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# Hindustan Times



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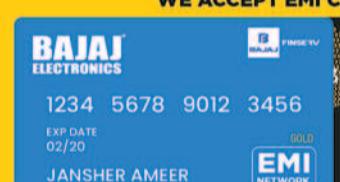
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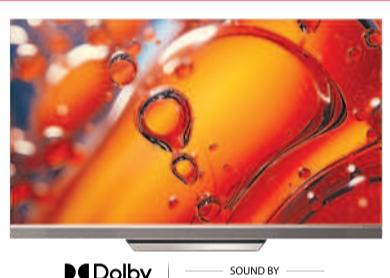


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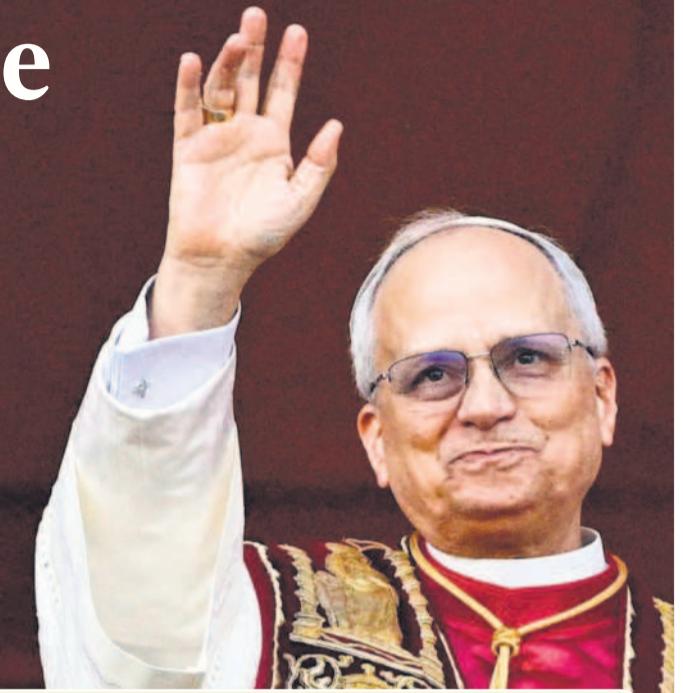


## NUMBER THEORY

## The material traits that define a pope

By Sreedev Krishnakumar

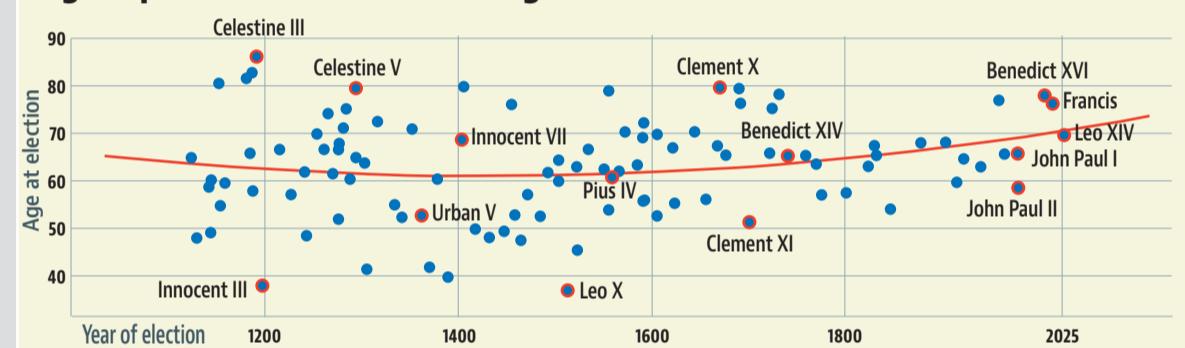
Robert Francis Prevost who took over the leadership of the catholic church as Pope Leo XIV is 69, significantly younger than his predecessor Pope Francis (76 in 2013) and Pope Benedict XVI (78 in 2005) when they became popes. Leo XIV is the first modern pontiff to hold a degree in mathematics. These anecdotal observations raise some broader questions: are popes getting younger or older? How long do their tenures last? And how have their educational backgrounds evolved? The charts below explore each of these in detail.



## 1 Are popes getting older or younger?

Although Leo XIV, whose inauguration will be held on May 18 is younger than his immediate two predecessors at their time of election, this doesn't represent a long-term decline in papal age. Examining all 105 pontiffs from the year 1124 to the present reveals an average election age of 63. When broken down by century, the figures fluctuate: the mean age in the 12th century was 63.4, falling to 55.0 by the 14th century, before climbing steadily from the 19th century onwards to reach 74.6 in the current century.

## Age of pontiffs at the time of being elected

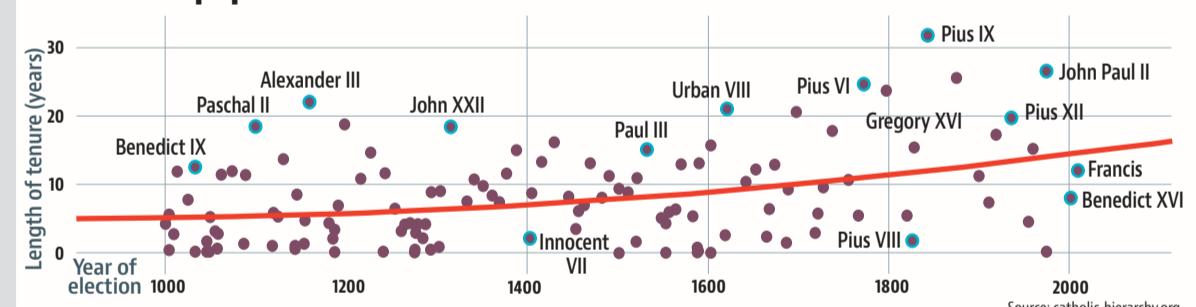


Source: catholic-hierarchy.org

## 2 How long do pontiffs remain in office?

Traditionally, popes serve for life. However, there have been rare exceptions — Benedict XVI who resigned in 2013 is the only modern-era pope to do so. From Sylvester II (999 AD) onwards an average papal reign has been of approximately 7 years and 9 months. That average, however, fluctuates by century: it dipped to around 4 years and 5 months in the 13th century, rose to about 15 years and 10 months by the 19th century, and is nearly 10 years so far in the

## Tenures of popes



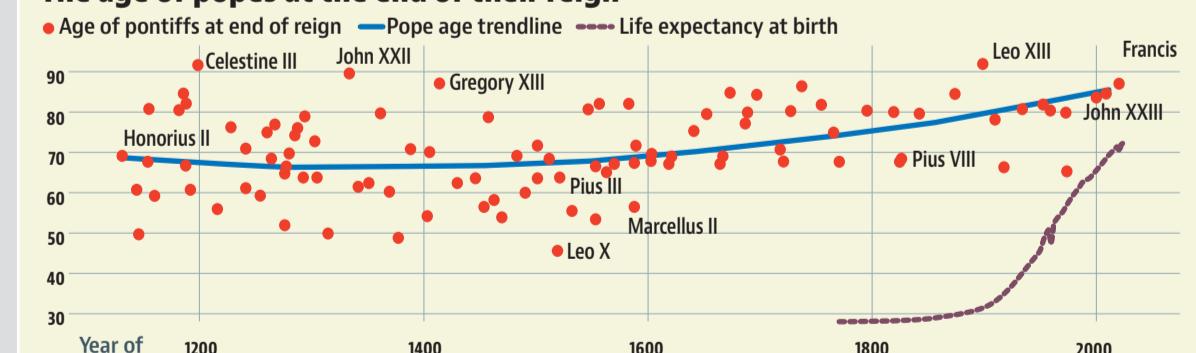
Source: catholic-hierarchy.org

## 3 Do popes live longer than their average followers?

In short, yes. Historically, most popes were in their sixties when elected. Global life expectancy at birth only reached that level in the 1980s. As mentioned above, almost all popes have served until death and comparing papal ages at the end of their

reign (usually their age at death) with average human life expectancy highlights a stark gap. Even in the 1800s, when life expectancy at birth was around 28–30 years, the average papal age at the end of tenure was around 77.

## The age of popes at the end of their reign



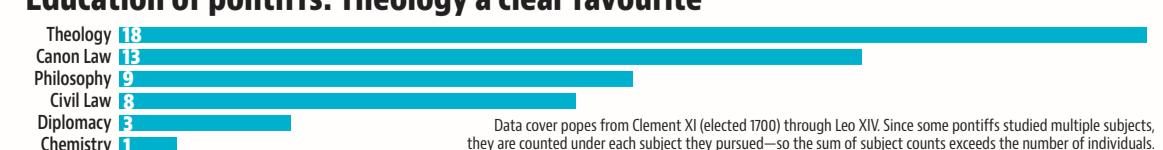
Source: catholic-hierarchy.org, UN WPP, Zijdemans et al. (Life expectancy at birth)

## 4 What do the popes study?

HT gathered data on the educational history of pontiffs going back to 1700. All popes from Clement XI to the newly elected Leo XIV have held at least one doctoral degree — except for Pius X (1903–1914) and Pope Francis, who recently died. Throughout history, pontifical education has centred overwhelmingly on theology, philosophy and canon law—an emphasis entrenched by John Paul II's 1990 apostolic constitution "Ex Corde Ecclesiae", which mandates that every Catholic university maintain a faculty or chair of theology. Its juridical component, canon law, remains the oldest continuously function-

ing legal system in the West. Over time, while the curriculum remained focused on humanistic and juridical disciplines, occasional outliers such as Pope Francis—who graduated from a technical secondary school with a chemical technician's diploma—and even the medieval scholar Pope Sylvester II, famed for his work in mathematics and astronomy, have popped up. Leo XIV, however, breaks ground as the first modern pontiff to hold a degree in Mathematics, which he gained from Villanova University in Pennsylvania, and which he complemented with subsequent theology and canon-law credentials.

## Education of pontiffs: Theology a clear favourite



Data cover popes from Clement XI (elected 1700) through Leo XIV. Since some pontiffs studied multiple subjects, they are counted under each subject they pursued—so the sum of subject counts exceeds the number of individuals.

Source: Vatican website, Salvador Miranda (The Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church), New Advent

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## India to rebuild canals, dig new ones to tap into Indus

Zia Haq

letters@hindustantimes.com

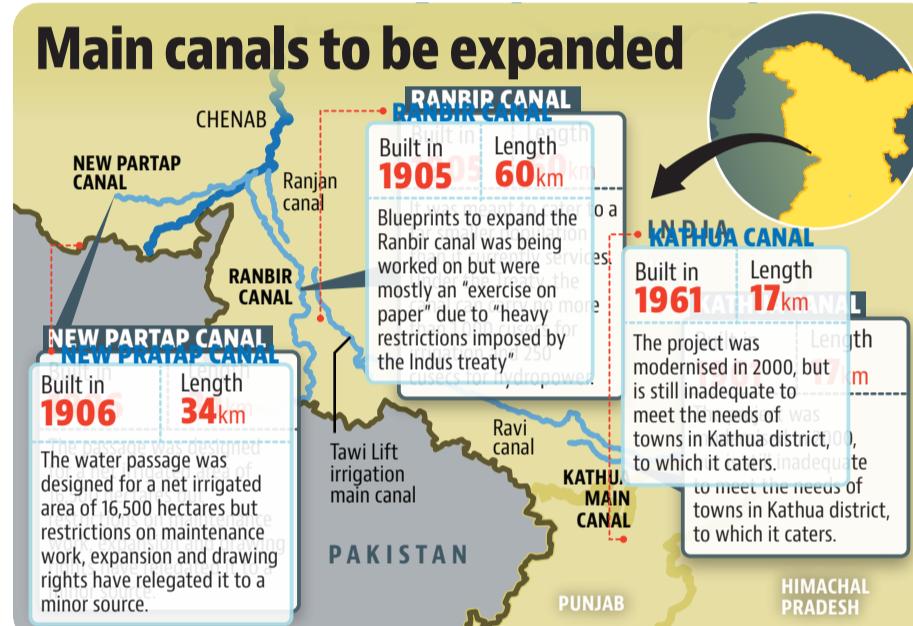
**NEW DELHI:** India will begin sprucing up a network of Indus canals, beginning with the Kathua, New Partap and Ranbir channels for the first time since most of them were built over a century ago as well as sanction new ones to increase the country's nearly stagnant net-irrigated area, officials aware of the matter said.

The tasks will be carried out unfettered by the Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan, which India suspended last month after terrorists killed 26 people in Pahalgam, a tourism hub in Kashmir. The treaty didn't allow or restricted India's ability to revamp, expand or create new water channels from the Indus basin rivers, despite a growing population, according to the Union government.

The rebuilding and expansion of canals linked to Indus rivers were prioritised immediately after the treaty was paused by India on April 23, although roadmaps were routinely being worked on by various departments, including the flood control and irrigation wing of the J&K government, one official said.

India is preparing to begin desilting work in the Ranbir, New Partap, Ranjan, Tawi Lift, Paragwali, Kathua Canal and Ravi canals, which will be done in phases by the Jammu and Kashmir government under technical guidance of the Centre, a second official said.

continued on →13



### Any loans to Pak used for terror funding: Rajnath message to IMF

Rahul Singh and  
Maulik Pathak

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI/AHMEDABAD:** Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Friday urged the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to reconsider its \$1 billion financial assistance to Pakistan and stop future support, saying that Islamabad was again trying to rebuild the terror infrastructure

taken down by New Delhi and adding that such aid will be used for funding terrorism.

He questioned if the bailout to Pakistan was tantamount to indirect funding of terror by the global organisation in what was New Delhi's latest push to isolate Islamabad globally.

"Any financial assistance to Pakistan is no less than terror funding," Singh said while addressing Indian Air Force

(IAF) personnel at the Bhuj airbase in Gujarat; a Jaguar fighter jet and Pechora surface-to-air missiles forming the backdrop.

Singh also warned Islamabad that it was currently "on probation" under the May 10 understanding that ended four days of fierce fighting.

"If the behaviour improves, it is fine; but if there is any disturbance, harshest punishment will be given," the defence minister said.

→P8

#### more stories

Cong to join govt's diplomatic outreach programme →P8

Omar, Mufti spar over Tulbul barrage project →P8

IPL restarts today with strategic tweaks →P23

BSF JAWAN YET TO RETURN HOME AS DEBRIEFING STILL ON

Prawesh Lama

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Border Security Force (BSF) constable PK Shaw, who was released by Pakistan after three weeks on May 14, is still waiting to return home as a team of doctors and central agencies continue his evaluation, officials familiar with the matter said.

→P8

#### more stories

Cong to join govt's diplomatic outreach programme →P8

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Sunetra Choudhury

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** "Show me the money".

That immortal pop-history line forms a pillar in the defence of justice Yashwant Varma, according to people familiar with the matter and excerpts from the 55-year-old judge's submission to the committee set up by the then Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna to look into the allegation that a huge amount of cash was discovered in his house. HT reviewed parts of the judge's submission.

Two months after a mysterious fire broke out in an outhouse at the residence of Varma, then a Delhi high court judge, the money remains at the heart of the arguments of both sides.

While the report has not been made public, parts of it have been reported in the media. These claim that on the day following the fire on March 14, there was a clean-up exercise.

Justice Varma's defence would appear to be that there was no money at all.

→P8

**TALIBAN: WANT TO RENEW INDIA TIES, AFGHANISTAN OPEN TO INVESTMENT**

Rezaul H Laskar

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Afghanistan is looking to renew and normalise ties with India and is open to investments for the country's development, Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen said on Friday in the wake of the first contact between external affairs minister S Jaishankar and Taliban acting foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi.

When Shaheen was asked about the significance of the contact between Jaishankar and Muttaqi, he told HT: "Afghanistan has had historical relations with India, there is a need to renew that and normalise relations. We have a balanced approach policy, and our arms are open for all countries to invest in Afghanistan and cooperate with us in various fields." →P8

→AFGHAN TRUCKS GO THROUGH ATTARI, P8



# MRF ZAPPER C1

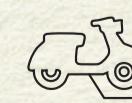
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## PAGE ONE PLUS

## From HT Archives

TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT OF SIKKIM, 1973



Prime Minister Indira Gandhi with leaders from Sikkim a month before the region merged with India and became its 22nd state. HT ARCHIVE

## Pact paves way for a democratic set up in Sikkim

As Sikkim marks 50 yrs of statehood, HT's report on pact that facilitated its merger with India

Prithvis Chakravarti

**NEW DELHI:** Sikkim's popularly elected representatives will administer law and order, finance, land revenue and economic development plans, according to the tripartite agreement between India, the Chogyal and the representatives of the state's three main political parties, the Janata Congress, the National Congress and the National Party that was signed in Gangtok last night. These portfolios, hitherto under the direct charge of the Chogyal, were a bone of contention between the hereditary ruler and the elected representatives under the diarchical constitutional arrangements replaced by the agreement.

The agreement, which was made public today (May 9, 1973), provides for a State Assembly elected on adult suffrage and an executive council responsible to the Assembly. The Chogyal, under the agreement, becomes a constitutional ruler with direct executive authority only over "the Palace establishment and the Sikkim Guards," the latter a 200-strong armed constabulary.

India, according to the agreement assumes overall responsibility for Sikkim's good administration, communal harmony and economic and social development in addition to its "sole responsibility" for defence, territorial integrity of Sikkim and the conduct and regulation of external relations.

The head of Sikkim's administration will be a Chief Executive who "shall be appointed by the Chogyal on the nomination of the Government of India." The Chief Executive will preside over the meetings of the Executive Council.

The agreement also lays down that any difference of opinion between the Chief Executive and the Chogyal "shall be referred to the Political Officer in Sikkim, who shall obtain the advice of the Government of India, which shall be binding".

The "one man one vote" for the State Assembly, the agreement stipulates, should not lead to the domination of any single ethnic community. The provision evidently is intended to reassure the Bhutia, Lepcha and other ethnic minority groups against domination by Sikkimese of Nepali origin, who constitute about 80% of the State's approximately three lakh population. The balance, it is said, is to be attained through a "parity" of seats in the Assembly between the majority community and the ethnic minority groups, but the details of the arrangement are still to be worked out by the three parties concerned.

There is also said to be an informal agreement among the parties concerned on the immediate appointment of an Advisory Council of eight to 10 popular representatives to discharge the State's executive functions, pending fresh elections in about six to eight months.

Mr B S Das, the Indian administrator, will head the Council.

The following is the text of the agreement: "Whereas the Chogyal and the people of Sikkim are convinced that their interest and the long term interest of Sikkim as a whole call for:

(1) The establishment of a fully responsible Government in Sikkim with a more democratic Constitution, the guarantee of fundamental rights, the rule of law, an independent judiciary, and greater legislative and executive powers for the elected representatives of the people;

(2) A system of elections based on adult suffrage which will give equitable representation to all sections of the people on the basis of the principle of one man one vote;

(3) The strengthening of Indo Sikkim co-operation and interrelationships."



HT carried a report on the Sikkim tripartite pact on the front page of its May 10, 1973 edition.

{ WORLD } 737 MAX CRASHES

## Deal may help Boeing escape crashes trial



Boeing has reached a tentative nonprosecution agreement with US prosecutors in a fraud case stemming from two fatal 737 MAX plane crashes that killed 346 people, people familiar with the matter said. The agreement, if approved, would be a blow to families who lost relatives in the crashes and have pressed prosecutors to take the US planemaker to trial. DOJ officials are still weighing whether to proceed with the agreement or take Boeing to trial. →P15

{ MY DELHI } POPULAR HUB

## Two weeks after fire gutted 30 stalls, Dilli Haat reopens



Dilli Haat reopened on Friday, two weeks after a devastating fire destroyed at least 30 stalls and damaged stock worth lakhs. Siddharth Bhattacharya, a designer who works with Khadi fabric, said that he brought his fire extinguisher and fire resistant tarpaulin. He said that the tourism department, which runs Dilli Haat, has directed that shops will shut at 8pm instead of 10pm. →P7

{ WORLD } FILM PROMPTS PROBE

## Cloud over credit for 'Napalm Girl' photo



World Press Photo suspended on Friday the credit for who took one of the most iconic pictures in history, the Vietnam War image "Napalm Girl". The organisation said it carried out its own investigation into the haunting 1972 photo after the premiere of the film "The Stringer". The documentary chronicles an investigation into rumours that the image was taken by a local freelancer, not the Associated Press photographer Nick Ut. →P15

{ FORBES TALLY }

## CR7 again tops highest-paid athletes' list

Cristiano Ronaldo topped Forbes' list of the highest-paid athletes for the third year, with total earnings of \$275 million

● Total earnings ● On-Field ● Off-Field



## Absence of women

No woman was on the list, highlighting the severe pay disparities that continue to plague different sports.

## Sport-wise breakdown of list

16	Basketball (NBA)
13	American football (NFL)
8	
5	Football
3	Golf
5	Baseball (MLB)
	Others

American high: US has the most number of athletes, 29, on the list, followed by UK with 3. No Indian is on the list.

{ ETAWAH CONSTRUCTION }

## Akhilesh pushes temple project in Yadav citadel before state poll battle

Qazi Faraz Ahmad

letters@hindustantimes.com

**ETAWAH:** On the outskirts of Etawah town in central Uttar Pradesh is the Lion Safari Park, once a big draw for tourists in India's most populous province but now closed due to a recent avian flu scare.

But coming up roughly 8km away, off the Etawah-Bhind bypass road, is another potential landmark for the city often considered a stronghold of the Yadav family.

Here, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav — accused by the Bharatiya Janata Party of being anti-Hindu for skipping the Ram temple inauguration in January 2024 — is quietly pushing a major religious project — the Kedareshwar Mahadev temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva.

The temple is being built on a 12-acre plot by the Kedareshwar Mahadev Etawah Temple Trust, whose chief trustee is former chief minister Yadav. The pran pratista or consecration ceremony was done in February 2024 and a small pool of devotees has been trickling in. But the grand inauguration is scheduled for February 2026 — roughly a year before assembly polls, the state said.

Madhu Botta, head of RIPL Constructions, the firm building the temple. Construction started with a Bhoomi Pujan on March 7, 2021, with Yadav in attendance. Last year, he shared a video on X of ongoing construction at the temple. The main temple complex is completed, but work related to the water tank, outer parikrama corridor, administrative block and boundary wall is pending.

Addressing the media at the party office in Lucknow recently, Akhilesh said: "I will visit the Ram Temple, after our Kedareshwar



The temple is being built by the Kedareshwar Mahadev Etawah Temple Trust, whose chief trustee is Akhilesh Yadav. DEEPAK GUPTA/HT

Temple is completed in Etawah."

**Blending traditions**  
Botta said only granite "Krishna Purush Shila" was being used in areas other than the foundational structure.

A blend of northern and southern Indian traditions will be seen, he said.

"Initially, Akhileshji asked me to get a Nandiji statue constructed, after which he asked me to study all the major temples and make a unique

Lord Shiva temple in Etawah. We extensively researched major temples and brought together the best resources in this field for the Kedareshwar Mahadev Temple in Etawah," Botta said.

"This temple is being built to last more than 2000 years," he added.

An estimated 600 tonnes of granite has already reached Etawah from Kanyakumari. In all, 1,000 tonnes of granite will be used, Botta said.

"Three Nandi statues have already been installed on three sides of the temple. The first

sound of 'Om' when rung," Rajendran added.

## Homage to Kedarnath

Bala Krishna, the assistant architect said the sanctum sanctorum will be 74 feet tall atop a 10-foot-high platform. "This brings its total elevation to 84 feet from the ground—just an inch shorter than the 85 feet height of the Kedarnath temple in Uttarakhand. As a mark of respect for the Kedarnath temple, the height of the Kedareswar Mahadev temple has been intentionally kept slightly lower," he said.

"Like the Kedarnath temple, a 12-foot high wooden 'shikharam' has been built on the top of the Kedareshwar temple. Along with keeping a hollow space between the roof of the sanctum sanctorum of this temple and the 'vimanam', a small hole has been placed on the roof in such a way that the echo of the conch, bell and damru played in the sanctum sanctorum can be heard in the entire complex. Electricity will not be used for lighting in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. The sanctum sanctorum will be illuminated by the light of diyas (earthen lamps)," Bala Krishna added.

Workers, many of whom are from Tamil Nadu, say they started working from 2021. "Summer is not a problem for us, but the extreme winter in North India was unbearable. However, with Lord Shiva's blessings, we persevered and continued our work," said Selvam Karthik, an artisan.

The Kedareshwar Mahadev temple will have four gates, resembling the gopurams of southern India. The main entrance will be 50-foot-high and the others 40-foot-high, said Botta.

Dr J Rajendran, the chief architect, said the temple will be illuminated by the light of diyas (earthen lamps). "The temple is being built on the same Shiv-Shakti axis line on which the Kedarnath Temple and other important religious sites in India lie. Eight major temples of Lord Shiva built in the country are also located on this line," Rajendran said.

"Three Nandi statues have already been installed on three sides of the temple. The first

"Five-foot-high bronze bell is being brought in from Sri Lanka, designed to resonate with the

sound of 'Om' when rung," Rajendran added.

Political observers said the construction of the temple might be a part of Akhilesh's strategy to counter the BJP ahead of the crucial state elections. "The temple may be seen as messaging from the Akhilesh to his followers that even OBCs, Dalits can have a temple of their own where they won't be insulted in any way. It will also blunt any criticism of Yadav and his party on Hindutva or temple politics."

Out of power in the state since 2017, the SP is hoping that the

temple will help it repel allegations that the SP was steeped in caste politics and against Hindutva, and also give a religious edge to its social alliance of Pichadi (backward), Dalit and Alpanshyak (minorities) that boosted its tally in the Lok Sabha polls.

"Constructing a temple is a personal and religious choice...Akhilesh ji has chosen to create something meaningful. Not everyone can travel to Kedarnath, but now they can visit the Kedareswar Mahadev Temple," said senior leader Uday Singh.

He said seeking votes in the name of the temple was not on the party's agenda and pointed to statues of Lord Hanuman built in Saifai in the late Mulayam Singh Yadav in 2016.

But BJP leaders said Yadav's involvement in the temple as a sign of the expanding influence of Sanatan Dharma.

"Rahul Gandhi is going to Ujjain temple and Akhilesh Yadav is getting a Shiv temple constructed in his native place. What more proof do we need of the increasing influence of Sanatan?" asked UP BJP vice-president Vijay Bahadur Pathak.

On this temple's impact on the 2027 Uttar Pradesh assembly polls, Pathak said, "Voters are intelligent. They know who is doing what and the motive behind it."

Political observers said the construction of the temple might be a part of Akhilesh's strategy to counter the BJP ahead of the crucial state elections. "The temple may be seen as messaging from the Akhilesh to his followers that even OBCs, Dalits can have a temple of their own where they won't be insulted in any way. It will also blunt any criticism of Yadav and his party on Hindutva or temple politics."

Leaders from the Samajwadi Party say in public that the temple is not linked to politics but admit privately that it will help blunt any criticism of Yadav and his party on Hindutva or temple politics.

"Three Nandi statues have already been installed on three sides of the temple. The first

"Five-foot-high bronze bell is being brought in from Sri Lanka, designed to resonate with the

sound of 'Om' when rung," Rajendran added.

## HT brunch Always broke?

It's not you, it's the times. No, really. People in their 20s have it uniquely harder than before, say data and the experts. Here's what Boomers don't see when they hate on Kids These Days

→P16





## SPOTLIGHT | 100 YRS OF ART DECO

# IN DELHI, AN ECHO OF DECO

As the Art Deco movement turns 100, its legacy still shimmers across Indian cities — not just in Mumbai's famed skyline, but in the quiet curves of Delhi's old hotels, houses, and cinemas. Introduced to India in the 1930s, the style brought with it sweeping balconies, fluted columns, and streamlined facades.

## Where cinema met the Republic

**W**hen Delite Cinema opened on Asaf Ali Road on April 30, 1954, it wasn't just a place to watch films — it was a statement. With its curved entrance, soaring vertical bands, and tripartite Deco façade, Delite wasn't only the tallest building in Delhi at the time, it was the boldest. It was also the only air-conditioned cinema in the city — a marvel of both India's post-Independence sense of architecture and aspiration.

Its founder, Brij Mohan Lal Raizada, wasn't simply setting up a business. He was responding to a call. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had urged the Capital to cultivate its own modern landmarks — expressions of a young, self-assured republic. Raizada offered Delite: a place where glamour, design, and nationalism could come together in celluloid splendour.

The building's tripartite elevation — a signature of Art Deco — gives it rhythm and drama, while its strong vertical lines

stretch skyward, drawing the eye. "In Deco buildings, especially for corner plots, we often see the corner as the axis where the predominant features are noticed, such as an entrance tower or overhanging porches to lay emphasis... adding volume to the dramatisation of the cinema," said Prashansa Sachdeva, the other half of Deco in Delhi, an arts and architectural based researcher.

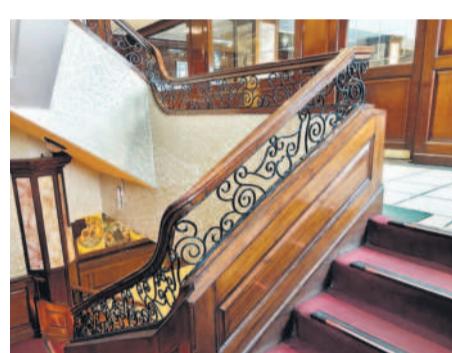
At night, its bold neon signage bathed the street in colour. Inside, the Deco story continued — and still does. Terrazzo staircases curl elegantly upward, wooden handrails gleam, balustrades carry ornamental finesse, and geometric motifs embellish newel posts. Despite renovations, especially the 2006 revamp, these Deco details remain lovingly preserved.

"It's one of the few Delhi buildings where Deco isn't just a façade — it's integral to how the space works and feels," Sachdeva said, adding that the furniture and some interiors, including the stained glass on doors and windows still have the original Art Deco style.

Delite was also a nod of civic consciousness. In 1971, during the Indo-Pak war, it stopped film screenings to broadcast news bulletins from the frontlines.

While most single-screen theatres have faded, Delite remains not just a movie theatre, but a monument — to an age when buildings dreamed big, and Delhi was shaping a modern identity.

PHOTOS: VIPIN KUMAR/HT



## A room that is a view

**J**ust off the frenetic swirl of New Delhi Railway Station, a building rises with poise and precision — its curved lines, flared windows and bright yellow accents, bringing an echo of another era. Hotel Bloomrooms, once known as Airlines Hotel, brings a touch of Bombay-style Deco elegance to the heart of Paharganj's chaos.

Built in the 1950s, Airlines was one of Delhi's first hotels to break from colonial or Mughal tropes. Conceptualised by owners believed to be from Mumbai — India's undisputed Art Deco capital — it presented a striking new vocabulary: clean horizontals, symmetrical flourishes, and a curved tripartite facade that hugged the street corner like a sculpted ribbon.

Though its architect is unknown, the building speaks fluently in Deco. The entrance to the corner building is a visual anchor: a tall central column flanked by fluted pilasters, crowned with a sleek finial. Above it, signature "eyelid" windows complete the scene. Inside, a sweeping staircase bends gracefully along the wall, its wooden handrail etched with the initials "AP" — likely a nod to the original owner.

Sachdeva said the balconies are elongated and banded with horizontal lines, curving in the corners, being a classic feature of Streamline Moderne, a subset of Deco. "The staircase's smooth flight, with a disjointed wooden handrail, till day presents a beautiful sight to behold... This remains as one of the few successful examples where the style has been appreciated and accentuated."

Even as the city changed around it, the building endured. In 2013, the site was reborn as Hotel Bloomrooms. Getting a new crisp yellow-and-white palette, the restoration kept the soul intact. The central courtyard remains — now dotted with café tables and chairs — while the 50 rooms are wrapped around this peaceful core.

"The structure is untouched. We've only repainted and preserved what was already here," said front office manager Rohit Bhati. The former Airlines Hotel offers a rare glimpse of Art Deco as lived space — where the geometry of glamour still quietly greets each guest.

PHOTOS: VIPIN KUMAR/HT



## Insaaf ki Kothi

**A**long the orderly avenues of the stately enclave of Lutyens' Delhi, where colonial grandeur takes the spotlight, Kanika House curves into view making a quiet statement. Commissioned in the 1930s by the Raja of Kanika, a princely state in present-day Odisha, and designed by Austrian architect Karl Malte von Heinz, the home broke from colonial opulence with sinuous lines, crisp horizontality, and a language steeped in Deco modernism.

A trend that was observed within other palatial houses being constructed around the same time such as Dholpur House, Jaisalmer House, Faridkot House, the Indian princes directly commissioned architects to construct their private residences in a style which better represented their tastes... Art Deco in that sense became a natural choice," Sayal said.

In 1947, the house entered the annals of Indian history when Dr BR Ambedkar, freshly appointed as the nation's first law minister, moved in. Here, within these curved walls and shaded windows, Ambedkar helped shape the Indian Constitution for the next four years. It was soon dubbed "Insaaf Ki Kothi — the House of Justice." He would stay here until he resigned from Nehru's cabinet in 1951, but the house never shed

its aura of legal and moral gravity. Today, the residence wears a different yet no less storied mantle. Since 1978, it has served as the official home of the Polish Ambassador — currently Adam Burakowski — making it one of the few addresses in Delhi where diplomatic and constitutional histories quietly overlap.

Set behind a metal gate, Kanika House reveals itself in full Streamline Moderne glory — a branch of Deco that prized curves, speed, and motion. The rear balcony juts out like the prow of an ocean liner; above the windows, slender concrete "eyebrows" provide sculptural rhythm.

Horizontal banding flows along the

façade, while a sweeping staircase within rises like a ribbon of reinforced grace.

PHOTOS: MAYANK AUSTEN SOOFI

"Kanika House is one of Delhi's finest surviving examples of Streamline Moderne," said Sayal. "Its eyebrow details, swooping balconies, and sinuous stairwell place it firmly within the global Deco narrative — yet it remains deeply rooted in the political and diplomatic life of India."

PHOTOS: VIPIN KUMAR/HT

Inside, the staircase becomes the architectural centrepiece — a spiral of concrete and brick, anchored by a solid newel post and finished with a polished wooden handrail still warm to the touch.

## The sentinel of Pusa Road

**O**n a stretch of Pusa Road where concrete buildings now jostle for visual space, one house holds its ground. Number 4, a quiet Deco relic, stands as the last surviving witness to an architectural experiment that once dreamt of a modern Delhi.

Its story started just before Independence in the 1940s, when the land was earmarked by the British for Electric Commission officers' quarters — a plan later abandoned. It was then acquired by Lala Sri Ram's Delhi Cloth Mills, which sought to transform the area into an enclave of Deco homes. The first, House #1, was designed by architect Mohinder Singh as a prototype that would set the tone for the rest. But it reportedly fell out of favour, and a new, anonymous architect took over. Four more homes — Numbers 2 to 5 — rose with a shared Deco language. Today, only Number 4 remains.

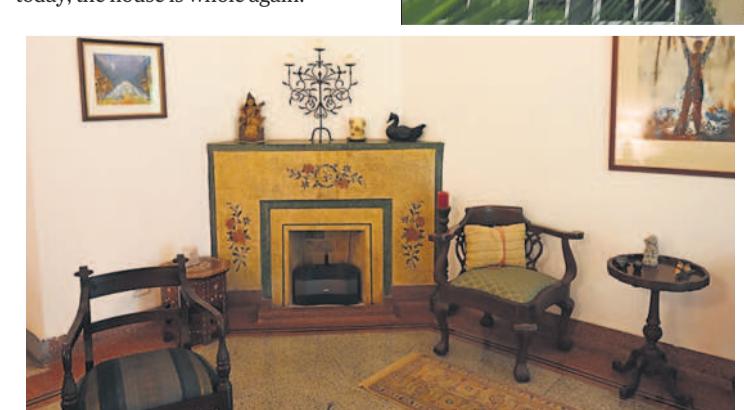
Owned by the Wahis family since 1975, the house was conceived as a joint family dwelling, with four independent flats wrapped around a central Deco staircase that functions as the home's spine.

Outside, the façade is textbook Art Deco: porthole windows punctuate a cylindrical tower, Hindu swastika-patterned jaalis filter sunlight, and the exterior plays with vertical and horizontal banding. "The external tower features a flat roof with vertical bandings wrapped around, porthole windows and jaali screens, as well as vertical and horizon-

tal bandings along its exterior facade," explains Sayal.

Inside, terrazzo reigns supreme. At least three fireplaces survive with their original carvings, and rare Burma teak and geometric grills still hold the space together. A major round of restoration came in 2017, when the open verandah was enclosed, but always with the same intent — to preserve. "It would've been cheaper to rebuild. But restoring this home has brought us far greater satisfaction," the Wahis said. Their efforts have kept a sliver of Deco breathing amid a sea of builder floors.

When the family first acquired the home, it was far from pristine. Squatters occupied it, and the first floor had been turned into a blood bank — beds and medical fixtures still leave their ghostly imprint on worn terrazzo tiles. But today, the house is whole again.



## Timekeeper of GT Road

**A**t the junction of Grand Trunk Road and Roshanara Road — long before it was engulfed by flyovers and traffic fumes — a slender, stately clock tower anchors Delhi's expansion northward. Erected in 1941, the Ram Roop Clock Tower was born from both civic necessity and architectural ambition, becoming one of the city's earliest forays into Art Deco.

Named after philanthropist and educationist Lala Ram Roop, the tower was envisioned as a beacon at the centre of a bustling industrial district. Mills flanked the area, trams clanged through Sabzi Mandi, and the crossroads cried out for order and ornament. In a 1938 letter preserved in the Delhi Archives, found during Deco in Delhi's research, Ram Roop proposed a traffic-diverting clock tower — functional, yet beautiful. The British agreed. And so rose a 50-foot Deco sentinel, its large dial perched 40 feet high.

From afar, it appears modest — another relic vanishing into the city's clutter.

But up close, its Art Deco identity comes alive. Vertical recessed bands carry light and shadow across its face. Intricate stone jaalis blend Deco geometry with Egyptian and classical motifs, echoing a uniquely Indian modernism that experts now call Indo-Deco. At its four corners, sharply defined geometrical "jaalis" anchor the structure with a sculptural elegance.

Geetanjali Sayal, founder, Deco in Delhi and a creative producer and arts researcher said a similar clock tower — called the Royapettah exists in Chennai too. "This helps further diversify the links between Delhi and other cities."

For Delhi, Ram Roop tower's chimes once ruled the rhythms of local life. Mill workers set their shifts to its gongs; merchants aligned their ledgers to its ticks. Even today, remnants of its era remain — frayed power lines that once served electric trams still hang above the road.

Just a few hundred metres away, the Ram Roop family still resides. "My great grandfather-in-law wanted to create something both practical and beautiful," said Neeti Gupta, 60. "This clock tower is a part of his legacy."

Today, the clock tower endures amid a web of wires — not just as an architectural artefact, but as a timekeeper of ambition, memory, and a vision of modernity that pulsed through Delhi's heart.

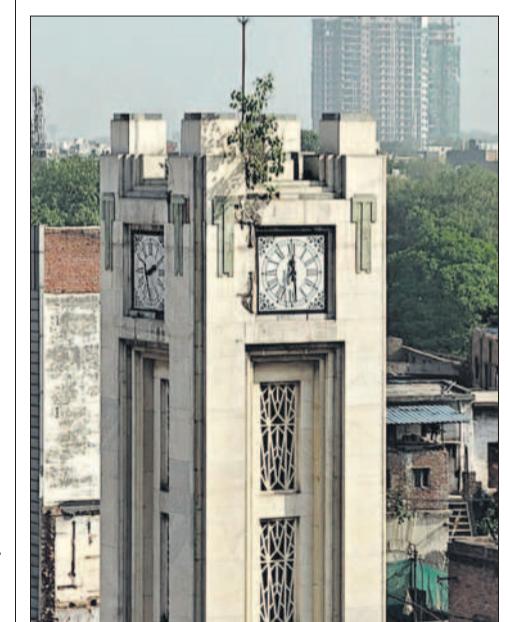


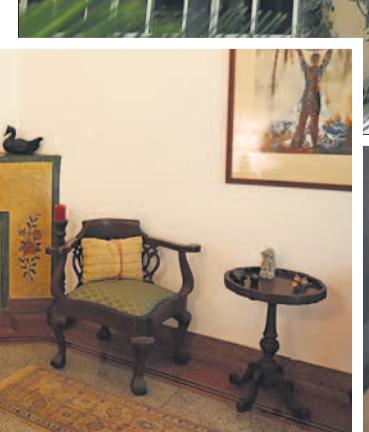
PHOTO: VIPIN KUMAR/HT

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# DPS Dwarka sends bouncers to block 32 expelled students

At the school gate, bouncers, teachers send back students; Move sparks outrage as school defies DoE, high court directives

Varun Bhandari

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**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi Public School (DPS) Dwarka on Friday deployed bouncers at its gates and denied entry to 32 students whose names were struck off the rolls for non-payment of a fee hike declared illegal by the Delhi government—openly defying a reinstatement order from the Directorate of Education (DoE) issued just a day earlier.

On Thursday, the DoE had warned the school against taking coercive action, calling its move to expel students for not paying unauthorised fees a violation of court directives. But as students arrived on Friday morning, at least four male and two female bouncers were stationed at the school's entrance, setting the stage for another standoff between the school and outraged parents.

As the expelled students approached the gates, security personnel and teachers checked ID cards, confirmed names against a list, and sent the children back without explanation.

No DoE officials were present on the premises during the early hours, and the school offered no communication to parents.

In its Thursday order, the DoE had stated: "No child should suffer because of the difference in payment of fees, if any. There is no rationale behind striking off names of students even when the case is listed in the high court."

The directive, issued by deputy director Sushita Biju, further instructed the school to "take back on the school's roll the names of the said 32 students, including any others

## Students denied entry in school

What happened at the school on Friday

**THURSDAY EVENING** DoE directs DPS Dwarka to take back 32 expelled students

**FRIDAY**

Around 07.00 AM

Teachers, security and 4 bouncers turn away the expelled students

Around 10.00 AM

A DoE nominee shows up and a few minutes later, school allows a few students to enter



Bouncers at the school's gate seen checking IDs of students.

"My son never misses school but the recent events have left him traumatized."

— Praveen Menon, father of student sent back

"My daughter was allowed to enter around 10.30am. She had missed half of the school already till then."

— Parent of a student who was later allowed to enter

"We are waiting for directions from the DoE regarding the school's blatant defiance."

— Anil Kumar Sharma, deputy education director (southwest)

"A committee of senior education and government has investigated the issue."

— Ashish Sood, education minister

whose names have been struck down by the school management for non-payment of the alleged increased fee."

Parents say the school's response to this order was one of open defiance.

"My daughter was stopped at the gate again by male bouncers. This is pure intimidation," said Vinay Rajput, one of the affected parents. "Young children are being subjected to psychological torture every day."

Parents said that all 32 children have been removed from school WhatsApp groups and other official communication channels.

"We don't even know what the summer vacation dates are.

inside the school—but only for a couple of hours.

"My daughter was finally allowed in at 10.30 am. But half the school day was already gone," said the parent of a Class 6 student, who requested anonymity.

Praveen Menon, another parent, said the school van no longer picks up his son.

"I came to drop him off at 7am, and they turned him back at the gate. He wasn't allowed to attend class," Menon claimed.

The impact on his son, he said, has been severe.

"He's an only child. School

We found out through other parents that vacations begin May 19," said one parent.

"We're completely blocked by the school administration. No updates. No homework. No communication."

The school is treating students like chattel... it deserves to be shut down," the judge said.

Deputy director of education (Southwest), Anil Kumar Sharma, said on Friday he was awaiting orders from higher authorities for action.

"We are waiting for directions from the DoE regarding the school's blatant defiance," he said.

"Show me a notice where you

was his social world. This abrupt disruption has left him psychologically shaken. Now he's anxious, withdrawn, and confused. I never imagined a school could treat a child this way," he said.

Many parents believe the school's use of bouncers and its continued refusal to comply with government orders is an open statement of contempt. "First, they stopped the students at the gate. Then, when the DoE nominee arrived, they let in a few children for appearance's sake," said Divya Mattey, a parent.

"But what's the point of entering class at 10.30 or 11am when school begins at 7am? The DoE order was ignored, and no official came to enforce it," she added.

Education minister Ashish Sood, responding to the latest events, said that DPS Dwarka had again crossed the line.

"We have already conducted an inquiry. A committee led by the vice chancellor of a Delhi government university (Ambedkar University), along with the joint secretary (finance), officials from the DoE, and chartered accountants, have investigated the matter," the minister said. "Mis-treatment of students cannot be tolerated."

The confrontation comes weeks after the Delhi high court came down heavily on the school for hearing on Monday.

On April 16, high court justice Sachin Datta criticised DPS Dwarka for treating children "with indignity" by confining them in a library and barring them from class over fee disputes.

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## Show proof of notice: HC reprimands school

Shruti Kakkar

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi high court on Friday deferred its decision on staying Delhi Public School (DPS), Dwarka's move to expel 32 students over their apparent non-payment of increased fees, even as it indicated that the school appeared to have violated legal procedures by failing to prior show cause notices.

The court said it would await the outcome of a related case—in which over 100 parents have urged the court to direct the Directorate of Education (DoE) and the lieutenant governor to take over the school's administration—before passing any interim orders and posted the matter for hearing on Monday.

A bench of justice Sachin Datta, hearing a plea by the parents of the expelled students seeking their reinstatement, noted that Rule 35(4) of the Delhi School Education Rules, 1973, requires schools to provide a reasonable opportunity to parents or guardians to respond before striking off a student's name from the rolls.

Senior advocate Debal Banerjee, representing the parents, submitted the school had not issued such notices. DPS Dwarka's counsel, senior advocate Pinaki Mishra, contended notices had been served, but the judge pressed him for proof.

"Show me a notice where you

side the school. The expulsions mark the latest escalation in a months-long stand-off between the school and parents, many of whom have refused to pay the revised fees, citing the lack of approval from DoE.

During the hearing, justice Datta also rebuked the school for the timing of its action. "You could've waited for five working days. When the school was about to shut for vacation, you chose the last week. They've been ousted in the crucial last week. You derive some sadistic pleasure by depriving the students (of studies)?"

### DELHI HIGH COURT

informed the students that they would be off the rolls on May 13 if they didn't pay the fees," justice Datta said, adding, "This is a striking off order. Rule 35(4) says that you (the school) have to issue notices. I think I'll stay this order immediately."

Though the judge described it as an "open and shut" case of procedural violation, he deferred passing the stay order, saying, "I'll pass the order on Monday. One day will not make a difference."

He cited the related petition being heard by justice Vikas Mahajan, in which over 100 parents have urged the court to direct DoE and the LG to take over the school's administration. That bench had reserved its order a day earlier.

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"Show me a notice where you

also cited the high court's order from April 16, in which it had rebuked the school for confining students over unpaid fees and warned that inability to pay did not justify harassment.

At that time, the court had described the treatment as "shabby and inhuman."

Mishra, however, argued that the school had incurred losses of ₹49 crore due to parents refusing to pay the revised fees, and maintained that the DoE had no authority in the matter.

The case will now continue on Monday.

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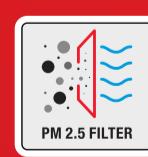
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# CM promises jobs for Mohalla Clinic staff in Arogya Mandirs

Ridhima Gupta and  
Alok Mishra

htreporters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Chief minister Rekha Gupta on Friday assured protesting Mohalla Clinic staff that they will be absorbed into the upcoming Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (AAM), even as the government begins phasing out clinics in areas where the new centres are being established. Her assurance came after scores of doctors, paramedics, and other clinic workers gathered outside her office on Friday, demanding clarity on their future and protesting delays in salary disbursement.

The protest, held during the CM's Janata Darbar, was triggered by the government's recent decision to withdraw Mohalla Clinics that overlap with the Ayushman Arogya Mandirs. "We will engage you on a priority basis in the new system that the government is creating," Gupta told the staff, adding that preference will be given to existing personnel once the transition begins.

On May 15, HT reported that the Delhi government intends to wind down existing Mohalla Clinics in areas where Ayushman Arogya Mandirs are coming up, since both facilities provide primary healthcare. According to minutes from a meeting on the operationalisation of Urban Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, Mohalla Clinic doctors and staff may be allowed to continue only for a year—or until new personnel are recruited to run the Arogya Mandirs.

Following this, on Friday, dozens of clinic workers gathered around noon for the CM's Janata Darbar. "We have worked at the Mohalla Clinics for the past six years. Now why are we being asked to leave our jobs? What is our fault?" said one paramedic at the gathering, summing up the anxiety shared by hundreds of frontline workers.

Amid slogans and appeals, CM Gupta addressed the group: "We will engage you on a priority basis in the new system. The government will absorb you in the Arogya Mandirs being set up



Delhi chief minister Rekha Gupta with cabinet minister Ashish Sood inspects fire service equipment at Delhi Secretariat in New Delhi on Friday.

RAJ K RAJ /HT PHOTO

## 'ARMOUR' ROBOT NEW FIREFIGHTER IN DFS RANKS

**NEW DELHI:** Chief minister Rekha Gupta and home minister Ashish Sood on Friday reviewed a demonstration of advanced firefighting robots—including the indigenously developed Automated Robotic Mist Omni Utility Rakshak (ARMOUR)—at the Delhi Secretariat. The exercise comes as the BJP-led government accelerates efforts to modernise the capital's emergency response systems with state-of-the-art equipment.

The ARMOUR is an automated firefighting vehicle equipped with high-pressure water mist technology to tackle fires in high-risk and hard-to-access zones. Also showcased were portable high-pressure mist systems—compact, mobile units that disperse fine water droplets at high velocity, allowing for effective firefighting.

HTC

## May 31 deadline set for drain de-silting

Alok K N Mishra

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**NEW DELHI:** Chief minister Rekha Gupta on Friday set a May 31 deadline for completing the desilting of city drains as the government steps up monsoon preparedness efforts. Chairing a review meeting with minister Parvesh Verma and irrigation and flood control officials on Friday, she stressed the need for proper and eco-friendly disposal of silt removed from drains.

Desilting is key to preventing urban flooding during the monsoon, as clogged drains obstruct the natural flow of rainwater.

Areas such as Minto Bridge, Puri Prakash underpass, the stretch of Ring Road opposite the WHO building, and the Zakhira Flyover have long faced

waterlogging during heavy rain. The monsoon typically hits Delhi by late June.

So far, 66.29% of the desilting work has been completed. To speed up operations, 66 machines—including draglines, hydraulic excavators, water masters, trash skimmers, and weed harvester—are deployed to remove silt, waste, and weeds, said the CM's office.

The CM directed that desilting and construction of Q-nets be completed on a war footing, and urged officials to intensify the removal of floating materials and obstructions from drains.

To manage waterlogging, 190 pumps have been deployed across the city—40 at permanent stations, 106 temporary, and 44 mobile units that can be dispatched as needed.

## DELHI MANDIS TO BE REVAMPED, AUDITED: CM

**NEW DELHI:** Chief minister Rekha Gupta on Friday announced a sweeping modernisation plan for Delhi's wholesale markets, starting with Azadpur Mandi, the largest in Asia.

During a visit to the market in north Delhi, she directed officials to begin immediate upgrades and ordered an audit of the mandi's finances over the past 10 years—a period under AAP rule.

At Azadpur, Gupta ordered the installation of CCTV cameras at all entry points, deployment of additional sanitation staff, refurbishment of roads, sheds and toilets. A primary health facility and an Atal Canteen offering full meals for ₹5 will also be set up, she said.

"Thousands of people work here daily, but the mandi lacks even the most basic infrastructure," Gupta said.

HTC

"However, these south-westerlies are only in the low level of the atmosphere, which is why there was very light to light rain on Friday. This moisture is expected to continue coming in, and there might be some thunderstorms activity in Delhi and neighbouring areas for the next five to seven days," Mishra said.

A Met official added, "Similar weather conditions are expected to continue on Saturday, with strong gusty winds and dust-raising winds early morning."

## Power demand peaks amid heat

The heat also drove Delhi's power demand to 6,867MW at 3.17pm on Friday—it's highest ever for this time of year, according to the State Load Despatch Centre (SLDC). The previous record was 6,855MW on May 16, 2024.

This summer, the Capital's peak power demand could touch 9,000MW for the first time, up from over 8,000MW last year.

BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL) expects demand in south and west Delhi to rise from 3,809MW last year to around 4,050MW. BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL) projects demand in east

and central Delhi to climb from 1,882MW to about 1,900MW. Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (Tata Power-DDL) said it met Friday's peak demand of 2,045MW—this summer's highest so far—without any network constraint.

## Grap 1 enforced, as air quality remains poor

Despite the showers, Delhi's air quality stayed in the "poor" category on Friday, following Thursday's dust storms. Owing to the deteriorating AQI, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) invoked Stage I of the Graded Response Action Plan (Grap) for the NCR on Friday.

The 24-hour average AQI was 278 at 4pm, a slight improvement over Thursday's 292, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

Measures under Grap-1 include strict implementation of construction and demolition waste rules, regular lifting of municipal solid waste, mechanised sweeping and water sprinkling on roads, among others.

Forecast by the Air Quality Early Warning System (AQEWS) suggested "poor" air quality on Saturday, which will improve to "moderate" by Sunday.



Visitors enjoy the sudden rain on Kartavya Path, in New Delhi, on Friday.

SANJEEV VERMA/HT PHOTO

# Rain falls, power demand soars on hottest day of yr

Aheli Das

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**NEW DELHI:** Parts of Delhi saw light rain on Friday evening, offering momentary respite even as the city recorded its hottest day of the year so far. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a yellow alert for Saturday, forecasting continued rain and a gradual dip in temperatures over the next few days.

The maximum temperature rose to 42.3°C on Friday—1.9°C above normal and the highest recorded this year, surpassing the previous peak of 42.1°C on April 26. Thursday's maximum was 40.6°C.

The minimum temperature was 26.2°C, slightly below normal and marginally higher than Thursday's 25.4°C.

According to the IMD, the maximum temperature is expected to remain around 41–43°C on Saturday, falling to 39–41°C by Monday and further to 37–39°C by Tuesday. The minimum temperature is likely to hover around 27–29°C over the weekend.

Krishna Mishra, a scientist at IMD, attributed the forecast dip in temperature to increased moisture from the Arabian Sea.

## Moolchand Hospital: Man's death leads to negligence complaint

Ridhima Gupta

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**NEW DELHI:** Delhi Police have received a complaint of alleged medical negligence against Moolchand Hospital in Lajpat Nagar following the death of a 30-year-old patient, officers said on Thursday.

No FIR has been filed yet, as police are awaiting the post-mortem report, they added. The hospital has denied the allegation, stating that all due protocols were followed during treatment.

In cases of alleged medical negligence, a 2005 Supreme Court ruling bars police from registering an FIR without first seeking expert medical opinion.

"The autopsy was conducted by a medical board at AIIMS and video recorded. The body was handed over to the family. We are waiting for the autopsy report before taking further steps," a senior police officer said.

"For two weeks, doctors told us his condition was under control. But on Wednesday, when I told them we couldn't afford further costly treatment, their attitude suddenly changed," the brother alleged in his complaint.

While the treating doctor did not respond to queries, the hospital administration called the allegations baseless.

"Our doctors followed all protocols and did their best. The patient's condition and treatment were communicated to the family at every stage," the hospital said in a statement.

## 42 IAS, DANICS OFFICERS IN DELHI RESHUFFLED

Alok KN Mishra

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**NEW DELHI:** In the first major bureaucratic reshuffle under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Delhi, 42 Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and DANICS officers were transferred on Friday, including chief minister Rekha Gupta's special secretary Ravi Jha, a 2011 batch IAS officer, who has now been posted as excise commissioner.

According to the deceased's younger brother, Bhagwan Singh, 29, doctors initially said the pain was due to kidney issues. On May 9, they informed the family that Heem Kumar's left kidney was severely damaged and required immediate removal. Despite a second surgery, the infection worsened, and he died on Thursday.

According to a May 16 order from the services department, transport commissioner Prashant Goyal has been appointed additional chief secretary (ACS) of the urban development department.

Navin K Chaudhary, ACS of the general administration department, has been shifted to Public Works Department (PWD), while principal secretary (home) A Anbarasi will also hold additional charge of services. Secretary land and building Nikhil Kumar is now secretary health. Finance secretary Niharika Rai has been posted as transport commissioner and given additional charge of tourism secretary. Special secretary of food and civil supplies Sushil Singh has been posted as director of the Directorate of Information and Publicity.

# 8 held as police hunt for men who killed trader in S Delhi

Jignasa Sinha

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**NEW DELHI:** A day after a 24-year-old businessman was shot dead near south Delhi's Chhatarpur metro station, Delhi Police teams are on the lookout for the two assailants who have allegedly fled the city. Over eight people have been detained in connection with the case, police said on Friday.

According to investigating officers, Arun Lohiya and his father—residents of southwest Delhi's Aya Nagar—were returning home in a car from

Saket court when the assailants attacked them. DCP (south) Ankit Chauhan had said, "The car was stopped. Two men on a bike approached from the driver's side and opened fire at Lohiya. He was shot and was immediately taken to the hospital where he was declared dead. His father did not sustain any bullet injuries. There is a history of cross complaints between the two parties."

"The families have been feuding over a plot in their village. However, last year, Lohiya allegedly thrashed one of the accused over the scrap business and was booked for attempted murder. He was jailed for six months," an investigator said.

Police suspect the accused took help from Rohit Chaudhary gang to execute the murder. "Based on the victim's father's statement, we are looking at involvement of Chaudhary's gang who allegedly helped the assailants with recce, weapons, and escape," the investigator said.

Chaudhary, a gangster involved in a dozen cases of murder, extortion, land grabbing and robbery, has been lodged in jail since 2021.

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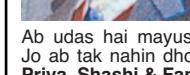
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# Dilli Haat reopens 2 weeks after blaze

Varun Bhandari

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Around 130 traders returned to their place of work to start from scratch, unpacking goods and setting up their shops as the iconic Dilli Haat in INA reopened on Friday, two weeks after a major fire destroyed at least 30 stalls and damaged stock worth lakhs.

Though their number was lower than usual, visitors and tourists too flocked to the huge market complex, a part of which was still under renovation due to the blaze. Process is also underway to upgrade electrical connections at the market for safety purposes.

But while traders said they are relieved that work has resumed, there are still apprehensions about the safety measures introduced after the April 30 fire incident.

Siddharth Bhattacharya, a designer who works with Khadi fabric, said that he brought his own fire safety equipment. "I bought my own fire extinguisher and fire resistant tarpaulin," he said.

Visitors also had similar expectations. "We have been coming to this market for years



A trader unpacks artwork for his shop after the market reopened on Friday.

RAJ KRAJ /HT PHOTO

## DELHI POLICE BUST GLOBAL STOCK MARKET SCAM, TWO ARRESTED

**NEW DELHI:** With the arrest of two people, the Delhi Police's special cell on Wednesday busted a stock market scam allegedly run by an international syndicate. The two arrested accused had been facilitating mule bank accounts used to launder over ₹64 lakh siphoned-off from an investor under the pretext of stock market trading and IPO investments, police said.

The accused have been identified as Vaddoriya Kewin Mukeshbhai, 25, a BBA student from Gujarat's Surat and Abdul Barik, 32, from Roorkee.

"Six mobile phones loaded with Chinese applications and online wallets were recovered from their possession. The accused received their commission in cryptocurrency," Tiwari said.

HTC

instead of 10pm, said Bhattacharya.

Another shopkeeper Arvind Raj, who lost silver jewellery worth lakhs in the fire, said they hope that normalcy will return soon. "We lost nearly 60kg of silver jewellery in the fire. We will start from scratch now."

Meanwhile, renovation and electrical works are expected to be started soon, and a tender has been floated for the same. The move comes amid increasing concerns over fire safety in crowded public spaces.

## 6 STAB 30-YR-OLD MAN TO DEATH IN SWAROOP NAGAR OVER ₹35,000

**NEW DELHI:** A group of six assailants stabbed a 30-year-old man to death in north Delhi's Swaroop Nagar on Thursday for not returning their money amounting to ₹35,000, police said on Friday, adding that four accused have been arrested.

The deceased has been identified as Mohd Munchun and his brother Mohd Afzar, 21, was critically injured. All the accused and the victims work at a rice bag factory.

The arrested accused are Rajesh Ram, 25, Arjun Kewal, 30, Jag Mohan, 24, and Shrawan Jagat, 23. Police said the remaining two accused have been identified and are currently on the run.

## 68 top officers shifted in bureaucratic reshuffle

Alok KN Mishra

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**NEW DELHI:** In a significant bureaucratic reshuffle, 68 officers from the Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram and Union Territories (AGMUT) cadre — including 42 IAS and 26 IPS officers — have been transferred, with several posted out of the Capital.

Among them is New Delhi DCP Devesh Kumar Mahla (2012 batch), who has been transferred to Arunachal Pradesh. Mahla was serving as DCP when a fire broke out at the official residence of Justice Yashwant Varma in March, leading to the recovery of cash and drawing much public attention.

Some of the Delhi government's senior IAS officers have also been transferred. Additional chief secretary (finance) Ashish Chandra Verma (1994 batch) and principal secretary (environment) Anil Kumar Singh (1995 batch) have both been posted to Jammu & Kashmir, as per a May 16 order from the ministry of home affairs — the cadre-controlling authority for AGMUT officers. This marks the first major reshuffle of IAS officers in Delhi administration since the BJP came to power in Delhi.

An official described the exercise as a "routine periodic reshuffle" involving officers from across the Union Territories and states governed by the AGMUT cadre.

## IIT-DELHI GETS 3 NEW ONLINE PG DIPLOMA COURSES

**NEW DELHI:** The IIT-Delhi has launched three online post-graduate diploma programmes — Healthcare Product Development and Management, Electric Vehicle (EV) Technology and Advanced Communication Engineering with Quantum and AI Integration — an IIT official said on Friday.

The programmes will include online sessions conducted by IIT Delhi's faculty as well as leading industry experts.

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## This way to the gali of bawarchis

The Old Delhi encyclopaedia

bakers are then seen busily wrapping the family-size stacks of piping hot rotis in scissored sheets of old newspapers. (During idle hours, these hardworking men lie down beside the unlit tandoor, scrolling through their mobile phone).

The bawarchis on the other hand tend to cook outdoors, setting up their coal-fired angeethis alongside the street. Yameen Bawarchi is the street's oldest kitchen establishment, though it is impossible to determine its exact age. Its patriarch, the elderly Yameen, spends his waking hours sitting on a wooden cot, silently gazing at his massive collection of pans and cauldrons. He vividly remembers his boyhood, learning his cooking skills from his late father, who, in turn, learned his skills from his father.

The owners of these inherited establishments acquire their status due to accident of birth. The street's true strugglers are the karigars — the hired cooks of these bawarchi khanas, who arrive from distant villages to make a career in the city.

Take karigar Ayub. Hailing from UP's Bahraich, he has been working at Hasinuddin Bawarchi for 40 years. Modest and unassuming, the man commands immense prestige. Nobody, not even his employers, dares to call him by his name. He is instead addressed reverently as Chacha. This afternoon, he is sitting on the kitchen staircase, holding a cup of chai. See photo.



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22 May, 2025 (Thursday)	Residential and Commercial properties	Panchkula and Hisar Zone
23 May, 2025 (Friday)	Residential and Commercial properties	Rohtak and Faridabad Zone
27 May, 2025 (Tuesday)	Residential and Commercial properties	Gurugram Zone
28 May, 2025 (Wednesday)	Nursing Home and Clinic Site, All School Sites	All Zones
30 May, 2025 (Friday)	Major Sites (Commercial Sites, Shopping Mall, Hospitals and Institutional Sites) and Multi-Storey Apartments	All Zones

NOTE: In continuation to the advertisement published on 16/4/2025, 02/05/2025, 06/05/2025 and 14/05/2025 the dates of e-auction are rescheduled due to administrative reasons

The e-auction will be conducted on the basis of Collector rate/Allotment rates/Institutional rate of 2024-25 w.e.f. 01.12.2024 to 31.03.2025 with the condition that in case of Collector rate/Allotment rates/Institutional rate for the year 2025-26 are revised subsequently the bid amount will be revised on proportionate basis and the bidder will be bound to pay the differential amount on demand.

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The detailed information of the sites and terms & conditions of e-auction will be available on <https://hsvpphy.org.in>.

# Pakistan building terror infra with funds from IMF: Rajnath

Rahul Singh and Maulik Pathak

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI/AHMEDABAD:** Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Friday urged the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to reconsider its \$1 billion financial assistance to Pakistan and stop future support, saying that Islamabad was again trying to rebuild the terror infrastructure taken down by New Delhi and adding that such aid will be used for funding terrorism.

He questioned if the bailout to Pakistan was tantamount to indirect funding of terror by the global organisation in what was New Delhi's latest push to isolate Islamabad globally.

Singh also warned Islamabad that it was currently "on probation" under the May 10 understanding that ended four days of fierce fighting. "If the behaviour improves, it is fine; but if there is any disturbance, harshest punishment will be given," he said. "Our actions were just a trailer, we will show the full picture, if need be. Attacking and eliminating terrorism is the new normal of new India," he said.

Operation Sindoar, which began in the early hours of May 7, was New Delhi's response to the Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people.

"Any financial assistance to Pakistan is no less than terror funding," Singh said while addressing India Air Force (IAF) personnel at the Bhuj airbase in Gujarat; a Jaguar fighter jet and Pechora surface-to-air missiles



Defence minister Rajnath Singh with Air Chief Marshal AP Singh and other defence personnel at Bhuj air force station. PTI

forming the backdrop.

Bhuj was among the airbases that Pakistan attempted to attack during the four-day military confrontation that stoked fears of a full-blown shooting war. This was Singh's second visit to a military base in two days.

Pakistan is once again trying to rebuild the terror infrastructure that was destroyed," he said. "A large chunk of the IMF bailout to Pakistan will be used to fund the terror infrastructure. Will this not be considered indirect funding by IMF, an international organisation? The funds India gives to IMF should not be used, directly or indirectly, to create terror infrastructure in Pakistan."

His comments came a day after he questioned if nuclear weapons were safe in Pakistan's control and

custody, and demanded Islamabad's arsenal be placed under the supervision of global nuclear watchdog International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), calling the country "irresponsible and rogue".

The defence minister said Pakistan will spend taxes collected from its citizens to give ₹14 crore to UN-designated terrorist Masood Azhar, the head of Jaish-e-Mohammed terror outfit, referring to the compensation announced by Islamabad for the families of those killed in the Indian strikes on terrorists camps in Pakistan.

Indian forces launched operation Sindoar in the early hours of May 7, bombing nine terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). The pre-dawn strikes — in which at least 100 ter-

rorists were killed — sparked a series of attacks and counter-attacks across the western border, involving fighter jets, missiles, armed drones, and fierce artillery and rocket duels.

In one such counterattack on the night of May 9-10, the IAF struck targets at 13 Pakistani airbases and military installations.

The understanding between India and Pakistan to cease military hostilities was announced on May 10 evening, after Indian director general of military operations Lieutenant General Rajiv Ghai and his Pakistani counterpart Major General Kashif Abdullah talked over the hotline and agreed to stop all military actions against each other — on land, in the air and sea.

Singh hailed the role of Indian forces and locally produced weapons during the clash; the Indian strikes marked the worst hit that Pakistan took after the 1971 war.

"When missiles were dropped inside the enemy territory, the world heard the echoes of India's valour and might," Singh said, adding that India showed that its fighter jets can strike "every corner of Pakistan without crossing the border."

The IAF jammed Pakistan's Chinese-supplied air defence (AD) systems to launch the precision strikes on terror and military targets in Pakistan.

"The world has witnessed how IAF destroyed terror camps and later Pakistan's airbases. IAF gave the proof that India's war policy and technology have changed," Singh said.

## PAK PM AGAIN CALLS FOR PEACE TALKS WITH INDIA

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan and India should sit down at the table like peaceful neighbours and settle their outstanding issues, including Kashmir, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Friday.

Addressing an event at the Pakistan Monument in Islamabad, Shehbaz said that India and Pakistan fought three wars and got nothing.

"The lesson is to sit down as peaceful neighbours and settle all outstanding issues, including Jammu and Kashmir. Without resolution of our issues, we cannot have peace in this part of the world," Shehbaz said.

India has made it clear that it will only have a dialogue with Pakistan on the return of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and the issue of terrorism. "If peace comes, we can also cooperate in counterterrorism," he said. PTI

## MP DyCM stokes row with Modi praise

Shruti Tomar

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Jagdish Devda

Words are not enough to describe the befitting reply Modi has given to the perpetrators of the Pahalgam terror attack, he said, asking the audience to applaud the PM.

Speaking at a function of civil defence volunteers in Jalandhar, Devda, who is also the state's finance minister, said: "We want to thank the Prime Minister. The entire country, its army and soldiers are 'nat-mastak' (heads bowed down) at his feet. The entire country has bowed down at

targets in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). Shah was booked by police over his inflammatory remarks on the directions of the MP high court.

Hitting out at Devda, Madhya Pradesh Congress chief Jitu Patwari said: "While praising PM Narendra Modi, BJP leaders are forgetting the contribution of our forces and insulting our real heroes..."

Congress national spokesperson Supriya Shrinare demanded strict action against Devda and Shah for their "vile" comments. "These remarks are brazen and blasphemous, and have stunned the whole nation," she said.

The BJP, however, defended Devda and accused the Congress of "distorting" his words. MP BJP media in-charge Ashish Agrawal said: "...Jagdish Devda ji clearly stated that the entire nation salutes the bravery of our soldiers and armed forces who carried out the strike on Pakistan.

Shah's plea challenges a May 14 order of the Madhya Pradesh high court directing an FIR against him for the comments.

The high court termed Shah's remarks against Colonel Qureshi disparaging and dangerous not just to the officer but to the armed forces itself. PTI

## Need to renew ties with India: Taliban

Rezaul H Laskar

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Amir Khan Muttaqi

hankar ahead of his scheduled visits to Iran and China next week is also significant, people familiar with the matter said on condition of anonymity. The call built on a meeting between Muttaqi and foreign secretary Vikram Misri in Dubai in January, and a visit to Kabul by the Indian diplomat overseeing relations with Afghanistan days after the Pahalgam terror attack.

When Shaheen, who is also

the Taliban's envoy to Qatar, was asked about the significance of the contact between Jaishankar and Muttaqi, he told HT: "Afghanistan has had historical relations with India, there is a need to renew that and normalise relations. We have a balanced approach policy, and our arms are open for all countries to invest in Afghanistan and cooperate with us in various fields."

The call for investments from the Taliban side is significant as the two sides are exploring ways to enhance bilateral trade from the current level of \$1 billion.

The people also said the Taliban side reiterated its strong condemnation of the Pahalgam attack and rejected alleged reports floated by Pakistani military officials of missile attacks by India on Afghanistan.

## ATTARI OPENS FOR AFGHAN TRUCKS STUCK IN PAKISTAN

Surjit Singh

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**AMRITSAR:** The Attari-Wagah checkpost was opened on Friday for over 150 trucks carrying goods from Afghanistan to enter India after they were stranded in Pakistan in the wake of the border being closed, officials said.

Officials aware of the matter said that eight trucks crossed the border checkpost to enter India on Friday. BK Bajaj, the president of the Indo-Foreign Chamber of Commerce, said: "Others are expected to come soon. We thank the governments of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan."

According to officials familiar with the matter, the ongoing eval-

uation is the reason why Shaw has not been allowed to meet outsiders, including his family.

"The debriefing is still on and until the 360 degree review is clear, he is not allowed to interact with outsiders. This is part of the procedure," an official said, adding that Shaw is not likely to join duty anytime soon.

## BSF jawan still being debriefed, says he was 'harassed' in Pak

Pravesh Lama

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**NEW DELHI:** Border Security Force (BSF) constable PK Shaw, who was released by Pakistan after three weeks on May 14, is still waiting to return home as a team of doctors and central agencies continue his evaluation, officials familiar with the matter said.

Shaw had accidentally crossed the India-Pakistan international border during a patrol on April 23, a day after the Pahalgam terrorist attack, and was released through the joint check post at Attari as part of a prisoner exchange between the two countries.

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"In the initial days, he was questioned by different people (seemingly different services) at different locations during which he was blindfolded. By odd hours, he meant he was woken up abruptly at different times and questioned why he had entered their country."

Shaw's wife Rajni said: "I am glad he is back. They will let us know when we can meet him..."

Officials aware of the matter said that Shaw does not bear signs of any superficial injuries. However, he told authorities that he was "mentally harassed" and questioned at odd hours by authorities in Pakistan. "...Having counsellors to examine him is part of the process," the officer cited above said.

"In the initial days, he was questioned by different people (seemingly different services) at different locations during which he was blindfolded. By odd hours, he meant he was woken up abruptly at different times and questioned why he had entered their country."

Shaw's wife Rajni said: "I am glad he is back. They will let us know when we can meet him..."

"Similar coordination was also seen during Operation Sindoar, which shows that there is a very good coordination in the process and thinking of our intelligence agencies and the three armed forces in carrying out the work," he added.

## 'SIX TERRORISTS KILLED IN 2 OPS IN SOUTH KASHMIR'

HT Correspondent

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**SRINAGAR:** Security forces jointly concentrated on South Kashmir in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack and eliminated six terrorists during two operations over the last three days, officials said on Friday.

In the backdrop of terrorist activities in the past one month, the security agencies deployed here reviewed their strategies and owing to that our intensified focus was on operations," VK Birdi, IGP Kashmir, said during a press conference after the operations in Shopian and Pulwama areas on May 13 and May 15, respectively.

Meanwhile, police said that they have arrested three terrorist associates affiliated with Lashkar-e-Taiba in Budgam district. HT

## Isro's 101st mission on Sunday

HT Correspondent

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**PSLV-C61 MARKS THE 63RD FLIGHT OF PSLV AND THE 27TH USING THE PSLV-XL CONFIGURATION**

Service Tower (MST) at SDSC-SHAR, Sriharikota for further integration. A step closer to launching on May 18 at 5:59 IST?" the space agency said on X.

Union minister of state for science and technology Jitendra Singh later said, "We are now one step closer to liftoff on May 18 at 05:59 IST."

Placing the 1,696-kg earth observation satellite into a Sun

Synchronous Polar Orbit (SSPO), SAR will provide images for various earth observation applications such as agriculture, forestry, soil moisture, hydrology, and flood mapping under all-weather condition.

PSLV-C61 marks the 63rd flight of PSLV and the 27th using the PSLV-XL configuration. Isro said Sunday's mission will be sustainable. "Adhering to the ISRO's commitment to the community, the spacecraft will be a debris-free mission. A sufficient amount of fuel has been reserved for de-orbiting the satellite after its effective mission life, lowering it to an orbit that ensures its decay within two years," the agency's launch brochure said.

## { IN WEST BENGAL }

## Electoral data deleted in security breach

Abhishek Angad

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**NEW DELHI:** At least 1,000 voters have been deleted from electoral rolls in a West Bengal assembly constituency following a security breach that began in September 2023, people familiar with the matter have said.

Election Commission officials confirmed the breach took place in electoral roll management where login credentials of four Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AERO) were stolen, but the extent of the records or additions or corrections will be known only after a detailed investigation.

"I was informed by the South

24 Parganas district magistrate that breach may be going on since September 2023, as found during the enquiry by the ERO," said West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Kumar Agarwal.

"In this case, the assistant system manager's involvement has been confirmed during an inquiry, and it has been alleged that a large number of deletions have taken place," Agarwal said. "However, the extent of deletions or additions or corrections will be known only after a detailed investigation."

Agarwal's office on May 15 issued an order, seen by HT, that gave some details of records

affected. The assistant system manager—a government employee named Arun Gorain—stole the login credentials of AERO Swapna Kumar Halder, who is also Kalki's joint block development officer.

"Gorain committed fraud and cheating by inserting his mobile number unauthorisedly in the login credential of AERO...and disposed of forms 6 [new voter addition], 7 [voter deletion], and 8 [changes in the electoral roll] by from the login [ID] of AERO by using OTP received in his mobile number," the order read.

Officials aware of the matter in the Commission and in the West Bengal office of the CEO

said the ECI needs to conduct an audit to determine the full extent of the breach. "The motive of Gorain is not clear yet, either it is money or he is in hands-in-glove with some political parties. This will be only known once the issue will be taken up by the ECI," one of these officials said. "Also, the role of AEROs and the ERO also needs to be investigated to ascertain how it went unnoticed for more than a year and a half."

A senior ECI official added: "We have taken swift action, and we will do our investigation to get to the root of it. We believe in transparency and that is why this has come out."

## Congress to join govt's outreach programme

Rezaul H Laskar

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**NEW DELHI:** The Congress will participate in the government's diplomatic outreach to articulate India's point of view on the Pahalgam terror attack and subsequent armed conflict with Pakistan, the party said on Friday.

People familiar with the matter said that the government plans to send teams of political leaders, former diplomats and experts to countries in key regions of the world to press India's case.

The groups that will fan out to different regions of the world such as Europe, North America and West Asia and visit key capitals, especially India's strategic partners.

The outreach will also include countries of the Global South, the people said.

The groups will engage with lawmakers, officials and think tanks to convey India's position on "cross-border linkages" to the Pahalgam terror attack of April 22 that killed 26 civilians, India's military strikes targeting terrorist infrastructure in territories controlled by Pakistan and the subsequent escalation of tensions, the people said.

Greater clarity about the visits is expected within a short while and the groups are expected to begin travelling to different countries as early as next week, one of the people said.

"This is a good move because India has to forcefully articulate its point of view to the world community. After all, Operation Sindoar and the events thereafter marked the most significant escalation in tensions with Pakistan since the 1971 war and India's position has to be sent across to the world community," said an opposition member of Lok Sabha.

**INDIA PROUD OF ITS ARMED FORCES: SHAH ON STRIKES AGAINST PAKISTAN**

# Justice Varma's defence in plea rests on proof of money stash

Sunetra Choudhury

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**NEW DELHI:** "Show me the money".

That immortal pop-history line forms a pillar in the defence of justice Yashwant Varma, according to people familiar with the matter and excerpts from the 55-year-old judge's submission to the committee set up by the then Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna to look into the allegation that a huge amount of cash was discovered in his house. HT reviewed parts of the judge's submission.

Two months after a mysterious fire broke out in an outhouse at the residence of Varma, then a Delhi High Court judge, the money remains at the heart of the arguments of both sides. While the committee's report, submitted to the CJI on May 4, has not been made public, parts of it have been reported in the media, citing people familiar with the contents. These claim that on the day following the fire on March 14, there was a clean-up exercise, with the contents from the outhouse being moved by unknown individuals. Justice Varma's defence, on the basis of the details shared by people familiar with the matter and the excerpts seen by Hindustan Times, would appear to be that



Justice Yashwant Varma

there was no money at all.

To be sure, justice Varma, now a judge at the Allahabad high court, could become the first judge of a constitutional court to be removed. Earlier this month, Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna initiated the process for justice Varma's removal by writing to President Droupadi Murmu and PM Narendra Modi, stating that the allegations of recovery of cash at the judge's residence were serious and warranted initiation of proceedings for his removal under the Constitution. Justice Varma's defence, articulated in 105 pages, and including a detailed floor plan of his house and outhouse, questions the absence of CCTV footage, and the lack of any forensic analysis of the burnt debris.

The only evidence of the money in the public domain is the still photographs and the video clip shared by the Supreme Court on March 22 that show burnt currency notes on the floor of a room. There has never been any confirmation of the amount of money found, just unofficial reports that it ran into several crores. The three-member committee comprising Punjab and Haryana high court Chief Justice Sheel Nagu, Himachal Pradesh high court Chief Justice GS Sandhawala, and Karnataka high court judge Justice Anu

who sent a WhatsApp message to Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora which was then forwarded to Delhi high court Chief Justice Upadhyay on March 16, two days after the fire. The message in Hindi translates as: "In that room, after the fire broke out, 4-5 burnt sacks were found, which contained remnants of Indian currency." Varma claims that it is not clear who sent this message and that no one has owned up to it.

He also questions the absence of CCTV footage of the room despite a camera that was pointing directly towards it and the passage leading to the staff and CRPF quarters. The inquiry committee obtained the hard drive and sent it to central forensic sciences laboratory (CFSL), Chandigarh. However, they concluded that no evidence could be extracted from the footage. Varma's argument is that the recording equipment was also in the guard house and not controlled by him. The panel's conclusion was that the hard drive was only seized on March 25th, more than 10 days after the fire, and could have been tampered with.

Varma's defence also suggests that someone may have hidden the money in his outhouse, or that it could have been "planted" as part of the conspiracy against him. It adds that the outhouse wasn't

locked and that many people had access to it – though media reports of the committee's findings say that the committee found that the room was usually locked.

In his defence, Varma also claims that his 27-year-old daughter who was present in the house on the night of the fire – the judge and his wife were travelling – heard a loud explosion. This, he says, was never probed.

The panel also concluded in its reported that was submitted on May 4, that Justice Varma's "unnatural conduct is indicative of his guilt". It cites testimonies of witnesses that say that after he came back from Bhopal, he never visited the outhouse where the fire took place. In his defence, Varma says he was more concerned about taking care of his aged mother, who was upset by the fire and had stayed up late, and his daughter. He was under the impression that it was a case of "arson", he adds. The panel also found it suspicious that Justice Varma "monthly" accepted his transfer to the Allahabad High Court. Varma says in his defence that he wanted to counter this and other charges in a personal audience with then Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna, but that on May 6, he was instead served an ultimatum – step down or face impeachment.

## SC: Iskcon B'luru owns Hare Krishna temple

Ayesha Arvind

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**BENGALURU:** The Supreme Court on Friday ruled that Iskcon Bangalore was the rightful owner of the iconic Hare Krishna temple in Bengaluru, ending a 24-year-old legal dispute with Iskcon Mumbai over the ownership and control of the temple and its associated property.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih allowed Iskcon Bangalore's appeal, setting aside a 2011 judgment by the Karnataka high

## Man dies after scaling Mt Everest



Subrata Ghosh scaled Mt Everest but was exhausted on the descent and showed signs of altitude sickness.

Press Trust of India

letters@hindustantimes.com

court that had ruled in favour of Iskcon Mumbai. The court said that Iskcon Bangalore is an independent legal entity and that the society cannot be treated as a branch of Iskcon Mumbai.

Iskcon Mumbai was founded in 1966 by Srila Prabhupada and is registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, and the Bombay Public Trust Act, 1950.

It claimed that Iskcon Bangalore, registered under the Karnataka Societies Registration Act in July 1978, was its branch and that the temple property belonged to the Mumbai society.

KATHMANDU: A 45-year-old Indian climber died on Mt Everest after showing signs of altitude sickness while descending from the summit point of the world's highest peak, according to a media report on Friday.

The deceased climber has been identified as Subrata Ghosh from West Bengal.

Ghosh is the second foreigner to die on the 8,848.86 metres-high Mt Everest this season, The Himalayan Times newspaper reported. Bodhraj Bhandari, Managing Director at Snowy Horizon Treks, said that Ghosh died just below the Hillary Step, near the summit point of Mt Everest on Saturday, according to the paper.

Ghosh was late in making his summit push and reached the top with his guide around 2 pm, the paper said. During the descent, he became exhausted and showed signs of altitude sickness, eventually refusing to continue, he said.

"Ghosh refused to move while descending from the summit," Bhandari quoted Champal Tamang, his guide, as saying. Champal returned to Camp IV late last night and informed about the incident this morning, he added.

Efforts are underway to bring his body to the base camp. Bhandari said. Earlier, the Supreme Court had

## Guj Samachar owner arrested, granted bail

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**AHMEDABAD:** An Ahmedabad court on Friday granted bail on health grounds to Babubhai Shah, co-owner of the Gujarat Samachar newspaper, who was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate late on Thursday after raids on offices linked to the Gujarat daily and the homes of its owners.

Shah was arrested around 8pm on Thursday over alleged financial irregularities, officials said. However, the ED was yet to issue a statement specifying the grounds for arrest. The X account of Gujarat Samachar, founded in 1932, has been suspended since May 9. According to the Indian Readership Survey (IRS) Q1 2019, the last time it participated in the survey, the daily had a readership of over 11 million in Gujarat.

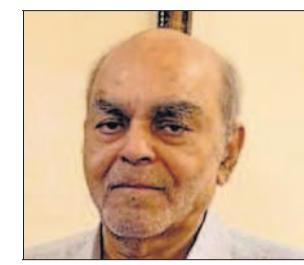
Shah was produced before the PMLA court in Ahmedabad on Friday, where his lawyer, Devang Vyas, cited the 73-year-old's health issues while appealing for bail. Lawyers representing ED did not oppose the interim bail request, officials said. Principal district judge Kamal Sojitra clarified that the matter was heard solely on health grounds and not on merits and granted interim bail to Shah till May 31.

Gujarat Samachar's editor-in-chief and managing director Shreyans Shah alleged political vendetta was the reason for his (younger) brother's arrest late on Thursday. He said ED summoned and arrested Babubhai Shah after raiding office premises without any prior written notice. It came after separate Income Tax raids that lasted 36 hours, Shah said.

The development drew criticism from the Opposition Congress, which linked the arrest to the newspaper's "bold" anti-establishment stance. "The attempt to silence Gujarat Samachar is not just about one newspaper – it is a conspiracy against all democratic voices," Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said.

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal also criticised the back-to-back raids by the I-T department and ED.

There was no response from the Bharatiya Janata Party.



Babubhai Shah

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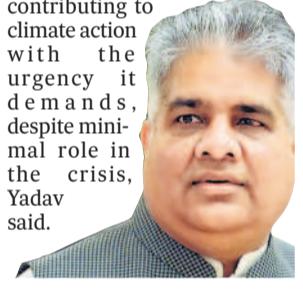
"The Himalayas are sounding an alarm. As a consequence of global warming due to human activity, glaciers are retreating, threatening the future of water security for populations downstream," said Yadav. "We in India, with our significant Himalayan territory, witness these impacts first-hand," he added.

The minister said the future of mountain communities will be dependent on collective action of all nations in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions in keeping with the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

"South Asia has been responsible for only 4% of global cumulative carbon dioxide emissions until 2020, despite being home to almost 25% of the global population," Yadav said while flagging that the global carbon budget is rapidly being exhausted with the developed nations continuing to disproportionately grab the meagre remaining carbon budget.

"Their commitments to providing climate finance, technology transfer and capacity building have been profoundly neglected, intensifying the climate crisis for which they bear far greater responsibility," Yadav said.

India is committed to contributing to climate action with the urgency it demands, despite minimal role in the crisis, Yadav said.



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# Destination Uttarakhand

CHAR DHAM YATRA 2025

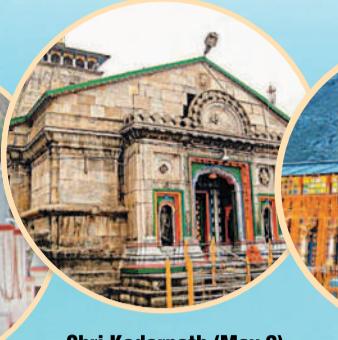
PICS: UTTARAKHAND TOURISM



Shri Yamunotri (April 30)



Shri Gangotri (April 30)



Shri Kedarnath (May 2)



Shri Badrinath (May 4)



Shri Hemkunt Sahib (May 25)



Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision for the holistic development of Uttarakhand is deeply inspiring. As we welcome devotees to the sacred 'Chardham Yatra', our government remains fully committed to ensuring their safety for a spiritually fulfilling experience. We urge all visitors to come experience the soul of Devbhoomi, Uttarakhand.

-Pushkar Singh Dhami, Chief Minister, Uttarakhand

There are two main pillars for the creation of a developed India in the 21st century—pride in our heritage and making every possible effort for development. Today, Uttarakhand is strengthening both these pillars. This decade will be the decade of Uttarakhand.

-Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

## Easy & safe Char Dham journey

Char Dham Yatra 2025 is set to commence from April 30, coinciding with the auspicious occasion of Akshaya Tritiya, as the portals of Yamunotri and Gangotri reopen. This revered pilgrimage spans four sacred sites—Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath—located in Uttarakhand. Each year, lakhs of devotees set out on this spiritual journey in pursuit of divine blessings and inner peace. For easy access, the Uttarakhand government has

established both online and offline registration procedures for pilgrims to provide a seamless and well-organised experience.

- Prior to journey registration is mandatory
- Please enter the correct mobile number during registration
- Make sure to obtain 'Darshan' token at the dhams
- Always carry sufficient woolen clothes, umbrella and raincoat with you
- Provide the correct health

information during the registration process

- Senior citizens are advised to get a health check-up done prior to journey
- If you take any medicine, keep sufficient stock with you
- If you are not feeling well then don't travel
- Take rest breaks at various stops during the journey route so that the climate suits you better
- Book the ticket for helicopter ride on [heliyatra.irctc.co.in](#)
- Beware of unauthorised persons assuring to provide helicopter tickets

- Beware of unauthorised persons who assure you to do darshan at the dhams
- Please extend help to keep the journey routes neat and clean by not littering the same
- Please keep control on the speed of your vehicle and park the vehicle only

### GOVERNMENT'S INITIATIVE TO ENSURE CLEAN AND HEALTHY FOOD AT THE CHAR DHAM JOURNEY ROUTE

This initiative will improve the quality of food served on the route and ensure healthy and safe food for millions of pilgrims who visit every year.

### 'AAJ SE THODA KAM' CAMPAIGN

PM Narendra Modi, during his last visit to Uttarakhand, emphasised on reducing the usage of salt and sugar by 10%, which is being promoted by the Uttarakhand government in the Char Dham Yatra. The main objective of this initiative is to control the quantity of excess salt, sugar and fat in food, so that diseases like heart disease and high blood pressure can be prevented. Restaurants and hotels are being encouraged to prepare healthy dishes with the help of chefs and food experts and keep nutritional balance in mind.

### 'RUCO' INITIATIVE

To further strengthen health security, the department has launched the Re-purpose Used Cooking Oil (RUCO) initiative. Under this, strict monitoring is being done to reduce the harmful effects of re-used oil and prevent it from entering into the food chain again.



## Decisions taken by the U'khand government to make Char Dham Yatra 2025 'Sugam, Sukhad aur Surakshit'

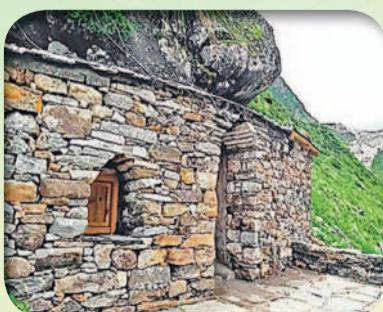
For the past few years, the number of devotees coming to Char Dham Yatra has been continuously increasing. The state administration is constantly making efforts to provide proper facilities for the devotees. In this sequence, to provide better facilities for the devotees in the upcoming Char Dham Yatra, U'khand government is committed to ensure a 'Sugam, Sukhad aur Surakshit' journey for pilgrims, for which several

steps have been taken for their convenience:

- Aadhar-based registration is compulsory for the pilgrims
- For those who have not registered online, on spot registration facilities are available at Rishikesh, Haridwar and Vikasnagar (Heribertpur, Nayagaon)
- Darshan will be allowed on the date for which registration is done

During the Char Dham Yatra, you can also visit the following nearby places

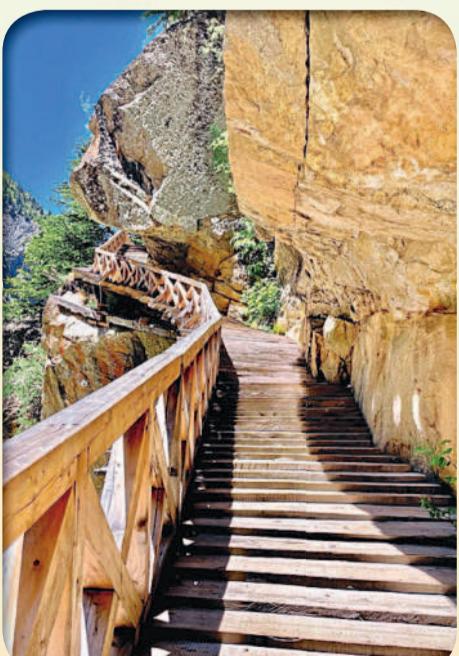
- Tryugi Narain Temple • Gartang Gali • Valley of Flowers
- Harshil Valley • Devprayag • Auli



Kedar Gufa



Auli



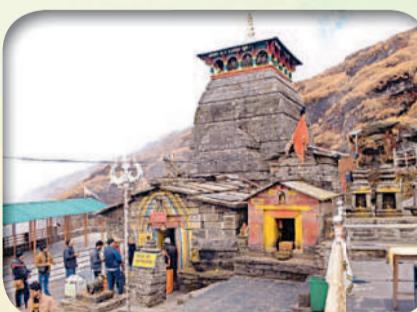
Gartang Gali



Valley of Flower



Tryugi Narain Temple



Tungnath Temple



Omkareshwar Temple



Kartik Swami Temple

PICS: UTTARAKHAND TOURISM



For Chardham Heli booking please log on [heliyatra.irctc.co.in](#) or scan the QR code



For registration: please visit on [registrationandtouristcare.uk.gov.in](#) or download the App [touristcareuttarakhand](#) from App stores  
For any type of support please contact our 24x7 toll free number: **0135-1364**  
For more details please contact: **0135-2559898, 0135-2552627**  
E-mail: [touristcare.uttarakhand@gmail.com](mailto:touristcare.uttarakhand@gmail.com)

CONSUMER CONNECT INITIATIVE

**कार्यालय कार्यपालन अभियंता, ग्रामीण यांत्रिकी सेवा, संभाग जशपुर, जिला - जशपुर (छत्तीसगढ़)**  
Phone : 9424242409 E-mail ID : ee-res.jashpur@nic.in

क्रमांक/009/वरलेनि/ग्रा.यो.से./2025-26 निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना जशपुर, दिनांक 09/05/2025

छत्तीसगढ़ के ग्राम्यसाल की ओर से लोक निर्माण विभाग छत्तीसगढ़ में एकीकृत संजीवन प्रणाली के अंतर्गत "झौं" एवं उच्च श्रेणी में पंजीकृत सिविल ठेकदारों से ग्रामीण यांत्रिकी सेवा के निम्नालिखित निर्माण कार्य हेतु प्रतिवेदन दर पर अन्तर्लाइन निविदा आमंत्रण की जाती है :-

क्र.	कार्य का विवरण	अनुमानित लागत (रुपए लाख में)	निविदा डाउनलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि	अमानत गणि सत्यानिष्टा संधि एवं तकानों सहसंबंज स्पैड पोर्ट से जमा करने की तिथि
	2	3	4	5
1	Zonal tender for civil construction work (Different Types of Works But each work not exceeding Cost. Of 25.00, lakh) at sub division Bagicha (04 Groups), Duldula (02 Groups), Farsabahar (03 Groups), Jashpur (02 Groups), Kansabel (02 Groups), Kunkuri (02 Groups), Manora (02 Groups), Pathalgao (04 Groups) Dist.- Jashpur (C.G.).	2100.00 (100.00 Lac's each group)	27.05.2025	28.05.2025 17:30 pm
	Total	2100.00		

उपरोक्त निर्माण कार्य की निविदा की सामान्य शर्तें ध्वान राशि, विस्तृत निविदा विज्ञप्ति, निविदा दस्तावेज व अन्य जानकारी दिनांक 13.05.2025 से कार्यालयन समय में उपर्युक्त हांक एवं विभागीय वेबसाइट <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in/> से प्राप्त की जा सकती है।

कार्यपालन अभियंता, ग्रामीण यांत्रिकी सेवा, संभाग, जिला- जशपुर

G-252600879/6



## NATIONAL BOARD OF EXAMINATIONS IN MEDICAL SCIENCES

(Autonomous body of the M/o. Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India)  
NAMS Building, Medical Enclave, Ansari Nagar, New Delhi – 110029

### DNB FINAL EXAMINATION – JUNE 2025

#### NOTICE

National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences (NBEMS) shall conduct the NBEMS DNB Final Theory Examinations on 25th, 26th, 27th and 28th June 2025.

The online applications are being invited from 15.05.2025(03:00PM onwards) to 03.06.2025 (till 11:55 PM) at NBEMS website:

<https://natboard.edu.in/viewnbeexam?exam=dnb>

Candidate Care Support: • Helpline Portal on applicant login page +91-7996165333 • Communication Web Portal on NBEMS Website



## यमुना एक्सप्रेसवे औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण

प्रथम तरल, कमर्सियल कॉम्प्लेक्स, ओमेगा-1 (पी-2), गेट नॉर्डा

Toll Free No. 18001808296 वेबसाइट : [www.yamunaexpresswayauthority.com](http://yamunaexpresswayauthority.com)

Tender No.: YEA/GM(P)/2025/304

Dated: 16/05/2025

#### NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER

##### "Internal Development work of Sector-16 Part-3 & Balance work of Part-I, YEIDA" on EPC Basis

GM Project on behalf of YEIDA for this Project, invites online bids for "Internal Development work of Sector-16 Part-3 & Balance work of Part-I, YEIDA" EPC basis from eligible bidders working in any central/state departments or government/semi government undertaking for development work through e-tendering from eligible contractors/firms in two bid system for the following work:

Name and Description of work	Estimated cost	Completion period of Work	Last date To fill/ upload the bid through e-tendering	Cost of Bid Document	Bid/ Tender Fee	EMD/ Bid Security amount
"Internal Development work of Sector-16 Part-3 & Balance work of Part-I, YEIDA" Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority Gautam Budh Nagar	Rs. 6419.15 In Lacs (excluding all applicable taxes & GST)	i. 18 Months ii. 5 years	09.06.2025 Upto 05:00 PM	Rs. 7080.00 (including GST)	Rs. 5900.00 (including GST)	Rs. 128.40 Lacs

- The bid document shall be available online from 22.05.2025 at 11 AM to 09.06.2025 at 5.00 PM & the last date of submission of bid document shall be 09.06.2025 upto 5.00 PM (Online) Opening of Technical Bid shall be 11.06.2025 at 11:00 AM.
- For submission & other tender details, please refer detailed NIT available on websites e-tender portal <https://www.etender.up.nic.in>. Other details are also available on YEIDA website <http://www.yamunaexpresswayauthority.com> and Corrigendum/ amendments etc., if any, will be notified on these websites only and separate advertisement will not be made for the same.
- YEIDA reserves the right to accept or reject any application without assigning any reason or incurring any liability whatsoever.

Project Manager

• The bid document shall be available online from 22.05.2025 at 11 AM to 09.06.2025 at 5.00 PM & the last date of submission of bid document shall be 09.06.2025 upto 5.00 PM (Online) Opening of Technical Bid shall be 11.06.2025 at 11:00 AM.

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• YEIDA reserves the right to accept or reject any application without assigning any reason or incurring any liability whatsoever.

Project Manager



## MADHYA PRADESH TOURISM BOARD

Corporate Identification Number (CIN) : U75302MP2017NPL043078  
6th Floor, Lily Trade Wing, Jahangirabad, Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh), India  
Pin Code-462008, Website : [www.tourism.mp.gov.in](http://www.tourism.mp.gov.in)

#### REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

NIT & System No.	Project Name
NIT No. : 3139/MPTB/2025 and System No.-2025_MPTB_424151 dated 16.05.2025	"Request for Proposal for Selection of Agency under Swadesh Darshan 2.0 Scheme for Development, Operations, Maintenance and Management of Tourism Experience : "Phoolbagh" Experience Zone, Gwalior"- A Premier Tourism Destination in Gwalior.

MPTB invites offers from agencies for Selection of Agency under Swadesh Darshan 2.0 Scheme for Development, Operations, Maintenance and Management of Tourism Experience "Phoolbagh Experience Zone, Gwalior". The detailed terms & conditions can be downloaded from website <https://www.mptenders.gov.in>, [www.tourism.mp.gov.in](http://www.tourism.mp.gov.in). For any other information please Contact - Mob. No. +91-9407057416 or E-mail at [cs.mptb@mp.gov.in](mailto:cs.mptb@mp.gov.in). Last Date and Time for online submission of the RFP is 03.06.2025 at 5:00 PM.

MANAGING DIRECTOR



#### NOTICE INVITING TENDER CPD/35-2025-26

Tenders are invited through e-Tendering in SRM Two Bid system from the registered vendors for Supply of following:

Tender No. & Description of Material	Estimated Amount (in Rs. in Lakh) Tender Fee (in Rs.)	Due Date & Time (Hrs.) Submission & Opening of Tender
SP/P&C/T-07/0525 RFx 5000001403 (4th Call) Procurement of Van Mounted Ground EHV Cable Fault Locator System.	1647.28 25,000.00	26.05.2025 16:00 26.05.2025 16:10

Contact Person: Office of the Executive Engineer (Gr-P&C)  
Tel.No.022-69852720/022-69852717 Cell.No.09619469933  
Email:1) C.E. (CPA) 2) E.E. (Group-P&C), CPA, C.O. MSETCL, 1st Floor, Prakashgad Building, Bandra (E), Mumbai Email id: ceepca@mahatransco.in, eepc@mahatransco.in,  
For further details visit our website <http://www.srmetender.mahatransco.in>. Any further amendments will be published on the MSETCL website [www.mahatransco.in](http://www.mahatransco.in). So bidders are requested to check the website.

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer (P&C)

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE					
SR. NO.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./ AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE (TIME)	AMOUNT/EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH
1.	MUNICIPAL COUNCIL REWARI	DOOR TO DOOR COLLECTION, SEGREGATION AND TRANSPORTATION UPTO PROCESSING SITE IN MC REWARI	05.05.2025 05.06.2025	43.51 CRORES	<a href="https://etenders.hry.nic.in">https://etenders.hry.nic.in</a> <a href="mailto:9034837507etenders.hry.nic.in">9034837507etenders.hry.nic.in</a>
2.	MUNICIPAL COUNCIL REWARI	PROCESSING OF DAILY GENERATED MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE, IN MC REWARI	08.05.2025 30.05.2025	-	<a href="https://etenders.hry.nic.in">https://etenders.hry.nic.in</a> <a href="mailto:9034837507etenders.hry.nic.in">9034837507etenders.hry.nic.in</a>

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : [www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in](http://www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in) or [www.etenders.hry.nic.in](http://www.etenders.hry.nic.in)

RO No. 13/2026/40/34835/I/19/7

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE					
SR. NO.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./ AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE (TIME)	AMOUNT/ EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./ AUTH
1.	HARYANA STATE WAREHOUSING CORPORATION	EXCAVATION OF POND AT VILLAGE CHHITHROLI BLOCK DISTT. MOHINDERGARH. + 5 WORKS	10.05.2025 19.05.2025	-	<a href="https://etenders.hry.nic.in">https://etenders.hry.nic.in</a> <a href="mailto:7206674854secretary-ho@hswc.org.in">7206674854secretary-ho@hswc.org.in</a>

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : [www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in](http://www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in) or [www.etenders.hry.nic.in](http://www.etenders.hry.nic.in)

RO No. 13/2026/40/34852/I/19/7

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA C-323 OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION, BALANGIR Email ID - [cphbar@yahoo.co.in](mailto:cphbar@yahoo.co.in), Ph. No—(06652—234647) NOTICE INVITING TENDERS NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement Bid Identification No. ACEPH BGR 03/2025-26 Dt. 15.05.2025					
01.	Number of Works	: 03Nos.	: Rs. 41.67 Lakhs to 610.64 Lakhs	: 03 (Three) Calendar Months	


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**GREEN CLEARANCE**

hereby struck down" while restraining the government from issuing any similar provisions.

"There are no equities in favour of those who committed gross illegalities without obtaining prior environmental clearances," Justice Oka said while reading the operative portion of the judgment. "The persons who acted without clearances were not illiterate persons. They are companies, real estate developers, public sector undertakings, mining industries... who knowingly committed the illegalities."

The bench, also comprising Justice Ujjal Bhuyan, added that, "hereafter the Central Government shall not come out with any version of the 2017 notification which provides for grant of ex-post facto EC (environment clearance)."

HT reached out to the ministry of environment forest and climate change for a response but did not get one immediately.

The issue relates to what was released through a 2017 notification as a "one-time opportunity" for six months for industries to seek ex-post facto (after-the-fact) environmental clearance as part of the mandatory environment impact assessment (EIA) for industries and projects.

In 2021, and then in a follow up memorandum in 2022, the internal directives extended and systematised the approach, creating what activists said was a regularisation mechanism for violating projects. Critics stated this effectively established a parallel pathway for environmental compliance—one that allowed projects to begin first and seek approval later, contradicting the preventive intent of the EIA framework.

To be sure, Friday's verdict, which came on petitions filed by NGO Vanashakti and others, clarified that environmental clearances already granted under the now-invalidated rules would remain unaffected.

The bench said "the 2021 OM talks about the concept of development. Can there be development at the cost of environment? Conservation of environment and its improvement is an essential part of the concept of development."

The 2021 memorandum, the court added, was "an attempt to bring in an ex-post facto or ret-

spective regime by craftily drafting the SOP... we have no manner of doubt that the 2021 OM which permits grant of EC is completely arbitrary and illegal".

The ruling came down on the government for "going out of the way" in order "to protect those who have caused harm to the environment". This, it said, "has to be deprecated by the courts which are under a constitutional and statutory mandate to uphold the fundamental right under Article 21 and to protect the environment."

Article 21 of the Constitution guarantees the right to protection of life and personal liberty.

On past cases on this issue, the bench noticed that the matter of ex-post facto EC has been dealt with in two earlier decisions; in Common Cause (2017) and Alembic Pharmaceuticals (2020), where it was held that such approvals is "completely alien" to environmental jurisprudence.

Environmental activists welcomed the judgment as a significant victory for ecological protection. "The judiciary has upheld the constitutional obligations of the state to protect the environment and forests. The balance should always be in favour of conservation. You cannot give a freehand to environmental destruction and incentives to people who destroy. The court has correctly observed that people involved in these violations are literate, wealthy and powerful who knew the consequences. We are so thankful that judiciary saw through this game," said Stalin D, director of Vanashakti.

Stalin emphasised the practical impossibility of undoing ecological damage. "Once you lose an ecologically important area, how can you recreate it? You destroy a mountain, how do you recreate it?"

Debadatta Sinha, lead-climate & ecosystems at Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, described the verdict as "a victory for environmental rule of law" that reinforces the mitigation hierarchy of "avoid, minimise, restore, offset" in development projects.

The practice of granting post-facto environmental clearance subverts this process, violates the Precautionary Principle, and is ultra vires the parent legislation—the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986," Sinha

**{ FROM PAGE 1 }**

said.

The ruling marks a significant departure from a March 2022 Supreme Court judgment, which had permitted ex-post facto clearances "in exceptional circumstances" while setting aside a National Green Tribunal order on closure of non-compliant industries.

Debi Goenka, executive trustee of Conservation Action Trust, offered a more measured response:

"The order sounds great on paper, but it is actually seems meaningless since all the violators have got away scot free along with the decision makers who have connived with them.

In contrast, the Order issued by the Bench headed by Chief Justice Gavai yesterday has mandated the return of the lands illegally allotted, and if that is not possible, payment of costs and penalties. I do hope this Order also includes similar provisions (since the actual Order is still not available). However, one of the fundamental principles of law is that you cannot benefit from your own illegality—even that principle seems to have been forgotten."

The Jammu region is favourable for year-round agriculture but water crises have always hampered farming as availability is very limited. Being in the northernmost part of the country, the monsoon arrives very late in J&K and retreats within a few weeks unlike in the hinterland," said Abhay Singh, a federal horticulturist.

The so-called Rawi Tawi Irrigation Complex comprises the Ravi and the Tawi Lift canal. In the Jammu division, canals provide over 90% of the total irrigation water: Ranbir caters to Jammu and Partap to Akhnor.

India is also set to expedite work on several proposed dams in the Kashmir region. These include Kishenganga, Ratle, Miyar Nallah, Lower Kalnar and Pakal Dul power projects aside from the Tulbul navigation project.

J&K chief minister Omar Abdullah has pushed for the completion of the Tulbul barrage on Wular lake, with the IWT being suspended.

Blueprints to expand the Ranbir canal, a major carriage built in 1905, was already being worked on but they were mostly an "exercise on paper" because implementation was not possible due to "heavy restrictions imposed by the Indus treaty", the first official said, reiterating India's position that the agreement had become obsolete given that natural changes in the Indus system had reduced India's share and population had increased manifold.

The length of Ranbir canal

is about 60 km, which was built according to needs of the previous century and has remained stuck there despite growing agricultural water demand,

the official cited in the first instance said.

**REBUILDING CANALS**

Then, expansion of the Kathua, New Partap and Ranbir channels will take place after projects are sanctioned, HT has learnt but it is as yet

under the six-decade-old Indus Water Treaty, the Ranbir canal can carry no more than 1000 cusecs for irrigation, 250 cusecs for hydropower besides some withdrawal allowance for silt extraction, to be carried out within a defined window.

"The proposed expansion of these canals will be done to allow full utilisation of irrigation potential and expand their command areas," the third official cited above said.

Pakistan has objected to India's suspension of the treaty

and it has said any Indian attempt to divert or restrict water downstream in the neighbouring country would be "considered an act of war".

On its part, India has clarified that despite the success of Operation Sindoora, India's strike against terror hubs and military installations in Pakistan, IWT will remain suspended, citing issues with the 65-year old agreement, including rapid strides in dam technologies in the decades since, and the climate crisis, which has reduced flow to the eastern tributaries of the Indus, water from which was available to India under the treaty.

The Partap channels are equally "high priority", a third person who briefed HT said. The Old Partap canal used to open on the right bank of Chenab near a village called Devi-pur, which lies about 20 km downstream of the head of New Partap channel.

"The Old Partap Canal was built in 1906 and meant to cater to a command area of about just 8000 hectares of cultivable land from Akhnor town to Manawar Tawi in Chhamb sector of Akhnor," the third official said. Command area refers to the total acreage of land that can be irrigated by fully utilising a canal system.

The New Partap canal's length is about 34 km, with utilisation of no more than 9000 hectares, which is grossly inadequate, the official said.

Once a major source of surface water irrigation, it catered to the lush Kandi belt of Jammu district, according to the J&K irrigation department. The water passage was designed for a net irrigated area of 16500 hectares but officials say

restrictions on maintenance work, expansion and drawing rights have relegated it to a minor irrigation source.

Under the six-decade-old

Indus Water Treaty, the Ranbir canal can carry no more than 1000 cusecs for irrigation, 250 cusecs for hydropower besides some withdrawal allowance for silt extraction, to be carried out within a defined window.

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mate crisis, which has re-

duced flow to the eastern

tributaries of the Indus, wa-

ter from which was availa-

ble to India under the trea-

ty," the third official added.

"DIAL is in the process of

onboarding a third handler,"

an airport official confirmed.

"The appointment of a third

ground handler will follow due

process. Until then, existing

handlers will operate in a non-

profit, support-only capacity

to ensure service continuity and

regulatory compliance," the

ministry official added.

In Mumbai the airport opera-

tors roped in a new company

REVOCA

TION OF

SECURITY

CLEARANCE COMES

AMID MOUNTING

TENSIONS BETWEEN

INDIA AND TURKEY

OVER THE LATTER'S

TIES WITH PAK

— Indo Thai Airport Services, a certified ground handler currently operating at nine airports across India, the ministry official added.

Confirming the move, a Mumbai airport spokesperson said:

"Within the next three days, Mumbai International Airport Limited (MIAL) will initiate the Request for Proposal (RFP) process to onboard a long-term ground-handling partner, to be finalised within three months."

Bangalore airport too confirmed in a Friday morning statement that Celebi personnel were being managed by existing service providers as a temporary measure.

It was not clear what employment terms existed for these people. A ministry official did not respond to requests for a comment on this.

Celebi Aviation Holding, the parent group, did not respond to requests for a comment.

Several foreign airlines approached alternative ground handlers on Friday. A third official familiar with the development said that Cathay Pacific, for instance, tied up with Air India SATS to manage their ground services.

Celebi provided ground-based services at nine airports across India – Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Cochin, Kannur, Chennai, and the MOPA airport in Goa. Its services include passenger handling, baggage processing, aircraft loading, cargo management, and ramp services. The company also runs one of Delhi airport's two cargo terminals and is a joint venture with the airport operator.

In a statement on Thursday, the company denied "misleading and factually incorrect allegations" about its ownership structure, claiming it is majority-owned (65%) by international institutional investors from Canada, the US, the UK, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, and Western Europe.

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India Bhushan R Gavai passed the order considering the significant impact these persons

will have by helping judges with case management and other non-judicial work that will provide judges more time to deal with core judicial functions.

The Shiv Sena, a coalition partner in the Maharashtra government, had earlier demanded that Mumbai airport cut ties with Celebi amid the diplomatic tensions between India and Turkey.

The top court directed the high courts to frame the rules within three months by taking aid from the 2018 rules notified by Assam government. Further, the states were directed to approve the rules and complete the regularisation process within three months of the approval been granted.

**CJI TO BE PART OF BENCHES IN FIRST WEEK OF 'PARTIAL WORKING DAYS'**

**Abraham Thomas**

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Leading by example, the top five judges of the Supreme Court (SC), led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Bhushan R Gavai will head the vacation benches in the first week of the "partial working days" beginning from May 26 when the summer recess of the top court will begin.

In a circular issued by the SC on Friday, the first week of the "partial working days" will see CJI and justices Surya Kant, Vikram Nath, JK Maheshwari and BV Nagarathna hold court by heading five separate benches. Justice Abhay S Oka, who is presently a judge, is due to retire on May 24.

The judges who will be sitting with the top five include justices AG Masih, Dipankar Datta, Sanjay Kumar, Aravind Kumar and Satish Chand Sharma.

**FRAME RULES ON COURT MANAGERS, SC DIRECTS HCs**

**Abraham Thomas**

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** In a big boost for better case disposal by trial courts and high courts, the Supreme Court on Friday directed all states to ensure court managers, brought in under the Thirteenth Finance Commission, are regularised, and rules regarding their service conditions are brought into force within fixed timelines.

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India Bhushan R Gavai passed the order considering the significant impact these persons will have by helping judges with case management and other non-judicial work that will provide judges more time to deal with core judicial functions.

The top court directed the high courts to frame the rules within three months by taking aid from the 2018 rules notified by Assam government. Further, the states were directed to approve the rules and complete the regularisation process within three months of the approval been granted.

**GOVERNMENT OF PUNJAB**

Reference No.: 58/Suptd.-Advt.-H.Q

Dated: 13.05.2025

<b>The Department of</b>	: Municipal Corporation, Ludhiana
<b>The</b>	: The Advertisement Branch invites e-tender-cum-e-auction for awarding the contract of OMD's for period of 7 years.
<b>Pre-Bid Meeting</b>	: On 06.06.2025 (Friday) at 11.00 AM. Meeting Hall, Municipal Corporation, Zone-D, Sarhba Nagar, Ludhiana
<b>Closing Dated and Time</b>	: On 12.06.2025 (Thursday) up to 2.00 PM.
<b>For Detail Log onto</b>	: <a href="http://www.tenderwizard.com/DLG">www.tenderwizard.com/DLG</a>

**Note:** For aforesaid E-Tender-cum-Auction if there are any change or alteration the same corrigendum Notice shall be published on the above website only.

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**FOR INVITING B**

## { OUR TAKE }

## Realistic pivot in India-Turkey ties

Ankara should realise the potential in a robust relationship with New Delhi and recalibrate its relations with Islamabad

**O**peration Sindoor has brought into relief Pakistan's ties with Turkey. Though 80% of Pakistan's weaponry comes from China, Ankara has been a key strategic partner of Islamabad, which became evident when it was found that many of the drones fired into India were of Turkish make. The pushback has been swift: Turkish goods, services and tourism were targeted as Indian travel platforms and service providers suspended services. On Thursday, the aviation ministry cancelled the security clearance to Celebi Aviation, a Turkish firm that provides ground services at nine airports in India, and Jamia Millia Islamia, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, and JNU have cancelled academic agreements with Turkish educational institutions.

These actions reflect the current public mood, which is hostile to all actors viewed as supporting Pakistan's use of terrorism as a strategic weapon against India, post the Pahalgam massacre. However, it should not be forgotten that Turkey is not just the Turkish State, which under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has turned Islamist and pivoted close to Pakistan, but also its people, and civil society; like India, it is defined by its civilisational values. New Delhi's Ankara policy has historically acknowledged the contradictions inherent in India-Turkey relations and nuanced its approach accordingly. Bilateral trade between the two countries, estimated at \$10.4 billion during 2023-24, favours India and both nations have worked on building a trade, economic, and cultural relationship, punctuated by multiple visits and interactions by their top leaders.

The Ankara-Islamabad relationship is rooted in Pakistan's quest for a model to build a modern State. Its army dictators saw a desirable model in Turkey, which allowed a major say for the armed forces in public affairs even though the country has been an electoral democracy since it built itself as a modern nation State from the debris of the Ottoman Empire and the World Wars. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, perceived the army as an institution that would protect the secular values of the new republic. This changed under Erdogan, a populist and an Islamist, who dreams of Turkey re-emerging as a pole of the Islamic world, mirroring the Ottoman Empire's sway over West Asia until World War I. Here, Turkey competes with Saudi Arabia and Iran, and in pursuit of his goals, Erdogan has invested heavily in soft power and in countries such as Pakistan, an ideological ally and a major buyer of Turkish armaments. India, on its part, has aligned with Turkey's rivals Greece and Armenia, backing their claims against Ankara.

Still, in recent years, India and Turkey have attempted to address the Pakistan irritant in their relationship to build robust ties that acknowledge their respective ambitions as emerging powers in a multipolar world. Ankara should realise the potential of a deeper economic relationship with India and recalibrate its relationship with Pakistan accordingly. Delhi has successfully pursued this path with countries in the Arab world such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which had once aligned their interests solely with Pakistan. In fact, Ankara could offer counsel to Islamabad to abandon its territorial ambitions regarding Jammu and Kashmir as well as its patronage for terror groups to further its strategic interests in the subcontinent and cease to be a rogue nation. And, for itself, Ankara should stop viewing Kashmir from a Pakistani vantage point and recognise it for what it is, a Muslim majority region that is an integral part of India.

## { THIRD EYE }

Barkha Dutt



## After Operation Sindoor, tales of West's hypocrisy

India may have to fight this battle alone; it can do that by accelerating growth, strengthening the economy and staying united

**E**ven as a war reporter who cut my teeth in journalism with frontline coverage of the Kargil conflict in 1999, the scenes I witnessed on the ground during Operation Sindoor were unprecedented, surreal, and harbingers of what modern warfare will look like. Travelling by road through Punjab and Jammu — the airports were shut — one had to adjust to driving blind through precautionary blackouts. If I looked up, I would often see balls of orange fire light up the thick, black sky. Often this would be accompanied by the sound of explosions or the rat-a-tat of distant firing. When it was further away, you could only see the silent sliver of a red streak across the skyline. Of course, it soon became evident that this was India's fabulous integrated air defence system bringing down Pakistani drones, and in some cases, missiles, before they could hit any target, civilian or military in India.

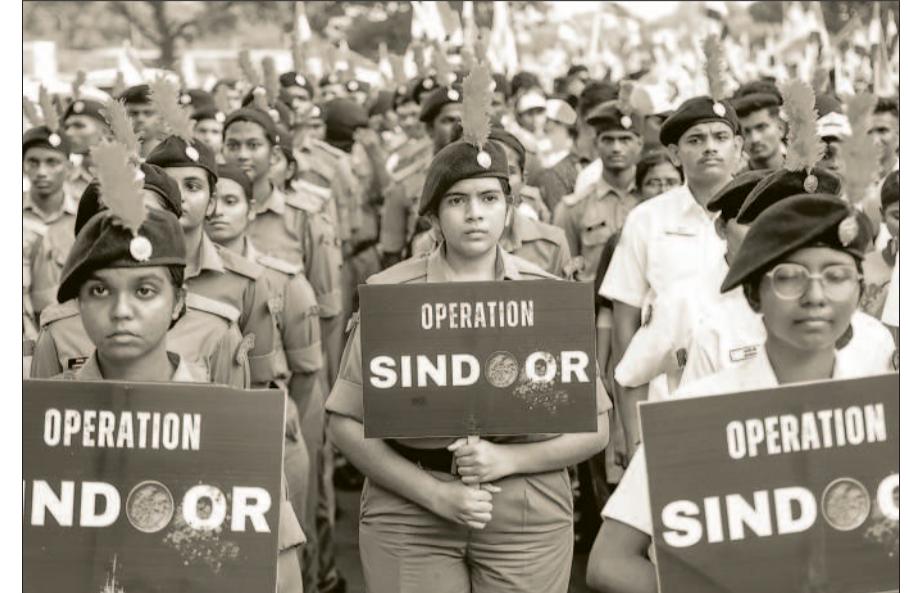
By now, there is enough satellite imagery coupled with the very granular and effective military briefing by India's armed forces to know the scale of damage India inflicted on Pakistan's air defence systems and air bases, including Nur Khan, Sargodha and Rahim Yar Khan. This was the tipping point that flipped the Pakistan military and left them with no option but to call India for a ceasefire. From burnt transport planes to destroyed hangars, from a hit on the entrance to a nuclear storage facility to depleting stocks, Pakistan could not withstand the precision strikes by India, despite China being a ghost in the battlefield with its supply of weapons. Notwithstanding US Presi-

dent Donald Trump's increasingly bizarre statements, it is obvious that without India's unambiguous military triumph in what was a four-day war, Operation Sindoor could have been much more protracted. Diplomacy would be leveraged on the back of these gains.

On the morning of May 10, I ran out of my hotel in Jammu at 5 am to the sound of explosions. Pakistan was now shamelessly targeting civilian areas and places of worship. The roof of more than one house had been blown away. Through the rubble, one could see the Indian tricolour, hoisted on the top floor of the now destroyed house, standing tall. I spoke to the residents who had been shaken awake by the bombing. A distraught mother held onto her two small children and through tears thanked the armed forces that she was still alive. Several others were injured and shifted to hospital. Window panes had been blown out of their frames and there were shards of glass everywhere. In more than one home, there were craters in the walls. Ten minutes away, the roof of a house inside the temple complex of Aap Shambu Mandir, right near the main entrance, had been blown away. A resident told me that air raid sirens had saved lives; Saturday mornings are especially crowded with devotees walking down the very path on which projectiles had fallen. An Army veteran told me, "This is now an all-out war."

A few hours later in a border village in

I TOLD UK BROADCASTER PIERS MORGAN THAT INDIANS WERE INFURIATED BY THE 'BOTHSIDEISM' OF WESTERN TV NETWORKS AND MEDIA PLATFORMS ON PAKISTAN'S TERROR



Whatever rights the Western countries allow themselves as nuclear-powered nations, they will need to concede to India

Jammu, I was reporting on a giant Pakistani mortar shell that had landed right inside the home of a local farmer, when news came of a halt in hostilities (after the call from the Pakistan DGMO). It is important to underline that the word ceasefire has never been used by India. It is purely Trumpian nomenclature. The American president's self-aggrandising statements rooted in post-truth claims (such as a 1,000-year war between India and Pakistan) are

All they do is bust the myth that a Trump administration was going to be better for India than the one headed by his predecessor, Joe Biden. There is no American politician or media outlet that can explain the obvious: Why should the US take out Osama bin Laden from under Pakistan's nose in Abbottabad be considered a heroic military act, but Operation Sindoor cast as an act of military aggression?

India's new security doctrine has changed the rules of the game. But don't expect two things to change — Western hypocrisy and Pakistan's perfidy.

I joined a show hosted by Piers Morgan, the UK broadcaster, to face off against Hina Rabbani Khar, former foreign minister of Pakistan. I asked her just two questions. One, did she consider the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad to be terrorist groups? Yes, or no? And if yes, why have they been operating in Pakistan with impunity?

And two, if America's Operation Osama was kosher, why not accept Operation Sindoor — which started by targeting terror bases alone —

for what it was? I said Pakistan should thank India for destroying the headquarters of Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar, provided Hina and her country were ready to concede what these groups stood for. She deflected, denied, whined and finally fled the show without once calling the LeT and Jaish terrorist outfits.

To Morgan I said, as I do to colleagues and friends in Western television networks and media platforms, Indians are bored and infuriated by the bothsiderism of your storytelling. This is not about the Kashmir 'dispute' as you go on calling it, falling back on lazy tropes from 30 years ago. If anything, after the devastated families of those killed by the terrorists, Kashmiris are the one hardest hit by what Pakistan did in Pahalgam. This is about India's right to respond to institutional State-backed, jihadis terrorism. At the very least, whatever rights you allow yourselves as nuclear-powered nations, you will need to concede to us.

India has made it clear that the next terror attack could well trigger kinetic action again. And again. As we discovered this time, that fight will sometimes have to be fought alone. The strongest way to shut down naysayers is to accelerate growth, strengthen the economy and stay united.

Become too powerful to even attempt to be lectured to; a better version of China because we are a democracy; a new version of America, without being America.

Barkha Dutt is an award-winning journalist and author. The views expressed are personal

## Presidential reference has echoes of a review petition

**M**any issues arise from the presidential reference listing 14 questions that was made to the Supreme Court this week, in the aftermath of the apex court's judgment in the case involving the pendency of gubernatorial assent for a clutch of Bills passed by the Tamil Nadu assembly. As is often said, the Supreme Court is also a political power centre. The drastic effects of the judgment by the Pardiwal-Mahadevan Bench that evoked the idea of deemed assent for 10 Tamil Nadu Bills that were pending with the governor are quite visible.

Within hours of the judgment, Tamil Nadu notified all the laws that had been detained by the constitutional procedure of gubernatorial assent for quite a long time. Deadlines were set by the court for gubernatorial and presidential (upon referral of a Bill to the President by the governor) assent. It was the outcome of an apparent activist posture by the Supreme Court.

An elementary issue that arises from the presidential reference in this instance is whether matters that are already adjudicated by the Supreme Court can be posed again before the Court by way of presidential reference. A perusal of the questions in the reference will show that a substantial number of them are answered in the *Tamil Nadu Governor* judgment or in the earlier decisions of the Supreme Court.

For instance, the question of whether the governor is bound by the aid and advice tendered by the Council of Ministers has been answered by a Constitution Bench — in the affirmative — in

*Shamsher Singh* (1974). The exceptions to this general rule as provided in the Constitution were highlighted in the *Tamil Nadu Governor* verdict and also in some previous pronouncements like *Nabam Rebia* (2016). In *Madhya Pradesh Special Police Establishment* (2004), the Court held that the governor has discretion in deciding on the question of sanctioning the prosecution of ministers in a Cabinet as it involves a constitutionally permitted exception.

The justiciability of the discretion exercised by the governor also has been discussed in the recent *Tamil Nadu Governor* judgment, based on earlier judgments such as *Rameshwar Prasad* (2006). The fixing of a time-limit for gubernatorial and presidential decisions has been done in the *Tamil Nadu Governor* judgment by exercising the Court's adjudicatory jurisdiction, based on certain recommendations by government-appointed bodies such as the Sarkaria Commission (1988). For this, the practice in other jurisdictions such as the US was relied on.

The Court also referred to the earlier verdicts in *Periarwal* (2022) and *Keishan Meghachandra Singh* (2020). Another issue is whether there can be a substitution of the power of the President or governor by a judicial order. The fact is that the *Tamil Nadu Governor* judgment did not say so but only evolved the idea of deemed assent, given the facts of that particular case. That it was done by invoking Article 142 of the Constitution

implies that it is not a precedent laying down the law for the future; rather it is a direction issued to do complete justice to the parties in a given situation. Many other questions, such as whether there could be a law without presidential assent, arise from the same erroneous assumption about the content of the *Tamil Nadu* judgment. The reference essentially seeks a review of the judgment: It is a review petition in the guise of reference.

The principle that the Supreme Court cannot be asked to re-decide matters already decided at the adjudicative level was laid down by the apex court in the matter of *Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal* (1991). In that case, lawyer Fali S. Nariman argued that the President can refer any question under Article 143, and, therefore, ask the Supreme Court to reconsider any of its decisions. This contention was rejected by the Court. The Court deconstructed Article 143 to say that once a question is adjudicated by the Court, it is no longer "a question of law or fact which has arisen, or is likely to arise", as stated in the text of the Article. The Court held: "When this Court in its adjudicatory jurisdiction pronounces its authoritative opinion a question of law, it cannot be said that there is any doubt about the question of law" warranting a reference.

The advisory jurisdiction under Article 143 is of British origin. Commonwealth countries like Canada and India followed the practice of constitutional court advising the executive on substantial legal issues. The US, on the other hand, rejected this practice, fearing it could meddle with the idea of separation of powers and independence of the judiciary. In the Indian context also, what follows a reference is only an opinion by the Court, either answering or refusing to

answer a reference. It is not a judgment or decree that binds the government or even the other courts in the country. Given the nature of the jurisdiction, the general principles of law laid down in *Tamil Nadu Governor* case are unshakable. About a dozen prominent presidential references since the formation of the Indian Republic will show that a reference is not supposed to upset or torpedo the law already laid down by the Court.

There are questions in the reference that are not pointedly answered in the *Tamil Nadu Governor* case. The question on the need to place a case before a Constitution Bench with five or more judges under Article 145(3), if it involved "substantial questions of law regarding interpretation of the Constitution" is curious. This has been answered in the affirmative, right in the text of Article 145(3) and, therefore, no reference is even called for. Regarding the *Tamil Nadu Governor* case, neither the parties nor the Court had ever suggested that apart from procedural law, there are issues demanding an interpretation of the Constitution. Even otherwise, whether a given case falls under the ambit of Article 145(3) can only be decided on a case-to-case basis and no general principle can be laid down.

When Kerala sought to withdraw its petition seeking an early decision by the Governor on its Bills on the ground that the *Tamil Nadu Governor* judgment covers the issues, the Centre, quite strangely, opposed it and the case was adjourned. The present reference order that was issued subsequently might be used by the Centre against Kerala's plea. Ideally and legally, a party is entitled to get the benefit of the law as interpreted by the Supreme Court or at least to withdraw petitions based on what has been held in the case.

Kaleeswaram Raj is a lawyer at the Supreme Court of India. The views expressed are personal

## Slow and steady progress on Iran-US nuclear talks

**O**n May 11, Iranian foreign minister Abbas Araghchi and US special envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff met in Muscat for the fourth round of Omani-mediated nuclear talks since April 12. After the talks, the Omani foreign minister stated that the discussions included "useful ideas", reflecting a shared wish to reach an "honourable agreement", and that the fifth round will be held after both consulted their leaders. Initially scheduled for May 3, the fourth round was postponed for "logistical reasons". In the interim, the policy divide on Iran within the Trump administration played out in the media. However, the continued talks suggest both sides are serious about avoiding war. In fact, President Donald Trump has said that the US and Iran are close to a nuclear deal.

Trump wants a deal that will permanently

prevent Tehran acquiring a nuclear weapon. In 2018, Trump withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreed in 2015 by the P5+1, calling it the "worst deal ever", focusing on the provisions stipulating expiry of restrictions on Iran's nuclear programme. Some Trump-team members, led by secretary of State Marco Rubio, have revived the demand of eliminating Iran's uranium enrichment programme. Others, including Witkoff, had suggested a scaled-back and heavily monitored enrichment programme. Tehran insists the new deal should guarantee its economic interests and mutual fulfilment of the commitments. Further, it is sticking to its long-held position that under Article IV of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), signatories

have an inalienable right to civilian nuclear capability and that Iran cannot be treated differently. In response to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA and Israel's campaign of sabotage against its nuclear facilities and assassination of its top nuclear scientist, Tehran passed a law to scale up nuclear activity as a leverage-building exercise. It demonstrated a capacity to scale up fast by installing new-generation centrifuges and enriching uranium to 60%.

During talks with the Joe Biden administration on JCPOA revival, Tehran argued that, since Washington could not provide guarantees against another withdrawal, there should be inherent guarantees allowing Iran to scale up its nuclear activities as a retaliation measure. In this context, it is unlikely that Iran will agree to dismantle its enrichment programme. Tehran, however, has indicated it isn't averse to potential scientific and commercial collaboration with the US for its civilian nuclear programme. Previously, analysts had pitched joint-venture enrichment plants, with European or even Russian and Chinese participation.



Deepika Saraswat

In recent months, Iran has strengthened coordination with Russia and China on the nuclear issue. In mid-March, the US and five other countries convened a closed-door session of the UNSC, where the UK indicated support for the snapback of sanctions on Iran if necessary. Subsequently, after a meeting in Beijing, Iran, Russia and China issued a joint statement emphasising the importance of diplomatic engagement and dialogue. While noting that Iran was committed to full compliance with NPT and other obligations, they stressed the need to fully respect Iran's right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Opposing a potential snapback, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi stated it will destroy years of diplomatic efforts. Tehran has also made fresh overtures to the Europeans to ensure they do not side with the US's maximalist demands. For the success of the US-Iran talks, the role of the other members of the P5+1 will be crucial.

Deepika Saraswat is an associate fellow at Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses. The views expressed are personal

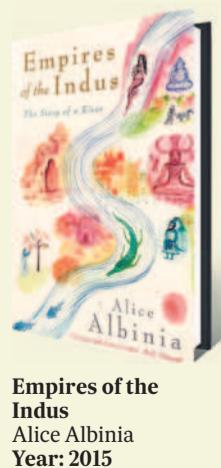
## { EDITOR'S PICK }

HT's editors offer a book recommendation every Saturday, which provides history, context, and helps understand recent news events

## A RIVER'S STORY

**I**ndia last month suspended the Indus Waters Treaty in response to the Pahalgam massacre. The Indus, which originates in Tibet and flows across northern India and Pakistan, is the lifeline of Pakistan. While India and Pakistan agreed to a cessation of hostilities last week, IWT remains suspended.

This week, we recommend *Empires of the Indus*, which details the 3,218-km long river's geography and over five millennia of history and contemporary importance. Indus, which birthed one of the world's ancient civilisations, has been worshipped for millennia and seen the rise and fall of multiple empires. The book chronicles cities that grew and traded on its banks 5,000 years ago, how Alexander, Afghans, and the British conquered the Indus Valley, which became a nodal point on the Silk Road, the birthplace of Sikhism, and now a site of conflict within Pakistan, as Punjab and Sindh battle for its depleted flow.



Empires of the Indus  
Alice Albinia  
Year: 2015

# WORLD



Volodymyr Zelensky, Keir Starmer, Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Polish PM Donald Tusk speak with Donald Trump on the phone, in Tirana, Albania, on Friday. REUTERS

## EU leaders agree with Trump on rejecting Russia's truce stance

Associated Press

letters@hindustantimes.com

**TIRANA:** European leaders have agreed with US President Donald Trump that Russia's position in ceasefire talks with Ukraine is unacceptable and they intend to coordinate a response, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said on Friday.

Starmer spoke from Albania's capital, Tirana, where leaders of dozens of European countries were gathered for the European Political Community (EPC) summit attended by Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky.

"We just had a meeting with President Zelensky and then a phone call with President Trump to discuss the developments in the negotiations today, and the Russian position is clearly unacceptable," Starmer told reporters. "As a result of that meeting with President Zelensky, under discussion with President Trump, we are now closely aligning and coordinating our responses and will continue to do so," he said.

He said that the decision with Trump was also agreed on with the leaders of France, Germany and Poland.

Russia and Ukraine held their first direct peace talks since the early weeks of Moscow's full-scale invasion, which began on February 24, 2022. The talks, which were held in Turkey, on Friday, ended after less than two hours, according to the Turkish Foreign Ministry and a Ukrainian official.

Kyiv accused the Kremlin of introducing new "unacceptable demands" to withdraw Ukrainian forces from huge swaths of territory, according to the official, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorised to make official statements.

French President Emmanuel Macron said it was "unacceptable" that, for a second time, Russia hasn't responded to the demands made by the Americans, supported by Ukraine and the Europeans. No ceasefire, and therefore no meeting at a decision-making level.

"And no response," Macron added: "We will continue to coordinate with our European partners — the coalition of the willing — and the US. There will be new contacts and feedback in the coming hours." German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said: "The diplomatic efforts that we have made, so far, have unfortunately failed because of Russia's lack of readiness to take the first steps in the right direction now. But we will not give up; we will continue and we will coordinate well on the European side, together with the Americans."

Earlier, Zelensky held a phone call with US President Donald Trump together with French President Emmanuel Macron, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, German Chancellor Friedrich

# Russia, Ukraine discuss truce, prisoner swap at direct talks

Ukraine and European powers had demanded that Putin commit to a 30-day unconditional ceasefire to create space for negotiations on a peace deal

Bloomberg

letters@hindustantimes.com

**WASHINGTON:** The first direct talks between Russia and Ukraine in more than three years ended in Turkey with an agreement on an exchange of prisoners and discussions on a potential ceasefire, though no truce was announced.

The negotiations in Istanbul's Dolmabahce Palace lasted about two hours, on Friday. Ukraine and Russia said they'd agreed to swap 1,000 prisoners each in coming days, in separate statements.

The sides also discussed "all modalities" of a truce, said Ukrainian Defence Minister Rustem Umerov, who led Kyiv's delegation. "Now we need to exchange people, and soon we will inform you what is the next stage," he said.

Russia is "satisfied with the results, and we are ready to continue contacts," Vladimir Medinsky, who led Moscow's negotiators, told reporters in televised comments. "We agreed that each side will present its vision of a potential future ceasefire, in detail," and then talks will resume, he said. Russia also took note of a request by the Ukrainian side for direct talks between the presidents of the two countries. Medinsky said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky held a phone call with US President Donald Trump together with French President Emmanuel Macron, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, German Chancellor Friedrich



Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan chairs a meeting with Ukrainian and Russian negotiators in Istanbul, Turkey, on Friday. REUTERS

Merz and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, Zelensky's spokesman said. Details of the discussion would be disclosed later, the spokesman said.

Ukraine and European powers had demanded that Putin commit to a 30-day unconditional ceasefire to create space for negotiations on a peace deal. Putin didn't agree to the truce and instead offered over the weekend to resume direct talks with Ukraine, in Turkey.

"We are very disappointed," Merz said of the talks in Istanbul. "The ball lay exclusively with Russia," but Putin failed to use the opportunity to discuss a peace agreement, he added.

"As a result of the meeting with President Zelensky and the discussion with President Trump we are now closely aligning and coordinating our responses," Starmer said.

Medinsky led Russia's negotiators at those meetings, which

broke down amid recriminations over a draft protocol of Russian demands that Putin later asserted had been largely accepted by Ukraine. The government in Kyiv has rejected this claim.

"We're spending great effort in order to end the war," Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said at the start of the meeting. "It is important that this meeting may form the basis for a meeting between the leaders" of Ukraine and Russia, he said.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio earlier said the likelihood of progress was low without a meeting between Trump and Putin. Putin had indicated he regards the talks as a resumption of 2022 negotiations held in Istanbul soon after Russia's full-scale invasion began.

Drones hit the capital Kyiv as well as the Odessa region, local

officials said.

At least three people were injured, Oleh Kiper, the head of the Odessa region's military administration said on Telegram.

Speaking to European leaders in Tirana, Albania, on Friday, Zelensky said it was necessary to "clearly define which issues must be handled at the leadership level — not below," adding "we all know who truly makes the decisions in Russia."

The Russian negotiating team stays in constant contact with President Putin, receiving real-time updates, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Friday. Trump told reporters he'd meet Putin "as soon as we can set it up" after finishing his Middle East visit, and had earlier said he was ready to travel to Turkey on Friday "if something happened."

## Russian hackers attacked election sites: Polish PM

**WARSAW:** Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk said Russian hackers attacked ruling coalition party websites on Friday, two days before the presidential election. The frontrunner is Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski of the Civic Platform party. "Two days before the elections, a group of Russian hackers operating on Telegram attacked the websites of the Civic Platform," Tusk said on Friday. AP

## Portugal's parties wrap up election campaigning

**LISBON:** Portuguese political parties wrapped up campaigns on Lisbon's streets, on Friday, ahead of Sunday's general election — the country's third early vote in three years — with polls suggesting an unstable government. Supporters of the three main parties held separate rallies in Baixa Chiado, one of the capital's iconic neighbourhoods. Far-right Chega leader Andre Ventura made a surprise appearance at his party's final event, despite earlier saying he would miss it. REUTERS

## Indonesia's Papua clash kills two officers, 18 rebels

**JAYAPURA:** Indonesia's security forces clashed with separatist rebels in Papua, killing at least 18 insurgents and two police officers, officials said on Friday. The fight began on Wednesday when armed rebels attacked troops providing health and education services in Intan Jaya, a conflict hotspot, as per military spokesperson. AP



Elon Musk  
REUTERS  
**MUSK'S AI FIRM CALLS GROK CHATBOT'S S AFRICA FOCUS 'UNAUTHORISED'**

Associated Press

letters@hindustantimes.com

**AUSTIN:** Much like its creator, Elon Musk's artificial intelligence chatbot Grok was preoccupied with South African racial politics on social media this week, posting unsolicited claims about the persecution and "genocide" of white people.

His company, xAI, said on Thursday night that an "unauthorised modification" to the chatbot was the cause.

That means someone — the company didn't say who — made a change that "directed Grok to provide a specific response on a political topic," which "violated xAI's internal policies and core values," the company said.

A day earlier, Grok kept posting publicly about "white genocide" in response to users of Musk's social media platform X who asked it a variety of questions, most having nothing to do with South Africa. One exchange was about streaming service Max reviving the HBO name.

Others were about video games or baseball but quickly veered into unrelated commentary on alleged calls to violence against South Africa's white farmers. Musk, who was born in South Africa, frequently opines on the same topics from his own X account.

Computer scientist Jen Golbeck tested Grok herself, sharing a photo from the Westminster Kennel Club dog show and asking, "Is this true?" Grok responded, "The claim of white genocide is highly controversial. Some cite targeted violence against white farmers, including farm attacks and the 'Kill the Boer' song as incitement."

## Author Rushdie attacker gets 25 years in prison

Agence France-Presse

letters@hindustantimes.com

(Left) Hadi Matar and Salman Rushdie



was to blame for the incident.

### Life-threatening injuries

The optical nerve of Rushdie's right eye was severed in the attack. His Adam's apple was lacerated, his liver and small bowel penetrated, and he became paralysed in one hand after suffering severe nerve damage to his arm.

Rushdie was rescued from Matar by bystanders. Last year, he published a memoir called "Knife" in which he recounted the near-death experience.

His publisher announced in March that "The Eleventh Hour," a collection of short stories examining themes and places of interest to Rushdie, will be released on November 4, 2025.

Rushdie, who was born in Mumbai but moved to England as a boy, was propelled into the spotlight with his second novel "Midnight's Children" (1981), which won Britain's prestigious Booker Prize for its portrayal of post-independence India.

20 years -- until the attack -- he lived relatively normally in New York.

But "The Satanic Verses" brought him far greater, mostly unwelcome, attention.

## Israeli airstrikes kill at least 93 in Gaza

Associated Press

letters@hindustantimes.com

**DEIR AL-BALAH:** Israel launched dozens of airstrikes across northern and southern Gaza on Friday, killing more than 93 people and wounding hundreds -- attacks that Israeli officials described as a prelude to a larger military campaign in the territory aimed at pressuring Hamas to release hostages.

The strikes followed days of similar attacks that killed more than 130 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, and as US President Donald Trump wrapped up a visit to Israel. Trump told reporters he'd meet with Putin "as soon as we can set it up" after finishing his Middle East visit, and had earlier said he was ready to travel to Turkey on Friday "if something happened."

In comments released by his office, on Tuesday, the prime minister said Israeli forces were days away from entering Gaza "with great strength to complete the mission... It means destroying Hamas."

An Israeli official said the strikes, on Friday, were preparatory actions in the lead-up to a larger operation and to send a message to Hamas that it will begin soon if there isn't an agreement to release the 58 hostages still in Gaza since Hamas' October 2023 attack.



Boeing 737 MAX 10 flying at the 54th International Paris Airshow at Le Bourget Airport near Paris, France, on June 20, 2023. REUTERS

## Boeing nears deal to avoid 737 MAX crash prosecution

Reuters

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**NEW YORK:** Boeing has reached a tentative nonprosecution agreement with US prosecutors in a fraud case stemming from two fatal 737 MAX plane crashes that killed 346 people, people familiar with the matter said.

The agreement would forestall a June 23 trial date the planemaker faces on a charge it misled US regulators about a crucial flight control system on the 737 MAX, its strongest-selling jet. It would require a judge's approval.

The agreement, if approved, would be a blow to families who lost relatives in the crashes and have pressed prosecutors to take the US planemaker to trial.

Boeing is no longer agreeing to plead guilty in the case, prosecutors told family members of crash victims during a meeting on Friday, according to sources.

Prosecutors explained that the company's stance shifted after a judge rejected a previous plea deal in December, prompting Boeing to reconsider its legal strategy.

DOJ officials are still considering whether to move forward with a nonprosecution agreement or take Boeing to trial, a Justice Department official said during the Friday meeting with families.

The official emphasised that

no final decision has been made yet, and that Boeing and DOJ representatives have not exchanged any formal documents or begun negotiating the final terms of a potential non-prosecution agreement.

Boeing and the DOJ had no comment.

"I think this is a terrible deal," Paul Cassell, a lawyer for family members, said during the meeting according to one of the sources.

Nadia Milleron, who lost her daughter in one of the Boeing plane crashes in 2019, told Reuters she questioned how the DOJ, and Attorney General Pam Bondi, could justify cutting a deal with a repeat offender.

In December, US District Judge Reed O'Connor in Texas rejected a previous plea agreement in the case, faulting a diversity and inclusion provision in the deal related to the selection of an independent monitor.

The decision prolonged the case into the incoming Trump administration, which has overhauled the Justice Department. Boeing agreed to the initial plea deal during the final months of the Biden administration.

Boeing is July agreed to plead guilty to a criminal fraud conspiracy charge after the two fatal 737 MAX crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia spanning 2018 and 2019, and to pay a fine of up to \$487.2 million.

## Iconic 'Napalm Girl' photographer's identity now in question

Agence France-Presse

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**AMSTERDAM:** World Press Photo said on Friday it removed US-Vietnamese photographer Nick Ut's name as the person credited for one of history's most iconic pictures, the Vietnam War image "Napalm Girl," amid doubts over its authorship.

The organisation, which awards one of the world's most prestigious photojournalism prizes, said it carried out its own investigation into the haunting 1972 photo -- which shows a nine-year-old girl fleeing naked from a napalm strike -- after the premiere of the film "The Stringer."

The documentary chronicles an investigation into rumours

that the image, which helped

change global perceptions of the US war in Vietnam, was taken by a little-known local freelancer, not Ut, the Associated Press (AP) staff photographer who won a Pulitzer Prize for the photo.

"It is possible that the author of the photograph will never be fully confirmed."

The suspension of the authorship attribution stands unless it is proved otherwise."

The Amsterdam-based organisation named the two other potential authors as Nguyen Thanh Nghe and Huynh Cong Phuc, both present for the infamous scene in the southern village of Trang Bang on June 8, 1972.

Nguyen said he was certain the photo was his in interviews for "The Stringer," which premiered at the Sundance film festival in January.



Photographer Nick Ut, centre, flanked by Kim Phuc, left, holds the "Napalm Girl", his Pulitzer Prize winning photo as they wait to meet Pope Francis, in St. Peter's Square, The Vatican, on May 11, 2022. AP



# RELAX. THE WEEKEND'S HERE

# HT brunch

## Always broke?

It's not you, it's the times. No, really. People in their 20s have it uniquely harder than before, say data and the experts. Here's what Boomers don't see when they hate on Kids These Days



Anushree Chatterjee

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**I**magine paying Rs 5,000, not Rs 25,000, to watch Coldplay perform. That's how much a ticket cost nine years ago, when they first visited in India. Imagine paying less for an Uber ride than for an autorickshaw in Delhi. In 2015, Uber Go rides cost Rs 7 per kilometre, while autos cost Rs 8.5. You could get a flat-white at Starbucks (they launched it in 2015) for under Rs 200. It costs Rs 350 now. Ed Sheeran played a gig here that year. Rs 5,000 could get you VIP Phase 2 tickets then. Now, that amount wouldn't even get you past the gates of his Delhi gig – ticket prices started at Rs 6,500 this year. At big-city restaurants, a single main course is priced in the four digits before GST. Nike just dropped its Alphafly racing sneakers for Rs 22,795.

It's not so much that everything seems more expensive. It's that for young people, little comforts are even further out of reach.

Cue the Boomer rant. Older folks will quickly say that they saved more, spent less, worked harder and had a better grip on their future when they were young.

Give them a cookie for their efforts and sit them down. Here's why that fantasy doesn't hold up today.

### Jump scares

"Even after accounting for inflation, the cost of living is much higher today than it has been at any point in India's past," says

Shuchi Trivedi, partner for Economic Development at EY India, the multinational professional services network previously known as Ernst & Young.

A person entering the workforce today or in their first few years in, is likely to have grandparents who lived with their parents until marriage, scrimped to afford one vacation a year, shopped only for a social occasion, but stuck to one job their whole lives. The struggle was real, but life was stable.

"Their successors were the salaried professionals who comparatively spent more and saved less," Trivedi says. This is the sandwich generation, tasked with caring for children in nuclear families and aging parents at the same time. But they lived through the economic reforms of the 1990s, traded up to new jobs in their prime earning years, and had access to home loans, credit cards, mutual funds and health insurance. The struggle was real, but powered by a hope for a better future.

In contrast, for the 377 million people aged between 15 and 29 (the largest generation to ever live in India), the struggle is just as real, but seems more and more like it isn't going anywhere. Jobs? It's all boom-and-bust cycles, short-term contracts, lay-



offs, and companies that reward loyalty with indifference. Start-ups? The odds are sinking: Only six reached unicorn status last year, compared to 43 in 2021. Homes? Rents for a two-bedroom house in seven cities rose up to 64% between 2019 and 2024.

God forbid you try to ease the isolation and stress by going out. The parks are crowded, the beach is dirty. Everywhere else, even walking into a pop-up event, costs money (The Lil Flea now costs Rs 249 to enter. It's not even a cover charge). "Gen Z seems to be working harder than others to transform the present," Trivedi says.

### Small cuts

Being young is not a crime. But for many young at the moment, it seems like a punishment. Divya Anand, 27, makes Rs 85,000 a month teaching dance and yoga in Mumbai. But her commute alone sets her back by Rs 15,000. "A lot of my colleagues live even further away and pay more just to get to and from classes," she says. Factor in the rising costs of utilities and groceries, and it's hard to keep aside even Rs 2,000 to spend on a restaurant on the weekend.

At 19, political science student Shreya Amberkar has a wishlist for her 20s: "A stable job that I love, but which also allows me enough time to have a life, to meet friends for a coffee on weekends, a movie every fortnight, a concert once a month, an annual family vacation. And enough money to tide

**The era of introductory pricing is over. Gigs cost more too. Nine years ago, when Coldplay first played India, tickets cost Rs 5,000. Similar entry cost Rs 25,000 this year.**

over a bad spell."

It's hardly indulgent. "I'm not even interested in expensive handbags and shoes, but already it seems like a lot. I would have added a house to my wishlist earlier. But even renting seems like it will pinch."

Psychologist Priyanka Varma's mental-health service, The Thought Co, caters largely to those under the age of 30. Among her pro-bono cases are people for whom even simple pleasures require complicated maths: "Where to buy cheap beer, how to pre-game with food and drinks so they don't spend money at a gig. They go thrifting not because it's cool, but because it's what they can afford."

### Rear view

What Boomers and Millennials forget, when they romanticise their own early struggle and stress, is how many privileges from their era are simply not available to 20-somethings today. Even 10 years ago, in the waning days of low-cost airlines, a Delhi-Goa flight cost as little as Rs 1,500 if one booked early enough. They average Rs 5,000 now. In 2016, when Netflix launched in India, monthly subscription plans started at Rs 500 for up to four users. Uber didn't have 4X surge pricing. AirBnBs were cheaper than hotel rooms. Zomato didn't add distance+platform fees. Ebooks were 80% cheaper than paperbacks.

In a post-disruption world, there are paywalls, platform fees, and premium modes. As hacks dry up, so do escape routes – visas are harder to come by for those looking to move abroad.

Amberkar recalls talking about job

opportunities with her mother. "She told me not to worry, that when she was my age, she started off at a bank, and they eventually made her a permanent employee." When the teen mentioned the costs of going out to her father, "he told me that when he was my age, he made do with a DVD player – I had to point out to him that this was just as much a privilege then as the tickets I worry about."

### Coin base

"Choices for anything to do, eat or buy today are highly information based as opposed to availability based 20 years ago," Trivedi observes. There are more pop-ups, collabs, coffee-tasting events or heritage walks to sign up for. Budgeting is a matter of looking for coupon codes, flash-discount, happy hours, and the credit card that offers the best buy now, pay later schemes.

Gen Z is also competing with well-settled older Millennials for the same entertainment options. At the Coldplay concerts this year, the minimum age of entry was six years. It opened the already sought-after event to a wider audience. Two families of four each from Chandigarh booked lounge tickets to the Mumbai gig and stayed at a luxury hotel, paying Rs 25 lakh for their mini vacation.

And there are new ways to spend. A 2024 report by Snap Inc and Boston Consulting Group suggest that Gen Z drives 43% of India's total consumer expenditure. A 2025 study by Perfios and PwC India finds that about one in three "emerging professionals" spend about 30% of their monthly income on discretionary spends.

Globally, young people are already feeling the pinch. The 13th edition of Deloitte's Gen Z and Millennial Survey polled 23,000 respondents across 44 countries (including India) last year. Their top concern, far ahead of climate change, unemployment, mental health, and crime/personal safety: Cost of living. Three in 10 said they do not feel financially secure. About six in 10 said they lived from paycheque to paycheque.

At The Thought Co, Varma isn't surprised. "We all went into introspective mode in the lockdown," she says. "But for teens and young people who hadn't yet engaged with the world, this only made them more determined to prioritise themselves, live larger, set boundaries and walk away from what didn't suit them."

Being broke, then, is a feature, not a bug, of breaking free. "It's not that adults don't understand this. It's that, they're extremely jealous."

That's what's really at play when people accuse 20-somethings of lacking passion and drive. "What they don't consider is that most people my age have never seen our parents set boundaries between work and home," Amberkar says.

"Now, a decade from retirement, they're seeing friends and classmates dying of heart attacks. Young people deserve to enjoy their 20s. In this economy, we're going to be exhausted by 30, anyway."

## This week, we're... Baying for blood

Remember Elizabeth Holmes, the Theranos blood-testing fraudster who went to prison? Billy Evans, her partner and baby daddy, has a startup that promises diagnoses from not just blood, but urine and saliva samples. Hollywood has Bonnie and Clyde. Bollywood has Bunty and Babi. Silicon Valley now has Liz and Billy.



### Tripping upwards

When the Swiss posted on their socials that the Tällibahn cable car to the Gadmer Dolomites was open for summer, we ran to the comments. They did not disappoint. "Use a headscarf" one user said. Another asked which items were banned. The Swiss have deleted the original post (Boo!). They're not renaming the ride (Yay!).

### Fessing up

Everyone's favourite petty-dispute subreddit, Am I The A\*\*hole?, is turning into a game show. Host Jimmy Carr will invite participants to present their case before him and two judges (comedians, who else?). We'll finally put a face to all those A\*\*holes. Hope it's better than that other subreddit adap, Florida Man.

### Mildly distracted

The Royals, (Bridgerton, but made with local ingredients) is a hot mess. Clichéd plot, zero chemistry. Bhumi Pednekar actually runs a company called Work Potato. But the breakout star on the show is Ishaan Khatter's chest. The Maharaja is shirtless at polo matches, in castle corridors, mid-monologue. His pecs get more screen time than most of the cast. BRB, watching in HD.

Rambo, Michael Jackson, Marilyn Monroe and Edgar Allan Poe.

### David Bowie

Ziggy Stardust, Thin White Duke, movie star. Oh, and also neo-Expressionist painter. Bowie debuted his artistic side in 1995, with a self-portrait on the cover of his album, Outside. He's been featured in art galleries across the world, and is best known for his Afro/Pagan Ancestors series, and Turkish Father and Son, which he painted while writing Yassassin. One self-portrait fetched 22,500 pounds in 2016.

### James Franco

He's rebranded himself after #MeToo, but he says he's been working on painting, video and performance since at least 2005. Franco's 2012 piece, Francophobia, had critics confused and annoyed. He played Franco the human, the performance artist, the movie star and the inner monologue. Meta much? His 2024 Zurich show, Hollywood in Hell, was a chaotic mix of pandemic-era LA, broken masculinity, and a deconstruction of Hollywood mythology. Exhausting.



## { LISTICLE }

# A brush with fame

A star who sculpts, a comedian who colours, corny art from an Oscar winner... 10 actors with side-hustles worth bidding for

### Kritika Kapoor

kritika.kapoor@hindustantimes.com



INSTAGRAM/@ADRIENBRODY

### Adrien Brody

Brody has won two Oscars. It might seem like he has no time for hobbies. But at Art Basel Miami in 2015, he exhibited Hot Dogs, Hamburgers, and Handguns, a work that is as literal as the title.

Other works depict a French fry box stuffed with cigarettes, a teddy bear gunfight and a suicidal Starbucks mermaid. Subtlety? Never heard of her.

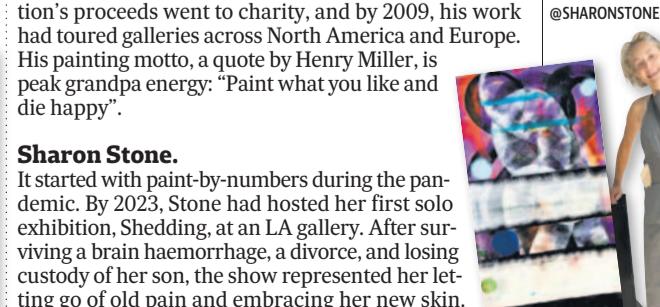


### Anthony Hopkins

On-screen, he terrified us as Hannibal. Off-screen, he is a shy artist who paints bright, innocent landscapes with a palette knife and thick dabs of colour. His first exhibition's proceeds went to charity, and by 2009, his work had toured galleries across North America and Europe. His painting motto, a quote by Henry Miller, is peak grandpa energy: "Paint what you like and die happy".

### Sharon Stone

It started with paint-by-numbers during the pandemic. By 2023, Stone had hosted her first solo exhibition, Shedding, at an LA gallery. After surviving a brain haemorrhage, a divorce, and losing custody of her son, the show represented her letting go of old pain and embracing her new skin. Hence, the snake symbolism. She's got that Basic Artistic Instinct, looks like.



### Instagram/@sarahildenart, Shutterstock



### Brad Pitt

In 2022, he debuted as a sculptor, and we all secretly hoped he would flop. But his show at a Finnish gallery impressed fans and critics. It was original and visceral: A Neoclassical frieze-style sculpture with men shooting each other to pieces; a bronze coffin, with bodies straining against it; a man sticking his head in a vase. The work is a result of "brutally honest" self-reflection, says the man who once played Death on screen.

### Instagram/@anthonyhopkins

### Instagram/@sharonstone

### Jim Carrey

In a 2017 video titled I Needed Colour, Carrey shared that he took to painting after a bleak New York winter in 2010. Around the same time, he dove into mindfulness, Christ consciousness and the Bhagavad Gita. The work reflects it all. Sunshower, a digital work, is large and colourful, a reminder to stay in the "present moment" he says. He's also produced scathing



### Instagram/@lissgallery

Trump cartoons. Now, he mostly paints man-goes, he says.

### Bob Dylan

The man has managed to keep two marriages a secret – we're not surprised he has a side gig too. The Nobel Laureate sketches, paints and sculpts. His muse: The American landscape. He's depicted an ever-busy Times Square and Manhattan Bridge, deserted motels, winding roads, truck stops, railroad tracks, cafes and sunflowers. In 1968, Bob Dylan painted the cover art for The Band's debut album, Music from Big Pink. His work also appeared on the cover of his own 1970 album, Self-Portrait.

### Sylvester Stallone

Underneath those muscles is the soul of an artist. Stallone has been painting for more than 50 years, and has exhibited in Russia, France and the US. His art is abstract and busy: Loud colours, graphic lines, quirky symbolism, but it deals with such heavy themes as death, loss and fame. His favourite muse? Rocky! He painted the first Rocky-themed work before the script was even written, using a screwdriver to carve the boxer's eyes and "capture the sadness". He's also painted

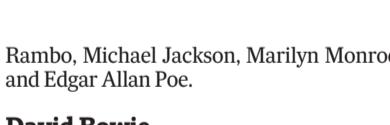
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## { RIGHT NOW }

# The sneak has peaked

Around the world, paparazzi now have cosier relationships with celebrities. All those airport, café and gym sightings? They're paid PR. The only one caught unawares is you

Reya Mehrotra

letters@hindustantimes.com

**O**nce upon a time, celebrities despised the paparazzi. Hordes of photographers (men, and occasionally a determined woman) would lie in wait, hoping to catch famous people doing something inappropriate, or just being human, in public. They've crashed into Lindsay Lohan's car, blocked Britney Spears' ambulance on the way to the hospital, bugged Nicole Kidman's house, photographed Jennifer Aniston topless in her own home, and chased Princess Diana's car into that fatal crash in 1997.

Now, it seems the relationship has had an update. Celebs are smarter about protecting their privacy, everyone's got a camera. And photographers have pivoted from sneaky, one-off documentation to clever, organised PR. Take a look...

**It's still hard work**

Mumbai celebrity photographer Laxmikant Rai has been in the business for 18 years. Celebrities pay him to dispatch his team of 20 to publish candid, seemingly accidental videos of them for Instagram. Those clips of actors spotted leaving the gym, headed to brunch, or catching a flight are not lucky coincidences. They're planned, assigned, scripted and paid for, to amplify a celebrity's star power.

Celebrities look like they're surprised by the cameras. In reality, they're often the ones calling the shots. "Our clients want coverage immediately, because within minutes, the pictures are everywhere and become stale," he says. "Recently one of my colleagues was rushing to a spot when he had an accident. His two-wheeler was nearly crushed. He's on bed rest. Another one hurt his arm while walking backwards, filming a celebrity."

**A sharper lens**

Old-timers such as Yogen Shah, Manav Mangani and



Varinder Chawla now make more money from film promotions and red-carpet events than from snooping around. Viral Bhayani, who's photographed celebrities for more than two decades, leads a team of 25 photographers, and has expanded his client roster to include big names in real-estate, wellness, fashion and beauty. His own job: Sitting in his office with multiple mobile phones until 2am, sorting hundreds of videos and pictures to post to his 13 million followers on Instagram (@ViralBhayani).

"Audiences no longer want nudity and wardrobe malfunctions. Gym and restaurant spotting no longer interests people," Bhayani says. "I filter and choose what goes, even if that means getting threats from some celebrities for posting or not posting videos of them."

When celebrity-led events were cancelled during the escalating tensions between India and Pakistan this month, Bhayani switched to sharing national-security updates. "Everyone wants authenticity in the images they see," he says. "I posted those advisories because it fit the moment."

**Zooming in**  
At the height of paparazzi power in Hollywood, gossip magazines would lay down bounty for first-looks of a celebrity's infant, a new beau, a private wedding. A seasoned paparazzo would track a single celebrity for years to collect the most damning evidence. India's big moment came in 2004, when a clip of Shahid Kapoor and Kareena Kapoor kissing at a restaurant went viral. "Nobody knew about their relationship until then," says Janhavi Samant, influencer-marketing expert and former entertainment journalist, who is working on a book on India's paparazzi culture. "It changed the way entertainment news was reported."

Now, photographers get paid by both the celebrities and by the outlets to whom they provide a daily supply of images. "Most paps are under the age of 35, because the work takes a lot of running around and stamina," says Rai.

Samant isn't surprised at the pivot. Most of the old guard started as news photogra-

phers and know well how to position and script a story. They're only adapting to what viewers want: "Apirational content, what we can't be or can't have," she says. "The Ambani wedding was all over social media because people were amazed to see the grandeur, the outfits and the jewellery."

It's why those artificially candid pictures all look the same – carefully cropped so there's no competing brand or distracting shop sign in the frame. Celebrities head to the gym casually, but impeccably styled. They lug designer totes – logo side outwards – as they enter the airport. Many have made more appearances at trendy restaurants than they have made in films or shows.

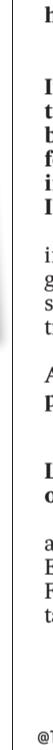
And it's come full circle. "Social media popularity is now part of the criteria when a role is cast," says Samant. "It gives filmmakers a ready market to sell a new face to."

It's hard to be a paparazzo in the traditional sense today. Daniel Radcliffe once repeated the same outfit for six months, thwarting paps' attempts to sell fresh shots of him to the tabloids. Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor Khan exposed their firstborn son, Taimur, to the media early – killing the public's interest in him and their second son, Jeh.

Actors voluntarily soft-launch their relationships on Insta before the paps can out them. For everything else, someone, somewhere is already recording on their cellphone. We're all paparazzi now, if we really want to be.



Emma Stone and Andrew Garfield use pap photos to promote charities. Leonardo DiCaprio often disappears into his clothes to escape them.



PICS: INSTAGRAM/  
@THEPOPCULTURECOLLECTOR, SIDESHOWEDD

**What connects Ariana Grande, Justin Bieber, Dua Lipa, Miley Cyrus and LeBron James?**

Each has been sued by the paparazzi for posting pictures of themselves, shot by paps, without the photographers' permission.

**My secret skill:**

I can read multiple books at one time.

**A superpower I wish I had:**

Flight

**My most star-struck moment so far:**

Meeting Conan O'Brien. He hugged me and took selfies!

**My favourite bad habit:**

Caffeine hits.

**If I could travel back or forward in time, I'd...**

Want to see if any of the good Star Trek storylines come true.

**A trait I despise in people:**

Dishonesty.

**Last thing I ordered online:**

A graphic-novel adaptation of Enid Blyton's Famous Five tales.

PICS: INSTAGRAM/  
@THEPOPCULTURECOLLECTOR, SIDESHOWEDD

# #COMICCON



**Paps have tracked Malika Arora on the way to the gym for decades. (Below) Rakhi Sawant and Uorfi Javed owe much of their popularity to India's paparazzi.**

**column { rude food }**

## Entrées and encores

How many great meals can a determined diner fit into a single fortnight? Here are the highlights from Bengaluru, Bangkok, Copenhagen, Bilbao and beyond



VIR SANGHVI

**I** am used to doing annual round ups of the best meals I have eaten. But this time, I am going to squeeze the time frame slightly. These are the best meals I have eaten, not in one year but in a single fortnight.

**Massimo Bottura in Bengaluru.** Bottura is often called the world's best chef. His Osteria Francescana restaurant in Modena has been number one on the list of the World's 50 Best restaurants more than once and it has held three Michelin stars for years.

Osteria Francescana is small (around 35 seats) and almost impossible to book, so many more people have heard of Massimo than will ever eat his food. Fortunately for us, Massimo loves India. So, for the last four years Culinary Culture (full disclosure: I am Chairman) has brought him to Mumbai, Delhi and now Bengaluru for years.

If you go to a three-star restaurant abroad, you will be lucky if the chef is even present in the building.

But here, Massimo was in the kitchen, making every single plate himself and then going from table to table. We usually persuade him to cook his most famous dishes, so the food is always fabulous. He sold out two dinners at the Leela in Bengaluru, but the meal he enjoyed the most himself was the benne dosa at Vidyarthi Bhavan!

**Gaggan Anand, Bangkok.** As you may know, Gaggan's flagship is a 14-cover counter open for only eight services a week. Each meal is a performance as either Gaggan or his head chefs take you through the menu.

The food is now as exciting as Gaggan divides the menu into four phases: Indian, Japanese, Thai and a mix of everything. In a just world, he would get three Michelin stars.

**Maison Dali, Dubai.** This deceptively casual but super chic restaurant is a tribute to the Scottish chef Tristin Farmer's skills.



At the Osteria Francescana dinner in Bengaluru, Massimo Bottura made every plate himself; (Below) Dubai diners have discovered that Maison Dali is exceptional value.

IMAGE COURTESY CULINARY CULTURE

Farmer walked away from three stars at Singapore's Zen to do something more relaxed and less three-starred. He has only been partially successful. The vibe is relaxed and the restaurant is more accessible and friendly, but Tristin still makes excellent three-star food. It's very good value for this level of cooking, but it's doing really well, so go before they put the prices up.

**Jordnaer, Copenhagen.** The city's newest three-star restaurant has attracted global attention because chef Eric Vilbrand has had a chequered career as a gang member on the wrong side of the law. His wife Tina has changed his life and the restaurant they

run together is among the world's best. Eric is now more cuddly than menacing, and told me that he wants to cook in India. His delicious food is international cuisine with Japanese influences and will work in Delhi.

**Noma, Copenhagen.** Regardless of whether I eat at Noma or not, I love spending at least a couple of hours chatting with Rene Redzepi. He is brilliant, not just as a chef but as a man who observes our world and sees the connections.

He has been at the top of his profession for two decades now, but his enthusiasm for food and hunger for knowledge are undiminished. I am sure he values the three stars he has held for decades, but you get the sense that even if they disappeared it would make no difference to him.

He used to have a fearsome reputation, but over the last few years when I have known him relatively well, I have been struck by his warmth, his generosity of spirit and his concern for others.

The food? Need anything be said? This is Noma, after all. Always at the cutting edge of cuisine.

**Disfrutar, Barcelona.** I first came to this small, unpretentious restaurant set up by the three former head chefs of El Bulli with their own money eight years ago, and wrote that their food beat the hell out of every other Spanish chef, including the more famous Roca brothers. I had no idea then that they would win three stars and be chosen as the number one restaurant in the world.

I went back last week to find that the food was even better than I remembered. Of course, they are masters of technique, but they are also incapable of making anything that does not taste delicious. Heston Blumenthal, who has known them a long time, told me that Oriol Castro, one of Disfrutar's trio, is someone he has long admired and

I was back last week to find that the food was even better than I remembered. Of course, they are masters of technique, but they are also incapable of making anything that does not taste delicious. Heston Blumenthal, who has known them a long time, told me that Oriol Castro, one of Disfrutar's trio, is someone he has long admired and

the problem is that the chef hates publicity and Michelin stars (they gave him one anyway) and was embarrassed when Asador Etxebarri came in at number two in the World's 50 Best list. His wife and family handle the service and they make it impossible to book. On any given day 80 per cent of the guests are regulars.

I got in because of Mohammed Benabdala, the brilliant sommelier who functions as Victor's ambassador on earth. The food was fabulous and reinforced my conviction that you cannot write knowledgeably about fire cooking or roasting if you have not watched Victor in the kitchen. He wrote the manual for this style of cooking and I felt very privileged to be there.

**Asador Etxebarri, Bilbao.** I have lost count of the influential chefs who have learned fire cooking from Victor Arguizniz, the legendary chef who reinvented the techniques of cooking with fire at Etxebarri.

The problem is that the chef hates



At Asador Etxebarri, Bilbao, (above) fire cooking hits new highs under Victor Arguizniz. Jordnaer in Copenhagen is run by Eric Vilbrand (right), a former gang member, and his wife Tina. It's among the world's top restaurants.



who created many of the techniques that made El Bulli so influential.

I am hoping to persuade Oriol to come to India to reveal his secrets.

**Asador Etxebarri, Bilbao.** I have lost count of the influential chefs who have learned fire cooking from Victor Arguizniz, the legendary chef who reinvented the techniques of cooking with fire at Etxebarri.

The problem is that the chef hates publicity and Michelin stars (they gave him one anyway) and was embarrassed when Asador Etxebarri came in at number two in the World's 50 Best list. His wife and family handle the service and they make it impossible to book. On any given day 80 per cent of the guests are regulars.

I got in because of Mohammed Benabdala, the brilliant sommelier who functions as Victor's ambassador on earth. The food was fabulous and reinforced my conviction that you cannot write knowledgeably about fire cooking or roasting if you have not watched Victor in the kitchen. He wrote the manual for this style of cooking and I felt very privileged to be there.

**Disfrutar, Barcelona.** I first came to this

small, unpretentious restaurant set up by the three former head chefs of El Bulli with their own money eight years ago, and wrote that their food was special. Rene went to Mexico, fell in love with the corn and also became a taco aficionado. The Disfrutar chefs did not want to repeat El Bulli when it closed, so they opened a simple local restaurant in a small town first. Even though Disfrutar is the world's top restaurant, their heart is in Compartir, a simpler place they run, which serves uncomplicated but excellent Spanish food. Massimo loves the panini at Mumbai's Soam as much as he liked the benne dosa.

Good food is not about Michelin stars and World's 50 Best. It is about restaurants where flavour is the star.

Because you shouldn't go to restaurants to show off. You should go to have fun!

The views expressed by the columnist are personal

## { PERSONAL AGENDA }

## Jatin Varma

Founder, Comic Con India,  
@ThePopCultureCollector

Christalle Fernandes

letters@hindustantimes.com

**Currently I am:**

Thrilled with the response to the April edition of Comic Con.

**High point in life:**

Meeting Stan Lee and getting him to sign my Fantastic Four comic twice!

**Low point in life:**

Waiting out the pandemic.

**On my playlist:**

Conan O'Brien Needs A Friend; the soundtrack to High Fidelity; People Everywhere (Still Alive) by Khrangbin.

**On my speed dial:**

My wife, my mom, my local coffee place.

**Today I'm craving:**

A good ham and cheese sandwich, like always.

**App I check before bed:**

My phone alarm.

**Advice I'd give my 18-year-old self:**

Money saved is money earned.

**My secret skill:**

I can read multiple books at one time.

**A superpower I wish I had:**

Flight

**My most star-struck moment so far:**

Meeting Conan O'Brien. He hugged me and took selfies!

**My favourite bad habit:**

Caffeine hits.

**If I could travel back or forward in time,**

{ ANU MALHOTRA } AUTHOR,  
SHAMANS OF THE HIMALAYAS

**Scholars like Sudhir Kakar accept that the sacred healing rituals of shamans are more effective than psychotherapy.**

On the Books &amp; Authors podcast on Spotify

{ INTERVIEW } STEPHEN GREENBLATT,  
AUTHOR, DARK RENAISSANCE

## 'Shakespeare is like an enormous planet Jupiter'

On why reading The Bard helps us understand our times better

Kanika Sharma

letters@hindustantimes.com

**1** Can you tell us a bit about your fascination with Shakespeare. In *Will in the World*, you call him a "person who wrote the most important body of imaginative literature of the last thousand years."

My love for Shakespeare started fairly late. As a graduate student I wrote on Raleigh, not on Shakespeare. And yet Shakespeare is like an enormous planet Jupiter, and it slowly pulls everything that's floating around closer and closer to the centre.

**2** In your book *Tyrant: Shakespeare on Politics*, you comment on contemporary politics, including on Donald Trump. How can reading Shakespeare help us understand Trump's return?

Often, Shakespeare asks himself, "How can a country fall into the hands of a catastrophic leader?" And he thinks the principal answer is election, not assassination. This is the whole point of *Richard the Third*, who only becomes what he is because enough people support him. Donald Trump is not Superman who miraculously has so many powers. He has to have many people who feel they have a stake in what is being done, and want it done. The question is, why should you think about literature in this context? The reason is that great literature, Shakespeare's plays being an example, tends to show the complicated, mixed motives that lead to catastrophes of this kind.

**3** At a session at the Jaipur Literature Festival, you mentioned feeding Shakespeare's reading list to a Large Language Model. What is your stand on AI?

Shakespeare at the end of his life was reading Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, and he wrote a play based on an episode in it called *Cardenio*. It's lost (an adaptation of the play called *Double Falsehood* was found later). So, I wrote a version (performed in Kolkata in 2007) based on *Double Falsehood* and I thought it would be fun, just as an experiment, to see what happened if you fed the play into AI and said, "Write *Cardenio*". It will almost certainly fail to give us something truly powerful because AI is not human. It doesn't have the craziness that human beings have. But also, there are guardrails built into AI so it can't be misogynistic, or homophobic. It's difficult to write a Shakespeare play without crossing all kinds of lines. I asked the same AI model to do a version of *Taming The Shrew* that wasn't misogynistic, and it erased virtually the entire play.

**4** You speak of loving a work of literature, but cancel culture has overpowered this narrative.

Walter Benjamin, the great German critic, said, "Every monument of civilisation is a monument of barbarism". If you look hard at Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, you realise it's complicit in horrendous colonial acts in Ireland, but you must love the poetry simultaneously. Understand that if you simply hate it, you're missing nine-tenths of what matters. I love the works but I also want to understand what they're complicit in.

{ MIGRATION TRAGEDY } A FICTIONALISED ACCOUNT

## Cold, callous, or cruel?

Rachel Lopez

rachel.lopez@hindustantimes.com

**I**t's not a winning title. And as it happens, *Small Boat* is a small book too. Just 160 pages. Three sections. Vincent Delecroix's International Booker Prize-shortlisted novel is a work of fiction from start to finish. But it stems from a real-life incident on a chilly night in November 2021, when an inflatable boat, en route from France to the United Kingdom, capsized in the Channel, whilst still in French territorial waters near Calais and Dunkirk.

Thirty migrants were on board; they sent out numerous calls for help. But the French authorities wrongly told them they were in British waters, and

needed to direct their SOS calls to the UK. Hours passed as coastguard authorities of the two nations argued over who was responsible.

By the time rescue vessels and aircraft arrived, all but two of the passengers had either drowned or died of exposure, including a pregnant woman and three children.

It is the single largest loss of life in the English Channel since the International Organisation for Migration began collecting data in 2014.

Here's where Vincent Delecroix's story begins. *Small Boat* is a fictional account of the event, narrated by the woman coastguard officer who took the calls on the French side.

Accused of failing in her duty, and now facing an

inquiry, she refuses to be held more responsible than others for this disaster. Her part-internal monologue, part-uncomfortable conversation makes up the thorny first section.

This isn't a neat little Netflix re-enactment about *What Happened That Night*. Phone records show that among the woman's many exchanges with the freezing migrants, were the statements: "I didn't ask you to leave," and "You will not be saved". In addition, the investigating police officer also happens to look like the woman, perhaps 10 years older. It's a genius



**Small Boat**  
Vincent Delecroix;  
Translated by  
Helen Stevenson  
160pp, ₹399  
Simon & Schuster India

device — the investigator serves as both the mirror and the conscience, while the coastguard officer may well be a synecdoche for France.

The woman insists that she's neutral, that she's trained to view the life of a migrant as no more or less valuable than that of a stranded heir after a party on a yacht.

She rationalises that being efficient is more useful than being empathetic in rescue operations. But it is callous insensitivity hiding behind indifference. The notion that humans making treacherous crossings to safer shores are "so caught up with not wanting to die", irritates her. Her "I didn't ask

you to leave," is not what sank the boat. But Delecroix's narrator has no remorse. She is haunted not by corpses, but her own recording playing over the evening news. It's the inspector who often struggles to find the right words to say.

The French-to-English translation is elegant. At one point the woman admits, "I failed to make the distinction when I should have. And when I shouldn't have, I made the distinction". But the testimony is, at best, a thought experiment, philosophising an ethical dilemma that shouldn't be a dilemma at all.

There's a brief Section II, a sharp, quiet description of the drowning, for anyone who needs reminding of what migrants risk for a chance at a hard life in a safer country.

*Small Boat* closes with a look at other players in the story: the coast guard's far-right ex, Eric, their young daughter Léa, and Julien, the cynical but compla-

cent colleague who was on duty that night too. It's a reminder of the banality of evil.

Like soldiers at Auschwitz who claimed to be just doing their jobs.

Like the Delhi Police who let a corpse lie on a road for 14 hours in 2010 while they argued about jurisdiction.

Like the officials at UP's Government Railway Police and Bareilly Police Station after a man had been run over by a train in 2015 — they squabbled for so long over who should collect the body that by the time they picked it up, another 16 trains had run over it.

Delecroix's book is not about the culpability of one woman; it is instead about the idea that we are all culpable. The author is a philosopher. Expect some spiralling passages about the difference between presuming innocence and proving it. But look past them too.

Saving lives is not that complicated.



Migrants' belongings on the beach of Wimereux, on November 25, 2021, in Calais, France. At least 31 people died trying to cross the Channel to the UK in an inflatable dinghy. *The Small Boat* is based on this incident.

{ HT PICKS } NEW READS

## OF LOVE AND FAMILY, RAVES AND KAFKA

Born in Germany to Afghan parents, raised in public housing graffiti with reverse swastikas, drawn to philosophy, photography and sex, Nila has spent her adolescence disappointing her family while searching for her voice as a young woman and an artist. In the haze of Berlin's legendary nightlife, Nila meets Marlowe, an American writer whose fading literary celebrity opens her eyes to a life of personal and artistic freedom.

As Nila finds herself pulled further into Marlowe's controlling orbit, ugly, barely submerged racial tensions begin to roil Germany, as well as Nila's family and community. After a year of running from her future, she stops to ask herself: Who does she want to be?

A story of love and family, raves and Kafka, staying up all night and surviving the mistakes of youth, *Good Girl* has been shortlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction.



**Good Girl**  
Aria Aber  
348pp, ₹699  
Bloomsbury

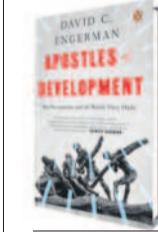
## LOOKING FOR WHAT WORKS

The battle against global poverty that began after World War 2 was a major undertaking engaging economists, activists and scholars.

At front and centre were six remarkable economists: Amartya Sen, Mahmood Singh, Mahbub ul Haq, Jagdish Bhagwati, Rehman Sobhan, and Lal Jayawardena, all born as colonial subjects in the British empire and all of whom studied at Cambridge University. They represented a new figure on the world scene — the Third World development expert — and played a crucial role in global debates about poverty and development.

*Apostles of Development* examines their different economic doctrines and the ongoing debate surrounding economic theory in poor countries compared to rich ones. Their lives reveal how development did not begin with textbook case-studies but with real-world attempts to solve very specific and pressing problems.

Finally, the book explores ways in which such development has been a Global South project first, aiming to improve the conditions of the world's poorest countries.



**Apostles of Development**  
David C Engerman  
560pp, ₹1,299, India Viking

## EXTENDING THE VISUAL ARTS

The essays in this volume examine the elements that shape game play and game spaces, including camera angles, scenography, character design and the stylistic choices game designers make.

These elements define a game's visual identity and impact. Some games, however, are about art itself and its role in shaping cultural and social narratives. *The Palace on the Hill* follows a boy who discovers ancient ruins near his village and embarks on an exploration of Pahari painting traditions, learning to paint in those styles. *Raji* integrates South Asian and Balinese myths and artistic influences, including shadow puppetry, into its scenography and narratives.

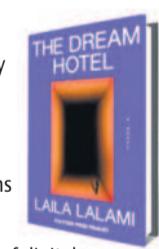
The Indian gaming industry employs artists trained in various painting traditions, who bring their backgrounds and influences to bear on game design. This issue of *Marg* looks at how videogames extend the visual arts while expanding established modes of spectatorship and the discourse of art.



**Video Games**  
124pp, ₹500  
Marg Magazine

## on the web

**READ:** The Dream Hotel by Laila Lalami is set in a United States of the near future in which citizens are constantly monitored through forms of digital scrutiny. The latest of these is an implant that records dreams. The dystopian novel effectively explores the erosion of autonomy in a world of algorithmic policing.



Scan the QR code to read the review by Sanjay Sipahimalani



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**buzz**

PFC strengthens internal audit function with strategic leadership

In alignment with global best practices in corporate governance and in recognition of the pivotal role that internal audit plays as the third line of defence in risk management, PFC further fortified its internal audit function, and accordingly, DV Subba Rao, Executive Director, was appointed as Head of Internal Audit, effective May 9, 2025, for a period of three years or until the date of his superannuation.

**SRMIST commits Rs 1 crore to PMNR and education aid**

In an expression of national solidarity and humanitarian commitment, SRMIST pledged a contribution of Rs 1 crore to PMNR to aid victims of the terrorist attack in Pahalgam. Dr TR Paarivendhar, Founder Chancellor of SRMIST, conveyed the institute's condolences and unwavering support through a letter addressed to the PM Narendra Modi. The letter recognised the courage and sacrifice of the brave individuals who lost their lives in the tragic incident.

**SIDBI releases in-depth report on Indian MSME sector**

On May 13, 2025, SIDBI released a comprehensive report titled 'Understanding the Indian MSME Sector: Progress and Challenges'. Based on a survey of over 2,000 MSMEs across 19 industries, the report highlights sector growth, credit gaps, digital trends, and regional and gender-based insights. It notes increased formalisation, yet persistent credit access issues—especially for micro and women-led enterprises. The study estimates a Rs 30 lakh crore credit gap.

**Ayurveda Day to be celebrated on September 23 every year**

The Government of India officially designated Sept 23 as the date for celebrating Ayurveda Day each year. This change, notified through a Gazette Notification dated Mar 23, marks a significant shift from the earlier practice of observing Ayurveda Day on Dhanteras, which follows a variable lunar calendar. Ayurveda Day was commemorated annually to promote Ayurveda as a scientific, evidence-based, and holistic system of medicine that plays a pivotal role in preventive healthcare and wellness.

**BSES' game-changing BESS Project draws interest from Telangana Deputy CM**

Telangana's Deputy CM Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, accompanied by Sandeep Kumar Sultania, IAS, Principal Secretary (Planning Department), visited BSES Rajdhani Power Limited's (BRPL) soon-to-be-inaugurated 20 MW / 40 MWh Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) at Kilkil, South Delhi — India's first commercially approved and South Asia's largest standalone BESS at the distribution level. Sunil Kumar Sharma, Director (NRE), Ministry of Power, Gol also graced the event. They were welcomed by senior BSES officials led by Amal Sinha, Director and Group CEO of BSES, and Abhishek Ranjan, CEO, BRPL, along with key project partners — IndiGrid, GEAPP, and amperiorhe.

**Narayana reigns supreme in CBSE Exam Results**

Aeroprime Group launched Glid, a next-generation, unified airline retailing platform that connects leading airlines to travel sellers through a single connection, plug-and-play technology. Through a single API integration, OTAs, consolidators, and travel sellers can instantly access airline fares, ancillaries, and inventory from an expanding global network of Full-Service Carriers (FSCs) and Low-Cost Carriers (LCCs), including NDC and XML API-based content. It empowers airlines to accelerate time to market and unlock new opportunities.

**KP Group delivers stellar performance in FY 24-25**

KP Group reported outstanding financial performance for FY 2024-25, with record revenues and profits, underscoring its operational excellence and strong growth momentum. The Surat-headquartered conglomerate, comprising three listed entities - KPI Green Energy Ltd, KP Energy Ltd, and KP Green Engineering Ltd - recorded a consolidated revenue of Rs 3,415 crore in the financial year 2024-25, marking an increase of 82.7% from Rs 1,868 crore in FY 2023-24. The combined PAT of the three companies surged by 101.6%.

**Veterinary College buildings in Nagaland inaugurated**

SS Chouhan, Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare and Rural Development inaugurated the Administrative-cum-Academic Block of College of

**NHRC urges states to end manual waste cleaning**

NHRC, India, in a letter to all the Chief Secretaries and Administrators of States and Union Territories, asked to ensure the immediate implementation of the 14 directives issued by the Supreme Court in its landmark 2023 judgment (Dr Balram Singh v/s Union of India, 2023 INSC 950), aimed at eradicating the inhuman and caste-based practice of manual scavenging and hazardous sewer cleaning. The Commission noted that the practice constitutes a grave violation of human rights, especially the right to life with dignity and equality.

Veterinary Sciences and Animal Husbandry, Central Agricultural University, Jalukie, Nagaland, in the presence of Deputy CM, Nagaland T R Zelang, and others.

**'Peaks of Courage' puts Nepal's peaks in spotlight**

In a first-of-its-kind cultural movement, Nepal is shining a spotlight beyond Everest to celebrate its 6K-8K peaks. Launched in partnership with the Nepal Tourism Board and Discovery Channel, Mountain Dew's "Peaks of Courage" campaign highlights the grit of climbers while promoting Nepal's untapped mountainous terrain. The initiative aims to boost tourism and generate revenue for local communities. Adventure seekers can explore detailed route plans, difficulty levels, infrastructure, weather updates, and Sherpa insights.

**AVV announces AEEE 2025 results and commences CSAP**

Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham published the AEEE 2025 ranks on May 16. The exam witnessed a numerous aspirants from across the country and abroad, vying for admission into the University's BTech programs offered at its campuses in Amaravati, Amarapuri, Bengaluru, Chennai, Coimbatore, Delhi NCR and Nagercoil. CSAP 2025 Registration and Choice Filling is now open through the official portal: <https://aeee.amrita.edu>. Candidates can choose from multiple engineering branches across 7 world-class campuses. The seat allotment process will be conducted in multiple rounds. Both AEEE 2025 rank holders and JEE Mains 2025 applicants are eligible to participate in the CSAP.

**Sri Chaitanya School, all India topper in CBSE 10<sup>th</sup>**

The Director of Sri Chaitanya Schools, Seema said that in majority of the States where Sri Chaitanya School has its branches, the School stood in the No 1 position in the Nationwide CBSE 2024-25 Results, along with the highest Pass Percentage and the highest Average Mark. She said that no other school in India could achieve the Results achieved by Sri Chaitanya. She said that in the Results of JEE Mains also, the students of Sri Chaitanya School got the 1<sup>st</sup> Rank in All India Open Category, 19 students got Ranks below 100.

**PNB launched Monthly Retail Outreach Programme**

Punjab National Bank (PNB) introduced its comprehensive Monthly Retail Outreach Programme—a nationwide strategic initiative that was organised on May 15, 2025 to reach out to pan India customers for offering tailored financial solutions in various retail lending segments. PNB Monthly Retail Outreach Programme brings a wide range of lending solutions under one platform, providing accessibility to essential financial products with competitive interest rates and minimal TAT & documentation requirements.



■ Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murli Dar Mohan inaugurated the new ATC Tower cum Technical Block cum Fire Station at Kolhapur Airport, and flagged off the inaugural Star Air flight between Kolhapur and Nagpur.



■ Devayya Society and Saifdarjung Hospital's Blood Bank conducted "Operation Sindoor," a blood donation drive collecting 85 units of blood. It was inaugurated by Prataprao Jadhav, Union Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare & Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Ministry of Ayush.



■ SK Gupta, CMD, GAIL (India) said that, the robust performance during FY25 was primarily driven by better physical & financial performance across all major segments. Despite global economy challenges, the company reached unprecedented financial milestones.



■ Union Minister for Electronics & Information Technology, Railways, and Information & Broadcasting, Ashwini Vaishnav inaugurated two new state-of-the-art design facilities of Renesas Electronics India Pvt Ltd, located in Noida and Bengaluru.



■ On the occasion of GAAD on May 15, the Inclusive India Summit was organised at India International Centre. The event was in collaboration with DEPwD, Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, SBI Foundation and NAB, Delhi, and supported by APD and Mission Accessibility.



■ Franchise India announced the 21<sup>st</sup> edition of Franchise India 2025, a landmark entrepreneurial event poised to shape the future of business in Asia. The expo will be held on May 17-18, 2025, at the prestigious Yashashoo, India International Convention and Expo Centre, New Delhi.



■ ICG successfully rescued six crew members of cargo vessel MSV SALAMATH, which sank in the early hours of May 14. At 1215 hrs on May 14, ICG received a distress alert from MT Epic Susui, reporting the sighting of a small boat adrift with six survivors onboard, off the coast of Karnataka.



■ The Union Minister of Communications and Minister for Development of North Eastern Region, Jyotiraditya Scindia chaired a press meet for the Rising North East Investor Summit. Minister of State, Ministry of DoNER - Sukanta Majumdar, Secretary, and other senior officials were present.

<b>S. E. RAILWAY – TENDER</b>
E-Tender Notice No.: KGPW-CW-AMDBSAMCFTRT-25; Date: 15.05.2025.
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Name of the work: Comprehensive annual maintenance contract for axle mounted disc brake system of LHB coaches (for FTRTIL make). Quantity: As per NIT. Place of work: Kharagpur Workshop, South Eastern Railway, Post-Kharagpur, Dist.- Paschim Midnapore, Pin-721301. Tender Value: ₹ 48,66,46,184.52. Earnest Money: ₹ 25,83,200. Contract Period: 12 months from date of issue of LOA. Closing Date and Time of Tender: On 23.06.2025 at 15:00 hrs. Cost of Tender Document: Nil. Detailed tender document is available in the e-Portal website <a href="https://www.ireps.gov.in">https://www.ireps.gov.in</a> . (PR-165)

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Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> 44511 C349/25

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The last date of submission of the E-Tender for "Augmentation of Transformation Capacity from 132/33 KV, 3 x 40 MVAT/F to 132/33 KV, 2x 40+1 x 80 MVA Transformer at 132 KV Substation Majra" against Tender Specification no. PTCU4-E-Tender/C&P-II/SS-22/2024-25 is hereby extended upto 29.05.2025 15:30 Hrs. For more details please visit e-tender website [www.uktenders.gov.in](http://www.uktenders.gov.in) (tender id no. 2025\_PTCU4\_82182\_1) and for e-tender corrigendum notice our website www.ptcl.org All other terms and conditions shall remain same.

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# FMCG companies set to keep deal street buzzing

Dabur to Emami chase M&As in search of new markets, customers

Suneera Tandon

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**NEW DELHI:** India's cash-rich makers of staples to shampoos will press ahead with big-ticket acquisitions as they chase high-growth, premium targets to cushion themselves from an urban consumption slowdown.

Dabur India Ltd, Marico Ltd and Emami Ltd will be on the lookout for mergers and acquisitions (M&As) that help them enter new categories such as premium personal care and wellness, build a digital-first portfolio and expand reach in the traditional market, executives said at earnings calls.

"If there is a new brand or a new category to be addressed, that is where M&A comes in and supplements our efforts of organic business with inorganic business," Mohit Malhotra, chief executive officer at Dabur India said during the company's post-earnings call on 7 May.

Large fast-moving consumer



India's FMCG industry reported 11% year-on-year value growth in the March quarter.

goods (FMCG) makers built mass-market portfolios of soaps, salt, biscuits, shampoos and more for a broader reach. But new, urban consumers are increasingly buying skin serums, muesli, supplements, pet food, and healthy snacks or beverages. Some new brands, especially online, are even gaining market share from incum-

bents. This is happening as demand for mass-market products remained under pressure due to heightened inflation.

India's FMCG industry reported 11% year-on-year value growth in the March quarter, while volumes grew 5.1%, according to data sourced from NielsenIQ. However, rural demand grew four times faster

than urban growth, where consumption decelerated, it said.

Rural demand primarily fuelled deals worth \$2.1 billion in 2024, according to Jayakrishnan Pillai, partner at Deloitte India. The consulting firm expects 6-8% growth for the sector in 2025-2026 compared with 5-6% in the previous two years, bolstered by improving urban demand, stable rural consumption, reduction in personal income tax, and lower inflation.

FMCG companies have continued their post-pandemic acquisition blitz. Last week, Dabur outlined a seven-pronged approach as part of a strategy refresh with plans to invest in core brands, expand in premium categories, update products and pursue acquisitions to build a "future-fit" portfolio.

The maker of Vatika oils and Real fruit drinks had last year acquired 51% of hair care company Sesa Care Pvt. Ltd, expanding its presence in the ₹900 crore ayurvedic hair oil market. The company cited "substantial revenue and cost synergies."

Meanwhile, Marico's investments include Just Herbs, Plix, Beardo and True Elements. All of these are relatively new brands and categories.

## Non-tax revenue to help meet fiscal deficit goal

Rhik Kundu & Subhash Narayan

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**NEW DELHI:** India is looking to maintain fiscal discipline backed by higher non-tax revenue, despite simmering global trade tensions and a potential spike in defence spending.

The centre aims to achieve the fiscal deficit target of 4.4% of gross domestic product (GDP) in FY26 despite uncertainties, two people aware of the discussions said. India's fiscal deficit in FY25 stood at 4.8% of GDP under revised estimates.

The Union budget had set a non-tax revenue target of ₹5.83 lakh crore—₹47,738 crore from interest receipts, ₹3.25 lakh crore from dividends and profits comprising contributions from the central bank, state-run banks, central public sector enterprises (CPSEs), and ₹2.07 lakh crore from other non-tax sources.

"This reflects a calibrated fiscal strategy anchored in revenue strength rather than expenditure cuts," the first of the two people said on the condition of anonymity.

In FY25, non-tax revenue stood at ₹5.31 lakh crore (revised estimates), according to the budget estimates for FY26.

In FY26, the Centre expects an all-time high ₹2.3-2.5 lakh



In FY25, non-tax revenue stood at ₹5.31 lakh crore.

a share of GDP would also depend on the economic growth rate and the inflation trend, in addition to adjustments to spending and changes in receipts.

India's economy is projected to grow between 6.2% and 6.8% in 2025-26, with forecasts varying due to global uncertainties and domestic factors.

The Economic Survey 2024-25 projected India's GDP to grow between 6.3% and 6.8% in 2025-26, reflecting confidence in the economy's underlying resilience.

In contrast, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) trimmed its growth forecast for the country to 6.2%, citing global trade tensions and policy uncertainty, particularly US tariffs.

On inflation, the RBI expects Consumer Price Index-based inflation to remain stable at 4%, assuming a normal monsoon and steady commodity prices.

"The fiscal roadmap for 2025-26 strikes a balance between consolidation and growth," the second person said on the condition of anonymity.

"By leveraging strong non-tax revenues instead of resorting to aggressive spending cuts, the Centre aims to preserve growth momentum while maintaining fiscal discipline, even in a volatile global environment," the person added.

To be sure, the fiscal deficit as



Gensol EV Lease owes Ireda ₹218 crore.

REUTERS

## IREDA FILES 2ND BANKRUPTCY CASE AGAINST GENSOLO

Reuters

feedback@livemint.com

The Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (Ireda) on Friday said that it had filed a bankruptcy application against Gensol Engineering's electric vehicle (EV) leasing unit, two days after filing a bankruptcy case against the troubled company.

Gensol EV Lease Ltd owes a total default amount of ₹218 crore, the state-owned agency said.

Gensol filed its first bankruptcy application against Gensol, a solar energy company, on Wednesday for an amount of ₹510 crore.

Gensol had also procured electric vehicles on behalf of the ride-hailing service Blusmart.

Gensol's former managing director, Anmol Singh Jaggi, is Blusmart's co-founder.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) had earlier alleged in April that Gensol had defaulted on its loans.

These loans also includes the ones taken to finance the electric vehicles purchased for Blusmart.

Ireda had filed a complaint with the Economic Offences Wing (EoW) against Gensol in April, alleging falsification of documents.

It also initiated an internal review.

Power Finance Corp. Ltd, which happened to be yet another lender to Gensol, has also filed similar allegations against the company.

## Hyundai preps for shift to hybrid EVs

Ayaan Kartik

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**NEW DELHI:** Hyundai Motor India Ltd is preparing to introduce hybrid electric vehicles over the next few years, seeking to include more clean-fuel cars in its overall portfolio.

India's second-largest passenger vehicle manufacturer had just a 1% contribution from electric vehicles in its overall 2024-25 product mix. Hybrids have both gasoline-electric engines and electric motors.

At a post-earnings media briefing on Friday, Hyundai Motor India's management refrained from setting a specific target for increasing the number of clean fuel cars in the company's overall product portfolio. However, the company expects to exceed the domestic industry's average for hybrid vehicles by 2029-30, they said.

Hyundai Motor India, a subsidiary of South Korean automotive giant Hyundai Motor Co., plans to launch 26 vehicle models in India by 2030-20 of which will be powered by conventional internal combustion engines (ICE), while the other six will be electric vehicles. This product pipeline doesn't include Hyundai Motor India's plan to launch hybrid vehicles.

When it does introduce hybrid vehicles in India, the company will join Maruti Suzuki India Ltd, India's largest carmaker, in having a comprehensive portfolio of ICE, hybrid, and pure electric vehicles.

"We feel that in India all kinds of technologies have a space. One solution cannot work and we need to leverage all kinds of technologies to reach the carbon neutrality goal," Tarun Garg, chief operating officer, Hyundai Motor India, said at the media briefing.

Hyundai Motor India's total revenue in FY25 declined 1% to ₹69,192 crore as domestic sales



Hyundai's EVs made up just 1% of its FY25 product mix.

## J&K seeks stake in NHPC's Sawalkot project

Rituraj Baruah

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**NEW DELHI:** Jammu & Kashmir is negotiating for a stake and revenue share in the 1,856MW Sawalkot hydro power project on the Chenab river with state-run NHPC Ltd, as it seeks to secure a direct income stream, said three people in the know seeking anonymity.

NHPC estimates that the project will require an investment of ₹22,700 crore.

The state-run firm has spent ₹973 crore on a detailed project

report (DPR).

The project is expected to generate an annual revenue of approximately ₹4,024 crore at a projected tariff of ₹5.5 per unit and a plant load factor of around 45%, according to industry estimates.

The J&K government is in talks with the Union power ministry to either develop the Sawalkot project independently or with the state-owned Jammu Kashmir Power Development Corp. (JKPDC), or through the joint venture (JV) Chenab Valley Power Projects

(CVPP), in which JKPDC holds a 44.71% stake, according to the people.

If JKPDC secures a stake and a share of revenue, it could earn around ₹1,800 crore annually, according to one of the three people. "The decision is yet to be made on whether NHPC, JKPDC, or the JV will undertake the project."

NHPC, meanwhile, has sought concessions on state goods and services tax (GST) as well as on water cess to keep tariffs viable, a second person said, adding that if a decision is

taken swiftly and the project receives central clearance, Sawalkot could be completed and commissioned by October 2023.

"J&K government may look at offering some concessions in case, if it gets stake in the project as a joint venture and the Centre provides incentives for equity stake by the state," a third person said.

Queried sent to NHPC and Union power ministry remained unanswered till press time. JKPDC officials could not be reached immediately.

An NHPC official, requesting anonymity, said the state department may find it challenging to undertake the project independently given the high capital requirement. "They may push more for the JV route, as they have in other projects," the official said.

If the state government takes over the project, it will need to reimburse NHPC for the DPR amount, plus interest. In the case of a joint venture, it would be required to pay a proportional share of the DPR costs, the NHPC official added.

## Low yields and slow uptake to test India's green rice plans

Vijay Roy & Dhrendra Kumar

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**NEW DELHI:** India is changing the way rice is cultivated. The government plans to implement a technique known as direct seeding of rice (DSR) in over 10 million hectares of farmland as part of its strategy to shift towards more sustainable agricultural practices and reduce carbon emissions.

The move is aimed at aligning with India's broader climate goals, particularly efforts to reduce emissions from rice farming, a water- and energy-intensive crop. However, the initiative faces two challenges: low yields and reluctance of farmers to accept the method of rice cultivation in about 25% of the country's paddy fields. This shift to DSR will eventually help overcome this resistance.

"Direct seeding of rice is a water-saving and climate-smart alternative. We identified 10 million hectares where this can be scaled up. The challenge now is to close the productivity gap

with research-led solutions," said Dr M.L. Jat, secretary in the Department of Agricultural Research and Education and director-general of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

Traditionally, rice sowing involves several steps like preparing the nursery, ploughing, puddling and transplanting seedlings in flooded fields.

Puddling—mixing of water and soil for cultivation—is an environmental concern as it leads to the release of methane, which is a potent greenhouse gas. DSR refers to a cultivation method where seeds are sown directly in the field without transplanting seedlings, thus saving water, labour and time compared to traditional methods.

This shift to DSR is part of the union agriculture ministry's policy to reduce area under conventional paddy cultivation,

currently at 43.42 million hectares, the highest ever. DSR can cut water consumption up to 35% and curb methane emissions by 30%.

States with water-stressed regions and overexploited aquifers will be the key beneficiaries of this transition to DSR.

Small and micro enterprises, are held by women, according to a report from the statistics ministry.

At the end of November 2024, women operated 27.7 million demat accounts, up from 6.6 million at the end of March 2021, as per this report. Also, women hold 301.3 million Jan Dhan or no-frills bank accounts at end of December 2024, more than the 240 million held by men.

The consistent rise in the number of women PAN holders reflects a positive trend towards financial inclusion and empowerment of women in India, said Amit Maheshwari, tax partner at AKM Global, a tax and consulting firm. Maheshwari said the steady rise in PAN allotments to women by the Income Tax Department indicates their growing participation in the formal economy.

The trend of rising women PAN holders aligns with the steady rise in women labour force participation rate from 23.3% in FY18 (July to June period) to 41.7% in FY24, driven by more rural women entering the work force.

Better employment opportunities for the marginalized sec-

## CLSA, Investec cut IndusInd outlook on audit concerns

Gopika Gopakumar

gopika.g@htlive.com

**MUMBAI:** Foreign brokerages including Investec and CLSA have downgraded their recommendations on the shares of IndusInd Bank Ltd after the lender flagged two more accounting issues in its internal audits.

IndusInd Bank on Thursday said its internal audit department had found ₹674 crore to be "incorrectly recorded as interest" in its microfinance book over three quarters of fiscal 2024-25. This amount was, however, fully reversed as on 10 January, the bank informed the stock exchanges. The audit team also revealed ₹595 crore worth of unsubstantiated balances in the lender's 'other assets' account, adding these balances were set off against corresponding balances in its 'other liabilities' account in January. The

audit team had launched a separate investigation following a whistleblower complaint alleging concerns over IndusInd Bank's 'other assets' and 'other liabilities' accounts.

Shares of IndusInd Bank fell by over 15% since 10 March, when the lender flagged the discrepancies which eventually resulted in a financial hit of ₹1,960 crore on its balance sheet for fiscal 2024-25.

CLSA on Friday had downgraded its recommendation on IndusInd Bank shares to 'hold' from 'outperform' and also lowered its target price to ₹780 per

share from ₹900 before.

Investec downgraded its recommendation on IndusInd Bank's stock to 'sell' with a target price of ₹650.

Shares of IndusInd Bank fell by over 15% since 10 March, when the lender flagged the discrepancies which eventually resulted in a financial hit of ₹1,960 crore on its balance sheet for fiscal 2024-25.

## Behind PAN data, signs of women's economic rise

Gireesh Chandra Prasad

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**NEW DELHI:** Indian women are striding into economic activity more than ever before, if tax department data on permanent account numbers (PAN) is anything to go by.

More women than men secured permanent account numbers (PAN) in the last two fiscal years.

cash deposits, as well as buying stocks, property and four-wheelers. Welfare funds are usually transferred to beneficiaries' bank accounts, which are linked to a PAN.

The trend of rising women PAN holders aligns with the



More women than men secured permanent account numbers in the last two fiscal years.

steady rise in women labour force participation rate from 23.3% in FY18 (July to June period) to 41.7% in FY24, driven by more rural women entering the work force.

Better employment opportunities for the marginalized sec-

&lt;p

## NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

## E-Tender Notice

Chief Project Manager, Gati Shakti, N.C. Railway, Jhansi for and behalf of President of India invites sealed "Open Tender" through on Line (E-Tender) for the following work.

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E-Tender No.: JHS-ENGG-GSU-2025-05 | Approx Cost : ₹ 298087004.54

Earliest Money : 1640400.00 | Date of closing Tender: 05/06/2025

Date of Completion/period from issue acceptance letter: 12 month

Tender online can be submitted up to 10:30 hrs on 05.06.2025. For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

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## SPORT

## Restart to see strategic tweaks

With some overseas stars not returning, focus will be on home grown talents to deliver wins in IPL

Somshuvra Laha

somshuvra.laha@htlive.com

**KOLKATA:** At a ground he calls home, Virat Kohli will walk out in the reds of Royal Challengers Bengaluru five days after announcing his retirement from Test cricket. No points for guessing who the Chinnaswamy Stadium will root for even though this is a different format altogether.

It won't be an exaggeration to say Kolkata Knight Riders will be up against a very vociferous 12th man in this all-important clash as the race for the playoffs resume after the IPL had to be paused for the flare-up between India and Pakistan.

Second on the points table with 16 points, RCB need one win to secure a playoffs berth while winning all three would guarantee a top-two finish with 22 points. Two of those games are at home, and a winning start on Saturday would be just the sort of momentum RCB would be seeking.

Most of their overseas players have returned, barring Josh Hazlewood, who according to the Sydney Morning Herald is supposed to join ahead of the play-offs. The 34-year-old Australia pacer—who has taken 18 wickets in 10 games at an average of 17.28 and economy of 8.44—is in rehabilitation because of a shoulder niggle. "With Josh, he's our only player not here at the moment," said Mo Bobat, director of cricket at RCB. "He's recovering from his shoulder niggle that he had. He's doing that with Cricket Australia. Our medical team and their medical teams have been liaising on what that detail looks like and he's just taking that day by day and he's trying to improve his shot."

**Star oops out**

Mitchell Starc is the most high-profile overseas player to opt out of the final phase even though most of his teammates have returned to India. According to Australian media reports, Starc has informed Delhi Capitals of his decision.

Bought for ₹1.75 crore by DC, the Australian fast bowler has taken 14 wickets at an average of 26. DC has signed Bangladesh left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman but he has been granted an NOC only for the league stage. Rahman is slated to leave for Pakistan for a five-match T20I series

**Comeback men**

IPL will resume today after the April 8 match between PBKS and DC was abandoned due to the India-Pakistan conflict. Here is the list of overseas players who will be available/unavailable for the rest of the IPL:

**GUJARAT TITANS**

**Available:** Jos Buttler (available till the league stage, to be replaced by Kusal Mendis for playoffs), Sherfane Rutherford, Kagiso Rabada (till league stage), Rashid Khan, Karim Janat, Dasun Shanaka, Gerald Coetze

**ROYAL CHALLENGERS BENGALURU**

**Available:** Romario Shepherd, Phil Salt, Jacob Bethell (till league stage), Tim David, Liam Livingstone, Lungi Ngidi (till league stage), Nuwan Thushara

**Unavailable:** Josh Hazlewood

**PUNJAB KINGS**

**Available:** Mitchell Owen, Azmatullah Omarzai, Marco Jansen (till league stage), Xavier Bartlett, Kyle Jamieson (replacement for injured Lockie Ferguson)

**Unavailable:** Josh Inglis, Marcus Stoinis, Aaron Hardie

**MUMBAI INDIANS**

**Available:** Will Jacks (till league stage, to be replaced by Jonny Bairstow for playoffs), Ryan Rickleton (till league stage, to be replaced by Richard Gleeson for playoffs), Bevon Jacobs, Corbin Bosch (till league stage), Mitchell Santner, Trent Boult, Reece Topley, Mujeeb Ur Rahman



that begins on May 25.

Faf du Plessis and Tristan Stubbs have returned, but Stubbs will leave after the league phase for the WTC final at Lord's. Australia captain Pat Cummins and batter Travis Head will be starting for Sunrisers Hyderabad, who have been eliminated from the playoff race along with Chennai

Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals. Tim David's return boosts RCB's lower middle order while Xavier Bartlett and Mitch Owen have joined Punjab Kings.

All the South Africans named in the squad for the WTC final will leave after the league phase but Caribbean participation has been ensured till the final after

POINTS TABLE					
Team	P	W	L	NRR	Pts
1 GT	11	8	3	0.793	16
2 RCB	11	8	3	0.482	16
3 PBKS*	11	7	3	0.376	15
4 MI	12	7	5	1.156	14
5 DC*	11	6	4	0.362	13
6 KKR*	12	5	6	0.193	11
7 LSG	11	5	6	-0.469	10
8 SRH*(E)	11	3	7	-1.192	7
9 RR(E)	12	3	9	-0.718	6
10 CSK(E)	12	3	9	-0.992	6

\*One match abandoned; E=Eliminated

"Shamar Joseph remains in the squad. John Campbell will replace Sherfane Rutherford for the Ireland leg, and Shimron Hetmyer currently unavailable for the Ireland leg, will join the squad for the England matches."

From the English contingent, Jofra Archer, Jamie Overton and Sam Curran are not returning for the remainder of the IPL. Jos Buttler, Will Jacks, Liam Livingstone and Jacob Bell are back but Buttler is expected to leave after the league phase.

In view of the changed status of quite a few overseas players, the onus is now on the Indian players to step up more than ever. Strategies will be tweaked for some teams, and redrawn for some, but the good thing is that given how the role of Indians have grown in the past few years, most IPL franchises are expected to deal with any crisis that may arise due to unavailability of the overseas players.

The state of preparedness wasn't hampered too despite the sudden break, according to KKR's Manish Pandey.

"It (the mid-tournament break) doesn't really change much because as professional cricketers, we know what's to be done. We definitely knew that the tournament would resume, but we didn't know how soon. But it was good that we didn't have a long break," said Pandey at the pre-match press conference in Bengaluru on Friday. "We were still in the gym and doing our work on the game. The whole team is here and everyone is ready to go and we are looking forward to having a great game."

Leading the table with 16 points, Gujarat Titans (GT) are one win away from cementing a place in the playoffs. Punjab Kings (PBKS) are on 15 points and need two wins out of three, while Mumbai Indians (MI) are fourth with 14 points.

**Rohit gets a stand**

The Rohit Sharma Stand was inaugurated at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Friday.

ANSHUMAN POYREKAR/HT

**Easwaran to lead India A, Nair back****HT Correspondent**

sportsdesk@hindustantimes.com

**MUMBAI:** Abhimanyu Easwaran, who was in the running to make a Test debut in Australia, was on Friday named captain of the 18-member India A squad to take on England Lions.

Shubman Gill, frontrunner to become the next Test captain, and Tamil Nadu opener Sai Sudharshan will reach England in time for the second of the three red-ball matches, which will serve as a dress rehearsal for India's upcoming five-Test series in England, starting June 20.

The first of the three tour games will be played from May 30 to June 2. This match will serve as an opportunity for Easwaran, 29, to push his case. It will primarily involve players whose IPL teams are out (like Yashasvi Jaiswal) or likely to miss out on playoffs.

An exception has been made for Delhi Capitals' Karun Nair, an indication that the middle order batter is in contention for a Test return; more so considering the middle order shakeup in the offing after Virat Kohli's retirement.

The squad also marks the return of Ishan Kishan to red-ball contention.

After losing his national contract last year for giving domestic cricket a miss, the Jharkhand wicketkeeper batter is slowly making his way back. With the arrival of Dhruv Jurel though, Kishan may still have to bide his time for the second wicketkeeper's berth behind Rishabh Pant.

Interestingly, both pace bowlers all-rounders Nitish Kumar, Shardul Thakur, Ishan Kishan (WK), Manav Suthar, Tanush Kotian, Mukesh Kumar, Akash Deep, Harshit Rana, Anshul Kamboj, Khaleel Ahmed, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Sarfaraz Khan, Tushar Deshpande, Harsh Dubey.

series in Australia, scoring a hundred at Melbourne, he wasn't quite up to scratch with the ball. There is a possibility that selectors could pick both Nitish and Thakur in the main squad to offer the team management more all-round options. Thakur, who Nitish replaced in Australia, is a more seasoned bowling resource with experience of English conditions.

The selectors have picked plenty of fast bowlers in the A squad from Mukesh Kumar, Akash Deep, Harshit Rana, Anshul Kamboj, Tushar Deshpande and left-arm bowler Khaleed Ahmed. With Jasprit Bumrah unlikely to feature in all the Test matches to manage his workload and Mohammed Shami's bowling form under a scanner, the shadow tour will serve as an opportunity for the team to narrow down on the options for the opening Test at Leeds.

Similarly, batter Sarfaraz Khan would look to use the opportunity to stake his claim after getting no game time in Australia. Ruturaj Gaikwad has made it back, recovering from his elbow injury.

Offie Tanush Kotian and left-arm spinners Manav Suthar and Harsh Dubey are the three spinners picked.

The last of the three tour matches will be an intra-squad match to be played against the India senior team, starting June 13 at Beckenham.

**India A squad:** Abhimanyu Easwaran (C), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Karun Nair, Dhruv Jurel (VC) (WK), Nitish Kumar Reddy, Shardul Thakur, Ishan Kishan (WK), Manav Suthar, Tanush Kotian, Mukesh Kumar, Akash Deep, Harshit Rana, Anshul Kamboj, Khaleel Ahmed, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Sarfaraz Khan, Tushar Deshpande, Harsh Dubey.

**Tendulkar-Anderson to replace Pataudi Trophy?**

Rakesh Mandani

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**MUMBAI:** India's Test tours of England could soon have a new name — Tendulkar-Anderson Trophy. The ECB are known to have proposed that future series between the two countries on English soil be named after the two most capped players — Sachin Tendulkar (200) and James Anderson (188) — in Tests. "With the premise that the trophy, be named after most capped players, the BCCI may not have any problems. Besides, it is the prerogative of the ECB," a BCCI official said.

India's Test tours of England were previously played for the Pataudi Trophy, which was named after Iftikhar Ali Khan Pataudi and his son, Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi. In March, the ECB wrote to the late Pataudi's family that they wanted to retire the trophy.

An official word from ECB is awaited.

**The new corporate shift for Indian athletics****Avishek Roy**

avishek.roy@htlive.com

**NEW DELHI:** In a landmark domestic feat, four of India's fastest sprinters recently shattered the men's 4x100m national record, which had stood unbroken for 15 years. Gurinder Singh, Animesh Kujur, Amlan Borgohain and Manikanta Hobiidhar clocked a blistering 38.69 seconds at the India Open Relays. All represented Reliance Foundation Youth Sports (RF) in Chandigarh, and the new national record now stands in the name of

They train their athletes at elite state-of-the-art high-performance centres. Domestic meets this season have seen participation from state associations, public sector units, corporate-backed foundations, and even Sports Authority of India's NCOEs (Indian Relays meet) — making for a diverse structure. The new model could significantly reshape the landscape of Indian athletics. The AFI believes it'll not only elevate the level of competition but also compel states to upgrade their facilities and increase support for their athletes. "We wanted to try something different this Olympic cycle," says AFI spokesperson and former president Adil Sumarwala. "Athletes can now train wherever they choose and compete in domestic events. This should also motivate states to step up for their athletes. "We wanted to try something different this Olympic cycle," says AFI spokesperson and former president Adil Sumarwala. "Athletes can now train wherever they choose and compete in domestic events. This should also motivate states to step up for their athletes.

The feath, though, wasn't just about raw speed; it also symbolised a shift in Indian athletics. For the first time, Athletics Federation of India (AFI) has opened domestic competitions to private sports organisations, allowing entities like RF and JSW Sports to field their own teams.

RF is the non-profit arm of Reliance Industries, and JSW Sports is



The men's relay team of Reliance Foundation.

athletics. "A lot of planning and effort has gone into this. It's exciting times for Indian sprinting. Back in 2019, a 10.5s sprint could win you the 100m. Now, 10.45s may not get you to the final. That's significant progress in 5-6 years," Hillier told HT.

The ripple effect is being felt across the circuit. "Even athletes whom we don't coach have started pushing the boundaries. There's a belief that yes, we can run 10.2s." That mindset didn't exist before." At the Federation Cup, Pranav Pramod Gurav of Railways won the 100m in 10.27s, with Animesh (10.32s) and Manikanta (10.35s) close behind. The momentum carried into the UAE Grand Prix, where the men's 4x100m team clocked 38.76s to set a new meet record. Animesh continued his stellar run, timing 20.45s in the 200m.

It's an encouraging build-up to the Asian Championships in South Korea this month where Indian sprinters are eyeing a

podium finish. Given their form, all four sprinters from RF are part of India's relay team, and Hillier has been appointed to lead the squad. "Opening up domestic events was a smart move by AFI," he said.

Hillier has also been credited with backing talents like Jyothi Yarraj, who has risen to prominence and clinched a silver in the 100m hurdles at Asian Games. "There's no shortage of talent in India, but it hasn't always been developed properly. A huge part is mental. Many athletes grow up believing they're not good enough. We've challenged that mindset and changed it through our training programme."

However, Hillier, with his experience of working in India, feels grassroots need to be developed. Though his focus is elite performance, Hillier emphasises that a strong foundation is vital. "If you teach these things correctly, it would not require fixing such problems at the elite level."

**APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION**

General Public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of a male Namely Ramesh S/o Unknown, R/o Unknown Age: 40 years, Height: 5'2", Complexion: Shallow, Face: Long, Built: Thin, Wearing: Green Coloured Shirt & Gray Coloured Caffery, was found Dead on 03.05.2025 from H.No.L-2B/12, Mohan Garden, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi. The dead body has been preserved in DDU Hospital Mortuary, New Delhi. In this regard a DD No.119A Dated 03.05.2025 has been lodged at P.S. Mohan Garden, New Delhi.

If any one having any clue about deceased male may kindly inform the undersigned and contact on following numbers.

SHO

P.S. Mohan Garden, Delhi

Ph. No.: 011-25351004, 25351003

Mob.: 8750871029

**Appeal for Identification**

General Public is hereby informed that a male dead body Name: Unknown, S/o Unknown, R/o Unknown, Age: About 30 years, Height: 5'7" Complexion: Shallow, Wearing: Maroon Color Check Shirt along with Blue Jeans was found unconscious near Christian Cemetery Dr. Hedgewar Marg, Jahangir Puri, Delhi. He was shifted to BJRM Hospital where the doctor declared him brought dead. In this regard FIR No. 581/2025, Dt. 14.05.2025 has been lodged in PS: Jahangir Puri, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to identify the deceased person, but no clue has come to light, so far. The description of the UIDB is as under:

Sex: Male, Age: 26 Years, Height: 5'7" ft, Complexion: Wheatish, Built: Medium, Face: Long, Hair: Black, Wearing: Black T Shirt & Blue Jeans and Black Shoes. If anyone has any information about his relatives, kindly inform the SHO/Saket, Delhi.

**APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION**

The general public is hereby informed that a male whose name, residence and family is unknown, whose age is about 2

# Chopra's spear finally breaches 90m barrier, silences doubters

Double Olympic medallist threw 90.23 metres as he finished 2nd at Diamond League meet in Doha

**Shantanu Srivastava**

sportsdesk@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** At long last. On a warm Friday evening in Doha, his long locks held back by the trademark headband, world champion Neeraj Chopra broke the barrier that had been weighing him down for a long time, logging a memorable 90.23m throw to break his own national record and enter an elite club of spearmen.

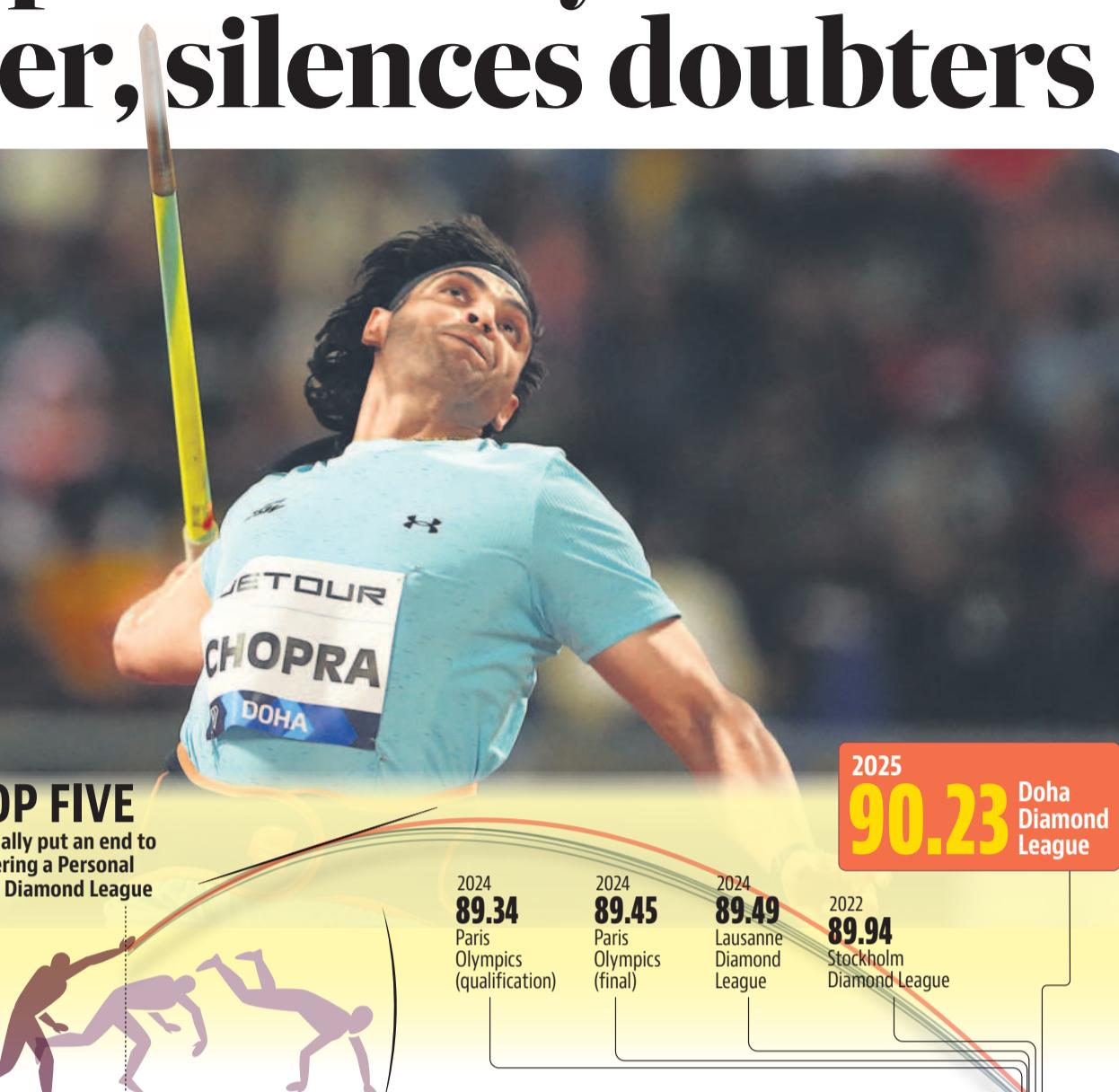
It didn't matter that German Julian Weber stole the top prize with his last throw (91.06m), for the night was truly about an exceptional athlete silencing lingering demons in his head. Grenada's Anderson Peters was third with a throw of 85.64m.

Having flirted with the elusive distance on a bunch of occasions, the two-time Olympic medalist threw the monkey off his back on his third attempt. As the spear tore through the Doha night sky, Chopra raised his arms in delight — his customary celebration indicating he has unlocked a big throw.

Not for the first time in his storied career, the Tokyo gold medalist showed that he can more than hold his own in a stacked field — five of the top seven finishers at Paris Olympics were among the 11 men in action. Chopra's reaction after his distance was confirmed showed that the emotion he felt most was relief. A gentle shake of the head before shaking hands with other athletes. They all knew what this meant him. They all knew it had been a long wait.

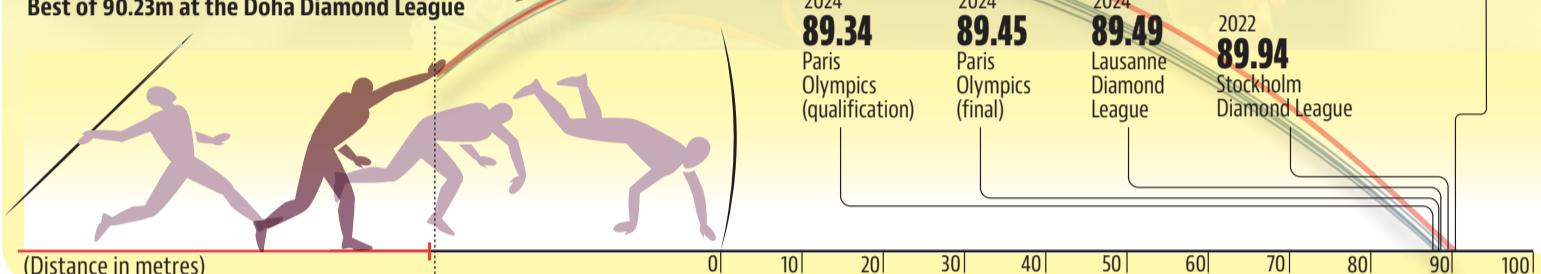
With temperatures hovering in the mid-30s and a helpful tailwind to boot, the Indian began the meet with a world-leading throw of 88.44m to give indication of what was to follow. His next effort was a foul but he came back strong, hitting the mark he has long chased. His next throw was 80.56m which was followed by another foul.

He closed the competition with



## NEERAJ'S TOP FIVE

Neeraj Chopra on Friday finally put an end to the 90m question by delivering a Personal Best of 90.23m at the Doha Diamond League



another strong throw (88.20m) before Weber, who had crossed 89m twice on the night already, unleashed the winner with his last throw.

Chopra's feat makes him only the third Asian after Chinese Taipei's Chao-Tsun Cheng (91.36m in 2017) and Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem (92.97 in 2024) to cross 90m and 25th overall. The second-place finish follows his victory at the Potch Invitational Meet in Potchefstroom, South Africa last month where he threw 84.52m.

The 27-year-old has been pegged back by a lingering groin niggle for over two years now and Doha was an ideal early season opportunity for him to test his body as well as consolidate his alliance with javelin great Jan Zelezny. After the Paris Olympics where he finished second with a throw of 89.45m behind Nadeem, Chopra had made no secret of his disappointment of failing to hit the 90m mark. Blessed with a fluid natural technique, the double Worlds medalist has, in the past, spoken about the need to get physically stronger and stay injury-free to achieve the mark.

Three months after Paris,

Chopra joined hands with the Czech exponent who holds the all-time javelin world record of 98.48m. Not much is public about Zelezny's training methods yet except the fact that the duo were based in South Africa during the off-season.

"With Jan, it's going really well, in the beginning it was challenging but now it's going well. It's helped me, not just in training. He was great when he was competing himself. So, he is helping me with other things, like how you have to be strong and compete with a strong mindset. It's going really

well," Chopra had said on Thursday. A day later, it all came together for him.

The other Indian in the fray, Kishore Jena ended eighth with a best effort of 78.60m.

Distance runner Gulveer Singh, competing in his first Diamond League, finished ninth. The 26-year-old had set the national record this February, clocking 12:59.77 en route a fourth-place result at the Boston University DMR Challenge.

Kenya's Reynold Cheruiyot won the race with a personal best time of 13:16.40. Swiss Dominic

Lokinyomo Lobalu was next with 13:17.70 while Bahrain's Birhanu Balew was third.

Later, 3000m steeplechaser Parul Chaudhary opened her season with a national record of 9:13.39. Her time was good enough to also secure qualification for the 2025 World Championships. Marking a comeback after a hiatus of seven months, Parul finished an impressive sixth. Kenya's Faith Cherotich won with 9:05.08 followed by Bahrain's Yavi Winfred who clocked 9:05:26. Ethiopian Sembo Almayew completed the top three.

## Barcelona defeat Espanyol to claim 28th La Liga crown

**Reuters**

sportsdesk@hindustantimes.com

**BARCELONA:** Barcelona secured their 28th La Liga title on Thursday when they beat city rivals Espanyol 2-0, securing an unsailable seven-point lead over second-placed Real Madrid with two games left to play.

Following a 4-3 loss at Barcelona on Sunday, Real needed to win their final three games and hope the leaders didn't earn more than one point in the same period to maintain any mathematical chances of claiming the title.

However, their slim title hopes were dashed when Lamine Yamal curled a superb shot into the back of the net in the 53rd minute, with Fermín López securing the victory by striking a ball from inside the box, assisted by Yamal, five minutes deep in stoppage time.

The result moved Hansi Flick's Barca to 85 points, seven ahead of last season's champions Real, with Atlético Madrid third on 70 points. It caps a remarkable first season at Barca for coach Hansi Flick as his side have won the La Liga and Copa del Rey double.

The Catalan side said they will be presented with the league trophy on Friday during a special celebration in the city.

Barca were seconds away from celebrating the title without stepping on the pitch on Wednesday until Real scored a late winner against Mallorca to keep their

slim hopes alive.

But Barca took care of business themselves with a hard-fought win at Espanyol, with the match being delayed for a few minutes after several fans were injured after being hit by a car outside the stadium.

The hosts were arguably the better side in a first half that was goalless thanks to Barca goalkeeper Wojciech Szczęsny who made a brilliant reflex save to deny a Javi Puado effort from close range in one of several dangerous Espanyol counter-attacks.

Just when it seemed Barca were out of ideas on how to break down their opponents, it was teenage sensation Lamine Yamal who worked his magic, scoring a stunning goal with what is becoming his trademark move.

The 17-year-old took the ball on the right touchline and made a superb lateral run parallel to the edge of the box before unleashing a curling strike between two defenders and into the top corner. "Lamine's goal is a move he practices a lot, he had scored twice today in the warm-up the same way. We have to look after him and let him enjoy it, he is fantastic," his teammate Pedri told Movistar Plus.

"You don't win a league every day so now we need to enjoy it and celebrate this trophy. It was one of the most complicated titles. We are happy with the year we have had. We've enjoyed it and so have the fans."



## FIR filed in cyclist Esow accident case



**NEW DELHI:** Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa won the Grand Chess Tour Superbet Chess Classic in Romania after a three-way blitz playoff against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Alireza Firouzja. This is his second title of the year after Wijk Aan Zee in Netherlands.

Praggnanandhaa entered the final round in sole lead and drew his game against Levon Aronian. He escaped with minor injuries after he was hit by two bikers on Wednesday but said that it could have been worse.



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RELAX. THE WEEKEND'S HERE

# brunch

MAY 17, 2025

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Everything seems more expensive now. But data shows that for young people, little comforts are even further out of reach. How did we end up here? Who made having a good time a crime? And why are Boomers still not getting it?

**Rude Food** A fortnight of fantastic food  
**Shots Fired** Why India is so cosy with the paparazzi

## front

This week,  
we're...

Sipping designer H20,  
joining the Tällibahn,  
ogling Ishaan Khatter,  
and lowkey flirting  
with Freud **03**

## Call signs

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## Extend play

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last longer so you can  
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## Shots fired

India's relationship  
with the paparazzi  
has changed. See  
who's chasing  
whom these  
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## Always broke?

It's not you, it's the times.

No, really. People in their 20s  
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before, say data and the  
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## Rude Food

How many great meals can one man fit into  
a single fortnight? Here's one example **17**



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around on a summer vacation **20**

## Drawing Room

Madhu Das crawls into Sheela Gowda's  
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side gigs. These are  
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# This week, we're...

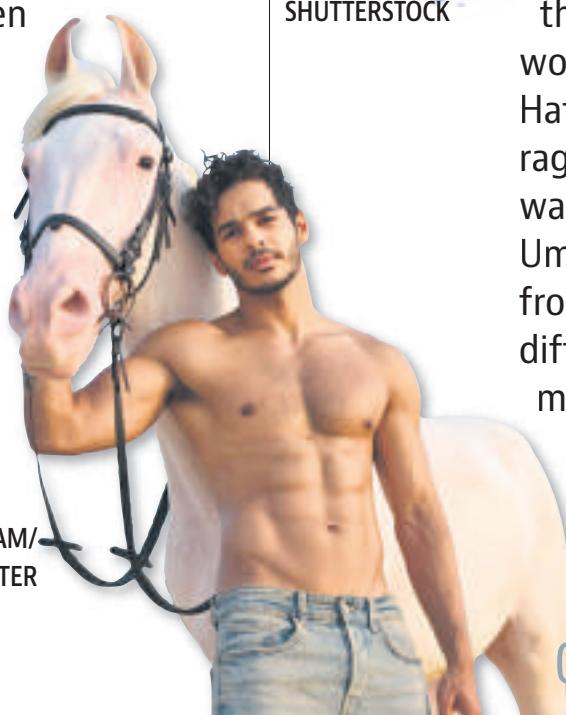
**Team Brunch**

letters@hindustantimes.com

**Mildly distracted:**

The Royals, (Bridgerton, but made with local ingredients) is a hot mess. Clichéd plot, zero chemistry, and romance tropes even Mills & Boon wouldn't touch. Bhumi Pednekar actually runs a company called Work Potato. But the breakout star on the show is Ishaan Khatter's chest. The Maharaja is shirtless at polo matches, in castle corridors, mid-monologue. His pecs get more screen time than most of the cast. BRB, watching in HD.

INSTAGRAM/  
@ISHAANKHATTER

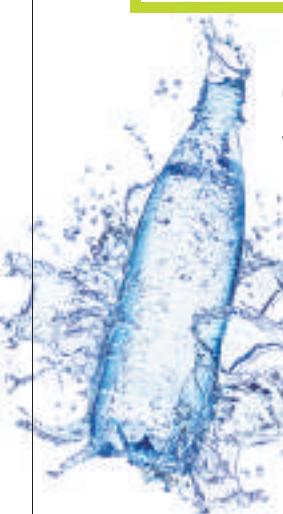


03

**Baying for blood.** Remember Elizabeth Holmes of Theranos, that fraud blood-testing start-up? Billy Evans, her partner and baby daddy, has a company that promises diagnoses from not just blood, but also urine, and saliva samples. Hollywood has Bonnie and Clyde. Bollywood has Bunty and Babli. Silicon Valley now has Liz and Billy.



SHUTTERSTOCK



SHUTTERSTOCK

**Getting a drink.** At the FineWaters Summit in the US, sommeliers sipped different "flavours" of H2O, swirled them around their mouths and rated them the way they would rate wine. Haters boiled with rage, insisting that all water tastes the same. Umm, no! The stuff from the tap feels different from the matka. Even bottled brands have their own vibe. Next time, sip, don't chug.

**Tripping up.** When the Swiss posted on their socials that the Tällibahn cable car service to the Gadmer Dolomites was open for the summer, we ran straight to the comments. They did not disappoint. "Use a headscarf" one user said. Another asked which items were banned on board. The Swiss deleted the posts. They're not renaming the ride.

INSTAGRAM/@GRIMSELWELT



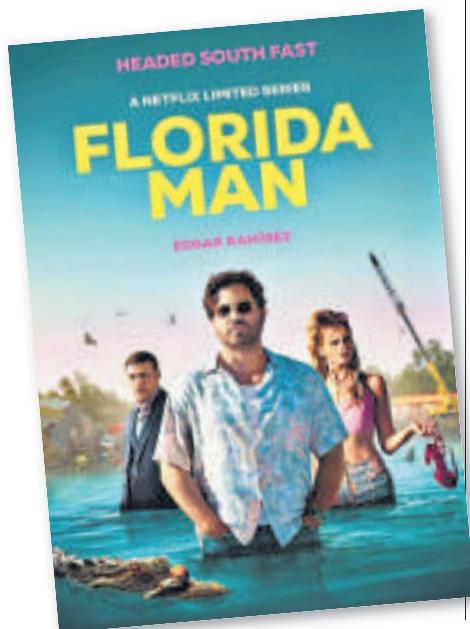


**Hiding from our moms.** A Pew Research Center study asked Americans what they consider to be the ideal age to get married: 25 to 29, apparently. And the best time to have a kid? 27. Who took this survey? Indian moms? Our mummies have already set this benchmark. They didn't need this extra validation, Pew Research. Why you gotta do us like that?

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Eisamay, Tamil, Telugu &  
Malayalam Newspaper,  
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Edition,

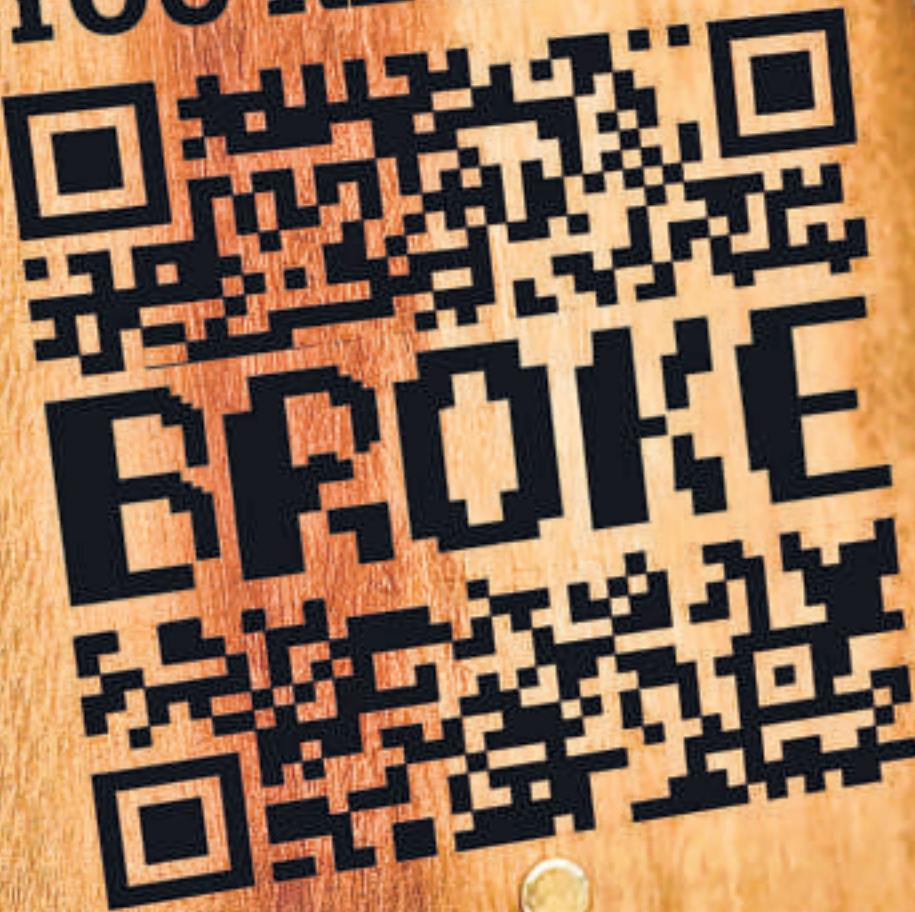


RELAX. THE WEEKEND'S HERE

# brunch

MAY 17, 2025

NO WONDER  
YOU'RE ALWAYS



Everything seems more expensive now. But data shows that for young people, little comforts are even further out of reach. How did we end up here? Who made having a good time a crime? And why are Boomers still not getting it?

**Rude Food** A fortnight of fantastic food  
**Shots Fired** Why India is so cosy with the paparazzi

## front

This week,  
we're...

Sipping designer H20,  
joining the Tällibahn,  
ogling Ishaan Khatter,  
and lowkey flirting  
with Freud **03**

## Call signs

It's 2025. Why are HRs  
still insisting on Mum  
and Dad as emergency  
contacts **05**

## Extend play

How to make a gadget  
last longer so you can  
delay the upgrade **07**

## Shots fired

India's relationship  
with the paparazzi  
has changed. See  
who's chasing  
whom these  
days **09**



## Always broke?

It's not you, it's the times.

No, really. People in their 20s  
have it uniquely harder than  
before, say data and the  
experts. Here's what Boomers  
don't see when they hate on  
Kids These Days **12**



## Rude Food

How many great meals can one man fit into  
a single fortnight? Here's one example **17**



## Spectator

Smart swaps, light loads and what not to lug  
around on a summer vacation **20**

## Drawing Room

Madhu Das crawls into Sheela Gowda's  
Darkroom and sees it in a positive light **22**

## back

## Listicle

Even celebs have  
side gigs. These are  
10 of our favs **24**

Personal  
Agenda

Comic Con founder  
Jatin Varma on his  
next big splurge **28**

# This week, we're...

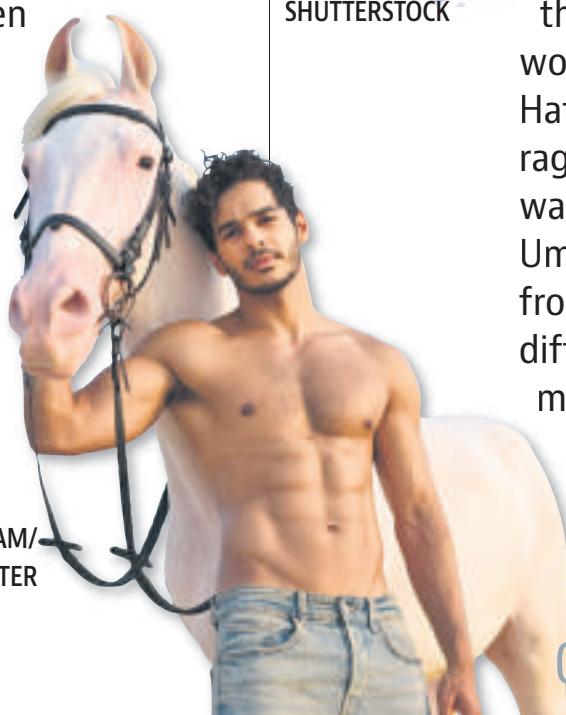
**Team Brunch**

letters@hindustantimes.com

**Mildly distracted:**

The Royals, (Bridgerton, but made with local ingredients) is a hot mess. Clichéd plot, zero chemistry, and romance tropes even Mills & Boon wouldn't touch. Bhumi Pednekar actually runs a company called Work Potato. But the breakout star on the show is Ishaan Khatter's chest. The Maharaja is shirtless at polo matches, in castle corridors, mid-monologue. His pecs get more screen time than most of the cast. BRB, watching in HD.

INSTAGRAM/  
@ISHAANKHATTER

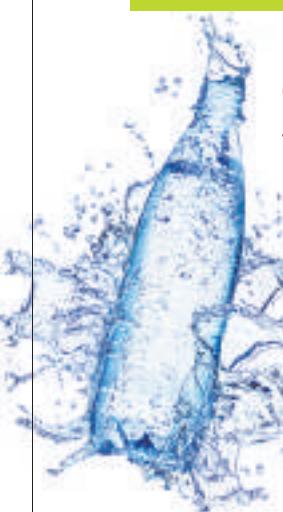


03

**Baying for blood.** Remember Elizabeth Holmes of Theranos, that fraud blood-testing start-up? Billy Evans, her partner and baby daddy, has a company that promises diagnoses from not just blood, but also urine, and saliva samples. Hollywood has Bonnie and Clyde. Bollywood has Bunty and Babli. Silicon Valley now has Liz and Billy.



SHUTTERSTOCK



SHUTTERSTOCK

**Getting a drink.** At the FineWaters Summit in the US, sommeliers sipped different "flavours" of H2O, swirled them around their mouths and rated them the way they would rate wine. Haters boiled with rage, insisting that all water tastes the same. Umm, no! The stuff from the tap feels different from the matka. Even bottled brands have their own vibe. Next time, sip, don't chug.

**Tripping up.** When the Swiss posted on their socials that the Tällibahn cable car service to the Gadmer Dolomites was open for the summer, we ran straight to the comments. They did not disappoint. "Use a headscarf" one user said. Another asked which items were banned on board. The Swiss deleted the posts. They're not renaming the ride.

INSTAGRAM/@GRIMSELWELT



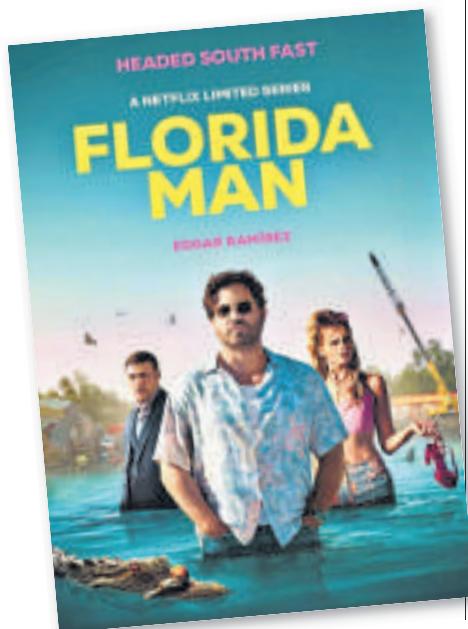


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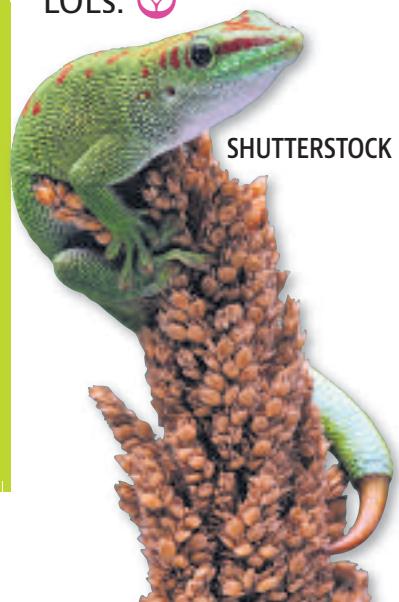
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18th May: 1:30pm - 2:30pm  
AI, Data Science & Beyond: Navigating the New Emerging Careers in Science & Technology

18th May: 3:30pm - 4:30pm  
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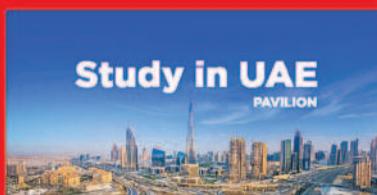
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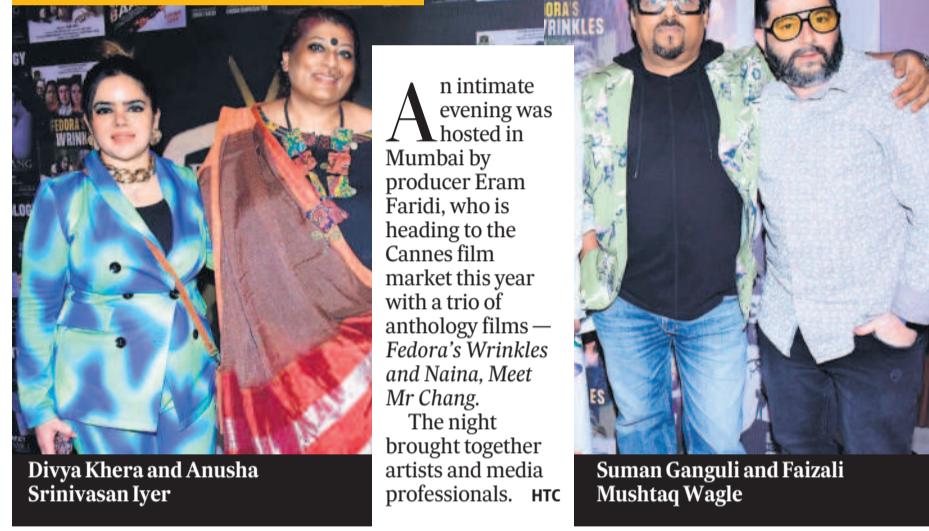
PHOTOS: HTBS



Vipin Bharadwaj, Eram Faridi, Heera Sohal and Suman Guha

► Veena Praveen Singh gave Cinderella-core in a Michael Cinco gown with a cinched waist and flared hem

## Celebrating milestones and achievements



Divya Khera and Anusha Srinivasan Iyer

An intimate evening was hosted in Mumbai by producer Eram Faridi, who is heading to the Cannes film market this year with a trio of anthology films — *Fedora's Wrinkles*, *Naina, Meet Mr Chang*.

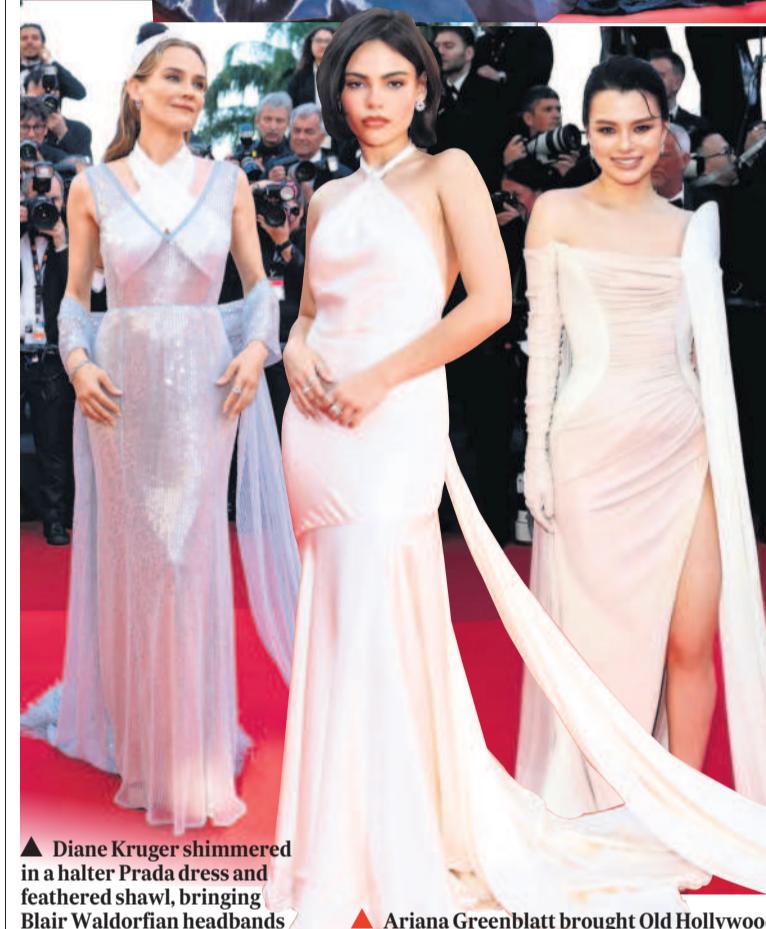
The night brought together artists and media professionals.

HTC

Suman Ganguli and Faizali Mushtaq Wagle



Irina Shayk served high drama in a feathery Elie Saab gown, gloves and wet hair



PHOTOS: AFP, INSTAGRAM AND X

► Becky Armstrong's blush-toned Nicolas Jebran gown with a high slit gave debutante-meets-movie-star

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PHOTOS: X AND INSTAGRAM



**A**ctor Jayam Ravi, also known as Ravi Mohan, has issued a statement on Instagram following estranged wife Aarti Ravi's public remarks and his recent appearance with rumoured girlfriend Bengaluru-based singer and healer Kenisha Francis (bottom inset). In an emotionally charged note, the actor alleged emotional and financial abuse during his marriage, calling Kenisha a "lifeline" who stood by him at

his lowest. "All these years I was being stabbed in the back, now I'm only glad that I'm being stabbed in the chest," he wrote in the caption, adding, "First and final one from my desk! With love, Ravi Mohan. Live and let live."

Ravi and Aarti, who tied the knot in 2009 and share two sons, separated in 2024 after Ravi filed for divorce. Aarti later accused him of walking out without explanation. In his note, Ravi alleged being denied access to his children and said his silence was for survival, not weakness. But decided to speak up after being targeted with "twisted truths" and "fabricated claims".

Claiming that only his close circle knows the real reason behind his divorce, Ravi also expressed disappointment over not being allowed to

meet his children, who he called his "eternal pride."

Addressing speculation about his relationship with Kenisha, he seemed to confirm their bond, describing her as someone who helped him walk away from a life that "nearly broke" him. "She was a friend who chose to save a drowning man... who became a lifeline of support when I had nothing but tears, blood, and the courage to walk away," he wrote, recalling the night he left his home "barefoot, in a night suit, stripped of wallet and dignity."

HTC

## Priyansh on being engaged to Rishma: I am already married to her in my head

S Farah Rizvi

farah.rizvi@htlive.com

**A**ctor Priyansh Jora, who was last seen in the OTT series *Kaala Paani*, has got engaged to sports anchor Rishma Rochlani. Priyansh took to Instagram on Friday to share: "Blessings coming our way haven't stopped since and I am over the moon..."

The 34-year-old shares that his life changed after meeting Rishma. "My focus shifted from professional life to personal life — how to move forward and share the happiness and peace we

found in each other. In fact, I found my peace the first day I saw her, so for me, she is my home, my life partner, my everything."

The couple got engaged in Mumbai recently after a proposal in Gulmarg (Jammu and Kashmir) two months ago. "It was an intimate ceremony with our families in our Mumbai home," the actor shares.

So, when will the wedding bells ring? "I am already married to her in my head, but the ritual will surely happen soon. The exact dates are yet to be decided," he answers.



Priyansh Jora with Rishma Rochlani in Gulmarg; (inset) the couple at their engagement

## { THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE VERDICT MOVIE REVIEW }

## 14 years on, death's design is still the star

**A**fter 14 years of silence, the *Final Destination* franchise is back from the dead. The sixth film in the series, *Final Destination: Bloodlines* is not just another body count parade — it finally dares to ask: what if death isn't just a twisted game of chance, but something written into your DNA?

Directed by Zach Lipovsky and Adam Stein, *Bloodlines* opens in 1969, where Iris, a woman with unsettling visions, saves lives during a building disaster. But the reprieve is short-lived — as always, death comes knocking. Decades later, her granddaughter Stefani starts experiencing similar premonitions. As history threatens to repeat itself, Stefani uncovers the terrifying truth: this isn't just about one freak accident. It's about a family being hunted across generations.

**FINAL DESTINATION: BLOODLINES**  
Direction: Zach Lipovsky and Adam Stein  
Cast: Kaitlyn Santa Juana, Tony Todd, Brec Bassinger, and Richard Harmon  
Rating: ★★★★

**THE GOOD** For a series known more for spectacle than storytelling, *Bloodlines* is surprisingly grounded. It's not just about who dies — it's about how the survivors live with the fear of what's coming. Visually, it's a treat. The 1960s sequences are stylish and unsetting. One standout moment — a premonition set to *Show to The Isley Brothers* — manages to both haunting and oddly beautiful.

And yes, the death scenes still slap. They're tense, creative, and rooted in the classic *Final Destination* formula where every



object in the room feels like a loaded gun.

Tony Todd's return as the ever-cryptic William Bludworth is the cherry on top. His brief appearance is enough to remind fans why he remains one of horror's most iconic voices.

**THE BAD** For all its ambition, *Bloodlines* doesn't completely stick the landing. The final act, though emotionally charged, feels slightly rushed. The casting of older Iris feels off. There are also moments where the film tries to explain too

much, slowing down the pace just when the tension should be rising.

**THE VERDICT** *Final Destination: Bloodlines* doesn't just bring the franchise back — it elevates it. It keeps the signature thrills, the elaborate kills, and the fatalism fans love, but injects it all with a sense of purpose and pathos. It's the smartest, sharpest, and most soulful film in the series — and a damn good reason to fear ceiling fans again!

Samarth Goyal

## Cannes has been very lucky for me: Rahul Bhat on his third visit

Deep Saxena

deep.saxena@htlive.com

**A**ctor Rahul Bhat is scheduled to make his third appearance at the ongoing Cannes Film Festival today, walking for the screening of his debut Hollywood film *Lost and Found In Kumbh* (LAFIK).

The actor, who earlier appeared for *Ugly* (2013) and yet-to-be-released *Kennedy*, both directed by Anurag Kashyap, tells us, "I must be the first actor to make a Cannes appearance for the third time, and that too, for a lead role. The place has been very lucky for me."

Ask him to elaborate and he shares, "I worked in a Chinese film after *Ugly* but unfortunately, it got shelved during the pandemic. Hollywood studio Mulberry Film approached me after *Kennedy*, where we got a seven-minute standing ovation. I hope

something bigger is in store with this new release - it's been made in India for a global audience."

LAFIK was extensively shot during the Maha Kumbh (Uttar Pradesh) earlier this year, with some scenes being shot in Germany.

Rahul, currently working on filmmaker Sudhir Mishra's web series *Summer of 77*, portrays a professor visiting his father in hometown with his British wife and son in LAFIK. "There, he meets his ex-wife and son. Both the sons get lost in Kumbh and the movie is all about that and the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati."

The film will be screened at the Marché du Film (Cannes Film Market). "Wahan ka nasha hi kuchh aur hai! It's true that cinema, be it films or OTT, is international now," he signs off.



## THEN



Actor Ravi Mohan is in the middle of a divorce with his estranged wife, Aarti Ravi (top inset)

In the past, Bollywood celebs like Dilip Kumar and Waheeda Rahman have shown solidarity with the Armed Forces during times of war

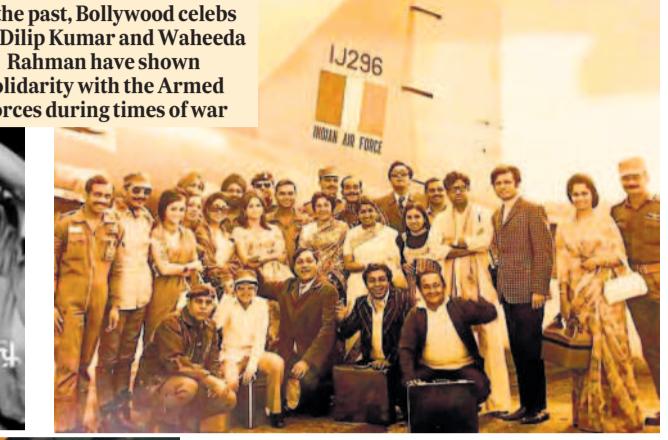
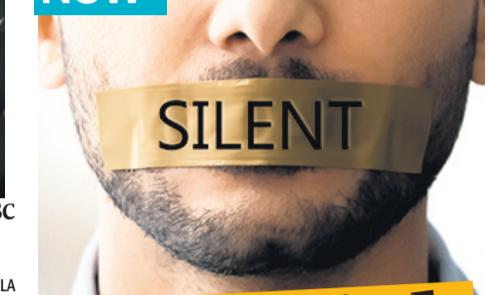


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK (FOR ILLUSTRATION PURPOSE ONLY)

## NOW



SILENT

Social media pages like Drift UPSC posted such AI generated pics to question the silence by celebs

AI ILLUSTRATION: INSTAGRAM / UPSCWALA

## When it mattered, why did Bollywood choose silence?



Scan the code to watch the full episode

Were some of them more worried about their fans in places other than their own country?

Why did Turkey forget 'Operation Dost' when India was the first country to help them in their 2023 earthquake crisis?

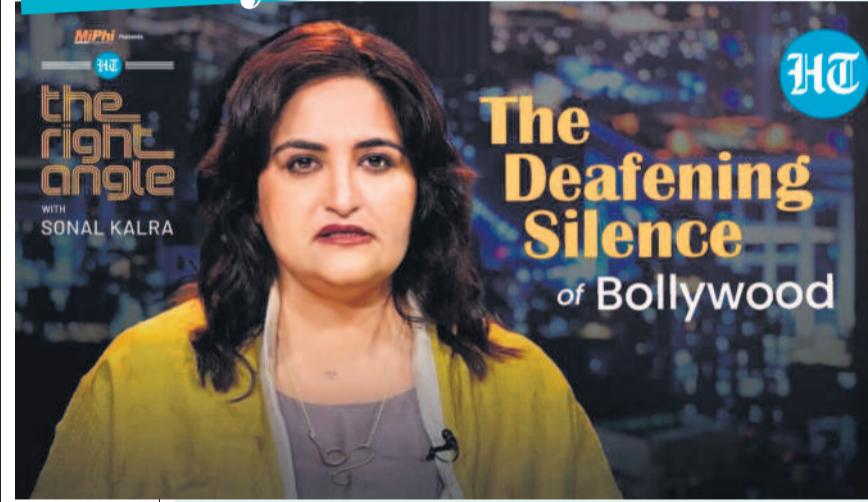
All these questions have been raised by Sonal Kalra, Chief Managing Editor, Lifestyle & Entertainment, in her show MiPhi presents *The Right Angle* with Sonal Kalra, this week.

Social media is flooded with boycott calls for certain stars who, it seems, strategically timed their messages for the nation just before a project was coming out. Many of them have often been a part of patriotic films — which is why their voice has become important. But the illusion seems to have broken.

*How difficult was it to put out something in praise of the operation, which was our country's fight against terrorism?*

*Do our actors need a script on even how to stand with their nation?*

HTC



### The Deafening Silence of Bollywood

**S**ilence becomes cowardice when occasion demands speaking out the whole truth and acting accordingly.

And when this 'silence' comes from people who millions look up to as their 'icons' and 'inspiration', it almost feels like a betrayal... betrayal of the trust the masses place in them. The silence from many of our celebs throughout the recent India-Pakistan conflict has been deafening.

As the nation grappled with the rapid turn of events, many public

figures couldn't make up their minds: some took too long to say anything, some wrote gibberish tweets, while some chose not to say anything at all — to date. And some jumped at the chance to register Operation Sindoora, our fight against terrorism, as a potential title for their upcoming films.

*How difficult was it to put out something in praise of the operation, which was our country's fight against terrorism?*

*Do our actors need a script on even how to stand with their nation?*

### DAILY HOROSCOPE

#### Saturday, May 17, 2025

PREMASTROLOGER

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#### ARIES MAR 21-APR 20

**♈** Financial disputes could impact your credit score. Improving posture may seem challenging today, so stay consistent with your efforts. A gradual project launch at work might yield better outcomes.

**LOVE FOCUS:** Allow your relationship to grow naturally without rushing.

**LUCKY NUMBER:** 11 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Orange

#### LEO JUL 23-AUG 22

**♌** New assignments might feel overwhelming, so break them into smaller parts. Adapting to varied customer interactions at work might enhance rapport. Manage in-law dynamics with diplomacy for peace.

**LOVE FOCUS:** Discovering new facets of your partner may strengthen bond.

**LUCKY NUMBER:** 2 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Baby Pink

#### SAGITTARIUS NOV 23-DEC 21

**♐** Thoughtful budgeting helps manage impulsive spending. Focusing on performance drives career advancement. Academic efforts may feel satisfying as knowledge continues to grow.

**LOVE FOCUS:** Resolving issues may take patience and open dialogue.

**LUCKY NUMBER:** 22 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Off White

#### TAURUS APR 21-MAY 20

**♉** Practicing meditation may bring peace, though distractions could occur. Review health insurance policies to ensure adequate coverage.

Property investments may take time to yield returns, so patience is key.

**LOVE FOCUS:** Giving partner space today can strengthen relationship.

**LUCKY NUMBER:** 8 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Green

#### VIRGO AUG 24-SEP 23

**♍** Strategic decisions at work enhances leadership skills. Screening tenants carefully could ensure a reliable and long-term rental arrangement. Minimise unnecessary spending for financial stability.

**LOVE FOCUS:** Take time for emotional reflection to deepen connection.

**LUCKY NUMBER:** 4 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Dark Grey

#### CAPRICORN DEC 22-JAN 21

**♑** Diet adjustments may not instantly resolve digestive issues, so remain patient. Planning in advance today may help you avoid minor delays in loan repayments and keep finances on track.

**LOVE FOCUS:** Small thoughtful actions may convey your feelings effectively.

**LUCKY NUMBER:** 9 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Light Blue

#### GEMINI MAY 21-JUN 21

**♊** Making thoughtful financial decisions might require compromise but could prove beneficial. Preventing infections could boost immunity. Gradual savings build financial security.

**LOVE FOCUS:** Finding excitement in relationship may require effort.

**LUCKY NUMBER:** 3 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Maroon

#### LIBRA SEP 24-OCT 23

**♎** A work partnership might require compromise but could prove beneficial. Preventing infections could boost immunity. Gradual savings build financial security.

**LOVE FOCUS:** Appreciating small gestures might strengthen your bond.

**LUCKY NUMBER:** 6 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Red

#### CANCER JUN 22-JUL 22

**♋** Family gatherings can bring warmth and unity. Constructive feedback at work fosters growth and skill enhancement. Using AI tools could enhance credit monitoring for safe transactions.

**LOVE FOCUS:** Mutual understanding takes effort; communicate openly.

**LUCKY NUMBER:** 17 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Magenta

#### SCORPIO OCT 24-NOV 22

**♏** Sticking to healthy habits today can help prevent minor health issues and support overall well-being. A backyard picnic might enhance family bonding. Navigating office politics could require tact.

**LOVE FOCUS:** Emotional support might create a deeper sense of security.

**LUCKY NUMBER:** 7 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Brown

#### PISCES FEB 20-MAR 20

**♓** Cash reserves provide security during uncertain times. Supporting elderly family members with practical care may foster harmony. Safeguarding important property documents to prevent future hassles.

**LOVE FOCUS:** Time to reflect brings a fresh perspective on relationship.

**LUCKY NUMBER:** 5 **LUCKY COLOUR:** Silver



## Neat talk: Uncorking wisdom on World Whisky Day

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

On World Whisky Day, connoisseurs weigh in on how to pair whisky like a pro, decode your dram, and which Indian brands are going global

Ruchika Garg

### WHISKY SCOTCH AND BOURBON — WHAT'S DIFFERENT?

- Think of whisky as the broader category, within which Scotch and bourbon are types — each with distinct rules and origins.
- Whisky: A broad term for spirits made from fermented grains anywhere in the world.
- Scotch: Whisky made in

Scotland. Typically made with malted barley, it is known for smoky notes and must be aged for three years before consumption.

• Bourbon: Made in the US, this spirit uses at least 51% corn, creating a sweeter, fuller profile. Bourbon must be aged for a minimum of two years.

Ankur Chawla, mixology specialist, Soorahi Whisky

### SPIRITS MAKING A MARK

- **GianChand:** Originating in Jammu, it has been labelled India's most 'delicate' malt and has won top awards at the Spiritz Awards in Delhi and International Spirits and Wine Competition in London.
- **Godawan:** Named after the Great Indian Bustard, this Rajasthan-origin spirit won Single Malt of the Year at the 2024 London Spirits Competition.
- **Indri-Trini:** The Haryana malt has won 14 global prizes, including Best New World Whisky at the VinePair Awards.
- **Kadamba:** Aged in oak, bourbon and sherry casks in Goa, it won Best Indian Single Malt at last year's Icons of Whisky Awards.
- **Rampur Asava:** Aged in Cabernet Sauvignon and bourbon casks, this UP native has Best World Whisky at John Barleycorn Awards.
- **Amrut:** A pioneer in single malts, this Bengaluru spirit's fusion expression was ranked among the world's top whiskies.
- **Paul John:** Another Goa origin malt, it has won Double Gold at the San Francisco World Spirits Competition for its rich, peated expressions.

### PAIRINGS FOR AN ELEVATED DRAM

- Complement your whisky with the salty flavours of smoked salmon or dry-cured meats
- Pick up some bitter dark chocolate to temper or balance the liquor's intensity.

### For fruity whiskies

- For some sweetness, zero in on the fruity notes with fresh fruit and berries or almonds and walnuts.
- Want a smoother palate? Pair your whisky with briar or goat cheese.

### For Irish whiskey

- Irish whiskey's smooth flavour pairs well with creamy cheeses.
- Double down on the sweetness with chocolate or highlight subtle notes with fresh fruit.

Inputs by Sarthak Batra, founder and head mixologist, IKIGAI

## A wholesome twist with Haldiram's avocado menu

Haldiram's has launched five avocado-based dishes, blending wholesome nutrition with its signature Indian flavours. Known for innovating with tradition, the brand's latest menu offers a healthy twist to your favourite snacks, while still being indulgent.

To celebrate the launch, Haldiram's held an exclusive event at its flagship outlet at Pacific Mall, Pitampura on May 13. The new dishes, which include the Avocado Cold Sandwich, Avocado Cheese Grilled Sandwich, Avocado & Paneer Wrap, Avocado Sev Puri and Avocado Chatpata Paneer Tikka, highlight the versatility of the super food in both classic and modern variations.

Among those at the launch were influencers and wellness enthusiasts, who got a chance to experience the new avocado



(L-R) Kailash Agarwal, President—Retail & QSR, Haldiram's, Madhusudan Agarwal, Vice-Chairman Haldiram's Group, Sumit Saran, Representative, World Avocado Organisation

creations first-hand with a curated tasting session.

The session also featured engaging discussions on the conception of ideas in response to shifting consumer

preferences and the creative process behind integrating avocado into Indian cuisine. Attendees gained valuable insights into the innovation journey, from experimenting



with flavours and formats to striking the perfect balance between health and indulgence.

"At Haldiram's, we constantly strive to innovate while staying true to our Indian culinary roots," President of Retail and QSR, Kailash Agarwal, said. "Our collaboration with the World Avocado Organisation has allowed us to introduce a global superfood in a uniquely Indian way. We are excited to offer our customers a fusion that reflects the evolving food preferences of modern India," he added.

Chairman of the World Avocado Organisation Zac Bard also shared, "We are

delighted to partner with India's biggest ethnic food chain and excited to introduce avocados into traditional Indian snack foods. With a dynamic culinary landscape and a growing base of health-conscious consumers, India represents a strong potential market for avocados. Our goal is to educate consumers on the benefits of including avocados in their everyday diet and to promote a healthy lifestyle. This collaboration is a perfect blend of taste and health, marking the start of an exciting culinary journey".

The new avocado range is available across all major outlets of Haldiram's in Delhi NCR.

PHOTOS: HTCS

## Limitless: The ultimate hotspot for Sufi nights and rooftop party vibes



The sufi night features a performance by The Voice season 2 winner Farhan Sabir

If you're looking for live Sufi performances in the Capital, Limitless has you covered. The restaurant is hosting a grand Sufi night featuring The Voice season 2 winner, singer Farhan Sabir tonight.

Experience the magic of Sufism, set against the backdrop of stunning rooftop views of Delhi. The ultimate party destination, every night is a celebration at Limitless. Take in the vibes with elaborate outdoor and indoor settings that pulse with energy as you groove to live music that keeps you upbeat all week long.

Indulge in unlimited party packages, tailored to make your night unforgettable. Whether you're looking for a private party or a night out with friends, Limitless is the



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## OTTplay recommends list - top 5

Series based on true events



**THE RAILWAY MEN**  
Based on a true story, this drama series chronicles how railway workers risked their lives to rescue others during the Bhopal gas tragedy of 1984. Kay Menon, R Madhavan, Divyendu, Juhi Chawla Mehta and Babil play pivotal roles in this series, helmed by Shiv Rawail.  
Platform: Netflix  
OTTplay rating: 8  
Language: Hindi



**MANVAT MURDERS**  
After as many as seven brutal murders are reported in a town in Maharashtra's Marathwada region, DCP Ramakant Kulkarni (Ashutosh Gowariker), a Special Crime Branch Officer, is tasked with solving the case. Sai Tamhankar, Makarand Anaspure, and Sonali Kulkarni play other key roles.  
Platform: SonyLIV  
OTTplay rating: 6.9  
Language: Marathi



**IC 814: THE KANDAHAR HIJACK**  
The series depicts the hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight in December 1999, and the surrounding events as the complex hostage situation unfolds. Vijay Varma, Naseeruddin Shah, and Pankaj Kapur feature in key roles.  
Platform: Netflix  
OTTplay rating: 8  
Language: Hindi



**SCAM 1992: THE HARSHAD MEHTA STORY**  
Hansal Mehta's intriguing series, based on the 1992 stock market scam, takes a close look at the life of stockbroker and convicted fraudster Harshad Mehta. Pratik Gandhi is seen in the primary role, while Shreya Dhanwanthary is seen as journalist Sucheta Dalal.  
Platform: SonyLIV  
OTTplay rating: 9  
Language: Hindi



**RANGBAAZ**  
This gripping series delves into the criminal world of Gorakhpur, chronicling the real-life story of gangster Shri Prakash Shukla as he goes on to become one of the dreaded criminals of Uttar Pradesh during the 1990s. Saqib Saleem appears in the lead role, along with Virender Kumar Singh, Aahana Kumra, Tigmanshu Dhulia and Ravi Kishan.  
Platform: Zee5  
OTTplay rating: 7.5  
Language: Hindi

## #newsinbrief



## Sunny Deol's Jaat to be out on Netflix this June

Sunny Deol and Randeep Hooda's action drama is coming to Netflix this year, and will be available for viewing from June 5. The film, directed by Gopichand Malineni, also stars Viineet Kumar Singh in a key role.



## Bhool Chuk Maaf to first release in theatres

Actors Rajkummar Rao and Wamiqa Gabbi's Bhool Chuk Maaf will go for a theatrical release on May 23 after PVR challenged the makers' direct-to-OTT plan. The announcement was made through an official statement by the film's production house.



## Is Nani's HIT 3 heading to OTT soon?

After a successful theatrical run, Nani's Telugu action adventurer HIT: The Third Case may be out on OTT this June. Reports suggest that the digital streaming rights have been secured by Netflix. The film, directed by Sailesh Kolanu, stars Nani as the righteous and ruthless cop Arjun Sarkar.



## Jude Law, Andrew Garfield on board for limited series on Siegfried and Roy

Actors Jude Law and Andrew Garfield are set to star in an Apple TV+ limited series based on the lives of celebrated magician duo Siegfried Fischbacher and Roy Horn. Jude will play Siegfried whereas Andrew will be seen as Roy, according to Variety.

## Captain America: Brave New World sets streaming date

Actor Anthony Mackie's Captain America: The Brave New World is finally going to have its OTT outing, much to the delight of Marvel fans. The superhero film's rights have been sold to JioHotstar, and will release on the platform on May 28.

Compiled by Yashika Mathur

## { REVIEW }

This show about dance and music needed more riyaaz

## HT Classifieds { THEATRE &amp; PLAY'S }

**HUMARE RAM**

PRODUCED BY FELICITY THEATRE

ASHUTOSH RANA as Ravan

DISCOVER RAMAYANA'S UNTOLD CHAPTERS LIVE ON STAGE

DIRECTED BY GAURAV BHARDWAJ

SINGERS: SHANKAR MAHADEVAN, SONU NIGAM, KAILASH KHER & ASHUTOSH RANA

WRITTEN BY NAresh KATYAYAN RAHUL R BHUCHAR

LYRICS BY ALOK SHRIVASTAV RAM KUMAR SINGH

MUSIC COMPOSER UDBHAV OJHA SAURABH MEHTA

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A nybody can dance, yes, but not everyone can make an engaging drama about the performing arts. Remo D'Souza's dance-centric films have been all the rage because of their choreography, but there was no depth to the stories. *Hai Junoon!*, a show directed by Abhishek Sharma, also has the same characteristics.

The story follows two rival groups, the Misfits and the SuperSonics, who are competing for the GOATs trophy.

Pearl (Jacqueline Fernandez) and Gagan (Neil Nitin Mukesh) play their mentors, respectively. Both have gone through something that has influenced who they are, but like many characters in dance films, they never fully connect with the audience. Siddharth Nigam's happy-go-lucky Bikram is a meaty role but not well-crafted. But despite his polished moves, the dance sequences aren't thrilling enough.

While *Hai Junoon!* benefits from access to an entire library of classics, with music director Shankar Mahadevan giving songs like *Pag Ghunghroo* a modern twist, it's a hit-and-miss affair throughout.

Overall, *Hai Junoon!* needed a bit more passion for everything, instead of releasing a whopping 20 episodes at one go. Perfecting art takes time. Stretching a show beyond a limit is never a good idea. Especially when the payoff is so little.

Rishabh Suri

## #celebwatch list

DIBYENDU BHATTACHARYA

## What I'm Watching:

I'm catching up on my OTT backlog right now. I'm watching Baby Reindeer. It's outstanding — so new and fresh.



## Why I'm hooked:

It's so real and genuinely one of the best shows I have ever watched. The acting is top-notch, and the intensity is superb.

## Favourite Character:

My favourite characters are the ones played by the lead cast — Richard Gadd and Jessica Gunning. Both actors are extraordinarily brilliant.

## Why I recommend it:

I recommend it for the ingenuity of its script, content, and acting. It's very real.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/ DIBYENDUOFFICIAL

## My binge-watch partner:

If the hour of watching is erratic, then I watch it alone. My binge-watch partner is usually my wife Richa Bhattacharya.

## My viewing routine:

I mostly watch shows in the evening or at night. If I am free and hooked to a show, then I can watch it at any point of the day.

Yashika Mathur

# HARYANA DEEN DAYAL PLOTS



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	105.02	87.81	21,000	2,00,000	34,75,700	15,75,300	52,51,000
	122.55	102.46	21,000	2,00,000	40,89,250	18,38,250	61,27,500
Type B	125.35	104.81	21,000	2,00,000	41,87,250	18,80,250	62,67,500
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Part V of the series on artistes who have been trendsetters in the world of Indian classical arts, in the words of Shantanu Das and Sapna Narayan.

## HARMONIES REDEFINED: THE TRAILBLAZERS

### THE MAGIC OF RHYTHMS

BICKRAM GHOSH

In the smoky, dim-lit bar of Brussels (Belgium) in 1993, Bickram Ghosh sat transfixed. Fresh off his first-ever concert with the Pandit Ravi Shankar, still in his kurta-pyjama, he watched as an African-American musician abandoned his congas mid-performance and began to play his own body—cheeks, chest, arms—music unuttered from tradition in a raw, elemental form.

Long before that night, rhythm had been the air Bickram breathed. Born into a Kolkata home to two formidable musicians, tabla maestro Pandit Shankar Ghosh and classical vocalist Sanjukta Ghosh, Bickram grew up in California (US), where his parents taught at the Ali Akbar College of Music. The boundary between Indian classical and Western music was porous. Yet his father's fears for his cultural roots led to a decisive return to India when Bickram was five and a half years old.

Landing in 1970s Kolkata was a shock to the system amid political unrest, regular power cuts, and the sharp tongue of playground bullies who mocked his accented Bengali. While socially adapting was a slow process, musically, he was navigating two parallel worlds. At his British-influenced school, he formed a band called The Satellites, playing congas to covers of The Beatles and The Rolling Stones. At home, his



father woke him before dawn for Table practice.

By the late 1990s, Bickram felt a deep void—his first marriage crumbled and professional acclaim felt hollow. Restless and disillusioned, he withdrew temporarily to search for meaning.

It was during this crucible of transformation that Rhythmscape was born: a new language where Indian

classical rhythms met jazz, electronica, and global beats on equal footing.

The cinematic world soon took notice and Bickram scored music for over 50 films. After a brief stint in acting—where he starred in a successful film—he consciously chose to walk away from cinema's seductive pull, refusing over 35 offers to preserve his identity as a musician first and foremost.

Today, Bickram Ghosh

stands as a testament to what can happen when tradition is treated not as a limitation but as a living, evolving foundation. In a world too often divided by categories and conventions, Bickram's music reminds us that the most profound artistry lies in the spaces between, in the fearless merging of old and new, East and West, body and instrument.

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### #bookreview

## A sweet homecoming for long-time fans of this dystopian series

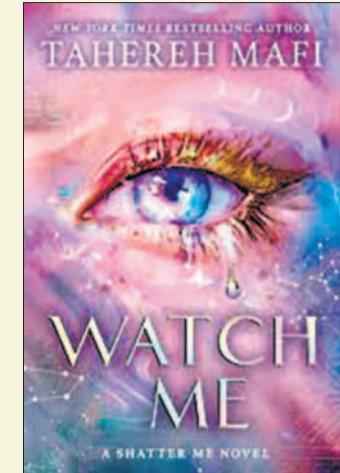
Tahereh Mafi has been one of the most prominent dystopian young adult writers ever since she wrote the best-selling, heart-throbbing *Shatter Me* series, which followed the lives of a few X-Men-like characters trying to make the world a better place. More than the plot, it was the thrilling romance between Juliette and the two men who couldn't keep their eyes off her, especially during life-or-death moments, that really pulled readers in. Her purple prose was a first for a lot of young readers just stepping into this kind of reading.

Mafi's newest book, *Watch Me*, follows a very Juliette-like character—she's desperate to escape her current life, and when she meets James from the Anti-Establishment, everything

changes. On an island where constant surveillance is the norm and where every consciousness has been uploaded onto the Nexus, it's thrilling to see how these two underdogs become the heroes of their own story.

The characters seem conjured straight from a teenager's dystopian fantasy and there's enough plot movement to keep you turning pages. The romantic tension remains a core driver as Mafi continues to weave her recurring themes of anti-establishment resistance with just enough swoony moments to satisfy longtime fans.

That said, *Watch Me* doesn't stray far from the blueprint. The message is familiar, the character types recognisable, and the twists echo past works. It's not groundbreaking, but maybe that's



the point. For fans of the original series, it's a sweet kind of *déjà vu*—a story where everything feels the same, just slightly reshaped.

**Title:** Watch Me

**Author:** Tahereh Mafi

**Publisher:** HarperCollins

**Price:** ₹499

**Aadrika Sominder**

### #gramit



## A hippo-pota-must for hot days!

On a super hot summer day in Delhi, this happy hippo was spotted chilling out with a big gulp of water at the National Zoological Park. With the temperature already hitting around 40°C—and expected to rise even more—the zoo's coolest residents are making the most of their splash zones, shady corners, and chilled-out vibes. As per IMD, a gradual rise in maximum temperatures by 2-3°C is likely over northwest India during the next two days.



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Sanchita Kalra

sanchita.kalra@hindustantimes.com

**A**s India's culinary horizons continue to expand, Japanese cuisine has become a particular favourite. While the madness over matcha caught on with a sudden quickness, another Japanese tea has quietly been making its mark in the country. Meet hojicha — a roasted green tea with a warm, nutty aroma and a sweet, mellow flavour.

**DECODING THE RISE OF HOJICHA**

Unlike its vibrant, almost floral cousin, hojicha's signature reddish-brown hue and low bitterness make it a soothing and highly approachable gateway into roasted teas. Rich in antioxidants and low in caffeine, it's comfort in a cup that additionally aids digestion and relaxation.

**WHAT'S DRIVING THIS SHIFT?**

Experts in the food and beverage industry tell us it has less to do with wellness, but rather a global matcha shortage. While hojicha hasn't overtaken its green counterpart, this growing preference for something warmer could be the next big wave in tea culture.

"Hojicha is not just a trend. It's smooth, comforting, and hits the Indian palate just right — think roasted barley meets gentle coffee," says chef Suvir Saran, whose soon-to-open Jaipur café will feature the tea both as a drink and a dessert in its limited-time special menu.

Yu Sung Eo, one of the founders of bubble tea company Got Tea, shares that they introduced hojicha to their menu a few months ago. "When we launched matcha in 2020, it didn't get

a great response as it is an acquired taste, but as it became a craze, we started seeing an uptick in signs of acceptance from customers. The introduction of hojicha on our menu has had a similarly quiet response, but we're hoping it will become as big," he muses.

**CHANGING THE FUTURE OF TEA**

Despite its more muted footprint, Umesh Kapoor, co-founder of Pour Over Coffee Roasters sees hojicha becoming a staple in premium beverage offerings. He also envisions a new movement: Indian tea brands roasting local green tea in Hojicha's style, creating a fusion product that's both familiar and exotic. "Picture hojicha lattes, sparkling hojicha sodas and cold brews in cafés across urban India. It's comforting, photogenic and ripe for Reels and even branding," Umesh states.

Chef Dheeraj Mathur, cluster executive chef at Radisson Blu, Kaushambi adds that India's growing appetite for international cuisine makes it fertile ground for roasted tea. "Restaurants and cafés could introduce it as a specialty tea to create a distinctive menu experience. Hojicha's toasted flavour and low caffeine content make it ideal for consumption and digestive comfort," he explains.

**TAPPING INTO FUSION MANIA**

The best part? "It pairs beautifully with Indian desserts like gulab jamun or jalebi, and there's exciting potential for use in marinades, sauces, or even fusion creations like Hojicha kulfi," he notes, before adding, "But awareness is key — consumers need to understand its benefits and unique flavour."

**How is hojicha prepared?**

Hojicha is made by roasting green tea leaves at high temperatures, which gives it a reddish-brown colour and toasted aroma. To prepare, steep one teaspoon of hojicha in hot water (about 80°C) for 30–60 seconds. Available both in powdered and loose leaf forms, it can be enjoyed hot, iced, or as a latte with milk. If you're looking to expand your tea repertoire, check out brands offering hojicha products in India, such as ILEM Japan, Karma Kettle, Brown Living, Dancing Leaf, Sancha Tea Boutique, Satori and Chiran Tea.

**What's the difference between hojicha and matcha?**



PHOTOS: ADOBE STOCK, SHUTTERSTOCK AND X

- Hojicha and matcha are both Japanese green teas but differ significantly in flavour, appearance, and use. While complementary, they have distinct places in the culinary and wellness worlds.
- While hojicha is made by roasting green tea leaves at high temperatures, matcha is a powdered, shade-grown tea known for its vibrant green colour, grassy taste.
- Matcha is bold, intense and high caffeine content — perfect for an energy boost. Hojicha, on the other hand, is a mellower experience that is more soothing and easier on the gut.

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