compared to other non-English speaking countries

**3** Stronger labour laws in Germany result in better labour regulations for gig workers. For example, a directly employed, full-time delivery rider in Lieferando is entitled to an hourly minimum wage of €13.90 per hour, employee benefits such as sick leaves, paid vacation etc. That, however, is changing as platforms move to the subcontractor model

**4** Several provisions exist for paid jobs on a student visa. International students, entitled to work 20 hours per week, can do ‘mini job’, ‘midi job’, part-time employment, student or research assistant jobs, or paid internships. After completion of studies, the student can apply for a one-year job-seeker visa to look for jobs

**5** A recent spree of agreements between India and Germany aims to increase the mobility of skilled migrants through legal mechanisms

As is apparent on the streets of Berlin, many of them start with gig work.

Patrick Feuerstein, co-principal investigator at Fairwork Germany, a global initiative studying the working conditions on digital labour platforms, says, “Most of the riders are young, tech savvy, need the money, and are flexible. There seems to be a lot of body referral going on, with people from the same communities referring their friends and family to the jobs.”

### ‘There are so many rules’

The son of a farmer, Mihir decided to move out of his village Chuli Khurd, in Hisar district, after the Agnipath scheme disrupted his dreams of joining the Army. “I thought, if I have to do *dehadi mazdoori* (daily-wage labour), I might as well do it abroad,” he says, looking out of the window at the East Berlin street below. He shares the two-room apartment with four men from Hisar.

His initial choices were Australia, Canada and the UK, but his agent suggested Germany.

In February 2024, Mihir received his acceptance letter from Berlin School of Business and Innovation (BSBI), a private university in Berlin. He paid around Rs 25,000 to the agent and applied for a bank loan of Rs 15 lakh to pay the university fees. The agent, he says, convinced him there was no need to know German.

Within 15 days of arriving in Germany, he got his first job — as a cleaner with a Berlin-based online platform. Since classes were held only thrice a week, he would frequently head out in the middle of college hours to attend to his work shifts.

In August 2024, he applied to Lieferando to work as a delivery worker. Luckily for him, knowledge of German was not a requirement; he only needed to know how to ride a bike. A quick phone interview later, he had the job. He later picked up jobs with Uber Eats and Wolt, and now earns about €2,500 a month if he works for eight hours all seven days a week.

Like Mihir, Tajinder Singh, 30, from Chandigarh, came to Berlin to study Marketing at Arden University, the Berlin campus of a private UK university. Soon after reaching Berlin, he joined Amazon as a delivery worker to manage his living expenses. A year later, he joined Lieferando. He now has six months left on his job-seeker visa.

Tajinder says most Indian students prefer delivery jobs because they are “stress-free” and “flexible”. “In most other jobs, you need to know German, but here, you just hand over the packet, nod, at the most say *bitte schön* (you are welcome) and leave,” he says.

Soon after landing in Berlin in May 2024, Mihir moved into a student accommodation. Very quickly, he found himself overwhelmed by the sheer number of rules. “There are rules for walking, talking, living, and even breathing, I realised,” he says.

It was especially tough to speak softly. “*India mein, apne ghar mein kuch bhi karo*, no problem (Back home, you can do whatever). But here, especially after 10 pm, there must be pin drop silence. On most days, I come home late after work and can’t even cook in a pressure cooker. The neighbours would call the police if the whistle went off at that hour,” Mihir says.

Sticking to the right-lane while on his bike to deliver orders was tricky, too. “It’s just the opposite of what it is at home,” he says. He would frequently slip into the wrong lane, inviting angry stares.

During the winter months, riding on the snow-covered streets of Berlin was tough and he would often slip. “Now I am used to it. I can get from one end of the city to



An estimated 90% of the food delivery workers are migrants, with Indians a significant part of the workforce. ADRIJA ROYCHOWDHURY

another in less than an hour,” he says.

Mihir says he still trips over the German names of streets. “I only know the main roads that lead out from my home. For the rest, there’s Google Maps.”

### A shorter route: Subcontractors

At 2.10 pm, Mihir’s phone rings out sharply. He finally had the first order of the day from Wolt. These orders are critical. On Uber Eats and Wolt, where he works through subcontractors, he is paid per delivery.

Over the last few decades, a number of sectors in Germany, from construction to logistics and delivery, which rely largely on migrant labour, have adopted the subcontractor route to hire workers.

There have been allegations of hirings that circumvent German laws on minimum wages, with the subcontractors paying per delivery and demanding a payment from the workers to get them on board. Besides, there is little job security. Mihir says that a few months ago, when he visited India for 40 days, he lost his Uber Eats gig though he had paid the subcontractors €600 euros for the job. Since then, he has been using his friend’s ID to work on Uber Eats.

A 38-year-old from Chandigarh says the



**By 10 pm, Mihir has completed six orders. After deductions, he is left with under €50. “Sometimes I don’t get a single order”**

subcontractor he worked with mostly hired delivery workers through ‘mini job’ contracts — a part-time job provision that allows students to earn a tax-free income up to €603. “But the riders would often work full time, and the remaining income is paid in cash. It is a blatant misuse of the student visa,” he says.

At Lieferando, where Mihir is a direct employee, he gets the minimum wage of €13.90 per hour, is not allowed to work for more than 20 hours a week as mandated by his student visa, and gets other employee benefits such as sick leaves, and medical aid. But the amount wasn’t enough for him to pay off his student loan and he needed to send money back home, so he signed up with subcontractors of Wolt and UberEats, where he is paid per delivery.

Amrita Datta, a sociologist working on Indian migrants in Germany, says the problem is not as much with gig work as with the subcontracting model that often leaves migrants vulnerable to exploitation.

Last year, Lieferando, which was the only delivery app that had been hiring directly until then, announced that they too were exploring the subcontracting route, sparking protests from amongst workers’ collective. Florian Anders, head of PR and communications at Wolt, Germany, however, said in an email interview that all delivery riders, “whether directly employed or engaged through partners... work under fair, lawful, and transparent conditions.”

Anders insisted that subcontractors are expected to meet high standards and employ their couriers on a permanent basis, treat them responsibly, and comply with all legal requirements.

Uber’s Mobility Communications Lead, DACH, Maja Ruhbach, said all their deliveries are handled by third-party fleet partners. “While these fleet partners act as independent employers... we contractually obligate them to comply strictly with all German labor laws, including mandatory social security contributions and the payment of the statutory minimum wage.”

Emails sent by *The Indian Express* to the press office at Lieferando and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs went unanswered.

A 38-year-old Indian working with Lieferando says workers exploiting German labour regulations may have pushed firms to adopt the subcontracting route. “Riders would log in during their shift times but not step out to do the deliveries. Since the la-

bour rules ensured they would be paid on a per hour basis regardless of the number of deliveries, they made the most of the system. Ultimately, the platforms turned to hiring indirectly through subcontractors.”

### Between two worlds

It’s 2:30 pm by the time Mihir reaches the restaurant to pick up his first order of the day. He is already behind schedule. He pedals hard for the next five or six kilometers, reaching the neighbourhood of Neukölln in southeast Berlin in 20 minutes.

He walks up to the apartment gate where the customer is waiting for the order. He is nearly half an hour late. Mihir apologises, the customer shrugs to say it’s alright.

“This is the big difference between India and Germany,” he says. “People are polite here. They say ‘please’, ‘thank you’. They even apologise if I have to climb up too many stairs to deliver the order.” In Hisar, where he worked with a food delivery platform for a week, “people would refuse to pay if the order reached them a bit late. I earned less than Rs 2,000 in an entire week, and ended up paying over Rs 500 from my pocket for fuel.”

Mihir gets two more orders, both on the outskirts of West Berlin. By now, his bike’s battery indicator is flashing low and he decides to go home to recharge it.

After a couple of hours, he steps out again. It’s a sunny spring day and most people are out on the roads. “This is a bad season for food deliveries. Winters are the best,” he says, talking about a bitingly cold January day, when he made his highest single-day earnings of €250, working for 12 hours straight.

Today is different. By 10 pm, he has completed six orders. After deductions, he is left with under €50. “Sometimes I don’t get a single order,” he says.

Those days are the hardest. Yet, returning to India is not an option he considers. “The delivery work is just a temporary job. Someday, I’ll be a chef at a restaurant,” he says.

The next morning, at 11 am, Mihir is ready with his three phones, scanning for orders. Outside, the air is colder. “Perhaps today will be better,” he says.

Names of delivery workers have been changed to protect their identities (The writer, Head of Research at indianexpress.com, is in Germany for a journalist-in-residence fellowship at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science)

Shubhra Gupta

**U**NDER ITS deceptively calm surface, there's a lot going on in Tribeny Rai's assured debut, *Shape Of Momo*. Based on Rai's own experiences, the film assimilates several themes — search of self, the definition of home, gender roles, family ties — in a film which has the courage to back a lead character who refuses to conform, or to be likeable.

While the other themes are familiar, the creation of Bishnu — stubborn and soft at the same time — breaks free from the good girl trap that most female characters find themselves confined in, in our mainstream cinema. Only recently have we had characters (Varsha Bharath's *Bad Girl*) that have broken free and in turn allowed the films to chart unexplored territories.

Played by Gaumaya Gurung, who bears a startling resemblance to the director, Bishnu is the kind of girl whose headstrong behaviour drives her mother (Pashupati Rai) and her visiting pregnant sister (Shyama Shree Sherpa) up the wall. Having returned to her native Sikkim village from Delhi, where one of her poems in 'English' has been published, no less, in a newspaper, Bishnu will now be matched suitably, get married, and make perfectly shaped momos, the acme of all accomplishment.

Wait. Scratch that. Bishnu will have nothing to do with shapely momos, even if that means turning her back on her personable suitor (Rahul Mukhia). She will, instead, daydream by a running stream, curled up much like a human momo, be vocal about wanting to turn their large home nestled in a meadow into a homestay (there's a snarky line about 'picturesque homestays' which makes you smile), and lift a heavy gas cylinder by herself, much to her mother's horror. It's bad enough that the father, the strong male protector, is no more; Bishnu, striding about in shapeless fleece jackets and pants, is beyond.

An interesting thread is raised, as the insider-outsider debate rages in the North-East, when a working-class family unit which has lived in their outhouse is asked to leave: a woman whose husband is away earning money for the family, who is also in charge of a sick daughter, and a mutinous teenage son who resents Bishnu's



## The Art of Not Fitting In

high-handed ways, refusing to be mollified by a gift of apples. They have gone to Nepal, we are told. A break-in, never explained, becomes enough reason for the local cops to roll up a group of men, who may or may not have had anything to do with it. While never making it explicit, the film taps into the rise of suspicion and distrust, mirroring current political realities, among people who've lived peaceably all these years.

The inclusion of a grandmother makes it a family of four women, who feel the absence of men in different ways: the

### SHAPE OF MOMO

★★★★

DIRECTOR:

Tribeny Rai

CAST:

Gaumaya Gurung, Shyama Shree Sherpa, Pashupati Rai, Rahul Mukhia, Bhanu Maya Rai

grandma, old and bedridden but still feisty, waiting for her Dubai-based son, who thinks a new iphone is a good enough replacement for his presence; the mother remembering her dead husband who would tell off pesky intruders; the sister having to take permission for every small thing in her marital home, with the husband presumably happier being his mamma's boy, and Bishnu herself who likes the man willing to give her space, but who would not accept-ably should he turn into an arbiter of the shape of her momos.

The fact that he could perhaps help her in making those delectable edibles doesn't occur to her because the film refuses to box her in. That her mother understands Bishnu's reluctance to give in to the relentless domesticity of perfectly shaped momos is even more noteworthy, in a film full of telling strokes and real performances, with only a few obvious strands. And that's clearly a scripting triumph: Rai has co-written the film with Kislav (the director of the terrific *Aise Hee*), creating a gentle, felt tapestry of dreams and desires.



## The Safes and the Sound

Shalini Langer

**P**ARAPHRASING BILLY Joel's *Piano Man*, if you're all in the mood for a melody, this film has got you feelin' alright.

Seemingly discordant storylines are strung together into a pleasing whole by director-co-writer Daniel Roher (who won an Oscar for his documentary, *Navalny*), largely due to the effortless charm of its cast.

Leo Woodall is Niki, a piano prodigy who now tunes pianos for a living, having developed a hearing condition that has left him allergic to loud sounds. Two years of therapy, of being kept in a dark room, means he can just about get around the world of noise via earplugs and noise-cutting headphones.

Dustin Hoffman is Harry, a piano player of some repute and a friend of Niki's late dad, who runs the piano tuning and fixing company where Niki works. The film begins with their effortless banter as Harry trades his wisdom and tricks with his beloved Niki, and tries to evade the sharp eyes of his wife Marla (the unmissable Tovah Feldshuh) who is worried for his failing health.

Havana Rose Liu is Ruthie, a pianist training to be a composer and hoping that the piece she is preparing for her graduation will

earn her a place with her favourite maestro (Jean Reno in a brief role). Ruthie and Niki meet over a piano repair session and sparks fly — as do keys and notes — in an effective meet-cute.

If the keyboard instrument ties together this strand, it is Niki's hearing condition that puts him in the path of Uri (Lior Raz, of *Faada*). The latter runs a company that provides hi-tech security to rich clients, which he also uses to steal things here and there that the wealthy don't miss. It is 'The Law of Diminishing Marginal Reality', Uri and his gang explain to Niki, with different things meaning different things depending on one's class. Since Niki is sensitive to the slightest sounds, he can figure out how to open locks of safes, turning the knob this way and that.

When the worlds of the piano players and the robber gangs meet, as they shall invariably, the clash is not as loud as one would expect. Niki's hearing condition provides a convenient plot interlude more than once; at other times, the film falls back on sheer incongruity; the redistribution of wealth logic to justify the robberies is also a stretch.

"Tuning a piano is like creating harmony out of chaos," says Niki. Some keys remain out of tune, but *Tuner* manages more harmony than chaos.

## Wishful Thinking

Shalini Langer

**BOY LIKES** girl. What next? A lot of possible romances end right here. But what happens when the shy boy gets one miracle wish that can turn romance into a love story?

A YouTuber on the road to fame after *Obsession* wowed audiences at Toronto International Film Festival, and got horror impresario Jason Blum on board as executive producer, director Curry Barker is all of 26. He is also the writer of this tragicomic horror film, with Cooper Tomlinson, who plays one of the key characters, as his long-time collaborator.

Barker taps right into Gen Z's *au courant* crisis and places *Obsession* in the irrelevant territory where love is an all-consuming but never-consummated emotion. Relationships are situationships, and situations are at the mercy of just too many things. Commitment is a word — and world — too long.

So when Bear (Michael Johnston) thinks he is in love with Nikki (Inde Navarrette), a friend and workmate, he doesn't know what to say that won't sound too needy or risk rejection. Even when she comes right out and asks him, Bear hesitates, with each waiting for the other to take the leap.

Could a 'One Wish Willow' that Bear has chanced upon be the answer? The shopkeeper who sells it to Bear suggests there have been "complaints", without specifying what, but he decides to take a chance.

And, lo and behold, Nikki is what Bear wished her to be — a girl who "loves me more than anyone else in the whole world".

Barker stages the transformation with creepy effect as Nikki (a very impressive Navarrette) changes into another being altogether — prone to standing in shadows and silhouettes, and popping up or lashing out unexpectedly. A lot is left unsaid but effectively and scarily implied in how Nikki just stands in the corner of the room, or speaks with just her eyes strategically lit, or has the light-and-dark play across her face suggesting a grotesqueness underneath.



### OBSESSION

★★★★

DIRECTOR:

Curry Barker

CAST:

Michael Johnston, Inde Navarrette, Cooper Tomlinson, Megan Lawless

Bear (Johnston, effective), who is anyway unsure about how much of Nikki's now obsessive feelings for him are organic, grows more and more nervous. There is a subversiveness here, about the male partner in a toxic relationship being the traumatised one, afraid to move an inch or leave the house without offering an explanation.

The problem is that Barker doesn't know how to flesh this out into a feature-length. Once the premise is established, the group of Bear and Nikki, and their friends Ian (Cooper Tomlinson) and Sarah (Megan Lawless), seem to go over the same lines and scenarios again and again. A poor cat is an unnecessary collateral.

It's also preposterous that there is no outside intervention by any party in a day and age when one of Bear's biggest fears is that, despite all the evidence to the contrary, Nikki would have an eager audience if she claims that he is "taking advantage of her".

As the elders in the room would say, be careful what you wish for.

## • STREAMING WATCHLIST



### The Four Seasons S2

NETFLIX

AFTER NICK (Steve Carell) dies in a car crash, his girlfriend Ginny (Erika Henningsen)

announces to Kate (Tina Fey), Jack (Will Forte), Anne (Kerri Kenney-Silver), Danny (Colman Domingo), and Claude (Marco Calvani) that she's pregnant with Nick's kid. Coming off a hard year, our group of friends carries on their tradition of vacationing together, now with a baby (and a little baggage) in tow.



### Jolly LLB 3

JIOHOTSTAR

AS *JOLLY LLB 3* returns with another courtroom drama, it shifts its focus to farmers and their land acquisition inspired by the 2011 Bhatta-Parsaul land protests. Jagdish 'Jolly' Tyagi (Arshad Warsi), takes on a pro bono case for a widowed woman whose father-in-law died by suicide after his land was fraudulently stolen. Opposing him is Jagdishwar 'Jolly' Mishra (Akshay Kumar), an opportunistic lawyer to help a major industrialist's project.



### On the Waterfront

NETFLIX

THIS 1954 American crime drama, directed by Elia Kazan and written by Budd Schulberg, is considered to be one of Marlon

Brando's biggest critical and commercial successes. The cast features Karl Malden, Lee J Cobb, Rod Steiger, Pat Henning and Eva Marie Saint. The score was composed by Leonard Bernstein, his only original film score. The movie is celebrated for Brando's performance as well as winning eight Academy Awards.



### Spider-Noir

PRIME VIDEO

MARKING A striking shift for the Spider-Man franchise, Nicolas Cage's *Spider-Noir* brings a darker, moodier and a noir-inspired take to the superhero universe. Spider-Man Noir was already a distinctive character — stylish, theatrical and deliberately out of step with everyone around him. This version leans into crime, mystery and a hero who has already been carrying the weight of the mask for years.

### A Good Girl's Guide to Murder S2

NETFLIX

TEEN SLEUTH Pippa Fitz-Amobi has a new mystery to solve, alongside Ravi Singh. It picks up in the aftermath of the pair solving what happened to missing student Andie Bell. They are joined by new co-stars Misia Butler, Eden H Davies and Jack Rowan in this adaptation of the second book in Holly Jackson's series, *Good Girl, Bad Blood*. Pip and Ravi are drawn to a new investigation when a crucial witness in a previous case, goes missing. ALAKA SAHANI

## A Roaring Good Time

Shubhra Gupta

**I**HAD gone in with a degree of skepticism into *Return of the Jungle*. The title itself sounded generic, coming on the back of multiple Indian animation flicks, heavy on mythological figures, blaring background music, and an overarching preaching-from-the-pulpit tone.

While the 93-minute *Return of the Jungle* is also dotted with several 'teachable' moments, it never forgets to add in the fun bits, and that's where it scores. Once I got drawn in, it was clear that the film has more than a few things going for it. Playful animal characters, school

kids who feel like they could exist out of the frame, relatable 'problems' that feel like they could be fixed, and, glory be, not a single mythological figure lurking in the jungle.

The parallels are drawn neatly. In the Kendriya Vidyalaya, where our characters study (specifically in class IV B, nice touch) there's your nice young boy and his pals, facing off a bully. A wise *thatha* (grandfather) is roped in for advice, and practical help; said grandpa does his job well by coming up with a folk tale, the kind where Goliaths defeat Davids.

A fancy dress competition blows up



into a battle between the bully and nice boy. A cricket match, executed with impressive detailing — someone clearly knows their game — becomes another round between the nice guys and the not-so-nice ones. What's nice is that the scale of the villainy — a Superman-like superhero vs a very-green dinosaur — is playful

### Bits of Panchatantra, bits of Bollywood, and a lot of fun, Return Of The Jungle is a fun desi alternative to the

and then the good guys win, which of course they do, everyone, including the bully boy, cheers.

What's even more impressive is that the team knows the ethos of the KVs well: the kids are from different backgrounds and

religions, and it feels good to see the reflection of a composite India, featuring a Rahul and an Ali among others, when so much of it is being erased from mainstream cinema.

It did strike me that the insistence on creating confluence makes it problematic to figure out exactly where the film, with its efficient animation, is set: a house on stilts, very North-East like, music from all over, with the Tamilian *thatha* listening to a *Suprabhatam*, a *dargah* being the setting of a predictable but rousing qawwali, plus a lush jungle with cute critters winning over a scary hunter. But you can safely ignore such niceties, because overall, the film stays light and entertaining, perfect for the little ones.

Bits of *Panchatantra*, bits of Bollywood, and a lot of fun, *Return Of The Jungle* is a fun desi alternative to the Hollywood superheroes crowding our canvas.

**SALUTE THE SOLDIER**

**BORDER SECURITY FORCE**


 HC AMAR SINGH 16 BN BSF 26.06.1949 - 30.05.1992	 L/NK A SASI 16 BN BSF 10.12.1957 - 30.05.1992	 CT DIPEN KR DAS 16 BN BSF 05.01.1969 - 30.05.1992	 CT ARUN KUMAR SINGH 16 BN BSF 15.10.1969 - 30.05.1992
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Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawans Head Constable Amar Singh, Lance Naik A Sasi and Constables Dipen K Das, Arun Kumar Singh, Mohan Chavan and Satvir Yadav on their Balidan Diwas. On this day, they sustained fatal injuries in an IED blast triggered by militants in area of Jagraon, Ludhiana, Punjab and made ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

 CT MOHAN CHAVAN 16 BN BSF 01.06.1968 - 30.05.1992	 CT SATVIR YADAV 16 BN BSF 30.05.1967 - 30.05.1992
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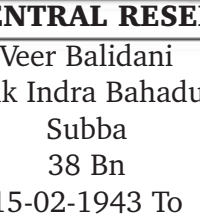

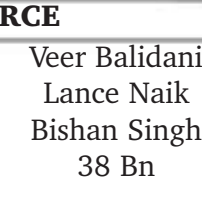
 HEAD CONSTABLE JAGDISH CHANDER 12 BN BSF 02.07.1965 - 30.05.2002	 CONSTABLE PRADEEP SINGH 12 BN BSF 13.05.1967 - 30.05.2002
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Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawans Head Constable Jagdish Chander and Constable Pradeep Singh on their Balidan Diwas. On this day, they sustained fatal bullet injuries, while fighting with militants in area of CI Post Thuru, Jammu and made ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.


 CONSTABLE SRIPADA DEB 59 BN BSF 08.02.1967 - 30.05.1990	Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Constable Sripada Deb on his Balidan Diwas. On this day, he sustained fatal bullet injuries while fighting with miscreants in area of BOP Patharghate, West Bengal and made ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.
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 CONSTABLE SUKH RAM BISHNOI 81 BN BSF 08.07.1974 - 30.05.1996	Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Constable Sukh Ram Bishnoi on his Balidan Diwas. On this day, he sustained fatal bullet injuries during a counter terror operation in Srinagar area, J&K and later succumbed to his injuries at 92 Base hospital, Srinagar.
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**CENTRAL RESERVE POLICE FORCE**

 Veer Balidani Naik Indra Bahadur Subba 38 Bn 15-02-1943 To 30-05-198	 Veer Balidani Lance Naik Bachhan Singh 38 Bn 31-08-1949 To 30-05-1989	 Veer Balidani Constable Ram Gopal Yadav 38 Bn 18-01-1947 To 30-05-1989	 Veer Balidani Constable Din Mohammad 38 Bn 01-11-1968 To 30-05-1989
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DG and all Ranks of #CRPF pay solemn tribute to six bravehearts of 38 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice while bravely countering an ambush by terrorists during an area domination patrol at Mehmoopur village, Tarn Taran, Punjab on 30 May 1989. #CRPF salutes the bravehearts and pledges never to let their sacrifice go in vain.

 Veer Balidani Constable G. Ranganathan 2 Bn 27-01-1981 To 30-05-2008	DG and all Ranks of #CRPF pay solemn tribute to Constable G. Ranganathan of 2 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice after being seriously injured in a cowardly attack by a Maoist during an area domination patrol at Majhar Parakate Kalyan market, district Dantewada, Chhattisgarh on 30 May 2008. #CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.
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**INDO-TIBETAN BORDER POLICE (ITBP)**

 Dy. Commandant Joy Lal	 Head Constable Khajan Singh	 Head Constable Shamsher Singh	 Constable Kailash Chand
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ITBPSalutes its bravehearts Dy. Commandant Joy Lal, Head Constable Khajan Singh, Head Constable Shamsher Singh & Constable Kailash Chand of 4th Battalion, who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty on this day in J&K in 1999.

**EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY**

**E-TENDER NOTICE**

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/TRS, East Central Railway, Barauni on behalf of the President of India invites "Open" E-tender from the eligible and experienced agencies or contractors for E-Tender No. ELS\_BJU\_CABAC\_4D. Particulars are as under:

- Name of the work with its location :** Annual Maintenance Contract (TRC) of Electric Loco Cab Roof Mounted AC Units of 3-phase loco (WAG-9/WAP-7) of Electric loco shed, BJU including replacement of spares for a period of 02 Years. **2. Approx. Cost of the work :** 2,61,97,380.14 (Rupees Two Crore Sixty One Lakh Ninety Seven Thousand Three Hundred Eighty and Fourteen Paise only). **3. Earnest Money :** Rs. 5,24,000.00. **4. Date & time of start of bid :** 02/06/2022. **5. Date and time of pre-bid meeting :** NA. **6. Last Date & Time for submission of bid :** 16/06/2022, 11:00 Hrs. **7. Website particulars where Tender document is available :** <https://www.ireps.gov.in> Detailed tender notice, eligibility criteria and tender document can be seen from above website. All corrigendum will be uploaded on website, if required.

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/TRS, East Central Railway, Barauni  
PR/0303/ELS/BJU/DRM/TRS/T/26-27/40

**SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY**

Follow us on @SCRailways India Details of the Tender Notices of S.C.Railway can be seen on our website: [www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in)

**TENDER NOTICE**

On behalf of the President of India, Sr. Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer, Secunderabad Division, South Central Railway, Secunderabad invites open tenders for the following works through e-Procurement of the Tenders.

**Sl. No. 1, Tender No. & Date:** C\_SG\_36\_605 Dt:29/05/2026. Closing dt: 19/06/2026. **Name of the work :** 1. Signaling arrangements at proposed development of PQRS siding at Yelgur (YGL) station 2. KZJ-KI: Telecom arrangements in connection with provision PQRS siding at YGL 3. Signaling arrangements at KZI-KI Section: Ancillary works for Ballast depot at PNPD station under ADEN.MDR sub-division. (PH 3100, IRPMS ID: 11.05.31.25.4.54.009) 4. Signaling arrangements for KZJ-KI Section: Proposed extension of ballast siding line at PNPD station under ADEN/MDR sub-division. 5. Telecom arrangements for KZJ-KI Section: Proposed extension of ballast siding line at PNPD station under ADEN/MDR sub-division. **Approx Value (₹):** 4,86,84,349.95. **Bid security/ EMD (₹):** 9,73,700.00

For further details visit the website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). Bid security/EMD to be paid as per GCC 2022

Sr. Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer/ Secunderabad

**Tender Notice No.09/2026 Dt.29.05.2026**

**Supply of Stores Items E-Procurement Tender Notice**

The following tenders have been floated online. Tenders are requested to visit the website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) and submit their offers online. The Tender Description, Qty, EMD, SD may be seen in website. Offers submitted manually will not be accepted. Offers by post will not be entertained. Tender closing time is 14.30 hrs of the due date of the tender. "For all indigenous offers, EMD will be accepted only via online system as available on [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)"

Tender No.	Brief Description
66265488B	Track Machine Spares of plasser make
LH257455A	Supply, and installation of FRP Modular Toilet
76261271	Solid MIG/MAG Welding Filler wire- 1.2mm Dia Class-IV
76261017	Manual Metal Arc Welding electrodes size 4.00x450mm
82264991	TKR Implants fixed Bearings-Oxonium Coated
38261145	Modified Elastomeric pad (Design-A)
38262186	Inner Spring For Casnub 22 HS Bogie
80261239	Transformer Oil for 3ph Locos
38262187	Outer Spring
31261021	Semi Permanent
38262390	Secondary brake beam
38262387	Draft Gear with follower
38261237	Shank wear plate for CBC
38262357	Round plate Bonded with stopper spring
6221197	Stainless steel pipe 20mm
67265007	Supply, installation, testing & commissioning of 500 T Wheel Press
67245007C	Supply, installation, testing & commissioning of 30/05 Tones EOT Crane

**Note:- Due dates of Tender Opening**

SL. No. 01 & 02 on dt.15.06.2026, SL. No. 03 & 04 on dt. 16.06.2026, SL. No. 05 dt. 17.06.2026, SL. No. 06 & 07 on dt. 19.06.2026, SL. No. 08 & 09 on dt. 22.06.2026, SL. No. 10 & 11 on dt. 23.06.2026, SL. No. 12 to 14 on dt. 29.06.2026, SL. No. 15 on dt. 01.07.2026, SL. No.16 on dt. 02.07.2026, SL.No.17 on dt.06.07.2026

**CORRIGENDUM**

Tender Notice No.07/2026 dt. 15.05.2026 Tender No.60266185 due on 08.06.2026 may be read as Due DT. 15.06.2026.

**Beside above mentioned Tenders There are other Tenders having value above Rs. 50 Lakhs for details, please visit Railway website above.**

Principal Chief Materials Manager/ A400 Secunderabad

For further tender conditions / details and for downloading the tender documents, Please visit website at <http://www.ireps.gov.in> or [www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in)

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES (DIVYANGJAN), SECUNDERABAD**

दिव्यांगजन सशक्तिकरण विभाग, सामाजिक न्याय और अधिकारिता मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार  
Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India  
मनोरिकारा नगर, सिकंदराबाद / Manovikas Nagar, Secunderabad - 500 009

दूरभाष : 040-27751741-745, फैक्स नं. : 040-27750198 ईमेल : Nihmademics@gmail.com, वेबसाइट : niepid.nic.in

**ADMISSION NOTIFICATION FOR THE YEAR 2026-27**

NIEPID, Secunderabad and its Regional Centres located at Navi Mumbai, Noida, Kolkata & Composite Regional Centres at Davanagere, Rajnandgaon and Nellore invites applications for various Under Graduate/Post Graduate and Diploma Courses in Special Education for the academic year 2026-27 as per the details given below:-

**NIEPID, Secunderabad**

**Post Graduate/Under Graduate Courses (Affiliated to Osmania University)**

Sl.No.	Name of the course	No. of seats
1.	Post Graduate Diploma in Early Intervention (PGDEI)	20 + 2 (EWS)
2.	M.Ed.in Special Education (ID)	25 + 2 (EWS)
3.	B.Ed.in Special Education (ID)	30 + 3 (EWS)
4.	B.A.-B.Ed.SE (ID) Middle Stage (ISITEP)	20

**\* Diploma Courses**

5.	Diploma in Education Special Education (IDD)	35 + 3 (EWS)
6.	Diploma in Early Childhood Special Education (ID)	30
7.	Diploma in Vocational Rehabilitation (ID)	30
8.	Diploma in Indian Sign Language Interpretation (DISLI)	30

**NIEPID Regional Centre, Noida**

**\* Diploma Courses**

9.	Diploma in Education Special Education (IDD)	35 + 3 (EWS)
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**NIEPID Regional Centre, Navi Mumbai**

**Post Graduate/Under Graduate Courses (Affiliated to University of Mumbai)**

Sl.No.	Name of the course	No. of seats
10.	M.Ed.in Special Education (ID)	15 + 1 (EWS)
11.	B.Ed.in Special Education (ID)	20 + 2 (EWS)

**\* Diploma Courses**

12.	Diploma in Education Special Education (IDD)	35 + 3 (EWS)
13.	Diploma in Early Childhood Special Education (ID)	30
14.	Diploma in Vocational Rehabilitation (ID)	30

**NIEPID Regional Centre, Kolkata**

**Post Graduate/Under Graduate Courses (Affiliated to West Bengal State University)**

Sl.No.	Name of the course	No. of seats
15.	M.Ed.in Special Education (ID)	12 + 1 (EWS)
16.	B.Ed.in Special Education (ID)	30 + 3 (EWS)

**\* Diploma Courses**

17.	Diploma in Education Special Education (IDD)	35 + 3 (EWS)
18.	Diploma in Vocational Rehabilitation (ID)	30

**CRIC, Nellore, Andhra Pradesh State**

**\* Diploma Courses**

19.	Diploma in Education Special Education (HI)	35
20.	Diploma in Indian Sign Language Interpretation (DISLI)	30

**CRIC, Davanagere, Karnataka State**

**\* Diploma Courses**

21.	Diploma in Education Special Education (HI)	35
22.	Diploma in Education Special Education (IDD)	35
23.	Diploma in Indian Sign Language Interpretation (DISLI)	30

**CRIC, Rajnandgaon, Chattisgarh State**

**\* Diploma Courses**

24.	Diploma in Education Special Education (IDD)	35
	Diploma in Indian Sign Language Interpretation (DISLI)	30

\* NOTE: All the Diploma Level Courses are affiliated to RCI, New Delhi for which the admission schedule is yet to be issued by RCI. Please visit website [www.rehabcouncil.nic.in](http://www.rehabcouncil.nic.in) & [www.niepid.nic.in](http://www.niepid.nic.in) for further updates.

For further details about detailed Notification, Application form for UG/PG Courses, prospectus, Eligibility Criteria, Fee details and important dates, please visit Institute's website: [www.niepid.nic.in](http://www.niepid.nic.in) and Osmania University website [www.ouadmissions.com](http://www.ouadmissions.com). Last date for submission of applications is 06.07.2026 & 15.07.2026 (with late fee).

**DIRECTOR, NIEPID**

**EASTERN RAILWAY**

Following e-Tenders are invited online by Sr. Divisional Engineer (IV), Eastern Railway, Howrah, DRM Building, near Howrah Railway Station, Howrah-711011 from Tenderers having experience of Similar Nature of work and required Financial capabilities including those Registered with Irrigation/CPWD/SEB/MES or any public sector undertaking for the following work : Sr. DEN/4/Howrah. (1) E-Tender No.: 86\_2026-27-Zone, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work : Zone No. 23 (General Zone) under AEN/Rampurhat P.E. 30.06.2027 Jurisdiction from Km. 135/0 to Km. 172/2 - Bansloi Bridge to Gumani (excluding Bonidanga Link Cabin) including Rajgram and Pakur Quarry. The work includes the General work, Sanitary work, Wood work, Colour wash/White wash etc. Under the jurisdiction of AEN/Rampurhat. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 1,10,00,000/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 2,20,000/- **(2) E-Tender No.: 86\_2026-27-Zone, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work : Zone No. 24 (Bridge Zone) under Sr. DEN/4/HWH P.E. 30.06.2027 Jurisdiction from Km. 1/0 to Km. 88/0 on SBG Loop and all Bridges of Rampurhat-Dumka Section. Repairs & Maintenance work of various bridges under the jurisdiction of Sr. DEN/4/HWH. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 56,00,000/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,12,000/- **(3) E-Tender No.: 87\_2026-27-Zone, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work : Zone No. 48 (Bridge Zone) under Sr. DEN/4/HWH P.E. 30.06.2027 Jurisdiction from Km. 88/0 to Km. 172/2 on SBG Loop and all Bridges of Rampurhat-Dumka Section. Repairs & Maintenance work of various bridges under the jurisdiction of Sr. DEN/4/HWH. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 70,00,000/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,40,000/- **(4) E-Tender No.: 88\_2026-27-Zone, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work : Zone No. 25 (General Zone) under AEN/Bolpur P.E. 30.06.2027 Jurisdiction from Km. 1/0 to (Ex. Khana) to Km. 88/0. The work includes the General work, Sanitary work, Wood work, Colour wash/White wash, etc. under AEN/Bolpur.Approx. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 1,20,00,000/- **Earnest Money :** ₹ 2,40,000/- **(5) E-Tender No.: 89\_2026-27-Zone, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work : Zone No. 26 (General Zone) under AEN/Rampurhat, P.E. 30.06.2027 Jurisdiction from Rampurhat (including Yard) to Dumka. The work includes the General work, Sanitary work, Wood work, Colour wash/White wash, etc. under AEN/Rampurhat. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 75,00,000/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,50,000/- **(6) E-Tender No.: 90\_2026-27-Zone, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work : Zone No. 27 (General Zone) under AEN/Rampurhat, P.E. 30.06.2027 Jurisdiction from 88/0 to Km 135/0 including all Stations, Colony and all Service Buildings, various structures from Rampurhat to Bansloi Bridge. The work includes the General work, Sanitary work, Wood work, Colour wash/White wash etc. under the jurisdiction of AEN/Rampurhat. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 1,15,00,000/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 2,30,000/- **(7) E-Tender No.: 91\_2026-27-Zone, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work : Zone No. 36 (Road Zone-LC gates and station approach road etc.) under AEN/RPH under the jurisdiction of Sr. DEN/4/HWH. [Description: Overall percentage above/below/at par over the rates of CPWD-DSR-2023 Items of Engineering Department on all chapters with up to date correction slips etc. [Value Rs. 75,00,000.00] NOTE: 1. The tenderer is to quote only one rate against the tender. The advertised value is the departmental assessed value. 2. The departmental assessed value/advised value has been chalked out considering at par with the basic cost of CPWD-DSR-2023 Items. This denotes that no escalation over the basic cost has been considered in firming up the assessed cost for the instant tender. 3. For firming up the assessed cost/advised cost of this zonal tender, contribution of i) Earth Work - 4% in chapter no. 2. ii) Mortar - 2% in chapter no. 3. iii) Concrete Work - 4% in chapter no. 4. iv) Masonry work - 4% in chapter no. 6. v) Steel Work - 5% in chapter no. 10. vi) Dismantling and Demolishing - 1% in chapter no. 15. vii) Road Work - 80% only 4. During execution, the respective schedules from the above mentioned percentage may be varied, if necessary is felt, with the approval of the competent authority. Finance vetting if warranted, may also be sought for in this context. 5. The above instructions are only for guidance to the tenderers. Tenderers should consider the above aspects while quoting rates. 7) Tenderers while quoting rates should quote the rates % above/below/at par w.r.t. the assessed/advised value, as reflected against the respective schedules, considering escalation and effect of GST and other taxes as applicable. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 75,00,000/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,50,000/- **(8) E-Tender No.: 92\_2026-27-Zone, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work : Zone No. 37 (Road Zone-LC gates and station approach road etc.) under AEN/BHP under the jurisdiction of Sr. DEN/4/HWH. [Description: Overall percentage above/below/at par over the rates of CPWD-DSR-2023 Items of Engineering Department on all chapters with up to date correction slips etc. [Value Rs. 75,00,000.00] NOTE: 1. The tenderer is to quote only one rate against the tender. The advertised value is the departmental assessed value. 2. The departmental assessed value/advised value has been chalked out considering at par with the basic cost of CPWD-DSR-2021 Items. This denotes that no escalation over the basic cost has been considered in firming up the assessed cost for the instant tender. 3. For firming up the assessed cost/advised cost of this zonal tender, contribution of i) Earth Work - 4% in chapter no. 2. ii) Mortar - 2% in chapter no. 3. iii) Concrete Work - 4% in chapter no. 4. iv) Masonry work - 4% in chapter no. 6. v) Steel Work - 5% in chapter no. 10. vi) Dismantling and Demolishing - 1% in chapter no. 15. vii) Road Work - 80% only 4. During execution, the respective schedules from the above mentioned percentage may be varied, if necessary is felt, with the approval of the competent authority. Finance vetting if warranted, may also be sought for in this context. 5. The above instructions are only for guidance to the tenderers. Tenderers should consider the above aspects while quoting rates. 7) Tenderers while quoting rates should quote the rates % above/below/at par w.r.t. the assessed/advised value, as reflected against the respective schedules, considering escalation and effect of GST and other taxes as applicable. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 75,00,000/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,50,000/- **Tender Form Cost :** Nil for each. **Completion Period:** 12 (Twelve) months from the date of issue of acceptance letter for each. In case the date of closing mentioned in the Notice Inviting Tender is declared a holiday/bandh/strike on any account, the date of closing tender online will not be changed as the application in the website of IREPS does not permit submission of any offer after closing date and time of the tender. However, opening of tenders online will be done next working day. **Closing date and time of tender :** 18.06.2026 at 14.00 hrs. The details of tender are available at website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) Tenderers are requested to submit their offer online on the above website. Payment of earnest money deposit (EMD) & Tender document cost, in respect of E-tendering, should be accepted through net banking or payment gateway only. **NOTE:** Fixed Deposit Receipt (FDR) will not be accepted as EMD for tenders invited on IREPS (E-tender portal). No manual offer will be accepted. (HWH-116/2026-27) **Tender Notice is also available at websites : [www.er.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.er.indianrailways.gov.in) / [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)****************

Follow us at : @EasternRailway @easternrailwayheadquarter

**Central University of Punjab**

Dated: 29.05.2026 **RECRUITMENT NOTICE** Advt. CUPB/26-27/007

Online Applications are invited for following contractual Teaching post:  
Assistant Professor (Education for M.Ed.-01-UR)

To apply online and for more details, visit website [www.cup.edu.in](http://www.cup.edu.in). Registrar

Badal-Bathinda Road, VPO Ghudda, Distt Bathinda-151401, Email: [recruitment@cup.edu.in](mailto:recruitment@cup.edu.in)

विज्ञापन का हिंदी रूपान्तर विश्वविद्यालय की वेबसाइट पर उपलब्ध है।

**EASTERN RAILWAY**

Following e-Tenders are invited online by Divisional Railway Manager, Eastern Railway, Howrah, DRM Building, near Howrah Railway Station, Howrah-711011 from Tenderers having experience of Similar Nature of work and required Financial capabilities including those Registered with Irrigation/CPWD/SEB/MES or any public sector undertaking for the following work : Sr. DEN/3/Howrah. (1) E-Tender No.: 74\_2026-27-Zone, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work : Zone No. 20 (General Zone) under AEN/Katwa P.E. 30.06.2027 [Jurisdiction Zonal Works for- Km. 89/0-107/0 in BB Loop, all Service Buildings, Colonies including Wood & Sanitary and Colour wash/White wash and other petty repairs of all service building & other structure under AEN/Katwa. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 85,00,000/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,70,000/- **(2) E-Tender No.: 75\_2026-27-Zone, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work : Zone No. 21 (General Zone) under AEN/Katwa P.E. 30.06.2027 [Jurisdiction Zonal Works for- Km. 107/0 to 125/0 in BB Loop, A-K & Katwa - Balgona BG Section [Excluding Balgona] including Katwa station, all Service Buildings, Colonies including Wood & Sanitary and Colour wash/White wash and other petty repairs of all service building & other structure under AEN/Nabadwip Dham. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 66,00,000/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,32,000/- **(3) E-Tender No.: 76\_2026-27-Zone, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work : Zone No. 22 (General Zone) under AEN/Nabadwip Dham P.E. 30.06.2027 [Jurisdiction Zonal Works for- Km. 02/0 -89/0 in BB Loop, all Service Buildings, Colonies including Wood & Sanitary and Colour wash/White wash and other petty repairs of all service building & other structure under AEN/Nabadwip Dham. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 88,00,000/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,76,000/- **(4) E-Tender No.: 77\_2026-27-Zone, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work : Zone No. 28 (General Zone) under AEN/Azimganj P.E. 30.06.2027 [Jurisdiction Zonal Works for- Km. 2.2 to 43.74 in Azimganj-Naihati section including Service Buildings, Colonies including Wood & Sanitary and Colour wash/White wash and other petty repairs of all service building & other structure under AEN/Azimganj. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 60,00,000/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,20,000/- **(5) E-Tender No.: 78\_2026-27-Zone, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work : Zone No. 29 (General Zone) under AEN/Azimganj P.E. 30.06.2027 [Jurisdiction Zonal Works for- Km. 125/0 to 181/0 including Azimganj station and all assets of AZ service building, Colonies including Wood & Sanitary and Colour wash/White wash and other petty repairs of all service building & other structure (2000000 for AZ loco shed work and AZ coaching depot) under AEN/Azimganj. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 68,00,000/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,36,000/- **(6) E-Tender No.: 79\_2026-27-Zone, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work : Zone No. 33 (Road zone - LC gates and station approach road etc.) under AEN/Katwa P.E. 30.06.2027 under the jurisdiction of Sr. DEN/3/Howrah. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 56,00,000/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,12,000/- **(7) E-Tender No.: 80\_2026-27-Zone, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work : Zone No. 34 (Road zone - LC gates and station approach road etc.) under AEN/Nabadwip Dham P.E. 30.06.2027 under the jurisdiction of Sr. DEN/3/Howrah. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 56,00,000/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,12,000/- **(8) E-Tender No.: 81\_2026-27-Zone, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work : Zone No. 35 (Road zone - LC gates and station approach road etc.) under AEN/Azimganj P.E. 30.06.2027 under the jurisdiction of Sr. DEN/3/Howrah. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 56,00,000/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,12,000/- **(9) E-Tender No.: 82\_2026-27-Zone, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work : Zone No. 45 (Bridge Zone) All Bridges including FOBs, RUBs/ROBs etc. of AEN/Katwa Section, Repairs & maintenance work of various bridges under the jurisdiction of AEN/Katwa, P.E. 30.06.2027. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 56,00,000/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,12,000/- **(10) E-Tender No.: 83\_2026-27-Zone, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work : Zone No. 46 (Bridge Zone) All Bridges including FOBs, RUBs/ROBs etc. of AEN/Nabadwip Dham Section, Repairs & maintenance work of various bridges under the jurisdiction of AEN/Nabadwip Dham, P.E. 30.06.2027. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 56,00,000/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,12,000/- **(11) E-Tender No.: 84\_2026-27-Zone, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work : Zone No. 47 (Bridge Zone) - All Bridges including FOBs, RUBs/ROBs etc. of AEN/Azimganj Section, Repairs & maintenance work of various bridges under the jurisdiction of AEN/Azimganj, P.E. 30.06.2027. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 56,00,000/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,12,000/- **(12) E-Tender No.: 96\_2026-27, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work :** Providing water supply by submersible pump facility to various Level Crossing Gates under jurisdiction of AEN/Azimganj and Provision of sinking Deep Tube Well (350x200 mm dia) with Pump house including pipeline, additional Electrical meter cum switch for Nabadwip Dham Railway colony under AEN/Nabadwip Dham. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 93,35,379/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,86,707/- **(13) E-Tender No.: 97\_2026-27, dated 29.05.2026. Description of work:** Howrah Division-TFTR-3.008 TKM, BDC-KWAE: Up 12.625-13.100-0.475 Km, 76.285-76.466-0.181 Km, 11.930-12.820-0.890 Km, 76.286-76.450-0.164 Km, 79.597-80.310-0.713 Km, 80.440-81.025-0.585 Km under jurisdiction of Sr. DEN/3/Howrah. **Approx. Cost :** ₹ 4,78,01,692.46 **Earnest Money:** ₹ 9,56,000/- **Completion Period:** P.E. 30.06.2027 for Sl. No. 1 to 11, 04(Four) months********************

**CHANGE OF NAME**  
I, Seema Agrawal, W/o, Uttam Kumar Agarwal, residing at Aryahi Apt. B1-A, 4th Floor, 265/A/4, G. T. Road, Bally (M), Liliuh, Howrah-711204, solemnly affirm and declare Before the Notary Public at Kolkata vide Affidavit No. 29AC321303 dated 29th May 2024 that I have Changed my name as Seema Agrawal. That Seema Agrawal and Seema Agarwal are the same and one identical person.

**"IMPORTANT"**  
Whilst care is taken prior to acceptance of advertising copy, it is not possible to verify its contents. The Indian Express (P) Limited cannot be held responsible for such contents, nor for any loss or damage incurred as a result of transactions with companies, associations or individuals advertising in its newspapers or Publications. We therefore recommend that readers make necessary inquiries before sending any monies or entering into any agreements with advertisers or otherwise acting on an advertisement in any manner whatsoever.

**RAJASTHAN RAJYA VIDYUT UTPADAN NIGAM LTD.**  
Suratgarh Super Thermal Power Station, Suratgarh-335805  
**E-Tender Notice : TN-2167 (RVU2627GLOB00413)**  
Online tenders are invited for "Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of CCTV Surveillance System with 3 years comprehensive onsite warranty at various location of SSTPS, Suratgarh." Tender details are available on websites <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> (for e-tender), [www.energy.rajasthan.gov.in/rvunl](http://www.energy.rajasthan.gov.in/rvunl) & [www.sppp.rajasthan.gov.in](http://www.sppp.rajasthan.gov.in).  
Raj.Samwad/C/26/3708 RVUN/PR-4401 Addl. Chief Engineer (Proc.)

**The Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd**  
(A Govt. of Kerala Undertaking) Sankaramangalam, Kollam-691 583  
Phone: 0476-2651215 to 2651217. e-mail: [mo@kmmil.com](mailto:mo@kmmil.com), [www.kmmil.com](mailto:www.kmmil.com)  
**TENDER NOTICE**  
For more details please visit E-Tendering Portal, <https://etenders.kerala.gov.in> or [www.kmmil.com](http://www.kmmil.com)  

SI No.	Tender Id	Items
1	2026_KMML_853258_1	Supply of Poly Aluminium Chloride Gr.Commercial SAB-18
2	2026_KMML_853226_1	Supply of safety shoes for DCW Employees

  
Chavara 29.05.2026 Sd/- Managing Director for The Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd

**Karnataka Soaps & Detergents Limited**  
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)  
Sandal City: P.B No. 5531, Bengaluru - Pune Highway, Bengaluru - 560055. Ph: 080-22164879, 22164886,  
Website: [www.mysorasandal.org](http://www.mysorasandal.org) E-mail: [ksdl.dgmmts@gmail.com](mailto:ksdl.dgmmts@gmail.com)  
An ISO-9001:2015 & 14001:2015 Company  
Date : 29.05.2026

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**  
Tenders are invited by **KS&DL** in two cover system through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal (Website: <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in/>) with respect to supply of following Goods/Services/Works.

Sl.No.	Tender Number	Tender Name	Tender Quantity	Published date	Last date of submission
1	KSDL/2026-27/SE0243	Appointment of Consultants for Architectural & Engineering Design Services for Soap Factory Buildings and Allied Works at Ittangi Industrial Area in Vijayapura District.	Services	29.05.2026	16.06.2026
2	KSDL/2026-27/IND1216/CALL-3	Procurement of Amryis oil	13200 Kgs	29.05.2026	08.06.2026
3	KSDL/2026-27/SE0232/CALL-2	Selection of Agency for Outsourcing End-to-End Production Activity of Three New Variants of Soaps	Services	29.05.2026	08.06.2026

For any queries contact the undersigned  
Sd/- Asst. Gen. Manager (Materials)

**EASTERN RAILWAY**  
Tender No. : SDSTE-POWER-CABLE-IPS-26 Date 27.05.2026. Divisional Railway Manager, Eastern Railway, Howrah, New DRM Building, near Railway Museum, Howrah-711101 invites Open e-Tenders against Tender No. SDSTE-POWER-CABLE-IPS-26 for the following work. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Name of Work: Provision of Stand by Power Cable from Auto Change Over panel to IPS and IPS to Relay Room by using 16 sq. mm. copper cables in ring arrangement over Howrah Division. Bidding System: Single Packet. Advertised Value: ₹ 5,74,50,242/-. Earnest Money/Bid Security: ₹ 11,49,000/-. Tender Document Cost: ₹ 0.00. Period of Completion: 9 months. Validity of Offer: 60 Days. Bidding Start Date: 05.06.2026. Tender Closing Date & Time: 19.06.2026 at 15.00 hrs. The details are available at website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)  
HWH-109/2026-27  
Tender Notices are also available at Website [www.er.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.er.indianrailways.gov.in)  
Follow us at: @EasternRailway @easternrailwayheadquarter

**EASTERN RAILWAY**  
Tender No. : SDSTE-SEG-IPS-SSDAC-26 Date 27.05.2026. Divisional Railway Manager, Eastern Railway, Howrah, New DRM Building, near Railway Museum, Howrah-711101 invites Open e-Tenders against Tender No. SDSTE-SEG-IPS-SSDAC-26 for the following work. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Name of Work: Segregation of Separate Power Supply from IPS for SSDAC Installation over Howrah Division. Bidding System: Two Packet. Advertised Value: ₹ 11,71,88,651.74. Earnest Money/Bid Security: ₹ 23,43,800/-. Tender Document Cost: ₹ 0.00. Period of Completion: 9 months. Validity of Offer: 90 Days. Bidding Start Date: 05.06.2026. Tender Closing Date & Time: 19.06.2026 at 15.00 hrs. The details are available at website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)  
HWH-108/2026-27  
Tender Notices are also available at Website [www.er.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.er.indianrailways.gov.in)  
Follow us at: @EasternRailway @easternrailwayheadquarter

**KONKAN RAILWAY CORPORATION LIMITED**  
(A Government of India Undertaking)  
**TENDER NOTIFICATION**  
By Chief Engineer (Works), Konkan Railway Corporation Limited, Ratnagiri, invites Open Tender Single Packet Bid system through E-Tendering on IREPS Portal from eligible contractors for the following work: Name of work: Conversion of Platform from Rail Level to High Level at Sape Wamane Station in Ratnagiri region of Konkan Railway. Tender Notice No.: KR-RNDY/SEC-SAPE-4-2026  
Date: 29/05/2026. Total Estimated cost: ₹ 1,20,56,917.71/- (Excluding GST). Bidding start date: 05/06/2026. Closing Date/Time: 19/06/2026 upto 15:00 Hrs for submission of on line offers/bids. Completion period: 6 months. Manual offers shall not be accepted. Please visit <https://www.ireps.gov.in> website for details/participation and corrigendum/addendum will be hosted on this website only.

**पंजाब नैशनल बैंक Punjab National Bank**  
...मरसे का प्रतीक!  
...the name you can BANK upon!  
**CIRCLE OFFICE KHARAGPUR SAM DEPT.**  
4th Floor, MS Tower 2, Near HP Petrol Pump, Atwal Real Estate, O.T. Road, Inda, Kharagpur, Paschim Medinapur, Pin-721305, E mail: [cokgpsam@pnb.bank.in](mailto:cokgpsam@pnb.bank.in)

**National Centre for Radio Astrophysics**  
TATA INSTITUTE OF FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH  
Post Bag No. 3, Ganeshkhind, Pune 411007  
Email: [est@ncra.tifr.res.in](mailto:est@ncra.tifr.res.in); URL: <http://www.ncra.tifr.res.in>  
**Recruitment Advt. No. 2026/07**  
NCRA is a unit of TIFR which is deemed to be a university and an autonomous institute of Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India. NCRA-TIFR has set up two radio telescopes, including the Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope, which is the world's largest radio telescope at metre wavelengths. NCRA-TIFR is on a look out for the following position for its Centre in Pune.  
**Administrative Officer-E**  
[1-Post; UR; HQ: Pune]  
Last Date is 30-June-2026. For detailed advertisement and for making online application, visit <https://tinyurl.com/ncrajob-2026>

**BENGALURU NORTH CITY CORPORATION**  
Office of the Executive Engineer, Hebbala Division, BNCC, Zone-2, 2nd Floor BNCC (Old BBMP) Building, Opp to Indira Canteen, JC Nagar Main Road, Munireddy Palya, Bengaluru-560006  
No:BNCC-Z2/EE/HBL/PR/04/2026-27 Date: 29-05-2026  
**SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION**  
(Through GOK KPP Portal <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in/> only)  
Tenders on Item Rate Basis are invited by the undersigned on behalf of the Commissioner, BNCC for the works mentioned below from the registered contractors of GBA-Bengaluru North City Corporation or Equivalent registration with CPWD/KPWD/Railways/MES or any State Government Organizations. (STD KW-3)

**E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002**  
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Constructive/ Physical / Symbolic Possession of which has been taken by the authorized officer of the bank/secured creditor, will be sold on "As is Where is", "As is What is" and "Whatever there is" on the date as mentioned in the table herein below, for recovery of its dues due to the bank/ secured creditor from the respective borrower (s) and guarantors (s). The reserve price and the earnest money deposit will be as mentioned in the table below against the respective properties.

**ANNEXURE-B**  
**SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY**

Sl. No.	A) Name of Branch B) Name of the Account C) Name & Address of the Borrower/ Guarantors Account	Description of the Immovable Properties Mortgaged/ Owner's name [Mortgagors of Property(ies)]	A) Date of Demand Notice u/s 13(2) of SARFAESI Act, 2002 B) Outstanding Amount C) Date of Possession u/s 13(4) of SARFAESI Act, 2002 D) Nature of Possession (Symbolic/ Physical/ Constructive)	A) Reserve Price B) EMD C) Bid Increase Amount	Date/ Time of E-Auction  Details of the encumbrances known to the secured creditors
1.	A) Jamna (199600) B) M/s Acharya Medical Prop. Shri Badal Kumar Acharya Account Nos. 1996008700003119 & 199600NC00001883 C) Borrower & Mortgagor: Acharya Medical, Prop. Badal Kumar Acharya, Village & P.O. Lutunia, P.S. Sabang, District- Paschim Medinipur, Pin-721140 Guarantor & Mortgagor: Mr. Dulal Acharya, Village & P.O. Lutunia, P.S. Sabang, District- Paschim Medinipur, Pin-721140 Legal Heirs of Late Mr. Mrinal Kanti Acharya, Village & P.O. Lutunia, P.S. Sabang, District- Paschim Medinipur, Pin-721140 Mr. Binoy Acharya, Village & P.O. Lutunia, P.S. Sabang, District- Paschim Medinipur, Pin-721140	Equitable mortgage of land & building located at Mouza-Andulia, P.S. Sabang, J.L. No. 144, Sabek Khatian No. 125 (Hal Khatian No. 10/2, 17/1/2, 95/4, 10/3) Modified L.R. Khatian No. 344, 346, 345, 347, Plot No. 09, Area-0.04 acre (4 decimal) vide Deed no. 03327/2011 in the name of Badal Kumar Acharya, Dulal Acharya, Mrinal Kanti Acharya and Binoy Acharya. Butted & Bounded By: North: Sabang Road, South: Panchayat Road after the Tank of Barendra Nath Guchohait, East: Manoranjan Das, West: Panchayat Road after house of Amar Santra	A) 08.09.2025 B) Rs. 60,32,001.00 (Rupees Sixty Lakh Thirty Two Thousand One only) + further interest and costs [Amount outstanding in Acharya Medical- Rs. 52,92,533.53 and amount outstanding in Badal Kumar Acharya Housing Loan- Rs. 7,39,467.47] C) 18.11.2025 D) Symbolic Possession	A) Rs. 46,97,100.00 B) Rs. 4,69,710.00 C) Rs. 10,000.00	07.07.2026 11.30 AM to 03.30 PM  Not Known to Bank
2.	A) Dantan (018920) B) M/s New Maa Tarani Concrete Firm, Prop. Siddheswar Jana Account Nos. 018920EG00000136, 018920S0812184, 0189307228632 C) Borrower: M/s New Maa Tarani Concrete Firm, Prop. Siddheswar Jana, P.O. Jamuapati, Dantan, Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal-721426 Proprietor & Mortgagor: Mr. Siddheswar Jana, S/o Shatrughna Jana, Jamuapati, Paschim Medinipur, Dantan, West Bengal-721426 Co-Borrower: Partha Sarathi Jana, S/o Siddheswar Jana, Jamuapati, Paschim Medinipur, Dantan, West Bengal-721426 Co-Borrower: Chinmoy Jana, S/o Siddheswar Jana, Jamuapati, Paschim Medinipur, Dantan, West Bengal-721426	Equitable Mortgage of Land and Building situated at Mouza- Jumuapati, A.D.S.R.O. Dantan, P.S. Dantan, Dist. Paschim Medinipur vide deed no. 1408 dt. 21.06.2020, J.L. No. 109, Khatian No. 128 & 129 modified LR Khatian No. 127, RS Plot No. 204, LR Plot No. 217 comprising of 05 Dec. executed in the name of Mr. Siddheswar Jana. Bounded:- North- Siddheswar Jana, South- Road, East- Kishori Mohan Jana, West- Road	A) 04.01.2024 B) Rs. 31,66,701.32 (Rupees Thirty One Lakh Sixty Six Thousand Seven hundred One and Paise Thirty Two only) + further interest and costs C) 31.05.2024 D) Symbolic Possession	A) Rs. 35,10,000.00 B) Rs. 3,51,000.00 C) Rs. 10,000.00	16.06.2026 11.30 AM to 03.30 PM  Not Known to Bank

**TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF E-AUCTION SALE**  
The sale shall be subject to the Terms & Conditions prescribed in the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 and to the following further conditions.  
1. The auction sale will be "online through e-auction" portal <https://baanknet.com>  
2. The intending Bidders/ Purchasers are requested to register on portal <https://baanknet.com> using their email-id and mobile number. Further they are requested to upload requisite KYC documents. Once the KYC documents are verified by a Auction service provider (may take 2 working days), the intending Bidders/ Purchasers has to transfer the EMD amount using online mode in his Global EMD wallet by 2 working days, the intending Bidders/ Purchasers has to transfer the EMD amount using online mode in his Global EMD wallet by 06.07.2026 (for SI. No. 1) and 15.06.2026 (for SI. No. 2) before the e auction Date and Time in the portal. The registration, verification of KYC documents and transfer of EMD in Wallet must be completed well in advance, before auction.  
3. Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) amount as mentioned above shall be paid online through 3 mode i.e NEFT/ Cash/ Transfer (after generation of challan from <https://baanknet.com>) in in bidders Global EMD Wallet, NEFT transfer can be done from any Scheduled Commercial Bank Branch. Payment of EMD by any other mode and will be credited in bidders e-Wallet. Bidders, not depositing the required EMD online, will not be allowed to participate in the e-auction. The Earnest Money Deposited shall not bear any interest.  
4. Platform (<https://baanknet.com>) for e-Auction will be provided by eAuction service provider M/s PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd. having its Registered office at Unit 1, 3rd Floor, VIOS Commercial Tower, Near Wadala Truck Terminal, Wadala East. Mumbai-400037 (Helpdesk Number +91 8291220220, Email Id: [support.BAANKNET@psballiance.com](mailto:support.BAANKNET@psballiance.com)). The intending Bidders/ Purchasers are required to participate in the e-Auction process at e-Auction Service Provider's website <https://baanknet.com>. This Service Provider will also provide online demonstration/ training on e-Auction on the portal.  
5. The Sale Notice containing the General Terms and Conditions of Sale is available / published in the following websites/ web page portal.  
1) <https://baanknet.com> 2) <https://www.pnbindia.bank.in>  
6. The intending participants of e-auction may download fee of cost, copies of the Sale Notice, Terms & Conditions of e-auction, Help Manual on operational part of e-Auction related to this e-Auction from e-auction portal (<https://baanknet.com>).  
7. Bidder's e-Wallet should have sufficient balance (>=EMD amount) at the time of bidding.  
8. During the e-auction, bidders will be allowed to offer higher bid in inter-se bidding over and above the last bid quoted and the increase in the bid amount must be of increment amount mentioned. Ten minutes time will be allowed to bidders to quote successive higher bid and if no higher bid is offered by any bidder after the expiry of 10 minutes to the last highest bid, the e-auction shall be closed.  
9. It is the responsibility of intending Bidder(s) to properly read the Sale Notice, Terms & conditions of e-auction, Help Manual on operational part of e-Auction and follow them strictly.  
10. In case of any difficulty or need of assistance before or during e-Auction process, bidder may contact authorized representative of our e-Auction Service Provider M/s PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd. Details of which are available on the <https://baanknet.com> portal.  
11. After finalization of e-Auction by the Authorized Officer, only successful bidder will be informed by our above referred service provider through SMS/ email. (On mobile no/ email address given by them/ registered with the service provider).  
12. The secured asset will not be sold below the reserve price.  
13. The successful bidder shall have to deposit 25% (twenty five percent) of the bid amount, less EMD amount deposited, on the same day or not later than the next working day and the remaining amount shall be paid within 15 days from the date of auction in the form of Banker's Cheque/ Demand Draft issued by a Scheduled Commercial Bank drawn in favour of "The Authorized Officer, Punjab National Bank, in case of failure to deposit the amounts as above within the stipulated time, the amount deposited by successful bidder will be forfeited to the Bank and Authorized Officer shall have the liberty to conduct a fresh auction/ sale of the property & the defaulting bidder shall not have any claim over the forfeited amount and the property.  
14. Payment of sale consideration by the successful bidder to the bank will be subject to TDS under Section 194-1A of Income Tax Act 1961 and TDS is to be made by the successful bidder only at the time of deposit of remaining 75 % of the bid amount/ full deposit of BID amount.  
15. The Authorized Officer reserves the right to accept any or reject all bids, if not found acceptable or to postpone/ cancel/ adjourn/ discontinue or vary the terms of the auction at anytime without assigning any reason whatsoever and his decision in this regard shall be final.  
16. The sale certificate shall be issued in the favour of successful bidder on deposit of full bid amount as per the provisions of the act.  
17. The properties are being sold on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" and "WHATEVER THERE IS BASIS".  
18. The particulars of Secured Assets specified in the Schedule hereinabove have been stated to the best of the information of the Authorized Officer, but the Authorized Officer shall not be answerable for any error, misstatement or omission in this proclamation.  
19. It shall be the responsibility of the bidders to inspect and satisfy themselves about the asset and specification before submitting the bid. The bidder inspect the property in consultation with the dealing official as per the details provide.  
20. All statutory dues/ attendant charges/ other dues including registration charges, stamp duty, taxes etc. shall have to be borne by the purchaser.  
21. The Authorized Officer or the Bank shall not be responsible for any charge, lien, encumbrances, or any other dues to the Government or anyone else in respect of properties (E-Auctioned) not known to the bank. The Intending Bidder is advised to make their own independent inquiries regarding the encumbrances on the property including statutory liabilities, arrears of property tax, electricity dues etc.  
22. The bidder should ensure proper internet connectivity, power back-up etc. The Bank shall not be liable for any disruption due to internet failure, power failure or technical reasons or reasons/ contingencies affecting the e-auctions.  
23. It is open to the Bank to appoint a representative and make self-bid and participate in the auction. For detailed term and conditions of the sale, please refer <https://baanknet.com> & <https://www.pnbindia.bank.in>.  
24. The sale shall be subject to the Terms & Conditions prescribed in the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.  
25. The sale shall be done by the undersigned through e auction platform at the website <https://baanknet.com> on 07.07.2026 at 11.30 AM to 03.30 PM for SI. No. 1 and on 16.06.2026 at 11.30 AM to 03.30 PM for SI. No. 2.

Date: 30.05.2026  
Place: Circle Office, Kharagpur  
Authorized Officer  
Punjab National Bank, Secured Creditor, Circle Office, Kharagpur

**KONKAN RAILWAY CORPORATION LIMITED**  
(A Government of India Undertaking)  
**E-Tender Notice**  
On behalf of Konkan Railway Corporation Ltd., Divisional Electrical Engineer, KRCL, Ratnagiri, is inviting E-Open Tenders for the following work: Name of the work - Composite work (All Electrical + Civil work) for Design, Supply, erection, testing, commissioning of Passenger Lift (Machine room less), 02 nos each for FOB at Kudal and Kankavali stations under Ratnagiri region of Konkan Railway (20 Passenger Lift/ 1360Kgs / 1 Speed / 2 Floors / 2 Stops / Stainless Steel (1.5 Mm) Car Cabin). As per RDSO approval and specification. (Spec No. RDSO/2013/EM/SPEC/0016 (Rev'2)-2025 or latest).  
Tender No. KR/RN/EL/T/17/2026 DATED 29.05.2026. Estimated cost - ₹ 2,43,23,999/- (Excluding GST). Cost of Tender form - NIL, EMD - ₹ 4,86,500/- (or as shown on IREPS portal). Last date and time of depositing of tender ON LINE : 19/06/2026 upto 15:00 hrs. For further details, contact office of Divisional Electrical engineer, MIDC area, Mirjole, Ratnagiri or on Railway web site ([www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)).

**CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS**  
**OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE**  
The following e-Tenders can be accessed under the link [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). Offers for such e-Tender can be submitted only electronically by accessing the link [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) → login → E-Tender Stores/Supply. Vendors may also contact the following officials to obtain clarification regarding particular tender or IREPS related information if any. Dy.CMM/CLW/Chittaranjan, 9163340721 or AMM/P, 9163342476 for notice Sl. No. [A] and Dy.CMM/IL/CLW/Chittaranjan, 9163340708 or AMM/M, 9163340706 for notice Sl.No. [B] & [C]. OFFICE ADDRESS: Office of the PCMM/CLW/Chittaranjan, [A] Notice No.: COS/CRJ/PUB/e-Tender/19/0162, Date: 22/05/2026, Sl. No.: [1]. Tender No.: 74263708. Brief Description of Item: Bogie Frame Complete for 3-Phase Co-Co Locomotives [Type WAG-9HC]. Spec. No. - CLW/MS/3/BOGIE/003 Alt-3, Drg. No. - 1209-01.112-202 Alt-1 [Set means Loco Set and one Loco Set consists of 02 [Two] Bogie Frames] [Warranty Period: 72 Months after the date of delivery]. Quantity: 595.00 Set. Earnest Money Deposit (Rupees): ₹5000000.00. Tender Closing Date & Time (IST):22/06/2026 at 11:00 AM. [B] Notice No.: COS/CRJ/PUB/e-Tender/19/0162, Date: 23/05/2026, Sl. No.: [1]. Tender No.: 75264019. Brief Description of Item: Central Under Frame Assy. for WAG-9HC Loco as per Spec. No. CLW/MS/3/154 Alt-3 or latest, Drg. No. 1209-02.126-005 [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery]. Quantity: 358.00 Set. Earnest Money Deposit (Rupees): ₹2000000.00. Tender Closing Date & Time (IST):17/06/2026 at 11:00 AM. [C] Notice No.: COS/CRJ/PUB/e-Tender/19/0162, Date: 26/05/2026, Sl. No.: [1]. Tender No.: 75264022. Brief Description of Item: Centre Sill Complete for WAG-9HC, Drg. No.1209-02.126-012 Alt.3 as per Spec. No. CLW/MS/3/154 Alt.3 [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery]. Quantity: 292.00 Set. Earnest Money Deposit (Rupees): ₹2000000.00. Tender Closing Date & Time (IST):24/06/2026 at 11:00 AM. PR7359 PCMM/CLW Chittaranjan  
Like us on: [www.facebook.com/Chitralways](https://www.facebook.com/Chitralways)

**Public Notice**  
It is hereby informed to the general public that I, M.B. Karthik, also known as Moothath Biju Karthik, son of M.V. Biju alias Moothath Velayudhan Biju & Geeta Biju, aged about 18 years, residing at South City, Tower 4, Flat No. 31A, 375, Prince Anwar Shah Road, Kolkata-700068, declare through Affidavit No. 6112 dated 20.03.2026 under first class judicial magistrate Alipore court Kolkata that M.B. Karthik and Moothath Biju Karthik represent one and the same person. Both names belong to me and are used interchangeably in my personal and official documents. All concerned authorities and the general public are requested to take note of the same.  
Place : Kolkata Date : 29.05.2026  
Sd/- M.B. Karthik/ Moothath Biju Karthik

**पंजाब नैशनल बैंक Punjab National Bank**  
Asset Recovery Management Branch, Kolkata North, Salt Lake, Sec-1, 3rd Floor, DD 11, Kolkata-700064. E Mail: [asr206@pnb.bank.in](mailto:asr206@pnb.bank.in)  
**Withdrawal of Sale**  
With reference to the E-auction Sale Notice pertaining to the Property of M/S Janata Welding Works, Prop. Late Gopal Majhi (alias Lt Gopal Chandra Majhi (SI No. 7), which was inadvertently published in this Newspaper on 22.05.2026 and which would be conducted on 08.06.2026 have been withdrawn due to some Technical Issue. Sd/ Authorized Officer Date: 30.05.2026, Place: Kolkata Punjab National Bank

indianexpress.com



**I arrive at a conclusion not an assumption.**  
Inform your opinion with detailed analysis.

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**CHANGE OF NAME**  
I, Uttam Kumar Agrawal, S/o, Shyam Sundar Agarwal, residing at Aryahi Apt. B1-A, 4th Floor, 265/A/4, G. T. Road, Bally (M), Liliuh, Howrah-711204, solemnly affirm and declare Before the Notary Public at Kolkata vide Affidavit No. 29AC321306 dated 29th May 2024 that I have Changed my name as Uttam Kumar Agarwal. That Uttam Kumar Agrawal and Uttam Kumar Agarwal are the same and one identical person.

**PIRAMAL FINANCE LIMITED**  
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Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Loan Code	Demand Notice Date and Amount With NPA Date	Property address
[LC No. BLSA0004E932 of Burdwan Branch] Mijan Seikh (Borrower) Sufia Seikh (Co Borrower 1)	Dt: 20-05-2026 / ₹ 2103901/- (₹ Twenty one lakh Three Thousand Nine Hundred One Only) NPA (06-05-2026)	All that piece and parcel of 7.00 decimals (5.00 decimals as Bastu and 2.00 decimals as Shali) land in R.S. & L.R. Plot/ Dag No. 4016, situated at Mouza- Berela, J. L. No.6, L. R. Khatian No. 3463 & 3844, lying and situated at P.S. & A.D.S.R. Pandua, District- Hooghly, within the jurisdiction of Berela-Konchimali Gram Panchayat.
[LC No. BLSA0006CB42 of Garia Branch] Bibhas Jana (Borrower) Sujata Jana (Co Borrower 1) Souvik Jana (Co Borrower 2)	Dt: 30-05-2026 / ₹ 3369691.43 /- (₹ Thirty three lakh Ninety Nine Thousand Six Hundred Ninety One Only and Forty Three Paise) NPA (06-05-2026)	Land with Building Three Stories, Holding No.10871, Gangaganagar Plot 33/2 P.S. Mouza Gangaganagar L.O.P-33, RS dag.355.356, Scheme 32/2 Colony- Airport Ward 26 under Madhyamgram MC, Near Julien Day School, Residential, North 24 Parganas, Madhyamgram, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, Property details: All that piece and parcel of land measuring about 1 Corah together with structure 390 Sq. ft. be the same little more or less, lying and situated at Mouza- Gangaganagar, comprised in C.S. & R.S. Dag Nos. 355 & 356, L.O.P.No.33, Toudi No.146, J.L. No.49, scheme No.33/2, Holding No.10871, 2 no. Colony, Ward No.18 within the limits of Madhyamgram under Police Station Kutulpur within the limits of Mirzapur Gram panchayat in the District of Bankura Pin: 722154.
[LC No. BLSA0002CE3 of Bankura Branch] Koushik Mukherjee (Borrower) Snigdha Chakroborty (Co Borrower 1)	Dt: 20-05-2026 / ₹ 2015947 /- (₹ Twenty lakh Fifteen Thousand Nine Hundred Forty Seven Only) NPA (06-05-2026)	All that piece and parcel of land measuring about 9 Decimal Comprised in or forming part of R.S & L.R Plot No. 5914 under L.R. Khatian No. 9173/3, Mouza Mirzapur J.L. NO. 22 Toudi No. 19 Post Office Rabighani under Police Station Kutulpur within the limits of Mirzapur Gram panchayat in the District of Bankura Pin: 722154.

If the said Borrowers shall fail to make payment to PFL as aforesaid, PFL shall proceed against the above secured assets under Section 13(4) of the Act and the applicable Rules, entirely at the risks of the said Borrowers as to the costs and consequences. The said Borrowers are prohibited under the Act from transferring the aforesaid assets, whether by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of PFL. Any person who contravenes or abets contravention of the provisions of the said Act or Rules made there under, shall be liable for imprisonment and/or fine.  
Date : 30-05-2026 Place : West Bengal  
Sd/- (Authorized Officer) Piramal Finance Limited

Pant steps down as LSG captain after disastrous IPL campaign



Rishabh Pant captained Lucknow Super Giants finished last this season. CREIMAS

Express News Service  
New Delhi, May 29

RISHABH PANT has stepped down as captain of Lucknow Super Giants (LSG), the Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise announced on Friday. This brings to an end a rather forgettable tenure as LSG skipper for Pant, with the wicketkeeper-batsman captaining the side in 28 matches and winning just 10. "Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) wish to formally announce that Rishabh Pant has requested to be relieved of his captaincy duties with the franchise, and the franchisee has accepted his request with immediate effect," said LSG in its statement.

LSG director of cricket Tom Moody further said in the press release that Pant "approached the franchise with the request". Pant had joined the side in the mega auction ahead of the 2025 season for a record fee of Rs 27.50 crore after spending eight seasons with the Delhi Capitals. He was made captain immediately, replacing K.R. Rahul, who went the other way to DC.

LSG, however, ended up winning just six out of their 14 matches in the 2025 season, thus missing out on the playoffs. Their recently concluded 2026 campaign was even worse. With just four wins, LSG finished bottom of the table, tied on eight points with the Mumbai Indians and trailing them on the net run rate.

Individually, Pant has suffered two of his least productive seasons in his IPL career with LSG.

He managed to score just 269 runs in the 2025 season, his worst return since his debut year in 2016, at a strike rate of 133.16 and average of 24.45 in 13 innings.

It has to be noted that 118 of these runs came in a single innings as he scored a century against Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the last match of the season.

Things didn't get better for him with the bat this year as he scored 312 runs in 13 innings at a strike rate of 138.05 and average of 28.36 with one half-century.

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

# Gill upstages Vaibhav on night of openers

After teenager hits a 47-ball 96, Gujarat Titans skipper makes stellar ton to take his team to third final in five years

**SYNOPSIS:** Despite Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's heroic 96, Shubman Gill's century powers Gujarat Titans to the final.

Venkata Krishna B  
Chennai, May 26

THE TWO teams that finished at the top of the league table will fight it out for the IPL 2026 trophy. Going into the game, the openers of both teams were in focus and Gujarat Titans' Shubman Gill and B Sai Sudharsan upstaged Rajasthan Royals' Yashasvi Jaiswal and Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, despite the latter giving another exhibition of his unbelievable capabilities. Set 215 to win, Titans made light work of the chase, entering their third IPL final in five years.

Going for the kill

Even as Sooryavanshi was threatening to take the game away, during the interaction with the host broadcaster, Gujarat's assistant coach Parthiv Patel felt that if they restricted Rajasthan below 220, they were in a good spot. The eventual required run rate at the start of the chase was 10.75, well within Gujarat's reach, provided they stuck to their template.

Having been blown apart in the Powerplay against Royal Challengers Bengaluru, Gill and Sudharsan seldom took any undue risk right through their 167-run stand that lasted 12.5 overs before the left-hander was out hit wicket like he did against RCB. ON display were two elegant batsmen with compact techniques to rely on, playing to their strengths, picking the right deliveries to attack and milking singles and twos effortlessly.

If there was one bowler who could trouble them, it was Jofra Archer, the in-form speedster whose pace and bounce was expected to be handy on the New Chandigarh surface. However, with Archer not finding his range, Sudharsan and Gill hit him for two boundaries each in the first over to set the tone. From there on, runs flowed freely.

India's Test and ODI captain, who was deemed not good enough to fit into the T20 World Cup side, put up a regal show. There was not a delivery which the 26-year-old tried to muscle. Instead, it was all about timing and playing into gaps, while going aerial whenever a chance presented itself.

**Complementing Gill perfectly was Sudharsan, whose array of cuts and drives were second to none. The two openers have 11 century stands in T20s.**

Having already made over 600 runs in the season, the century on Friday in a match-winning cause will only propel his name in discussions when it comes to Indian team selection. Who knows what winning a trophy can do as the temptation of having a single captain for all formats would be too hard to resist for the selectors.

Gill's batting isn't going to be a problem. This was an innings paced perfectly, as he brought up his fifty off 30 deliveries before getting to his fifth IPL century off 47. It was clean, steady acceleration without breaking sweat. On a night when flicks, drives, and swats dictated his innings, it was the three pulls that stood out. Each of them was picked up right in front of his eyes, and was met with the meat of the bat, with one going the distance.

Complementing Gill perfectly was Sudharsan, whose array of cuts and drives were second to none. The two openers have 11 century stands in T20s, the most for any pair in the world.

Running successfully

As RCB had shown in Qualifier I, Gujarat's plans are too rigid. They have certain limitations and have to play around with them. But when the opportunity presented itself to bat them out of the game, the Rajasthan batting, except Sooryavanshi, failed on the night. In the last leg of the tournament, their batting being largely dependent on a 15-year-old summed up their campaign.

Even before they could get a hang of the conditions, they were two down, losing Yashasvi Jaiswal and Dhruv Jurel to two of the best Powerplay bowlers.

Even in the middle order, with the exception of Ravindra Jadeja - who was the first to counter-attack when Sooryavanshi was still searching for rhythm - the rest crumbled against the high-quality Gujarat attack. Rajasthan ended up with 214, but they had kept



Shubman Gill with his trademark celebration on reaching his century against Rajasthan Royals in Qualifier 2 of the IPL in New Chandigarh. KAMLESHWAR SINGH

one door open for Gujarat as this was the sort of target they don't sweat over.

Holding Rajasthan's innings together, before Jadeja and Donovan Ferreira took it past 200, was Sooryavanshi. Having been rattled early by the sheer pace of Rabada, he stood his ground courageously.

There was even an instance where one of the South African's short deliveries - there were plenty of them aimed at his body - hit Sooryavanshi flush on the left ear, needing a short medical break.

But moments later, the left-hander was back to playing pulls and hooks. They weren't his best, but it didn't matter on the night. Those testing moments aside, he was in his element whenever an opportunity presented itself.

Having made a habit recently of getting out in the 90s, he once again narrowly missed a century that was there for the taking, as he fell for 96. The scoreboard will show he took only 47 deliveries. But that won't reveal the full picture of the knock.

**BRIEF SCORES: Rajasthan Royals 214/6 in 20 overs (Vaibhav Sooryavanshi 96, Ravindra Jadeja 45 not out, Donovan Ferreira 38 not out; Jason Holder 2/27) lost to Gujarat Titans 219/3 in 18.4 overs (Sai Sudharsan 58, Shubman Gill 104; Nandre Burger 1/35) by 7 wickets.**

What followed was a riveting

## By playing waiting game, wunderkid proves he is more than just a six-hitter

Venkata Krishna B  
Chennai, May 29

IT WAS a night where 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi showed there's a different side to his batting. So far this season, all of his knocks have been breathtaking, providing edge-of-the-seat entertainment.

On Friday, in the Qualifier II against the Gujarat Titans, on a two-paced pitch in Chandigarh, he had his back against the wall. Wickets kept falling at regular intervals at the other end. The bowlers were not giving him room to free his arms.

The sixes, which seemed to arrive as and when he intended, didn't come easily. He was made to earn them. Sooryavanshi took the challenge head-on. When he was dismissed for 96 runs from 47 balls, he had made an impact once again, despite reaching a half-century in 31 deliveries.

Before Sooryavanshi could hit his first six off the 14th delivery, Rajasthan Royals were already in trouble. Mohammed Siraj took out Yashasvi Jaiswal in the first over. Kagiso Rabada then ended Dhruv Jurel's stay in the second over. Rajasthan responded by sending Ravindra Jadeja at No.4 to provide some solidity.

What followed was a riveting



Vaibhav Sooryavanshi made 96 from 47 balls. PTI

contest. Gujarat maintained aggressive lines and were also delivering some high-quality short stuff. All of this meant that Sooryavanshi didn't get off to the flying start that he usually does.

But it was the innings that Rajasthan needed. The first six arrived only off the 14th delivery he faced off Kagiso Rabada, but what is worth noting is, in the previous 13 deliveries he faced, didn't show the desperation to manufacture one.

Early on against Siraj, he tried to go heave one over the mid-wicket, but the scrambled seam that the pacer delivered meant, it held on the surface. Sooryavanshi didn't connect well. So he immediately put that

shot away for the time being.

While the sixes didn't arrive, there were boundaries to show. There were those plays and misses.

And then there was the pressure factor. He saw wickets falling at the other end. Barring Ravindra Jadeja, who retired hurt and came back again, the rest hardly rose to the occasion, leaving Sooryavanshi with a humongous job of carrying the team to the final.

So far in his brief career, Sooryavanshi has rarely been put on a situation like this. Yet, despite all it, he didn't get into a shell. Instead, whenever the Gujarat attack offered him some sort of room, Sooryavanshi ensured, they were punished.

As Siraj repeatedly hit that hard length in the powerplay, Sooryavanshi took him on. Then in the same over, as Siraj strayed on the leg-side, he got on his knees and swept fine. The timing wasn't there. Perhaps, he was trying too hard to break the shackles. But off the next delivery, a crisply timed flick announced Sooryavanshi has arrived on the night.

Those two boundaries gave him the confidence to take on Rabada. The hard-length which he has been hitting consistently this season had fetched wickets regularly. Here, Sooryavanshi responded with fire - clear the front foot away, and hit it over cover. As a 153kmph delivery landed on the back of the length, the left-hander, having been beaten for pace twice in that over, opened up his stance on the occasion and lofted him straight for his first six. Again, outstanding game sense from a 15-year-old, who had the clarity to go straight and not bring out a cross-batted shot.

Once he brought up his fifty, Sooryavanshi resumed normal service.

Off the next 16 deliveries, he smacked 46, hitting five sixes in the phase as Rajasthan went past the 200-run mark with help from Jadeja and Donovan Ferreira.

## Vallejo fined for sexist remark about female referee: 'Need lot of courage'

Reuters  
Paris, May 29

PARAGUAYAN PLAYER Adolfo Daniel Vallejo will be fined after he suggested women lack the courage to umpire rowdy crowds following his marathon five-hour defeat by a French teenager, the French Tennis Federation (FFT) said on Friday.

Vallejo blamed Brazilian referee Ana Carvalho for failing to control the home crowd during his second-round loss to France's Moise Kouame, who triumphed 6-3, 7-5, 3-6, 2-6, 7-6 (10-8) at a packed Court Suzanne Lenglen. "I think this sort of matches should be umpired by a man," Vallejo told *Clay* magazine. "It's very difficult for a woman to do it because the crowd is very annoying. You need to have a lot of courage to go against the crowd."

The 17-year-old Kouame was roared on by passionate home supporters during the thriller that lasted four hours and 56 minutes, but Vallejo insisted the atmosphere only helped his opponent. "I knew it was going to be like that. It didn't harm me, it only strengthened him," he said, adding that a male umpire



Adolfo Daniel Vallejo of Paraguay. AP

would have "absolutely" made a difference against the "disrespectful" crowd.

The FFT swiftly condemned the comments as "unacceptable" and announced the fine.

"The competence of an umpire is not determined by their gender, but by their professionalism and ability to officiate at the highest level," the FFT said in a statement.

"The outcome of a sporting event, whether positive or negative, can never justify or excuse such remarks. The tournament organisers will impose a significant sanction on Adolfo Vallejo in the form of a fine.

"The Roland Garros tournament strongly condemns all sexist remarks, regardless of who makes them, and offers its support to the match umpire and, more broadly, to all the tournament's umpiring officials."

Vallejo attempted damage control on social media, claiming his comments were taken out of context.

"I never spoke about women in general, I was referring specifically to the referee, who failed to manage the crowd at any point during the match," he posted on X.

turbed by the sweat and the stress of competition, becoming as recognisable as his striking forehead and sometimes volatile temper.

"No secrets, I guess I was just lucky. The way I wake up is the way it is," World No.13 Rublev told reporters following his 7-5, 7-6(2), 7-6(2) third round win over Nuno Borges.

"No, to be honest, of course I take care of my hair."

Rublev said the attention around his hair had shifted with his results over time, turning from curiosity and ridicule into admiration as his ranking climbed. "It's funny because when I was far away from the top 10, it was the opposite. Can he have a normal haircut? What's this with his hair? He looks like a monkey. He has no money to have a haircut?" the former world number five from Russia added.

"Then when you start to be a better player, somehow you appear to the top 10, it's like 'wow, what hair he has, what style, he's a rockstar. I had all my life, this hair. How that opinion changes, you know? Of course I'm taking care (of it), but not (going) crazy.'"

## PSG's appetite for silverware stronger

Reuters  
Paris, May 29

PARIS ST Germain's hunger has not faded after last year's Champions League triumph, with captain Marquinhos and coach Luis Enrique insisting the club's historic breakthrough only sharpened their appetite for more silverware.

PSG face Arsenal in Saturday's final at the Puskas Arena seeking to cement their status among Europe's elite after finally lifting the trophy last season.

But Marquinhos said the emotional high of their 5-0 victory over Inter Milan in last season's showpiece match had only fuelled the squad's determination to experience it again.

"It's really important to have that motivation," Marquinhos told a news conference on Friday.

"Last year we said it and we showed it on the pitch. Once you win the Champions League, once you taste that title and those moments, you want to relive them again."

The Brazilian defender said PSG had learned from last season's run and were now better equipped to handle the pressure and noise surround-



PSG coach Luis Enrique (C) ahead of the Champions League final. AP

ing a Champions League final.

"There are a lot of things around these matches, the expectations, the pressure," he said. "The message in the dressing room was to change nothing, to continue working the same way and keep the same hunger we had last year."

"Even today, I have the same sensations and the same emotions I had last season." Luis Enrique, who guided PSG to their first Champions League title last term, said they were driven less by legacy than by the desire to remain the best team in Europe. "Once is historic, twice is legendary," a banner by PSG ultras recently read.

"But our motivation is not to make history because we already did that last year," Luis Enrique said when asked about the slogan. "Our motivation is to continue being one of the best teams in Europe and in the world."

With Arsenal chasing a first Champions League title in the same way PSG were a year ago, Luis Enrique said his side now had an even greater source of motivation - the chance to win it again.

"It's powerful," he said of Arsenal's drive. "But you know how powerful it is to try to win the second Champions League. It's even bigger."

The coach praised Arsenal

and Mikel Arteta, saying the Premier League side deserved to win the English title after being "the most consistent team."

"They score a lot of goals and we defend very well, but the path to achieve that is different," he said.

PSG forward Ousmane Dembele, who has fully recovered from a calf problem, said his individual ambitions, including Ballon d'Or speculation, were secondary to the club's collective goals.

"It hasn't changed my way of being or my way of playing," Dembele said. "I've always had the desire to win trophies with this club, with this squad and this staff. Individual trophies come afterwards. The most important thing is winning with PSG."

The France forward added that the squad had managed to stay mentally and physically fresh despite another exhausting campaign in which they retained the Ligue 1 title.

"We didn't have many holidays but the coach and the staff managed the season very well," he said. "They gave us time to disconnect from football."

■ Live on Sony Sports Network/Sony Liv: 9:30 pm.

## Pooja breaks Sahana's 14-year-old high jump NR

British Raj  
New Delhi, May 29

POOJA, 19, STEADIED herself before attempting the 1.93m jump at the Asian U20 Athletics Championships in Hong Kong on Friday. She visualised herself taking the strides and jumping and seconds later, executed all of it in a harmonic motion to break the 14-year-old national record.

As she fell on the track shedding tears, in the background, Sahana Kumari couldn't hold herself back either. The high jumper-turned-coach was constantly encouraging Pooja and the tears came out the moment she saw her own record being erased.

"It is a special feeling. I had always said that Pooja is the kid who can break my national record and she has done it today. Honestly, I was not aware that it's been 14 years since I set the record. I came to know when calls started coming. It's a feeling I can't express in words," Sa-

hana told *The Indian Express* from Hong Kong. "I didn't want to cry but couldn't hold myself in joy. She came and hugged me and it was a good feeling."

Pooja, one of India's brightest young athletes for the past two years, had been on the verge of breaking the national record for quite some time. In January, she had jumped 1.90m at the Indian Athletics Series in New Delhi, but her three attempts at the national record were unsuccessful there.

"After a point, getting a new personal best is not easy. We have to go step by step. I believe the national record is near," she had said then.

### Super consistent

Pooja's consistency has been remarkable and she is unbeaten at the national level in six competitions, while holding both the senior and junior Asian titles.

According to Sahana, an early start to her athletics career and body coordination is the



Pooja jumped 1.93m to win gold at Asian U20 Championships. AFI

reason behind her meteoric rise and consistency.

"She started at a young age. Her body is perfect for high jump with excellent coordination. It is very rare for a high jumper to have equal hand action and leg lift. These small things matter. With her pro-

gression, she has a good chance to go past the 2m mark," explained Sahana.

While Sahana was emotional seeing her national record erased by someone she has been advising constantly, Pooja's coach Biran Sergey had another reason to be happy.

"The competition record was held by my wife (Svetlana Radzivil) and it has been broken by my athlete," Sergey told *The Indian Express*.

### Training under Sergey

Pooja started training with Sergey, the husband and coach of the three-time Asian Games champion, this season. It has resulted in Pooja going beyond her personal best twice this year.

"We are working step by step on technique, physical condition and confidence. She is very talented and disciplined, and most importantly, she trusts the process. A big role was also played by her first coach, who gave her the love for sport, the desire to work hard and the right attitude towards training," Sergey said.

He made a few technical adjustments that have been vindicated but feels that they need to stay calm and focus on the upcoming big tournaments.

"We made some technical

adjustments, but I don't want to go into details. We are working on many small things together — approach, rhythm, take-off and confidence in competition. We also pay a lot of attention to the last three steps before take-off," he said. "Right now, the main thing is to stay calm, continue working and progress step by step. This year, there is the World Championships, where it is important to gain experience, but the main target is the Asian Games. We want to be in our best shape for it."

Pooja's consistent performances at the international level has also drawn praise from former greats of the game. Blanka Vlasic, two-time World champion and double Olympic medallist, had words of high praise. "Her progression is brilliant and she is just 19. She just needs to continue doing what she is doing. Once she perfects her technique, sky's the limit for a young athlete like her," the Croat had told *The Indian Express* last month.

## Carlsen beats Gukesh after year-long wait



Magnus Carlsen contemplates his next move. AMIT KAMATH

Amit Kamath  
Oslo, May 29

ON HIS last day as a teenager — and then again on his first day as a 20-year-old — world champion D Gukesh was reminded that there is still some growing up for him to do. On Thursday, the world champion picked up a fight on the board against World no.1 Magnus Carlsen, and lost.

"Gukesh sometimes plays a bit too ambitiously. He wanted to prove a serious advantage today, which I'm not sure there was," Carlsen said later. "Eventually, he played himself into some trouble. And I took over more and more."

Even though Friday was a rest day at the tournament, Gukesh turned 20 in the company of fellow grandmasters, including world championship challenger Javokhir Sindarov and Carlsen. The players spent three hours on sailboats racing against each other at Oslofjord in the annual Norway Chess games, where at least twice, impromptu chorus of 'happy birthday' rang out for a grinning Gukesh.

But just before the players were to get on the boats, a video from the social media team from Norway Chess dropped where other participants at this year's event wished him. Right at the top was Carlsen's message for him, delivered with a cheeky grin: 'Happy birthday, Gukesh. You're not a teenager anymore. So time to grow up.'

Ever since the World No.1 from Norway smashed his fist on the table almost a year ago in reaction to losing at the same tournament to the Indian, the chess world has been eagerly awaiting another Carlsen-Gukesh battle. Thursday's game — the first of two instalments between the two at Norway Chess this year — did not disappoint.

Seats at the Deichman Bjørkvik started to fill up half an hour before the first moves would be made. Fans paying NOK 300 (just over Rs 3,000) had filled out the first two rows of chairs in front of the players.

After Carlsen lost two classical games in the first three rounds of Norway Chess, some of his contemporaries had been wondering aloud if he still had what it takes. Even by his own track record of 'rusty' starts to

tournaments, two losses in the first three rounds was unprecedented. Gukesh's form, meanwhile, has been scrutinised for the past 18 months since he became the youngest world champion in chess history. Almost every defeat is held up as proof that he is not a world champion with impeccable credentials like Carlsen.

In a game that saw an exchange variation of the queen's gambit declined, Gukesh, playing with white pieces, played aggressively, catching the world no.1 off guard at the start.

"Did I miss knight to b5 (Gukesh's ninth move)? Yes! Was it an unpleasant surprise? Yes," Carlsen said in an early visit to the confessional booth.

After Carlsen was left with doubled pawns on the f file, Gukesh had a small edge, according to the eval bar. But the Norwegian soon found a way to bounce back. While Carlsen had struggled to keep up with the clock in the unique time control used at Norway Chess till then, on Thursday it was Gukesh who found himself fighting time trouble in the middle game, needing to make 12 moves in seven minutes.

By the 30th move, Carlsen was winning after Gukesh's bishop to e4. By the 39th, the world champion had to sacrifice his queen in exchange for a rook. Three moves later, he resigned.

Then the duo sat on the board for a few minutes discussing the intricacies of the game in a way they had rarely done after past encounters.

"It was a huge relief (to win today). After missing a few chances (in previous games), you kind of get little doubts in your mind. What's it going to take for me to get it done? Feels good to get that monkey off my back," Carlsen told Take Take Take after the win.

At the 2025 Norway Chess tournament, after Carlsen's first-round win over Gukesh, the Indian had posted a quote from *The Wire* on his X handle: 'You come at the king, you best not miss.'

On Thursday, his X account stayed silent. There is another Carlsen-Gukesh game coming next week, after all.

THE WRITER IS IN OSLO ON THE INVITATION OF NORWAY CHESS

## Suruchi-Esha complete an Indian 1-2 at ISSF WC

Nitin Sharma  
Chandigarh, May 29

IN ALMOST the repeat of the ISSF World Cup Final at Munich last year, where two Indian shooters won gold and silver in the women's 10m air pistol, Suruchi Singh Phogat and Esha Singh made it a 1-2 finish for India this year too.

Phogat claimed her fifth ISSF World Cup title with 21-year-old Esha achieving the rare feat of medals in the 25 m pistol and 10m air including the 25m world record earlier this week. "This is my first World Cup title of the year and the starting has been good for me. I did not face any pressure (to compete against Esha for the gold)," Suruchi said. "The start was not good but after that I got the flow and settled down. I just followed my technique and it went well. It is a very important year with Asian Games and Olympic quota matches too. I hope I will be able to win a medal in the Asian Games and then in the Olympics too," Suruchi told ISSF TV.

The day saw Phogat and Esha finishing eighth and ninth in qualification with scores of 578 each with Phogat having higher inner tens and another Indian Muskan, who was competing in non-medal category, finishing sixth. It meant that Esha too qualified for the eighth-shooter-final. Phogat and Esha edged out Paris Olympics 25m champion Yang Jinn and 10m air pistol champion Oh Ye-jin of

Korea as well as world number one Qianxun Yao of China for the last two spots.

The eight-shooter final had the likes of Tokyo Olympian Choo Gaewn, 25m pistol World Junior silver medallist Mirslava Mincheva of Bulgaria, Granada World Cup champion Shen Yiyao of China, 25m pistol Asian Champion Nguyen Thuy Trang of Vietnam, London Olympics silver medallist Céline Goberville of France apart from Zhang Qi of China.

Goberville grabbed the early lead in the final with her first series of 51.6 followed by Gaewn at the second spot with just 0.1 point behind. Singh shot a first series of 51.5 to be placed third with Qiat at fourth place with Phogat at fifth place with 49.4 points.

Phogat would shoot a second series of 51.5 points to climb to the fourth spot with Gaewn maintaining her top spot followed by Goberville and Singh at fourth and Mincheva at fifth. Chang dropped to sixth spot followed by Thuy and Yiyao at seventh and eighth respectively.

In the elimination stages, Phogat slowly climbed her way up with Esha dropping to fifth but again coming back to the top four before Mincheva was eliminated at the fourth spot. Gaewn followed by hitting some low nines to exit at the third spot.

Phogat, who had a 1.2 lead over Esha, would shoot 10.2 and 10.3 in the last elimination series with Esha shooting 10.1 and 10.7. Phogat won the gold with a lead of 0.9 points.

## Supreme Court clears Vinesh to compete in Asian Games trials

Ashish Shaji  
New Delhi, May 29

THE SUPREME Court on Friday allowed wrestler Vinesh Phogat to participate in Asian Games 2026 selection trials. The court was hearing WFI's plea against the Delhi High Court's order allowing her to compete in the trials scheduled for May 30. "The respondent shall be permitted to participate in the selection trials for Asian Games 2026, which are scheduled for 30 May and 31 May 2026," the bench said in its order.

The court, however, expressed concern over the manner in which the Delhi High Court examined the matter. Phogat, who was on a break from December 2024, included a maternity break, had been permitted to participate in tournaments from January 1 this year by the international wrestling body. The WFI barred her participation and, in the show cause notice, also accused her of indiscipline.

Earlier, the division bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia of Delhi High Court said, "It is necessary that (Phogat) is permitted to participate in the Selection Trials in the interest of sport and justice."

In view of the peculiar facts and circumstances of this case, it is clear that except for (her) motherhood and the SCN issued by WFI, she would be entitled to participate in the Selection Trials. Therefore, the circumstances were beyond her control... It is deemed appropriate to protect the interest of (Phogat) by permitting her to participate in the Selection Trials."

**The respondent shall be permitted to participate in the selection trials for Asian Games 2026.**

## AIMS TO COMPETE IN 53 KG CATEGORY

# Vinesh returns to mat after crossing multiple hurdles

As a precaution will carry her own weighing scale, trusted person will ensure food, water are not tampered

Mihir Vasavda  
Mumbai, May 29

IF THIS were any other tournament, Vinesh Phogat would have been studying her opponents on the eve of her much-anticipated return to competition. Not least because she would be stepping on the mat for the first time in two years on Saturday — this time in the 53kg category.

Instead, the two-time World Championship medallist and a three-time Olympian was glued to the Supreme Court proceedings, where the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) — in their last, desperate attempt — tried hard to stop her from competing in the Asian Games selection trials.

After the bench comprising Justice PS Narasimha and Justice Alok Aradhe cleared her participation, Vinesh and her team's focus quickly turned to Saturday's trials — preparing not just for the expected battles on the mat, but the unexpected ones off it too.

Their measures include carrying their own weighing scales, designating a 'trusted person from the inner circle' to ensure Vinesh's food and water are not tampered with, and filming the bouts, even though the Delhi High Court ordered that the trials be video recorded to ensure fairness.

According to the WFI rules, wrestlers will be given a 1kg exemption during weigh-in for these trials. Vinesh, her team said, 'is within the prescribed weight limit'.

"We are leaving nothing to chance," said a member of Vinesh's entourage. "Although we hope that everything will be done as per the rules and fairly,

we want to take all the precautions on our end too. We will carry our weight machines just in case something fishy comes up during the weigh-in. We will take proper care of the food and water she will consume. We are thankful to the Court for ordering the video recording of the bouts. We hope that it will encourage fair judging."

Since she announced her comeback in December last year, reversing the decision to retire after the Paris Olympics, Vinesh has alleged that the WFI has been 'actively creating roadblocks' and 'twisting rules and regulations' in a way that 'prevents' her from competing again.

### WFI U-turn

The WFI has argued that Vinesh isn't eligible for the Asian Games selection trials because she did not meet the criteria. In a circular on May 6, the WFI said only the medal winners of the 2025 National Championships, held in December, and last February's Federation Cup would be allowed to compete in the selection trials. Vinesh, who gave birth to a baby boy in July last year, did not compete in either tournament.

Vinesh was set to make her comeback at the 2026 Ranking Tournament in Gonda from May 10 to 12, hoping that it would open the door for her to compete in the trials. The WFI, however, excluded the Ranking Tournament from its list of eligible competitions.

It went on to bar her from competing in Gonda, declaring her ineligible due to anti-doping protocols and an ongoing disciplinary hearing.

On May 27, the WFI issued a



Vinesh Phogat will compete in the 53 kg category at the Asian Games trials. EXPRESS PHOTO

**"We are leaving nothing to chance. Although we hope that everything will be done as per the rules and fairly, we want to take all the precautions from our end too."**

### A MEMBER OF VINESH'S TEAM

fresh circular, allowing the Ranking Tournament medallists to compete in this week-end's Asian Games trials.

WFI president Sanjay Singh said the trials would go ahead as scheduled, but when asked about the U-turn, he hung up.

### Key opponents

The latest circular means potentially four more wrestlers in each category, leading to

more bouts and — consequently — a tricky situation for Vinesh, whose stamina would be tested.

On current form, Vinesh's biggest challenge could come from Meenakshi Goyat. The 25-year-old, who boasts of a strong defence, has won two silver medals this year, at the Asian Championship and the Muhamet Malo tournament in Albania. However, her stock has risen in this weight class after she stunned twice World Championship medallist Antim Panghal during the Asian Championship selection trials in March.

Antim was so shocked after the loss that she lay on the mat in disbelief for minutes after the bout. The Paris Olympian, however, would be keen to prove that the defeat was only a blip. After all, the counter-attacking wrestler was the only Indian to return with a medal

from the 2025 World Championship and also won a bronze medal at the Asian Championships, apart from gold medals at the Hungary and Mongolia Ranking series.

A dark horse in this category could be recently-crowned Under-23 Asian Champion Muskan. Only 19, she conceded just two points en route to winning the title in Da Nang, Vietnam, earlier this week. However, the short turnaround time between the two competitions could impact her performance on Saturday.

U-23 World Championship bronze medallist Nishu, who competes in 55kg but is likely to drop to 53 for these trials, is another wrestler who could pose a challenge, along with Hansika Lamba, who won a bronze at the Asian Championship earlier this year, although in the 55kg category.

## SINGAPORE OPEN SUPER 750

# Satwik-Chirag find different ways to skin the cat in quarters

Shivani Naik  
Mumbai, May 29

IN THE current phase of their careers, Satwiksairaj Ranikreddy and Chirag Shetty don't take their big smashing abilities for granted, and use their powers judiciously. While clamping down on Malaysian upstarts Kang Khai King and Aaron Tai, the Indian duo found other ways to get the job done and make the semifinals at the Super 750 Singapore Open on Friday.

While India's singles challenge ended with PV Sindhu fizzling out 21-17, 21-14 to An Seoung and Lakshya Sen suffering his first-ever defeat to Koki Watanabe 19-21, 21-15, 15-21, this would be the first Super 750 level event in a while with two Indian doubles pairings in the last four.

Tanisha Crasto and Dhruv Kapila benefitted from the retirement of World No.3 Toh Ee

Wei and Chen Tang Jie, after Ee Wei injured her knee at 16-18. In the semis on Saturday, they will play unseeded World No.18 Yuichi Shimogami and Sayaka Hobara.

Satwik-Chirag now face the World No.1 left-right pair of Koreans Kim Won-ho and Seo Seung-jae. The Indians are looking for their first win against the pair after two losses.

They scored fewer points (94-95) than the highly-rated Malaysians, aged 20 and 21, while winning 19-21, 21-17, 21-13. The game-style was also energy-efficient, though even a mellow Satwik can cause enough damage with his soft skills. Chirag has been on a roll since the Thailand Super 500.

Kang-Tai had handed Satwik-Chirag a shock loss at the All England. Tai, whose endurance started depleting by the middle of the first game itself, does have some wild racquet-



Satwik-Chirag will face Kim-Saung in the semi-final of the Singapore Open. BADMINTON PHOTO

work in strokes and a proper jump smash. The two Malaysians buzzed around like bees, in contrast to the two tall towers of Indian badminton.

A plan devised by India's

Malaysian coach, Tan Kim Her, was underway, but first up, came the customary Indian first-game dawdle.

Falling 13-18 behind, the Indians pulled off a 5-point surge to level at 18-18. Then in experimental mode, first Chirag then Satwik sent two flick serves, not high enough, that ended up looking like poor choices, as they were hammered down both times, to lose the opening game.

### Comeback on

These days, Satwik-Chirag can shrug off first-game reversals and still win comfortably. The bouncy Malaysians, talked up by no less than PV Sindhu, were coasting at 8-3 up in the second when the Indians decided they had had enough.

The 2022 instinct would've been to amp up the attack and go smashing away. But it's not how the close-circuited, flat ex-

changes game against Malaysians and Indonesians work. So the Indians started cutting at the shuttle gently, shearing it off pace, but lifting and clearing it high enough to not allow Tai a chance to smash it down.

Satwik, in fact, would tempt fate a few times keeping the rally going with soft taps and flicks and even floaty drives adding loopy variations before he would strike the hammer down. A few chosen moments of vintage Satwik-Chirag 1-2s would follow, where Satwik smashed from the back court, with the scrambled weak returns finished off with a Chirag smash.

But at most times, the Indian idea was to stay calm and composed in defence, not allow the rally pace to be dictated, stabilise exchanges, before picking out the opportune time to attack.

The inexperienced Malaysians couldn't feed off the speed of rallies to unleash chaos, and

eventually the Indians cruised to secure a place in the Super 750 semifinals.

A day earlier, Tan had offered crucial advice to Tanisha Dhruv: to not get intimidated by Japanese champ Yuta Watanabe's reputation. "First game, they didn't play their game because they gave too much respect to Yuta," Tan would say.

The comeback kicked in as the Indians reached the quarters beating the famous Japanese from a game down. "Yuta usually plays cross-drive, Tanisha intercepted 3-4 of them. This confused Yuta. Then Tanisha had a very good serve," Tan would explain.

That "not respecting reputations too much" was put into practice on Friday against Malaysian World Champions too till the injury ended the match.

Tan might need to drill the message down Satwik-Chirag too, when facing Seo-Kim.

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