

All-Party meeting chaired by Punjab CM decides Not to give Extra Water to Haryana

CHANDIGARH: The all-party meeting, chaired by Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann here on Friday to discuss the issue of giving additional water to neighbouring Haryana, unanimously decided that the state itself has no surplus water. They also decided to meet either Prime Minister Narendra Modi or Union Home Minister Amit Shah, to apprise them of the situation.

The meeting comprised leaders from the AAP, BJP, the Congress and the Shiromani Akali Dal. Later there was a media interaction after the all-party meeting of all prominent parties expressed unanimity with the AAP government's refusal to share extra water with Haryana. Chief Minister Mann told the media that all the political parties, rising above their ideology, suggested to the government that it must save every drop of the water which is the state's lifeline.

CM Mann said Haryana, which is already receiving 4,700 cusecs against its allocated 1,700 cusecs, is now set to benefit from additional theft



of Punjab's rightful share. The ongoing row was triggered by the Bhakra Beas Management Board's (BBMB) decision to release 8,500 cusecs of water from the reservoir to Haryana, which is an additional 4,500 cusecs.

CM Mann clarified that Haryana has already used 103 per cent of its share and warned of agitation "if Punjab's rights are denied". He said the government of Punjab has convened a special Assembly session on sharing water on May 5.

to share more water," Mann said categorically. "We all are united for safeguarding the interests of Punjab and Punjabis. We got a suggestion to meet the Prime Minister on the issue, and we will arrive at the decision after the special Assembly session on Monday," he said.

He clarified, "All parties would be allowed to speak on the issue as much as they can."

The Chief Minister also clarified that Punjabis have the right over every drop of river water and no one can snatch it.

In the special session of the Vidhan Sabha, the government will bring a special resolution on the water issue.

He reiterated that the government will not compromise over this issue, and the interests of the state on the river waters will be safeguarded.

Saying Punjab has no surplus water to share with anyone, state BJP President Jakhar said at a time when war-like conditions persist at the International Border, the government is destabilising Punjab by entangling its police force in protests and demonstrations.

Punjab has no surplus water to share: State BJP chief Jakhar amid row with Haryana

CHANDIGARH: Saying Punjab has no surplus water to share with anyone, state BJP President Sunil Jakhar on Thursday said at a time when war-like conditions persist at the International Border, the government is destabilising the state by entangling its police force in protests and demonstrations.

He pointed out that for political gains Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann had stated during Haryana elections that water would be provided to Delhi and Haryana and the government had told the Supreme Court that they were ready for the construction of the Satluj Yamuna Link Canal but farmers were not allowing its construction.

In a statement here, Jakhar claimed this reflects the double standards of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders who are using these protests as a pretext to cover up the involvement of their leaders, Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain in the Rs 2, 000 crore classroom scam in Delhi.

He said, "The so-called



Delhi model, which the AAP boasted about, has been exposed by the people of Delhi, and now the looting of public money during their tenure is coming to light." He accused the AAP of destroying Delhi and now attempting to ruin Punjab's education system.

Addressing the water issue, Jakhar emphasised that the BJP has always firmly stood for Punjab's interests and maintained a clear stance that Punjab has no surplus water to share with any state.

However, he said resorting to petty politics over providing drinking water on humanitarian grounds may suit the AAP, but it goes against the spirit and principles of 'Punjabiyaat.'

He urged AAP leaders to shed their duplicity and remember the promises made during the Haryana elections.

Jakhar added the people of Punjab have understood and recognised that this government is leading the state towards ruin. The Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB), which serves the irrigation requirements of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan from the Bhakra Dam, on Wednesday evening ordered that an additional 8,500 cusecs of water would be released to Haryana. Aghast at this decision, the Punjab government has stepped up security at the regulator's end of the Nangal dam and held statewide protests. During a meeting of the BBMB's three member states, the Punjab government issued a dissent note saying it did not have a drop to share with anyone, and Haryana should have used its share judiciously. While the release of water is yet to start, the government has stepped up security at the regulator end of the Nangal dam fearing a law-and-order situation.

Haryana government committed to making cyberspace safer for every citizen says Dr. Sumita Misra



GULSHAN KUMAR
Chandigarh

In a concerted effort to curb cybercrime, Haryana has witnessed a significant increase in public engagement, enforcement action, and financial recovery during the past few years.

Additional Chief Secretary, Home, Dr. Sumita Misra informed that 29 Cyber Crime Police Stations are already functional in the state and 3 new cyber crime police stations for East and Gohana zone in Sonipat and Bahadurgarh in Jhajjar district are in the process of being set up.

She informed that the 1930 Cybercrime Helpline saw a surge in calls—from 1.45 lakh in 2022 to 7.25 lakh in 2024 — indicating growing public awareness and responsiveness toward cyber threats. Correspondingly, complaint registration rose to over 1.30 lakh cases in 2024 alone, up from 66,784 in 2022 and 1.15 lakh in 2023. Further, over 33,000 complaints have already been registered in the first 3 months of this year.

"Haryana is committed to making cyberspace safer for every citizen. Our focus on awareness, enforcement, and inter-agency coordination is yielding strong results," Dr. Sumita Misra said.

"We urge citizens to stay vigilant and report cyber frauds promptly by calling the 1930 helpline," she added. The Additional Chief Secretary informed that while 1909 cybercriminals were arrested in 2023, the number grew substantially to 5,156 in 2024. Over 1900 cybercriminals have already been arrested in the first three months of 2025, with 21 persons being arrested per day this year on an average. The hold and recovered amount from these cybercriminals has also seen a steep rise with Rs 268.40 crore being held and recovered in 2024, up from Rs 76.85 crore in 2023. Further, in the first 3 months of 2025, total Rs 34.73 crore have already been held and recovered, registering an improvement of 33.36% in March this year. Dr. Sumita Misra said over 2.83 lakh bank accounts and 1.24 lakh mobile numbers were blocked in 2024, along with thousands more in 2025, including IMEI blocking to combat fraud. The department is also conducting Cyber awareness programmes, which reached over 47 lakh citizens in 2024. The campaign continues in 2025 with over 1 lakh participants reached in the first three months, she added.

Complete Bandh in Amritsar



JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

Complete bandh was observed here in the city as protesters took out march through markets and even inside the old walled city where small shopkeepers were forced to close their shops to protest the terror attack in Pahalgalam that claimed lives of 26 innocent people, most of them tourists, on Tuesday.

Post Pehlagam terror attack, a bandh call was given by different political and non-political outfits including Amritsar traders Association; even private schools were also found shut due to band call.

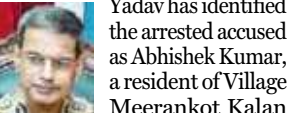
Fuel stations, vegetable and milk vendors and medical services were exempted as they were working as per their routine.

However, trains were moving according to its schedule even state run buses of Punjab Roadways also found moving normally.

Pakistan's bid to destabilise Punjab foiled; Police busts arms smuggling racket

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

Counter Intelligence (CI) Amritsar has dismantled a Pak-backed illegal weapon smuggling module with the arrest of one operative, who was supplying weapons to anti-social elements on the instructions of his Australia-based handler identified as Jassa. Director General of Police (DGP) Punjab Gaurav



Yadav has identified the arrested accused as Abhishek Kumar, a resident of Village Meerankot Kalan in Amritsar. Police teams have also recovered seven pistols—including five .30 bore and two sophisticated 9MM Glock—along with four cartridges and Rs 1.5 lakh from his possession, besides, impounding his Mahindra Thar vehicle being used for weapon smuggling, he said. The DGP revealed that CI Amritsar received credible intelligence indicating that Australia-based Jassa, in collusion with Pakistan-based smugglers, was orchestrating the smuggling of illegal arms/ammunition through the Indo-Pak border with the help of his local associates Abhishek Kumar, and his accomplice identified as Jodhbhir Singh alias Jodha.

480 Passengers including NORI VISA holders crossed over to India

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

As many as 480 passengers including NORI (No Obligation to Return to India) Visa crossed over to India through Integrated Check Post (ICP) of Attari border here on April 29.

However on April 28, 70 Pakistan nationals who were having Pakistani Passports with NORI visa had arrived India through the same land transit route.

The process of arrival of



NORI VISA holders began yesterday onwards when In-

dian Government allowed them to cross over to India

Earlier, all Pakistanis having Pakistani passports were not allowed to come to India from Pakistan but from yesterday onwards Pak nationals with NORI Visa were allowed to cross over to India from Attari border.

It is noteworthy here that females with NORI visas entering to India with their Indian born children who are having Indian passports.

Tomorrow more people from Pakistan with NORI Visas are expected to cross over to India.

Haryana CM Nayab Saini holds high-level meeting following Pahalgalam attack

CM directs adequate measures to ensure the safety and security of Kashmiri students

GULSHAN KUMAR
Chandigarh

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini discussed several key issues in the aftermath of the Pahalgalam attack at a high-level meeting held at Haryana Civil Secretariat here today. He condemned the gruesome Pahalgalam attack, in which several innocent lives were lost, and stated that such acts could not be tolerated.

In line with the directions issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India,



he announced that April 27, 2025, is the deadline for Pakistani nationals to leave Haryana. However, this deadline will be extended to April 29 for those holding medical visas. These timelines will not be applicable on Pakistani nationals

holding long-term, diplomatic, or official visas.

He directed the Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police to ensure that the above directions are implemented in letter and spirit. He also reviewed the

law and order situation in the state and made it clear that anyone who attempts to disrupt peace in the state will be dealt with firmly.

Haryana Chief Minister also directed that adequate measures be taken to ensure the safety and security of Kashmiri students studying in various colleges and universities across the state. Currently, 1,157 such students are pursuing their education in different educational institutions in Haryana. He instructed the district administration to maintain close contact with educational institutions to address any concerns and provide students with a sense of safety and reassurance.

Pakistan's Fate is to Cry, whether we block the water or release it: Anil Vij

PARVESH HANDA
Chandigarh

Haryana's Energy, Transport and Labour Minister Anil Vij commenting on the release of water under the Indus Waters Treaty, said that "It is Pakistan's fate to cry—whether we block the water or release it." He emphasized that "It is our water, and it is our prerogative to use it as we see fit." During an interaction with media persons today, Sh.Vij criticized past Congress governments and said that "In 1960, some leaders, more sympathetic to Pakistan than to India's interests, signed the treaty, benefiting Pakistan. However, today, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, every decision is made in India's interest."

Cabinet Minister Vij said it is noteworthy that following India's decision to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty, water flowing to Pakistan was halted, causing significant uproar there. Now, even after some water has been released, Pakistan continues to raise a hue and cry over the issue. Cabinet Minister Vij said, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Has Given a Clear Message That the Pahalgalam Attack Will Be Avenged.

Reacting to Prime Minister Modi's remarks during his 'Mann Ki Baat' address



regarding the recent terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir, Vij said that "Since the terror attack, Modi ji has been unequivocal in assuring the nation that those responsible will be brought to justice—and when Modi ji makes a promise, he fulfills it." Sh.Vij added that the entire country trusts that any action promised by Modi ji will be carried out. The exact timing and nature of the response will be decided after discussions with senior officials, but when it happens, the world will witness Pakistan's fate.

Commenting on the selective targeting of Hindus in Pahalgalam, Vij said that "The terrorists sought to divide Hindus and Muslims. They verified identities by checking names and even forced victims to remove clothing to ascertain their religion before shooting Hindus specifically. Vij emphasized that "They did not attack Indians; they

attacked Hindus to widen the communal gap. However, they will not succeed in their malicious intentions, he asserted."

Responding to reports that the Jammu and Kashmir attack was pre-planned, Sh.Vij said that "Such a large-scale massacre could only happen with meticulous planning. Reports suggest that the terrorists' handlers were guiding them using satellite phones, and cameras mounted on their helmets were used to monitor operations." He asserted that Pakistan was closely monitoring the entire operation and reiterated, "Pakistan is the birthplace of terrorists and sooner or later, it will have to bear the consequences."

Responding to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's statement supporting the government's response to the terror attack, Cabinet Minister welcomed the solidarity, stating that "Though we may differ on minor issues domestically, whenever the nation faces a grave threat, we unite as one." He further mentioned that many powerful countries have also expressed their support for India, underscoring the strong international stature of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Water crisis deepens in Haryana, canals dry up and water tanks empty

SATISH HANDA

Punjab Chief Minister Mann told Haryana that they should get the Centre to fill up Punjab's reservoirs by diverting the water flowing to Pakistan, now that the Indus Water Treaty stands suspended. After that we will give more water to Haryana.

The water crisis is deepening in many districts of Haryana. Water tanks have also started drying up due to the decrease in water in the canals as well underground. The problem of drinking water is increasing in few districts in Haryana including Hissar, Sirsa, Fatehabad, Tohana, Bhiwani, Rohtak and Jind where sufficient amounts of water is not available. People are forced to depend on tankers paying a heavy amount between 500 to 700 rupees each tanker. Information reveals, even in the 150 villages of Tohana, which is called the city of canals, the crisis of drinking water has increased so much in the last few days that women have to go three to four kilometers away to get drinking water. Tanker owners have also increased the rates. However, government officials claim that efforts are on to solve the problem. The time for running tubewells is also being increased.

Punjab Chief Minister



Bhagwant Mann on Tuesday refused the release of more water to Haryana, stating that the neighbouring state has already utilised 103 per cent of its allocated share this season. He accused the BJP of exerting pressure on the Punjab government through the Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) to meet Haryana's demand. Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan are partnering states who meet their water requirements from Bhakra and Pong dams managed by the BBMB. The BBMB decides the annual quota of water to be released to the three states from May 21 every year. Mann said Haryana has exhausted its share of water in March and is now seeking additional water for April and May. He said Punjab needs water for the upcoming paddy sowing season and there is not a single surplus drop to spare. Mann

said the BBMB has allocated 2,987 MAF (million acre feet) water to Haryana for utilisation by May 21, 2025 and the state has already used 103% of it, whereas Punjab was allocated 5,512 MAF but has utilised only 89% so far. He said Haryana had demanded 4,000 cusecs for drinking and other purposes in April, which Punjab had agreed to provide on humanitarian grounds. "They now trying to rob Punjab of its water. They should have used their share judiciously. The BJP is now pressurising Punjab to release additional 8500 cusecs through BBMB, but we do not have a drop extra due to paddy sowing season coming up.

Information reveals that Haryana had made the demand for extra water during the meeting of the technical committee of the board on April 23. Meanwhile, Haryana CM Nayab

Singh Saini requested Mann on April 27 reminding him of the telephonic discussion they had on April 26 regarding the implementation of the decision of the technical committee of the BBMB on April 23 to give 8500 cusecs water at Haryana Contact points. Saini reminded Mann that Haryana is reeling under a shortage of water supply, since drinking water crisis is erupting fast in many places across the state, requesting to release excess of 9500 cusecs water like in the past during the months of May and June, thus helping Haryana to meet the demand in summer period when flow in river Yamuna is extremely low. On April 23, the Centre announced that the Indus Water Treaty of 1960 with Pakistan will be held in abeyance with immediate effect until Islamabad credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism.

Meanwhile, Indian national Lok Dal (INLD) has announced a protest against the reduction of Haryana's share of water from Bhakra in all districts across the state from May 5 to 7. State President Rampal Majra said that the Center removed Haryana's members from BBMB due to which Haryana is getting less water. Congress MP Kumari Selja has also assured support to the government.

Delhi Court Issues Notice to Sonia Gandhi & Rahul in National Herald Case

NEW DELHI: A court here on Friday issued notices to Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi in the alleged National Herald money laundering case.

The Rouse Avenue Courts asked the Gandhis and others accused to show cause as to why cognisance should not be taken on the charge sheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Last week, Special Judge (PC Act) Vishal Gogne temporarily declined to issue notice on ED's prosecution complaint and asked the federal anti-money laundering authority to place the requisite documents on record and remove the defects.

As the prosecution contended that the court can take cognisance of a charge sheet without hearing the accused and, therefore, notices should be issued, the judge had said: "I cannot pass such an order until satisfied."

The court had then posted the matter for hearing on May 2.



The ED recently filed a prosecution complaint against senior Congress leaders, including Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, in the National Herald case. Others named in the charge sheet include Congress Overseas Chief Sam Pitroda, Suman Dubey, and others.

The charge sheet, filed before Delhi's Rouse Avenue Courts, values the alleged proceeds of crime to the tune of Rs 988 crore. It is alleged that the Congress leadership had misappropriated property belonging to the Associated Journals Limited (AJL), the original publisher of the National Herald, by convert-

ing public trusts into personal assets.

The National Herald, a newspaper established by Jawaharlal Nehru and other prominent leaders in 1938, was originally aimed at representing the liberal voice within the Indian National Congress. Published by AJL, the National Herald was a critical tool for Congress during the freedom struggle and post-independence years. Alongside the English publication, AJL also published newspapers in Hindi and Urdu. However, the paper ceased operations in 2008 due to mounting debts exceeding Rs 90 crore.

The controversy over its assets came into focus in 2012 when BJP leader Subramanian Swamy filed a complaint in a trial court, alleging that Congress leaders had engaged in cheating and breach of trust in the process of acquiring AJL.

According to Swamy, the firm Young Indian Ltd — in which Sonia and Rahul Gandhi are majority stakeholders — acquired control over the newspaper's vast assets through a "malicious" takeover aimed at benefiting the party leadership personally. In the course of the investigation, the ED found that the accused, including Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, used Young Indian to acquire AJL's assets at a nominal price of Rs 50 lakh. The probe agency claimed that Young Indian, beneficially owned by the Gandhis, effectively took control of AJL's properties while undervaluing their market worth.

In November 2023, the ED attached immovable properties valued at Rs 661 crore and AJL shares worth Rs 90.2 crore, terming them suspected proceeds of crime.

Caste count goes official: BJP seizes agenda; INDIA bloc faces strategic recalibration

NEW DELHI: In a landmark decision with far-reaching social and political implications, Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government has approved the inclusion of caste enumeration in the upcoming national Census. The announcement, made by Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw following a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA) on Wednesday, comes amid growing political momentum around caste data and its role in public policy.

Vaishnaw, addressing the media, termed the decision as both a corrective measure and a governance reform, stating that while some states had already conducted caste surveys, many executed in politically motivated and non-transparent ways, leading to confusion and mistrust in society. "To preserve the integrity of our social fabric and ensure that caste enumeration is not misused for narrow political gains, it is essential to include it transparently within the formal Census process," he said.

The Union Minister came heavily down on the Congress



and its INDIA bloc allies, accusing them of exploiting the demand for a caste census purely for political leverage. He underscored that no caste enumeration has been included in any population census since India's Independence, despite repeated demands.

Tracing the history, Vaishnaw reminded that in 2010, then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh assured the Lok Sabha that the Cabinet would consider the inclusion of caste data in the Census. A Group of Ministers was subsequently formed, and several parties recommended proceeding with caste enumeration.

However, despite this consensus, the UPA government did not carry out a caste census. Instead, it conducted a socio-economic survey, widely known as the SECC (Socio-Economic

and Caste Census), which did not yield credible or usable caste data due to its flawed design and lack of official recognition.

This decision comes at a time when opposition parties, especially Rahul Gandhi and the Congress, have made the caste census a central electoral demand.

Rahul Gandhi, in particular, has used it as a consistent political weapon, frequently attacking the BJP for allegedly remaining silent on the issue. The inclusion of caste enumeration in the official Census effectively neutralises that political advantage, taking the wind out of Rahul's sails just as Bihar gears up for Assembly elections, say observers.

In Bihar, where caste plays a defining role in electoral politics, the RJD-Congress alliance was preparing to make caste census a major campaign issue. However, with PM Modi-led government now taking ownership of the process at the national level, the opposition's pitch risks being blunted. Political analysts suggest that this move could lead to internal churning within the INDIA bloc.

Majhi keen to make Odisha steel hub of the country



ARABINDA MOHAPATRA
Bhubaneswar

Chief minister Mohan Majhi continues to take Odisha forward on the road to development with focus on industrial development, women empowerment and youth and sports.

Majhi recently visited Mumbai where he said that his mineral rich state has targeted to more than triple its steel production capacity to 130 MT from current 41 MT. This will be achieved by companies operating in the State by 2030. The state is planning to auction 22 mines to attract fresh investments. Odisha intends to be among the top five industrial states by attracting investment in downstream steel processing industries. "Odisha will lead the country in the steel sector. We are becoming an economic power among the five states which are leading the country (in terms of economic development)" Majhi told reporters on the sidelines of Steel India 2025 event, jointly hosted by the Ministry of Steel and FICCI in Mumbai.

"We are currently producing more than 41 million tonnes of steel. Our target is to take steel production to 130 million tonnes by 2030," he said adding that Odisha would account for some 50 per cent of the country's total steel output. He said the state, received investment proposals worth Rs 17-lakh crore at the two-day business conclave, "Utkash Odisha" held in January with a large portion of this investment intended for the steel sector. "We have also rolled out a new industrial policy, offering financial incentives to the industry, which is far more simple and clear than such policies of other states," he added.

The chief minister recently announced that Odisha's growth transformation journey will be accelerated by launching a strategic initiative '36 for 36' by identifying 36 flagship initiatives in key sectors by 2036. The government has also decided that the 'Odisha Vision 2036 and 2047' document will be finalized in consultation with public representatives, members of civil society and common citizens very soon. Equally keen to promote sports the government recently announced that Rs 4,124 crore would be spent on development of sports in the next five years. Inaugurating the five-day inter-university sports competition at Dharanidhar University in Keonjhar, the chief minister said, "Modern facilities for various sports including volleyball, cricket, football and athletics will be created in every block of our state. A total of Rs 4,124 crore will be spent in five years for development of sports."

At least 15 dead in Kolkata hotel fire, Probe Ordered



KOLKATA: At least 15 people lost their lives in a tragic fire that engulfed the Rituraj Hotel in central Kolkata, according to police officials.

The blaze broke out around 7:30 pm on Tuesday, claiming most lives due to suffocation, while one individual reportedly died after falling from the building in an attempt to escape the flames.

Kolkata Police Commissioner Manoj Kumar Verma confirmed the casualty toll and said the fire had been brought under control around 1 am on Wednesday after ten fire engines were dispatched to the site.

Addressing reporters, he stated, "Till now, 15 casualties have been reported. Additionally, an SIT has been formed to probe the cause of the fire and the safety measures that were in place. The investigation will also look into the difficulties faced by the guests while evacuating from the building."

While the cause of the fire remains undetermined, preliminary reports suggest that many of the deceased were guests who had been unable to exit their rooms in time.

Police said that the victims were trapped inside the hotel once the blaze began.

The Rituraj Hotel is built on top of a commercial storage facility on the ground level, with the five upper floors designated for accommodations.

The fire reportedly spread quickly through the structure, filling the hotel with thick smoke.

Union Minister and West Bengal BJP President Sukanta Majumdar called on the state administration to act swiftly in assisting victims and demanded a serious review of fire safety protocols.

Some people will lose sleep today: PM Modi's Swipe at INDIA Bloc during Kerala event

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday took potshots at the Congress and INDIA bloc during the Vizhinjam seaport inauguration in Kerala, saying that "some will lose sleep today", apparently pointing to Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, who was present on stage.

PM Modi, after dedicating the Rs 8,900 project to the nation, told the gathering, "Today's event is the first-of-its-kind, some will lose sleep over the mega inauguration event."

"This will irk some," he added.

PM Modi's pointed reference was apparently at Congress MP Tharoor's attendance at the seaport inauguration event.

Earlier in the day, Tharoor went to the airport to receive PM Modi, setting tongues wag-



ging in political circles.

Tharoor also shared pictures of receiving PM Modi at the airport, ahead of the inauguration ceremony.

Notably, Tharoor's recent "closeness" with the BJP and repeated praise for PM Modi have already sent rumour mills into overdrive. Speculations are

rife that the Congress lawmaker was weighing his options within the party and contemplating a switch for a "better political future". However, these continue to remain mere hearsay for now.

Those close to Tharoor admit off the record that he has been upset with the party high command for repeated neglect and

spurn, and such "overtures" are nothing but means to vent his discontent with the party's ways of functioning.

In the past few months, Tharoor has praised PM Modi not once but multiple times.

Early this year, when US President Donald Trump described PM Modi as a "tough and better negotiator" than him, the Congress MP welcomed the statement and said, "That sounds very good".

The last time Tharoor praised PM Modi was on India's vaccine diplomacy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Praising the Vaccine Matri project of the Modi government, he said that this policy "reinforced India's image as a benevolent and reliable partner on the global stage".

Supreme Court protects family facing deportation to Pak, asks authorities to verify documents

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday asked authorities not to take coercive action such as deportation to Pakistan against six members of a family, who allegedly overstayed their visa, till an order on verification of their identity documents. The family members are residents of Kashmir and their son works in Bengaluru. They are facing deportation to Pakistan following the Pahalgam terror attack.

Observing that the issue involves a human angle, a bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kottiswar Singh gave the family the liberty to approach the Jammu and Kashmir High Court in case they are aggrieved by the document verification order. The top court was hearing a plea by Ahmed Tarek Butt and his five family members who claimed they were detained and taken to the Attari border for deportation to Pakistan despite having valid Indian documents.

Rahul Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge writes to PM for special Parliament session



NEW DELHI: Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Congress National President Mallikarjun Kharge have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging him to convene a special session of both Houses of Parliament at the earliest in the wake of the dastardly terror attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir.

The attack, which was later claimed by "The Resistance Front", an offshoot of the banned Pakistan-based terror outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba, saw terrorists open fire on a group of tourists in the Baisaran Valley, killing 26 and injuring several others, including a Nepali national. In his letter, dated April 28, Gandhi stressed the need for Parliament to demonstrate

solidarity and resolve against the deadly assault on civilians.

"The terrorist attack in Pahalgam has outraged every Indian. At this critical time, India must show that we will always stand together against terrorism. The Opposition believes that a special session of both Houses of Parliament should be convened, where the representatives of the people can show their unity and determination," he wrote.

Kharge, the Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, echoed Gandhi's sentiment, stating that a special session should be convened as a powerful demonstration of collective unity. "At this moment, when unity and solidarity is essential, Opposition believes that it is

important to convene a special session of both Houses of Parliament at the earliest. This will be a powerful demonstration of our collective resolve and will to deal with the brutal terror attack in Pahalgam on innocent citizens on 22 April 2025. It is our fond hope that the session will be accordingly convened, " Kharge's letter read. On Monday, RJD Rajya Sabha MP Manoj Jha wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, requesting him to convene a Special Session of Parliament to address the pressing challenges to national security following the recent Pahalgam attack in Jammu and Kashmir.

Expressing deep concern, Jha wrote a letter to the Prime Minister: "As a concerned citizen of India, moved by the gravity of the recent attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam, I believe that the Parliament of India, as the cornerstone of our Republic and the highest forum for democratic expression, must be the platform where the anxieties, hopes, and resolve of the people find their fullest voice."

Pahalgam Attack Impact: J&K Govt closes 48 Tourist Spots in Kashmir

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government said on Tuesday that 48 destinations across the Valley have been shut for tourists.

The action comes after the horrific attack on tourists in the Baisaran meadow near Pahalgam town in Kashmir. Twenty-five tourists, including a Nepali national and a local, were killed in the firing by terrorists, who singled out Hindu men for their religion. The valley has 87 total destinations, out of which 48 have been closed now. Kashmir has witnessed a drop in tourists after the Pahalgam terror attack. The number of arrivals at Srinagar airport witnessed a steep decline. The destinations which have been closed are, Yousmarg, Tousmaidan, Doodpathri, Aharbal, Kousar-



nag, Bangus, Kariwan Diver Chandigam, Bangus Valley, Wular/Watlab, Rampora and Rajpora, Chearhar, Mundij-Hamam-Markoot Waterfall, Khampoo, Bosnia, Vijitop, Sun Temple, Verinag Garden, Sinthan Top, Margantop, Akad Park, Habba Khatoon Point, Babarshi, Ringawali, Gogaldara, Baderkote, Shrunz Waterfall, Kamanpost, Namblan Waterfall. Eco Park Khadni-

yar, Sangarwani, Jamia Masjid, Badamwari, Rajori Kadal, Aali Kadal, Padshapal resorts, Faqir Gujri, Dara, Astanmarg View Point, Astanmarg Paragliding, Manneth and Mahadev Hills, Buddhist Monastery, Dachigam – Beyond Trout Farm / Fisheries Farm, Astanpora, especially Qayam Gah resort, Lachpatri, Hung Park and Naranag.

The other destinations have been provided with proper se-

curity. An official said that some of these destinations have been closed temporarily.

The killing of tourists in Pahalgam has resulted in nationwide outrage, with people across religions and regions unequivocally condemning the barbaric killings by the terrorists.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that the terrorists, their backers and handlers would be hunted down and giv-

en a punishment they could not imagine. Security forces have demolished 10 houses of active terrorists, including those of Adil Hussain Thoker and Asif Sheikh, two terrorists reported to have been responsible for the Pahalgam terror attack. The Jammu and Kashmir Assembly on Monday passed a unanimous resolution condemning the Pahalgam terror attack.

The resolution described the attack as heinous, barbaric, inhumane, and a cowardly act. It stated that such acts of terror directly attack the ethos of Kashmiriyat, the values of the Constitution, and the spirit of unity, peace, and harmony. The Assembly expressed solidarity with the victims of the recent terror attack and extended condolences to their families.

Kharge questions PM Modi's absence from all-party meeting on Pahalgam terror attack

NEW DELHI: Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, on Monday, criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his absence from the all-party meeting on Pahalgam terror attack, saying he is always busy with the election programmes across the country.

"It is unfortunate for the country that when its self-respect was attacked in Pahalgam and the Prime Minister was busy delivering an election speech in Bihar. Leaders of all parties attended the all-party meeting, but it is sad-denying that PM Modi did not. Was Bihar so far away? He should have come to the meeting, shared his plan, and told us how we could help," the Congress President said at the Congress' 'Samvidhan Bachao Rally' held at Ramlila Maidan in Jaipur.

In the rally which saw participation from other senior Congress leaders, including former Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, former Rajasthan Deputy CM Sachin Pilot, and Rajasthan Congress President Govind Singh Dotasra, who earlier welcomed Kharge at the Jaipur airport. Kharge criticised PM Modi's working, saying, "You boast about a 56-inch chest, but



when it was time to lead, you didn't even attend an all-party meeting. We, leaders of all parties, gathered, yet you showed indifference. Such is the attitude of our Prime Minister."

Speaking on inflation and unemployment, the Congress President blamed PM Modi for soaring inflation and unemployment, asserting, "All major welfare schemes today are gifts from Congress. What has PM Modi given? Only inflation and joblessness. He promised big things but delivered little. PM Modi's 56-inch chest has shrunk under the weight of his unfulfilled promises."

Highlighting alleged discrimination against Dalits and Backward Classes, the Congress President said, "Our Leader of Opposition Tika Ram Jolly visited the temple,

and afterwards, the temple was washed with 'Gangajal' by a BJP leader. Where did the talk of Hindu unity go then? Before elections, Amit Shah and his followers would visit Dalit homes for meals, but the reality is they don't even allow Dalits to drink water from community ponds or touch idols they make. They are trying to suppress Dalits and backward classes, but they will not bow down."

Kharge also spoke on the Constitution and Ambedkar; stressed the importance of the Constitution, saying, "It is because of Ambedkar's Constitution that a tea-seller can become the Prime Minister and a mill worker's son like me can become the Leader of Opposition. If the Constitution survives, so will democracy."



Sustainable energy key to AI expansion

The International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) assessment that artificial intelligence is likely to bring economic benefits outweighing its energy-related environmental costs offers timely reassurance. Yet this optimism must be underpinned by policy foresight and investment, especially in emerging economies like India, where the scale and direction of AI infrastructure are still taking shape. India’s AI efforts, particularly under the IndiaAI Mission, are not yet large enough to influence the national energy mix. But as demand grows, so too will the pressure on energy systems—making it essential that the growth of AI is underwritten by clean power. Encouragingly, the government has signalled its intent to align AI ambitions with sustainability goals, most recently at the AI Action Summit in Paris. Two factors make this a sector that demands early attention. First is the projected energy use: AI’s electricity needs are rising fast. In the United States, AI expansion could push electricity prices up by 9%, according to the IMF. Without a switch to renewables, this would imply steep increases in emissions. Second, data centres themselves are ideal for co-locating renewable generation. Their vast footprints make them suitable for solar installations, and some Indian firms are already buying clean power to support operations. Beyond solar, nuclear energy could prove helpful. Small modular reactors located near AI clusters could deliver steady, low-carbon electricity—complementing other renewables and displacing fossil fuels. But electricity is only one part of AI’s footprint. Mineral extraction, water use and electronics manufacturing all carry environmental burdens. These are also areas where India sees industrial opportunity. Sustainability must be embedded from the start. To meet its net zero goal by 2070, India will need not only to cut emissions from legacy sectors but also to ensure that new ones, like AI, are green by design. Now is the time to make that commitment real.

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ARUN CHAWLA WONDERS WHY SO FEW DISCUSS THE NEED TO DEVELOP ELITE INDIAN ARBITRATORS

Let the arbitrator rise



A Neglected Subject

Despite this, the development of elite Indian arbitrators is rarely prioritised. While there has been visible progress in nurturing India’s arbitration bar, equivalent efforts to enhance the arbitration bench are conspicuously lacking. In March 2024, former Chief Justice of India, D.Y. Chandrachud, pointedly asked why Indian arbitrators were not being appointed in international disputes with no domestic link. His concern was well placed. With rare exceptions, Indian arbitrators remain excluded from the informal but influential group of elite international arbitrators who are repeatedly appointed across jurisdictions. Why is this so? The core of the issue lies in how India identifies and appoints arbitrators. The prevailing assumption equates elite status with prior judicial service, typically at the level of the High Court or Supreme Court. Indian courts routinely appoint retired judges to arbitrate high-stakes matters, and this preference has seeped into the practices of litigants, counsel and arbitral institutions alike. The logic appears straightforward: former judges, given their legal training and experience, are presumed to conduct proceedings

more efficiently and produce better-reasoned decisions. However, this presumption does not always hold. Guidelines released by the Ministry of Finance in June 2024 paint a sobering picture. According to the Ministry, arbitration proceedings in India have often become excessively lengthy, costly and overly formalistic—resembling court trials more than the flexible dispute resolution mechanisms they are meant to be. The awards produced under such conditions are frequently challenged and, more worryingly, set aside. These findings underscore a critical misconception: legal or judicial experience, though valuable, is not by itself sufficient to produce capable arbitrators. Arbitration demands a unique blend of skills. It calls not only for legal acumen but also for effective case management, procedural flexibility and the capacity to innovate. Arbitrators must move beyond the rigid boundaries of India’s civil procedure and evidentiary laws and instead embrace global best practices specific to international arbitration. They must also be adept at collaboration. Many arbitrations are conducted by panels comprising members of diverse nationalities and legal cultures. Within such tribunals, effective decision-making often depends on subtle persuasion and diplomatic skill—qualities that are not always honed on the bench and must be cultivated deliberately. Finally, there is a marked difference between writing judgments as appellate judges and drafting arbitral awards. The latter requires close engagement with extensive documentary evidence, witness testimony, and expert analysis—especially when quantifying financial losses or damages.

A Path Forward

Two key reforms are necessary to strengthen India’s arbitration ecosystem. First, the pool of arbitrators must be broadened. It cannot remain restricted to retired judges or practising advocates. Professionals with specific expertise—whether in engineering, finance, construction, or energy—must also be brought into the fold. These individuals can enrich arbitral tribunals with technical knowledge and diverse perspectives that improve both process and outcome. Second, a robust system of training and accreditation must be introduced. All arbitrators, regardless of background, should undergo formal instruction through certified courses and workshops. Leading arbitral institutions and professional associations can play a vital role in this capacity-building effort. The goal is to foster a professional identity for arbitrators—one that recognises arbitration as a distinct discipline requiring its own standards of excellence. Such reforms would also contribute to a cultural shift. Arbitration must be viewed not as a fallback or inferior version of litigation, but as a legitimate and effective method of resolving commercial disputes. Creating a cadre of well-trained, respected arbitrators would help change this perception and, in turn, enhance India’s standing in the global arbitration community. India is not short of talent. But to realise its ambition of becoming a world-class arbitration hub, it must invest in developing the individuals who will carry that ambition forward. A focus on human capital—on creating not just more arbitrators, but better ones—is essential. Only then will India earn a seat at the global arbitration table.

Arun Chawla, Director General, Indian Council of Arbitration. Views are personal.



M. SURESH BABU EXPLAINS HOW THE PROPOSED TARIFFS MAY AFFECT INDIA’S US EXPORTS

Time to reset India’s global trade compass



Impact on Asia

Two aspects of the current round of tariffs are particularly notable. First, no regions have been hit as hard as South and Southeast Asia. Over the past three decades, these economies have grown rapidly by exporting to global markets—especially to the United States. In countries like Vietnam and Cambodia, exports to the US account for about 30% and 25% of GDP, respectively. Both now face some of the highest tariffs—46% for Vietnam and 49% for Cambodia. Other countries in the region, including Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore, have also been affected to varying degrees. Among them, Cambodia appears especially vulnerable. The garment industry, employing nearly 750,000 people, has been central to poverty reduction and economic stability. Tariffs now threaten to reverse those gains. Unlike China, which has responded with its own countermeasures, smaller Southeast Asian economies lack the scale or leverage to retaliate. Their only option is to negotiate—and even then, largely on terms set by the United States.

all countries alike, regardless of whether they operate open or protected markets. It also considers only trade in goods, ignoring services such as technology or financial exports. This favours countries with large service exports to the US, while disadvantaging those with a merchandise-driven trade profile.

India’s Position

India is not immune. If the proposed tariffs are implemented after the current pause, India could see a \$7.76 billion fall—around 6.4%—in merchandise exports to the United States this year, according to the Global Trade Research Initiative. In 2024, India exported \$89 billion worth of goods to the US. The prospect of a sharp decline underscores the need for urgent and strategic trade policy responses. First, India must secure a more balanced trade deal with the US, which will require continuous engagement and careful diplomacy. Second, India should accelerate trade negotiations with the European Union, the United Kingdom and Canada—markets where goodwill towards India remains strong. Third,

deeper trade and investment ties with countries such as Russia, Japan, South Korea, ASEAN members and the UAE could diversify India’s export destinations. Fourth, India must manage its relationship with China with strategic caution—seeking selective cooperation while limiting economic vulnerabilities. Some observers argue that India could use this global realignment to its advantage. The success of Apple’s iPhone exports from India, which rose by 54% last year, is often cited as a case in point. Yet such optimism must be tempered by broader trade data: India’s total goods exports for 2024–25 remained flat at \$437 billion, the same as the previous year. A few bright spots cannot obscure the fact that the overall momentum is weak. Cashing in on current disruptions will require more than favourable geopolitics or isolated corporate achievements. What is needed is a coherent set of domestic reforms. These should include a rationalised tariff structure, a simpler and more predictable GST regime, streamlined export procedures and credible, fair enforcement of quality standards. Without such groundwork, India’s ambition to capture a larger share of global trade will falter. The temptation to retreat into inward-looking policies must be resisted. A more protectionist stance may appear politically appealing in the short term, but it risks squandering a rare opportunity. As global trade patterns shift and alliances are redefined, India has a chance to position itself as a credible, rules-based trading partner. That requires bold thinking, stable policy, and above all, a commitment to openness.

M. Suresh Babu is Director at the Madras Institute of Development Studies. Views are personal.



BOOKS: REVIEW

New novel explores fiction, family & fragility in Delhi

Keshava Guha’s second novel, *The Tiger’s Share* (Hachette India), confirms what his debut *Accidental Magic* first hinted at: here is a writer attuned to the cultural undercurrents of our times, yet drawn to the enduring structure of the realist novel. Where his first work conjured the inner worlds of global Harry Potter fans, his latest is rooted in Delhi’s material elite—a tale of fractured families, gendered inheritance, and the slow, choking presence of environmental collapse. At its centre, *The Tiger’s Share* weaves together the stories of two families navigating social expectations, generational disappointment, and personal ambition. It touches upon the bitter inequities of inheritance, particularly the unequal treatment of women, which Guha frames not as an aberration but a routine, almost unthinking practice in wealthy Indian households. His Delhi is both familiar and pointed—a city fuelled by material aspiration and sharp social exclusion, where

prestige is measured in gated flats and imported cars. In tone and structure, the novel carries the unmistakable imprint of Victorian fiction. Guha himself acknowledges this influence, citing Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* as a direct inspiration. Like Gaskell, he uses fiction not only to mirror social reality but to examine how systems—legal, familial, economic—shape human behaviour. Yet *The Tiger’s Share* is not homage for its own sake. It is an attempt to revitalise the old form for new questions, demonstrating the novel’s still-potent capacity to track societal change. One of the novel’s strengths lies in its prose: restrained, clear, and unsentimental. There are no stylistic pyrotechnics here, no affectations of postmodern irony. Instead, the novel progresses with the confidence of a writer who trusts in narrative and character to hold the reader’s attention. This is, as Guha himself puts it, “something old-fashioned but of enduring value”. He describes

fiction as a private artistic pursuit, one not designed to change the world but to fulfil a deep imaginative impulse. That modesty is reflected in the novel’s controlled ambition—it does not preach, but it does persuade. Guha is alert to the lie that fiction can tell, in service of a greater truth. The families he writes about are imagined, but their dilemmas are achingly real. The inheritance wrangles, the environmental degradation, the ideological drift between generations—none feel exaggerated. The author brings lived experience to bear, having observed, rather than drawn from, Delhi’s power elite. His depiction of the patriarchal default in inheritance practices is especially sharp, revealing how entrenched inequalities are not always the product of explicit malice, but of longstanding social habits. The environmental theme—quietly seeded throughout the narrative—becomes clearer as the novel moves toward its close. Guha reveals that the book’s origin lay in the idea of someone taking a drastic step



The Tiger’s Share by Keshava Guha; Hachette India; 320 pages; Rs455

out of despair over what humanity has done to nature. That premise gives the novel a lingering moral tension. Though not a polemic, *The Tiger’s Share* presses readers to consider how economic privilege often insulates people from the costs of the environmental crisis they help perpetuate. What also sets the novel apart is Guha’s interest in individuals who are “not typical”, characters whose reactions and beliefs resist easy categorisation. Fiction, unlike journalism or documentary, allows for such portraits of idiosyncrasy. This is particularly evident in Guha’s female characters, who quietly subvert the expectations placed upon them. There is no false empowerment narrative here, no triumphant transformation; instead, the novel explores the limits and possibilities of agency in a rigidly stratified society.

Guha, who studied history and politics at Harvard and writes both fiction and political commentary, is as comfortable reflecting on Delhi’s cultural drift as he is crafting elegant character arcs. In interviews, he laments the city’s descent into “material ambition”, contrasting it with the non-material idealism of the pre-Independence generation. That historical consciousness threads through the novel, giving it thematic ballast without overt nostalgia. Looking ahead, Guha reveals that his next work will explore the global Indian elite, shaped by a decade of brain drain and dispersed influence. If *The Tiger’s Share* offered a close-up of national faultlines, the next promises a broader, outward gaze. One can expect the same attentiveness to character and structure, even as the canvas widens. Among his literary influences, Guha names George Eliot and Penelope Fitzgerald—writers known for their psychological depth and narrative economy. From the former he inherits moral seriousness; from the latter, a belief in brevity and boldness. Though *The Tiger’s Share* is modest in length, its impact is lasting. It is a novel of quiet intelligence—thoughtful, considered, and deliberately unfashionable.



DSP Mutual fund Launches DSP Silver ETF fund of fund to provide easy access to Silver Investment

TANVIR KAUR
Mumbai

DSP Mutual Fund announced the launch of its new open-ended scheme, the DSP Silver ETF Fund of Fund, designed to offer investors a convenient and structured way to gain exposure to silver through the mutual fund route. This Fund of Fund will primarily invest in units of DSP Silver ETF, providing returns that closely correspond to the performance of physical silver in domestic markets.

Silver as a commodity plays a crucial role in various industries such as electronics, automotive, power, and jewelry, with demand expected to rise due to the global shift towards renewable and cleaner energy sources. Supply growth for silver has been limited, and recent years have shown a consistent supply deficit. The year 2025 could be the fifth year running where demand for silver could be more than the



The DSP Silver ETF Fund of Fund offers the advantage of owning the metal in a convenient digital form without the requirement for a demat account to transact. It also presents a systematic way to invest in Silver via SIPs

along with the flexibility of redeeming the units without any lock-in period. "During geopolitical tensions and uncertainties, precious metals like silver and gold present a safe haven for investors. Precious metals are also a good inflation hedge for investors who fear that trade wars and tariff tensions would cause high inflation. But besides such investment demand, more than 50% of the annual demand for Silver is for industrial use. Such

Piyush Goyal Highlights Investment Opportunities at India-UK Business Roundtable



LONDON: Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday highlighted opportunities for further investments to strengthen India-UK bilateral economic ties at a roundtable of businessmen and CEOs of the two countries.

"Addressed the India-UK Business Roundtable, bringing together prominent business leaders and CEOs from both countries. Highlighted opportunities to strengthen economic ties, drive innovation-led growth, and expand investment avenues between India and the UK," the minister said in a post on X. The Commerce Minister is on a five-day visit to London, Oslo and Brussels this week, for strengthening India's trade and invest-

ment relations with the UK, Norway and the European Union. He also met Al Cook, CEO of De Beers Group, and his team to explore global trends in the gems and jewellery sector. "We discussed India's opportunities, sustainable practices, and growth prospects for the diamond industry," said the minister. Goyal also met Martin Gilbert, Chairperson of Revolut, and exchanged views on the immense opportunities in India's fintech ecosystem and the importance of partnerships with global players to drive innovation and growth.

Earlier, Goyal held a meeting with the UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade, J. Reynolds, to advance Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotia-

tions between India and the UK. The Indian minister termed the meeting with his British counterpart "as productive" and part of the commitment to deepen the India-UK economic ties. "Arrived in London for two days of engaging discussions aimed at strengthening bilateral trade and investment relations. In my first engagement, held a productive meeting with the UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade J. Reynolds to advance Free Trade Agreement negotiations, reinforcing our commitment to deepening India-UK economic ties," Goyal said on X, after the meeting. The visit started with the London leg of the trip, aimed at wrapping up the negotiations for the proposed FTA between India and the UK, as talks have entered the last lap. India and the UK are looking to conclude talks for the proposed FTA sooner, as international trade is expected to face challenges due to steeper tariffs from the US. There are 26 chapters in the agreement, which include goods, services, investments, and intellectual property rights.

India's Coal Production Rises 3.6 Pct to Cross 81.5 Million Tonnes in April



NEW DELHI: The overall coal production in India during April reached 81.57 million tonnes (MT), marking an increase of 3.63 per cent over the 78.71 MT produced in the corresponding period of the previous year, the government said on Thursday.

Production from captive/other entities mines during April in FY 2025-26 stood at 14.51 MT, registering a significant rise from 11.46 MT recorded during the same period last year. This surge highlights the growing contribution of captive mining to India's overall coal output, the statement from Ministry of Coal pointed out. India's total coal dispatch during April reached 86.64 MT, demonstrating a steady increase from 85.11 MT recorded during April 2024 in FY2025-26. As on April 30, the coal stock held by coal companies witnessed a notable surge, reaching 125.76 MT in FY 2025-26, as compared to 102.41 MT during the corresponding period of the previous year.

At Coal India Limited (CIL) alone, the total coal stock stood at 105 MT in FY 2025-26, marking a 22.1 per cent growth over the 86.60 MT recorded during the same period last year. This surge reflects an impressive annual growth rate of 22.8 per cent underscoring the robust performance and efficiency of the coal sector, the official statement said.

The Ministry is focused on achieving sustainable growth, improving coal availability, and reducing dependence on imports. India's coal imports during April to December 2024 declined by 8.4 per cent to 183.42 million tonnes (MT) from 200.19 MT in the same period of previous financial year due to the increase in domestic production. The reduction in coal imports resulted in foreign exchange savings of approximately \$5.43 billion (Rs 42,315.7 crore) for the country, the ministry said. The non-regulated sector, excluding the power sector, experienced a more significant decline, with imports dropping by 12.01 per cent year-on-year.

Although coal-based power generation grew by 3.53 per cent from April to December 2024 compared to the previous year, imports for blending by thermal power plants to increase the calorific value of coal decreased sharply by 29.8 per cent.

HCL Group Launches Climate Fund to Support Low-Carbon Innovations



NEW DELHI: In a significant push toward climate action, Indian tech giant HCL Group, in collaboration with the India Climate Collaborative (ICC), has launched the HCL Climate-Force Fund—a Rs 25 crore initiative aimed at supporting market-ready solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation.

The fund seeks to address critical sectors like cooling, buildings, and freight mobility, which are vital to India's development and environmental goals. With rising demand for cooling—expected to increase eightfold by 2037—and an expanding building sector, the need for sustainable solutions has never been greater. Freight emissions, too, are projected to surge by over 450 per cent by 2050. "This is our first dedicated climate initiative," said Roshni Nadar Malhotra, Chairperson, HCL Group. "We are investing in innovators creating real solutions for a low-carbon future, aiming to bridge innovation and adoption."

India-Nepal Summit charts path for cross-border growth

FW DESK
Purnea (Bihar)

A summit on India-Nepal relations held in Bihar has laid fresh emphasis on cross-border cooperation, with a focus on trade, culture and environmental management.

Organised by the India-Nepal Centre of the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in collaboration with the Sub Himalayan Research Institute, the "India-Nepal Partnership Summit 2025" took place on 22 April at the Vidya Vihar Institute of Technology in Purnea.

Supported by Varun Beverages Ltd, the event attracted scholars, business leaders and policymakers from both countries. Discussions centred on



ways to strengthen ties in the Sub-Himalayan region, particularly across Seemanchal, Kosi and Mithilanchal in India and neighbouring provinces in Nepal. Speakers included Ratneshwar Mishra and Manindra Nath Thakur from the Sub Himalayan Research Institute; Atul K Thakur of PHDCCI; Bhaskar Koirala of the Nepal Institute of International and Strategic Studies; and senior represen-

tatives from Nepal's trade and tourism bodies.

The summit highlighted the shared cultural heritage of the region—where languages, religious customs and social practices transcend the international boundary—and how this could be harnessed for deeper diplomatic and economic cooperation. Calls were made for joint cultural festivals and student exchange programmes.

Cross-border trade also featured prominently. With the North Bihar-Nepal corridor acting as a vital commercial link, panellists urged the removal of infrastructure bottlenecks and the creation of a roadmap for accelerated economic integration.

Environmental cooperation, particularly concerning flood-prone rivers originating in Nepal and flowing into India, emerged as a pressing concern. Participants discussed joint flood control strategies and sustainable water management initiatives.

The summit concluded with a consensus that India and Nepal must institutionalise cross-border dialogues to turn their historical and geographical proximity into enduring, mutually beneficial partnerships.

India's Growth Hinges on Tax Incentives & Global Trade Dynamics: Deloitte

NEW DELHI: According to a Deloitte report, India's economic trajectory faces two counterbalancing forces that will shape growth outcomes.

The tax incentives introduced in the Union Budget 2025, designed to stimulate consumer spending, serve as a significant positive catalyst. These incentives, amounting to approximately Rs 1 lakh crore, primarily benefit the middle class and are expected to boost domestic demand.

Deloitte India Economist Rumki Majumdar emphasised that "the tax exemptions announced during the budget will increase disposable income in the hands of the young population with higher income elasticity." Despite these tax concessions, the report suggests that heightened economic activity should help offset revenue declines, allowing the government to maintain its fiscal deficit targets. Counterbalancing these positive domestic developments



are uncertainties in the global trade environment.

The report indicates that reciprocal tariffs could range from a moderate 10 percent to a substantial 26 percent, depending on how effectively India

navigates upcoming bilateral agreements. Majumdar noted that trade tariffs might potentially reduce India's growth by 0.1-0.3 percent, contingent on the country's negotiation capabilities. The outlook specifically highlights the importance of establishing a bilateral trade agreement with the United States by autumn. Such an agreement would enable India to identify new opportunities and gain access to the American market amid global trade uncertainties.

Learning from the Longest Surviving Pharma Enterprise



DR. ANIL KUMAR
ANGRISH

E. Merck KG is the holding entity which is a partnership firm. Through the holding entity, the organization has control over Merck KGaA (or Merck) which is a listed company. As on December 31, 2024, the Merck Group had 62,557 employees belonging to 142 nationalities. The Group's net sales amounted to €21.2 billion in fiscal 2024. The company is the longest surviving pharma enterprise in the world. The founding family which is the majority owner is in its 13th generation. 356 years of existence and the control of the family offers interesting insights for family-owned pharma companies in India given the fact that Indian pharmaceutical companies are primarily family-owned. Unique ownership structure, long-term mindset, reinventing the business model from time to time, etc. remained primary ingredients.

Annual Report of 2024 of Merck KGaA shows the ownership structure whereby the founding family still holds a 70.274% stake in the listed company, i.e., Merck Kommanditgesellschaft auf Aktien (Merck KGaA), Darmstadt, as a general partner and that too, via the Group's ultimate parent company, i.e., E. Merck Kommanditgesellschaft,

Darmstadt. The remaining stake of 29.726% of equity share capital of the listed company is traded on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange and other stock exchanges. In a KGaA, total capital is divided between two categories of partners namely 'general partners', and 'limited partners' whereby general partners are personally liable with their assets, and limited partners are liable with their contributions. Further, under the Family Contract, family members are not allowed to sell their equity, and they can just transfer their equity to another family member. While doing so, they have to sell the equity at a discount of 20 per cent of the market value of the shares of the listed company. This ensures reluctance on the part of family members as it will cause them loss. This reflects that the family remains engaged while maintaining a degree of detachment.

Merck came into existence in 1668 when the founder – Friedrich Jacob Merck who was a pharmacist bought a pharmacy in Darmstadt, a town near Frankfurt in Germany. Owning and operating a pharmacy was a mandatory requirement for a pharmacist in Germany. Over a period of three and a half centuries, the Group saw many upheavals. Two World Wars brought existential crisis for the Group. In 1917, the group's American subsidiary – Merck & Co.

which was the group's largest international business, was confiscated and expropriated by the US government by considering it as 'enemy property'. George Merck, grandson of the founder - Friedrich Jacob Merck was managing the subsidiary as he had moved to the USA in the 1880s. George Merck, by virtue of being American citizen could buy back the shares of Merck & Co. after the World War I. Hence, Merck & Co. (USA) continues to operate as a separate business which is independent of the Merck (Germany). Even today, E. Merck KG and Merck KGaA highlight that they hold the global rights to the Merck name and brand, and the only exceptions are Canada and the United States. Merck KGaA operates in these countries as MilliporeSigma (Millipore, a Boston-based Life Sciences company, acquired in 2010, and Sigma Aldrich, St. Louis-based Life Science company acquired in 2015) in the Life Science business, as EMD Serono (Serono, a biotech company, acquired in 2007) in the Healthcare business and as EMD Electronics in the Electronics business.

World War II dealt another major blow to Merck Group as its 90% business and factories got destroyed in bombings. Most of the Group's international subsidiaries were confiscated by foreign governments as these were treated



as deemed enemy property. Many of the subsidiaries were sold too due to increase in the costs or due to losses. Post-World War II, the company rose like a Phoenix as it focused on select niche areas.

Way back in 1827, Emmanuel Merck, the representative of founders' family used to offer 48 different alkaloids to pharmacists in Germany thereby establishing Merck as an Industrial enterprise. Prior to this, industrial-level production of alkaloids was not feasible due to lack of standardization. In 1904, Merck was manufacturing medicines, and the portfolio consisted of about 10,000 products. Not only that, but the group also sold the generics business to Mylan as it realized that it was a poor 'strategic fit' and was a 'commodity business.'

Diversification of the business and focus on select niche areas reflect the code of the group's longevity as it kept on reinventing itself.

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany was founded in 1995 as a partnership limited by shares. It came up with an Initial Public Offering (IPO) with a volume of Deutsche Mark (DM) 2.4 billion in November 1995. This was the largest public offering in German history at that time. Accountability towards investor groups and other stakeholders is reflected in the information provided in accordance with the requirements of the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS), the standards of the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB), the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). Processes and data is based on the ISO standards including ISO 14001, ISO 45001, ISO 9001, and ISO 50001. Validation of corresponding certifications by external auditors adds strength to the disclosures.

Hence, transparency and accountability towards stakeholders through disclosures, and scrutiny of processes as well as data by third party becomes important parameter for good governance. Family-owned companies in general do not lay too much emphasis on these parameters.

Interface of Corporate and Family governance structures is another crucial element. Annual Report of Merck for 2024 shows that Merck KGaA has the Executive Board, the Supervisory Board as well as the Board of Partners of E. Merck KG. The Supervisory Board that performs a 'monitoring function' had 16 members as on December 31, 2024, comprising 8 shareholder representatives and 8 employees' representatives. In this way, the Board ensures a mix of family as well as non-family members thereby ensuring good corporate governance standards. The Executive Board comprises members who have extensive knowledge of key industries and business sectors (Life Science, Healthcare, and Electronics) in which the company is operating. The Supervisory Board is kept adequately and timely informed by the Executive Board. The competencies and activities of the Supervisory Board are complemented by the Board of Partners of E. Merck KG, Darmstadt. It is the Board of Partners which designs and reviews the remuneration

system. The management performance of the Executive Board is also monitored by the Board of Partners. The Family Board of E. Merck KG considers 'competencies', 'expertise', 'experience' on areas such as sustainability matters, management skills, leadership abilities, etc. In-depth expertise and experience in the Life Science, Healthcare and Electronics sectors also forms integral part. In this way, industry and product knowledge helps the Board of Partners in complementing the expertise, experience and activities of Supervisory Board.

Bringing together talented members of the family and industry professionals who are non-family members, results into formation of a cohesive and progressive group. Appropriate blend of ownership and management gets ensured.

Family businesses get destroyed because of feuds. To strengthen the bond, family members across generations (10th to 13th) keep on interacting through family days, participation in informal social events, family intranet, in addition to in-house magazine, 'Merck Family News'.

Next Generation Leadership Development is an important aspect in the company as it is conducting two education programmes namely the Merck Next Generation -1 (for family members falling in the age group of 15-23) and Merck Next Generation - 2

(for family members falling in the age group of 24-35). Engaging next generation members through education & training programmes, giving exposure at the factory-level, and assigning role in different international markets is pursued. Family members are also encouraged to join programmes offered by Witten/Herdecke University in family business.

Engaging next generation leaders in a family-owned business through immersion programmes, training, education, and role in operating activities of the organization can prepare family members to take up responsible positions such as Board members in future. This can provide continuity of value system, strategic direction, family's long-term vision, and prioritizing the interests of the company over individual family members' interest. It is because of these elements; the Merck Group has preserved the legacy for centuries. The Group attributed longevity to focus on strategic areas comprising 'Competence', 'Curiosity', 'Capability', and 'Continuity'.

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DISCLAIMER: Views are personal and do not represent the views of the Institute.



INTERNATIONAL

Jagmeet Singh quits as NDP leader after defeat in Canada election

OTTAWA: Once a kingmaker in Canadian politics, Jagmeet Singh announced on Tuesday that he is quitting as the leader of the National Democratic Party (NDP) after he lost his own election to parliament and his party suffered a rout.

A Khalistan sympathiser at heart, Singh influenced former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who depended on him to keep his minority government in power, against India. Now, he has been personally defeated, and his party faces irrelevance.

From the 24 seats the NDP had in the last House of Commons, it was down to an expected seven seats this time, having won four and leading in three. "I'm disappointed that we could not win more seats, but I'm not disappointed in our movement," Singh told his supporters. He said that



he would give up the party's leadership as soon as a new leader is elected. He came in third in the Burnaby Central constituency in British Columbia, trailing the Liberal Party winner and the Conservative Party candidate.

A lawyer by profession, he became the leader of the NDP in 2017 and was elected to parliament in 2019. He extended his party's support to Trudeau,

whose Liberal Party lacked a majority, without joining the government. But last year, he announced his party was pulling its support for Trudeau, who quit this year, unable to face a vote of confidence without the NDP.

At the beginning of the year, the NDP had 17.4 per cent support in the aggregation of polls by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

However, the NDP suffered collateral damage in US President Donald Trump's tariff war on Canada and threats to annexe it. As Canadians rallied to the beleaguered Liberal Party as the country's best defence, NDP's support halved to 8.1 per cent on the eve of the election.

Last year, Singh called on Trudeau to impose sanctions on India. He accused India of being behind the attacks on Khalistanis and demanded action against Indian diplomats. Trudeau obliged him by expelling six Indian diplomats. Additionally, after Khalistanis attacked worshippers at a Hindu temple in Brampton, Ontario, Singh turned on India, saying, "What we need to see is an end to the violence; we need to see a firm stance against the Indian government."

Pakistan Cancels All Flights to PoK amid Escalating Tensions with India



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Wednesday announced cancellation of all domestic flights to Gilgit and Skardu amid escalating tensions with India after last week's Pahalgam attack in which 26 innocent civilians lost their lives. "The decision to suspend the flights to the northern regions was made after a review of national airspace safety protocols. All other flights to the northern areas of Pakistan have also been temporarily halted as a precautionary measure," said an official. A strict monitoring of foreign flights has also been initiated with major focus on international airlines crossing over from India. As per details, the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has been instructed to scrutinise all inbound foreign aircrafts. After the high-level meeting of the Pakistan's National Security Committee (NSC), it was decided to give a reciprocal response to India's decisions to shut down the Wagah-Attari border, declare defence and security advisors at Pakistan High Commission as Persona Non Grata, cancelling visas for Pakistani nationals under SAARC, and putting the IWT in abeyance, etc.

China sees surge in worker protests over unpaid wages, factory closures & US tariffs

BEIJING: Worker protests over unpaid wages are increasing throughout China, reflecting a surge in dissatisfaction among millions impacted by factory closures due to hefty US tariffs on Chinese imports amid an economic slump, as reported by Radio Free Asia (RFA).

From Dao county in Hunan province to Suining city in Sichuan and Tongliao city in Inner Mongolia, numerous frustrated workers have taken to the streets to voice their grievances about overdue wages and to contest unfair layoffs at factories forced to shut down due to US tariffs.

The workers claimed that the Sichuan-based firm, which produces flexible circuit boards, had not compensated them for



their wages since the beginning of the year and had withheld social security benefits for nearly two years from June 2023, according to the RFA report.

Analysts at the American investment bank Goldman Sachs have estimated that at least 16

million jobs across various sectors in China are at risk due to US President Donald Trump's implementation of a 145% tariff on Chinese imports.

They predict that the increased tariffs from the Trump administration will "consider-

Deal with India close but not there yet: Top US trade official



WASHINGTON: India and the US are close to a trade deal but they are not there yet, the top US trade negotiator said on Wednesday.

US media and policy circles have been agog with talk of a US-India trade deal as the first to be announced in the rush for agreements to beat President Donald Trump's 90-day pause in the implementation of his sweeping levies on nearly all of America's trading partner countries.

"I wouldn't say finish line (but) close," Jamieson Greer, the US Trade Representative, told Fox News, when asked in an interview if a deal with India was close to the finish line.

"I have a standing call with India's Trade Minister. I sent my team to India for a week. They were here last week and I met with their chief negotiator," he added.

Asked about US Vice-President J.D. Vance's visit to India, Greer referred to the an-

nouncement by the two sides of a framework for trade negotiations between the two sides.

Greer is an old hand at the office of the US Trade Representative. He served as Chief of Staff to Robert Lighthizer, the US Trade Representative in President Donald Trump's first term, when the US and India came very close to the finish line on a trade deal.

A deal was to be announced and signed during President Trump's visit to India in February 2020, but it fell through despite protracted and tough negotiations. Top Indian trade negotiators blamed the US for it, alleging they "kept changing the goalpost". Greer seemed far more bullish about a trade deal with South Korea in the present flush of negotiations, saying they have been most forward looking and the US strategy has been to go with the most ambitious proposals on the table.

"They've been very forward leaning," he said of the South Korean proposal.

Trade talks with India 'coming along great', says Trump



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said that trade talks with India were "coming along great" and expressed confidence in signing a deal.

Unlike his aides, however, the president did not put an immediacy to the talks.

"India's coming along great," he told reporters at an airport, heading to a rally in Michigan state to mark his achievements in the first 100 days of his second term. "I think we'll have a deal with India... they want to make a deal." Scott Bessent, the treasury secretary who has been leading the negotiations with trading partner countries in Asia, has flagged the likelihood of a deal with India being the first to be signed in the aftermath of the global trade turmoil triggered by President Trump's multiple rounds of escalation of tariff, including a reciprocal tariff on nearly all of America's trading partner countries.

Imports from India were pegged at 26 per cent in President Trump's reciprocal levies that were announced early this month aimed at levelling import duties and also bridging the trade imbalance that favours India. It is down to 10 per cent for 90 days and applies to all trading partner nations with the exception of China, whose exports to the US will be tariffed at 145 per cent.

India has been off the block fast to sew up a trade deal and the Trump administration has been touting it as the model outcome of President Trump's tariff assault on global trade.

"I would guess that India would be one of the first trade deals we would sign," Treasury Secretary Bessent told CNBC.

Bessent has indicated the first trade deal is expected this week or the next. India wants a deal and made it clear by not retaliating to President Trump's reciprocal tariffs, unlike China, and moved swiftly to seek a deal instead. Few details are available of the deal, but there are expectations in the US of major cuts in duties on imported automobiles, a long-standing US demand.

'Pahalgam Incident Deeply Disturbing & Tragic': Former Pakistan PM Imran Khan

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday termed the Pahalgam terror attack as disturbing & tragic and also condoled the victims and their families. "Loss of human life in the Pahalgam incident is deeply disturbing and tragic. I extend my deepest condolences to the victims and their families," said the incarcerated former Prime Minister during a discussion with the lawyers in Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi.

He alleged that when the "False Flag Palwama Operation" incident happened, Pakistan offered to extend all-out cooperation to India, but India failed to produce any concrete evidence. "As I predicted in 2019, the same is happening again after the Pahalgam incident. Instead of introspection and investigation, Modi Sarkar is again placing the blame on Pakistan," he said.

He further added that being a country of 1.5 billion people, India needs to act responsibly instead of messing with a region already known as "nuclear flashpoint." "Peace is our priority, but it should not be mistaken for cowardice. Pakistan has got all the capabilities to give a befitting response to any Indian misadventure, as My Government, backed by the whole nation, did in 2019. I have always



emphasised the importance of the Kashmiris' right to self-determination, as guaranteed by United Nations resolutions," he said. The former Prime Minister further alleged that India, led by RSS ideology, is a "grave threat", not only to the region but beyond it. "Indian oppression in Kashmir, intensified after the illegal abrogation of Article 370, has further fueled the Kashmiri people's desire for freedom," he alleged. Talking about the internal factions inside Pakistan, the former Prime Minister said that, sadly, his nation has been divided by an "illegitimate government" imposed through fraudulent Form-47 results. "And yet, ironically, Narendra Modi's aggression has united the people of Pakistan in one voice against Indian hostility. While we reject this fake regime, we stand firmly as one Pakistani nation and strongly condemn Modi's war-mongering and his dangerous ambitions that threaten regional peace," he said.

United States VP Vance hopes Pak will cooperate with India on Probe in Pahalgam Terror Attack

WASHINGTON: US Vice-President J.D. Vance has said that the US hopes that Pakistan would cooperate with India to hunt down the Pakistan-based terrorists responsible for the terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam last month.

"Our hope here is that India responds to this terrorist attack in a way that doesn't lead to a broader regional conflict," Vance said on



Thursday in an interview on Fox News' "Special Report with Bret Baier" show. "And we hope, frankly, that Pakistan, to the extent that they're responsible, cooperates with India to make sure that the terrorists sometimes operating in their

territory are hunted down and dealt with," the US Vice-President added. During the interview with Fox News, Vance made his public remark on the attack, which left 26 people dead. Vance and his family was in India on a four-day visit when the carnage — the worst since the Pulwama attack on CRPF personnel in 2019 — took place.

The Vice-President's remarks assume significance amid ris-

ing tensions between India and Pakistan in the aftermath of the Pahalgam attack. Vance, who was in India last month, had then condemned the attack and expressed solidarity with the victims and their families in a post on X. The Pahalgam attack, which claimed the lives of 25 tourists and one local, was one of the deadliest attacks on civilians in the Kashmir Valley in recent times.

With Spain and Portugal Plunge in Darkness, Power Disruption Haunts Europe



GOPAL MISRA
Admittedly, there is no direct evidence that the Chinese have invaded the power-grid systems in Europe's Iberian peninsula comprising two developed economies of Spain and Portugal, but the apprehensions of a Chinese invasion haunts Europe. Its impact was being felt even in the adjoining areas of France. With the peace efforts in Eastern Europe, Russian cyber aggression is being ruled out. The ongoing tariff war between the US and its western allies with China could be identified as one of the possible provocations. The delayed downloading of the electric cars in European ports have already caused much anger in China.

Meanwhile, India appears to be playing face with China. She has already opened her markets for the Chinese BYD electric bus chassis. By the end of January this year 2330 electric buses equipped with BYD electric bus chassis are operating in 35 cities across the country, representing a 24% market share. The buses are operating with the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation and the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation.

In India, the power distribution systems from China have already been functioning for more than a decade, but it could not be immediately ascertained how much Indian systems could be insulated from the Chinese cyber in-

vasion, if it ever happens. In India, there is no immediate threat to the power grids, but the caution, perhaps, could be emphasised following the collapse of the power distribution systems in Spain and Portugal.

With the state-of-the-art technologies being used for the power distribution in Spain and Portugal, few are ready to accept the claim being offered by the governments of Spain and Portugal that the power breakdown has been caused by sharp temperature swings in the atmosphere. Portugal's grid operator, REN, has claimed that "a 'rare atmospheric phenomenon' is the cause of the widespread shutdowns."

The governments in two countries, perhaps, are reluctant to share the details of the break-down, but the sudden collapse in the distribution of power has panicked Europe. The train services have suddenly been suspended, thousands of passengers stranded; even the airports were being managed with the backup power systems, and the traffic chaos has hit these two countries. The plight of patients in hospitals was palpable. Only emergencies were functioning with backup generators, and metro systems suffered sudden breakdowns.

Spain has declared a state of emergency in what is described as Europe's biggest power failure. Meanwhile, it is being stated that almost 82 per cent of power has been restored, according to Spain's electricity operator, REE.

The Denials – For many, it appeared quite intriguing that while Antonio Costa, President of the European Council and Portugal's former



prime minister, stated that the exact cause of the disruption is to be ascertained, he also has promptly claimed "There was no evidence pointing to a cyberattack".

It may be recalled that during the tenure of the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, the British wanted to censure China for the leak of the Covid-19 virus, but through backdoor diplomacy, according to reports Beijing had warned him that the British nuclear power stations are being run on the Chinese systems, including software; and if necessary it could stop the power systems in the UK. It, perhaps, forced Boris Johnson from lowering his anti-china rhetoric. Earlier, on 20 March this year, Heathrow Airport was shut down for a while following an incident of fire presumably caused by a short-circuit.

The blackout was so widespread that it has also adversely affected residents in Andorra and parts of France near the Spanish border. According to some initial reports that disruptions also hit a few areas in Belgium.

Judiciary Orders Enquiry– Meanwhile, Spain's High Court said it would investi-

gate whether the country's energy infrastructure had suffered a terrorist strike. The court has refused to accept the REE's statement ruling out a cyber-attack on the system. It has forced Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez to state that "his government has not ruled out any hypothesis". He further added,

"We must not rush to 'conclusions' and 'commit' errors through haste". He further stated "We will find out what happened in those five seconds, when the power suddenly was disrupted." The REE, however, has claimed that "it had identified two incidents of power generation loss, probably from solar plants, in Spain's southwest that caused instability in the electric system and led to a breakdown of its interconnection with France".

Meanwhile, Dutch cybersecurity experts, who have been closely monitoring the ongoing major power outage affecting Spain and Portugal, have raised concerns about the vulnerability of critical infrastructure. Initially, there were fears that a cyberattack could be behind the widespread disruptions. In spite of

Spain's grid operator's assurance that the outage was not caused by a cyberattack, the issue has drawn worldwide attention. The Spanish authorities have attributed the outage to weather-related factors, experts in the Netherlands cautioned that similar issues with critical infrastructure could be caused by cyberattacks.

According to Dave Maasland, director of the cybersecurity firm ESET, there is a growing risk of cyberattacks on critical infrastructure. He has further cautioned that power grids remain vulnerable to such attacks, even if the current outage was not caused by one. "A cyberattack on power infrastructure is not science fiction, attacks on power supplies are possible and have already caused disruptions in the past," he added.

He pointed to several examples of cyberattacks on power grids, including the 2015 attack by Russian hackers that disabled power systems in western Ukraine. A similar attack occurred in Kyiv in 2016. More recently, a cyberattack on Ukraine's power grid was narrowly avoided in 2022, after Russia's invasion. Maasland described the malware used in these attacks as a "digital hand grenade," designed to not only disrupt power but also destroy critical systems, complicating recovery efforts.

Gopal Misra has been associated with national and international media. His books on journalism and geo-politics have been well-appreciated. Views are personal.

Pakistani nationals asked to leave Odisha over Pahalgam carnage

**ARABINDA MOHAPATRA
Bhubaneswar**

At least a dozen Pakistani nationals living in Odisha have been asked to leave the state and get ready to be deported back to their country in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack which has worsened the relations between India and Pakistan. The fall-out of the attack has been particularly painful for some Pakistani women residing in Odisha.

Reports said that Nagma Yusuf, a Pakistan national, left Bhubaneswar on Sunday. She is among the 12 citizens from the neighbouring country identified by the authorities here for repatriation. Nagma was residing at BJB Nagar area of the city on a long-term VISA after her marriage with an Indian citizen,



Mohammed Nizamuddin, in 2008. She had recently obtained a visitor visa after subsequent applications for renewal of visa were rejected. She applied for an exit permit with foreigners' registration office of the Commissionerate Police, a few days prior to the expiry of the visitor visa in February but it is still pending.

Following the gruesome attack on tourists at Baisaran meadows in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam on April 22 that left 26 dead, the Ministry of Home Affairs approved her application seeking departure and served her notice to leave the

country in 48 hours. Sarada Bai (55) is battling deep mental agony, facing deportation to a country she barely recalls after living in India for over three decades. On Saturday, she appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Odisha chief minister Mohan Charan Majhi not to separate her from her family. In 1987, Sharda, along with her parents Mannha Mal and Indra Bai, and her nine siblings, entered India from Pakistan's Sindh province on a 60-day visitor visa. While her four sisters and five brothers were granted Indian citizenship and settled in various cities, including Raipur, Lucknow, and Madhya Pradesh, Sharda's attempts to secure long-term visas or citizenship remained unsuccessful.

Canada elections: Liberal Party to retain power after unintended boost from Trump

OTTAWA: Canada's Liberal Party is set to retain its power under Prime Minister Mark Carney after a closely-fought election with an unintended boost from US President Donald Trump, who helped unleash a wave of nationalism in a country known for its understated demeanor.

Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre conceded defeat and congratulated him early Tuesday morning, sealing his victory. Declaring victory, Carney said, "We will build an independent future for our great country." The party had won 168 seats and was leading in 16, 4 short of a majority in the 343-member House of Commons. It had 152 seats in the last



parliament. The Conservative Party had won 144 seats. It had 120 seats in the last parliament. The National Democratic Party, led by Khalistan sympathiser Jagmeet Singh suffered a rout, winning five seats and leading in two, while Singh himself lost the election.

The Liberal Party appeared at the beginning of the year to be heading towards a hu-

miliating defeat when Trump resurrected it by waging a tariff war against Canada and threatening to annexe it. Support for the party surged in a show of defiance against Trump and reinvigorated nationalism. In the backlash, many Canadians switched allegiance to the Liberal Party, which they believed was better placed to stand up to Trump than the Conservative Party led by Pierre Poilievre, whose ideology mirrored the US President's in many ways.

Forums demand autonomy for universities, Free from political interference



Former VC Panjabi University Boparai urged for complete autonomy to varsities

KULBIR SINGH KALSI
Chandigarh

To uphold the sanctity of universities as “temples of knowledge,” public forums Lok-Raj Punjab and Jago-Punjab have called for complete autonomy and independence for all universities. They emphasized that these vital institutions must be free

from political interference to preserve their role as custodians of cultural diversity, languages, heritage and history.

Speaking jointly, Padma Shri and Kirti Chakra awardee Prof. S. Swarn Singh Boparai, former Vice Chancellor, Panjabi University and Chairman of Jago-Punjab and Dr. Manjit Singh Randhawa, Convenor of Lok-Raj asserted that the post of Vice Chancellor should be redefined as “Chancellor.” Further, the appointment should be made by

the university’s governing body not by the Governor and the candidate must be a respected faculty member from the same university.

They criticized the current practice where the state Chief Minister sends a panel of names to the Governor who then appoints the Vice Chancellor, often someone from outside the institution.

Drawing comparisons with foreign universities, where Chancellors hold full administrative powers, they pointed out that Indian Vice Chancellors merely exercise delegated powers from politically appointed Chancellors, leaving them with no real authority.

The statement was prompted by recent incidents particularly at PAU Ludhiana where political interference allegedly led to public embarrassment. The forums called such acts “reprehensible” and warned that political control undermines the impartiality, integrity and future of education in India.

World IP Day: Celebrating and Safeguarding Creativity

KULBIR SINGH KALSI
Chandigarh

Pushpa Gujral Science City celebrated World Intellectual Property Day by organizing a seminar on the theme “IP and Music: Feel the Beat of IP”, highlighting the crucial role intellectual property (IP) plays in nurturing creativity and innovation in the music industry. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from around 200 students and teachers representing various educational institutions.

Dr. Rajesh Grover, Director, PGSC in his address to the participants, emphasized the importance of inventions and creativity in today’s fast-changing global economy. He explained that Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) act like a protective shield, helping to safeguard people’s ideas from being copied or misused. He pointed out that protecting intellectual property is key to driving innovation, boosting economic



growth and maintaining global competitiveness. Furthermore, tools like patents, copyrights, trademarks and trade secrets play a vital role in encouraging creativity, attracting investments and advancing progress across industries, he added.

Dr. Balwinder Singh Sooch, Director, Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Career Hub, Punjabi University, Patiala introduced this year’s World IP Day theme, highlighting how the music industry is evolving in the digital age. He explained that

the theme focuses on the crucial role of Intellectual Property (IP) in supporting musicians and content creators in the era of the internet and social media. Using real-life examples, he helped the audience understand different types of IP and their importance in everyday life. The session also offered a clear overview of how to register copyrights, patents, industrial designs, trademarks and geographical indications, helping students and educators better understand the practical side of IP protection.



Indian citizens Mohammad Irfan, Left, Khursheeda Begum, right, embrace her relatives on their return from Pakistan at the Attari-Wagah border between India and Pakistan, near Amritsar, India, Wednesday. PHOTO-PRABHJOT GILL



A Pakistan national bids goodbye to her Indian relatives as she leaves in a bus at the Attari-Wagah border between India and Pakistan, following New Delhi’s decision to order almost all Pakistani citizens to leave the country after last week’s deadly attack in Indian-controlled Kashmir. PHOTO-PRABHJOT GILL

Tragic Death of Jhinjri Bride Married in Nahan



FW DESK
Ropar

In-Laws accused in Dowry Case after Poison Incident a heartbreaking case has emerged from the village

of Jhinjri near Sri Anandpur Sahib, where a young woman named Neha Devi, married just five months ago in Rampur Gujran (Nahan area), tragically lost her life after allegedly consuming poison. Her grieving family claims that she was regularly harassed and pressured for dowry by her in-laws. After being rushed to PGI Chandigarh for treatment, Neha succumbed to the poisoning. Police have filed a case under multiple sections and arrested the husband Sanjeev Kumar, along with his mother Tej Kaur, and relatives Karam Chand and Raj Singh. This tragic incident has sparked outrage and renewed conversations around the dowry system in India.

Tourists return to Valley after the deadly terror attack, say Kashmir is safe & beautiful

FW DESK
Srinagar

After a week of deadly terror attack in Pahalgam, tourists are once again enjoying the scenic beauty of Kashmir Valley. Visitors are seen taking Shikara rides on Srinagar’s Dal Lake and exploring the city with ease, and posting the videos on social media. .

Tourists are expressing confidence about the safety and urging others to visit.

“I was told by news channels to say negative things about Kashmir but I refused to do this,” one tourist said in a social media. “However, I have been taken care of by Kashmiri people. They have offered every help. One even offered money.” Others said they didn’t



cancel their trip despite the Pahalgam terror attack, saying they are safe.

Foreign tourists, too, appeared unfazed. According to ANI agency, a group from Croatia and Serbia, currently visiting Pahalgam, said they

felt secure and praised Kashmir’s natural beauty and hospitality. “We are very happy here. The people are kind, and the landscape is stunning,” said Ljiljana from Croatia, quoted by ANI.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 29 chaired a high-level security review with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, and the three service chiefs. National Security Advisor Ajit Doval was also present. The meeting followed an earlier Cabinet Committee on Security session on April 23, held in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack that claimed 26 lives. The government has vowed strict action against the attackers and those behind the conspiracy.

Over 60 Women Benefit from Health Camp Organised by Chandigarh Press Club



FW DESK
Chandigarh

More than 60 women journalists and women family members of the Chandigarh Press Club members benefited from a health camp organised by the Chandigarh Press Club in association with the Government Medical College and Hospital (GMCH), Sector 32, at the Club premises on Saturday. As part of the camp, 37

women underwent screening mammography for the early detection of breast malignancy, while 67 members availed themselves of bone density tests.

The health camp, aimed at promoting preventive healthcare among women, was organised at the Club premises. The initiative was open to women journalists as well as women family members of the Club’s members.

VIKSIT
BHARAT IN
ACTION:

ROPEWAYS, AI BREAKTHROUGHS & GLOBAL RECOGNITION

VIKAS BHI, VIRASAT BHI: BOOSTING CONNECTIVITY AND RELIGIOUS TOURISM

KEDARNATH ROPEWAY PROJECT

12.9 km ropeway,
₹4,081 crore project,
18,000 passengers/day

HEMKUND SAHIB ROPEWAY PROJECT

12.4 km ropeway,
₹2,730 crore project,
11,000 passengers/day

IMPACT

Travel time slashed
from 8-9 hours to
just **36 minutes!**

PM at the inauguration of the NAMO
Hospital at Silvassa, in Dadra and Nagar
Havelli & Daman and Diu



“**Development of modern infrastructure & Ease of Living** should be focused to catapult our economic growth and development.

PM Narendra Modi

DIGITAL INDIA: FROM AADHAAR TO AI – A TECH REVOLUTION

AADHAAR: POWERING INDIA’S DIGITAL LEAP
(in February 2025)

- 225 crore Aadhaar transactions
- 43 crore e-KYC transactions
- 12.54 crore face authentications—highest ever!

INDIA’S AI MOMENT: INNOVATION AT SCALE

- AI Kosha: Secure AI innovation platform
- iGOT-AI: Smart recommendations for officials

AI Compute Portal:
10,000 GPUs, 8,000 more incoming

IndiaAI FutureSkills:
Nurturing AI talent

ENSURING AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE FOR ALL

15,000+ PM Bharatiya
Janaushadhi Pariyojana
Kendras across India

50-90% savings on
medicines

75 crore Suvidha
Napkins provided at just
Re 1 each

A GLOBAL SALUTE: BARBADOS HONOURS PM MODI

Awarded the **Honorary Order
of Freedom**

Recognized for **strategic
leadership & COVID-19 aid**

Strengthens **India-Barbados
diplomatic ties**

