# THE ASIAN AGE

**NEW DELHI THURSDAY 24 APRIL 2025** 

NATION | 4

SC's ultimatum to TN mantri Balaji, asks him to choose between post and freedom



**US: Russia & Ukraine** must 'strike a deal

Case against Allu Arjun, Sreeleela over alleged



www.asianage.com

RNI No. 57290/94, Regd No: DL-SW-05/4189/15-17



Rohit Sharma plays a shot during an IPL match between Sunrisers Hyderahad and Mumbai Indians in Hyderabad on wednesday.

Report on Page 8

#### **Gunfight breaks out** in Kulgam, day after **Pahalgam terror hit**

Srinagar: A gunfight broke out between terrorists and security forces in Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, officials said here. Security forces launched a cordon and search operation in Tangmarg area of Kulgam district following information about the presence of ultras there. An encounter broke out after the terrorists opened fire on the security personnel, they said. No casualties have been reported in the exchange of fire so far, the officials said adding further details were awaited. The security forces are on high alert after Tuesday's terror attack in Pahalgam left 26 people, mostly tourists, dead.
Full report on Page 3

#### **Israeli air strikes**

on Gaza City kill 25 Gaza City: Israeli strikes killed at least 25 people across the besieged territory, while Germany, France and Britain urged Israel to end its blockade on aid entering. Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas urged Hamas to free all hostages.

Full report on Page 3

#### **6.2-magnitude quake in**

**Istanbul injures over 150** 

Istanbul: An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 6.2 shook Istanbul and other areas on Wednesday. There were no immediate reports of serious damage in the metropolis of 16 million. More than 150 people were hospitalised with injuries sustained while attempting to flee buildings. - AP

#### COUNTERPOINT



Even I lost my deposit in the Class X exam results, father!





Max: 41°C Min: 23°C **RH:** 18% Rain: Nil

Forecast: Sunny

#### ASTROGUIDE

Vishwavasu: Uttarayana Tithi: Chaitra Bahula Ekadasi till 2.26 pm Star: Shatabhisham till 10.45 am Varjyam: 4.38 pm to 6.07 pm **Durmuhurtham:** 10.08 am to 10.58 am; 3.09 pm to 3.59 pm Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm **SUNSET TODAY 6.52 PM SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.46 AM MOONRISE TOMORROW 4.28 AM** 

**MOONSET TODAY 4.15 AM** 



#### WORLD 6

or we will walk away'

#### **DELHI AGE 9**

misleading endorsement

**Chase them to hell: Shah tells** 

forces, reviews

security in J&K

AGE CORRESPONDENT

Union home minister Amit Shah has asked the security forces who have launched a high-tech

counter-terror operation

in the Kashmir hills fol-

lowing Tuesday's ghast-

ly attack on tourists at

Baisaran to chase the perpetrators to the gates

of hell. The Union home

minister vowed, "Bharat

The Union home min-

ister, along with Jammu and Kashmir's lieu-tenant-governor Manoj

Sinha and chief minister

Omar Abdullah, visited

Srinagar's police control room (PCR) to pay the last respects to the slain

will not bend to terror"

SRINAGAR, APRIL 23



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## ■ Indus treaty suspended ■ Visas cancelled ■ Defence attaches pulled out ■ Will track all behind plot: Rajnath ■ Attari shut ■ All-party meet today

## Diplomatic offensive against Pak as PM chairs CCS, all options open after attack

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI with bureau inputs NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

In the wake of one of the deadliest terror attacks in the Valley on Tuesday, India has launched a decisive diplomatic offensive. After being briefed on the 'cross-border linkages" to Pakistan of the terrorists who carried out the heinous Pahalgam mas-sacre of tourists, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday decided that the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) of 1960 with Pakistan "will be kept in abeyance with immediate effect until Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism". Also, the government will be calling an all-party meeting on Thursday, official sources

With the move to pause the IWT, India will now be able to regulate the flow of water from the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab and their tributaries to Pakistan. Announcing the other CCS decisions at a special late-evening min-



Union home minister Amit Shah pays his last respects to 26 people killed in the Pahalgam terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday.

briefing that reflected a sweeping move of conquence, foreign secretary Vikram Misri said that the defence, military, naval and air advisers in the Pakistani high commission in New Delhi have been "declared persona non grata and that they have a week to leave

New Delhi will also be withdrawing its own defence, navy, air advisors from the Indian high commission in Islamabad. 'These posts in the respective high commis-

VIKRAM MISRI said that the defence, military, naval and air advisers in the Pakistani high commission in New Delhi have been 'declared persona non grata and that they have a week to

annulled. Five support staff of the service advisors will also be with-drawn from both high commissions," Mr Misri

leave India'

In response to statements regarding steps India is taking against

the terrorist attack in Pahalgam, the office of Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has called a special meeting of the National Security Council

on Thursday. The meeting that will be chaired by Mr Sharif will also have foreign office, defence, finance, interior security ministers and officials along with chiefs of Army, Navy and Air Force. The Inter Services

Intelligence (ISI) D-G, along with the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and other top ■ Turn to Page 4

Mr Shah had reached here from New Delhi on Tuesday evening, hours after the terrorists had gunned down 27 tourists and a local horse rider at Baisaran, a hilltop green meadow about 5 km from Kashmir Valley's premier tourist resort in Pahalgam. At Raj Pahalgam. At Raj Bhavan here, he chaired

> Following the wreath-laying ceremony, the Union home minister posted on X, "With a heavy heart, paid last respects to the deceased of the Pahalgam terror attack. Bharat will not bend to terror. The culprits of this dastardly terror attack will not be

a security review meet-

spared." Later Mr Shah reached Baisaran by helicopter, where he was briefed by the security forces' officials on the outcome of Turn to Page 4



People take out a protest march near the Dal Lake in Srinagar on Wednesday against the Pahalgam terror

## Anger, despair in Pahalgam; panic exodus of tourists

It's heartbreaking, says CM Omar

YUSUF JAMEEL PAHALGAM (J&K), APRIL 23

"Unn kay haath maa-soomon ke/Khoon se ran-gay hua hain.../Unhon ney hamara pet par laat bhi maar di hai. Khuda unko gaarat kar dey. (Their hands are stained with innocent blood. They have also taken the bread out of our mouth. May God plunder them)".

The curse for the terrorists who on Tuesday gunned down 27 tourists and a local at Baisaran, a hilltop green meadow about 5 km from here, comes from Irfan Poswal, a pony walla. For many years, Poswal has been helping tourists to discover the charm of Pahalgam, often called the "Valley of Shepherds", with pony rides through its stun-

ning landscapes. He, his two brothers and their father also offer pony rides and carry logistics for Amarnath pilgrims along the 32-km trek Chandanwari near here to the revered caveshrine tucked away in the Kashmir hills in peak summer.

Today, Poswal and other service providers who insist on being called "humble hosts" instead are shocked beyond dis-

THE MASSACRE has cast a pall of gloom over the lives of many families and places across the country. Here at Pahalgam, anger and despair have taken possession of almost every-

belief at the horrid murder of innocent tourists. While Poswal and his friend Ghulam Nabi were escorting a group of back tourists Pahalgam town from Baisaran when the mastook sacre Dilnawaz Parray, another pony walla, said he was about to enter the meadow but on hearing gunshots from a distance he hid himself behind a cluster of pine trees. Soon he saw "utter chaos, with everyone jostling to move out and women and children crying for help".

According to the witnesses, the gunmen came out of the woods and opened fire at the tourists who were enjoying horse back riding or other recreational activities in the meadow situated at a height of 2,400 meters (7,874 feet) and dotted with dense pine forests and surrounded by snowcapped mountains. After committing the terror
Turn to Page 4

### Complete intelligence failure exposed ■ Chinks in Unified Command setup ■ Was complacency to blame?

RAKESH K. SINGH and AMRESH SRIVASTAVA

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

Preliminary probes into the Pahalgam attack suggest complete intelligence failure, inadequate deployment of forces in the targeted location and complacency resulted in one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in Jammu and Kashmir.

The attacks also exposed the chinks in the Unified Command, which is responsible for overall security and operational matters in the Union territory. Instead of conducting an objective assessment of the security situation, the Unified Command has been consistently portraying the return of normalcy in the Valley, officials in the know said.

"Notwithstanding the contributions contributions of the Jammu and Kashmir police, which is responsible for all deployments of security forces, also

remained oblivious of the ground situation. A shift in reliance from the Central security forces to the local police has also apparently not borne out the desired results terms of actionable intelligence and counter offensives against ultras," a senior official said.

The Unified Command is chaired by the J&K lieutenant-governor and also consists of the chief minister besides the representatives of the security and

intelligence including from the Army, police, paramilitary forces those from the Intelligence Bureau (IB) Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW)

The deployment of CRPF in Baisaran, where the terrorists gunned down at least 26 tourists, including one foreigner and injured 17 others on Tuesday, was thinned out in 2023-24, sources said.

One company of the ■ Turn to Page 3

#### **Keep airfares** in check, run extra Srinagar flights: Govt

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

Aviation regulator DGCA on Wednesday cracked the whip and asked airlines to increase the number of flights from Srinagar to facilitate the return of tourists in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack and keep fares under check and waive off cancellation rescheduling charges.

Passengers complained about the airfares, which on some travel websites were as high as ₹56,000 between Srinagar and Mumbai Thursday on Air India. Amid com-plaints, the DGCA and the minister for civil aviation Ram Mohan Naidu swung into action. Mr Naidu held an urgent meeting with all airline operators and issued a strong advisory against surge pricing. The return tickets for Wednesday and Thursday Srinagar were all sold

out despite extra flights being pressed into service. ■ More on Page 3

#### **PM rally in Bihar today,** Kanpur visit is deferred

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

The scheduled visit of Minister Narendra Modi to Kanpur on Thursday to lay the foundation stone for development projects is cancelled in light of the terror attack in Pahalgam, but his prescheduled visit to

Madhubani in Bihar stands, albeit amid heightened security.
According to officials,

keeping in mind the sombre mood in Kanpur over

the death of 31-year-old businessman Shubham Dwivedi from the city, it was considered appropriate to defer formal public engagement.

All eyes will be on the PM's Bihar visit, where he is expected to deliver a strong message during his first public appearance after the terror attack. The event on the occasion of Panchayati Raj Diwas is expected to see participation from people across the country via video conference. ■ More on Page 3 Military activity seen in Pak after attack ■ Eye on role of Gen. Munir, ISI chief ■ PAF shifts assets, fearing Indian backlash

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23 As visuals of the terror attack in Pahalgam on Tuesday played out in full public glare, Pakistan started moving its assets around the chessboard and military activity heightened along the India and Pakistan border areas. The Pakistan Air and the Army simultaneously carried out subtle reorientation of their air and ground defence postures.

and PAWAN BALI

Sources indicated the PAF deployed their elec-

tronic intelligence, airborne early warning and control system (AEW&C) aircraft over the northern airspace while the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) backed surrogate military accounts on social media released visuals of Pakistani Army formations under the Lahore-based 4 Corps con-ducting field-level exercises at Tilla Field Ranges near Jhelum, close to the India-Pakistan border.

The Indian Air Force air defence structures and commercial radars picked up the heightened air activity in the neighbour▶ INITIAL FINDINGS suggest the Pahalgam attack was carefully planned over a period of time with clinical surgical precision involving detailed survey and reconnaissance of the target area to inflict mass casualties

the north, in its bid to preempt a backlash from Meanwhile, it reported the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) chief Lt. Gen. Asim Malik was engaged in back-tomeetings Tuesday afternoon attend-

hood. It is notable that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while returning from Jeddah, avoided the Pakistan airspace, which was used for his journey to Saudi Arabia earlier in the day. Pakistan reoriented its air assets from the southern side towards

Islamabad. Interestingly, it is learnt that Pakistan Army chief was in the general headquarters for a long time on Tuesday.

ed by all the Maj. Gen. ranks D-Gs of the ISI in

Initial findings suggest the Pahalgam attack was Turn to Page 4

## Catholic faithful in thousands line up to pay final respects to Pope Francis

Vatican City, April 23: Thousands of people filed through the central aisle of St. Peter's Basilica to pay their final respects to Pope Francis on Wednesday, the start of three days of public viewing ahead of the pontiff's funeral.

Throngs of ordinary faithful made their way slowly to the 16th-century basilica's main altar, where Francis' simple wooden casket was perched on a slight ramp, thousands of people are expected to pass through the basilica, which is staying open until midnight to accommodate them.

Cardinals, meanwhile, met in private to finalise preparations Saturday's funeral and plan the conclave to elect

Francis' successor.
Pope Francis died on
Monday at age 88, capping
a 12-year pontificate characterised by his concern for the poor and message of inclusion, but also

Wednesday opened with the bells of St. Peter's tolling as pallbearers carried Francis' body from the Vatican hotel where

he lived into the basilica in a procession through the same piazza where he had delivered what became his final goodbye. Pope Francis made a sur-prise popemobile tour through the faithful on Easter Sunday, after being assured by his nurse he could despite his continued frail health from a bout of pneumonia. -AP■ More on Page 6





■ Security beefed up at Pak high commission, Israeli embassy, Jewish establishments ■ Security also up at major market places

## Delhi on high alert after Pahalgam terror attack

**BHASKAR HARI SHARMA** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

After the ghastly attack, which killed 26 people in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam on Tuesday, security apparatus has been beefed up in the national

capital.
The security outside the Pakistan high commission, Israeli embassy, Jewish establishments, and the tourist spots in the capital has been stepped up.
"We have deployed para-

military forces along with the Delhi police personnel outside the high commission of Pakistan. No one will be allowed to breach law and order there," a senior police officer said.

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

In response to the attack, the Delhi police beefed up security across the city, focusing particularly on the tourist hotspots and border



Delhi chief minister Rekha Gupta consoles the wife of Indian Navy's Lt. Vinay Narwal during a triute-paying ceremony after Narwal's mortal remains were brought at the cargo terminal of the IGI Airport in New Delhi on Wednesday. Narwal was killed in the Tuesday's Pahalgam

confirming that checking and surveillance have been intensified.

Security is also increased around the Jewish establishments like the Chabad Synagogue, and

"Security has been beefed

up at the famous tourist spots such as the Red Fort, India Gate, Qutub Minar, Humayun's Tomb, Bangla Sahib Gurudwara, Lotus Akshardham Temple, Lodhi Garden, Jama Masjid, Delhi Haat

INA, National Museum,

Mantar, Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia Dargah, Rajghat, and Safdarjung Tomb, among others," the police officer said.

The police added that it has also stepped up security outside of the Metro stations, bus terminals, Railway stations, malls, and market-

"We have set up special Delhi police help desks inside many Metro stations. Security forces have been instructed to look out for any suspicious activities. All the senior police officers will be on the ground and strictly monitor the checkpoints on the borders with Pradesh Haryana," the officer said.

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

The alert coincides with the ongoing visit of US vicepresident J.D. Vance, for which security has already been strengthened in Delhi and other cities.

The police also increased the security cover at the 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 Foot patrolling teams and police personnel in plain clothes have been pressed into service," another senior police officer said

## 90% bookings for Kashmir cancelled: Travel agencies

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

In the aftermath of a terror attack in Pahalgam, several travel agencies in Delhi said on Wednesday that nearly 90 per cent of bookings for Jammu and Kashmir have been cancelled by tourists over safety concerns, while some tourists are negotiating to shift their plans to alternative destinations.

Around 25 people have asked them to cancel their bookings for the Union Territory, said Gaurav Rathi, owner of Swan Tr-avellers, a company located in Shankar Market, Outer Circle, Connaught Place.

He added that most of the tourists had planned to visit Kashmir next month and are now

requesting cancellations. The attack took place 3.00 pm

**A TRAVEL** agent said that people are asking for refunds. They are saying they cannot risk taking their loved ones to a place where there is a chance that they might

Tuesday, when terrorists descended from the mountains in Pahalgam's Baisaran valley and opened fire on tourists.

not return

The area, often referred to as "mini Switzerland" for its lush green meadows, is a popular tourist destination.

At least 26 people, mostly tourists, were killed in the ghastly attack.

"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, told a news agency.

Popular tourist spots like Gulmarg, Hajan Valley, and the Tulip Gardens were among the

most-booked destinations. "We had more than 20 bookings for Kashmir for this month and next month, but almost all of those have been cancelled indefinitely," said Kartik Verma, travel agent from Good Guide Tours and Travels.

"People are asking for refunds. They are saying they cannot risk taking their loved ones to a place where there is a chance

that they might not return," he added. Since some bookings, especially for flights and hotels, are non-refundable, it is creating a real mess for the tour agencies, Mr

## Delhi govt turns to artificial rain, AI to battle toxic air

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

To tackle air pollution in the national capital, a proposal to conduct a cloud-seeding trial will be tabled at the next Cabinet meeting, while the pollution action plan is set to be launched in the upcoming week, Delhi environment minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said on Wednesday. He said the Delhi govern-ment is ramping up its efforts to curb pollution

through advanced technological interventions, including maximum digitisation, artificial intelligence-based monitoring, and round-the-clock surveillance of construction

and traffic hotspots. In the upcoming week, the department will launch its pollution action plan, focusing on comprehensive measures to address the sources of

pollution, Mr Sirsa said. He added that efforts will be prioritised to reduce public inconvenience and enhance transparency, with most of the work being carried out through digitisation.

Giving an update on the progress of the artificial-rain initiative, Mr Sirsa told a news agency that a cloudseeding proposal — currently in its final stages — will be presented at the next Cabinet meeting.

If approved, it will be circu-

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

The commission for air qual-

ity management (CAQM) has

directed authorities in Delhi

to deny fuel to all end-of-life

(EoL) vehicles — diesel vehi-

cles older than 10 years and

petrol vehicles aged more

than 15 years — from July 1.

According to the order, all

fuel stations in Delhi must

install automated number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras by June 30. These

systems will detect vehicles

older than 10 years (diesel) or

15 years (petrol) and deny

In five high vehicle density

Ghaziabad, Gautam Budh

Nagar and Sonipat — the

same action must begin from

November 1 this year, with installation of ANPR cam-

Faridabad,

them fuel starting July 1.

districts adjoining Delhi

Gurgaon,

#### **CM orders 24X7** waste disposal at 3 landfill sites

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

Delhi chief minister Rekha Gupta on Wednesday ordered to ensure 24x7 waste disposal operations at Delhi's three major landfill Ghazipur, Bhalswa and Okhla. She also directed to start work on a war footing by increasing the number of modern machines at these landfill sites and enhancing their operational

In a high level meeting with minister Ashish Sood, chief secretary Dharmendra and other officials on the status of landfill sites held on Wednesday, the CM expressed dissatisfaction with the slow progress at the Ghazipur landfill site and directed for its expedited completion.

She also issued instructions to promptly start the construction of proposed wasteto-energy plants in Narela and Ghazipur.

lated among all departments for the required no-objection certificates (NOCs) and a detailed evaluation.

eras to be completed by October 31.

The remaining NCR dis-

tricts have been given time

till March 31, 2026, to install the cameras, with fuel denial

for EoL vehicles starting

the VAHAN database, will

identify old vehicles or those

without valid pollution certifi-

The commission said fuel stations must refuse refuelling

such vehicles from the speci-

fied dates and authorities

must take immediate legal

action, including impounding

and scrapping under the regis-

tered vehicle scrapping facili-

Traffic surveillance sys-

tems and integrated com-

mand control centres should

be used to detect and act

against these vehicles on

ty (RVSF) Rules.

roads, it said.

cates, the CAQM order said.

These cameras, linked with

April 1, 2026.

No fuel to all end-of-life

vehicles in Delhi July 1

## आप सभी को राष्ट्रीय पंचायती राज दिवस की ढेरों शुभकामनाएं। पंचायतें भारतीय लोकतंत्र का आधारस्तंभ हैं, जिनकी मजबूती में ही नए भारत की समृद्धि निहित है। आइए, आत्मनिर्भर भारत के निर्माण में अपनी पंचायतों को और अधिक सशक्त करने का संकल्प लें। 🤊 - नरेन्द्र मोदी On the occasion of

## **National Panchayati Raj Day**

## State Level Gram Utthan Sammelan

April 24, 2025 9:00 AM Tau Devi Lal Stadium, Sector 3, Panchkula

**Chief Guest** 

## Sh. Nayab Singh Saini

Chief Minister, Haryana

Presiding over by

## Sh. Krishan Lal Panwar

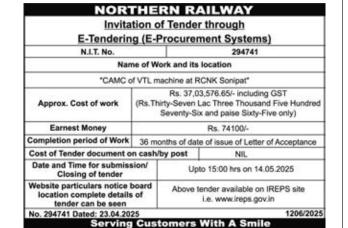
Development and Panchayat Minister, Haryana

**August Presence** 

Speaker and Deputy Speaker, **Haryana Legislative Assembly** 

## Council of Ministers, Government of Haryana

On this occasion, Social Security Pension will be distributed to newly identified 41,591 beneficiaries





🍞 Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana

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SHORT TAKES

#### **Muslim Law Board**

halts Waqf protests

New Delhi: The All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) on Wednesday condemned the Pahalgam terror attack and decided to pause its ongoing protests against the new Waqf law for three days in solidarity with the families of victims. The AIMPLB has issued a condolence statement and decided to temporarily pause its ongoing protest programmes, a statement issued by the Muslim organisation said. As a mark of solidarity with the bereaved families, the board has suspended its campaign against the "controversial amendments" to the Waqf Act for three days starting April 23, the statement said. S.Q.R. Ilyas, national convener of the Majlis-e-Amal for the protection of Waqf under the AIMPLB, said the terrorist attack in Pahalgam is deeply tragic and strongly condemnable. Therefore, the board has decided to suspend its protests. -PTI

#### **Cops announce ₹20L**

for terrorists info

Srinagar: Police on Wednesday announced a bounty of ₹20 lakh for information leading to the neu-tralisation of terrorists involved in the gruesome killing of tourists in Pahalgam. The horrific incident is the deadliest attack in the valley since the Pulwama strike in 2019. The dead included two foreigners and as many locals. "Any information leading to the neutralisation of terrorists involved in this cowardly act shall be rewarded Rs 20 lakh," Anantnag police said in a post on its official X handle. The identity of the informer shall be kept a secret, the police added. Earlier in the day, security agencies released the sketches of three men suspected to be involved in the terror attack. The men, all

#### **RAUT: ATTACK IS RESULT OF BJP'S DIVISIVE POLITICS**

Pakistanis, are Asif Fauji, Suleman Shah and Abu

Talha, officials said.

AGE CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, APRIL 23

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Saniav Raut on Wednesday said BJP's divisive politics was responsible for the terror attack targeting civilians

in Kashmir's Amit Shah a "failed home minister", he demanded his resignation. Mr Raut also expressed doubt



Sanjay Raut

nesses that terrorists killed people after confirming their religion. Criticising Mr Raut, Shiv Sena leader Naresh Mhaske advised him to "stop smoking weed". Mr Raut said that BJP leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah, are busy 24 hours breaking other parties and implicating Opposition leaders in false cases. "Mr Shah is spending his entire energy on doing politics all the time. Who will protect the country?" he said. The Shiv Sena leader said only Mr Shah is responsible for the deaths and he should resign immediately. "No one

else is responsible for it. This is a result of the hate that is being spread from Bengal to J&K," he said, adding, "Amit Shah is a failed home minister in the history of the country. The entire country is seeking his resignation.

### **LIVES LOST**

Distraught family members of the 26 men killed in Pahalgam struggled to come to terms with their loss. Many also demanded capital punishment for the perpetrators of the attack.



Mone





Chandramouli



Dilip Desale



Manish Ranjan



Ramachandran



Vinay Narwal





Bharath Bhushan



Manjunath



Hemant



Sushil



Shubham



Sanjay



Sameer



Bitan Adhikari



#### Shailesh Kalathiya

**MAJOR TERROR ATTACKS** 

**IN LAST 20 YEARS** 

MARCH 21, 2000: Militants attack

AUG. 2: 32 people, including 21

Amarnath pilgrims, local shop-

keepers and security personnel, killed at Nunwan base camp in

JULY 20, 2001: Amarnath Yatra

killing 13 people, including 8

again hit at Sheshnag base camp,

Hindu pilgrims, 3 Muslim civilians

minority Sikh community in Chittisinghpura village in Anantnag district and killed 36

## PM skips Kanpur, keeps Bihar date

Modi will lay foundation stone of ₹13K-cr infra & welfare projects in Madhubani today

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

Even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi apparently cancelled his Thursday visit to Kanpur in light of the terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir, he is going ahead with his pre-scheduled offiprogramme

Madhubani, Bihar. All eyes will be on the PM's Bihar visit, where he is expected to deliver a strong message during his first public appearance after the Pahalgam terror attack.

Mr Modi's scheduled visit to Kanpur on March 24 to inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for development projects has already been can-celled in light of the terror

attack. The PM scheduled to visit Kanpur to inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for development projects worth over ₹20,000 crore on Thursday "However, in light of Tuesday's terror attack that claimed a number of including that of Shubham, a courageous young son of Kanpur, and keeping in mind the sombre mood and sentiments of the people, the event has been cancelled," officials said, adding that as a mark of respect, it was considered appropriate to defer any celebratory or formal public engagement in the city during this period of grief.

Shubham Dwivedi, a 31year-old businessman from Kanpur, was among those

Once again, tensions have

returned to several areas along the Line of Control (LoC) in the

backdrop of the widespread

anger across the country over

the killing of more than two

While an exchange of fire was reported between the fac-

ing armies in an area of fron-

tier Poonch, the Indian Army

said it gunned down two mili-

tants after they had breached

the LoC fence and tried to sneak into the Uri sector of

Baramulla district Wednesday.

A defence spokesperson said

a heavy exchange of fire took

place between the security

forces and militants in Uri's

Nala area. He said two to three

militants tried to infiltrate

Sarjeevan at Uri Nala but alert

troops deployed at the LoC

obvious in

them leading to a firefight.

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

Pahalgam terror attack

and its Army Chief Gen.

Asim Munir's recent

tirade against India may

put it on the backfoot glob-

ally, as foreign nations

including the United States and Russia have

demanded action against

India is expected to ramp

up diplomatic pressure on Islamabad amid growing

calls for a military strike

against terror bases in the

neighbouring country. A

rattled Islamabad, which expressed "concern" over

the perpetrators.

Pakistan's

involvement

area

tnrougn

dozen tourists in Pahalgam.



Relatives mourn at the body of Hemant Suhas Joshi, a victim - DEBASISH DEY of Pahalgam terrorist attack, in Mumbai.

killed by the terrorists in Madhubani, Bihar, on the Pahalgam. Mr Modi will, however, attend a pre-scheduled offi-cial programme in

■ India, Pak armies exchange gunfire in Poonch area

**Tensions return: 2 infiltrators** 

shot dead at LoC in Uri sector

occasion of "Panchayati Raj Diwas" on April 24, which is expected to see the participation from people across the

Minister at Lohna Uttar Gram Panchayat, Jhan-jharpur block in Madhubani district of Bihar.
"The PM will address
Panchayati Raj institutions and gram sabhas across the country and confer Special Category National Panchayat Awards 2025 on this occasion," the ministry said. The

In a statement, the ministry of Panchayati Raj said that

the main function on National Panchayati Raj Day will be organised in the

august presence of the Prime

project includes LPG bottling plants, electrification proj ects, housing schemes, rail way infrastructure, and road development, amounting to approximately ₹13,500 crore.

#### and two security personnel **OCT. 1:** Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly complex

Pahalgam

was struck by suicide (fidayeen) bomber, killed 36 MAY 14, 2002: 36 people killed in Kaluchak areas

JULY-AUG. 2002: 11 Amarnath Yatris killed at Chandan base

NOV. 23: 10 people killed, including nine security personnel, 3 women and 2 children, in an IED

blast in South Kashmir on Jammu

and Srinagar national highway **MARCH 23, 2003:** 24 Kashmiri Pandits, including 11 women and 2 children, killed at Nadimarg village in Pulwama district

JUNE 13, 2005: 13 killed, including 2 school children and 3 CRPF officials, when an explosive-laden car blew up in a crowded market in Pulwama. Over 100 injured.

JUNE 12, 2006: Nine labourers from Nepal and Bihar and a Kashmiri Army soldier were killed in Kulgam **JULY 11:** Five grenade attacks

were carried out in Srinagar, killing eight people and injuring over 40 others JULY 10, 2007: Eight killed in

attack on Amarnath Yatra bus in

**2017:** Eight Amarnath yatris killed, 18 others injured in Anantnag in J&K

FEB. 14, 2019: Militants targeted a CRPF convoy in Pulwama, which killed 40 personnel and injured 35 OCT. 20, 2024: Six construction workers and a doctor killed in Ganderbal

#### Reject use of terror: India, Saudi veiled attack at Pak

**SRIDHAR** KUMARASWAMI NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

Amid growing global outrage, India and Saudi Arabia jointly con-demned the Pahalgam terror attack and crossborder terrorism in their joint statement on Wednesday, after Prime Minister Narendra Modi cut short his visit to the Gulf nation.

The statement men-"Both sides strongly condemned the gruesome terror attack in Pahalgam on April 22, which claimed the lives of innocent civilians. In this context, the two sides condemned terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations, emphasised that this remains one of gravest threats humanity."

The two nations agreed that there cannot be any justification for any act of terror for any reason whatsoever. They rejected any attempt to link terrorism to any particular race, religion or cul-

India and Saudi Arabia also welcomed the excellent cooperation between the two sides in counter-terrorism and terror financing. They condemned cross-border terrorism and called on all States to reject the use terrorism against other countries, dismantle terrorism infrastructure where it exists, and bring perpetrators of terrorism to justice swiftly.

Both sides stressed the need to prevent access to weapons, including missiles and drones to commit terrorist acts against other countries. The joint call to dismantle terror infra-

#### **Gunfight breaks out in Kulgam** there. An encounter broke out

AGE CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, APRIL 23

A gunfight broke out between terrorists and security forces in Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, officials said here.

Security forces launched a cordon and search operation in Tangmarg area of Kulgam district, following information about the presence of ultras

Army's Srinagar-based 15 Corps in a post on X added that the infiltration bid was foiled in the ongoing "Operation Tikka". It added two AK series rifles with five magazines, one pistol, 10 kg of radio-controlled improvised explosive devices and other war-like stores have been recovered from the site and that the identity of the challenged and intercepted slain men is being ascertained.

■ India to ramp up diplomatic pressure for strike on terror bases

Pak's link may affect its global image

Sketches of three men suspected to be involved in the

after the terrorists opened fire on the security personnel, they said. No casualties have been reported in the exchange of fire so far, the officials said adding further details were awaited The security forces are on high alert after Tuesday's ter-

ror attack in Pahalgam that left 26 people, mostly tourists,

the Baisaran terror attack suspended the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty, shut the Attari check post, declared the military advisors posted at the Pakistan high commission in New Delhi as persona non grata, effectively expelling them from the country and revoked all visas issued to Pakistani citizens, many Kashmir watchers fear the tensions along the LoC As India has in response to might only escalate.

#### **J&K CM calls** for all-party meet today **Srinagar, April 23:** Jammu and Kashmir

chief minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday said he has convened an all-party meeting to discuss the fallout of the terror attack. "In the aftermath of the attack in Pahalgam, I have called an all-party meeting tomorrow afternoon," he posted on X. Meanwhile, the Centre will be calling an all-

party meeting on Thursday in the wake of party the terror attac, official sources said. Defence minister Rajnath Singh is likely to chair it, they said. Home minister Amit Shah and Mr Singh are speaking to leaders of various parties on the issue, the sources said.

Several Opposition parties, including the Congress, nad demand ed that the government should convene a meeting of all parties over the issue.

## Ensure no surge in airfares, govt warns all airlines

Carriers to operate additional flights

**AGE CORRESPONDENT** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

websites

Wednesday showed exorbitant airfares from Srinagar to other cities, particularly Mumbai, as tourists rushed to return home on the first available flight in the wake of the terror attack in Pahalgam on Tuesday, prompting the government to crack the whip. Aviation regulator DGCA asked airlines to increase the number of flights from Srinagar to facilitate the return of tourists in the aftermath of the attack, keep fares under check and waive cancellation and rescheduling

charges.
Meanwhile, tour operators in J&K that survive on tourism fear this year will be a lull as several tourists across India have started cancelling bookings in the Valley.

The return tickets for

Wednesday and Thursday from Srinagar were all sold out despite two extra flights being pressed into service by Air India, IndiGo and Akasa and their scheduled flights to Mumbai and Delhi. The ministry of civil aviation said as part of immediate relief measures, four special flights from Srinagar to Delhi and two for Mumbai have been arranged, with additional flights kept on standby to

of flights from Srinagar to facilitate the return of tourists in the aftermath of the attack and keep fares under check cater to further evacua-

DGCA ASKED airlines

to increase the number

tion needs. Passengers complained

on social media platforms about the airfares, which on some travel websites were as high as ₹56,000 between Srinagar and Mumbai for Thursday for Air India for about a twohour flight. Amid complaints, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the minister for civil aviation Ram Mohan Naidu swung into action and asked airlines to keep fares under check and not charge for cancellations and reschedulings. Mr Naidu held an urgent meeting with all airline operators and issued a strong advisory against surge pricing.

All airlines were directed to maintain regular fare levels, ensuring no passenger gets burdened at this point of time. The DGCA has also issued an advisory to increase the number of flights in response to heightened demand and ensure uninterrupted connectivity from Sri-nagar to various destinations across India, facilitating the evacuation of stranded tourists.

#### Complete intelligence failure exposed away, leading to a lag of at cuted it. The survivors have least an hour in deployment, confirmed that at least two ■ Continued From Page 1

CRPF was earlier deployed in Baisaran for "area domination" but it was withdrawn for posting in other strategic locations. The quick action team of the CRPF's 116 battalion was the first responder to reach the scene.

Following the Pahalgam attacks, a multi-agency probe has begun to unravel the entirety of the conspiracy behind the attacks.

Flagging the inadequate security arrangement, the sources in the security establishment said that given the large footfall of tourists in Baisaran, dubbed "mini Switzerland" for its scenic meadow, adequate security deployment should have been made. The nearest camp to Baisaran was at least 6 km

which gave an advantage to the attackers to leave the site after perpetrating the hits.

As per the topography of Baisaran, the meadow is accessible only by foot or by pony, and the large numbers of tourists' influx to the region made it an easy target for the ultras. While the logistical support for the terrorists is estimated to have been provided by the Pakistan Army-ISI syndicate and its terror cohorts, the support in planning, reconnaissance and target location must have

come from locals. As per sources, the local overground workers must have done a reconnaissance before the terror strike and the four to five terrorists exe-

ultras were communicating in the Pashto language, suggesting they could be Pakistani terrorists.

The forces are combing the Baisaran valley to flush out the terrorists.

The terror module has apparently adopted the old modus operandi of not using modern communication equipment so as not to leave any digital footprint and also evade detection by the agencies, which have of late relied excessively on technical surveillance.

A new communication gadget of Chinese origin is also under scrutiny for possible use during the attacks, sources said, adding the device is yet to be decoded.

## Assam Hindu prof escapes death after reciting 'kalma'

"strongly condemned the

dastardly terror attack in

New Delhi said the

Australian PM also "offered condolences on

the loss of innocent lives

and expressed solidarity with the people of India in this hour of grief",

besides "extending all sup-

port in the fight against

Jammu and Kashmir"

MANOJ ANAND **GUWAHATI, APRIL 23** 

terror attack on Tuesday.

as Saudi Arabia, arguably

the most influential nation in the Islamic

world, has promised all

support and help to Prime

China expressed "shock"

over the terror attack, say-

ing it "opposes terrorism

Australian Prime Minis-

ter Anthony Albanese port in the called PM Modi and terrorism".

in all forms'

Minister Narendra Modi.

An Indian Air Force (IAF) personnel Arunachal Pradesh was among the 28 people killed in what has been widely condemned terrorist attack in J&K. The deceased, identified as Corporal Tage Hailyiang (30), was a native of Tajang village in Ziro, Lower Siang district. Security sources said that Corporal Hailyiang was on leave and was on a

trip to J&K. The attack,

one of the deadliest in the

valley in recent times, left

several others injured.

Brother of Hailyiang, Tagi Mali, told reporters, 'I reached Srinagar last night after my brother's wife called to inform me about the attack. They were on a holiday trip. I rushed to immediately." Pahalgam Condolences

poured in from across the region. Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu in a social media post condoled the

The mortal remains of Arunachal's IAF Corporal Tage Hailyang will be

Pradesh on Wednesday. Meanwhile a professor from Assam University, Silchar, Debasish Bhattacharyaa escaped the deadly terrorist attack by reciting "Kalma". He told reporters that as ter-

US vice-president J.D. Vance also spoke to PM Modi on Wednesday and "strongly condemned the dastardly terror attack in

Jammu and Kashmir". He

also "conveyed his deepest

condolences on the loss of

lives and reiterated that

the United States stands

with the people of India in

Mr Vance and his family

are currently in India and

visited the Taj Mahal in

The Prime Ministers of

Nepal and Mauritius also

spoke to Mr Modi and con-

The Pakistan foreign

office spokesperson was

quoted by media reports

as stating, "We are con-cerned at the loss of

tourists' lives in an attack

in Anantnag district. ...

veyed their condolences.

Agra earlier in the day.

rorists were singling out non-Muslims to kill them, Mr Bhattacharyaa recited the "kalma", an Islamic verse, and escaped after convincing the terrorists that he was a Muslim.

In the deadliest attack, the terrorists had singled out non-Muslims by ask-











#### the attack, is expected to structure is being seen turn to its all-weather as a thinly veiled referfriends like China and ence to Pakistan. Turkiye for support even

#### SHORT TAKES

#### **Settle defamation**

case amicably: SC

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked Union agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Rajya Sabha MP Vivek Tankha to amicably settle the defamation case lodged by the Congress lawmaker against the senior BJP leader. Congress leader Mr Tankha has alleged that Mr Chouhan, BJP state president V.D. Sharma and former minister Bhupendra Singh carried out a "coordinated malicious, false and defamatory" campaign against him for political mileage by accusing him of opposing OBC reservation in the 2021 panchayat elections in Madhya Pradesh. "Please do not make us hear this case.

#### Chase them to hell: Shah tells forces

All entry and exit points to Baisaran had been sealed ahead of the Union home minister's

hospital of Government Medical College (GMC) in Anantnag. He assured them of every possible support and directed the concerned authorities to provide them with the best available treatment for

their speedy recovery. While interacting with the survivors, Mr Shah said to them that every Indian feels the pain of losing their loved ones in the terrorist attack. He said to them that "this sorrow cannot be expressed in words" and assured them and other coun-

"I assure all these families and the entire country that these terrorists who killed innocent people will not be spared at all.' solidarity and to provide some succour to the grieving families and those injured in the terror attack", announced an ex gratia

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 ₹10 lakhs each for the families of the deceased, ₹2 lakhs for those seriously injured and ₹1 lakh for those with minor injuries," Mr

provided the best medical care.

## 'Not in our name': J&K rises up against terrorists

Protesters seek 'forceful retribution' against those supporting militants

YUSUF JAMEEL

As Tuesday's terror attack has left the people of Jammu and Kashmir aghast, a shutdown was observed across the Union territory on Wednesday to mourn and protest the killing of over two dozen tourists and a local horse rider in the deadly inci-

Angry crowds took to the streets at many places in the Jammu region as well as in the Kashmir Valley to express their grief and condemn the massacre of innocent civilians. They sent out a clear message: Not in our name.

Protest rallies were also taken out at a few places in Ladakh, reports said.

In the evening, hundreds of political and social activists, members of the civil society, students, artists and journalists turned out at Srinagar's historic centre square Lal Chowk for a candlelight

SC warns

TN minister

Warning DMK leader V.

Senthil Balaji of can-celling his bail if he did

not step down as minister in Tamil Nadu, the Supreme Court on

Wednesday asked him to

make a choice "between

post and freedom" and

A bench of Justices

Abhay S. Oka and

Augustine George Masih

said: "There is grave apprehension that you will interfere and will

influence witnesses. You

have to choose between

the post (minister) and

freedom. What choice

you want to make, you

The SC took exception

to the fact that Mr Balaji

was reinstated as a min-

ister in the TN cabinet

days after getting bail in

bail didn't mean power to

influence witnesses, it

ister, categorical findings have been recorded

against you in the man-

brought about settle-

ment and the proceed-

ings are quashed. Grant

of bail does not mean

power to influence wit-

nesses. In the past, you

have influenced witness-

es," the bench said.

in which you

'When you were a min-

tell us."

inform it accordingly.

AGE CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23



Bereaved family members of Syed Adil Hussain Shah, a pony ride operator who was killed in the terror attack at Pahalgam, and others mourn during his funeral in J&K's Anantnag district on Wednesday.

vigil to remember the victims of the shooting at Baisaran, a picturesque meadow southern Protests, dharnas, candlelight vigils and calls for unity against terrorism and violence were reported from several other towns and villages of the predominantly Muslim Valley and

The call for the shutdown and peaceful protests had initially been issued by the Jammu Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) and Jammu Bar Association (JBA) and the same was endorsed by various political, social, religious and trade organisations and leaders including

ruling National Conference (NC) and opposition BJP

Party (PDP) and also by Mutahida Majlis Ulema (MMU), an amalgam of Muslim religious organisations and leaders headed by Kashmir's chief Muslim cleric and separatist leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq. Former chief minister

and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti led her PDP party workers and supporters to march along the streets of Srinagar to show solidarity with the families of the terror victims. A placard she was carrying in her hands read, "This is an attack on all of us". She said killing innocents is an act of terror and though the people of Kashmir are helpless, they feel ashamed over what was done to their guests by a handful of

marauders. The protesters also demanded 'forceful retribution' against the overground workers and supporters of various militant

## 'Direct assault' on integrity: Cong, CWC to meet today

AGE CORRESPONDENT

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday strongly con-demned the terrorist attack in Pahalgam that claimed the lives of 28 tourists, terming it a "cowardly and brutal act" and a "direct assault" on India's unity and integrity.

"The dastardly killing of innocent, unsuspecting tourists by terrorists in Pahalgam has deeply hurt, shocked, and saddened us all. The Congress 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," Mr Kharge said, addressing a press meet in Bengaluru on Wednesday.

He also spoke to Union home minister Amit Shah about the situation.

Mr Kharge urged the Centre to call an all-party meeting at the earliest and also informed that a CWC meeting had been convened on Thursday at the AICC office in Delhi at 11 am to discuss the issue. Stating that it was no

time for "partisan poli-tics", Mr Kharge said that it was a moment for a "collective resolve" to ensure justice for those who lost their lives and the grieving families, by bringing the perpetrators of this terpror attack to justice. He also stated that the Pahalgam civilian attack was among the "most brazen and outrageous' attempts by terrorists and separatist forces since the horrific Chittisinghpura massacre in 2000

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi also condemned the attack and spoke to Mr Shah. "Families of vic-tims deserve justice and our fullest support," Mr Gandhi said. The former Congress

chief said he also spoke with Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah and Congress' J&K unit president Tariq Karra.

Former UP Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav Chief also condemned the attack

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, who was on an official visit to Lakshadweep, expressed his condemnation of the attack, describing it as "assault" not only on India but on the "rights of the people of Kashmir."

Let us close it. Both of you

sit together and settle this,"

a bench comprising Justices

Bindal told senior advocates

Mahesh Jethmalani and Kapil

M.M. Sundresh and Rajesh

Sibal, appearing for Mr Chouhan and Mr Tankha

respectively.

■ Continued from Page 1

the preliminary investigation into the incident and their response to it. As the meadow bore the scars of violence, the Union home minister asked the security forces to chase the perpetrators of this heinous crime to the gates of hell.

Mr Shah, along with Mr Sinha and Mr Abdullah, also visited the injured at the associated

trymen that the perpetrators will be brought to justice soon.

In another post on X, he said, The J&K CM, "as a gesture of relief package for them.
"No amount of money can

Abdullah said. The J&K CM said that all arrangements for the dignified transport of the victims back to their homes have been made and that the injured are being

#### Choose post Thousands mourn as bodies or freedom, of 6 Maha victims flown back

**SONU SHRIVASTAVA** MUMBAI, APRIL 23

Thousands of people gathered to mourn for the three men from Dombivali Kashmir's Pahalgam. As their final rites were being performed on Wednesday evening, the people shouted slogans Pakistan Murdabad" and "Hindustan Zindabad". Some people were heard telling others in the crowd to henceforth shop only after checking the names of shopkeepers.

Atul Mone, Sanjay Lele and Hemant Joshi, who were close friends and relatives, were among the six people from Maharashtra who were killed by the ter-

The three had gone to Kashmir for summer vacation along with their 3 victims from Bengal; 'grim hour' for state, says Mamata

AGE CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, APRIL 23 West Bengal chief minis-ter Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday strongly condemned the terror attack in Pahalgam in which 28 people, including three from the state, were killed. She also expressed shock over the style of the attack, where the victims were first selected by their names and then gunned

whom are safe. Joshi, who worked as a senior executive with a private cargo company in Andheri, had gone to Kashmir with his wife it happened can be looked

"Terrorism is an identity. It's a born criminal who has no caste, creed or religion. They can not be par-doned also," Ms Banerjee

Describing it to be a "grim hour" for the state, Ms Banerjee said that her government was making all the arrangements to get family members of the victims back home from New Delhi and she was person-"What happened or how ally overseeing it.

Monica, an accountant, and son Dhruv, 16, who had appeared for his SSC exams. Dhruv also sustained bullet injuries on

#### **High-alert in Punjab, Mann** calls meeting

Chandigarh, April 23: Punjab has been put on high alert in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack, with chief minister Bhagwant Mann on Wednesday holding a high-level security meeting here to take stock of security arrangements in the state.

At a press conference after chairing the meeting, Mr Mann said security has been enhanced in Punjab.

'It is our duty to keep Punjab safe secure...I want to assure people of Punjab that we will keep the state safe and secure,

With reports that terrorists first asked the names of people before killing them Pahalgam, chief minis-ter Mann said terror has

#### Military activity seen in Pak after attack ■ Continued From Page 1

carefully planned over a period of time with clinical surgical precision involving detailed survey and reconnaissance of the target area to inflict casualties. attack in Pahalgam took place close to the time when the Prime Minister landed in Jeddah on Tuesday afternoon. It could be sheer coincidence that both Indian and Pakistani PMs were not in the country when the Pahalgam attack took place. Pakistan PM Shahbaz Sharif was in

Turkey on Tuesday. Pakistan is anticipating a well-calibrated response like Balakot in 2019 or a surgical strike like in 2016. Defence sources indicated there are around 40 launch pads in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir with over 100 terrorists in these camps waiting to cross over to India.

For Pakistan Army Chief Syed Asim Munir, who has been facing intense backlash from the Imran Khan-led PTI, increasing tensions with India is the way to gain credibility and restore the destroyed "izzat" of the Pakistan Army in the the people. His recent rabid anti-Indian statement on Kashmir is seen in this context by the Indian defence establish-

There has been a strong resentment against the Pakistan Army in civil society since the ouster of Mr Khan as Prime Minister of Pakistan in April 2022. The anti-Army sentiment was so severe that after the arrest of Mr Khan in May 2023, people

**PAKISTAN IS** anticipating a well-calibrated response like Balakot in 2019 or a surgical strike like in 2016. Sources indicated there are around 40 launch pads in PoK with over 100 terrorists

went on a rampage across Pakistan, including the unprecedented instance of burning down the residence of the Lahore Corps Commander, also known as Jinnah House, allegedly by the pro-PTI Despite pressure, the

Pakistan Army has not been able to break the hugely popular Mr Khan, seen as the second coming of Muhammad Ali Jinnah by common Pakistanis, and reach a compromise with him. Mr Khan continues to enjoy strong support in the public from the jail. He also enjoys support from some elements of the Pakistan Army due to his hard-line approach.

This has led Gen. Munir, who is also a "Hafiz e Quran" (one who has memorised the entirety of the Quran) to now go back to the old trick of fuelling anti-india sentiment gain support among the Pakistani public, said sources in the defence establishment.

Gen. Munir described Kashmir as the "jugular vein" of his country and invoked the two-nation theory propounded by Pakistan's founder, M.A. Jinnah. He called upon the Pakistanis to tell stories to children so that they don't forget they are "different from Hindus"

#### a money laundering case related to the "cash-for-job" scam. The SC Mansarovar yatra now in just 10 days referred to a previous judgment which record-PRITHVIRAJ SINGH The pilgrimage, suspend- the Lipulekh route four in 2020, but this is the first ed that he forced people ed since 2019 due to border years ago; remaining full-scale yatra to make use tensions and the Covid-19 repairs are being expedited of it. Pilgrims will now to withdraw complaints against him. Grant of **DEHRADUN, APRIL 23**

■ Yatra restarts in June ■ 5-hr drive replaces 9-day trek

Kailash 2025 Mansarovar pilgrimage will be significantly shorter and less arduous for the first time, as pilgrims can now drive over 80 km of newly upgraded road between Dharchula and Lipulekh Pass in a matter of hours — an arduous trek that previously took 8 to 9 days on foot. This improvement is expected to cut the total journey from the earlier 17 to 21 days to around 10 days.

pandemic, will resume in June 2025. In 2019, the government imposed restrictions on Indian pilgrims, effectively halting the yatra. Now, with diplomatic and logistical hurdles resolved, over 250 devotees have already registered for the journey to Mount Kailash and Mansarovar Lake, located in the Tibet Autonomous

Region of China. Roads Border

to ensure readiness before the yatra begins on June 10. As per officials from the Pithoragarh district administration, pilgrims will be able to reach Gunji from Dharchula in just five hours via the newly constructed metal road. "All necessary arrangements are being made to ensure

safety of the pilgrims," an official said. The road to Lipulekh Pass the gateway to Mount Organisation completed Kailash — was completed

undertake the journey pri marily by vehicle, reducing travel time. While some stretches are undergoing repairs due to snowfall and glacial activity, authorities have assured that the route will be functional before the yatra starts after June 10. District magistrate Vinod Goswami said all agencies have been directed to finish road repairs, despite damage from heavy snowfall and glacial

#### Anger and despair in Pahalgam a couple of days here, was

■ Continued From Page 1 act, they fled back into the woods. No pony walla was here to Baisaran on Wednesday. As the mediapersons began walking towards the meadow, we were stopped at a makeshift security checkpoint. A police official told us that movement towards Baisaran has been restricted for two reasons; Home minister Amit Shah was visiting the scene of the massacre and, therefore, it has been transformed into a high-securi-

tv zone. Second, the Army and other security forces have with various surveillance systems such as drones and helicopters moved in to track down the perpetrators. "It is risky to go there. Please, don't play with your lives. Otherwise also, we have strict instructions not to allow unauthorised persons to relocate there. Please understand," he said.

However, after the home minister had left, the media persons managed to reach Baisaran, where they found a high-tech operation was underway, with aerial and ground surveillance working in tandem in the meadow and surrounding woods. We were advised by the security officials to leave the area as early as possi-

The security agencies have, meanwhile, released sketches of three suspected militants believed to be involved in the attack. The suspects -- identified as Asif Fauji, Suleman Shah and Abu Talha -- who are also known by the aliases Moosa, Yunus and Asif respectively, were allegedly linked to previous militancy-related activities in the Poonch sector. The sketches were developed accounts and statements from survivors, several of whom reported seeing the attackers shortly before the incident, the officials

A picture released by the agencies shows them armed with three AK rifles and an M4 rifle. The officials said the group is linked to the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT), and at least two are believed to be foreigners and the others are residents of J&K.

The massacre has cast a pall of gloom over the lives of many families and places across the country. As Tuesday's, unexpected terrorist attack has fanned security fears, tourists are leaving the place. Anita Bhardwaj, a sales executive from Surat, who had along with her elder sister Aadhya and her family reached here from Srinagar at around 11 am on Tuesday and had planned to spend

boarding a cab to return to the J&K capital when this correspondent met them. "We had planned to go to Baisaran today and to Aru

(the last scenic village of the Lidder Valley located around 12 km from Pahalgam town) tomorrow and return to Srinagar on Friday Before coming here, we stayed in houseboat (Srinagar's) Nigeen Lake for two nights and enjoyed

visits to Mughal Gardens

and Manasbal Lake. We have also booked hotel rooms in Gulmarg. But I think we should return home immediately," she Reports from Srinagar, Gulmarg, Sonamarg, Gulmarg, Doodhpathri and other

destinations suggest that Tuesday's terror attack has prompted tourists to flee Kashmir en masse. It has also led to cancel lations of scheduled visits

to the scenic Valley. J&K CM Omar Abdullah expressed sorrow over the panic exit, which has also overshadowed the tourism boom touted by PM Narendra Modi as a big achievement of his government following the abrogation of Article 370. Mr Abdullah said in a post on X: "It's heartbreaking to see the exodus of our guests from the

Valley after yesterday's

terror attack in

tragic

Pahalgam, but at the same time we totally understand why people would want to leave

He said while the Directorate-General Civil Aviation and the civil aviation ministry are working to organise extra the Srinagar Jammu highway (NH-44) has been reconnected for traffic in a single direction. He said: "I've directed the administration to facilitate traffic between Srinagar and Jammu, allowing tourist vehicles to leave.

The railway authorities have launched a special train from Katra to Delhi to assist stranded passengers and accommodate extra rush following Tuesday's terror attack.

DGCA Wednesday asked airlines to increase the number of flights from Srinagar to facilitate the return of tourists. It also requested the carriers to consider waiving cancellation and rescheduling fees for Srinagar flight tickets. In an advisory, the DGCA said in the aftermath of the incident in Pahalgam, there is an unexpected demand from tourists seeking to return to their homes.

The airlines have also been asked to provide all necessary assistance to tourists facing challenges during this difficult time.

#### Diplomatic offensive against Pak as PM chairs CCS ■ Continued From Page 1

called for the meeting. Pakistan's defence minister Khawaja Asif said that the top civilian and military leadership will meet on Thursday to formulate an appropriate response to India's move to suspend the Indus Water Treaty and downgrade diplomatic ties.

Announcing what is effectively a further downgrading diplomatic ties that Islamabad began in 2019, Mr Misri said, "The overall strength of the high commissions will be brought down to 30 from the present 55 through further reductions effective from May 1.'

He also said the "integrated check post at Attari (Punjab border) will be closed with immediate effect and that those who have crossed over with valid endorsements may return through that route before May 1. It was also announced that "Pakistani nationals will not be permitted to travel to India under the Saarc visa exemption scheme visas" and that "any SVES visas issued in the past to Pakistani nationals are deemed cancelled". Any Pakistani national currently in India under the SVES visa has 48 hours to leave India, Mr Misri said.

"Recognising the seriousness of this terrorist attack", the CCS "also reviewed the overall security situation and directed all forces to maintain

Mr Misri said: "It resolved that the perpetrators of the attack will be brought to justice and their sponsors held to account. As with the recent extradition of Tahawwur Rana, India will be unrelenting in the pursuit of those who have committed acts of terror or conspired to make them possible.

Making India's intention ategorically clear, the Prime Minister posted on X, "Those behind this heinous act will be brought to justice...they will not be spared! Their evil agenda will never succeed. Our resolve to fight terrorism is unshakable and it will get even stronger..."

The option of carrying out

strikes against terror targets in Pakistan is also believed to be on the table. All eyes are on the Prime Minister's Bihar rally on Thursday, where he is expected to indicate the roadmap ahead. In the first clear indication of India's likely response to the terror attack, defence

minister Rajnath Singh said that India will not only hunt down those who perpetrated the attack but will also trace the people who conspired to carry out the nefarious act on Indian soil while "sitting behind the scenes". India has also cancelled the

leave of the armed forces personnel posted in Kashmir. India has also put its air assets and armed forces along the LoC on high alert.

Besides, the government will be calling an all-party meeting on Thursday in the wake of the terror attack in Pahalgam and Mr Singh is

likely to chair it, official sources said.

At the meeting Mr Singh is expected to brief leaders of different parties on the brutal terror attack targeting tourists. Under the IWT, which was signed by India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Pakistan's then President Ayub Khan in 1960, water from six rivers — Beas, Ravi, Sutlej, Indus, Chenab and Jhelum — are to be shared between the two countries. Pakistan has been complaining of not receiving enough water and had opted for international arbitration in a cou-

ple of cases. The Indus system of rivers comprises three eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas and Sutlej and their tributaries) and three western rivers (Indus. Jhelum and Chenab and their

tributaries). Union home minister Amit Shah, who landed in the national capital Wednesday evening from Kashmir, gave a detailed briefing to the CCS. which met at PM residence for two hours, on the emerging security situation in Kashmir after the attack by LeT arm TRF. The defence minister, external affairs minister S. Jaishankar and NSA Ajit Doval were present

during the meeting. The next few days are also crucial as India is expected to carry out more measures against Pakistan. India had carried out a surgical strike inside PoK in 2016 after a terror attack on an Army camp in Uri and also carried out

airstrikes on Balakot inside Pakistan in 2019 in response to the terror suicide attack on CRPF convoy in Pulwama which had killed 40 soldiers.

Earlier in the day, the defence minister reviewed the security situation in J&K in a nearly two-and-a-halfhour meeting that was attended by Mr Doval, Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Anil Chauhan, Army Chief Gen. Upendra Dwivedi, Navy Chief Adm. Dinesh K. Tripathi, Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh and

the defence secretary.
"Yesterday, in Pahalgam, our country lost many innocent citizens in a cowardly attack by terrorists targeting religion. This extremely inhuman act has plunged all of us into deep grief and pain," the defence minister 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," he said, adding, "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... The people responsible for such acts will get a strong

response in the near future. Mr Modi returned to New Delhi in the morning after cutting short his two-day trip to Saudi Arabia. Shortly after landing in Delhi, the Prime Minister held a meeting with Mr Doval, Mr Jaishankar and Mr Misri.



## THE ASIAN AGE

24 APRIL 2025

## Nab culprits of Pahalgam, don't allow spread of hate

he Kashmir Valley shut down on Tuesday, the day after a cowardly ter-ror aimed against tourists reared its head. This was not just a silent protest by the stricken people of the valley but a condemnation of the deed that so clearly was meant to spread fear and disaffection.

The attack bore all the signs of the kind of terror that a neighbouring country nurtures and sponsors regularly. The intention of the attackers was clear — scuttle peace, sow panic in the minds of residents and visitors in the time of peak summer tourism and whip up communal discord in India, of which Jammu & Kashmir is an integral part.

As a civilised society that is essentially peace-loving, India must respond in a mature way while allowing the security apparatus to do its job unfettered in hunting down the perpetrators and bringing them to face the law

Also, the government must do all it can to contain the harm that can come from expressions of religious differences that can crop up because of the nature of the crime in which people of religions other than the one to which the terrorists belonged were targeted and killed or injured. And there is no denying the Islamist terror angle regardless of where this bunch emerged from.

A thorough probe will reveal whether this group is indeed the one that plotted this spineless attack and whether terrorists from across the border were involved. It would help if the guilty were identified so the truth is established.

A proxy of a known terror outfit operating from across the border and which has been active in J&K over the last four or five years has claimed responsibility. A thorough probe will reveal whether this group is indeed the one that plotted this spineless attack and whether terrorists from across the border were involved. It would help if the guilty were identified so the truth is established.

The price to pay for the battle against terror is eternal vigil. Regardless of the number of plots discovered in time and defused or potential assassins tracked down and killed in the frequent encounters that are a feature of life in the Valley, one set of terrorists picking easy targets and killing indis-criminately as this bunch did is sufficient to bring on charges of intelligence failure, etc.

The timing of the attack, coming in the wake of the reckless abandon with which the loose cannon of a Pakistan army chief vented out at India last week with venom irresponsibly spewed, must have instilled apprehension in the security forces tasked with guarding the Valley. That they did not spot this one, as was evident from the lack of presence of security force personnel in a highly popular tourist area, led to tragic consequences.

It is not only the tourism industry that will be badly hit by such attacks. J&K has shown a steady rise in GDSP over the last three years that is better than the national average, hosted an increasing number of domestic and foreign tourists and invited investment into the UT in industry and trade. An attack like this might prove a dampener on the good outlook that such development has engendered

To plough on in trying to ensure the safety of every Indian, regardless of religion or caste, is the task of the security forces whose lot is unenviable. To back them with weapons, every means of communications and the wherewithal to crack the lines of communication of the terror groups is the duty of the Establishment as it exists today in the UT with the armed forces and police personnel in charge of security and intelligence gathering.

### Maha Hindi U-turn a lesson

he decision of the Maharashtra government to stay its own order to make Hindi mandatory as a third language for students of classes I to V in Marathi and English medium schools despite wholehearted support from the ruling alliance, including the Shiv Sena, reflects the fragility of the policy to impose language on an unwilling people.

As per the new decision, Hindi will not be made compulsory and the third language in Marathi and English medium schools will be left optional. The options will offer Hindi as well. The decision follows stiff resistance from the Opposition parties and regional groups, and the state government's language consultation committee's appeal to chief minister Devendra Fadnavis to revoke the decision.

It is unimaginable that Hindi should be facing opposition to its introduction in schools in a state where the people have never felt that language to be alien to them. In fact, the state hosted and nurtured Bollywood, the international brand ambassador of the language. Indeed, the people there felt that Hindi films not only entertained them but also told their stories to the world.

India is a country of diversities in every aspect of human behaviour, language included. Anything human is welcome in this land except when forced. The founding fathers and mothers had realised this fact and hence the deliberate attempt in the Constitution to ensure that every human being is provided with the opportunity to grow one's potential in ways they are most comfortable with. That the rights of the meek are not trampled by the mighty was the guiding principle.

Tamil Nadu chief minister M.K. Stalin has been fighting a running battle with the Union government against the latter's attempts to use Central funding as tool to impose its will and policies on states, including its preference for Hindi. The Maharashtra government's decision endorses Mr Stalin's stand. This must now force policymakers at every level to open their eyes and train themselves to be mindful of the hard realities on the ground while taking decisions.

#### THE ASIAN AGE

KAUSHIK MITTER

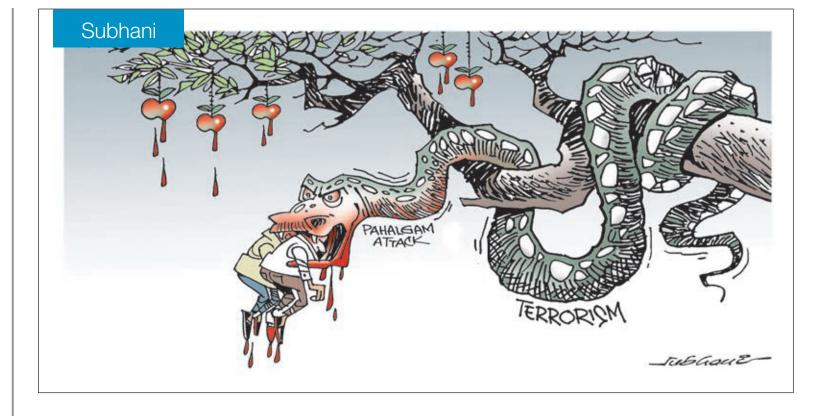
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## Pakistan in bid to reverse Kashmir's rising normalcy



Syed Ata Hasnain

very right-thinking Indian will commence everything he does with a prayer on his lips and deep-set anger in his heart. The attack by Pakistan-sponsored terrorists of The Resistance Front (TRF) on innocent Indian and foreign tourists at Basiran near Pahalgam and the loss of a large number of lives needs the severest condemnation. There has to be a response, of course, although I feel we should allow the government to consider the most appropriate one with the best national and international professional

One of the prime reasons for the attack was the fastdiluting relevance of Pa-kistan in the Kashmir narrative. Let me explain this with the help of an unpublished draft paragraph of the article that I was writper just two days ago. The paragraph read as follows: recently travelled to J&K's capital city and its suburbs on the banks of the Jhelum, on a quiet weekend. Besides that, I spent some time at an uncharacteristically quiet Line of Control. A calm optimism seemed evident everywhere. Hostility, so evident in the eyes of the population earlier, seemed to be fading. Practiced observers like me can probably feel the change in the air, through the looks people give you and the conversations they make. None of these alluded to anything negative. Which is why I sense danger and not without reason. When statistics start to indicate normalcy and minds start to accept this, the point of danger becomes evident. A strange paradox, but true"

This article remained unpublished in the light of the terrorist attack. However, it's not difficult to

explain the premonition. Pakistan has invested just too much time, energy, resources, lives and finances in fighting the proxy war in Jammu and Kashmir. Even with its internal situation so tenu-ous in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, its Army chief keeps spewing out hatred instead of looking towards stabilising the borders through a better relationship with its chief adversary. What Pakistan wants is a return to its old relevance to neutralise just what I wrote in my

very relevant. First, much attention of the security establishment was focused on Kathua. there was an impending bumper tourist season in the offing, with a reported eight lakh iting the Garden at Srinagar. With the coming holiday season, the numbers would have exceeded all records. With money in the pocket and peace in the streets. families looking towards Pakistan would be history. That is exactly what

unpublished observation

reproduced above. The

Deep State and the

Pakistan Army (which is a

part of it) found this time

Pakistan did not want. To put India under intense pressure. Pakistan knows that the sometimestenuous communal temperature can be incendiary. That is why these terrorists specifically profiled the tourists, ensuring that Hindus would be targeted and inflammatory addressing India's Prime Minister would be relayed. Besides this, the current visit of US vice-president J.D. Vance to India reminds one of a similar incident in March 2000. US President Bill Clinton was on a visit to India and was to speak to India's Parliament. The night before that, the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba struck at Chittisinghpura, a mithe humiliation of huge losses suffered in Balochistan and its inability to get the better of a worsening internal security situation, which also involves the Afghanistan border and the tribal areas

nority Sikh village in South Kashmir, killing 36 Sikhs, in an apparent message to the US President that Kashmir was not in India's control. This may be a more appropriate time in Pakistan's perception to target the current emerging normalcy and India's control over the Union territory. It is reported that Pakistan, and its military leadership in particular, is seething at the humiliation of huge losses suffered in Balochistan and its inability to get the better of a worsening internal security situation, which also involves the Afghanistan border and the tribal areas. At the first instance, it lays the blame on India. Retribution has been a Pakistani philosophy and doctrine of war and th is a result of that.

One would have accorded greater rationale to Pakistan's strategising capability but we are aware that its generals act first and think afterwards. The internal security situation coupled with its failed economy hardly affords Pakistan the ability to risk a serious conventional conflagration with India. Therefore, applying rationale, one would surmise smaller acts, a combina-tion of many of these to attempt to achieve something quite similar that wish to achieve through Pahalgam. It would be less risky too. However, knowing the Pakistani mind, these irrational acts will continue. That is why it's up to India to ensure that it responds, but only after thinking through. The one thing we definitely need to do is to eschew every Indian becoming a strategist and proffer advice to the government. Remember, we

Pakistan is seething at have an elected government in place, unlike that of Pakistan. Such a government looks at the national interest from every angle. It has a set of professionals who will advise, plan and execute. We should have the fullest faith in the political and military leadership and leave it to their sense of proportion and timing. While it is a hugely senti-

mental moment which has shaken up India's deeprooted psyche, we cannot afford sentiment alone to rule our judgement. There are thousands of innocents of all communities, good loyal Indians who are the heart and soul of our nation. We must ensure unity among our people despite the gravest of provocations and this one is definitely not the last of them.

The way forward is to

ensure that Jammu and Kashmir's progressive normalcy is enabled at any cost. With the terrorist strength small, the flow of intelligence will also be limited. Hence there has to be greater anticipation of potential actions which can upset the applecart in favor of the adversaries. Remember there are other linkages here, and India needs to get the pro-active diplomatic domain on J&K re-activated so that our narratives are the predominant ones. There should be no dilution in our outreach programmes resulting from the inevitable negativity that an event such as Pahalgam tends to send out. The political environment is not yet vitiated, and a certain maturity is evident all around. We can all understand how difficult it is for those who have suffered as families but the biggest neutralisation of Pakistan's Kashmir strategy will be to make sure it does not regain any of the space that it has lost over the last couple of years.

As far as a response to Pahalgam is concerned, we will await the decisions of the government, which knows this best.

> The writer, a retired lieutenant-general, is a former GOC of the Srinagar-based 15 ("Chinar") Corps

#### **LETTERS**

#### THE NEW BULLIES

It has been reported that a new form of bullying has emerged in schools, starting from the primary level. Students from rich families show off their money power to taunt and segregate poor students. They make fun of their classmates, who bring simple food in their tiffin boxes, or ordinary pencil boxes and colour pencils, or who do not go to a foreign country like them for a holiday. Kids aged even 4-5 years are now displaying a high level of class intolerance. There is no wonder in it, as schools cannot be quarantined from the whole society and system, both of which are plagued with class obsession and hatred, alongside rising inequality

Sujit De Kolkata

#### **NATION BUILDERS**

**ELEVEN** women in the top 25 and Shakti Dubey bagging the top slot in the UPSC exams is a testimony to growing Nari Shakti. These women came from diverse backgrounds and have studied a wide range of subjects like engineering, science and commerce. They are true inspirations for not only voung women in their cities but those from all across the country. It is a lesson for parents as well to not withhold education from the girls in their families and let them fulfil their dreams.

**Bal Govind** 

#### **POINTLESS SPENDING**

NAVI MUMBAI is in a frenzy to achieve targets for concretisation of roads before monsoons. The progress of work on main roads of heavy traffic density is best known to the civic agencies but one is witness to perfectly good minor roads. lanes and dead-end bylanes, with scarce traffic and used solely by society dwellers to park their cars, being dug up. Such substantial outlay of funds on already good infrastructure could have been avoided. The funds would have been better invested in government schools, creches, night shelters and drinking water kiosks in summer and other such vital public resources. Affluent cities need to spend civic revenue smartly.

R. Narayanan

#### Dilip Cherian Dilli Ka Babu



ED extensions: Tenure policy 'relaxed' for two **IPS** officers

f there's one thing India's babus do well, it's dressing up flexibility as policy. Case in point: The latest extensions given to Sonia Narang and Abhishek Goyal, both senior IPS officers on Central deputation to the Enforcement Directorate (ED). Their tenures have been extended in "relaxation" of the IPS tenure policy. Now

that's babu-speak for, "Yes, we made rules. No, we're not always bound by them."

Take Ms Narang. In early April, she was relieved from her ED post and sent back to the Karnataka cadre without explanation. And just like that, she's back in Delhi with a one-year extension. Whiplash, anyone? In her time at ED, she's handled a whole alphabet soup of high-profile cases — PFI, IFFCO, Vivo, Maoists, even the ever-glamorous Khan Market cash trail. Someone decided she's too valuable to let go just yet. But observers are wondering why the unceremonious

Mr Goyal's extension is equally telling. Currently leading the HIU and also handling the Northern Region (including the recently held Maharashtra elections), he, too, gets a one-year bonus round. Perhaps it helps to be where the

Let's not forget: The post of special director is the second-highest rank in the ED hierarchy. There are nine of them. That's a lot of "special" and not a

So here we are watching the rules bend, twist, and politely look the other way when power and convenience collide. The ACC may call it relaxation. For many others, it's a masterclass in bureaucratic voga

#### KERALA'S 'CIVIL WAR' GOES PUBLIC

Kerala's babudom seems to be experiencing its own version of a reality show, complete with public spats, social media drama, and allegations flying faster than monsoon winds.

At the centre of this storm is IAS officer N. Prasanth, affectionately dubbed "Collector Bro" for his social media savvy. Currently suspended, Mr Prasanth has accused senior bureaucrats A. Jayathilak and K. Gopalakrishnan of corruption and conspiracy, even dragging a Malayalam daily into the fray. He claims his suspension is retaliation for whistleblowing against entrenched corruption and misuse of office — serious charges that can't just be brushed off.

Meanwhile, Mr Gopalakrishnan was suspended for allegedly creating a religion-based WhatsApp group, seen as a violation of service rules. Mr Prasanth's own suspension followed his very public criticism of Jayathilak on social media, which the government called a breach of conduct. The online slugfest has exposed the cracks within Kerala's famously disciplined administrative set-up.

This bureaucratic brawl isn't just about bruised

egos; it reflects deeper dysfunction within the administrative framework. The public airing of such disputes, especially on social media, undermines the integrity of the civil services and erodes public trust. And let's not forget, it's also a massive distraction from governance.

In an era where transparency is paramount, perhaps it's time for the babus to embrace openness and address internal conflicts through proper institutional channels. After all, the public deserves a civil service that is as accountable as it is efficient and less prone to becoming an OTT-

#### MP BABUS BEAR TRANSPARENCY BURDEN

In the power corridors of Madhya Pradesh, a silent discontent brews among babus. While IAS, IPS, and IFS officers are mandated to disclose their immovable assets annually, ministers have sidestepped this transparency for over 15 years. The contrast is as stark as it is telling, and although no one dares say it out loud, the resentment is palpable.

The state's general administration department has reiterated that all state employees must submit detailed property disclosures. This includes information on ancestral and self-acquired properties, purchase dates, values, and current market valuations. Non-compliance could result in withheld salaries or stalled promotions — a stiff penalty for mere delay, let alone defiance.

In contrast, ministers have largely avoided such scrutiny. Despite previous commitments, including a 2016 announcement to declare assets online. many ministers have not consistently disclosed their property details. Successive governments have either quietly ignored the issue or kicked the can down the road, possibly to avoid ruffling political feathers.

This discrepancy fosters a sense of inequity among bureaucrats, who are held to stringent standards while political leaders operate with relative impunity. The whisper in government circles is not about whether this is unfair but how long this double standard will continue.

The lack of ministerial transparency undermines the principles of accountability and good governance. For a truly transparent administration, it's imperative that ministers lead by example, embracing the same disclosure standards imposed on bureaucrats. Until then, babus will keep filing their disclosures under silent protest, watching their political bosses sail above the accountability tide, dry, untouched, and remarkably unbothered.

Love them, hate them ignore them at national peril, is the babu guarantee and Dilip's belief. Share significant babu escapades dilipcherian@hotmail.com.

SHORT TAKES

#### **BEIJING BRIDGE FALLS AFTER FIRE, NO ONE INJURED**

Beijing, April 23: A bridge in Beijing's northeastern Shunyi district collapsed on Wednesd-ay morning after a fire broke out in its structure, according to authorities and images circulating on social media. No casualties were reported on the bridge, which was already closed to traffic, the Beijing Municipal Commission of Transport wrote on the social media platform Weibo.

The Chaobai river bridge was damaged after a fire broke out in the morning, the commis-

The fire was later put out.

#### **OPPN FIGURE IN CAMBODIA GOES**

Phnom Penh, April 23: An outspoken Cambodian politician went on trial on incitement charges on Wednesday, in the latest legal case against a

prominent opposition figure. Rong Chhun, an adviser to the Nation Power Party, which was founded in 2023, faces up to four years in prison if he is convicted on charges of incitement to cause serious social unrest.

The charges were brought last year after he met victims of land disputes, and comments he made about Prime Minister Hun Manet's visit to the border area with Vietnam.

#### **GUNMEN KILL 2 GUARDING PAK POLIO VAX TEAM**

Quetta, April 23: Gunmen killed two Pakistani police officers guarding polio vaccinators in the turbulent southwestern province of Balochistan, officials said on Wednesday, the second attack since the launch of a nationwide inocu-

lation drive this week. In Pakistan and neighbouri ng Afghanistan — the only countries where polio remains endemic - militants have for decades targeted vaccination teams and their security escorts. The officers were guarding health workers in the Teeri area of Mastung district when

#### S'PORE PM FACES **TEST AS ELECTION CAMPAIGN BEGINS**

Singapore, April 23: Singapore's election campaign offi cially kicked off on wednesday with Prime Minister Lawrence Wong facing his first major test amid public frustration over rising living costs and a rejuvenated opposition.

The May 3 polls are also coming as the wealthy city-state faces a turbulent global economy upended by US tariffs.

Wong, who took over in 2024 said "there is much at stake this election". "We are in a changed world with turbulence all around," he said. "Your vote will determine your future and your children's future.

#### **PRIEST BEAT ME AS TEEN: FRENCH PM's DAUGHTER**

Paris, April 23: A daughter of France's Prime Minister became on Wednesday the latest to accuse the clergy running a school in the Pyrenees of systemic abuse including while Francois Bayrou was a local official, saying a priest beat her during summer camp when she was 14.

Bayrou's eldest daughter Helen Perlant, now 53, said that her father did not know about the incident. Multiple accusations of sexual and physical abuse at the Notre-Dame de Betharram boarding school have cast a shadow on Bayrou's premiership.

#### **NJ FOREST FIRE: STATE PARKWAY STRETCH SHUT**

New Jersey, April 23: A forest fire in southern New Jersey that has shut a stretch of one of the state's biggest thoroughfares is yet to be contained sparking evacuations and threatening to snarl com-

muters. The fire rapidly grew to 8,500 acres (3,440 hectares) in Ocean County, about 90 miles south of New York City, by late Tuesday evening, nearly tripling in size in just a few hours, according to the New Jersey Forest Fire Service. An 11-mile section of the Garden State Parkway has been shut.



A local rides past damaged buildings in Pokrovsk, the site of the heaviest battles with the Russian troops in Ukraine's Donetsk region, on Wednesday.

## Vance: US to walk away till Moscow, Kyiv agree to deal

ned on Wednesday that the United States would "walk away" unless Russia and Ukraine agree to a peace deal, as envoys from Washington, Kyiv European nations gathered for downgraded

talks in Britain. "We've issued a very explicit proposal to both the Russians and the Ukrainians, and it's time for them to either say 'yes', or for the United States to walk away from this process," Vance told reporters in India.

US media reported that President Donald Trump was ready to accept recognition of annexed land in Crimea as Russian territory, and Vance said land swaps would be fundamental to any deal.

"That means the Ukrainians and the Russians are both going to have to give up some of the territory they currently own, he added. The reports said the proposal was first raised at a meeting with European nations in Paris last week.

The latest round of diplomacy comes amid a fresh wave of Russian air strikes that shattered a brief Easter truce.

A Russian drone strike

#### London, April 23: Vice President J.D. Vance war-AT RUSSIA DRONE **OUTPUT SITE: KYIV**

Kyiv, April 23: President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Tuesday that Ch inese citizens were working at a drone production site in Russia and suggested that Moscow may have "stolen" drone technology from China.

The Ukrainian leader made the comment at a news conference in Kyiv days after he said China was supplying weapons and gunpowder to Russia, the first time he has accused Beijing of direct mi-litary aid to Moscow, something China staunchly denies. Ukraine's foreign ministry said it had summoned Chinese ambassador Ma Shengkun and expressed "serious concerns" over Chinese involvement in Russia's war in Ukraine.

on a bus transporting workers in the southeastern city of Marganets killed nine people and wounded at least 30 more. the Dnipropetrovsk regional governor said on Wednesday. — AFP



on the Yafa school building, a school-turned-shelter, in Gaza City, on Wednesday.

## Abbas urges Hamas to free hostages as Israeli strikes kill 25

**Gaza City, April 23:** Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas on Wednesday urged Hamas to free all hostages, saying their captivity provided Israel with "excuses" to attack Gaza, as rescuers recovered charred bodies from

an Israeli strike. Israeli strikes killed at least 25 people across the besieged territory, while Germany, France and UK urged Israel to end its blockade on aid entering. Israel resumed its military campaign in Gaza on March 18, ending the ceasefire that had largely paused hostilities and resulted in the release of 33 hostages from Gaza and approximately 1,800 Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails. -AFP

#### HAMAS VIDEO **SHOWS ISRAELI HOSTAGE ALIVE**

Gaza City, April 23: Hamas's armed wing released a video on Wednesday showing an Israeli-Hungarian hostage alive in Gaza, speaking in Hebrew and walking through a tunnel. In the nearly three-minute clip published by the Ezzedine Al-Qassam Brigades, the hostage — who identifies himself as 48-year-old Omri Miran — is seen addressing the camera. Israeli media confirmed his identity. AFP could

undeclared not verify when the footage was recorded. — AFP centrifuges.

Albright said.

## EU fines Apple 500 mn euros, Meta 200 mn in digital cases International students stripped of legal status in US piling up wins in court London, Atlanta, Washington, April 23: European Union watchdogs fined

President Donald Trump speaks at a ceremonial swearing in of Paul Atkins as chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, and his wife Sarah (R), in the

White House, Washington D.C., on Tuesday.

## Trump's tariff cuts in China trade deal

Washington, April 23: President Donald Trump said he plans to be "very nice" to China in any trade talks and that tariffs will drop if the two countries can reach a deal, a sign he may be backing down from his tough

stance on Beijing. "It will come down substantially but it won't be zero," Trump said, followearlier comments from treasury secretary Scott Bessent that the standoff was unsustain-

The Trump administration's planned drastic cuts the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) "mean more dirty air"

"we're going to be very nice and they're going to be very nice, and we'll see what happens. Trump said he didn't see

able. Trump added that

the need to "play hard-ball" with Chinese leader Xi Jinping and that dur-ing discussions he wouldn't raise Covid-19 — an issue that is politically sensitive in Beijing. The White House recently launched a website that suggested the virus came from a China Bloomberg

an advocacy group warned Wednesday. Plans to lay off hundreds

of employees would eliminate the scientific arm of

## PoC man punched during arrest dies

**23:** A person of colour (PoC) man, hospitalised for a week following an arrest in which Alabama police shocked him with a Taser and punched him, died on Tuesday, law enforcement said.

It is not yet clear what caused John Scott Jr, 41, to die, or whether his arrest is related. The uncertainty has reignited anger in Decatur, a northern Alabama city divided by the ongoing trial of a white officer charged with murder for fatally shooting a different Black man in 2023.

A police statement did not specify the names or races of the officers involved in Scott's arrest. "Here we go again. We stated that this was going to happen again, based on what happened when Steve Perkins died. They shifted the police chief, but they got the same players still playing the game," said Rodney Gordon, president of the local NAACP chap-ter, referring to the recent resignation of the Decatur police chief.

Scott was arrested on April 15 after his mother called the police to her residential street because she feared that her son had stopped taking his me• OFFICERS HAD responded to a call the mother made earlier in the day and contacted the department's mental health liaison, who determined that he was not a threat to himself or others.

cing a mental health crisis. Officers had responded to a call the mother made earlier in the day and contacted the department's mental health liaison, who determined that he was not a threat to himself or others, so they left, accord-

ing to the police statement. At least five officers who arrived after the second call encouraged Scott to go to the hospital with emergency medical responders.

The video shows Scott standing without shoes at the door of the ambulance appearing confused, sweating profusely and taking deep breaths.

When Scott refused to go into the ambulance, officers began to arrest him. The video shows the officers punching Scott and shocking him with a Taser after he falls to the ground and continues to refuse to put his arms behind his back. Scott can be heard screaming "I'm sorry"

**WEF CONFIRMS** 

**PROBE AGAINST** 

**FOUNDER SCHWAB** 

Geneva, April 23: The

World Économic Forum

confirmed on Wednesd-

av that it has launched an investigation into allegations made against its founder Klaus

Schwab that reportedly prompted his resigna-

In a statement confir-

ming a report by the Wall Street Journal, the

WEF said its board of

tion this week.

#### U.S. TALKS GO ON, **IRAN FORTIFYING BURIED N-SITES**

Apple and Meta hundreds

of millions of euros Wednesday as they stepp-

ed up enforcement of the

27-nation bloc's digital

competition rules.
The European Commission imposed a 500 million euro (\$571 million) fine on

Apple for preventing app

makers from pointing

users to cheaper options

The commission also fined Meta Platforms 200

million euros because it

forced Facebook and Insta-

gram users to choose be-

tween seeing personalised

ads or paying to avoid them. Apple and Meta have to comply with the decisions within 60 days

or risk unspecified period-

ic penalty payments, the

More than a thousand international students

have faced disruptions in

recent weeks, with their

academic careers and their lives in the US thrown

into doubt in a widespread

crackdown by the Trump

administration. Some have found a measure of

success in court, with fed-

eral judges around the

country issuing orders to restore students' legal sta-

In addition to the case

filed in Atlanta, judges have issued temporary

restraining orders in stat-

es, including New Hamps-

hire, Wisconsin, Montana,

Oregon and Washington.

tus at least temporarily.

commission said.

outside its App Store.

Washington, April 23: Iran is ringing two deeply buried tunnel complexes with a massive se curity perimeter linked to its main nuclear facil-ity, a report said on Wednesday, amid US and Israeli threats of attack.

The Institute for Science and International Security released its report based on recent satellite imagery as the US and Iran prepare to hold a third round of talks this weekend on a possible deal to reimpose restraints on Tenran's nuclear program.

US President Donald Trump, who pulled the US out of a 2015 pact designed to prevent Tehran from developing nuclear weapons, has threatened to bomb Iran unless a deal is quickly reached that would ensure that same goal.

Trump's withdrawal prompted Iran to breach many of the pact's restraints. Western powers suspect it is pursuing the capability to assemble a nuclear weapon, which Tehran denies.

David Albright, the institute president, said the new perimeter suggested that the tunnel complexes, under construction beneath Mt. Kolang Gaz La for several years, could become operational relatively soon. Tehran has not allowed UN nuclear inspectors access to the complexes,

That has raised concerns that they could be used to store Iran's used to store Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium or undeclared nuclear nuclear materials, and advanced — Reuters

## Catholic faithful pay their respects to Pope Francis

Vatican City, April 23: Thousands of people filed through the central aisle of St Peter's Basilica to pay their final respects to Pope Francis on Wednesday, the start of three days of public viewing ahead of the pontiff's funeral.

Throngs of ordinary faithful made their way slowly to the 16th-century basilica's main altar, where Francis' simple open wooden casket was perched on a slight ramp, as iour Swiss Guards stood at attention. Over the coming days, tens of thousands of people are expected to pass through the basilica, which is staying open until midnight to accommodate them.

Many people paying their respects had come to Rome to celebrate Easter, on a spring vacation or other personal business, only to be met with the news of Francis' death on Easter Monday. Out of devotion to the Argentine pope and his message of inclusion, they joined the procession of mourners that wended through the Holy Door and down the central aisle of the basilica. Francis was laid out in red robes, clasping a rosary and wearing a bishop's miter, the traditional pointed headdress.

Mourners waited hours to reach the casket which sat behind a cordon some holding their cell phones aloft as they neared him to snap photos in what has become a mod-ern ritual. "It gave me chills," said Ivenes Bianco, as she left the basilica. She was in Rome from the southern city of Brindisi for medical care, and had



Visitors, pilgrims and the faithful pay respects to late Pope Francis inside St Peter's Basilica in The Vatican, on Wednesday.

#### AFTER DEATH, 'CONCLAVE' **VIEWERSHIP UP**

Los Angeles, April 23: The viewership of papal thriller drama "Concla-ve" has spiked 283 per cent following the death of Pope Francis on April 21, according to Luminate, which tracks viewership of streaming content. 'Conclave", released in 2024 and won Peter Straughan the best adapted screenplay Oscar, revolves around the selec-

tion of a new pontiff. "Conclave" is available on various PVOD (premium video on demand) platforms.

MIN. DELETES **SOLACE POST** Jerusalem, April 23: Israeli foreign ministry

deleted Pope condolences post. The ministry refused to comment on its decision to post and then quickly deleted the post on X, which said: "Rest in peace, Pope Francis. May his memory be a bless-ing." According to Israeli media, ambassadors, especially those serving in predominantly Catholic countries, were furious over the deleted post.

**ISRAELI FOREIGN** 

Pope Francis was critical of Israel's war in Gaza.

ay's funeral and plan the come to pay her respects. conclave to elect Francis' successor. Francis died on "He was important to me because he encouraged coexistence. He brought Monday at age 88, capping many people together." Cardinals, meanwhile, met in private to finalise a 12-year pontificate char acterised by his concern for the poor and message preparations for Saturdof inclusion.

#### trustees "unanimously supported the Audit and Risk Committee's decision to initiate an indeoendent investigation following a whistleblower letter containing allegations against ex-chairman Klaus Schwab".

Schwab denies the claims, the paper added. The WEF, which hosts the annual meeting of wealthy, famous and influential global elites at the luxury Swiss ski resort town Davos, initially provided no explanation for its longtime chairman's sudden resignation Monday "with immediate effect".

WEF's board hailed Schwab's "outstanding achievements" But the WSJ reported that the decision had been spurred by a board decision to investigate allegations of financial and ethical misconduct by the longtime leader

and his wife Hilde. The letter, said to have been sent by anonymous current and ex-WEF staff, "included allegations that Klaus Schwab asked junior employees to withdraw thousands of dollars from ATMs on his behalf and used Forum funds to pay for private, in-room massages at hot-

## SPACE I DAY April 24 marks successful launch of China's 1st satellite in '70

## China to launch 3 astronauts today

**Beijing, April 23:** China will launch three astronauts to its space station on Thursday – coinciding with its 10th Space Day -to replace their colleagues manning the station for the past six months, it was announced on Wednesday.

The Shenzhou-20 crewed spaceship is scheduled to be launched at 5:17 p.m. on Thursday (Beijing time) from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in northwest China, the China Ma-Space Agency (CMSA) spokesman Lin Xiqiang told the media at



Astronauts for the upcoming Shenzhou 20 mission captain Chen Dong (C), Wang Jie (L), and Chen Zhongrui meet with the press at the Jiuguan Satellite Launch Centre in northwest China, on Wednesday

the centre, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. The spaceship will carry

Dong, Chen Zhongrui and Wang Jie with Chen Dong

serving as the commander. The crew will conduct new life science experiments involving zebrafish, planarians and streptomyces, Lin said. These experiments will mark China's first space-based investigation into the regenera-tion of planarians, a new organism introduced to China's space station and known for their extraordi-

organs, Lin said. This project will enhance our understanding of fundamental mechanisms of regeneration at the ind-

nary ability to regrow

ividual level and could provide insights into human health issues related to space-induced injuries, Lin said.

China designated April 24 as its Space Day in 2016 to mark the successful launch of its first satellite, Dongfanghong-1, on April

Shenzhou-20 is the 35th flight mission of China's manned space programme, and the fifth crewed mission during the application and development stage of China's space

## Bleaching event hits 84% of all coral reefs

Washington, April 23: Harmful bleaching of the world's coral has grown to include 84 per cent of the ocean's reefs in the most intense event of its kind in recorded history, the International Coral Reef Initiative announced on Wednesday.

It's the fourth global bleaching event since 1998. The event has now surpassed bleaching from 2014-17 that hit some twothirds of reefs, said the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), a mix made up of more than 100 governments, non-gov-

ernmental organisations and others.

And it's not clear when the current crisis, which began in 2023 and is blamed on oceans, will end.

We may never see the heat stress that causes bleaching dropping below the threshold that triggers a global event," said Mark Eakin, executive secretary for the International Coral Reef Society and retired coral monitoring chief for the US National Oceanic and Ation (NOAA).

NEW DELHI | THURSDAY | 24 APRIL 2025

## quick

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	80,116.49	0.65
Nifty 50	24,328.95	0.67
S&P 500*	5,442.56	2.93
Dollar (₹)	85.42	0.24
Pound Sterling (₹)	113.80	-0.09
Euro (₹)	97.53	-0.36
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	98,700 <b>▼</b> 2,900	-2.85
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	66.01	-2.12
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.331	0.005
US 10-Yr T-bill yield	* 4.29	-0.099
* Δc of 8·30 PM IST	•	

#### **ICL Fincorp** announces NCD public issue

Kerala based ICL Fincorp, a NBFC, announced ₹100 crore non convertible debentures (NCD) public issue that opens on April 25. The coupon rate for the NCD has been fixed between 11 per cent to 12.5 per cent for tenures of 13, 24, 36, 60 and 68 months. This is the fifth series of NCD public issue from ICL Fincorp which aims to raise minimum ₹50 crore with a green shoe option to retain oversubscription of ₹50 crore.

#### Suzuki, Maruti plan to set up CoE in India

Suzuki Motor Corporation and Maruti Suzuki India said they would set up Osamu Suzuki Centre of Excellence (OSCOE) in India in honour of late Osamu Suzuki, the former chairman of Japanese automaker. The OSCOE is proposed to be located in Gujarat and Haryana, and will work towards supporting the national objective of high manufacturing growth and raising the standard of component manufacturers, it said.



#### **NPCI** launches UPI Circle on BHIM payments app

NPCI BHIM Services, a subsidiary of NPCI has launched an UPI Circle with partial delegation on the BHIM payments app. It is designed to empower users by enabling them to delegate UPI transaction capabilities to trusted individuals with defined controls and complete transparency. UPI Circle allows a primary user, the UPI account holder, to authorise upto five secondary users to initiate UPI payments from their account.

#### Ather Energy IPO price band at ₹304-321 apiece

Electric two wheeler maker Ather Energy's initial public offering (IPO) will open on April 28 in the price band of ₹304 to ₹321 per equity share of ₹1 face value. ₹2980.76 crore IPO of Bengaluru based company is a mix of fresh issue worth Rs 2626 crore and an offer for sale of ₹354.76 crore by promoter shareholders. The first large main board IPO of FY26 after a long dry spell will close on April 30.

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## gold tide ebbs by ₹2,900

Gold prices saw a sharp correction of over ₹2,900 per 10 gm due to profitbooking on Wednesday after crossing ₹1 lakh mark in the spot market on Tuesday. However, analysts believe that prices will bounce back with uncertainties remaining unresolved.

In the Delhi bullion market, gold was trading at ₹98,700 per 10 gm against ₹1,01,600 on Tuesday, falling by ₹2,900 per 10 gm. In the MCX, gold had started correcting on Tuesday itself after touching ₹99,358. On Wednesday, it came down to a low of ₹94,959 and was seen rebounding to ₹95,700 levels.

In international market gold prices dropped from a high of \$3,498 per troy ounce to a low of \$3,305 and then moving up to \$3,330 as US, China trade

tensions were seen easing.
"US President Donald Trump signalled a possible shift in his stand towards China and indicated that the steep tariffs on Chinese imports may be significantly reduced if a

**OFFICIALS FROM** 

with an aim to iron out

tus to the negotiations.

According to the

non-tariff barriers, and

negotiating a robust set of

commitments to ensure

The US has on multiple

occasions flagged con-cerns on widening trade

deficit with India, which

is \$45.7 billion in 2024. It

would look at bridging

this deficit with India

The two have finalised

The three-day talks ass-

ume significance as the US has paused the imposition of tariffs for 90 days.

The ToRs cover around 19

chapters, such as tariffs,

non-tariff barriers, and

An official said these

talks would lead to the

formal launch of negotia-

India's chief negotiator,

additional secretary in

the department of com-

merce Rajesh Agrawal, is

leading the team for the

first in-person talks betw-

een two countries. — PTI

customs facilitation.

tions for the BTA.

the terms of reference

(ToR) for the agreement.

long-term benefits.

through the BTA.

**PRICE CORRECTION ANALYSTS** 

**IN DELHI** bullion market, gold was trading at ₹98,700 per 10 gm against ₹1,01,600 on Tuesday.

believe that gold prices will bounce back with global uncertainties remaining

IN INTERNATIONAL market gold prices dropped from high of \$3,498 per troy ounce to low of \$3,305.

deal is reached. He is said 145 per cent is too high and it won't be that high. The de-escalation of trade war tensions saw gold retreating," said Ajay Kedia, managing director,

Kedia Commodities. Moreover, the dollar index also was seen gaining strength as Trump backed off from his earlier statement on removing Federal Reserve chair Jerome Powell from his office.

"Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin suggested that he is open to the potential of direct discussions with his Ukrainian counterpart Volo-

dymyr Zelenskyy, enhancing expectations for tru-ce," said Prithviraj Kotha-

IN THE MCX, gold

had started cor-

Tuesday itself

after touching

**₹99.358** 

recting on

ri, managing director of RiddiSiddhi Bullions. "Technically gold was overbought and needed a correction. After rallying up over 30 per cent this year, prices need to cool down and we have usually seen 7-8 per cent correction in previous bull-runs. This could see gold moving down to ₹92,000 levels," said Kedia.

However, the fundamentals that have been supporting gold have not fully reversed. A bounce back in prices is possible.

## RBI gov: Rate cut will revive investments

**FALAKNAAZ SYED** MUMBAI, APRIL 23

monetary policy INDIA, U.S. BEGIN should nurture domestic demand impulses to fur-TRADÉ PACT TALKS ther increase the growth momentum, said Reserve Bank of India (RBI) gover-New Delhi, April 23: Indian and US officials nor Sanjay Malhotra during the recent monetary policy committee (MPC) begin deliberations on the proposed bilateral trade agreement (BTA) in Wasmeeting.
Other members of the hington on Wednesday MPC too echoed similar

sentiments that monetary

issues and give an impepolicy now has room to spur domestic demand, The US has stated that the pact with India will revealed the meeting minutes released Wednesday. In first meeting of FY26. help open new markets for American goods and the six-member MPC of create new opportunities the RBI on April 9 voted for workers, farmers, and unanimously to reduce the repo rate by 25 bps to 6 per cent and changed the entrepreneurs in both policy stance from neutral trade representative, the to accommodative. In the February monetary policy, the RBI MPC had United States is looking at increasing market access, reduced the benchmark reducing the tariffs and

> per cent from 6.5 per cent. Advocating for a rate cut, Malhotra said that it is specially so amidst an uncertain global environment, which has amplified downside risks to growth. He said that a rate cut would bolster private consumption and support a revival in private corporate investment activity. "Going forward too, con-

reportate by 25 bps to 6.25

bolster private consumption and support a revival in private corporate investment activity. Going forward too, considering the evolving growth-inflation trajectories, monetary policy needs to be accommodative.

> - SANJAY MALHOTRA, RBI governor

sidering the evolving growth-inflation trajectomonetary policy needs to be accommodative," added the Reserve bank chief.

The MPC noted that as

per projections, there is now a greater confidence of a durable alignment of headline inflation with the target of 4 per cent over a 12-month horizon. On the other hand, impeded by a challenging global environment, growth is

still on a recovery path after an underwhelming performance in first half of 2024-25 said the minutes of the meeting. In such challenging glob-

the benign inflation and moderate growth outlook demands that the MPC continues to the support

## After ₹1-lakh crescendo, Time right to buy silver, says ace investor Rogers

Sees potential in industrial metals like copper on back of tariff war

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, APRIL 23

Ace investor Jim Rogers finds silver the most attractive instrument for investment currently as the metal price is low and it has the potential to move higher in the future. He also wants to bet on Chinese equities, while staying away from US Treasury bonds.

"Silver is much cheaper compared to gold and I will buy silver now," he told Financial Chronicle. The gold-silver ratio is currently above 100 and indicates reversal to the mean levels of 65 to 70. This would see silver prices moving up significantly in the future.

"Silver prices have seen a record level of \$50 earlier. It is currently at \$33 levels. Silver will surely return to its earlier levels," he said.

"Gold too has the potential to go up much higher from the current levels, but I will not buy it now. Gold may possibly see corrections, but it has not seen corrections enough for me to buy," he said.

He also bets on industrial metals like copper as the tariff war has led to significant weakness in metal counters. "I would also look for some agricultural commodities that

**METAL SILVER PRICES** have seen record level of **BASKET** \$50 earlier, currently

**GOLD-SILVER** RATIO CURRENTLY ABOVE 100 AND INDI-CATES REVERSAL TO MEAN LEVELS OF 65 TO 70, IMPLYING SILVER PRICES

WILL MOVE UP.

at \$33 levels, it will return Rogers said. **TREASURY** bonds will see a fall as tariff war will

**AMONG EQUITIES, Rogers** prefers Chinese equities as he thinks they are trading at low levels, right enough

> Silver price rises ₹28 to

₹95,907 jack up inflation and take global econo-

my towards as participants increased their bets. **ROGERS BELIEVES** that there

is no currency that can be an alternative to the US dollar.

GOLD TOO has the potential to go up much higher from the current levels, but I will not buy it now. Gold may possibly see corrections, but it has not seen corrections enough for me to buy. - JIM ROGERS, Veteran Investor

are trading at their lowest levels," he added.

Among equities, he prefers Chinese equities as he thinks they are trading at low levels, right enough to enter. "The Indian equity market has been doing well like most other markets. But I will not buy Indian equities

now." he said. He believes that US treasury bonds will see a fall as the tariff war will jack up inflation and take the global economy towards recession. "Even the US dollar will see more weakness. But eventually it will move up," he said.

Though several emerging economies are de-dollarising their reserves and reducing their dependence on greenback, Jim Rogers believes that there is no currency that can be an alternative to the US dollar.

"The world does not have to find another currency as an alternative to the dollar. It can be anything.

But, at present there is no alternative that can compete with the dollar. Many countries are increasing their gold reserves in the process of de-dollarisation. But gold cannot repl-

ace the dollar," he said.

However, he will stay clear of cryptocurrencies. "They will not last long. People understand gold and dollar and trust in these asset classes. They do not understand crypto and hence they will not last long," Rogers added.

## Sensex up 520 pts after US goes slow on China

**RAVI RANJAN PRASAD** MUMBAI, APRIL 23

Market gained for the seventh consecutive session as the US government indicated a trade deal coming with China and President Trump seemed to be withdrawing his aggressive interest rate cut approach against US Fed chief Powell.

The Sensex reclaimed 80,000 level after a gap of nearly four months with a gain of 520.90 points or 0.65 per cent to close at 80,116.49. The Nifty-50 closed 0.67 per cent or 161.70 points up at 24,328.95.

analysts However. warned of volatility continuing and sector rotation as the market had seen a sharp rally over the last fortnight led by financials stocks after the big fall on April 7.

"The Nifty-50 has rallied nearly 12 per cent over the last 10 sessions, pushing indicators into over-bought territory. Considering the overbought condi**BSE SENSEX** 80,116.49 **▲ 520.90** 78,000 76,024.51 77,000 76,000 75,000 **APRIL 2025** 

tions, we advise against chasing momentum at higher levels. Sector-wise, banking pack witnessed profit booking after recent surge, while IT stocks staged a rebound. With monthly equity derivatives expiry ahead, sector rotation is likely to continue, said Rajesh Bhosale, technical analyst, Angel One. Broader market also

seen a rally with the BSE mid-cap index up 0.94 per cent while BSE small-cap index gained 0.26 per cent. "Historical trends show

that IT Index has always rallied when the sector reaches such lows and the stocks rally well, ahead of earnings upgrades. The current slowdown is a cyclical one, and we see an upgrade cycle toward the CY25 end, once clarity comes on tariffs," said Seshadri Sen, head-Research and Strategy, Emkay Global Financial Services.

Foreign investors bought equities worth ₹3,332.9 cr while domestic institutions were net sellers of

## INSURANCE

#### **LIFE INSURANCE SECTOR MAY GROW AT 12-15% IN FY26**

**FALAKNAAZ SYED** MUMBAI APRIL 23

A high base effect and market-driven slowdown in ULIP sales have weighed on the life insur ance sector's momentum.

According to the data released by the Life Insurance Council, individual new business pre-mium collected in FY25 stood at ₹1.66 lakh crore as compared to ₹1.49 lakh crore in the previous financial year, a growth of 11 per cent.

In terms of total business, the life insurers grew by 5.13 per cent with a total premium of ₹3.97 lakh crore for FY25 as compared to ₹3.77 lakh crore in FY24. "With the economy estimated to grow at 6.5 per cent, life insurance sector will grow at 12-15 per cent in retail individual business for FY 26," said Manoj Kumar Jain, MD, Shriram Life Insurance.

Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has garnered ₹2.26 lakh crore in new business premium for FY25, which includes ₹62,404 from individual new business. The individual new business pre-mium for FY25 registered a growth of 8.35 per cent year-on-year basis, the

## Pvt sector biz grows fastest in 8 mths in April

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

India's private sector expansion witnessed an eight-month high in April driven by a strong demand and significant surge in foreign orders for manufactured goods. However, goods producers noted a stronger rate of expanthan service providers, and one that

was the most pronounced activity since August. in over 15 years, a private survey showed

As per the HSBC Flash India Composite purchasing managers' index (PMI), compiled by S&P Global, the index rose to 60.0 in April from 59.5 in March, marking the strongest growth in combined manufacturing and services It, however, highlighted

that the combined output in manufacturing and service witquicker nessed increases across sectors, the fastest rate of expansion since August 2024

The manufacturing sector showed particularly strong momentum, with

its PMI climbing to 58.4, up from 58.1, reaching a one-year high. The services sector also maintained solid growth, with its PMI increasing to 59.1 from 58.5, the highest level in four months. However, the private sector firms noted a record increase in new export orders during April," the survey showed. Pranjul Bhandari, chief India economist at HSBC,

orders accelerated sharply, likely buoyed by the 90-day pause in the implementation of tariffs. employment grew, for

"Ås a result, output and both, manufacturers and service providers. Cost inflation was in line with March levels, but prices charged rose a tad faster, leading to improved margins," Bhandari said.

## India to grow at 6.3% in FY26: WB

**MADHUSUDAN SAHOO** NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

Amid the shadow of uncertainty over the US tariff policy, the World Bank on Wednesday said that it slashed India's growth projections for FY26 to 6.3 per cent citing uncertain global environ-ments and high trade tensio-ns across the globe.

In January, the World Bank had projected India to grow at 6.7 in FY26. In India, growth in FY24/25 disappointed FY24/25 disappointed because of slower growth in private investment and

public capital expendi-

tures that did not meet

government targets, the World Bank said in its regional outlook.

The World Bank report said the benefits to private investment from monetary easing and regulatostreamlining expected to be offset by global economic weakness and policy uncertainty.

"Private consumption is expected to benefit from tax cuts, and the improving implementation of public investment plans should boost government investment, but export demand will be constrained by shifts in trade policy and slowing global growth," it said.

**VIKRAM SUBBURAJ** 

the decentralised world of crypto, you **L**are your own bank and that means you alone are responsible for securing your digital assets. Unlike a traditional bank account where lost credentials can be recovered, a compromised or mis-placed private key can lead to irreversible loss. Choosing the right cryp-

to wallet and following

best practices is essential

There are three primary

ways to store crypto assets: hot wallets, cold wallets, and exchange storage. Each comes with its own balance of convenience and risk. Hot wallets are software

applications connected to the internet. Available as mobile apps, desktop programs, or browser extensions, they are ideal for small amounts and freauent transactions. However, being online makes them vulnerable to hacking, phishing, and Always strong passwords, enable

Make your cryptocurrency wallets safe (2FA), and be cautious of

Cold wallets, or hard-

fake apps or websites.

M NEY MATTERS

ware wallets, are physical devices. These store private keys offline, offering better protection against threats. Ideal for long-term holders and large investments, they must be set up carefully. The most important

step is to securely record

recovery seed phrase - los-

ing it means losing access

permanently. Some users keep their assets on crypto exchang-

While convenient, exchanges are frequent targets

tory of breaches. If you use this method, ensure the platform is FIUregistered. platform should offer robust securi-

for attacks and have a his-

ty features, too. Across all wallet types, some safety principles remain universal. Never share your private key or recovery phrase. Always doublecheck wallet addresses

before transfers. Test new

addresses with small

amounts and regularly

firmware to close known vulnerabilities. As India sees increased crypto adoption, understanding wallet safety beco-

update your apps and

mes critical. At Giottus, we urge investors to educate themselves on custody options and to treat wallet security with the seriousness it deserves. Crypto gives you control - but it also demands cau-

vour future depends on it because in many ways, it

tion. Store your assets like

(The author is CEO of Giottus Crypto Platform)



















PURPLE

Krishna, GT

Kuldeep

Yadav, DC

# BITZCICK

Delhi Capitals)

Chennai Super Kings

- Royal Challengers Bengaluru
- Kolkata Knight Riders
- Mumbai Indians
- Rajasthan Royals
- Lucknow Super Giants



Sudarshan

**Nicholas** Pooran, LSG

Suryakumar Yadav, MI

Noor Ahmad, CSK

short takes

#### Players, fans stand up for terror victims

AGE CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, APRIL 23

Hyderabad cricket fans joined the rest of India in condemning the terrorist attack in Pahalgam by observing a one-minute silence to mourn the victims before the start of the IPL match between Sunrisers Hyderabad and Mumbai Indians here on Wednesday. The scene at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium

was sombre as the supporters stood in rapt attention while players of both teams lined up on the boundary line close to the South Pavilion, heads bowed and sporting black armbands to pay respects to those affected by the incident in Jammu & Kashmir.

The 60-second stillness was broken by full-throated chants of *Bharat Mata Ki Jai* with some screaming Jai Shri Ram as well, followed by a smattering of applause.
The match also did not feature

cheerleaders and fireworks.
The BCCI also issued a statement to condemn the "ghastly and cowardly" attack. "The cricketing community is deeply shocked and anguished by the tragic loss of innocent lives in the gruesome terror attack at Pahalgam yesterday. On behalf of the BCCI, while condemning this ghastly and cowardly act with strongest possible words, I extend our heartfelt condo-lences to the bereaved families and prayers for the departed souls. In sharing their pain and grief, we stand hand in hand at this hour of tragedy," BCCI sec-

#### Pujara says KL has left last season's baggage

retary Devajit Saikia said.

India Test specialist Cheteshwar Pujara feels K. L. Rahul has moved on from a disappointing last season at Lucknow Super Giants and the change in mindset is not only helping him flourish at his new IPL franchise but also making him a strong asset for the national team.

'Just move on, don't carry any baggage from the past. And that's a good thing. KL is a mature player. Last couple of years, he's been batting well across formats," Pujara said on ESPNcricinfo's TimeOut.

"It's good to move on, which will also help him play well for DC and even for the Indian team. Because, lately, he is someone the India team also relies on, the way he's batting,' he added.

## **BOULT FROM BLUE**

## Rohit raps half-ton after Trent dents Sun show

HYDERABAD, APRIL 23

It was supposed to be a belter for the hosts. The visitors wielded the whip. Mumbai Indians proved too hot for Sunrisers as they registered a cracking seven-wicket win that propelled them to third on the points table of the Indian Premier League. Sun stays static at ninth on the 10team grid.

Rohit Sharma and Manof-the-Match Trent Boult (4 for 26) were the stars for the Blues band that rocked Hyderabad on Wednesday night. Rohit rattled a 46ball 70 to lead the charge with eight boundaries and three sixes as Mumbai hunted down SRH's 143 for 8 with more than four overs to spare.

Earlier, a hefty half-century from Heinrich Klaasen and a fine 43 from Abhinav Manohar revived a half-dead Sunrisers from 35 for 5 to a modest total via their 99-run partnership for the sixth wicket.

Klaasen crafted a cut-throat knock, hitting 71 in just 44 balls as he negotiated the Mumbai bowlers with authority, evident from his nine boundaries and two soaring sixes, one of which came against rookie spinner Vignesh Puthur as the team 50 came in the 10th over.

The South African slayer was out on the last ball of the penultimate over, caught by Hyderabad's Tilak Varma while Tilak Varma while attempting a big hit off India spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who took his wicket tally to 300 in T20s. At the other end,

Abhinav was unfazed and played audaciously in the company of Klaasen. Not afraid to loft the ball, he cleared the field cleanly and collected runs coolly in his 37-ball essay that included two boundaries and three maximums one each off Bumrah, Boult and rival captain Hardik Pandya. The rightnander was out hit-wicket in the last over bowled by

But Sun started slowly, very slowly. A leg-bye and wide is all they managed in the first over bowled by Deepak Chahar. The sec-



Mumbai Indians bowler Trent Boult (right) celebrates with captain Hardik Pandya after taking the wicket of Sunrisers Hyderabad batter Travis Head during the Indian - DEEPAK DESHPANDE Premier League match in Hyderabad on Wednesday.

saw the fall of the first wicket, Travis Head skying a catch to Naman Dhir at deep backward point to be out for a duck. And when new man Ishan Kishan stole a single off Boult it was the first run

lith ball o the innings. That was all Ishan — who hit a century in the season opener here — managed before edging Chahar to Ryan Rickelton behind the

Sun's other centurion

ond ball of the second over scored off the bat, on the this season, Abhishek Snarma, he cut Boult straight into the waiting hands of Vignesh at cover point. He made just 8 which includ-

ed a six. When home hope Nitish Reddy

#### **SCOREBOARD**

Sunrisers Hyderabad: Travis Head c Naman Dhir b Boult O, Abhishek Sharma c Puthur b Boult 8, Ishan Kishan c Rickelton b Chahar 1, Nitish Kumar Reddy c Santner b Chahar 2, Heinrich Klaasen c Tilak

Varma b Bumrah 71, Aniket Verma c Rickelton b Pandya 12, Abhinav Manohar hit wicket b Boult 43, Pat Cummins b Boult 1, Harshal Patel not out 1. Extras (lb-1, w-3) 4. Total (For 8 wickets in 20 overs) 143.

Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-9, 3-13, 4-13, 5-35, 6-134, 7-142, 8-143.

Bowling: Deepak Chahar 4-0-12-2, Trent Boult 4-0-26-4, Jasprit Bumrah 4-0-39-1, Santner 4-0-19-0, Hardik Pandya 3-0-31-1, Vignesh Puthur 1-0-15-0.

Mumbai Indians: Ryan Rickelton c & b Unadkat Rohit Sharma c Abhishek Sharma b Malinga 70, Will Jacks c Manohar b Zeeshan Ansari 22, Suryakumar Yadav not out 40, Tilak Varma not out 2. Extras (w-1) 1. Total (for 3 wickets in 15.4 overs) 146.

Fall of wickets: 1-13, 2-77,

Bowling: Pat Cummins 3-0-31-0, Jaydev Unadkat 3-0-25-1, Harshal Patel 3-0-21-0, Eshan Malinga 3-0-33-1, Zeeshan Ansari

Chahar for just 2 in the fifth over Sun had lost most of their power in Powerplay, at the end of which the score read a sorry 24 for 4. It was their second lowest during the rapid-fire round, behind Rajasthan Royals at Pune

in the 2022 edition. Soon, Pandya induced an edge off Aniket Verma's bat that landed in wicket-Ricketton's as Sun slipped to 35 for 5 in the 9th over.

That's when Klaasen and Abhinav got together and undid the damage. It did not matter in the end

#### N/R Points Net RR 12 +0.657RCB +0.472 10 +0.177 -0.054+0.2120 -0.633 -1.361

## RCB eye home improvement

Bengaluru, April 23: Struggling to find form in their own den, Royal Challengers Bengaluru **Matches** will look to regain control of their IPL campaign at **RCB** home when they meet a floundering Rajasthan Royals here on Thursday. No results

RCB's three defeats at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in as many matches offer one of the biggest paradoxes of this edition. An outfit that has steam-rolled opposition in all parts of the country has been left chasing shadows

in their own backyard. The RCB batters have appeared strangely subdued and their bowlers seem to have forgotten the lengths to adopt here.

Central to that woeful run is the changed character of the 22-yard strip here which has offered some grip to the bowlers.

The Bengaluru batters are yet to find the right tempo to tide over the slowness in the pitch, as they seem to have been caught in the dilemma of whether to step on the gas It's evident in the team's

totals here so far -169/8, 163/7 and 95/9 (14 overs). They have scored over 9-10 runs an over in other venues, but here the rate has dropped down to 7-8 runs an over. Their mainstay Virat

Kohli has been in decent form this season, averaging 64, but more would be expected of Phil Salt, Devdutt Padikkal and skipper Rajat Patidar. l'he inconsistent bounc

is holding back the RCB batters, particularly after the Power Play segment and, hopefully, they will find the rhythm against

Bhuvneshwar

15 RR

**HEAD to HEAD** 

FOR THE RECORD

 Krunal Pandya, who smashed 98 sixes in 175 innings of 215 matches, needs just two maximum to become 45th Indian and 322nd batter overall to complete a century of sixes in Twenty-20

Sanju Samson, who smashed347 sixes in 289 innings of 302 matches, needs three more sixes to become the fourth Indian Indian and the 34th batter overall to hit 350 sixes in Ywenty-20 crick-

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES Rajasthan Royals defeated

Royal Challengers Bangalore by 6 wickets at Jaipur. Raiasthan Rovals beat Roval

Challengers Bangalore by 4 wickets at Ahmedabad. FIRST MEETING OF SEASON

Royal Challengers Bangalore beat Rajasthan Royals by 9 wick-

STATS: S. PERVEZ QAISER

Kumar-led bowling attack's story is not different either. Despite the deck offering some assistance they have not been able to fully utilise the conditions here, unable to find the right spots.

Rajasthan have a messy house to deal with. Sanju Samson will miss this match with an abdominal injury that earlier forced him to skip the game against Deini Capitais a well. Riyan Parag will continue to lead the Royals, who are currently tottering at eighth on the table with four points, in the absence of their regular captain.

## Porel's future plan is to play for India

Lucknow, April 23: Like any other cricketer from the country, young Delhi Capitals opener Abishek Porel aspires to represent India in the future but said his current focus is to help his side win its maidtrophy this year. Chasing 160, the 22-year-old made 51 off 36 balls to help DC win by eight wickets against Lucknow Super

Giants here on Tuesday. "Obviously, I am enjoying every innings, trying to develop in every innings. The future plan is to play for India, play for the country for a long period," Porel said at the post-

My current focus is the IPL trophy, how can I help the team in winning the trophy, how can I contribute for Delhi Capitals. This matters a lot right now.

en Îndian Premier League match press conference. "But current focus is the IPL trophy, how can I help the team in winning the trophy, how can I contribute for DC. This matters a lot right now.

"I know my game and the support staff also knows that. The support staff always tells me to play freely and not to take any tension. Asked to bat, LSG made

ABHISHEK POREL, DELHI CAPITALS PLAYER

a quick start with Aiden Markram Mitchell Marsh (45) sharing 87 runs for the opening

stand in 10 overs. But DC bowlers made a brilliant comeback with Mukesh Kumar (4/33) leading from the front to restrict LSG to 159 for 6, a target which Porel feels was gettable. "The wicket was very

good, so 160 score was a bit

less, so we had that in mind that we need to chase these runs. Good toss to win. There was not much difference but the skipper took a good decision," Porel said.

LSG assistant coach Vijay Dahiya said the hosts lost the momentum in the second half of their innings after a bright

"I think leaving pitch, you can see that we scored over 80 runs in nine overs. From there we lost the momentum a bit. We had the momentum and we should have taken advantage of that," he said.



pay tribute to the victims of the terrorist attack in Pahalgam, before the start of their IPL match in Hyderabad on Wednesday.

## Nunes strikes at death as City sink Villa

Manchester, April Matheus Nunes scored a priceless stoppage-time winner as Manchester City beat top five-rivals Aston Villa 2-1 on Tuesday to boost their bid to qualify for the Champions League. Pep Guardiola's side were seconds away from a damaging draw at the Etihad Stadium after Bernardo Silva's early opener was cancelled out by Marcus Rashford's penalty. But Nunes's last-gasp strike sparked wild celebrations from Guardiola and his players as they climbed to third place in the Premier League. With the race for a top-five finish approaching a tense

climax, Portugal midfielder



Manchester City's Matheus Nunes celebrates after scoring against Aston Villa during the English Premier League match at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester on Tuesday.

Nunes, converted to rightback lately, could not have picked a better time to net his first league goal for City. City's 15th successive home

league win against Villa wasn't quite as stunning as the fightback from two goals down that brought them the Premier League title on the last day of the 2021-22 season. But it could prove almost as lucrative, with a place in the Champions League now

within their control. With four games left, City will remain at least fifth even if fourth-placed Nottingham Newcastle and sixth-placed Chelsea each win their game in hand.

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## **Indian athletes condemn** Pahalgam terrorist attack cent civilians in the name

New Delhi, April 23: united with them at this India's sporting fraternity dark hour, as we mourn oscillated between grief and rage as it joined the nation in condemning the deadly terrorist attack in Pahalgam with some demanding that the country should cut all sports ties with Pakistan. On Tuesday, terrorists opened fire at a prime tourist location in Pahalgam, killing at least 26 civilians and injuring several others. Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli expressed shock as they mourned the loss of lives.

"The affected families must be going through an unimaginable ordeal — India and the world stand

the loss of lives and pray for justice," Tendulkar

wrote.
"Heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims. Praying for peace and strength to families all those who lost their lives and justice to be served for their cruel act,' Kohli posted on his Instagram.

Similar sentiments were expressed by other top players such as Jasprit Bumrah and Suryakumar Yaday. Pacer Mohammed Siraj posted an emotional message in which he called for justice.

"To target and kill inno-

of religion is pure evil... No cause, no belief, no ideology can ever justify such a monstrous act. Yeh kaisi ladai hai...jahaan insaan ki jaan ki koi keemat hi nahi (what sort of a fight is this in which there is no value for human life)," he asked. "I hope this madness ends soon and these ter-

rorists are found and punished, without mercy," he

Indian cricket team head coach Gautam Gambhir wrote: "Praying for the families of the deceased. Those responsible for this will pay. India will strike.'

#### **NADEEM DECLINES NEERAJ'S INVITE TO PLAY IN INDIA** Lahore, April 23:

Pakistan's champion Olympic Nadeem on Wednesday said he has declined Neeraj Chopra's invitation to compete in the NC Classic javelin event in Bengaluru on May 24 as that will clash with his training schedule for the upcoming Asian Athletics Championships. Nadeem, however, said he was grateful to Chopra for inviting him for the grant.

him for the event.
"The (NC) Classic
event is from 20th May (May 24) whereas I am scheduled to leave for Korea on 22nd May for Asian Athletics Championship, Nadeem said.