



# Pakistan invites diplomatic strike for Pahalgalam carnage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday here reviewed security situation in the wake of the Pahalgalam terrorist attack killing 26 people and took stock of preparedness to prevent recurrence of such incidents.

He was also briefed during the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) meeting about the ongoing operations to track down the perpetrators of the dastardly act and overall plans to enhance the security grid in Jammu and Kashmir.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and National

Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval took part in the high level meeting that went on for over two-and-a-half hours. The prime minister has vowed that these behind the attack will not be spared and brought to justice. Among those also present at the crucial meeting were Cabinet Secretary T V Somanathan, Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, Foreign Secretary Vikram Miri, besides the prime minister's two principal secretaries P K Mishra and Shakuntala Das.

Earlier in the day, Home Minister Shah visited Baisaran in Pahalgalam, the site where terrorists struck on Tuesday evening, as well as the hospital where some of the injured were being treated.

Incidentally, Prime Minister Modi, who cut short his visit to Saudi Arabia and returned to New Delhi on Wednesday morning, was briefed about all aspects of the incident at the airport by Jaishankar, Doval and Foreign Secretary Vikram Miri.

Meanwhile, Rajnath Singh cautioned people responsible for the 'cowardly terrorist attack' on innocent citizens in Pahalgalam will soon get a 'strong response' to their nefarious acts on Indian soil, in the first clear indication of India's possible response to the massacre.

While vowing a befitting reply, he also said India will not hunt only down the people who perpetrated the attack but will also trace those 'sitting behind the scenes' who



Prime Minister Narendra Modi chairing a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) on Wednesday. At least 26 people were killed in a terror attack in Pahalgalam of Jammu and Kashmir PTI

had conspired to carry out the deadly act on the Indian soil. The defence minister made these assertions while delivering the annual Arjan Singh Memorial lecture here. Hours before the address, the Defence Minister reviewed the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir that was attended by NSA Doval and Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan.

Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi, Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi and Air Chief Marshal A P Singh.

Also present in the meeting was Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh. "Yesterday, in Pahalgalam, our country lost many innocent citizens in a cowardly attack by terrorists targeting religion."

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## IN A FIRST, INDUS TREATY SUSPENDED

New Delhi: Adopting a tough stance a day after the Pahalgalam terrorist attack, India on Wednesday took a slew of measures including Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 in abeyance with immediate effect till Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism.

Announcing these steps, Foreign Secretary Vikram Miri said "Recognising the seriousness of this terrorist attack, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) decided upon the following measures — The Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 will be held in abeyance with immediate effect until Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism."

Secondly, the check post Attari will be closed. Those who have crossed over with valid endorsements may return through that route before 1st May 2025. Thirdly, Pakistani national will not be permitted to travel to India under the SAARC Visa Exemption scheme.

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## Why tourists and why Pahalgalam?

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Srinagar

Despite launching a massive man-hunt to track down the footprints of perpetrators behind the brutal massacre of tourists in the South Kashmir area of Pahalgalam, the security forces could not find anything significant during the day.

Ground reports claimed helicopters and drones scanned the Baisaran forest area over Pahalgalam in search of the terrorists but failed to track down their footprints.

Preliminary reports indicated a group of four Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorists, including two locals, executed the terror plot at the behest of their Pakistan-based handlers to disrupt the peak tourist season and spread the reign of terror in the region.

The two locals, involved in the attack, have been identified as Aadil Thakur of Bijbehara and Asaf Sheikh of Terai.

Reports also claimed the terrorists were armed with sophisticated AK rifles, armour-piercing bullets, and helmet-mounted cameras to record the

'barbaric' strike on the Indian tourists holidaying at a famous picnic spot.

Before launching the targeted strike, the terrorists had carefully zeroed in on the Baisaran meadow, a popular hotspot for tourists during the peak summer season.

**The terrorists were well aware of the fact that none of the security personnel were deployed at the tourist hotspot, and they could freely target the tourists as 'sitting ducks'**

Since the objective was to derail the blossoming tourist season in the valley, the terrorists took advantage of the complacent security environment in the region. The terrorists were well aware of the fact that none of the security personnel were deployed at the tourist hotspot, and they could freely target the tourists as 'sitting ducks'.

The Baisaran meadow, located six kilometers uphill from the main town of

Pahalgalam in the Anantnag district, not only became a death trap for tourists but also provided enough time to the terrorists to flee the area without coming on the radar of the security forces.

After the attack took place around 2.30 p.m. on Tuesday, the security forces arrived at the location after about an hour. The terrorists exploited the time lag to their advantage and vanished into the deep jungles before the security forces could launch any counter terrorist operations in the area.

The absence of a road network and undulating terrain further delayed the arrival of security forces and others to rescue the injured after the terrorists opened fire on tourists.

Eyewitness accounts and initial reports suggested the terrorists had a free run for about 15 to 20 minutes in the area.

According to ground reports, several injured succumbed to their injuries due to excessive blood loss as they could not be shifted to the nearby hospital in the absence of direct road connectivity between Pahalgalam and Baisaran.

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## Will not bend before terror: Amit Shah

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Srinagar

Shaken by the brutality of the Pahalgalam massacre, which left 26 tourists dead and 17 others wounded on Tuesday, ordinary Indians have united in grief and rage, demanding swift retaliation against the perpetrators from the government.

Echoing similar sentiments, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday asserted that the country will not bend before terror and that those responsible for the killing of tourists at Pahalgalam will not be spared. Selective targeting of tourists, belonging to one faith, has not only devastated families but also shaken the public conscience.

To register their protest against the barbaric strike, people across Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday observed a complete shutdown.

Across the Valley, political, religious, social and professional organisations condemned the killing of tourists at the famous Baisaran meadow of Pahalgalam.

Protests were held in several parts of Jammu city, with many protesters raising



Union Home Minister Amit Shah visiting the site of the Pahalgalam terror attack in Anantnag district, Jammu and Kashmir. PTI

anti-Pakistan slogans and demanding surgical strikes to destroy terror bases in the neighbouring country.

Before the mortal remains of tourists were dispatched to their native places, the Union Home Minister attended the wreath-laying ceremony in Srinagar.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also paid their tributes to the victims.

The Home Minister later interacted with families of the slain persons and other survivors of the attack.

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## The ByStander



## Tourists evacuate, airlines called to action

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

After the terror attack in Pahalgalam, over 6,000 passengers departed Srinagar between 0600 hrs and 2300 hrs, as tourists rushed to leave Jammu and Kashmir. Airlines were also directed to waive cancellation and rescheduling fees. Meanwhile, nearly 90 per cent bookings for Jammu and Kashmir have been cancelled by tourists over safety concerns.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has instructed airlines to temporarily operate more flights out of Srinagar to handle the rush of tourists who want to cancel their holiday and leave Jammu and Kashmir in the wake of Tuesday's terror attack.

Airlines were also advised to waive cancellation and rescheduling fees. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has issued advisory to airlines to "take swift action" to increase flights to and

**The Ministry of Civil Aviation has instructed airlines to temporarily operate more flights out of Srinagar to handle the rush of tourists who want to cancel their holiday**

from Srinagar to facilitate evacuation of stranded tourists. IndiGo, Air India and SpiceJet are operating a total of seven extra flights in addition to their normal scheduled services from Srinagar.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation asked the airlines to ensure there is no surge in airfares on the Srinagar route, and airlines will be operating additional flights to the city. Civil Aviation Minister K Rammoohan Naidu on Wednesday said that strict instructions were given to airline companies to avoid any fare surges, and that fares are being monitored and kept at reasonable

levels. His comments also came against the backdrop of some websites apparently showing ticket prices of over ₹50,000 for flights to Srinagar. Terrorists struck at a prime tourist location in Pahalgalam in south Kashmir on Tuesday, killing at least 26 people, mostly tourists, and injuring several others. Among the deceased were two foreigners—one each from the UAE and Nepal—and two locals.

"In the aftermath of the incident in Pahalgalam, there is an unexpected demand from tourists seeking to return to their homes. In this regard, the airlines are advised to take swift action to increase the number of flights in response to heightened demand and also to ensure uninterrupted connectivity from Srinagar to various destinations across India, facilitating evacuation of stranded tourists," read the DGCA advisory released on Wednesday, April 23.

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## Pakistan, China and Bangladesh shed crocodile tears for India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ New Delhi/Islamabad/Dhaka/Beijing

A day after the Pahalgalam attack in which 26 people were killed, Pakistan, China and Bangladesh on Wednesday condoned the deaths of tourists. "We are concerned at the loss of tourists' lives in an attack in Anantnag district. We extend our condolences to the near ones of the deceased and wish the injured a speedy recovery," Pakistan Foreign Office spokesperson said in Islamabad responding to media queries about the attack.

Terrorists opened fire in Pahalgalam on Tuesday afternoon, killing 26 people, mostly tourists, in what is the deadliest attack in the Valley since the Pulwama strike in 2019. On Tuesday, The Resistance Front (TRF), a proxy of the banned Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), claimed

responsibility for the attack. Officials said it was possible the terror group members had crossed over from Kishtwar in Jammu and reached Baisaran through Kokernag in south Kashmir.

Dam ending, Pakistan Army Chief General Asim Munir described Kashmir as Pakistan's "jugular vein," triggering a sharp response from New Delhi. "Our stance is very clear, it was our jugular vein, it will be our jugular vein, and we will not forget it. We will not leave our Kashmiri brothers in their heroic struggle," General Munir said while addressing the first Overseas Pakistanis Convention in Islamabad on April 15. The event was also attended by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, senior ministers and Pakistanis living abroad. India has slammed Munir's remarks.

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## Come winter, welcome entry ban on all vehicles registered outside Delhi

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

In a move to tackle the high pollution emissions from the congested vehicles entering Delhi, the Commission of Air Quality Management (CAQM) on Wednesday issued an order banning on entry of all vehicles from November 1, 2025. Only BS-VI diesel, CNG, LNG and electric goods vehicles, including Light Goods Vehicles (LGVs), Medium Goods Vehicles (MGVs), and Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs), will be allowed entry into Delhi from that date, the commission said in an order. The CAQM said the order will apply to all such vehicles registered outside Delhi.

The Commission has also issued order not to give fuel to End of Life (EoL) vehicles, identified through the Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras or other such systems installed at the fuel pump stations from June 1, 2025 in Delhi and Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, Gautam Budh Nagar and sonapat will ban the fuel from November 1, 2025 and from April 1, 2026, it will be applicable in the rest of the national capital region.

According to experts, transport is the key contributors to air pollution in Delhi. There were 79.5 lakh vehicles registered as of March 31, 2023. Of these, 20.7 lakh were private cars. The total number of vehicles registered in Delhi was 1.2 crore, with 33.8 lakh being private cars, as per the Delhi Statistical Handbook 2023. The ever-growing vehicular traffic in Delhi - NCR has been a prime contributor to the enhanced vehicular emissions in the region and such large number of vehicles also cause traffic congestions and jams at major intersec-

tions and critical public places, thereby further enhancing the pollutant load from vehicular emissions.

"Such non-BS-VI compliant transport/commercial goods vehicles carrying essential commodities / providing essential services shall however be permitted to enter Delhi, but only for a limited period up to October 31, 2026 beyond which goods / services shall also have to be catered only through CNG / LNG / BV / BS-VI diesel vehicles', Transport Department/ Traffic Police in Delhi & the NCR States may accordingly widely disseminate this direction amongst all stakeholders and ensure strict compliance w.e.f. 01.11.2025 through effective implementation/enforcement measures at all border entry points to Delhi and regular monitoring/review of the same' Quarterly Reports on the action taken by the concerned agencies shall be furnished to commission," reads the order.

However, non-BS VI vehicles carrying essential commodities or providing essential services will be granted temporary exemption until October 31, 2026. After that, even essential services must switch to cleaner fuels.

The CAQM said commercial vehicles, especially older diesel ones, significantly contribute to Delhi-NCR's air pollution, particularly during winter. The decision is aligned with the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), which already restricts entry of polluting vehicles during high-pollution days. The commission has directed the transport departments and traffic police in Delhi and neighbouring states to ensure strict enforcement of this order at all 126 border entry points and 52 toll plazas equipped with



Delhi Noida border

Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras. Quarterly compliance reports must be submitted by all implementing agencies, the CAQM said.

There is no restriction on entry of Diesel goods vehicles to BS-VI standards and all vehicles running on LNG, CNG or electric vehicles into Delhi at any point in time of the year.

"WHEREAS, the ever-growing vehicular traffic in Delhi — NCR has been a prime contributor to the enhanced vehicular emissions in the region and such large number of vehicles also cause traffic congestions and jams at major intersections and critical public places, thereby further enhancing the pollutant load from vehicular emissions;

"Whereas, within the vehicular sector, while transport/commercial goods vehicles are generally reported to be utilised extensively, these are often poorly maintained and thus are significantly high on emissions; WHEREAS, it has been established through various assessment studies that all classes of transport/commercial goods vehicles —

LGVs' MGVs and FIGVs particularly those with pre-BS-VI standards have significantly higher emission potential and these while passing through NCR areas and moving into Delhi contribute adversely to the overall vehicular pollution load in the entire NCR," it said.

On the barring fuel to overaged vehicles, the Commission ordered not to give fuel to such vehicles (End of Life-EoL) vehicles, identified through the Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras or other such systems installed at the fuel pump stations from June 1, 2025 in Delhi and Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, Gautam Budh Nagar and sonapat will ban the fuel from November 1, 2025 and from April 1, 2026, it will be applicable in the rest of the national capital region. "Immediate legal action should be taken in respect of such EoL vehicles, including impounding and further disposal in accordance with RVSE Rules, 2021 and other extant policies of the respective State Governments and the GNCTD. There are 61, 14,728 overaged vehicles in Delhi; 27,50,152 in Haryana; 12,69,598 in UP and 6,20,962 in Rajasthan. "Traffic surveillance cameras installed on major roads which facilitate the traffic police to challan vehicles for traffic violations and the Integrated Command Control Centers for traffic management in NCR cities/districts shall also be used for supplementing action against EoL vehicles found plying on roads, using camera feeds from strategic traffic points/ intersections. Transport Department of GNCTD and the NCR States may accordingly widely disseminate this direction amongst all stakeholders including fuel stations and ensure its strict compliance through effective implementation / enforcement measures," it said.

# Families return empty-handed from paradise lost

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Srinagar

Two newly married grooms, serving officers, businessmen, grandparents, and retired employees were among 26 tourists massacred by the terrorists in the picturesque meadow of Baisaran in Pahalgam on Tuesday.

A day later, the families returned home empty-handed from the lost paradise along with the mortal remains of their loved ones. Many among them could not even bid a last goodbye to each other, as terrorists pumped bullets from close range without allowing them to do so. A young Navy officer, Lieutenant Vinay Narwal, from Karnal in Haryana, is one of those killed in cold blood by the terrorists on Tuesday. He married Himanshi Narwal on April 16. The couple hosted a reception at April 19 and then left for Kashmir on Monday to enjoy their honeymoon.

A day later, when they were sitting together in the picturesque meadow of Baisaran in Pahalgam, enjoying 'bhelpur', a heavily armed terrorist, after verifying the religious identity of Lieutenant Narwal, shot him from point-blank range, abruptly ending their six-day-old marriage.

Blood splattered on her face, Himanshi could be heard saying in a video on Tuesday: "We were having bhelpur when a man came and shot my husband."

On Wednesday, Lieutenant Narwal's body was brought to Delhi in a coffin and Himanshi stood beside it. "I pray that his soul rests in peace... We will make him proud in every way," she sobbed, stopping at the coffin. "It is because of him that the world is still surviving. And we should all be proud of him in every way... in every way," she said, bowing repeatedly before the coffin — the officer's peaked cap atop it —

to pay her respects before being helped away by her family members.

Before a family member escorted her, Himanshi gave him a farewell salute, shouting "Jai Hind".

An Intelligence Bureau (IB) officer posted in Hyderabad was among the tourists killed in the terror attack in Kashmir on Tuesday, Manish Ranjan, a native of Bihar, was shot dead in front of his wife and children. The IB officer, posted in Hyderabad, was on a Leave Travel Concession (LTC) visit with his family.

Manish Ranjan was posted in the ministerial section of the IB's Hyderabad office. He was set to visit the Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine in the Jammu region. Before he could embark on a spiritual journey, his life too was cut short by the terrorists' bullets, and his family members, who were waiting to join him in Katra, are now preparing to perform his last rites.

Shubham Dwivedi, a 30-year-old newly married man from Kanpur, was among 26 tourists killed in the terror attack, leaving his family and friends distraught and devastated. He was having a good time with his wife and sister-in-law when terrorists opened fire at tourists around eateries, said survivors in his family travelling with him. Their return was scheduled for Wednesday, April 23.

Prashant Satpathy, a resident of Odisha's Balasore, was reportedly struck by a bullet during the attack. The deceased was on vacation with his wife, Priyadarshini Satpathy, and their eight-year-old son when the attack occurred. In the sudden attack, Prashant was hit, leaving his wife and child in shock. The incident has thrown his family into distress.

Syed Adil Hussain Shah, worked as a pony ride operator at Pahalgam's Baisaran



Jammu: Less than 24 hours after a brutal terrorist attack in Pahalgam, alert troops of the Indian Army on Wednesday foiled an infiltration bid along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district, by neutralising at least two heavily armed infiltrators. In the evening, another encounter broke out between a joint team of security forces and terrorists in the south Kashmir district of Kulgam.

On 23 April 2025, approximately 2-3 terrorists tried to infiltrate through the general area Sarjanan at (U) Nala, Baramulla (in north Kashmir), the Chinari Corps posted on X around 8 am.

The "alert troops challenged and intercepted" the infiltrators, resulting in a firefight, it said.

An hour later, it said that two terrorists had been "eliminated".

"A large quantity of weapons, ammunition and other war-like stores have been recovered from the terrorists," the Chinari Corps said. The operation is in progress, it added.

3 pm, we heard about the attack. We called him, but his phone was switched off. Later, at 4:40 pm, his phone turned on, but no one answered. We rushed to the police station, and that's when we learned that he had been shot in the attack.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah

Wednesday attended his last rites. "What can I say? Our guests had come for holidays. Unfortunately, they have been sent in coffins. This young man (Shah) worked hard to earn a living. He left home for work. Unfortunately, we returned his body in a coffin. But we have heard he did not do just like that. He proved his bravery. He tried to stop the attack, he probably tried to snatch a gun and then was targeted. We will have to take care of his family. I have come to assure them that the administration is with them. We will do what we can," he said.

Asavari Jagdale, 26, the daughter of a Pune-based businessman, recounted how terrorists confronted her father, Santosh Jagdale, demanding he recite an Islamic verse. When he failed to recite, they shot him first in the head, then behind the ear, and finally in the back.

"We were a group of five people, including my parents. We were in Baisaran Valley near Pahalgam and were at a spot called Mini Switzerland when the firing began," Asavari Jagdale said.

"We immediately rushed to a nearby tent for protection. So did six to seven others (tourists). We all lay down on the ground as protection against the firing, which we then assumed was between the terrorists and security personnel," Asavari said. Soon, the terrorists approached their tent.

"They called out, 'Chaudhari, tu bahar aa ja', targeting my father," she recalled. They accused the group of supporting PM Modi. They even made some statements to deny that Kashmiri militants kill innocent women and children, she said. "They then asked my father to recite an Islamic verse (probably the Kalma). When he failed to do so, they pumped three bullets into him, one on the head, one

behind the ear and another in the back," Asavari asserted. "My uncle, who was beside me, was also shot multiple times. Several other men at the spot were gunned down as well," she added.

Asavari, her mother, and another female relative were spared. "It was because the attackers claim they don't harm women," she said. A karnataka from the Shivamogga region of Karnataka was also among those killed in the gruesome attack on Tuesday, Manjunath Rao, 47, his wife Pallavi Rao, and their son Abhijeet, 18, were in Pahalgam when the firing occurred in the afternoon. In a phone call to a relative, Deepa, in Shivamogga, Pallavi said they initially thought it was an exercise of the armed forces. However, ten minutes later, Pallavi found Manjunath's body lying in a pool of blood. Pallavi told her relative that her husband died of a single shot fired at his head by a man in regular clothes as soon as they stepped off a tourist bus and entered the meadowland.

A 38-year-old LIC regional manager from Indore lost his life in the Pahalgam terrorist attack on Tuesday while his daughter and wife got injured.

Alirajpur LIC regional manager Sushil Nathaniel, along with his wife Jennifer (54), who is a government school teacher, and daughter Anuraag (34) had gone to Kashmir on April 21 for a vacation.

Recalling the incident, Sushil's brother Vikas Nathaniel said, "My brother was roaming with his wife and daughter in Pahalgam when terrorists attacked them. He was asked to recite an Islamic prayer. When he refused, he was shot. I was a Christian, he was shot dead while his daughter was shot in her leg. His wife, Jennifer, also got injured while trying to evade the terror attack."

## Raj Thackeray condemns Pahalgam terror attack

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ Mumbai

Condemning the terrorist attack in Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) Chief Raj Thackeray on Wednesday the Centre to retaliate against the terrorists involved in Tuesday's attack along the lines of an operation undertaken by Israel

against Palestinian terrorists after the 1972 Munich terrorist attack.

In a statement posted on micro-blogging site "X", Raj said: "Maharashtra Navnirman Sena strongly condemns the terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir. Maharashtra Navnirman Sena pays heartfelt tribute to those who lost their lives in this incident... This incident is very seri-

ous and the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena will fully stand by the government in this situation." The Central Government should now take such measures against these attackers that even the next 10 generations of these attackers will shudder to remember them... In 1972, during the Munich Olympics, Palestinian terrorists attacked Israeli athletes... After this, Israel

killed these terrorists, the masterminds of this attack, in such a way that terror was instilled in the minds of the Palestinian people for a long time. India and Israel have good relations," the MNS chief said. "We hope that the Centre will follow in the footsteps of the Israeli government and eliminate these terrorists and the supporters forever," Raj said. "While reading news

reports about this attack, a shocking thing came to light... An eyewitness said that the attackers asked the other persons' religion while firing... Is this your excuse? As I often say in my speeches, if anyone comes against Hindus in this country, we will all come together as Hindus and attack them... Wherever the masterminds behind these attackers are hiding, they must know what our power is," the MNS chief said.

The Centre government abrogated Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir. After that, the situation seemed to be get-

ting a little better and the influx of tourists had increased. If such an attack happens, who will buy land in Kashmir in the future and start industries? Therefore, the central government should take such steps and take concrete action," Raj said.

"I have no doubt that the central government will be tough in its retaliation... and all the political parties in this country will stand behind them... Maharashtra Navnirman Sena will stand by the Government," Raj added.

## Will not bend before terror: Amit Shah

In his arrival in Srinagar late Tuesday evening, Shah was briefed about the situation by Director General of Police Nalin Prabhat.

The Home Minister separately chaired a security review meeting, which was also attended by the Lieutenant Governor and senior officers of the Indian army, police, and others.

Posting a message on X, Amit Shah said, "With a heavy heart, paid last respects to the deceased of the Pahalgam

terror attack. "Bharat will not bend before terror. The culprits of this dastardly terror attack will not be spared," he said.

Congress MP KC Venugopal and Jammu-Kashmir Congress President Tariq Hameed Karari also paid tribute to the victims of the Pahalgam terror attack during the ceremony.

Later, the Home Minister arrived at the Baisaran meadow, the site of the attack where the lives of innocent tourists, sending shockwaves across the nation.

Despite a huge presence of security personnel on ground zero, an uneasy calm prevailed in the picturesque mead-

ow dotted with pine trees.

The attack was one of the biggest terror attacks in the region after the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019.

While he took stock of the ground situation along with senior army and police officers, the combining operations continued in the region to hunt down the perpetrators behind the massacre.

Before returning to New Delhi, Amit Shah also visited a hospital in Anantnag to enquire about the condition of the persons injured in the Pahalgam terror attack.

Meanwhile, the Jammu and Kashmir government on Wednesday announced

an ex-gratia of Rs 10 lakh for the families of each of those killed in the Pahalgam terror attack on Tuesday.

The chief minister said no amount of money can ever compensate for the loss of loved ones, but as a mark of support and solidarity, the J-K government announces an ex-gratia of Rs 10 lakh each for the families of the deceased.

The chief minister also announced Rs 2 lakh for those seriously injured, and Rs 1 lakh for those with minor injuries.

All arrangements have been made to transport the mortal remains of the deceased back to their homes in a dignified manner, Abdullah said.

## Pakistan, China and Bangladesh...

foreign be in a jugular vein? This is a Union territory of India. Its only relationship with Pakistan is the vacation of illegally occupied territories by that country," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Rajnath Jaiswal said.

Meanwhile, Beijing "strongly condemned" the terror attack and said "China has noted the reports," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Junqian told a media briefing here while responding to queries on the attack.

"We strongly condemn the attack. China firmly opposes all forms of terrorism. We mourn for the lives lost and express sincere sympathies to the bereaved families and the injured," he said.

Separately, Chinese Ambassador to India Xu Feihong also condemned the

attack. "Shocked by the attack in Pahalgam and condemn," he posted on social media. "Deep condolences for the victims and sincere sympathies to the injured and the bereaved families. Oppose terrorism of all forms," he added.

Bangladesh interim government led by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus strongly condemned the terrorist attack and reaffirmed its unwavering stance against terrorism. In a social media post, Yunus said, "Excelsency: Please accept my deepest condolences over the loss of life resulting from the terrorist attack that took place in Kashmir's Pahalgam."

"We strongly condemn this heinous act. Let me reaffirm Bangladesh's resolute stand against terrorism," the Chief Adviser added. The attack has led to widespread international condemnation.

## Pakistan invites diplomatic strike for Pahalgam...

"This extremely inhuman act has plunged us into deep grief and pain," defence minister Rajnath Singh said. "From this platform, I assure the countrymen that in view of the incident, the government of India will take every step that is necessary and appropriate. "And we will not only trace those who perpetrated this incident. We will also reach out to those who, sitting behind the scenes, have conspired to carry out the nefarious act on the soil of India," Rajnath Singh said.

The defence minister said "India is such an old civilization and such a big country that it cannot be intimidated by any such terrorist activities." The people responsible for such acts will get a strong response in the near future," he asserted.

In the context of cross-border terrorist incidents, Rajnath Singh said: "History is witness to the withering away of nations not due to the action of the adversary, but due to the result of their own misdeeds. I hope people across the border look at lessons of history more closely," he described the attack in Pahalgam as "extremely inhuman" that has "left all of us in deep grief

and pain." "First of all, I express my deepest condolences to all the families who have lost their loved ones. In this sad time, I pray to God for the peace of the departed souls."

"I would like to reiterate India's firm resolve that we have a zero tolerance policy against terrorism. Every citizen of India is united against this cowardly act," he said.

The high-level meeting chaired by the defence minister discussed all possible aspects of the situation that emerged in Jammu and Kashmir following the terror attack, the sources said, declining to share further details. It is learnt that Rajnath Singh directed the armed forces to enhance their combat readiness and increase the intensity of anti-terror operations.

In the meeting, Army Chief General Dwidivedi presented a detailed overview of the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir including deployment of his forces.

The defence minister has also cancelled his two-day scheduled visit to Ladakh in view of the situation arising out of the terror attack in Kashmir's Pahalgam. He was to visit Ladakh on April 25 and 26, sources said.

In another development, US Vice President J D Vance

spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday and strongly condemned the Pahalgam terror attack. In the phone conversation, Vance conveyed to Modi that the United States stands with the people of India in this difficult hour. "Vice President J D Vance called Prime Minister Narendra Modi and strongly condemned the dastardly terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Rajnath Jaiswal said.

The US Vice President conveyed his deepest condolences on the loss of lives and reiterated that the US stands with the people of India in this difficult hour, he said. "He expressed that the United States is ready to provide all assistance in the joint fight against terrorism. PM thanked Vice President Vance and President Trump for their messages of support and solidarity," Jaiswal said in a social media post. Vance held wide-ranging talks with Modi in New Delhi on his first day's visit to India.

The Central government is likely to convene an all-party meeting tomorrow, April 24. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to chair the meeting, according to sources.

At the same time, the security agencies on Wednesday released the sketches of three men suspected to be involved in the terror attack that killed 26 people, mostly tourists, near Pahalgam in south Kashmir. The men are Asif Jafar, Sulaiman Shah and Abu Talha, officials said. The three terrorists also had code names — Moosa,

## In a first, Indus Treaty suspended

the Foreign Secretary said.

The CCS reviewed overall security situation, directed all forces to maintain high vigil, he said adding the CCS resolved that perpetrators of Pahalgam attack will be brought to justice and the perpetrators held to account.

Moreover, India will be unrelenting in pursuit of those who have committed acts of terror, or conspired to make them possible, the Foreign Secretary said.

In January this year, the Neutral Expert appointed by the World Bank under the terms of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) decided that he is "competent" to adjudicate on the differences between India and Pakistan regarding the design of two hydroelectric projects in Jammu and Kashmir, vindicating New Delhi's long-held position.

"The decision upholds and vindicates India's stand that all the seven questions that were referred to the Neutral Expert, including the loss of the Kishenganga and the Ratle hydroelectric projects, are differences falling within his competence under the Treaty," Ministry of External Affairs had stated.

It was signed by India and Pakistan on September 19, 1960 to determine the distribution of the waters of the Indus and its tributaries. It was signed in Karachi by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and then President Lyndon B. Johnson after nine years of negotiations arranged by the World Bank.

## Tourists evacuate, airlines called to action

The advisory also called upon airlines to be considerate of passengers caught in unforeseen circumstances. "The airlines are also requested to consider waiving cancellation and rescheduling fees and provide all necessary assistance during flight unexpected circumstances and challenges during this difficult time," it added.

The country's largest airline IndiGo said that in view of the emergent situation, it has taken steps to keep the fare moderate. The minister also emphasised that constant efforts are being made to ensure safe travel of tourists from Srinagar. "In addition to the four extra flights already announced, three more flights to Delhi have been added for today," IndiGo GE 3203 (Dep: 1700, Arr: 1800), IndiGo GE 3103 (Dep: 1800, Arr: 1930), and a Spector flight scheduled to depart at 10:30 PM," he said in a post on X. All airlines operating from Srinagar have waived cancellation and rescheduling charges to tourists.

upside for those waiting. Between 6 am and 12 pm today, Srinagar Airport handled 20 departures with 3,337 pax," Naidu said. The minister also said that he is personally monitoring the situation and is in constant touch with the home ministry as well as airline operators.

IndiGo said that to support those travelling to/from Srinagar, it is offering waivers for cancellation fees or rescheduling charges.

IndiGo has added special flights to Srinagar from Delhi and Mumbai with immediate effect and will be operating these over and above the regular schedule of 160 weekly flights from / to Srinagar from various parts of India," the airline, which operates 20 flights daily connecting Srinagar with various Indian cities, said in a statement.

Air India is operating one additional flight each from Srinagar to Delhi and Mumbai. It has five flights from Delhi and Mumbai to Srinagar daily. The airline is also offering complimentary rescheduling and full refunds on cancellations to passengers with confirmed bookings lit

April 30 on these sectors, according to a post on X.

SpiceJet, in a post on X, said it is operating an additional flight and also extending waivers on rescheduling and cancellations for Srinagar flights till April 30. It will be applicable for bookings made on or before April 22. Akasa Air, in a post on X, said passengers who wish to cancel their bookings will be provided with a full refund at no additional charge for all flights departing between April 23 and 29 to/from Srinagar.

"Guests booked to travel on Air India Express flights from or to Srinagar until 30th April 2025 are being offered the flexibility to reschedule their travel with a complete waiver of date change fees and fare differences," the airline said in a post on X. According to the airline, passengers may also opt to cancel their bookings and receive a full refund to their original mode of payment.

Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) President and Nominations Travel CEO Ajay Prakash said in the short term, tourism in J&K will take a significant hit

due to the attack. "As TAFI, we pledge to support tourism in J&K, and we are confident that it will recover very quickly," he said. Travel agencies in Delhi reported that nearly 90 per cent bookings for Kashmir have been cancelled, while some tourists are negotiating to shift their plans to alternative destinations.

"We had a few bookings from families. From bus and flight tickets to hotels — everything was booked in advance. But the moment the news of the terror attack broke, we started receiving calls for cancellations," Dev, the owner of Kusha Travels, said. Another travel agency, Swastik Travels, said Kashmir is not just the first-choice destination for Delhiites, but also very popular among the tourists visiting Delhi, many of whom plan onward trips to the valley.

"It is not just Delhi residents cancelling their plans — tourists already in the capital are also calling off their Kashmir trips, even though hotel tariffs are at a peak this time. People are cancelling regardless of the cost," said the owner of Swastik Travels.

# Candlelight vigils across Delhi for Pahagam victims

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

A day after 26 people died in a dastardly terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahagam, people from all walks of life in Delhi came together to express solidarity with the victims through candlelight marches and protests on Wednesday. Traders' bodies on Wednesday called for a Delhi bandh on April 25 as a mark of protest against the Pahagam terror attack and to express solidarity with the victims. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) held a candlelight vigil at Jantar Mantar, where the party's Delhi unit chief Saurabh Bhargava condemned the terror strike, the deadliest in the Kashmir Valley since the 2019 Pulwama attack. "Terrorists never attacked tourists in Kashmir before. This is the first time such an incident has taken place. All the victims were innocent. The entire country is grieving. The government must take strict action against the perpetrators," Bhargava said. The Congress' youth wing held a candle march at its Raisina Road office.

Several traders' associations across the national capital also joined in the condemnation, staging protests with black ribbons tied around their arms. They announced a Delhi Bandh on April 25 and held their own candlelight march. In a post on X, the New Delhi 'We Condemn' Association (NDTA) said, "We condemn



the heinous and cowardly act of violence and terrorism perpetrated in Pahagam yesterday, targeting innocent lives. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families who suffered unimaginable loss."

During the demonstration, protesters held placards with slogans such as 'Doshiyon ke khilaf karwayi karo' (take action against the guilty), 'Begunah ka balidaan nahi sahega Hindustan' (India will not tolerate the sacrifice of innocents)

and 'Kataleam band karo' (Stop the massacre). They also carried posters featuring photos of the victims and their families, which had been circulating online.

The Chandni Chowk Traders Association held a demonstration outside the Town Hall, while the Federation of Sadar Bazaar Traders protested near Qutub Road. Paramjit Singh Pammi, president of the Federation of Sadar Bazaar Traders, expressed deep sorrow over the incident, stating that the attack



had shaken the entire nation.

"We are a country with diverse religions, but terrorism knows no religion. A terrorist is a terrorist," said Rakesh Kumar Yadav, Secretary of the Federation of Sadar Bazaar Traders.

The traders' associations have called on the central government to take strong and decisive action against terrorism.

Rajiv Batra, president of the Chandni Chowk Traders Association, said, "We want strict action against those behind this terror attack. We stand with the government and support their efforts." Sanjay Mehra, president of the Khan Market Traders Association, announced that the market would be closed on Thursday in solidarity with the victims. The traders also plan to hold a candlelight march.

Condemnation of the terror attack also echoed in universities across Delhi. At Jawaharlal Nehru University, all major student unions — the RSS-backed ABVP,

Congress-affiliated NSUI, and the left-leaning AIFS — came together for a joint candle march inside the campus to condemn the attack.

Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) offered a poignant tribute to victims by linking their Earth Day observance with the tragedy. The university planted 26 trees — one for each life lost — in the front lawns of its administrative block. "Jamia Millia Islamia condemns the heinous terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahagam and extends deep condolences to the (bereaved) families," the university said in a statement. It also announced that the memorial trees would receive proper upkeep and the university would hold an annual remembrance event to honour the victims.

The Delhi Vyapar Mahasangh expressed deep sorrow and anger over the killing of innocent tourists in what it described as a peaceful region.

According to it, the call for a bandh has been supported by nearly all major trade bodies in the city. The move is intended to express solidarity with the victims and condemn the violence that has shaken the nation, it said. "We request all traders, shopkeepers, and business owners to voluntarily shut their establishments on April 25 as a mark of respect to the victims and to send a strong message that acts of terrorism are unacceptable," the trader body said in a statement.

## CM Gupta, BJP president pay homage to Navy officer



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, accompanied by BJP President Vinay Narwal, paid homage to Pahagam terror attack victim navy officer Lieutenant Vinay Narwal, whose body was brought to the Indira Gandhi International airport from Kashmir on Wednesday.

The Delhi government on Wednesday postponed all its public programmes for two days as a mark of tribute to the vic-

tim of the Pahagam terror attack. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, in a post on X, said all public programmes scheduled on April 23 and 24 were postponed as a mark of condolence towards those "martyred" in the cowardly terrorist attack of Tuesday in Pahagam.

Earlier, the Chief Minister laid a wreath at the mortal remains of Narwal and was also seen trying to comfort his wife. "At least 26 persons — mostly tourists — were killed by terrorists on Tuesday at the Baisaran meadows in Pahagam. In a heart wrenching video,

his wife was seen weeping inconsolably while bidding an emotional farewell to her husband, who was killed in the attack. "I hope his rest in peace. He lived a good life. He made us really proud, and we should keep this pride in every way," she said with trembling voice as she broke down. The couple got married on April 16 and was holidaying in Pahagam.

Among those killed in the attack was 26-year-old Narwal, a resident of Karnal in neighbouring Haryana, who was holidaying with his wife in Pahagam. Narwal got married recently. His mortal remains will be taken to Haryana's Karnal. MLA Jagmohan Anand met his family in Karnal. Family members of late navy officer were seen weeping, hugging the MLA and begging with folded hands.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Indian Navy, condemned the attack, extending condolences to the families of the victims. "Adm Dinesh K Tripathi, CNS, and all Personnel of the Indian Navy are shocked and deeply saddened by the tragic loss of Lt Vinay Narwal, who fell to the dastardly terror attack in Pahagam. "We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family during this moment of unimaginable grief. The Indian Navy also stands in solemn solidarity with all others who lost their lives in this heinous act of violence," read a post by the Navy.

Expressing her anguish, CM Gupta posted on X, "Deeply anguished to learn about the terrorist attacks on tourists in Kashmir's Pahagam. My thoughts are with those who lost their close ones and prayers for the swift recovery of those injured. These cowardly, barbaric attacks will not go unanswered."

## Security tightens amid J and Kterrorist attack

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Delhi Police has tightened up security in the national capital on Wednesday, following Tuesday's terrorist attack in Kashmir's Pahagam that killed at least 26 people, officials said.

According to the officials, their focus is particularly on the tourist hotspots and border checkpoints of the city, where checks and surveillance have been intensified.

"Security has been beefed up at the famous tourist spots such as the Red Fort, India Gate, Qutub Minar, Humayun's Tomb, Bangla Sahib gurdwara, 'Lotus' Temple, Akshardham Temple, Lodhi Garden, Jama Masjid, Delhi Haat INA, National Museum, Jantar Mantar, Hazrat Nizamuddin Ali Dargah, Rajghat and Safdarjung Tomb, among others," the police officer said.

He added that the police have also stepped up security outside of the Metro stations, bus terminals, railway stations, malls and marketplaces across the capital.

The security outside the Pakistan High Commission in the capital has also been beefed up.

Traffic movement has also been regulated in the sensitive zones, officials

said. The alert coincides with the ongoing visit of US Vice-President JD Vance for which security has already been strengthened in Delhi and other cities.

The security cover includes major marketplaces in Delhi such as Chandni Chowk, Sadar Bazaar, Lajpat Nagar, Sarojini Nagar and Rajouri Garden, among others.

"We have deployed barricading and metal detector checking at various places," he said.

"Foot patrolling teams and police personnel in plain clothes have been pressed into service," another senior

According to the officials, their focus is particularly on the tourist hotspots and border checkpoints of the city, where checking and surveillance have been intensified

police officer said.

Terrorists opened fire at the Baisaran meadow near the resort town of Pahagam in Anantnag district on Tuesday afternoon, killing 26 people, mostly tourists, in what is seen as the deadliest attack in the Valley since the Pulwama strike in 2019.

## Audit of city STPs ordered

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Taking a decisive step towards cleaning the Yamuna River, Delhi Water Minister Parvash Sahab Singh Verma has directed the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) to conduct a third-party audit of all 37 existing Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) in the city. In a recent review meeting on the sewage management wing of the Ministry, the Minister discussed the current capacity and status of ongoing rehabilitation and upgradation works across the capital's sewage infrastructure.

"We have directed the DJB to carry out a third-party audit of all the STPs to get more clarity on the installed treatment capacity and the actual treatment being carried out," Verma said on Wednesday.

Out of the 37 STPs currently operational, 18 are undergoing upgradation to improve their performance. Additionally, three new STPs at Sonia Vihar, Delhi Gate, and Okhla are expected to enhance the overall sewage treatment capacity by approximately 47 million gallons per day

(MGD). "A substantial amount of untreated sewage is still entering the Yamuna. The Delhi government is committed to reducing this pollution load through comprehensive interventions."

The audit is one such step—once the reports are in, further directives will be issued to improve and expand the sewerage treatment network," the Minister added. As part of the Delhi government's continued efforts, the 2025-26 budget includes Rs 500 crore allocated for STP repair and modernisation, along with an additional Rs 250 crore earmarked for replacing old and damaged sewer lines. Officials also noted that 30 out of the 37 STPs are operated by private companies under outsourcing arrangements.

The Water Minister has instructed all such operators to ensure compliance with installed capacity and quality standards. Earlier this month, Verma had announced that Asia's largest wastewater treatment facility at Okhla—developed by DJB with a capacity of 564 MLD—has been made fully operational.

## Vijender, Mr Birla discuss modernisation of Assembly

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta, in a meeting with his Lok Sabha counterpart Om Birla on Wednesday discussed transmitting the historic Vidhan Sabha building into a national heritage site.

Gupta met the Lok Sabha speaker and talked about reinforcing the efforts being made for the preservation and modernisation of the Delhi Assembly, according to a statement from the Assembly Secretariat. The meeting at the Parliament Secretariat also focussed on e-library and archival digitisation, strengthening the institutional framework and infrastructure of the assembly.

Gupta apprised Birla about the ongoing initiatives at the Vidhan Sabha, particularly the efforts to elevate the historic Assembly complex to the stature of a

The meeting at the Parliament Secretariat also focussed on e-library and archival digitisation, strengthening the institutional framework and infrastructure of the assembly

national heritage. Birla directed the immediate initiation of a plan to convert the Delhi Vidhan Sabha library into a fully digital facility.

This transition will significantly enhance public access to legislative documents and ensure the long-term preservation of institutional knowledge. In a show of strong support, Birla instructed the Lok Sabha Secretariat to extend all possible assistance to the Delhi Assembly in its endeavours, the statement added.

## MCD implements integration of birth certificates with DigiLocker

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has implemented the integration of birth certificates with DigiLocker. This initiative has been implemented in collaboration with the IT Department and NIC or MCD. It marks a significant step towards digital governance under the 'Digital India' mission, ensuring secure and easy access to essential documents for citizens.

MCD officials said that the facility is also an integral part of the '100 Days Viksit Delhi Programme,' which has now been effectively brought into action.

The MCD officials said that with the move citizens can now download their birth certificates anytime, anywhere via DigiLocker. This will reduce dependence on physical copies and visits to government offices. Digital availability of documents will also reduce the risk of loss,

tampering, or duplication, thereby improving transparency and speeding up processes and this facility will be beneficial in processes like school admissions, passport issuance, Aadhaar registration and more.

MCD will help in direct integration with DigiLocker simplifies paperwork, saving both time and effort for municipal staff. Promoting paperless operations, this initiative also contributes to environmental sustainability. The initiative sets a benchmark for digitising other essential documents and strengthens the e-Governance framework," they said.

This development is expected to significantly enhance citizen convenience and reinforce the government's commitment to digital transformation.

MCD will also conduct awareness campaigns to ensure widespread adoption of this facility among the public, they said.

# DdA posts ₹1,371 crore surplus in fiscal year 2024-25 on record flat sales

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on Wednesday said it posted an impressive surplus of ₹1,371 crore in financial year (FY) 2024-25 due to sale of housing units. The civic body also said by impressive sale of housing units, 8,500 flats sold with revenue over ₹3,100 crore were earned in current FY.

Giving details, officials said having remained in red for over a decade, the DDA posted a surplus of ₹1,371 crore. This is the second consecutive year when DDA has recorded revenue surplus. In 2023-24, DDA had recorded a surplus of ₹511 crore under the General Development Account (GDA), thereby reversing the revenue deficit trend for 12 consecutive years.

The massive surplus this year is primarily on account of the unprecedented sale of housing units across all categories at various locations.

According to the data received on 31 March, 2025, there has been a steep and steady upward trend in the actual surplus registered in the General Development Account (GDA). In 2024-25, the total receipts under GDA stood at ₹3,477 crore, while the total expenditure was ₹2,106 crore.

While GDA was in substantial loss of Rs 1,304 crore in the financial year 2022-23, it registered a thumping surplus of ₹511 crore in 2023-24, which was for the first time in the last twelve years. This further augmented to a record surplus of ₹1,371 crore in the GDA during the financial year 2024-25, thereby registering a growth of 169 per cent as compared to the year 2023-24.

Thus from a loss making entity, DDA has transformed into a substantive profit making organisation in just two years, ie from 2022-23 to 2024-25.

Notably, DDA account is the main account of DDA and deals with transac-

tions relating to disposal of Houses and shops, license fees from built up properties, management of sports complexes, etc. Officials said when Lt Governor (LG) VK Saxena took charge in May 2022, the DDA was incurring huge losses mainly due to huge unsold inventory of DDA flats.

Thus from a loss making entity, DDA has transformed into a substantive profit making organisation in just two years, ie from 2022-23 to 2024-25

In the very first Authority meeting that he chaired after taking over the reins of DDA, Saxena took strong exception of the consistent losses and asked DDA officials to take corrective measures to curb the losses and make DDA financially self-sustainable.

However, since then, DDA started

working in a mission mode under Saxena's guidance and introduced a host of innovative initiatives and people-friendly measures that resulted in a complete turnaround of the agency.

The growth in GDA is primarily on the back of rising trajectory recorded by the housing receipts from ₹665 crore in the year 2022-23 to ₹2,398 crore in the year 2023-24 which shows a steep impressive upswing of about 260 per cent in the total housing collections. This further exceeded to ₹3,176 crore in the financial year 2024-25.

It is noteworthy that total housing collection in the last two financial years viz 2023-24 and 2024-25 have stood at ₹5574 crore which is 25 per cent more than the collections of only ₹4,460.00 crore in the last eight financial years from 2015-16 till 2022-23.

Sports receipts have also registered an impressive upsurge with collections steadily rising from ₹77 crore in the financial

year 2022-23 to ₹89 crore in the financial year 2023-24 to ₹111 crore in the financial year 2024-25.

Under supervision of the LG, DDA introduced a number of measures to enhance customer experience and boost the sale of housing units. The token money was substantially increased to attract old serious buyers, from lottery system, the mode of allocation was changed to first come first serve auction, which gave buyers their choice of flats.

Besides, housing regulations were amended, removing the restriction of owning a property in Delhi for applying in DDA Housing Scheme.

In addition to these a professional marketing strategy adopted by DDA for the first time, also helped the sale. Single window enquiries on web site, seamless information to buyers and handing over all proper related and ownership documents to the buyer helped generate customer confidence and trust towards DDA.

The most striking feature that has taken place in the last three years is the increased focus on Narda, where DDA had huge inventory of flats. The Lt Governor has placed significant impetus on civic infrastructure in the sub-city, with many projects in the pipeline.

The upcoming Education Hub with all university campuses, proposed International Sports Complex, institutions, court complex, policing and enhanced connectivity, have played a catalytic role in making Narela a preferred choice of buyers.

Apart from these laying of foundation stone for the new Narela-Kundli corridor of the Delhi Metro has also enhanced its locational advantage.

The combination of these factors has contributed in the sale of housing units and DDA has achieved all time records of disposal of over 8,500 flats with revenue over ₹3,100 crore.



# Pahalgam terror attack sparks national outcry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Several Chief Minister and political figures on Wednesday condemned the Pahalgam terror attack and expressed condolences to the families of the deceased.

Assam government is making all arrangements to bring back a survivor family of the terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said.

"The CMO/Office Assam has spoken to a survivor from the attack of the dastardly #PahalgamTerrorAttack and has taken a full brief of the incident which they have faced yesterday," the CMO said in a social media post.

"The entire family returned to the State is being arranged on priority and the Government of Assam is in touch with the Gov of India to bring the family back to Assam at the earliest," it added.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the images of fog and rain are heart-breaking and have shaken the nation's conscience.

"The people of Assam join Adarniya @Amitsingh in offering our prayers for the departed. This nefarious attack will be avenged and the perpetrators will not be spared," he said in a series of posts. Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said those responsible for the 'cowardly' attack on tourists in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam will not be spared. "We strongly condemn the cowardly and planned attack on tourists... Those who have committed this act will not be spared, and strict action will be taken

against them," Saini told reporters in Gurugram, asserting that the Centre's resolve to fight against the firm is firm.

Among those killed in the attack was 26-year-old Indian Navy officer Lieutenant Vinay Narwal, a resident of Haryana's Karnal, who was holidaying with his wife in Pahalgam. Narwal got married recently.

On Wednesday, Saini made a video call to Narwal's grandfather, who sought from Prime Minister Narendra Modi exemplary punishment for the perpetrators and firm action to weed out terrorism. "Today, I have lost my grandson, tomorrow it can be someone else," he said while speaking to chief minister Saini.

Haryana Assembly Speaker Harvinder Kalyan, who is a BJP MLA from Gharuanda in Karnal district, also reached Karnal city to be with the bereaved family. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee confirmed that three persons from the state were killed in the terror attack.

Describing it to be a "grim hour" for the state, Banerjee said her government was making all the arrangements to get family members of the victims back home from New Delhi and she was personally overseeing it. "As per the latest updated information made available to us, three persons from our state have died in the most unfortunate Kashmiri violence," Banerjee said in a social media post.

The three deceased are Bitan Adhikari of Balishabghata in Kolkata, Samir Guha of Sakher Barar in Kolkata and Manish Ranjan of Jhaldai in Purulia district.

"All arrangements are being put up by our administration at Delhi Airport to help



Security personnel near the site of the Pahalgam terror attack in Anantnag district, Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday. At least 26 people were killed in the terrorist attack on Tuesday.

attended by senior officials, including Garhwal Commissioner Vinay Shankar Pandey, Secretary to CM Shailesh Baghathi and Secretary (housing and energy) R Meenakshi Sundaram was held at the chief minister's official residence.

Conveying his deep condolences to the families that lost their loved ones in the attack, Dhani said, "My deep condolences to the bereaved families on behalf of the people of Uttarakhand. This cowardly attack is not only an attack on innocent people but also on the culture, peace and values of humanity of our country."

"The attempts by terrorists to disturb Jammu and Kashmir will never succeed. A befitting reply will be given to this mis-

deed and the culprits will not be spared," he said. Union Minister G Kishan Reddy and several other BJP leaders and activists on Wednesday held a protest in Hyderabad against the Pahalgam terror attack, raising slogans calling for an attack against Pakistan.

Kishan Reddy, who wore a black dress as an expression of protest, said those responsible for the attack will not be spared. The government would take a decision to act against the terrorists, he said. "Termining the attack as a 'cowardly act' in a statement issued in Shimla, Himachal Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said such incidents were not acceptable in a civilised society and anti-social elements must be curbed at all costs.

Former Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur also condemned the terror attack and said "such cruelty" cannot be tolerated in a civilised society.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said the TDP-led NDA government extended solidarity with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the union government in the backdrop of the terror attack.

The chief minister underscored that the state government extends its support to Modi and the Centre in their commitment to safeguard India's sovereignty and responding to terrorism with "firm and decisive action".

Further, he mourned the death of JC Chandra Mouli and Madhusudan in the attack, who were of Telugu origin.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the families during this time of profound grief, and I pray they find the strength to endure this immense loss," added Naidu, who is

scheduled to receive Mouli's body in Vizag later on Wednesday.

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav described the terror attack as "very painful" and termed the killing of tourists as "unthinkable". He said, "One of the deceased happens to be from Bihar, but posted in Hyderabad. We offer condolences to all bereaved family members."

The reference was to Manish Ranjan, an Intelligence Bureau officer, whose father had migrated to West Bengal long ago.

Ranjan's wife and children, who were accompanying him at the tourist spot in Jammu and Kashmir, survived the attack. Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt General K T Paria (retired) termed the killing of innocent people as a "barbaric act of cowardice" and said such attacks are a direct assault on the composite and inclusive fabric of India, which binds the nation in unity and diversity.

On Corporal Take Haiyang of the Indian Air Force, an Arunachal Pradesh resident who lost his life in the attack, Paria said the entire state stands united in mourning this irreparable loss, a Raj Bhavan statement said here.

Paria, who served in Jammu and Kashmir including as the General Officer Commanding of the Morena District Command, also wished a speedy and full recovery to those injured in the attack.

AAIMM president Asaduddin Owaisi alleged the Pahalgam terror attack was the result of an intelligence failure. He demanded the Narendra Modi government to fix accountability over the incident saying the attack is more dangerous, condemnable and painful than the similar incidents in Uri and Pulwama.



Indian Navy Lt. Vinay Narwal's wife breaks down while paying tribute to her husband after his mortal remains were brought at the cargo terminal of IGI Airport in New Delhi on Wednesday.

## Navy officer killed in J and K

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Chandigarh

Married just a few days ago, 26-year-old Indian Navy officer Lieutenant Vinay Narwal was holidaying with his wife in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam when terrorists shot him dead.

Hailing from Bhusli village in Karnal district, Narwal's family was presently living in Karnal city.

The Indian Navy also confirmed Narwal's death in the terror attack. "Adm Dinesh K Tripathi, #CNS and all Personnel of the Indian Navy are shocked and deeply saddened by the tragic loss of Lt Vinay Narwal who fell to the dastardly terror attack in Pahalgam. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family during this moment of unimaginable grief."

The #IndianNavy also stands in solemn solidarity with all others that lost their lives in this heinous act of violence. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims' families and we pray for the swift recovery of those injured," the Navy said in a social media post.

Narwal's neighbour Naresh Bansal said the officer had recently got married.

"After the marriage, everyone was celebrating and in a happy mood. And now suddenly this sad news comes," he said about the terror attack incident.

Another neighbour Seema recalled that the wife was employees still serving home and not just the Narwal family, but the entire neighbourhood was celebrating after the wedding.

She told reporters in Karnal that Narwal did his engineering and later cleared the exams to become an officer in the Indian Navy.

"They were planning a honeymoon in Switzerland, but decided to go to Kashmir instead taking into account the leave he had, they can't imagine what his family is going through," she said. "We saw videos where a girl was crying and pleading with the terrorists to kill her too but they told her they were sparing her so that she can tell (PM Narendra) Modi what happened," she said without elaborating.

At least 26 persons — mostly tourists — were killed by terrorists on Tuesday at the Baisaran meadows in Pahalgam in one of the worst terror attacks on civilians in Kashmir in the past many years.

## Ujjain Collector breaks norm with chair for citizens

GIRISH SHARMA ■ Bhopal

In a gesture that quietly speaks volumes, Ujjain district Collector Roshan Kumar Singh is drawing praise for a simple but significant move— placing a chair in front of his desk during public hearing so that complainants can sit and speak comfortably.

Singh, a 2015 batch IAS officer, assumed charge as Ujjain's Collector on April 15. At his very first Jan Sunwai (public hearing) in the district, held on a Tuesday as mandated across Madhya Pradesh, Singh instructed his staff to place

a chair for complainants. Traditionally, complainants stand while presenting their grievances, while the Collector and revenue officials remain seated—a practice often criticised for its symbolic imbalance.

While talking to The Pioneer, Singh downplayed the gesture. "People come with problems—some of them serious and deeply personal. The least we can do is offer them a seat and a sense of dignity," says Ujjain Collector Roshan Kumar Singh, explaining the thought behind his simple yet impactful change during public hearings.

While public hearings are a regular feature in all district Collectorate of Madhya Pradesh, Singh's approach has reignited the debate about why such a small act of empathy has remained so rare.

This is not the first time Singh has introduced people-centric innovations. During his tenure as Vidisha Collector, he took a proactive approach to resolving complaints under the CM Helpline.

Going beyond the standard protocol, he personally reached out to complainants through random calls to verify if their issues were genuinely resolved and to assess their satisfaction levels.

Prior to his posting in Ujjain, Roshan Kumar Singh served as the Chief Executive Officer of the Morena District Panchayat and was later appointed Commissioner of the Ujjain Municipal Corporation in 2022. He subsequently served in the Public Relations Department in Bhopal before taking charge as Collector of Vidha.

Now Ujjain, Singh continues to uphold a governance style that prioritizes accessibility, humility, and a genuine connection with the public—a refreshing approach in a system often seen as hierarchical and distant.

## 'I'm alive for a reason', says terror attack survivor

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Neha alias Kishori Waghulade, who works as a casual labourer with the All India Radio (AIR) in Maharashtra's Jalgaon city, feels she must have done something good in life to have survived the deadly terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam town.

Visiting Pahalgam with a group of holiday-makers, Neha Waghulade was admiring the natural beauty of Baisaran meadows, a prime tourist location, when gunshots rang in the air on Tuesday afternoon. The meadows in the upper reaches of Pahalgam soon turned into a site of carnage where 26 people, mostly tourists, were gunned down by terrorists.

"I must have done something good in life, that's why I am still alive," she told her husband after surviving the terror attack. Her husband, Tushar Waghulade, speaking from Jalgaon, said his wife went to Kashmir with a group of friends on April 15. "The group was with her for two days because of work. When I called her

around 2 pm on Tuesday, she said there was firing and a terror attack was taking place. She told me she was safe and would contact me later," he said. Tushar Waghulade said he sensed the gravity of the situation from her voice. "She sounded shaken. Then she cut the call. I understood how serious it was," he said. They spoke again in the evening.

"Between 7:30 pm and 8 pm, she told me she was fine. She mentioned ambulances and that more security personnel were arriving. She said some tourists had died, but her group was safe," Tushar Waghulade maintained. Yetish Sudhir Parmar, a resident of Gujarat's Bhavnagar, who was killed in the terrorist attack at Pahalgam in Anantnag district of Jammu & Kashmir, said she told me that during the afternoon call there was a loud noise and people were panicking. After she hung up, I assumed her group had been moved to a safer place," he said. "The first ambulances in vehicles and ambulances and later shifted everyone to a safe place about 1.5 km from the attack site. Many tourists spent the night there," he said.

## Three Gujarat tourists killed in terror attack



(Left and right) Yashesh Sudhir Parmar and Smit Yashesh Parmar residents of Gujarat's Bhavnagar, who were killed in the terrorist attack at Pahalgam in Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir.

Kalathiya (44), belonging to Chikwadani area in Surat city, who moved to Mumbai a few years back after he was transferred there, according to officials.

"Kalathiya's cousin told us that he shifted to Mumbai four years ago due to job transfer. He had gone to Pahalgam with his wife and two children. His wife and children are safe," Surat disaster management department's revenue officer Sajid Merujay said.

Yatish Parmar and his son Smit Parmar, residents of Kalyanibadi area of Bhavnagar city, were atop among those killed in the Pahalgam terror attack, district collector Manish Kumar Bansal said.

The two were among 19 persons from Bhavnagar who went to Kashmir on April 16 to attend religious preacher Morari Bapu's discourse there, according to sources.

Terrorists struck at a prime tourist location in Pahalgam in south Kashmir on Tuesday, killing at least 26 persons, mostly tourists and injuring several others. Security has been beefed up across the valley, especially at vital tourist spots.

Three persons from Gujarat — two from Bhavnagar and one from Surat — were killed in the attack, while two were injured. The victim hailing from Surat lived in Mumbai.

"We are in touch with the Centre and Jammu and Kashmir government to bring back the bodies. We have also efforts to bring back other tourists who survived the attack," Patel said.

## UP announces DA hike for 5th and 6th Pay Commission employees

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Lucknow

A significant decision aimed at easing the financial burden on government employees, the Uttar Pradesh government has approved a hike in dearness allowance (DA) for staff receiving salaries under the 5th and 6th Pay Commissions.

The announcement, made through an official order issued by the Additional Chief Secretary (Finance), is expected to benefit thousands of employees across the state, including teachers, technical staff, and urban local body workers.

According to the revised structure, DA for employees under the 5th Pay Commission has been increased by 11 per-

cent, raising the rate from 455 percent to 466 percent of basic pay. Employees falling under the 6th Pay Commission will see a 6 percent hike, bringing their total DA to 252 percent from the earlier 246 percent.

These rates reflect the government's effort to account for the rising cost of living and inflationary trends that have weighed on employees' real income over the past years.

The period between January 1 and March 31, 2025, the amount will be credited to the employees' General Provident Fund (GPF) accounts or other designated future savings instruments. This method ensures that the fiscal burden is

managed prudently while still securing the benefit for the employees. The increase will cover a wide category of employees, including state government personnel, staff of government-aided educational institutions, technical institute employees, and regular and full-time staff employed by urban local bodies.

These are employees who, for various administrative or structural reasons, have not been transitioned to the 7th Pay Commission and continue to work under previous regimes. While, Vivek Kishore, leader of the State Government Employees Association, welcomed the move but said more needed to be done to bring parity. "This increase in dearness allowance is a

welcome step. Our long-standing demand has finally been addressed and it will provide financial relief to a large section of employees. We urge the government to consider bringing all employees under the 7th Pay Commission to ensure uniformity in compensation and benefits."

Employee unions, associations have been pressing for the move for several months, arguing that stagnant allowances were eroding real income, particularly as inflation and cost of essential commodities have risen sharply. This announcement comes at a crucial time, towards new fiscal year and reflects its intent to maintain administrative harmony and employee satisfaction.

## Kanpur plunged into grief over Shubham Dwivedi's death in Pahalgam terror attack

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Kanpur

A deep pall of sorrow hangs over Kanpur as news of the death of Shubham Dwivedi, a young man from the city killed in the recent terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam, spreads through his locality.

The 28-year-old, who had gone to the Valley for a short vacation with his wife, was shot in the head by terrorists in a brutal assault that claimed over two dozen civilian lives. Shubham had only recently stepped into a new chapter of his

life—he was married on February 12 this year. The attack has left not just his family, but an entire neighbourhood in mourning.

"He was full of life. Always ready to help everyone," said a Rajesh Sinha, a neighbour who had known Shubham since childhood.

"We just attended his wedding celebrations in February. Who knew that he would be attending his funeral so soon?" Locals gathered outside Shubham's home in Govind Nagar on Wednesday morning, many in tears, as they awaited

updates from the family.

Some lit candles in the evening and held a silent prayer for the departed soul.

"Shubham was like a son to all of us. His death feels like a personal loss," said Sumita Verma, an elderly woman who lives two houses away from the Dwivedis.

"His wife is in shock. We just want her to know that the entire mohalla stands with her." Shubham's cousin Saurabh Dwivedi said the terrorists had allegedly asked names before opening fire. "My sister-in-law called my uncle and said Shubham was shot in the head. We

have been told the body will be handed over in a couple of days after official procedures," he said.

The incident has triggered outrage and sorrow in equal measure. Local social groups have demanded that the government take strict action against terror outfits responsible for the attack.

"This is not just about Shubham. He represents every Indian civilian who has to travel, travels for peace, and falls victim to mindless violence," said Shaileendra Mishra, a local youth activist who plans to hold a peace march in

Shubham's memory.

The attack, which took place in Pahalgam, has been attributed to a group with suspected links to Lashkar-e-Taiba. Home Minister Amit Shah visited the attack site and assured that the perpetrators would be brought to justice.

As the Dwivedi family prepares to receive Shubham's mortal remains, Kanpur stands united in grief—remembering a young life snatched away too soon, and a family that such bloodshed never be repeated again. Meanwhile, Prime Narendra Modi

has cancelled the programme scheduled in Kanpur on April 24 in the wake of Pahalgam terror attack where 26 people were gunned down.

The Prime Minister was scheduled to visit Kanpur on April 24 to inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for development projects worth over ₹20,000 crore.

However, in light of the recent terror attack that claimed a number of lives, including that of a young man from Kanpur, the event has been cancelled.

Editor's  
TAKE

## Humanity dies in Pahalgam

**Terrorists slaughter 28 tourists — a tragic reminder that terror still haunts the Valley**

In one of the deadliest terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir since the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, 28 tourists were massacred on Tuesday in the tranquil Baisam meadow near the popular hill resort of Pahalgam. The Resistance Front (TRF), a proxy terror outfit of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), claimed responsibility. This attack has not only shocked the nation but also reopened deep-seated concerns about the fragile security scenario in Kashmir.

The tourists, who included honeymooners, families, and two foreign nationals — from Nepal and the UAE — were gunned down in a sudden gunfire. Despite existing security measures, including checkpoints and patrols, the attackers managed to infiltrate and execute their mission with clinical precision, raising serious questions about intelligence and on-ground presence.

This incident is not an isolated act of violence but appears deeply orchestrated. It coincided with two significant geopolitical events: The visit of US Vice President JD Vance to India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's diplomatic mission in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, it followed a combative speech by Pakistani Army Chief General Asim Munir, intensifying suspicions that the attack was calibrated to internationalise the Kashmir issue and portray the region as a nuclear flashpoint. The synchronicity is disturbingly reminiscent of the Chittisinghpora massacre in 2000, where 36 Sikhs were murdered days before US President Bill Clinton's visit.

By targeting tourists — symbols of normalcy and economic recovery — the terrorists aimed to derail the narrative of a stable Kashmir and provoke communal unrest across India. Since Article 370 was revoked, the Indian government has maintained a tight security apparatus in Kashmir, focusing on counter-insurgency and infrastructure development to boost tourism. While there has been a marked decline in local recruitment into terrorist groups, proxies like TRF have stepped up infiltration, especially using foreign fighters and sleeper cells.

The attack also underscores significant lapses. Despite heavy surveillance, there was no forewarning of this operation. The use of Army uniforms by terrorists highlights a dangerous tactic to bypass trust and checkpoints. Tourists, previously considered off-limits, are now being directly targeted, expanding the threat matrix. But the question is why now? Indeed it has to do with the arrival of US Vice President JD Vance. Pakistan may be attempting to paint Kashmir as unstable and urge foreign intervention.

Tourism in Kashmir has seen a resurgence post-370, contributing significantly to the local economy. Attacking tourists directly threatens this recovery. The brutal nature of the attack — execution-style killings — aims to spread fear and signal the reach and intent of the perpetrators.

India now faces the dual challenge of responding decisively to terror while safeguarding the fragile gains in Kashmir. It is time to enhanced human intelligence and local collaboration to detect sleeper cells. Deployment of smart surveillance technologies in vulnerable areas is a must and should be taken on priority. In the wake of this unspeakable tragedy, India faces a critical infection point — one that demands not just a military or tactical response, but a comprehensive strategic recalibration. First and foremost, a robust intelligence review is essential. India must intensify international pressure on nations that provide safe haven or support to terror outfits, directly or indirectly. This includes leveraging global forums such as the United Nations, and bilateral partnerships to isolate state and non-state actors that are responsible for terrorism. Silence and inaction on terror can no longer be diplomatically acceptable — Strategic complicity must be met with unwavering clarity and consequence.

Second, the long-term antidote to terrorism lies not only in security but in stability. Continued economic development and civic engagement in Jammu and Kashmir are key to undermining extremist narratives.

Investment in education, job creation, tourism infrastructure, and inclusive governance empowers local communities, weakens recruitment for terror networks, and fosters a sense of belonging amongst youth. A region that thrives economically is harder to radicalise. Most critically, it is time to revisit and reinforce the security architecture surrounding tourism. Tourists — once regarded as ambassadors of peace and economic revival — have now become targets. This demands a thorough overhaul of safety protocols, especially in remote and high-traffic areas like Pahalgam. The aim is not to deter tourism, but to restore confidence. Kashmir must not once again become a hostage to fear.

## Leaderspeak



The dastardly killing of innocent, unsuspecting tourists by terrorists in Pahalgam yesterday around 2:30 PM has deeply hurt, shocked, and saddened us all. The Congress Party unequivocally condemns this cowardly act of terror and those responsible for it in the strongest possible terms. This attack is a direct assault on the unity and integrity of our nation.

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE, PRESIDENT, CONGRESS PARTY

# Political fault lines shift in Bihar

With caste dynamics, coalition equations, and leadership challenges all in play, the stage is set for a high-stakes political showdown between the NDA and the Mahagathbandhan

The Bihar polls at the end of the year are pretty unpredictable. Currently, there will be no cakewalk for the BJP, RJD, Congress or the JD(U). The churning is quietly taking place in Bihar politics. There could be a potential shift in power dynamics. The BJP, playing its classic fiddle to the Janata Dal (United) for the past two decades, is eyeing a lead role. The RJD wants to form the government.

Two crucial power groups are in the fight. On one side, the NDA and, on the other, the Mahagathbandhan, which comprises the RJD, Congress, and the Left parties. Intra-party and inner-party dynamics are in full swing.

The NDA and Mahagathbandhan are making calculated moves for a high-stakes political showdown. Encouraged by consecutive victories in states where the odds were against it, a revitalised BJP has now set its sights on Bihar after winning Delhi.

Bihar's caste politics is interesting. Backward classes comprise 63.13 per cent of the population, and the upper caste only 15.52 per cent. Other Backward Classes comprise 27.12 per cent of the backward class category, while the Extremely Backward Class population numbered 36 per cent. Dalits comprise almost 19.65 per cent and

Yadavs account for 14.26 per cent. Kauri, Kauri Kauri's Kauri caste, also categorised as OBC, is 2.87 per cent of the population. In the last Assembly polls, upper castes, around 15 per cent of the population, dominated ticket distribution in Bihar. BJP gave 47.3 per cent of its tickets to upper caste candidates, whereas Congress gave 40 per cent of its seats to upper castes.

In the 2020 Bihar assembly elections, the Mahagathbandhan did not win a simple majority in the 243-member legislative assembly, missing it by just 12 seats. The RJD was the largest party in the House but could not form the government.

For the 2025 polls, JD(U) has confirmed Nitish Kumar as the chief ministerial face. The well-known poll expert Kishor Kishor predicted that Nitish Kumar would end his political career. The RJD has opted for its leader, Tejashwi Yadav. Congress has not opened its cards yet. A series of meetings between Congress and the RJD, which began this time, continues.

The Janata Dal (United) party and the BJP coalition currently rule Bihar. Nitish Kumar's deteriorating health, caste balance, and the functioning of the alliance make Bihar politically unpredictable. Even if the



BJP chooses Nitish, his health issues could significantly impact the election outcome.

The JD(U) wants to bargain for more seats with the BJP. In 2020, the JD(U) ran for 115 seats but only won 43. In contrast, the BJP ran for 110 seats and won 74. The Mahagathbandhan, which consists of RJD,

Congress, and some smaller parties, pose stiff opposition. The RJD and top Congress leaders met in Delhi last week to advance the alliance.

Political realignments since 2020 — the VIP joining the MGR, the BJP aligning with the NDA and the Rashtriya Lok Samata Party merging into the JD(U) — complicate the poll picture.

A key development since 2020 has been the change in the power equation within the NDA, with the BJP emerging stronger. The BJP has strategically cultivated non-dominant other backward classes (OBCs) and non-dominant Dalit communities.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah visit-

ed Bihar for two days. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Bihar. RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav made a surprising announcement, stating that he is open to reconciling with his socialist ally, Nitish Kumar. In response to this schizo-speech statement, Nitish remarked that he had inadvertently aligned with the RJD. Tejashwi Yadav, however, asserted that there is no place for Nitish in the Mahagathbandhan. Many believe that Nitish, known for his U-turns, could switch sides.

The INDIA opposition bloc has appointed Tejashwi Yadav, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader and former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister, as head of its coordination committee for the upcoming Bihar Assembly elections. This decision was made during a meeting of the six alliance partners in Patna on April 17.

The Congress and Left parties in the Mahagathbandhan are worried that the RJD will wait until the last minute to finalise seat-sharing agreements. The Congress party is unhappy with the weak constituencies it was given in 2020. It only won 19 out of the 70 seats it contested in the last election. The CPI(ML), which did

well in 2020, wants a larger share of seats. Since 2005, the RJD has had difficulty regaining power, except for short periods in 2015 and 2022.

Currently, Tejashwi Yadav has two main tasks. First, he needs to expand the support beyond its core groups of Muslims and Yadavs to include other castes. This involves a stronger grassroots campaign, as the traditional voting trends are changing. The Congress has not developed younger leadership in Bihar. Its old core groups of Muslims and Dalits have shifted to other parties. The party has launched the 'Samvidhan Leadership Programme' to eye marginalised communities.

The main parties face challenges both within their groups and from outside, and a significant political change is expected. A point to note is that Nitish Kumar's EBC is intact and challenges the RJD Congress alliance.

There could be many more changes before November; they would be interesting to watch. In politics, one week is said to be long. Six months is really long.

(The author is a popular columnist. Views are personal)

## Why EQ matters more than IQ

— someone who is empathetic, creative, problem-solving, curious, open to ideas, a good communicator, accepting without being judgmental... and many more. Most people also believe that individuals with lower IQ scores can achieve success — especially when they possess strong emotional intelligence (EQ).

Based on this survey I concluded that there was a shift in people's perception from IQ to EQ. In general, the meaning of intelligence exceeded beyond the confinement of standardised test. In order to get a broader understanding of intelligence I started researching the different types of intelligences as per psychological theory.

In the 1980s, Harvard psychologist, Howard Gardner proposed a theory that broke away from the "one-size-fits-all" model of intelligence. He introduced eight distinct types of intelligence that reflected the diverse ways humans learn, express themselves, and solve problems. These were:

**Linguistic Intelligence:** Word savvy like, writers, storytellers

**Logical-Mathematical Intelligence:** Analytical thinkers, like scientists and engineers

**Musical Intelligence:** Musically inclined, like musicians, dancers

**Kinesthetic Intelligence:** Physical grace and skill like, athletes

**Spatial Intelligence:** Visual and spatial thinkers like architects and artists

**Intrapersonal Intelligence:** People skills and empathy like, therapists, teachers, and leaders.

**Interpersonal Intelligence:** Deep self-understanding like philosophers and spiritual leaders

**Naturalistic Intelligence:** Attunement to nature, like, gardeners and environmentalists

Among other psychologists that followed, Daniel Goldman played an important role in introducing the concept of Emotional Intelligence, which includes empathy, self-awareness and emotional regulation which demonstrated that EQ plays an important role in personal success.

Together, these theories encourage us to look beyond IQ scores and appreciate the depth and diversity of human potential. Hence, even if one wasn't considered academically intelligent and didn't fit in the traditional high IQ "cookie cutter" mould, many have been very successful and have contributed to society at large. Younger generations in school and reportedly had very little formal education. His teachers thought he was slow or unable to learn. Despite this, he became one of the most prolific inventors in history.

Walt Disney was reportedly fired from a newspaper job for "lacking imagination", and he struggled academically. His success came through storytelling, creativity, and persistence.

Therefore, we must reconsider the tendency to label someone as lazy or unintelligent based solely on conventional standards. I believe my experience along with research and survey findings strongly support this perspective, which is aptly captured in the quote: "A high IQ may open a door, but emotional intelligence determines how far you'll go once you walk through it."

(The writer is an educator based in the US. Views are personal)

## SECOND Opinion

BY SHARMILA VAIDYA

In my nearly 26 years of experience working as an educator, I have had the privilege of working with students from diverse backgrounds and in different educational settings. It is during this period I started administering the state mandated IQ tests. These tests were administered to measure an individual's cognitive abilities, mostly logical reasoning, memory and verbal mathematical aptitude. They tell us how well someone can solve abstract problems under specific conditions.

I was surprised to see how these standardised tests categorised and measured individuals by numbers and scores often disregarding their potential, experiences and abilities, making it inherently biased.

This realisation prompted me to explore what IQ, intelligence and success fully mean in the real world. Hence, I decided to conduct a small survey. To get a fair sampling, I included people of different backgrounds — educators, parents, students, homemakers and professionals.

My questions were:

1. What qualities make you see someone as intelligent?
2. Do you think people with low IQ can be successful?
3. I was pleasantly surprised to see the responses from the survey. According to the survey — some of these qualities were,

### Contempt plea against Dubey

Madam — The Supreme Court on Tuesday 22 April said it will hear next week a contempt plea filed against BJP MP Nishikant Dubey for his controversial remarks blaming Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjay Khanna for "civil wars" in the country.

The matter was brought before a Bench comprising Justice B.R. Gavi and Justice Augustine George Masih by a lawyer who highlighted that the Attorney General had not responded to the request for sanction to initiate contempt proceedings.

The remark is viral. Dubey says CJI responsible for civil wars. No reply from Attorney (General), the lawyer said, prompting Justice Gavi to respond, "List it next week."

Dubey had sharply criticised the judiciary, claiming that if the Supreme Court continues to frame laws, then Parliament and state assemblies might as well be shut down. His comments came after the Centre assured the court that it would hold off on implementing controversial provisions of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, following judicial scrutiny. The BJP was quick to distance itself from Dubey's explosive comments.

Party president J.P. Nadda called the statements personal opinions and reiterated the BJP's "utmost respect for the judiciary", instructing party leaders to refrain from such remarks in the future.

### Mangoes can be a health risk!

Madam — Mango is a fruit rich in flavor, nutrition, and energy. It contains essential vitamins such as A and C, along with iron — nutrients that are highly beneficial for the eyes, skin, and immune system.

However, consuming mangoes before their natural season poses serious health risks, especially when they are artificially ripened using harmful chemicals like calcium carbide.

This chemical accelerates the ripening process unnaturally but its toxic compounds can damage the stomach, liver, and nervous system. Prolonged exposure or consumption may lead to ulcers, nausea, and in severe cases, even cause the risk of cancer.

It is therefore wise to prefer naturally ripened mangoes and prioritise health over momentary pleasure. Naturally ripened mangoes are available only during the proper mango season. The ones found in markets before that time are often treated with hazardous substances to enhance their appearance and ripen them prematurely. In fact it is the duty of the Government that no food item is sold which is a health risk.

Those who indulge in this practice must be behind the bars. So, for now, stay away from your "beloved" mango — and choose health over desire. A little patience today can ensure a safer and sweeter tomorrow!

ABDUL MBOOD | MUMBAI

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

B. MADHUSUDHAN REDDY | KARIMNAGAR

## PAHALGAM ATTACK: TERRORISTS ARE ENEMIES OF ENTIRE MANKIND

Once again Kashmir is lying in blood. It is very sad to note that at least 26 people mostly tourists were killed and several were injured by the terrorists. The gruesome attack should be condemned by each and every one. The Government boasted at last abrogation of Article 370 that the terrorism will come to an end in Jammu and Kashmir. After the rhetoric of Amit Shah and PM Narendra Modi that there is normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir the attack has proved that the Central Government has failed miserably to crumble down the terrorism. While many tourists were enjoying a peaceful afternoon amidst snow-capped peaks and pine forests the militants had spit blood in Pahalgam. This is an direct attack on the Indian state. The entire nation is in great shock. Previously in the gruesome terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir over 43 brave soldiers were killed. Every now and then many innocents people's

are being killed by terrorism. Now killing of 26 tourist is an act of barbarians and act of cowardice and assault on the values of humanity. Conceded that there can be genuine grievances of the people and individuals but violence is certainly not an option for redressal. It is a crime against humanity and has to be condemned by one and all. The terrorists are the enemies of entire mankind and they do not belong to a particular religion or particular country. All religions are great and love should be the universal religion. I request the Government to take stringent action against those are behind the terror attack. My sympathies to the families and prayers to the injured. At this moment the nation must stand by the families of the brutally killed innocent people and make all efforts to bring the culprits and give them exemplary punishment.

ZAKIR HUSSAIN | KAZIPET

# WAVES 2025: Redefining global media diplomacy

WAVES weaves together storytelling, technology and international cooperation to reshape the global media and entertainment. This summit marks a decisive leap into a future where India leads with innovation, cultural capital and strategic foresight

FIRST  
Column

Come May 1st, India has truly arrived with the WAVES Entertainment Summit being held in Mumbai from 1st to 4th of May 2025. The summit echoes the vision envisaged in 2019 by PM Modi in his speech at the inauguration of the National Museum of Indian Cinema, highlighting Indian cinema as a powerful medium of global outreach and soft power, calling it a "silent force" that shapes global perceptions and connects cultures. He emphasised cinema's potential to promote film tourism, inviting international filmmakers to explore India's diverse landscapes. The design of WAVES is an unusual convergence of like-mindedness of M&E stakeholders; individuals or institutions that think alike in carving out a landscape that will be suited for the global fraternity responsible for creating content and its consumption.

WAVES 2025 brings a bold new phase of soft power diplomacy, focusing on transformative and technology-driven partnerships. Innovation in this segment is bound to create a new buzz for foreign policy tie-ups, carried forward on the wings of emerging tools such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality (VR), and immersive content ecosystems. The diverse participation at WAVES will open unprecedented avenues for multilateral cooperation and dialogue across critical areas of knowledge sharing, media engagement, storytelling ecosystems, and digital co-productions. It provides India with an unparalleled opportunity to assert global leadership in the creative domain; by fusing its creativity quotient, strategic foresight, and cultural capital into a soft power matrix that fosters goodwill and purposeful international collaboration.

At the heart of WAVES 2025 lies its evocative tagline: "Connecting Creators, Connecting Countries", a bold declaration of India's intent to reposition itself as a global M&E powerhouse. As a summit that seeks to reimagine communication diplomacy, one of its most awaited outcomes is the WAVES Declaration, a visionary charter that could reshape the media discourse globally.

Rarely has a platform attempted to knit together creativity, business, leadership, and soft power into a cohesive global identity. But WAVES seeks to do just that, with a Global Media Dialogue, a declaration of shared values, and a structured roadmap for the future. The declaration reflects the ethos of a borderless, tech-enabled, creatively interconnected world. The declaration will place communication-clear, coherent, and collaborative-at the centre of a new global information order, founded on equity, access, equality, and participation.

WAVES has quietly but effectively given a new meaning to soft power diplomacy wherein all constituents that create charisma associated with knowledge sharing and storytelling play a critical role in bilateral or multilateral cooperation. It would be appropriate to mention that diplomacy will adorn new wings of change based on creativity,



ity, innovation and the spirit of collaboration. WAVES will truly be the "Mahakumbh" of ideas, opportunities, experiences and knowledge sharing.

The philosophical underpinning of WAVES 2025 can be distilled into the 7 Cs of Communication: Clarity, Conciseness, Concreteness, Correctness, Coherence, Completeness, and Courtesy. These seven pillars not only ensure effective storytelling but serve as diplomatic principles guiding cross-border media collaboration. They offer a timeless framework as we enter an era where communication is the new currency of power, diplomacy, and development.

With narratives shaping geopolitics, trade, and international perception, there is a pressing need for a Global Media Charter, a binding commitment from nations to protect freedom of creative expression, foster diverse storytelling, and ensure ethical media practices. WAVES 2025 can be the birthplace of this transformative shift. In a world increasingly governed by digital influence and algorithmic reach, a unified declaration will help navigate the



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

practices. WAVES 2025 can be the birthplace of this transformative shift. In a world increasingly governed by digital influence and algorithmic reach, a unified declaration will help navigate the

6  
THE SUMMIT ALSO AIMS TO INCREASE INDIA'S GLOBAL MARKET SHARE IN MEDIA, ATTRACT MAJOR INVESTMENTS, AND ENCOURAGE CO-PRODUCTION BETWEEN INDIAN AND INTERNATIONAL PLAYERS. BY BRINGING TOGETHER CREATORS, INVESTORS, AND POLICYMAKERS, WAVES OFFERS A SHARED SPACE TO BUILD PARTNERSHIPS AND GROW IDEAS

ethical dilemmas of deepfakes, information disorder, and cultural homogenisation. It's not just about content anymore; it's about cultural continuity, technological responsibility, and global unity through creative collaboration.

WAVES isn't just about short-term buzz, it's about building something lasting. It understands that media and entertainment (M&E) isn't a quick fix but a long-term strategic play. At its heart is a clear goal: to make India the global content hub and a net exporter of stories. With its rich cultural diversity and languages, India has all the ingredients to build a strong intellectual property base that resonates worldwide.

The summit also aims to increase India's global market share in media, attract major investments, and encourage co-production between Indian and international players. By bringing together creators, investors, and policymakers, WAVES offers a shared space to build partnerships and grow ideas. Platforms like WaveXcelerator and WAVES Bazaar will help startups and innovators scale up and plug into global markets.

WAVES 2025 is designed to be a complete experience. The Global Media Dialogue brings together ministers and top policymakers from around the world to exchange ideas. The Thought Leaders Track will host key sessions exploring future trends and challenges in media.

In the Exhibition Zone, companies will showcase the latest in gaming, animation, VR, and AI. The WAVES Bazaar will act as a meeting ground for buyers and sellers to find the right collaborators. WaveXcelerator will give startups a chance to pitch live and attract investors.

The Bharat Pavilion will spotlight India's storytelling journey; from folk tales to futuristic formats. The CreatoSphere will feature masterclasses, creators' meet-ups, and the grand finale of the Create in India Challenge. And finally, a series of cultural performances will bring together talent from across the globe, blending tradition with innovation.

WAVES is expected to drive real outcomes, from new content partnerships and global investments to job creation and policy support. It will help position India as a creative and tech-savvy media partner for the world. With cutting-edge tech on display, including AI tools and immersive experiences, the summit will also show how India is shaping the future of media.

By promoting co-productions, content exchanges, and new distribution deals, WAVES could help Indian stories travel further. It also gives international stakeholders a chance to build real connections with Indian creators-paving the way for shared growth and innovation. Most importantly, it sets the stage for India to lead the way in global media diplomacy.

The timing couldn't be better. According to the EY-FICCI 2025 M&E Report, India's media sector grew to INR 2.5 trillion in 2024 and is expected to touch INR 2.7 trillion in 2025.

Digital media now makes up 32% of total revenue, with digital ads growing fast. OTT platforms grew by 18%, driven by regional stories finding global fans. The report projects that the sector will hit INR 3.1 trillion by 2027, powered by gaming, animation, and immersive tech. WAVES gives these numbers real meaning, by turning data into action, partnerships into policy, and content into soft power. It's where the industry meets diplomacy and the future is co-created.

India is no longer on the sidelines of the global media conversation, it is setting the agenda. With WAVES 2025, India is articulating a bold creative vision for the world: one that transcends platforms, breaks silos, and builds coalitions of creators. WAVES 2025 isn't just another summit, it is a cultural declaration, a geopolitical realignment of media narratives, and a commitment to connect not just creators, but countries, cultures and communities.

By placing communication at the heart of global partnerships, WAVES brings together not only markets but also minds and meanings. The world is watching, and India is ready to lead.

(The writer is former Civil Servant, writes on Cinema and Strategic Communication. Views are personal. Inputs provided by Zoya Ahmad and Vaidhyan Srinivasan)

## Reclaiming our humanity: A call to connection in a fragmented world

Amid global turmoil, Danish explorer Thor Pedersen's journey to every country without flying stands as quiet proof that kindness and shared humanity endure — even in the unlikely places. It's a story of contrast, conviction, and hope

Septuagenarian Dr Iain McGilchrist, a world-renowned philosopher, psychiatrist and neuroscientist, recently addressed a symposium titled 'The Future of Humanity, where he delved into some of the most pressing questions at the heart of our existence—the existence of what is good, beautiful, and true. Reflecting on his lifetime, he observed that these fundamental transcendental values have been increasingly sidelined, decimated, debased, and even destroyed. "It is not just that we are distracted from the truth," he noted, "but we demand protection from it, lest it hurt us—in case life itself hurts us."

This observation resonates deeply in a world increasingly perceived as unkind, unfeeling, and unconcerned, where the very essence of humanity—compassion, love, and concern—seems to be vanishing at an alarming rate.

In our hyper-competitive socio-political environment, every sphere of life—family, social, professional, and spiritual—is under strain. Systems meant to support them are collapsing. Yet amid this bleakness, glimmers of hope remain. One such beacon is a traveller's journey—marked by twists, encounters, and insights, offering a powerful affirmation of the human spirit.

Take the journey of Thor Pedersen, a Danish explorer. Thor is the only person in history to travel to every corner of the world without flying. Between 2013 and 2023, he visited over 200 nations—India being his 168th—using only ships, trains, buses, and other ground or sea-based transport. His journey was more than a feat of endurance; it became a profound exploration of humanity, transcending borders, cultures, and beliefs.

At the heart of his experience lay a simple truth: "People are just people." Whether he went, he met ordinary people living ordinary lives—finding joy in food, music, and sports, and valuing safety and stability over political and religious



divides. Across every border he crossed, he was met with kindness and generosity. Strangers offered him meals, shelter, contacts, translations, or simply a smile when he needed it most—true to the spirit of our shared humanity.

His realisation deepened when he observed: "If we reduce people to numbers and statistics, we create distance and lose empathy. Divide and conquer is an age-old strategy, and it works well—but at what cost? We can keep dividing the world until, eventually, we all sit alone."

However, the Danish globetrotter's voyage was not without challenges. He encountered a few unpleasant incidents and individuals along the way, threatened by drunk, armed, and hostile men, battling cerebral malaria, and being held at gunpoint. While all this, however, did not dishearten him, we are reminded of Gandhi's profound words: "You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is like an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean

are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty."

Thor's journey, devoid of privilege and elitism—underscores vital truths:

a) Even if gentleness and kindness seem to be in decline, they continue to thrive quietly at the grassroots.

b) Though humanity struggles to find its rightful place in a world consumed by the relentless pursuit of power, pleasure, and profit, it is not lost — only marginalised.

c) As we glamorise wealth, we risk losing the very qualities that define us as human—compassion, care, and cooperation.

History bears witness to countless individuals who, in moments of crisis, be it accidents, tragedies, or desperate need — step forward uninvited, saving lives and rekindling faith in humanity. Though often overlooked, their actions quietly pull humanity back from the brink.

That said, the world remains enmeshed

in grave, interconnected crises—war, inequality, poverty, climate change—demanding collective will. Sadly, world leaders, despite their promises, continue to ignore the catastrophic plight of millions. As they routinely gather to design an ostensibly better future, they remain either unable or unwilling to reveal—let alone act—on that failure of meaningful action, but a failure of intent.

### Grim Realities

For long, we have viewed the world as manipulable and controllable—ripe to be bent to our will. Therefore, few doubt that many crises plaguing our world are not mere accidents of fate or unavoidable circumstances; they are often the deliberate outcomes of power-driven agendas. Fueled by greed, ruthless self-interest, and an insatiable thirst for domination, these forces ignite brutal conflict, widespread deprivation, environmental devastation, racism, and religious extremism—creating

a reality steeped in suffering and division. Poverty, an affront to human dignity, heightens vulnerability to abuse. Tied to climate change, it's set to intensify—new research led by Dr Timothy Neal (University of New South Wales) warns the average person could be 40% poorer if global temperatures rise by 4°C.

Shockingly, those who hold power—whether in struggling countries, developing economies, or even the most developed nations—have often abandoned humanity as the foundation of governance. Opportunistic toxic politics and hybrid forms of authoritarianism continue to destroy the sacred ground of human dignity, pushing aside the cardinal principle that must guide all leadership: People Over Everything.

Even the COVID-19 crisis—exposing vulnerabilities and inequities—failed to instill lasting solidarity. Human dignity remains dispensable.

What of more grim realities?

According to the Geneva Academy, more than 45 armed conflicts are currently raging across the Middle East and North Africa. Africa follows closely, with over 35 non-international armed conflicts (NIACs). Asia remains a battleground for 19 such conflicts, while Europe contends with seven.

Bleak as it may seem, this is a call to action—once urging us to deepen our commitment to humanistic values, where every life is worthwhile, wanted, and welcomed.

While it may be simplistic to expect everything to align perfectly with the humanistic way, it is crucial to recognise the deeper causes of suffering, distress, and anguish within the fabric of human society—locally, nationally, and globally. In an age of deep disillusionment, we must remember: the world is not merely a map of borders, but a shared home.

As Professor Harvey Whitehouse of Oxford reminds us: "Remembering that we are all related and experience many of the same challenges could be the key to solving global problems—from inter-group conflicts to poverty and the climate crisis."

What kind of world do we want to live in? If we fail to address this, we risk sliding into a soulless existence—a world full of people, yet empty of humanity. We may exist, but we will not truly live. The degradation of humanity is not inevitable. Though messiness and imperfection are part of what makes us human, it is in our ability to reclaim substantive conversation and enrich our relationships, based on humanistic virtues. Our hearts and minds—feeling, wing, knowing, sensing—must not grow numb to the suffering that surrounds us.

We must not be swayed by eloquent words, empty rhetoric, or the shallow display of symbolism. Only through real, tangible action can we reclaim what is slipping away—the very essence of our shared humanity.

The imperative of our times: **Reawakening our humanity** — Embracing what matters most—People, planet, and our shared future.

(The writer is columnist and author. He is former Deputy General Manager, Indian International Centre, Delhi. Views expressed are personal)



DEBASHISH BHATTACHARYA

## British PM condemns Kashmir terror attack

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA** ■ London

strategic partners and assets overseas," USISPF said, adding that it is a shame that the picturesque town of Pahalgam has

GOPIO Chairman Thomas Abraham reaffirmed solidarity and resolve in the fight against terrorism in all its forms and wherever it occurs. "The Indian Diaspora will remain united with the Government of India's efforts to combat terrorism," he said.

"We reiterate our absolute condemnation of all acts of terrorism in whatever

The bodies of the 26 victims were brought to the Government Medical College (GMC) in Srinagar early on Wednesday and then taken to the Police Control Room where Home Minister Amit Shah laid wreaths on them.

CLYDE

The blaze is the second major forest fire in the region in less than a week.

ing actor, Jessica Mann, in a M

## ment and the achievement of

Putin declared a 30-hour unilateral ceasefire on Saturday, but Ukraine and British officials said Russian attacks continued during the alleged pause. The Associated Press was unable to verify whether a ceasefire was in place along the roughly 1,000-km front line.



# Will not to raise stake in Vodafone idea: Scindia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The government has no plans to increase its shareholding in Vodafone Idea (VIL) as it does not want the telecom operator to turn into a public sector undertaking (PSU), Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia has said.

Sending out a strong message to Vodafone Idea, Scindia said in an interview that it is now the telco's job to ensure it performs. After the recent conversion of Rs 36,900 crore of outstanding spectrum rights dues into equity, the government now holds 48.99 per cent shares in Vodafone Idea Ltd. Prior to this, the government's stake was about 22.6 per cent.

It is pertinent to mention that any additional stake could potentially turn the company into a PSU - bringing it under the administrative control of the government which would then get to appoint the board. Also the company would come under the

purview of CAG and other oversight bodies, under such circumstances.

"It is now their (VIL's) job to ensure that they perform. Government today has 49 per cent of the company. There is no intention for the government to make that into a PSU. So we will stick to 49 per cent," Scindia said. On his assessment of impact of dues conversion on VIL's health and future competitiveness, specially given wide skepticism that the telco may still struggle to meet future payment obligations, the minister said, "That question should be directed at VIL. It is now their job to ensure that they perform".

Analysts have been saying that government relief to Vodafone Idea into through dues-to-equity conversion may ease near-term liquidity constraints for the telco, but that structural challenges remain for the operator with factors like stabilisation of subscriber base, tariff hikes, long-pending debt raise, and further relief on dues being vital for the telco's long-term

**Analysts claim that government relief to Vodafone Idea into through dues-to-equity conversion may ease near-term liquidity constraints, but that structural challenges remain for the operator**

survival. On the issue of MTNL's default on bank loans, the minister noted that it has substantial land bank and informed that same will be monetised for clearing dues of banks and debt.

"MTNL now has a large amount of asset base in terms of its land bank. We are today progressing on that. And through NLMC - National Land Monetisation Committee - that land will be divested and through the proceeds of that land, all dues to banks and debt will be taken care of," Scindia assured. He did not specify timelines that may

be involved for such monetisation, and said he is pursuing the matter.

"NLMC is under DIPAM and the Finance Minister. I am pursuing with them. As soon as that's done that will be taken care of," the minister said.

It is pertinent to mention here that state-run telecom firm MTNL has defaulted on bank loans worth ₹3,436.24 crore from seven public sector banks, according to a statutory filing by the company over the weekend. The loss-making public sector telecom firms total debt obligations reached ₹3,568 crore as on March 31, 2025, according to the filing dated April 19.

The total loan default includes ₹3,633.42 crore of debt raised from Union Bank of India, ₹2,374.49 crore of Indian Overseas Bank, ₹1,074.34 crore of Bank of India, ₹464.26 crore Punjab National Bank, ₹350.05 crore from State Bank of India, ₹266.30 crore from UCO Bank and ₹180.3 crore along with principal and interest payment.

The defaults in loan payment occurred

between August 2024 to February 2025. The total debt on the company comprises ₹8,346 crore bank loan, Rs 24,071 crore sovereign guarantee (SG) bond, and loan of ₹1,151 crore from Department of Telecom (DoT) for paying 5G bond interest, the minister said. Bhaurao Santhar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) has scripted an "amazing turnaround" and lauded it for delivering a "stellar performance". "It's been an arduous task and it has been an amazing turnaround. I must, on this occasion, also thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his belief in BSNL and providing those relief packages for BSNL without which we would have not seen this day," Scindia said.

BSNL during in the October to December quarter of FY25 has delivered net profit (₹262 crore) for the first time in 18 years. "After 72 quarters, we posted net profit... It is my firm belief that as we roll out 4G on an 'Atmanirbhar' solution... Only the fifth in the world to do so (there are only four other countries that have pro-

duced 4G technology)... India has produced 4G technology. We are rolling out 100,000 towers. As of date, 90,000 towers have been installed," he said. About 74,000 towers have been commissioned. "It is my fervent hope that by July or so, we will roll out the balance towers. We then have to stabilise the network. Then as a next step, ensure quality of service. The number of call drops, the amount of latency, the number of interruptions... And once that is stabilised, then I intend to move the 4G network, convert that into a 5G network," he said.

Doing so would require an additional equipment, include BTS, to graduate BSNL from 4G on to 5G.

"The next step would be to also strengthen this network. So that's the path forward. But I think it is important to keep BSNL customer-centric. We are also putting in place a number of software so that we can connect with the consumer, as customer service is paramount to us," the Minister stated.

# Jitendra Srivastava appointed CMD of REC

# Pahalagam terror attack: Hospitality industry braces for Kashmir travel booking cancellations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Gurugram

Jitendra Srivastava, IAS, has assumed charge as Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of REC Limited on April 22, 2025.

On 18th April 2025, the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) appointed Srivastava, who is an IAS from Bihar Cadre (2000 Batch), as the CMD of REC. This appointment has been made in the rank and pay of Additional Secretary to the Government of India, under the Ministry of Power.

Srivastava is a seasoned civil servant with over two decades of distinguished service. Over the years, he has held several key administrative and leadership roles across the Government of India and the Government of Bihar.

Srivastava has served as Joint Secretary in the Department of Drinking Water and

Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti from January 2023 onwards. Earlier, he served as Secretary to Govt. of Bihar in Home Department and Public Health Engineering Department (PHED). He holds a B.A. (Hons) in Economics from Delhi University's Hansraj College and MBA (Finance) from Cochin University of Science and Technology.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Anticipating largescale travel booking cancellations for Jammu and Kashmir in the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Pahalagam, aggregators on Wednesday said they are working with airlines and hotels to offer free date change and cancellation waivers to travellers.

Hospitality industry players expect the terror attack to sow fear in the minds of tourists who were keen to visit Jammu and Kashmir, adversely affecting the livelihoods of people in the state who are dependent on tourism. At least 26 people - mostly tourists - were killed by terrorists on Tuesday at the Baisaran meadows in Jammu.

"As per the early observations, flight cancellations jumped 7x, and a drop in tourist bookings by nearly 40 per cent," said Manjari Singhal, Chief Growth and

**Hospitality industry players expect the terror attack to sow fear in the minds of tourists who were keen to visit Jammu and Kashmir, adversely affecting the livelihoods of people in the state**

Business Officer, Cleartrip. "As travellers navigate this difficult situation, our teams are working round the clock with airline and hotel partners to provide flexibility and assistance on bookings/ cancellations. Our on-ground team is doing everything in their capacity to offer support to travellers. We remain committed to providing continued assistance to both our customers and partners during this difficult time," a MakeMyTrip spokesperson said.

EaseMyTrip Chairman and Founder Nishant Pitti said, "In light of the ongoing situation in Srinagar, we at EaseMyTrip are fully committed to supporting our customers who are travelling to or from Srinagar. We understand the uncertainty this situation may cause and are here to minimise any inconvenience to your travel plans. To ensure flexibility, we have extended free change and cancellation waivers for all bookings made on or before April 22, applicable for travel up to April 30."

FAITH (Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality) General Secretary Rajiv Mehra said for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, tourism is not just a livelihood, it is their pride, their legacy and their hope.

"This attack has not only harmed innocent lives but has also dealt a cruel blow to the thousands of families who depend

on tourism to survive. From household owners and hoteliers to local guides and artisans, every individual in this chain of warmth and welcome is affected," he warned.

Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) also expressed its deep anguish and pain on selected targeting of tourists in Kashmir by a group of terrorists, saying it strongly condemns the cowardly terror attack "which is clearly designed to instil fear in the people in Kashmir and create an atmosphere of fear".

We are shocked and appalled at these attacks in our country. Since 2020, the J&K region has seen a steady upswing in tourism numbers going from 3 million in 2019 to over 12 million in 2024. This 8x huge surge in tourists impacts and improves the lives of the long-tail of the tourism industry and leads to the prosperity of the locals.

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# Rupee falls 25 paise to settle at 85.44 against US dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

The rupee depreciated 25 paise and settled for the day at 85.44 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, on surge in crude oil prices and importer demand for the American currency.

Forex traders said the American currency recovered, supported by Donald Trump's softened stance - particularly towards the Federal Reserve and China.

However, positive domestic markets and weak US dollar index and foreign fund inflows, supported the domestic unit at lower levels.

Forex traders said the market found support after Trump on Tuesday backed off from threats to fire FED Chair Jerome Powell after days of intensifying criticism against the Fed, not cutting rates. Trump also signalled the possibility of lower tariffs against China.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.24, and touched an intra-day low of 85.52 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 85.44 (provisional), registering a loss of 25 paise over its previous closing level.

On Tuesday, the rupee settled lower by 4 paise at 85.19 against the US dollar.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a positive bias amid risk on sentiments in the global markets and FII inflows. Overall weakness in the US dollar may also support the rupee."

# Alcohol industry seeks uniform taxation for sector



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Alcoholic beverage maker's body CIABC on Wednesday urged the government to introduce uniform taxation for the sector and allow promotion of heritage spirits like 'Mahua' and 'Feni' globally, saying such reforms are vital to boost exports and help Indian brands compete internationally.

Deepak Roy, Chairman at Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Industry (CIABC), also said that the government should allow the industry to communicate freely with its consumers.

With the government's help, Indian heritage spirits can be promoted in international markets, as they have great potential in India and globally, he said.

Roy was speaking at the AlcoBev India 2025, the industry conclave organised by CIABC here.

"One segment that can really make it happen is the Indian heritage spirits. When 'Tequila' can be synonymous with Mexico, 'Sake' with Japan and 'Soju' with Korea, the same we can achieve internationally with 'Feni' or 'Mahua', which have a rich cultural legacy. We need to get out of the old mindset and promote Indian heritage spirits," he said.

He added that different taxation levels in states are a big challenge for the industry.

"There is no cohesive strategy for the Indian alcoholic beverage industry. The industry needs a uniform taxation mechanism which will propel the growth," he added.

# E fines Apple 500 million Euros and Meta 200 million in separate cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

European Union watchdogs fined Apple and Meta hundreds of millions of euros Wednesday as they stepped up enforcement of the 27-nation bloc's digital competition rules.

The European Commission imposed a 500 million euro (USD 571 million) fine on Apple for preventing app makers from pointing users to cheaper options outside its App Store.

The commission, which is the EU's executive arm, also fined Meta Platforms 200 million euros because it forced Facebook and Instagram users to choose between seeing personalised ads or paying to avoid them.

The punishments were smaller than the blockbuster multimillion-euro fines that the commission has previously slapped on Big Tech companies in antitrust cases.

Apple and Meta have to comply with the decisions within 60 days or risk unspecified "periodic penalty payments," the commission said.

The decisions were expected to come in March, but the self-imposed deadline slipped amid an escalating transatlantic trade war with US President Donald Trump, who has repeatedly complained about regulations from Brussels affecting American companies.

The penalties were issued under the EU's Digital Markets Act, also known as the DMA. It's a sweeping rulebook that amounts to a set of do's and don'ts

designed to give consumers and businesses more choice and prevent Big Tech "gatekeepers" from cornering digital markets.

The DMA seeks to ensure "that citizens have full control over when and how their data is used online, and businesses can freely communicate with their own customers," Henna Virkunen, the commission's executive vice-president for tech sovereignty, said in a statement.

**The commission said it ordered Apple to remove technical and commercial restrictions that prevent developers from steering users to other channels, and to end 'non-compliant' conduct**

"The decisions adopted today find that both Apple and Meta have taken away this free choice from their users and are required to change their behaviour," Virkunen said. Both companies indicated they would appeal. Apple accused the commission of "unfairly targeting" the iPhone maker, and said it "continues to move the goal posts" despite the company's efforts to comply with the rules.

Meta Chief Global Affairs Officer Joel Kaplan said in a statement that the "Commission is attempting to handicap successful American businesses while allowing Chinese and European companies to operate under different standards."

In a press briefing in Brussels, commission spokesperson sought to tamp down concerns that the penalties would inflame trade tensions.

"We don't care who owns a company. We don't care where the company is located," commission spokesperson Thomas Regnier told reporters. "We are totally agnostic on that front from a European

Union." "And be it a Chinese company, be it an American company, or be it a European company, you will have to play by the rules in the European Union."

In the App Store case, the Commission had accused the iPhone maker of imposing unfair rules preventing app developers from freely steering consumers to other channels. Among the DMA's provisions are requirements to let developers inform consumers of cheaper purchasing options and direct them to those offers.

The commission said it ordered Apple to remove technical and commercial restrictions that prevent developers from steering users to other channels, and to end "non-compliant" conduct.

Apple said it has "spent hundreds of thousands of engineering hours and made dozens of changes to comply with this law, none of which our users have asked for."

"Despite countless meetings, the Commission continues to move the goal posts every step of the way," the company said. The EU's Meta investigation centred on the company's strategy to comply with strict European data privacy rules by giving users the option of paying for ad-free versions of Facebook and Instagram.

Users could pay at least 10 euros a month to avoid being targeted by ads based on their personal data. The US tech giant rolled out the option after the European Union's top court ruled Meta must first get consent before showing ads to users.

Regulators took issue with Meta's model, saying it doesn't allow users to exercise their right to "freely consent" to allowing their personal data from its various services, which also include Facebook Marketplace, WhatsApp, and Messenger, to be combined for personalised ads.

Meta rolled out a third option in November giving Facebook and Instagram users in Europe the option to see fewer personalised ads if they don't want to pay for an ad-free subscription.

# '90 per cent IT and security experts report cyberattacks'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

New research from Rubrik Zero Labs has traced that Indian organisations are facing a wave of cyberattacks. In the past one year, 80 per cent of Indian organisations that experienced a ransomware attack paid a ransom to recover their data or to stop the ransomware attack. Significantly, 52 per cent of Indian organisations paid a ransom due to data extortion threats while 44 per cent of Indian organisations reported that cyber attackers successfully affected their backup and recovery options.

Accepting that cyberattacks are a constant threat, the RZL research, "The State of Data Security in 2025: A Distributed Crisis," also notes that 65 per cent of organisations in India store their data across multiple environments (on-premises, Cloud, or SaaS) while 38 per cent respondents say that one of the biggest challenges they face in securing their data is securing sensitive data across multiple environments. As many as 44 per cent of Indian organisations reported that cyber attackers successfully affected their backup and recovery

options. The consequences of these attacks were that 29 per cent of respondents reported financial losses, 31 per cent noted reputational damage and loss of customer confidence, and 36 per cent experienced a forced leadership change following a cyber incident.

The State of Data Security in 2025: A Distributed Crisis is based on insights from over 1,600 IT and security leaders across 10 countries (half of whom were CIOs or CSOs) from the US, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Japan, Australia, Singapore and India. From India 125 IT respondents participated in the survey conducted by Wakefield Research.

RZL research - "The State of Data Security in 2025: A Distributed Crisis," states that globally, 90 per cent of the IT and security leaders reported cyberattacks in the past year. It also reveals the hazards that hybrid environments are creating, leading to a cloud security crisis that organisations are unprepared to address.

Many organisations that move to the cloud assume that providers will handle security," said Joe Hadik, Head of Rubrik Zero Labs.

# Markets rise for 7th day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Stock markets extended the winning run to seventh day on Wednesday. With benchmark BSE Sensex jumping 520 points to close above 80,000 level for the first time in four months driven by strong gains in IT and auto shares.

The 30-share Sensex rose by 520.90 points or 0.65 per cent to settle at 80,116.49, the highest closing level since December 18. During the day, it surged 658.96 points or 0.82 per cent to 80,254.55.

The Nifty rallied 161.70 points or 0.67 per cent to 24,328.95.

Foreign fund inflows and positive global trends also boosted the market sentiment, analysts said.

Among the Sensex firms, HCL Tech surged the most by 7.72 per cent after the firm posted an 8.1 per cent increase in consolidated net profit at ₹4,307 crore for March quarter 2025, mainly on account of large deals with a total contract value of about ₹25,500 crore.

Tech Mahindra, Tata Motors, Infosys, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services, Tata Steel, Bharti Airtel and Maruti were also among major gainers.

Banking shares witnessed a sell-off after recent sharp gains with leading pri-

vate lender HDFC Bank dropping by 1.98 per cent to emerge as the biggest loser among Sensex shares.

State Bank of India, Axis Bank, ITC and UltraTech Cement were also among the laggards.

In Asian markets, South Korea's KOSPI index, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled in the positive territory. The S&P 500 Composite ended marginally lower. Markets in Europe were trading slightly higher.

US markets bounced back sharply on Tuesday. Nasdaq Composite surged 2.71 per cent, Dow Jones Industrial Average jumped 2.66 per cent and S&P 500 rallied 2.51 per cent.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹1,290.43 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

"The Indian equity market sustained its positive momentum, driven by better outcome from the latest set of IT results and optimistic forward-looking comments. However, profit-taking was visible in financials after the recent sharp rally."

"While US-China trade tensions appear to be easing, a rally in US tech stocks has further bolstered investor confidence globally," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

# INBRIEF

**GNU, NSE ACADEMY LAUNCH MBA IN FINANCIAL ANALYTICS**

Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University has signed a three-year MoU with NSE Academy to launch an MBA in Financial Analytics, blending academic rigour with industry insights. The program will offer live projects, certifications, and practical training starting this academic session.



**GNU NATIONAL SEMINAR ON INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM**

Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University's Hindi Department, in collaboration with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), has organised a seminar titled "Indian Knowledge System: A Multidimensional Legacy", highlighting India's rich literary and philosophical traditions. Eminent scholars and cultural figures from across the country participated.

# Man City scores late winner to beat Aston Villa 2-1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Manchester

Pep Guardiola celebrated wildly as Manchester City took a big step toward Champions League qualification with a 2-1 victory over Aston Villa in the Premier League. With clenched fists, the City manager roared with delight after Mathew Nune struck deep into stoppage time at the Etihad Stadium.

"I was so happy. I have to admit it," Guardiola said after a win that could help salvage a troubled season for his once dominant team.

The late winner moved four-time defending league champion City up to third in the standings, with the top five securing a place in European club soccer's top competition. Nune fired home from a tight angle in the fourth minute of added time after Jeremy Doku's low cross through the box. The game had looked destined to end in a draw after Bernardo Silva's first-half goal had been canceled out by a Marcus Rashford penalty.

There is still likely to be a tense battle for the Champions League with a clutch of teams in contention going into the final weeks of the season and just four points separating third to seventh in the standings. But City's fate is in its own hands after a troubled campaign that saw its title defense unraveled before Christmas and its hopes of winning the Champions League end in the playoffs.

A top-five finish would go some way to ending the season on a high — and Guardiola's celebration was evidence of just



how important the win could prove to be. "We have a lot of pressure for the club to go to the Champions League," said Guardiola, whose City team won the competition for the first time in 2023. "If we win the next four games, it will

have been so important," he added.

Victory moved City up to 61 points and above Nottingham Forest in fourth and Newcastle in fifth. Chelsea is sixth and Villa, with 57 points, is seventh. England's top flight will be given a bonus

fifth Champions League place because of the performances of English teams in Europe this season. Both City and Villa have played a game more than their top-five rivals. But City knows a perfect record from its remaining four league

games would guarantee a place in next season's Champions League.

It would be the 15th season in a row that City has qualified for the competition and would provide an uplifting finale to a campaign that brought an end to Guardiola's recent dominance of English soccer. There is likely to be a rebuild in the off-season, with Kevin De Bruyne leaving and Silva and Ilkay Gundogan also in the latter stages of their careers. But it was Silva who provided the opener for City in the seventh minute from close range after Omar Marmoush's cutback. Rashford had already hit the post for Villa by that point after bursting into the box seconds after kickoff. And the on-loan Manchester United forward was on the score sheet in the 18th — equalising from the penalty spot following VAR review of Ruben Dias' foul on Jacob Ramsey in the box.

Defeat was a blow to Villa's hopes of making it back-to-back seasons in the Champions League after returning to the competition for the first time in 41 years this term and advancing to the quarter-finals. "Of course, today we lost, but there are still matches to play, still points to play (for). We will have chances to get the Champions League," Villa manager Unai Emery said.

"I am happy how we are reacting, how every player is facing the moment we are in (in). Both City and Villa are also in the semifinals of the FA Cup.

Villa plays Crystal Palace on Saturday, and City plays Nottingham Forest on Sunday.

## Andre Agassi to play at US Open Pickleball Championships

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Naples (US)

Andre Agassi closed his two of his eight Grand Slam tennis titles at the US Open and now he'll be competing at a different racket event with that name.

Agassi, who retired from professional tennis in 2006 after playing his last match at Flushing Meadows, will line up alongside teenager Anna Leigh Waters in the mixed pro division at the US Open Pickleball Championships next week in Naples, Florida.

Agassi, who turns 55 next week, has participated in made-for-TV pickleball exhibitions with other former tennis players and can be seen pitching pickleball equipment via social media. This will be his first professional pickleball appearance.

He won the tennis US Open in 1994 and 1999, completed a career Grand Slam by winning at least one championship at each of that sport's majors and was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 2011.

It was announced earlier this month that Agassi will be a studio analyst for TNT Sports during the semifinals and finals at the French Open this year.

Pickleball is a mix of tennis and ping pong that uses paddles and a wiffleball.

## Can't afford any slip-up, need to start winning games: Dravid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bengaluru

Head coach Rahul Dravid on Wednesday acknowledged that the Chennai Royals cannot afford another slip-up after sliding to eighth on the IPL points table with his team has "no option" other than start "winning games quickly." The Royals will come up against an in-form Royal Challengers Bengaluru at the M.Chinnaswamy Stadium here on Thursday, and the Chennai reversal will make it really tough for them to nourish play-off aspirations.

"It's a very important game for us, in fact, every game from here on in, as the position we find ourselves in, we can't afford to make many mistakes. This stage is a tournament... just over half way, we find ourselves at the bottom half of the table," Dravid said in the pre-match press conference.

"We've got to start climbing that table quickly and we've got to start winning games quickly. There are no options, no chances of slipping up anymore," he added. Dravid accepted that the Royals have not fared well in crunch situations in this tournament despite playing excellent cricket in patches.

"We know we have to play well to be still alive in this tournament. Now, we've lost a couple of close games coming into this, but we've played some good cricket as well. It's one of those tournaments where a few losses going here or there and we might have been in a slightly different position. But you need to play well in those critical moments and it hasn't happened for us," he noted.

The Chinnaswamy stadium pitch has usually favored bowlers more in this IPL than the batters, but Dravid hoped for a change of character on Thursday. "You just have to go for it irrespective (of the nature of the pitch). But I think every surface will be different. The wicket isn't seeing here, from at least where we can make it look like a really good wicket." "So, I can't really say how those wickets looked in earlier games, but the track that's been produced for this one looks actually to be a very good cricket wicket and I think it should be a pretty high scoring game," he added.

### Sanju is getting assessed

Dravid said regular RR skipper Sanju Samson's fitness is getting assessed on a daily basis. Samson will miss the match against RCB with an abdominal injury.

**We've got to start climbing that table quickly and we've got to start winning games quickly. There are no options, no chances of slipping up anymore**

— RAHUL DRAVID, RR HEAD COACH

"I have no time-line to give as to when exactly he will be fit, but we're trying our best, you know, obviously we've got to play here, after this we've got a game on (April) 27th and we've got a few games quickly and then we've got a gap. "So, we'll just have to see how it goes. Honestly, he was not fit for this game and he didn't travel here," he added.

Dravid said Rian Parag has stepped in effectively as the captain of the side in the absence of Samson despite a few matches not going the team's way.

"Sanju is still the captain of the team and Rian is the vice-captain and he stepped in really well. I think Rian had captained four of the games, even in the second half, in fact, Sanju wasn't able to field because of the finger injury. "Some of those games haven't been easy, especially the high-scoring ones, like the game against Sunrisers Hyderabad. But I think he's done a good job."

The 32-year-old Rian Parag has remained collected in the face of a tough job like the IPL captaincy.

"I think he's been really good, calm and, you know, we were just having a chat with him about some of his bowling changes and field placements.

"I think they've been really good and he's getting the pulse of the game really well. So for someone who's so young and just starting out in his captaincy, I think he's kind of, you know, adapting well to it. Of course, the team needs to play well for him," he said.

## World Cup Olympics of cricket, says Steve Waugh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Madrid

A time when the relevance of ODIs has become a topic of debate, former Australian captain Steve Waugh has batted for the format, saying that it would never lose significance as the quadrennial World Cup is akin to the Olympics of cricket.

In an interaction with select media on the sidelines of the Laureus World Sports awards here, Waugh said despite the pressure of shorter formats, ODIs are holding ground as it was evident from the record viewership garnered by the 2023 World Cup. "Everyone seems to think one-day cricket's not going to survive, but then you have the World Cup and it's huge and the ratings are massive and people love it and fall back in love with the game. Then it dies down for a couple years and we go through the same scenario," Waugh said.

"So right now, somehow we're managing to fit three formats of the game in and there's pressure of T10 maybe coming in, so there could be four, four formats of cricket. I don't know how that's all going to get

managed, but right now it seems to be going okay. "World Cup is significant for one-day cricket. It's pretty much the Olympics, to play (the World Cup) every four years," he added. Cricket will have its share of spotlight in the actual Olympics as well when it makes a comeback to the Games after more than 100 years in the 2028 Los Angeles edition.

Waugh also offered his views on other issues concerning international cricket right now, including the obvious Indian dominance in the administration of the sport and the revenue sharing arrangement that favours big Test playing nations.

A recent study by the World Cricketers Association (WCA) claimed that the BCCI currently receives 38.5 per cent of the global cricket revenue, and recommended the figure be brought down to 10 per cent to ensure fairer distribution.

Calling for equal pay for all Test players regardless of nationality, Waugh said: "If you play a Test match, every player who plays a Test match should have equal pay. "No one listened to me, but I said that in 1999 in an article, that every Test match

player should get paid the same. You play a Test match, the fee should be exactly the same," added the 59-year-old.

The report also highlighted the congested international schedule, with overlapping bilateral and domestic leagues making it difficult to manage player workload and team commitments. When pointed out that only the IPL has a designated window, Waugh was candid: "BCCI runs world cricket, that's why they have their own window. Simple."

### Bumrah among best but unfair to compare others with him

Among players, Waugh hailed Indian pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah as one of the finest paces of modern era, but said it would be unfair to assess other Indian fast bowlers using the same yardstick.

"Bumrah obviously is one of the best bowlers of this modern era, if not of all time. It's very hard when you're judging the other players on him because he's at the elite level. But India have got plenty of back-end and plenty of quick bowlers," he felt. Bumrah has led India's pace attack almost single-handedly for quite a while

and remains one of the most feared bowlers across formats. However, frequent injury concerns have plagued his career in recent times. The 31-year-old was India's stand-out performer during the four-match Test series in Australia, which the visitors lost 1-3. "There's plenty of Indian bowlers out there. Obviously, Bumrah had a great series (in Australia). (Mohammed) Siraj did pretty well and some of the young guys coming through," he said.

With Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli in the twilight of their international careers, both are eyeing the 2027 ODI World Cup as their swansong. The duo has already announced their retirement from T20s.

Waugh said their participation will depend on "form, fitness and motivation" "I'm not sure. I mean I don't follow their careers that closely but they've both been incredible cricketers for India, the former skipper said when asked if he sees them playing a role in the 2027 edition.

Every career has got to end at some stage. They've both been outstanding and they're still world-class players now but lots of things coming up.

## Barcelona beat Mallorca 1-0 to increase Spanish League Lead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Madrid

Dani Olmo scored early in the second half as Barcelona defeated Mallorca 1-0 to increase its Spanish league lead.

The home win on Tuesday gave the Catalan club a seven-point lead over Real Madrid, which visits Getafe on Wednesday. Barcelona, seeking its first league title since 2023, has five league games left.

Olmo's winner came a minute into the second half, as Mallorca wasn't able to field because of the finger injury. It was the third consecutive victory for Barcelona in the league. The Catalan side had 40 attempts on goal, while Mallorca had only four — none on target.

"We created a number of scoring opportunities and we should have taken advantage of them, but that's soccer," Barcelona midfielder Gavi said.

"We can't always score easily. We insisted until we finally scored and that's what's important. Mallorca, which has only two wins from its last nine matches, stayed in seventh place. Barcelona and Madrid will meet in the Copa del Rey final on Saturday in Seville. Barcelona coach Hansi Flick made several changes to his starting lineup, with forward Ansu Fati making his first league



start in nearly six months. Striker Robert Lewandowski was absent because of a muscle injury. "We played a great match," Gavi said. "I'm happy for the players who rotated and got to play."

### Espanyol draws at Valencia

Earlier on Tuesday, Espanyol's three-game

winning streak ended with a 1-1 draw at Valencia, which has drawn two in a row after three straight victories.

The result left both teams tied on 39 points, though Espanyol has a game in hand. Valencia was in 14th place, just behind Espanyol. Also Wednesday, Celta Vigo hosts fifth-place Villarreal, and Las

Palmas visits fourth-place Athletic Bilbao. Relegation-threatened Alaves welcomes ninth-place Real Sociedad.

On Thursday, third-place Atletico Madrid hosts midtable Rayo Vallecano, while sixth-place Real Betis visits last-place Valladolid, which has lost 12 of its last 13 matches.

## 15 selected for NCOEs from ASMITA sub-junior hockey league

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Fifteen under-16 girls from Mizoram are among the 15 hockey players selected by the Sports Authority of India to be inducted into the various National Centres of Excellence (NCOEs).

Seen as the building block for women's hockey in India, the girls have been chosen after the conclusion of the 2024-25 season of the ASMITA leagues matches. The 15 selected for training at the NCOEs include three players from Haryana and two each from Jharkhand and Odisha, besides girls from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh.

Pyidub, Dabey, hockey's High Performance Director for SAI and Khelo India, said these girls have been chosen keeping future Olympics in mind. "We have to think of a pathway and these girls have the potential to make it to the senior national team. In the last three-four years, ASMITA has provided the opportunity to see so many players in action and this is a welcome change in our hockey ecosystem. This did not exist before," said Dabey.

He added that many players like Sanjita Toppo, Sujata Kujur and Sakshi Rana have emerged from this hockey league and are now representing India.

Sixteen featuring 120 under-16 players took part in the ASMITA sub-junior hockey league's final phase. A total of 17 matches were played in the Rs 15.5 lakh

prize money event. SAI Shakti won the team championship for the third consecutive time beating Madhya Pradesh Hockey Academy 2-1 in the final match at the Major Dhyan Chaud National Stadium here.

Mizoram's ascendancy in women's hockey has been quite startling. For the first time in its history, the tiny North-eastern state, known for its footballers and box-

**The 15 selected for training at the NCOEs include three players from Haryana and two each from Jharkhand and Odisha, besides girls from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh**

ers, won a bronze medal in the senior national women's hockey championship in Panchkula.

Dubey said the Mizoram girls have shown immense improvement in the last five-six years and credit goes to the coaches who are working at the SAI centre in Thenzawl. Lalrothumai, a 2009 junior India player, said young girls are taking interest in hockey and some 40 are training at the SAI centre.

Mizoram have found a unique way to attract youngsters to play hockey. The image and profile of current Indian women's team player and Tokyo Olympian Lalremsiam have been used in advertisements and social media to attract girls to participate in trials.

"The response has been fairly good from the villages. Two of our girls — Lalthantlang and Lalrinpui — are ASMITA products and are junior Indian team members. They are a great advertisement for us and we are very happy that five Mizoram girls have been selected for training at NCOEs," said Lalrothumai.

The players need more competitive exposure and better training ecosystem. In terms of skills, all players are more or less equal but Mizo girls are stronger and have the stamina. We hope they will utilise the facilities at NCOEs well." However, selection at NCOEs does not guarantee long-term membership. There are two assessments every year and players are judged on the three basic parameters — physical strength, sports science tests and skills.

The following players have been selected:

**For NCOE Lucknow:** Shweta Upadhyay (Haryana), Rashi (Haryana).

**For NCOE Mumbai:** Lalindipui (Mizoram), Binita Karketta (Jharkhand), Suneli Burh (Odisha), Salmi Jida (Odisha).

**For NCOE Delhi:** Tulashi (Andhra Pradesh), Pearl (Karnataka), Vanlarinlui (Mizoram), Lalulufeli (Mizoram).

**For NCOE Sonapat:** Diya (Haryana). **For NCOE Bhopal:** Aradhana Rajbhar (Uttar Pradesh), Shivani Khalko (Jharkhand).

**For NCOE Kolkata:** Loicy Lalhanpui (Mizoram), Lalakwami (Mizoram).

## Give BCCI Hundred stake to unlock Indian players: Lancashire CEO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

The England and Wales Cricket Board should bring on board the BCCI as a "minority ownership partner" of The Hundred in order to attract Indian players to the tournament, Lancashire CEO Daniel Gidney has said, according to a report.

Even though Indian men's players are not issued The Object of Certificates to play outside the IPL, the T20 league owners have expanded their footprint across the globe, and have stakes in SA20 (South Africa), ILT20 (UAE) and Major League Cricket (USA).

According to ESPNcricinfo, Gidney believes "aligning interests" would be the way to bring Indian players to compete in The Hundred.

"I think it's possible. If I was the ECB, I'd be talking about perhaps bringing the BCCI in as a minority ownership partner in the tournament as a whole. If you do that, then you are aligning interests," he said. While Indian men's players fea-

ture only in the IPL, the country's women cricketers, including captain Harmanpreet Kaur and Smriti Mandhana, have featured in England's The Hundred and Australia's Women's Big Bash League.

"That is probably your best chance of getting (Indian) players in The Hundred. It comes down to the will, and the individuals on both sides," Gidney said. "The BCCI have been really successful with protecting their brand and by making sure they don't play any T20 tournaments anywhere in the world..."

"If I was the BCCI, then I would have to say I would need a significant incentive to relax the current policy because that has been extraordinarily successful and has grown the IPL into the massive commercial entity that it is," he said.

The report added that the Lancashire CEO was in India recently to finalise a deal with RPSG Group, which will see them acquire a 70 per cent stake in the Manchester Originals and run the franchise as a joint venture.

