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SYSTEM OBSERVER

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Admin imposes restrictions in parts of Doda, Bans unauthorised assemblies for two months

JAMMU

The administration on Sunday imposed a ban on unauthorised assemblies and protests in parts of Jammu and Kashmir's Doda town for a period of two months under Section

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LG LAUNCHES MAJOR CAMPAIGN AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AND NARCO-TERRORISM IN SRINAGAR



SYSTEM OBSERVER
SRINAGAR

"In the war against drug abuse and narco-terrorism, every step matters. Every effort counts. Every contribution brings victory closer. Together, let us envision a Jammu Kashmir where no child is lost to drugs, no family is broken by addiction, no community suffers under traffickers, and every citizen thrives in health and strength," the Lieutenant Governor, Shri Manoj Sinha said today in Srinagar.

"This is the vision we pursue, the dream we must

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Srinagar man arrested for receiving funds from Pakistan & foreign sources, quizzed by Special Cell, IB & RAW

SYSTEM OBSERVER
DESK
NEW DELHI

The Special Cell of Delhi Police has arrested a resident of Srinagar who allegedly received a sum of Rs 18 crore from Pakistan and foreign based individuals.

As of now, it is not confirmed whether he was working for ISI (Pakistan's intelligence agency) or involved in espionage for Pakistan. Special Cell officials were not available for comment on the matter.

The accused, Asif Shafi Ahangar (38), a resident of

Srinagar, was recently jointly interrogated by officials of RAW and IB, Indian intelligence agencies.

He was arrested on April 5 in connection with providing a mule account and cheating a Jamia resident of Rs 86,12,083.

An FIR (first information report) in this regard was registered by the Special Cell of Delhi Police after receiving a complaint from Faiz Ahmad, a resident of Jamia Nagar in Delhi.

Faiz was contacted by Anne Fan alias Anita and Kevin Fan, both claiming to

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Lotus Blooming From Gangotri To Gangasagar: PM Modi On BJP's Assembly Election Win

SYSTEM OBSERVER
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the lotus is now blooming from Gangotri to Gangasagar with the BJP's historic victory in West Bengal and asked all parties to work for change, not revenge, and ensure that the state's future trumps over fear.

Addressing BJP workers at the party headquarters after the win in assembly elections in West Bengal, Assam and Puducherry, Modi said it was a special day in many ways as it heralds a bright future for the country.

"It is a day of trust in the great democracy of India, trust in the politics of performance, trust in the resolve of stability, trust in the spirit of Ek Bharat,



Shrestha Bharat.

"I bow before the people of West Bengal, Assam, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and Keralam," he said at the victory celebration event where BJP

President Nitin Nabin, Union ministers Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh, among others, were present.

Modi said on November 14

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All gates of Baglihar Dam on Chenab remain closed even a year after Indus Waters Treaty Suspension

SYSTEM OBSERVER
RAMBAN

All gates of the Baglihar Dam on the Chenab River in Ramban district continue to remain closed even a year after the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty, which was put on hold following the Pahalgam attack.

The continued closure of the gates highlights the sustained impact of the treaty's suspension on water management and hydroelectric operations in the region. The Baglihar Hydroelectric Power Project, a key infrastructure on the Chenab River, has remained under close

monitoring since the decision was taken in the wake of the attack.

The Indus Waters Treaty, which governs the sharing of river waters between India and Pakistan, was suspended following the Pahalgam attack, marking a significant shift in bilateral water-sharing arrangements.

The Baglihar Dam, located in the Ramban district of Jammu and Kashmir, plays a crucial role in hydroelectric power generation and water regulation on the Chenab River. The closure of its gates is being seen as part of broader measures linked to the treaty

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Nasha Mukht Abhiyaan | J&K Police come hard at smugglers, peddlers during first 15 days



SYSTEM OBSERVER
SRINAGAR

Jammu & Kashmir Police have intensified

its multi-pronged crackdown on drug trafficking and substance abuse under the Nasha Mukht Abhiyaan, registering significant achievements across the Union Territory.

Pertinently, the ongoing campaign launched and spearheaded by Lieutenant

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DIG reviews security preparedness in Udhampur, Orders intensified vigilance

SYSTEM OBSERVER
JAMMU

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police, Udhampur-Reasi Range, Shiv Kumar Sharma, chaired an operations-cum-security review meeting on Sunday, stressing the need to further strengthen the intelligence network through effective asset cultivation and sustained community engagement.

He passed these directions at the meeting at the Majalta police station in Udhampur district and reviewed operational preparedness during his visits to the headquarters of 84

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Tribals, Scheduled castes preserved India's identity and soul despite foreign invasions: Bhagwat

SYSTEM OBSERVER
MUMBAI,

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has said that despite foreign invasions and hardships, tribal communities and Scheduled Castes preserved the country's identity and soul, stressing the need to integrate them into the mainstream development process.

He was speaking on Saturday at the Karmayogi awards ceremony in

Mumbai, where Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari was also present.

"Human life is defined by giving back to the world, as we are all part of one great family. A person works and spends for the betterment of society, not as a favour, but out of duty. In serving others, we foster our own development. By helping others to thrive, we elevate ourselves and grow as

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FROM PAGE-1

IG launches.....

fulfil, and the legacy we owe future generations. It is about Jammu Kashmir's destiny, the society we aspire to build, the values we uphold, and the lives we safeguard. Today, let us pledge that we will not rest until Jammu Kashmir is completely drug-free," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He was addressing the launch of a major campaign against drug abuse and narco-terrorism at TRC Football Ground in Srinagar. The Lieutenant Governor also led a two-KMs Padyatra, urging people from all walks of life to commit themselves wholeheartedly to the fight against substance abuse.

The Lieutenant Governor said that battle against substance abuse is being fought in our homes and the pledge we made today is not just a personal vow.

"It is cry of every mother who has seen her child consumed by addiction, and solemn commitment of every father who has watched dreams collapse under weight of drug abuse.

It is also promise of every teacher who has witnessed talent and potential fade into silence. Determination to uproot drugs is not only a declaration from administration but it is collective resolve of people, who, after enduring decades of suffering, have risen to say: enough is enough.

Active participation of the people is unshakable force capable of defeating the enemies' assault through narco-terrorism. Drug traffickers and their networks have targeted our youth. We have taken a solemn oath that we will never allow them to succeed," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasised that the intervention from the society is most significant. He said that we must involve elders, spiritual leaders and teachers to guide youth on the right path. Their vigilance can save lives and serve as powerful weapons against addiction, he said.

"I also want to tell our youth that drugs are not 'cool' but they are chains that steal your freedom. Your energy belongs to sports fields, skill platforms, and the building of a brighter future," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor said our neighbouring country, known as the world's foremost incubator of terrorism is pushing drugs to harm our youth and sponsor terrorism. He said drug money fuels terrorism and radicalization. He also said that this mission advances on three fronts- dismantling supply chains, spreading awareness at the grassroots, and rehabilitating addicts with dignity and care.

"It is a grave threat to internal security. Both terrorists and drug traffickers seek to fracture unity, corrode integrity, and destroy peace, while draining the strength of our youth to strike at Jammu Kashmir's future. We have adopted 360-degree approach for cracking down on drug peddlers, rehabilitating addicts, training police, raising awareness, and mobilizing grassroots participation," the Lieutenant Governor said.

"Under a new SoP, we are taking stringent action. Between April 11 and May 2, the Jammu and Kashmir divisions together recorded 481 FIRs in just 21 days. During this period, 518 drug smugglers and peddlers were sent to jail, while 24 houses, which were proceeds of crime, were demolished and property worth crores was seized. Kashmir alone accounted for 26 of these attachments. In addition, authorities have recommended the cancellation of more than 300 driving licences.

Srinagar man.....

be citizens of Singapore and employees of the World Gold Council, for online gold trading through the website <https://www.malaber.com>.

The accused lured and duped the victim through a fake online gold trading scheme.

They also sent the victim pictures from their Goa trip and asked him to praise them on social media and write about their trip.

"They also shared a photograph of Laxmi Building in Mumbai, claiming it to be the World Gold Council office. They also shared the website malaber.com, where one can browse and check details about trading and business products, which gave me confidence," the victim told police.

Convinced by them, the victim started online gold trading. He was provided with an online account and a wallet to withdraw, add, or transfer money.

Initially, he was given a profit of Rs 2 lakh, which further lured him. He was then persuaded to opt for a VIP5 membership, for which he paid Rs 30 lakh.

In total, the victim deposited Rs 86,12,083. Later, the accused stopped responding to his calls and messages.

The accused also shut down the website for a day and later restarted it.

Police registered a case and launched an investigation, which led to the arrest of Asif Shafi Ahangar. An amount of Rs 3 lakh from the cheated money was found deposited in his account.

"He was asked to join the investigation but was later arrested from the Lajpat Nagar area of Delhi," a source said.

During the course of investigation, police found that he had received Rs 14 crore from Pakistan and foreign based individuals.

His two aides are on the run.

The Special Cell is currently probing the matter, and officials remain tight-lipped.

Lotus Blooming.....

last year, when the Bihar election results came in, he told the BJP workers from this very spot that the Ganga flows onward from Bihar all the way to Ganga Sagar (in West Bengal).

"And today, with victory in West Bengal, from Gangotri (Uttarakhand) to Ganga Sagar (West Bengal), it is nothing but the lotus in full bloom. Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal today, in these states surrounding Mother Ganga, there are BJP-NDA governments," he said.

Democracy, not fear, won in this festival of democracy in West Bengal, Modi said.

When the BJP has won in Bengal, there should be talk of 'badlav' (change) not 'badla' (revenge), 'bhavishya' (future) not 'bhay' (fear), he said.

The Prime Minister said winning and losing are a natural part of democracy and politics, but the people of the five states have shown the world why the country is the mother of democracy.

"Democracy is not just a system for us; it is the river of traditions in our veins. Today, not only has India's democracy triumphed, but India's Constitution has also triumphed. Our constitutional institutions have triumphed; our democratic processes have triumphed," he said.

Modi said the nearly 93 per cent voter turnout in West Bengal has been historic in itself, and new records of voting have also been set in Assam, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala.

He said women's participation in this election has been exceptionally high and this is emerging as the brightest picture of Indian democracy.

"Today is a historic day, unprecedented. When years of penance transform into attainment, the joy that appears on the face, that joy today I am seeing on the faces of BJP workers across the country," he said.

The Prime Minister also congratulated the Election Commission, all its employees, all the personnel involved in the voting process, especially the security forces, for the successful conduct of the assembly elections. "History will always remember your contribution to maintaining the dignity of India's democracy," he said. (Agencies)

All gates of.....

suspension.

Despite reaching out to an agreement on the cessation of hostilities, the Indian government's position on the Indus Waters Treaty remains unchanged, with the agreement still in abeyance following the terror attack in Pahalgam.

The Indus system comprises the main Indus River, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Sutlej. The basin is mainly shared by India and Pakistan, with a small share for China and Afghanistan.

Under the Indus Waters Treaty signed between India and Pakistan in 1960, all the waters of three rivers, namely Ravi, Sutlej and Beas (Eastern Rivers), averaging around 33 million acre feet (MAF) were allocated to India for exclusive use.

The western rivers-Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab-carrying an average flow of around 135 MAF, were allocated to Pakistan, while India retained limited rights for domestic, non-consumptive, and agricultural use as specified under the treaty.

India has also been given the right to generate hydroelectricity through run-of-the-river (RoR) projects on the Western Rivers, subject to specific criteria for design and operation, which are unrestricted.

To fully utilise the eastern river waters allocated to it, India has developed major infrastructure projects including the Bhakra Dam on the Sutlej, Pong and Pandoh dams on the Beas, and Thein (Ranjit Sagar) Dam on the Ravi.

These storage works, together with other works like Beas-Sutlej Link, Madhopur-Beas Link, Indira Gandhi Nahar Project etc has helped

India utilise most of the waters of waters of Eastern rivers. (Agencies)

Tribals, Scheduled.....

human beings. This principle is the core value of this Indian land, commonly known as a Hindu society," Bhagwat said.

"This is the society's enduring ethos, which has survived for thousands of years. For various reasons, partly because of our indifference and partly because of foreign invasion, those who preserved this ethos paid a heavy price," he said.

The foreign invaders found that this ethos, this value system of the society is its soul and the key to keeping it alive. So they ensured that those who tried to preserve this soul would be uprooted and face extreme hardships, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief noted.

But despite foreign invasions and hardships, tribal communities and Scheduled Castes preserved the country's identity and its soul, he said.

"Despite such adversities, the country's core identity remained intact among tribal communities and those belonging to SC and ST groups," he said, emphasising the need to integrate them into the mainstream development process while ensuring they receive equal access to services and facilities.

Referring to global developments, Bhagwat said the present world is "stumbling forward" and struggling to maintain balance, and asserted that India could emerge as a stabilising force.

The country must not only safeguard its own interests but also extend support to the world, he said.

DIG reviews.....

Brigade Rampur, Majalta and Police Post Khoon, officials said.

He directed officers to intensify Long Range Patrols (LRPs), Short Range Patrols (SRPs) and Cordon and Search Operations (CASOs) to maintain heightened vigilance and operational efficiency.

Nasha Muk.....

Governor Manoj Sinha to target drug peddlers, dismantle financial networks linked to narcotics, and strengthen public awareness is going on in full vigour.

Sources said that the accelerated action under the abhiyaan is on the top of agenda of the Director General of Police Nalin Prabhat who chaired a number of review meetings and made visits to districts for achieving maximum results.

The campaign, started on April 11, 2026, and up to April 26, 2026, 378 cases were registered under the NDPS Act and related laws, with 431 drug peddlers booked.

"Police seized 478 kg of narcotic drugs, 13,427 tablets, capsules and bottles of psychotropic substances, with a total estimated value about Rs. seven crore. The authorities disposed of 4,776 kg of narcotic drugs and 6,493 tablets, capsules and bottles of psychotropic substances.

Efforts to curb illicit cultivation leading to the destruction of poppy crops is also in full swing.

Admin imposes.....

163 of the BNSS, citing apprehensions of public disturbance and threat to peace.

The step has been taken in view of the expectations of large gatherings of people in public events of recently released AAP MLA Mehraj Malik in his native Doda district.

According to an order issued by District Magistrate Krishan Lal, the administration observed that some people were allegedly planning demonstrations and trying to mobilise gatherings, which could lead to untoward incidents and disturb public order.

"In exercise of powers vested in me I hereby order a complete ban over any unauthorised gathering of 5 or more than 5 persons and organising protests or Dharnas in the public places - Clock tower chowk, Dessa road upto Akramabad, sports stadium, within the radius of 100 meters from the sports stadium and from clock tower up to old Bus Stand except for the events for which the permission has been already granted," Lal said in the order.

The administration said such gatherings could cause obstruction and inconvenience to commuters, passengers and pedestrians, besides posing a threat to public safety.

However, events for which prior permission has already been granted will remain exempted, it said. Violators will be booked under Section 223 of the BNSS, the order said.

Trump family: Intersections of defense deals, crypto ventures, and presidential power

SYSTEM OBSERVER EXCLUSIVE

Since returning to office, Donald Trump and his family have expanded their footprint across defense, digital assets, and Middle East-linked investments. The overlap between public policy decisions and private business activity has drawn scrutiny from ethics experts and political observers. Here's a structured look at the developments??

Step 1: Political mandate and business ecosystem
Following the election victory, Trump's position at the center of US policymaking coincided with the rapid expansion of family-linked commercial ventures—particularly in sectors

sensitive to regulation and geopolitics.

Step 2: Defense sector exposure amid regional tensions

Rising instability in the Middle East, especially involving Iran, has increased demand for drone and counter-drone systems.

Eric Trump and Donald Trump Jr. are linked to investments in drone-focused firms such as Powerus, targeting Gulf defense markets.

Entities associated with Eric Trump have reportedly secured US defense contracts.

Donald Trump Jr. is connected to Unusual Machines, a firm involved in drone-related supply chains.

Step 3: Policy environ-

ment and market impact
US policy decisions during this period have influenced both defense and crypto markets.

Executive actions promoted domestic drone manufacturing and reduced reliance on foreign (notably Chinese) systems.

Federal procurement programs expanded funding for US-based defense suppliers.

Regulatory posture toward crypto shifted, with greater emphasis on adoption and innovation.

Step 4: Expansion into crypto ventures

In parallel, Trump-linked entities entered the cryptocurrency space with multiple offerings.

The TRUMP memecoin launched shortly before inauguration, with val-

uation driven largely by brand association rather than utility.

Reports indicated rapid early market capitalization growth and concentrated ownership among insiders.

Additional ventures, including World Liberty Financial, raised significant capital from investors.

Step 5: Investor access and capital flows

Some crypto initiatives included high-value participation structures.

Premium-tier offerings (such as "Super Nodes") provided access to project teams and networks.

International investors, including figures like Justin Sun, were reported among participants.

Step 6: Broader Middle East investment links

The family's financial

ties extend into regional investment networks.

Jared Kushner's firm Affinity Partners has raised substantial capital from Gulf sovereign wealth funds.

Trump-linked ventures have also attracted investment interest from Gulf-based entities.

Step 7: Ongoing product and brand expansion

During this period, Trump-affiliated businesses continued launching new products across sectors.

Digital assets (tokens, NFTs, stablecoin initiatives)

Blockchain-linked infrastructure (e.g., mining ventures)

Branded consumer products (watches, sneakers, licensing deals)

Market outcomes and

risk exposure

Several Trump-linked or associated crypto assets have experienced significant volatility.

Large price declines were reported across multiple tokens after initial surges.

Market losses affected both retail and institutional participants, reflecting broader risks in speculative crypto assets.

Why it matters

The convergence of political authority, regulatory influence, and private business activity has prompted debate in the US and internationally.

Supporters view these developments as legitimate business expansion.

Critics argue they highlight potential conflicts of interest and governance challenges.

How Sudan Was Broken Apart - And Why It Benefited

Washington

SYSTEM OBSERVER EXCLUSIVE

Sudan's collapse did not happen in a vacuum.

It unfolded amid a wider geopolitical struggle in which the US sought to weaken rivals, contain Chinese influence, and reshape strategic regions to its advantage.

Here's how that played out??
China Built Sudan Into a Strategic Energy Partner
Before Sudan's partition in 2011, China had developed deep ties with Khartoum. Beijing wasn't merely purchasing Sudanese oil—it was building the backbone of Sudan's energy infrastructure.

Invested roughly \$6 billion into Sudan's oil sector

Helped construct a 1,500-mile pipeline linking southern oil fields to the Red Sea

Enabled Sudan to export oil despite Western sanctions

and pressure

By the late 1990s and 2000s, Sudan's oil production surged and the economy expanded rapidly.

A China-backed energy hub emerging in East Africa posed a strategic challenge to Washington.

Partition as a Strategic Turning Point

The US increasingly backed efforts to separate the south from Khartoum.

Western media narratives around atrocities and religious persecution helped build support for intervention and pressure on Sudan's government.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 paved the way for a southern independence referendum.

Comprehensive Peace Agreement

In 2011, South Sudan voted

for independence.

South Sudan became the world's newest state—and Washington quickly recognized and supported it.

Oil Wealth Was Split, Infrastructure Was Not
Partition divided Sudan's oil geography in a destabilizing way:

Most oil reserves ended up in South Sudan

Export infrastructure and pipeline routes remained in Sudan

This created structural dependence and immediate friction between the two states.

Rather than producing stability, partition fractured the economic system that had previously sustained both.

Collapse and Civil War Followed

Despite billions in foreign aid, South Sudan lacked functioning institutions and diversified infrastructure.

Internal power struggles soon erupted into civil war.

The conflict devastated the country:

Hundreds of thousands killed

Millions displaced

Oil infrastructure severely damaged

Export revenues collapsed

The integrated Sudanese oil economy was shattered.

China Lost Ground

China-once dominant in Sudan's energy sector—saw much of its investment undermined by instability, war, and fragmentation.

Its strategic foothold in the region weakened dramatically.

Regional Powers Deepened the Crisis

Foreign intervention did not stop with partition.

The ongoing Sudan war has also been fueled by outside regional actors:

The UAE has repeatedly

been accused of backing the Rapid Support Forces (RSF)

Rapid Support Forces

RSF control over gold-producing areas has linked Sudan's resource wealth to illicit export networks

through Dubai

Gulf states also recruited Sudanese fighters for the Yemen war, further militarizing local factions

The Bigger Geopolitical Picture

From this perspective, Sudan's fragmentation served multiple strategic purposes:

Weakened a formerly unified regional power

Disrupted Chinese economic influence

Increased external leverage over local actors

Opened Sudanese resources to broader foreign competition

The result has been prolonged instability, fractured sovereignty, and immense human suffering.

Iran's Hidden Leverage: How Undersea Cables Near Hormuz Could Disrupt the Global Internet

As conflict around Iran escalates, one of the world's most overlooked strategic vulnerabilities is coming into focus: the dense cluster of undersea fibre-optic cables running near the Strait of Hormuz.

Often viewed only as an oil chokepoint, Hormuz is also a critical digital artery for the global economy.

Here's why that matters??

The world runs on submarine cables

Despite popular belief, satellites carry only a tiny fraction of internet traffic.

More than 99% of global internet and data traffic travels through undersea fibre-optic cables

Roughly \$10 trillion in daily financial transactions depend on these networks

The global cable system spans 500+ networks and nearly 1.5 million km of seabed

Major cable systems linking Asia, Europe,

and the Middle East—including AAE-1, FALCON, and Gulf Bridge International—pass through or near the Gulf/Hormuz region.

Why Hormuz is a digital chokepoint

A disruption in this corridor could create far more than local outages.

Potential consequences include:

Internet slowdowns or outages across parts of Asia, Europe, and the Middle East

Delays in banking sys-

tems, SWIFT transfers, and market operations

Pressure on cloud providers such as Amazon Web Services and Google Cloud

Disruptions to e-commerce, logistics, and cross-border digital trade

Why repairs are difficult

Subsea cable damage is not quickly fixed—especially in a war zone.

Repairs can take weeks to months

Cable repair ships may

face mines, naval exclusion zones, or insurance restrictions

War-time permit approvals can delay access even further

Some routes could remain degraded for prolonged periods

Why satellites can't replace them

Satellite networks provide resilience for niche use cases but cannot absorb the bandwidth of global fibre infrastructure at scale.

That means if major Gulf cable routes are

severed, there is no true rapid substitute.

Bottom line

Iran's strategic geography gives it leverage beyond missiles and oil.

The Strait of Hormuz is not just an energy chokepoint—it is one of the world's most critical digital chokepoints.

Any serious disruption there could reverberate through the global internet, financial markets, and cloud infrastructure far beyond the battlefield.

How Britain Took India's Koh-i-Noor - The Crown Jewel of Colonial Loot

SYSTEM OBSERVER EXCLUSIVE

For more than 170 years, the Koh-i-Noor diamond has stood as one of the world's most contested symbols of colonial plunder-taken from India and held by the British Crown.

Here's why the fight over its return still matters??
How Britain Acquired the Koh-i-Noor

The diamond passed into British hands after the defeat of the Sikh Empire in 1849 during the Second Anglo-Sikh War. Following Punjab's annexa-



tion, the British compelled Maharaja Duleep Singh, then only 10 years old, to surrender the diamond. Its transfer was formalized through the Treaty of

Lahore, signed under British military occupation. The gem was shipped to Britain, displayed at the Great Exhibition of 1851, and eventually mounted in

the British Crown Jewels. India's Longstanding Demand for Return
India has repeatedly sought the diamond's repatriation, arguing it is a stolen piece of national heritage removed during colonial rule. The issue resurfaced recently after public figures renewed calls for King Charles III to return it. Britain continues to reject those demands, citing the Treaty of Lahore as legal proof of ownership. Why the Legality Is Disputed
Critics argue Britain's legal case rests on a colonial-era agreement with little moral legitimacy.

The treaty was signed by a minor ruler under overwhelming coercion. Opponents say a transfer extracted under foreign occupation cannot be treated as freely given consent. More Than a Diamond
For many Indians, the Koh-i-Noor is not merely a gemstone-it is a lasting symbol of imperial extraction. Its place in the Crown Jewels reflects how colonial powers transformed conquered wealth into imperial prestige. Its continued retention remains, for many, an unresolved reminder of Britain's colonial legacy.

China's Clean Coal Revolution Is Rewriting the Future of Fossil Power

While much of the world talks about phasing out coal, China is reinventing it.

Beijing has spent years upgrading its coal fleet with ultra-low emission technology, turning conventional coal plants into some of the cleanest-and most efficient-on Earth for local air pollutants.

Here's what changed??

Ultra-Supercritical Plants

Steam temperatures exceed 600°C and pressures top 30 MPa

Thermal efficiency reaches 42-45%, far above legacy coal plants

SYSTEM OBSERVER EXCLUSIVE

Higher efficiency means less coal burned per kWh and lower CO₂ intensity

Industrial-Scale Pollution Control
China's newest coal plants use layered flue-gas treatment systems: SCR units slash nitrogen oxides
Wet desulfurization strips sulfur dioxide
Advanced particulate filters capture fine dust

Emission performance now rivals-or in some cases beats-natural gas plants for major air pollutants. Massive Deployment

Over 96% of China's coal power fleet now reportedly complies with ultra-low-emission standards, backed by continuous real-time monitoring.

The Next Leap: Coal Without Combustion

China is pushing into coal electrochemical fuel cells-experimental systems that could:

Generate electricity directly from coal's chemical energy

Bypass heat-engine efficiency limits
Simplify carbon capture at source
Turn captured CO₂ into industrial feedstocks

Why It Matters

China is not abandoning coal overnight.

Instead, it is pursuing a dual-track strategy:

Scale renewables aggressively

Make unavoidable coal generation cleaner, smarter, and more efficient

The result: Beijing may be building the blueprint for how coal survives in a carbon-constrained world.

'US Is Broke': Gold Emerges as America's Top Export Amid Mounting War Costs

SYSTEM OBSERVER EXCLUSIVE

The United States is increasingly liquidating hard assets to sustain fiscal and strategic pressure, with non-monetary gold becoming the country's top export for multiple months in 2025-26, according to economist Michael Hudson.

Instead of AI, aircraft, or industrial

machinery, Washington is exporting record quantities of gold to refiners in Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and wider Asia.

Gold Export Boom

\$4.7B in January 2026

\$8.0B in February 2026

Gold has now surpassed traditional export leaders to become America's largest export category in recent months.

A Warning Sign?

Hudson argues the trend signals

deeper structural weakness:

US debt stands near 130-134% of GDP

Budget deficits remain elevated

No serious fiscal tightening is underway

He contrasts current policy with the 1971 gold window closure, when Washington moved to defend its reserves. Today, he says, the US is doing the reverse-selling hard assets while relying on debt and a weakened industrial base.

Bigger Strategic Implications

Hudson warns this may reflect:

Erosion of America's manufacturing strength

Reduced resilience in strategic sectors like defense and AI

Accelerating global moves toward de-dollarisation

Bottom line: If sustained, the trend could indicate the US is trading long-term financial leverage for short-term liquidity.

Why US' Dark Eagle Hypersonic Missile Is Doomed to Fail Against Iran

SYSTEM OBSERVER EXCLUSIVE



In late April 2026, US CENTCOM pushed to deploy the Dark Eagle Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon to the Middle East amid the ongoing war with Iran-potentially marking the missile's first real-world deployment beyond its home base.

Marketed as a revolutionary strike system, Dark Eagle is a ground-launched boost-glide hypersonic weapon capable of flying above Mach 5 and striking targets over 2,700 km away. It is designed to evade layered air defences and hit targets beyond the reach of HIMARS-launched PrSM.

But behind the Pentagon's hype, the reality is far less impressive.

Why the Hype Falls Flat

An Unproven Experimental Weapon
Despite years of promotion, Dark

Eagle remains an experimental platform fielded only in very limited numbers, with each fully integrated missile costing roughly \$47 million. Combat Readiness Still Incomplete
Pentagon testing schedules show meaningful evaluation of the weapon's combat effectiveness will not be completed until 2027-raising serious questions about its battlefield readiness.

Plagued by Repeated Failures

The programme has suffered multiple aborted live-fire tests, particularly during 2022 and 2023, exposing persistent reliability issues.

Engineering Problems Continue

Launcher faults, hydraulic systems struggling under missile weight, awkward launch positioning, and software glitches have repeatedly

delayed progress.

Why CENTCOM Wants It Now

The timing of the push is difficult to ignore.

After weeks of sustained fighting against Iran, US missile inventories have come under severe strain.

Air defence stockpiles-especially THAAD and Patriot interceptors-have reportedly taken major losses.

Offensive missile reserves have also been heavily depleted, with Tomahawks, PrSMs, and JASSMs

burned through at rates expected to take years to replace.

In that context, the sudden interest in deploying Dark Eagle looks less like confidence in a wonder weapon-

and more like desperation from a military running low on proven options.

Great Nicobar Project Is Reshaping India's Strategic Map

SYSTEM OBSERVER EXCLUSIVE

India's National Green Tribunal has refused to interfere with the 2022 environmental clearance for the Great Nicobar mega-project, explicitly acknowledging its strategic importance and ruling that existing safeguards are adequate. In practical terms: the biggest legal roadblock is gone - implementation can now accelerate. Galathea Bay: India's Future Transshipment Powerhouse. At the heart of the project lies the international transshipment port at Galathea Bay - designed to repatriate container transshipment traffic currently routed

through foreign hubs and establish India as a serious maritime logistics player. Why Galathea Bay Is Strategically Valuable. Natural water depth exceeding ~20 metres, capable of handling next-generation ultra-large container vessels. Located close to the Strait of Malacca, directly adjacent to the East-West global shipping artery. This places India beside one of the most critical maritime chokepoints on Earth. Scale: Built for Global Relevance. Phase 1-2 investment of approximately \$5.3 billion, targeting 11 million TEU capacity. Long-term expansion to roughly 16.2 million TEUs.

Development planned under a phased PPP / landlord-port model. Importantly, reporting suggests the terminal structure is being designed to retain majority Indian operational control - underscoring that this is viewed as strategic infrastructure, not merely a commercial port concession. The Airport: Strategic Airlift Meets Civil Aviation. The planned greenfield airport is not auxiliary infrastructure - it is the air bridge enabling the broader strategic hub. The Airports Authority of India has initiated tendering activity for groundwork and consultancy, with the airport package estimated at ~\$1.03 billion. Projected Airport

Specifications. Code-F / A380-capable runway. Approx. 4,000 metres in length. All-weather operational design. Simultaneous wide-body and narrow-body aircraft parking capability. The Real Vision: A Strategic Logistics Ecosystem. This is not simply a port project. It is an integrated strategic node comprising: Deep-water port. International airport. Power infrastructure. Planned township / support ecosystem. Together, these elements are intended to create a permanent logistics, trade, and strategic foothold in the eastern Indian Ocean.

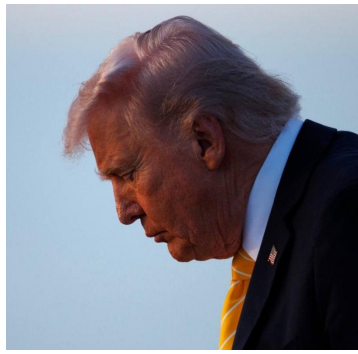
Overall Financial Scale. Total projected cost is estimated between \$9.6-10.8 billion, placing it among the most ambitious infrastructure-strategic projects undertaken in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. What India Is Really Building. A sovereign alternative to foreign transshipment hubs. A future-proof mega-port positioned for next-generation maritime trade. A dual-use logistics backbone integrating sea and air power projection. A major strategic infrastructure anchor near the Indo-Pacific's busiest trade corridor. Enhanced long-term leverage in the eastern Indian Ocean security architecture.

Iran Blasts Trump's 'Unlimited Demands' as U.S. Rejects Reported Peace Framework

SYSTEM OBSERVER EXCLUSIVE

Iran has launched a sharp verbal attack on President Donald Trump after Washington reportedly dismissed Tehran's proposed 14-point peace framework aimed at ending the ongoing regional conflict. Speaking to reporters, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei accused the United States of displaying "habitual greed" and making "never-ending, unlimited demands," arguing that Washington's con-

stantly shifting positions have made diplomacy increasingly difficult. According to Baghaei, the U.S. has repeatedly altered its stance during negotiations, complicating any serious effort toward de-escalation. Baghaei also accused Washington of destabilising regional security through its military posture, alleging that U.S. actions have made international waters unsafe and warning that countries genuinely seeking peace should pressure the United States to curb its military escalation across the region.



Iranian officials further rejected reports suggesting that Tehran's long-term uranium enrichment programme was under discussion in the current negotia-

tions. Baghaei clarified that, at this stage, Iran's sole focus remains achieving a complete halt to the war rather than entering broader strategic or nuclear concessions. The reported Iranian peace proposal outlines a 30-day roadmap to end hostilities and includes several major demands: an immediate ceasefire across all fronts-including Lebanon-security and non-aggression guarantees, the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the region, the lifting of sanctions and blockades, and war reparations. President Trump reportedly

rejected the framework, arguing that the proposal failed to meet core U.S. strategic requirements. He also stated that Iran had not yet paid a "big enough price" for its actions over the past four decades. The exchange underscores the deepening diplomatic deadlock between Washington and Tehran, with both sides appearing far apart on the conditions necessary for ending the conflict. As military tensions persist and rhetoric escalates, prospects for a negotiated settlement remain uncertain.

How India Is Redrawing Its Maritime Map in the Horn of Africa

SYSTEM OBSERVER EXCLUSIVE

Its engagement remained largely reactive-deploying nearly 4,600 peacekeepers to Somalia under United Nations Operation in Somalia II in the 1990s and later participating in multinational anti-piracy operations between 2008 and 2014. Over the past decade, however, New Delhi has fundamentally reset its approach, with the Horn of Africa emerging as a central pillar of India's maritime strategy. Strategic Reset: From Reactive to Proactive. Since 2014, India has recalibrated its regional posture, adopting a more assertive diplomatic strategy while expanding naval exercises across the western Indian Ocean. By 2023, New Delhi had positioned itself as the Indian Ocean's "net security provider," reflecting ambitions that extend beyond maritime defence to shaping regional security architecture. To support this shift, India introduced a broader strate-



gic framework aimed at strengthening regional security, deepening economic cooperation, and influencing the maritime order rather than merely responding to it. Within this framework, the Horn of Africa now occupies a pivotal place. What India Brings to the Table

India is Africa's third-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade exceeding \$80 billion and cumulative investments spread across the continent. Its regional footprint is expanding through three principal channels: Security Cooperation: Naval exercises, military training,

and coast guard partnerships. Development Support: Agricultural initiatives, digital infrastructure, and technical assistance in countries such as Kenya and Djibouti. Humanitarian Assistance: Food aid, medical supplies, disaster relief, and emergency response support.

For years, India maintained only a limited footprint in the Horn of Africa

A Distinct Strategic Model. Unlike many Western powers, India presents itself as a partner offering strategic cooperation without debt dependency or overt political conditionalities-a model increasingly attractive to African governments wary of foreign overreach. The Broader Strategic Picture. In the increasingly crowded geopolitical theatre of the Horn of Africa-where China, the United States, Turkey, Gulf states, and European powers compete for influence-India is steadily consolidating its presence. Rather than pursuing headline-grabbing moves, New Delhi is building partnerships, tightening maritime connectivity, and securing long-term influence through sustained engagement. The Horn of Africa is no longer a peripheral theatre for India-it is becoming central to New Delhi's maritime grand strategy.

From Atlantic to Indian Ocean: Africa Balances US and China Through Strategic Rail Corridors

SYSTEM OBSERVER EXCLUSIVE

African nations are increasingly leveraging great-power competition to advance their own economic and strategic interests, using major rail infrastructure projects to transform the continent's connectivity while balancing between the United States and China.

Lobito Corridor: The Western-Backed Atlantic Route

The Lobito Corridor is a planned 1,600-kilometre rail network connecting Angola's Atlantic port of Lobito to the mineral-rich Copperbelt

regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia.

Built upon the historic Benguela Railway, originally constructed by British interests between 1902-1931 and later rebuilt by China from 2006-2015

Traverses one of the world's richest untapped mineral zones, with the DRC estimated to hold \$24 trillion in natural resources including cobalt, copper, lithium, and gold

Strongly backed by the United States as part of its strategy to counter China's expanding infrastructure footprint in Africa

Washington has pledged over \$4 billion, while the

European Union has committed more than \$2 billion

Tazara Corridor: China's Indian Ocean Gateway

The Tanzania-Zambia Railway (TAZARA) remains one of China's most symbolic and strategic infrastructure projects in Africa.

Constructed by China between 1970-1975

Spans 1,860 kilometres, linking Zambia to Tanzania's port of Dar es Salaam on the Indian Ocean

In November 2025, Beijing signed a \$1.4 billion modernization agreement with Zambia and Tanzania

The 30-year concession involves major Chinese firms including Zijin Mining, CMOC, COSCO Shipping,

and Jiayou International

Strategic Implications

African leaders increasingly view the Lobito and TAZARA corridors not as competing projects, but as complementary routes capable of linking the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean, potentially extending toward Mozambican ports.

This would create a transcontinental logistics network across Southern and Central Africa-reshaping trade flows, reducing dependence on single export routes, and enhancing Africa's bargaining power.

The Bigger Picture

China has built or upgraded over 13,000 km of railway across Africa under the Belt

and Road Initiative, cementing its position as the continent's dominant infrastructure partner.

Despite US efforts to challenge Beijing's influence, African governments continue to value Chinese expertise, financing, and delivery capacity.

Conclusion

Rather than choosing sides in the US-China rivalry, African states are strategically engaging both powers to maximize infrastructure investment, economic growth, and geopolitical leverage-turning foreign competition into African opportunity.

Africa Leverages US-China Rivalry Through Strategic Rail Corridors

SYSTEM OBSERVER EXCLUSIVE

African nations are increasingly using competition between the United States and China to accelerate strategic infrastructure development, positioning themselves as beneficiaries rather than battlegrounds in the broader geopolitical contest.

At the center of this shift are two major rail projects-the Lobito Corridor and the Tanzania-Zambia Railway (TAZARA)-which together could help link Africa's Atlantic and Indian Ocean

coasts through an integrated transcontinental trade network.

The Lobito Corridor, backed by Washington and European partners, is a planned 1,600-kilometre rail route connecting Angola's Atlantic port of Lobito to the mineral-rich Copperbelt regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia. Built on the historic Benguela Railway, the route passes through one of the world's most resource-rich regions, with the DRC estimated to hold trillions of dollars in untapped mineral wealth including cobalt, copper, lithium, and gold.

The United States has com-

mitted more than \$4 billion to the project, while the European Union has pledged over \$2 billion, reflecting Western efforts to counter Beijing's expanding economic footprint across Africa.

Running parallel to that effort is the Chinese-backed modernization of the 1,860-kilometre TAZARA railway, which links Zambia to Tanzania's port of Dar es Salaam on the Indian Ocean. Originally constructed by China in the 1970s, the railway remains one of Beijing's most iconic infrastructure projects on the continent.

In November 2025, China

signed a \$1.4 billion agreement with Zambia and Tanzania to modernize the route under a 30-year concession involving major Chinese firms including Zijin Mining, CMOC, COSCO Shipping, and Jiayou International.

African policymakers increasingly view the two corridors as complementary rather than competing initiatives, with growing discussion around integrating them into a broader east-west logistics network that could eventually extend toward Mozambican ports.

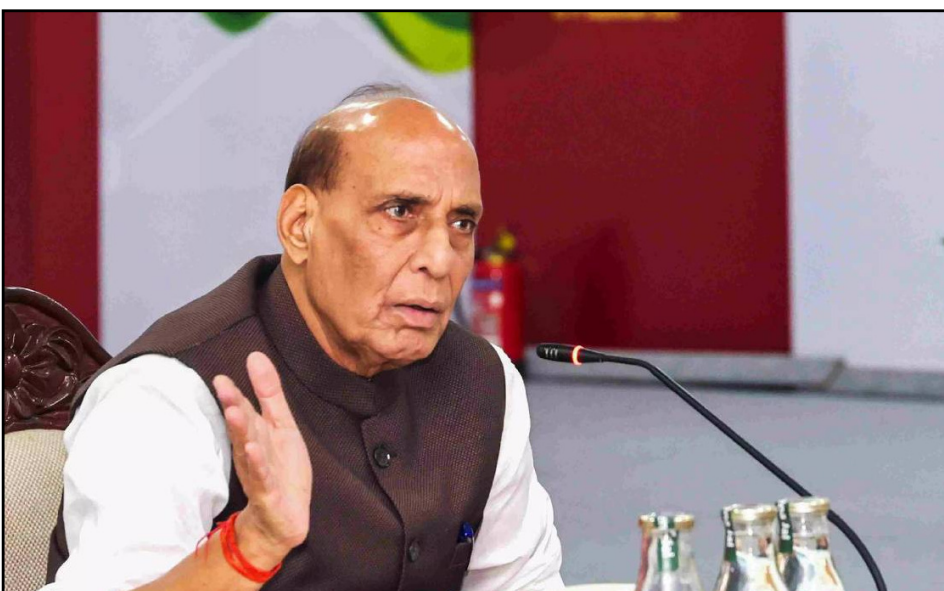
Such a network would significantly reshape regional trade flows, improve export

flexibility for landlocked economies, and deepen Africa's logistical integration with global markets.

China has already built or upgraded more than 13,000 kilometres of railway across Africa under the Belt and Road Initiative, underscoring the scale of its infrastructure presence on the continent.

For many African governments, the strategic objective is not alignment with either Washington or Beijing, but maximizing national advantage by engaging both-turning global rivalry into leverage for domestic development and regional connectivity.

India Known for IT, Pakistan for terrorism: Rajnath Singh



NEW DELHI

Delivering a sharp rebuke over Pakistan's continued backing of terrorism, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said that while both nations gained independence together, India is today globally recognised for "Information Technology", whereas Pakistan has come to be seen as the epicentre of "International Terrorism", underscoring a hardened shift in India's response to cross-border terror.

Addressing a National Security Summit in the national capital,

Singh said, "Both, India and Pakistan attained independence at the same time. However, today India is recognised globally for IT i.e., 'Information Technology', while Pakistan is regarded as the epicenter of a different IT i.e., 'International Terrorism'".

In a sharp articulation of India's evolving security doctrine, the defence minister asserted that Operation Sindoor marks a decisive shift from the earlier practice of limited diplomatic responses to terror attacks, underscoring the government's resolve to confront terrorism

with firm and calibrated military action.

He said that the operation highlighted India's tri-service combat capability and was executed and concluded entirely on the nation's own terms, sending a clear global message of strategic resolve and operational confidence.

"Operation Sindoor conveyed an unequivocal global message that India is no longer bound by the old mindset of merely issuing diplomatic statements when terror attacks are perpetrated on its soil, and that Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi-led Government has moved beyond mere intent and rhetoric by demonstrating its unwavering commitment through decisive action," said Singh said in his address.

"Terrorism emanates from a distorted and perverse mindset. It casts a dark stain on humanity. The battle against terrorism is not merely a matter of national security; it is, fundamentally, a battle to safeguard the core values of humanity. It is a fight against a barbaric ideology that stands in direct opposition to every human value. We have articulated this Indian perspective, both within the country and abroad," said the Minister. He further added that as long as terrorism exists, it will continue to challenge collective peace, development, and prosperity. "Attempts are made to justify terrorism by giving it a religious colour or

linking it to a violent ideology such as Naxalism. This is extremely dangerous and, in a way, provides cover fire to terrorists so they can slowly advance toward their goal. Terrorism is not just an anti-national act; it has multiple dimensions- operational, ideological, and political. It can only be dealt with if we tackle all these dimensions," he said.

Dubbing Operation Sindoor as a shining example of jointness and synergy of the Indian Defence Forces, he stated that the Indian Army, Indian Navy, and Indian Air Force acted in concert and under a unified plan, demonstrating conclusively that India's military might no longer operates in silos; instead, it has emerged as a joint, integrated, and global power.

He also stated that India executed Operation Sindoor on its own terms and at a time of its own choosing, and halted it strictly on its own terms. "During the course of the operation, we targeted, with absolute precision, only those who had perpetrated the attack against us. We did not halt the operation because our capabilities had been exhausted or diminished. We halted it entirely on our own terms. We were fully prepared to sustain a prolonged conflict. We possess the requisite surge capacity, and the inherent strength to rapidly scale up our capabilities in moments of sudden crisis," he said.

Starmer urges tougher action against Gaza protests in UK following antisemitic attacks



LONDON

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer warned Saturday that tougher action was needed against people chanting certain phrases at pro-Palestinian protests, as concerns grew over the safety of British Jews after the stabbings of two Jewish men in London.

Starmer said he would always defend the right to protest, but said there may be instances where some marches protesting the war in Gaza should be banned.

He suggested that repeated pro-Palestinian marches have had a "cumulative effect" linked to the rise in antisemitic incidents in the UK.

"When you see, when you hear some of those chants – globalise the intifada' would be

one I would pick out – then clearly there should be tougher action in relation to that," Starmer told the BBC. The Arabic word intifada is generally translated as "uprising."

A 45-year-old man was charged Friday with attempted murder after two Jewish men were stabbed and wounded Wednesday in Golders Green, a London neighbourhood that's an epicentre of Britain's Jewish community. Police called the attack an act of terrorism.

It was the latest in a string of incidents including recent arson attacks on synagogues and other Jewish sites in the British capital.

The UK's most senior police officer warned Friday that British Jews are facing their greatest ever threat, and blamed social media for making anti-

semitism more mainstream than before.

Mark Rowley, the head of the Metropolitan Police, said British Jews are now the target of every extremist group spreading hate.

"The ghastly fact is that Jews are on everybody's list, all of those hateful groups, whether you're extreme right, whether you're extreme left, whether you're Islamist terrorist, whether you're right-wing terrorist, and some hostile states as well now with some sort of Iranian-related threats," he told The Times. "There's a ghastly Venn diagram that they're at the middle of."

Britain's official terror threat level was raised from substantial to severe after Wednesday's stabbing attack. Severe is the second-highest on a five-point scale and means intelligence agencies consider an attack highly likely in the next six months.

The government said the change was not due solely to the Golders Green attack but also due to increased danger "from Islamist and extreme right-wing terrorist threat from individuals and small groups based in the UK." The number of antisemitic incidents reported across the UK has soared since the attack by Hamas-led militants on southern Israel on Oct 7, 2023, and the subsequent war in Gaza, according to the Community Security Trust charity. The group recorded 3,700 incidents in 2025, up from 1,662 in 2022

Taiwan's president lands in Eswatini in trip delayed by lack of overflight clearance



TAIPEI

Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te said he arrived in the African nation of Eswatini on Saturday, days after his government was forced to push back the trip when several countries withdrew permission for him to fly over their territories reportedly over Chinese pressure.

In a post on X, Lai said he arrived in Eswatini – Taiwan's only diplomatic ally in Africa – to "affirm our longstanding friendship". He said that Taiwan, a self-ruled democracy that China considers part of its territory, "will never be deterred by external pressures".

Lai was originally scheduled to visit the southern African country from April 22, but Taiwanese officials said flight permits were revoked by Seychelles, Mauritius and Madagascar over "strong pressure from the Chinese authorities, including economic coercion".

In a separate Facebook post on Saturday, Lai wrote that the visit was made possible following careful arrangements by his diplomatic and national security teams. He said the trip will further deepen the friendship between Taiwan and Eswatini through closer economic, agricultural, cultural and educational ties.

"Our resolve & commitment are underpinned by the understanding that Taiwan will continue to engage with the world – no matter the challenges

faced," Lai wrote on X. Taiwan did not announce latest plans of Lai's Eswatini visit prior to his arrival.

A spokesperson of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement shortly after Lai posted on social media about his visit that he was "performing a laughable stunt in front of the world," and referred to him being "smuggled" out of Taiwan.

Lai's "undignified act" and visit "will always be a losing cause and nothing will ever change the fact that Taiwan is part of China," the ministry said. "We urge Eswatini and some other individual countries to see where the arc of history bends and stop serving as the prop of Taiwan independence' separatists."

China has not ruled out force in taking control of Taiwan and has sought to block other countries from maintaining formal diplomatic ties with Taipei.

In 2023, Tsai Ing-wen was the most recent Taiwanese president to visit Eswatini, the small, landlocked nation with a population of around 1.2 million. Eswatini became the only African country excluded from tariff-free access to China's market because of its ties to Taiwan.

On Friday, Taiwan's government expressed concern after Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in a phone call that Taiwan is the "biggest risk" when it comes to relations between Beijing and Washington.

Fuel crisis uncertainty looms as Croatia gears up for summer tourism season

DUBROVNIK,

Summer is still a few months away, but the streets of Croatia's old town of Dubrovnik are already teeming with tourists from all over the world. It's usually a sign of a strong season ahead, but this year uncertainty hangs in the air.

Global instability triggered by the Iran war and surging fuel prices have brought unpredictability to the tourism industry, including in Dubrovnik, Croatia's top Adriatic Sea destination that draws millions of visitors annually.

The stakes for Croatia's economy are high: The tourism sector is one of the country's key sources of income and is largely dependent on international travellers.

Though tourist numbers have been up in Dubrovnik, officials are warning nothing is guaranteed. The fuel crisis and Persian Gulf tensions could drive up airfares and slow arrivals just as the season gathers pace.

Miro Draskovic, director of the Dubrovnik Tourist Board, noted that while the American market remains strong, some Australian travellers – typically among the top 10 nations coming to the city – are now "facing difficulties travelling toward Europe."

"The situation for sure is very, very difficult, and we are following what's happening every day," he told The Associated Press.



So far, things are looking good. Dubrovnik airport has recorded a 13 per cent rise in visitors over Easter compared to the same period last year. Its bustling atmosphere and boats ferrying tourists around testify to the city's lasting appeal.

The UNESCO-protected heritage city is known for its rich medieval history, seafront location and churches and palaces within its stone walls. Dubrovnik's popularity soared after it served as a filming location for the hit TV series "Game of Thrones."

Compared to other regions in the country, Dubrovnik could be harder hit if the fuel crisis deepens because of its location at the southern tip of Croatia's Adriatic Sea coastline. Around 80 per cent of visitors come to Dubrovnik by plane.

Marina Ruso Mileusnic, a spokeswoman for the city's airport, which is connected to

some 70 airports around the world, said "we are very cautious about the upcoming season."

Predictions for the weeks and months ahead have varied.

In early April, the head of the International Energy Agency Fatih Birol warned in an interview with the AP that Europe has just weeks of jet fuel supplies and could face the biggest energy crisis ever. This week, however, European Union's Transport Commissioner Apostolos Tzitzikostas said there is "no actual evidence" of shortages in the 27-nation bloc as officials urged people to plan their holidays without fear.

Singapore businessman Ramon Padiernos agreed. The crisis in the Middle East meant he had to swap his favorite carriers Emirates and Qatar Airways for Turkish Airlines, but he still made it to Dubrovnik.

EDITORIAL



AVINASH BASSAN

In democracies like India, where diversity of thought and expression is a defining strength, a vibrant and independent press is essential. It bridges the gap between the government and the governed, amplifies voices from the margins, and fosters informed public discourse.

PRESS FREEDOM ROBUST PILLAR OF DEMOCRACY

Any attempt to undermine media independence not only weakens journalism but also strikes at the very foundation of democratic values. Observed every year on World Press Freedom Day, this occasion is far more than a symbolic tribute to journalism—it is a powerful reminder of the indispensable role a free, fair, and fearless press plays in sustaining democracy. In an age defined by rapid information flow, political polarization, and digital disruption, the value of press freedom has never been more critical. At its core, press freedom is about the public's right to know. It ensures that citizens remain informed, empowered, and capable of making decisions that shape the future of their societies. A free press acts as a watchdog, holding those in power accountable, exposing corruption, and bringing transparency to governance. Without it, democratic institutions weaken, and the space for

dissent and debate shrinks. Globally, however, the state of press freedom remains a cause for concern. Journalists continue to face threats, intimidation, censorship, and even violence for pursuing truth. In many regions, legal pressures, economic constraints, and political interference hinder independent reporting. The rise of misinformation and disinformation further complicates the media landscape, challenging the credibility of genuine journalism and eroding public trust. World Press Freedom Day also compels us to reflect on the evolving challenges of the digital era. Social media platforms, while democratizing information, have also blurred the lines between fact and opinion. In such a scenario, the responsibility of journalists becomes even greater—to verify, to contextualize, and to report with integrity. Equally, the responsibility of audiences grows—to critically evaluate

information and support credible journalism. Importantly, this day is also about recognizing the courage and dedication of journalists who risk their safety to report from conflict zones, uncover hidden truths, and give voice to the voiceless. Their work is a testament to the enduring power of truth in the face of adversity. Safeguarding press freedom requires collective effort. Governments must ensure legal protections and uphold the principles of free expression. Media organizations must adhere to ethical standards and resist undue influence. Citizens, too, must play their part by supporting responsible journalism and rejecting misinformation. As we observe World Press Freedom Day, the message is clear: a free press is not a privilege—it is a necessity. Protecting it is not just the responsibility of journalists, but of every citizen who believes in truth, justice, and democracy.

Chernobyl at 40: A disaster that refuses to end

BY NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

The fundamental lesson of any tragedy that claims to teach something is simple: build a mechanism that prevents repetition. Yet history rarely behaves like a controlled experiment. It loops, mutates, and returns in altered form, often in places that insist they have already understood the lesson.

Forty years ago, on a day like today, 26 April, Chernobyl tore through that assumption. It did not just expose a failed reactor design; it exposed how quickly institutions, states, and expertise bend under pressure, secrecy, and denial. Since then, new nations have formed, old ones have dissolved, and international bodies have rebranded themselves as guardians of “lessons learned”. And still, the core pattern persists: systems that acknowledge danger while continuing to reproduce it.

Chernobyl today is often framed as a resolved chapter. Reporting from the exclusion zone does not support that comfort. It is not closed. It has been contained, partially stabilised, and then reinserted into another instability: war. The New Safe Confinement, a €1.5 billion structure meant to lock away reactor 4's remains for a century-long decommissioning process, is already damaged by a drone strike.

Engineers are no longer working only against decay and radiation, but against renewed physical attack. One senior engineer put it plainly: “You cannot tell radioactivity to stop being radioactive.” That is obvious physics. The problem is political systems that behave as if physics can be subordinated to urgency, conflict, or neglect.

Inside the reactor itself, the language used by scientists is stripped of sentiment. There is no room for metaphor when describing “corium”—a mix of melted fuel, concrete, and metal formed in 2500°C heat—or when describing spikes of neutron activity that still appear unpredictably. One researcher, Anatoly Doroshenko, who enters the struc-

ture to take measurements, describes his preparation in terms that are almost procedural rather than emotional:

“You should be aware that everything is contaminated.” He adds, repeatedly, “you should control yourself.” The repetition is not stylistic; it is instruction. The work is not about courage; it is about limiting error in a place where error becomes physical consequence.

This is the same reactor where, as another account records, “the reactor flew” seconds after the AZ-5 shutdown button was pressed. The mechanism designed to stop the system instead accelerated its destruction. Systems fail not only through absence of control, but through control functions that behave unpredictably under stress. Forty years later, the most repeated claim in contemporary reporting is not about radiation itself, but about displacement. A recent New Scientist report states directly: “The biggest threat to Chernobyl is no longer radiation.”

It continues: “The one-dimensional view of Chernobyl as a contaminated wasteland is wildly off the mark.” This matters because public memory tends to freeze the site into a single condition: a poisoned void. The reality is more unstable. Radiation has decayed unevenly, ecosystems have expanded, and wolves and moose move through zones where humans cannot safely remain for long periods. But stability here is conditional, dependent on maintenance, monitoring, funding, and above all, political access.

That political access has become the fragile point. The exclusion zone is now also militarised territory. Russian occupation in 2022 brought trench digging in contaminated soil, looting of laboratories, and the destruction of research continuity. One scientist described returning to his office to find it stripped, computers removed, and research interrupted mid-process.

Another described it as “typical behaviour for a medieval army”, a phrase that is not literary but diagnostic: extraction without under-

standing value systems beyond immediate use.

El País documents the same rupture from a different angle, through lived memory inside the zone. A former worker recalls Russian soldiers asking: “Who has given you permission to live better than us?” It is not about Chernobyl, but about comparison systems embedded in modern conflict. The exclusion zone becomes a mirror for political grievance projected onto infrastructure, science, and ordinary survival. The city did not die; it was displaced, reoccupied by forest, then by soldiers, then by scientists again. Death here is not an event but a repeated administrative claim.

The scientific community working in the exclusion zone operates under dual pressures of radiological risk and physical insecurity. As a New Scientist report describes, researchers work close to reactor 4's core, carefully balancing speed against exposure: “You want to do the work, and you also want to see something, but it's not an excursion.” The zone is often misrepresented as either horror tourism or ecological recovery, but the reality is procedural, repetitive work constrained by radiation dose limits rather than time.

Four decades later, Chernobyl sits alongside the global nuclear posture today. States maintain arsenals designed for deterrence rather than use, yet continue modernisation programmes that increase the speed, accuracy, and survivability of delivery systems.

The result is a paradox: the probability of total war remains low, while the capacity for total destruction remains intact and, in some cases, improved. Strategic stability is treated as a technical equilibrium, while geopolitical trust continues to erode.

In that sense, Chernobyl is not a relic. It is a functioning case study in what remains after systemic failure: partial containment, institutional adaptation, and persistent vulnerability. The presence of wildlife in the exclusion zone is often cited as evi-

dence of recovery.

That is misleading. It is not recovery in the human sense. It is the absence of human pressure combined with persistent contamination at variable depth. As one researcher notes, radiation effects exist alongside “ecological effects”, and separating them remains unresolved.

What persists more than radiation is uncertainty. Workers enter reactor structures knowing that conditions can shift. Humidity changes alter neutron behaviour. Water levels alter reactivity. Even after four decades, “nobody knows exactly where all the fuel material is inside the reactor”, as one scientist states. That lack of precise mapping is not a failure of effort; it is a structural limit of access and destruction.

The most striking continuity is not catastrophe, but the normalisation of abnormal conditions. Residents cook, tend gardens, and care for animals in areas officially declared uninhabitable. Scientists conduct routine inspections inside structures that could become lethal if mechanical stability changes. Soldiers patrol zones that were once research fields. Each group adapts to conditions that were never meant to stabilise into everyday life.

This is where Chernobyl intersects with present geopolitical behaviour. The assumption that catastrophic risk leads to long-term caution has not held. Instead, high-impact risk environments are managed, not avoided. Nuclear deterrence persists. Infrastructure is rebuilt after strikes.

Exclusion zones are repurposed for research, military control, and limited habitation. Risk is not eliminated; it is administratively absorbed. As Svetlana Alexievich's *Voices from Chernobyl* puts it: “Chernobyl is like the war of all wars. There's nowhere to hide.” It adds, “The era of physics ended at Chernobyl.” It assigns finality to a place that continues to function in altered form. It is not accurate; it is psychological closure applied to an unfinished system.

Clinical CSK outclass MI by 8 wickets to boost playoff prospects

CHENNAI

Chennai Super Kings produced a thoroughly professional display to outclass Mumbai Indians by eight wickets in a critical Indian Premier League match and significantly boost their playoff prospects here today.

Afghanistan left-arm spinner Noor Ahmad led a disciplined bowling effort to help CSK restrict a lacklustre Mumbai Indians to 159 for seven.

Noor returned excellent figures of 2/26 in four overs while Anshul Kamboj grabbed 3/32, even as Naman Dhir top-scored for MI with 57 off 37 balls in an insipid display by the visitors after winning the toss.

Captain Hardik Pandya consumed 23 balls for his 18, reflecting MI's struggles.

Pandya's counterpart Ruturaj Gaikwad then led by example with an unbeaten 48-ball 67 and he was well supported by Kartik Sharma (54 not out off 40 balls) and Urvil Patel (24 off 12 balls).

In the chase, CSK's man in form Sanju Samson was quick off the blocks with a couple of boundaries but Jasprit Bumrah cut short his stay with a beautiful outswinger that took the outside edge and Ryan Rickelton dived to right his to grab the ball.

Samson, who punched Bumrah through covers in the previous delivery, paid the price for his lack of foot movement.

Skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad smashed Trent Boult for a six over deep square-leg as 17 runs came off the third over.

Krish Bhagat leaked 18 runs with



Urvil Patel hitting him for two sixes and a four before Ruturaj got a maximum against AM Ghazanfar.

Ghazanfar, though, dismissed Patel as the batter played the ball on to his stumps.

Gaikwad and Sharma then took CSK home.

Earlier, Mukesh Choudhary started the proceedings for CSK on an excellent note, conceding just one run in the opening over and then IPL debutant Ramakrishna made immediate impact with a stunning catch to send back Will Jacks in the second over bowled by Anshul Kamboj.

Off a length ball outside off, Jacks stepped out and tried to hoick but failed to connect as Ramakrishna ran in from deep backward point and dived to complete the catch, leaving the crowd at MA Chidambaram Stadium delighted.

With their campaigns hanging by a thread following a string of disappointing outings, there was a lot riding on this contest for both MI and CSK, and the latter delivered when it mattered. MI, though, are still not out mathematically.

MI's first boundary was unconvincing as the ball flew off Naman Dhir's bat down to deep fine leg after the batter tried to flick it.

However, the in-form Rickelton smoked Mukesh for two successive sixes — one over extra cover and another over deep midwicket to set the ball rolling for MI.

Naman got into the act as he hit Kamboj for a maximum.

CSK skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad introduced Prashant Veer into the attack, and Rickelton welcomed him with three sixes in a productive over for MI, fetching them 18 runs.

Naman smashed Mukesh for his second six as MI ended the power-play with 57 runs for the loss of one wicket.

Naman was dropped by Shivam Dube on 19, and it was a sitter, but CSK hit back almost immediately with the big wicket of Rickelton, dismissed by left-arm spinner Noor Ahmad as the opener got down on one knee to target the deep midwicket region but found Urvil Patel instead.

Ghosh gave away just seven runs in his first over in IPL, including a six by Suryakumar Yadav (21 off 12), who also struck Noor for a maximum and a four.

Suryakumar, however, again failed to convert his quick start into a significant contribution as Ghosh had him caught in the deep for his maiden wicket after the batter tried to get on top of the ball and guide it over cover.

MI, who were playing quite a few dot balls in the middle overs, lost another big wicket when Tilak Varma got a top-edge while trying to sweep a turning delivery for Ruturaj Gaikwad to complete a neat catch.

MI struggled to get any momentum thereafter, with Hardik and company failing to get the big hits going.

Brief scores:

Mumbai Indians: 159 for 7 in 20 overs (Ryan Rickelton 37, Naman Dhir 57; Noor Ahmed 2/26, Anshul Kamboj 3/32).

Chennai Super Kings: 160 for 2 in 18.1 overs (Ruturaj Gaikwad 67 not out, Urvil Patel 24, Kartik Sharma 54 not out; Jasprit Bumrah 1/20).

Batting-heavy SRH look to continue winning run against resurgent KKR

HYDERABAD

A power-packed batting unit at their disposal, Sunrisers Hyderabad will look to continue their winning streak and climb up the ladder when they take on a resurgent Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL here on Sunday.

SRH are on a five-match winning streak and are placed third in the IPL standings with 12 points from nine matches, that includes six wins and three defeats.

KKR, on the other hand, have been struggling all season under Ajinkya Rahane's captaincy but have won their last two games. They are placed eighth in the 10-team tournament.

SRH boast of a strong batting line-up in the form of tournament's second and third highest run-scorer in Abhishek Sharma and Heinrich Klaasen.

In Ishan Kishan, SRH has an explosive batter who can change the complexion of the match in any given day and he has proved that this season.

Australian opener Travis Head also got back among runs with 76 against Mumbai Indians in SRH's last match while chasing an



imposing 243 for 5 with six wickets in hand in 18.4 overs.

Nitish Kumar Reddy and Salil Arora have also risen to the occasion with the bat for SRH when called for.

Considering the firepower of SRH's batting unit, KKR's bowling department will have to raise their standards by leaps and bounds to contain their opponents.

On the bowling front, SRH have been boosted by the return of their skipper Pat Cummins.

Besides Cummins, Praful Hinge, Eshan Malinga, Reddy and Sakib Hussain too have been playing their part.

SRH would also be high on confidence, having defeated KKR by 65 runs at the Eden Gardens in the

first leg.

It promises to be an exciting contest as KKR are on a comeback trail with consecutive wins after five losses and one washed out match.

KKR's bold decision to continue with Rahane as the captain after a woeful IPL 2025 campaign has been the talk of the town as the right-hander has so far failed to inspire his side.

Rahane has shown a transformative approach with flashes of positive intent — a 67 off 40 against Mumbai Indians and a brisk 41 off 24 against LSG but his leadership and decisions on the field have been questionable.

It needs to be seen whether KKR finally includes Rachin Ravindra in the scheme of things as he has warming the bench.

Finn Allen and Tim Seifert have also failed to live up to the expectations, while the likes of Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Cameron Green and Rovman Powell are yet to fire.

KKR haven't been helped by a depleted pace attack and a quiet start from spin spearhead Varun Chakravathy.

The former champions are mainly reliant on domestic players like Anukul Roit,

Vaibhav Arora and Kartik Tyagi.

Teams (From):

Sunrisers Hyderabad: Pat Cummins (c), Salil Arora (wk), Ishan Kishan (wk), Heinrich Klaasen (wk), Travis Head, Ravichandran Ashwin, Aniket Verma, Abhishek Sharma, Harsh Dubey, Krains Fuletra, Liam Livingstone, Kamindu Mendis, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Harshal Patel, Shivam Mavi, Shivang Kumar, Amit Kumar, Gerald Coetzee, Praful Hinge, Sakib Hussain, Dilshan Madushanka, Eshan Malinga, Onkar Tarnale, Jaydev Unadkat, Zeeshan Ansari.

Kolkata Knight Riders: Ajinkya Rahane (c), Manish Pandey, Rovman Powell, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Ramandeep Singh, Rinku Singh, Sunil Narine, Anukul Roy, Vaibhav Arora, Umran Malik, Varun Chakravathy, Cameron Green, Matheesha Pathirana, Rahul Tripathi, Tim Seifert, Tejasvi Dahiya, Rachin Ravindra, Akash Deep, Blessing Muzarabani, Navdeep Saini, Prashant Solanki, Finn Allen, Daksh Kamra, Kartik Tyagi, Sarthak Ranjan, Saurabh Dubey.

Independent Journalism Punished, Compliance Rewarded: Kharge Attacks BJP-RSS On Press Freedom



NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday attacked the BJP-RSS over the issue of press freedom, saying their message is clear that independent journalism will be punished, and compliance rewarded.

He alleged that sections of the media have been reduced to echoing the ruling establishment, while those who persist in asking questions are "targeted relentlessly".

In a post on X on World Press Freedom Day, Kharge said India's position in the World Press Freedom Index has steadily declined since 2014 and alleged that the Sangh Parivar has increasingly "weaponised" legal frameworks to silence newsrooms.

Kharge said the nation must confront a stark and undeniable reality that since 2014, India's position in the World Press Freedom Index has steadily declined, falling to 157th place, under the BJP regime.

"A free press, in its truest sense, does not exist to amplify

the government's narrative or conceal its failures. It exists to question authority, to scrutinise power, and to hold those in office accountable," the Congress chief said on X. Kharge said the media preserves the democratic balance between power and the people.

"Journalists are the custodians of public truth. As Pandit Nehru had said, 'The freedom of the Press is not just a slogan but an essential attribute of the democratic process.' That essential attribute stands gravely compromised under the present regime," Kharge alleged.

"The Sangh Parivar has increasingly weaponised legal frameworks to silence newsrooms. Defamation laws, national security provisions, and sweeping criminal statutes are deployed not as instruments of justice, but as tools of intimidation," he said.

Between 2014 and 2020, over 135 journalists were arrested, detained, or interrogated, he claimed and added that between 2014 and 2023, 36 journalists were imprisoned.

The scale of persecution has

risen sharply, with several journalists booked under draconian laws such as the UAPA, he said.

"At the same time, a far more disturbing pattern has emerged, one of violence and impunity. Journalists are being murdered in BJP-ruled states for doing their job," he alleged.

"Raghvendra Bajpai in Uttar Pradesh, Mukesh Chandrakar in Chhattisgarh, Rajeev Pratap Singh in Uttarakhand, and Dharmendra Singh Chauhan in Haryana, each of them was reporting on corruption and issues of public interest. Today, they stand as grim reminders of the cost of speaking truth to power," he said.

Not satisfied with its existing control, the BJP-RSS government, in its quest for total dominance, is now seeking to tighten its stranglehold over social media in an attempt to silence it, he claimed.

"The message of the BJP-RSS is clear: independent journalism will be punished, and compliance will be rewarded. Sections of the media have been reduced to echoing the ruling establishment, while those who persist in asking questions are targeted relentlessly," he alleged.

As we observe, World Press Freedom Day, it is time for deep introspection by all stakeholders, Kharge said.

Most importantly, those in power must always uphold the long-established norms of Democracy, he said.

"Any deviation from these principles, if allowed to persist over time, risks becoming normalised and even accepted, causing lasting damage to democratic norms, values, institutions, and the people they serve," he said.

The government of the day must, therefore, hold itself to the highest possible standards, Kharge asserted. (Agencies)

Delhi should be tourist destination, not just transit point: CM Rekha Gupta

NEW DELHI,

Delhi should be seen as a tourist destination rather than a transit hub, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said on Saturday.

While attending a tourism stakeholders conference, she said Delhi, as the national capital, has unique features.

"We are trying to positively rebrand Delhi in the tourism sector so that tourists see this city as a destination and enjoy its unique features, not just as a transit point," the chief minister said.

She said, "In Delhi, there are several historical monuments and attractions that tourists want to see. People want to see the Parliament, Rashtrapati Bhawan, and several other spots."

Gupta said in the past year, the Delhi government has taken several steps to improve the tourism ecosystem, including the Delhi Film Festival, the development of a Delhi Tourism Board and the implementation of a robust information system at prominent locations.

"Delhi has cultural diversity;



one can find people from different states and identities. Tourists can find cultural spots, temples, food and handicrafts in Delhi," the chief minister said.

Gupta, also praised Delhi's food. "The taste you get in Delhi, you cannot find anywhere else, I challenge that," she said.

On the sidelines of the event, the Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation (DTTDC) signed

several key agreements with online travel websites, including Agoda and Makemytrip to boost collaboration and innovation in the tourism sector.

"Partnerships with Agoda, MakeMyTrip Foundation and Sabhyata Foundation aim to promote digital innovation, cultural programming, infrastructure development and sustainable tourism," an official said.

Allahabad HC dismisses plea for offering namaz on piece of village land in Sambhal

PRAYAGRAJ (UP),

The Allahabad High Court has dismissed a petition seeking a direction to authorities to provide security and permission to offer namaz on a piece of land in a village of Sambhal district, saying right to practice religion is subject to public order and cannot be exercised in a manner that interferes with the rights of others.

The court observed that introduction or expansion of a religious use or practice not previously prevalent, particularly where it disturbs the existing social balance, is not protected under Articles 25 and 26.

A bench of justices Saral Srivastava and Garima Prasad observed that the State is not required to wait for an actual disruption and may take reasonable preventive measures where such activity is likely to affect public life.

Petitioner Aseen of Sambhal claiming himself owner of the property based on a gift deed argued that the respondent authorities were restraining such prayers, thereby violating his fundamental rights under Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution.

The counsel for the state claimed that the land in question is recorded as Abadi land which is meant for public use and that the petitioner has no ownership rights over it.

The bench was apprised that namaz has traditionally been offered at this location only on the occasion of Eid and that no restriction has been imposed on this established practice.

It was further submitted that the petitioner was attempting to introduce regular large-scale congregational prayers by inviting persons from within and outside the village.

It was also submitted that while religious practices are to be respected, no new traditions or non-traditional activities can be permitted and that established practices must be adhered to in order to maintain public order.

After hearing the counsels for the parties, the court observed, "Public land is meant for common use and no individual or group can claim a right to use it as an exclusive or recurring religious space. The State is bound to ensure equal access and cannot permit preferential or exclusive use of such land."

The court further said, "The right to practise religion is subject to public order, including access, movement and peaceful living and cannot be exercised in a manner that interferes with these rights of others."

In its order, the bench stressed that the right to practice religion is not an unlimited right and must be exercised in a way that does not affect others or disrupt the normal functioning of public life.

The court also said that the State is constitutionally entitled and in appropriate cases duty-bound to prevent the use of public land without lawful authority.

After going through the facts of the case, the material on record, the court said that it do not support the claim advanced by the petitioner and dismissed the petition.

Bengal: Hundreds stage protest over 'threats' by TMC workers in South 24 Parganas

KOLKATA

Demanding safety after counting of votes, hundreds of villagers staged a protest for over seven hours at Falta in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district on Saturday, alleging they were receiving life threats from TMC workers in the area.

The protesters, many of them women and holding BJP flags, blocked the road in Hasimnagar village, alleging that local panchayat pradhan Israfil, a close associate of TMC candidate Jehangir Khan, issued them threats of attacks after poll results are announced.

The CRPF deputy commandant visited the area with a large force and armoured vehicle and assured the demonstrators of ensuring their safety.

Khan dismissed the allegations and said the women were "deployed" by the BJP to stage the demonstration and engineer the arrest of TMC functionaries in the area before the counting to "harm the morale of the TMC supporters".

When Preity Zinta revealed the one co-star she would not call in a time of crisis

Actress Preity Zinta once shared an interesting and somewhat humorous anecdote about why she would hesitate to rely on actor Saif Ali Khan during a serious moment of crisis, shedding light on their off-screen dynamics and contrasting personalities.

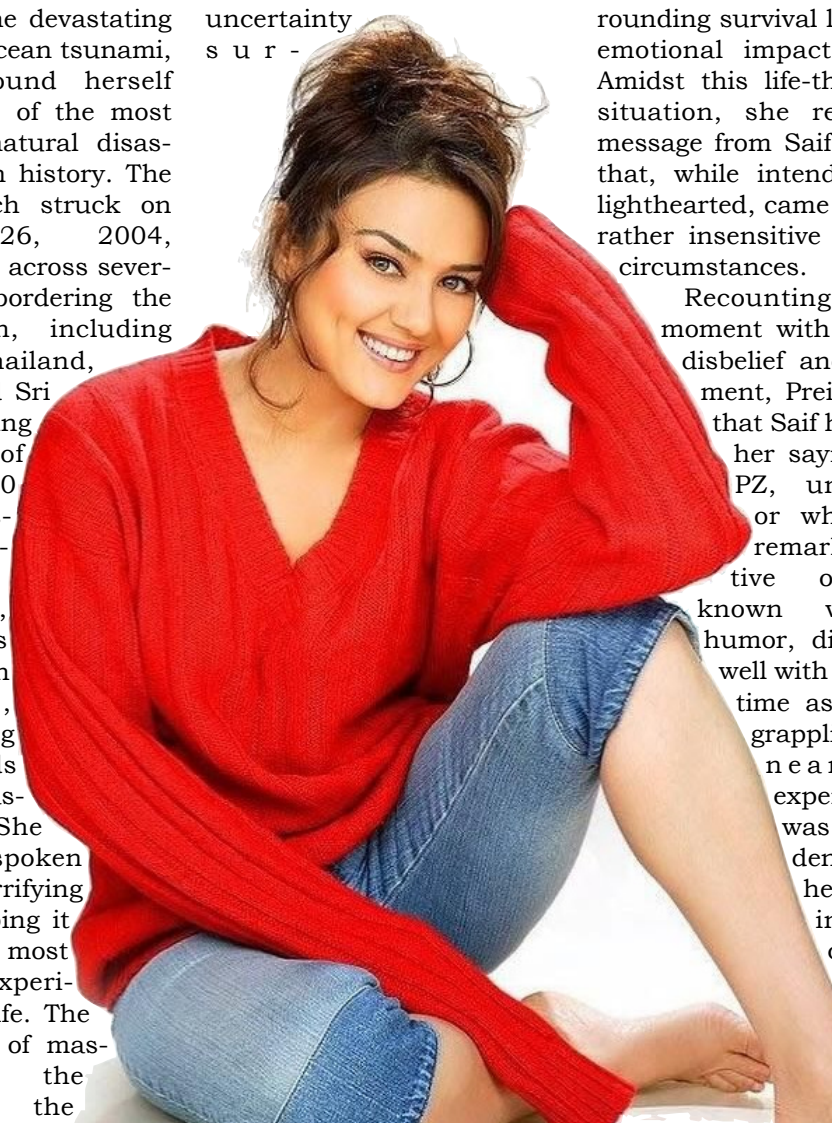
The revelation came during her appearance on the popular celebrity talk show Koffee with Karan, hosted by filmmaker Karan Johar. Known for its candid conversations and rapid-fire rounds, the show often brings out lesser-known stories from celebrities' lives. During one such segment, Karan posed a quirky question to Preity, asking her to name the last person from the film industry she would think of calling if she were kidnapped. Without much hesitation, Preity named Saif Ali Khan, a response that immediately sparked curiosity and laughter.

Explaining her answer, Preity went on to narrate a real-life incident that had left a lasting impression on her. She recalled her experi-

ence during the devastating 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, when she found herself caught in one of the most catastrophic natural disasters in modern history. The tsunami, which struck on December 26, 2004, wreaked havoc across several countries bordering the Indian Ocean, including India, Thailand, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka, resulting in the loss of over 2,30,000 lives and displacing millions.

At the time, Preity was vacationing in Phuket, Thailand, along with friends when the disaster struck. She has often spoken about the terrifying ordeal, describing it as one of the most traumatic experiences of her life. The sudden surge of massive waves, the chaos, and the

uncertainty
s u r -



rounding survival left a deep emotional impact on her. Amidst this life-threatening situation, she received a message from Saif Ali Khan that, while intended to be lighthearted, came across as rather insensitive given the circumstances.

Recounting the moment with a mix of disbelief and amusement, Preity shared that Saif had texted her saying, "Hey, PZ, underwater or what?" The remark, reflective of Saif's known wit and humor, did not sit well with her at the time as she was grappling with a near-death experience. It was this incident that led her to jokingly conclude that he would not be the last person she would

call in a crisis, as his response might not match the seriousness of the situation.

Despite this anecdote, the two actors have shared a strong professional rapport and have worked together in successful films like Kal Ho Naa Ho and Salaam Namaste. Their on-screen chemistry in both films was widely appreciated, contributing significantly to their popularity as a pair in the early 2000s.

On the work front, Preity Zinta is gearing up for her much-awaited return to cinema with Lahore 1947. The film is directed by Rajkumar Santoshi and features a powerful ensemble cast including Sunny Deol, Shabana Azmi, Ali Fazal, and Abhimanyu Singh. Backed by Aamir Khan, the film is set against the emotionally charged backdrop of India's Partition and is expected to mark a significant and meaningful comeback for the actress, who has been away from the big screen for several years.

Rakul Preet Singh says Jackky Bhagnani has 'never cribbed' about her road to recovery

Actress Rakul Preet Singh has looked back at a difficult phase following a serious injury, and recalled how through every step of that journey her husband-producer Jackky Bhagnani stood by her side.

Rakul was joined by her husband Jackky on the chat show Famously Fit with Sophie hosted by Sophie Choudry.

Sharing what that meant to her, Rakul said "He has been my biggest support... he never cribbed about my road to recovery, we did everything together."

She further added: "He is all ears when he is listening to me, so that's half the battle won."

Jackky and Rakul's story began somewhere between shared routines, food swaps, and just consistently showing up for each other. For them working out is a part of the routine.

As Jackky puts it: "We don't look at it like this, for us it's like taking a shower," while Rakul added: "You know some people read every day, some people eat some food every day, so for us it's a routine — uthke workout kiya phir din shuru hota hai. And this is not for losing weight, not to look a certain way, not for show but for us."

As the conversation deepens, it naturally moves into their individual journeys and everything that has shaped them along the way.

Reflecting on his experience as a producer, Jackky shares, "Producing is not an easy job...it has made me a more humble and a better person and taught me what life is all about."



The episode shifts gears into full entertainment mode, packed with candid confessions, fun moments, and just the right dose of chaos.

Rakul and Jackky announced that they were in a relationship in 2021. It was in 2024, when the two got married in Goa in an intimate ceremony.

Produced by Amazon MX Player (AMXP), executed by Tamgha Entertainment, Famously Fit with Sophie is now streaming on Amazon MX Player.

Shibani Kashyap on if AI influence in music should be seen as a threat: Use it as an assistant

Singer Shibani Kashyap shared her views on the growing influence of AI in the music industry during an exclusive interaction with IANS.

When asked if AI should be seen as a threat, Shibani said that AI can never replace humans, as, in the end, one is always able to make out the difference between AI and the real thing.

Shibani told IANS, "So I don't think we should take it as a threat. At the end of the day you might listen to an AI created voice once or twice, but it is not a living person that is just a voice which has been created out of AI, and one can easily make out the difference."

She further stressed that, instead of seeing AI as a threat, one should use it as an assistant.

"But yes, AI can be a very good support system. It can be a very good assistant. Use it as an assistant. This is exactly what we even discussed during the AI impact summit — that we should use AI for our own benefit, not that we let it take over and become a threat to us," she went on to add.

Sharing a similar sentiment, earlier, Sufi singer Mujtaba Aziz Naza also opened up about the rising influence of AI in the music industry.

He told IANS, "AI is helpful in many ways, but it cannot replicate the soul of music. Music is deeply emotional and spiritual. AI operates within limitations, while human creativity is boundless. There are cer-



tain feelings and inspirations that only a human mind can create."

Shedding light on the growing concern regarding AI cloning artists' voices and who should hold the rights in case of a conflict, the singer stated that if someone's voice is being used, they should definitely have the rights.

A mother's guide to preventing bone loss and calcium depletion

By Anuja Susan Varghese

Until that day, all I had seen—and felt—were tiny feet kicking in my belly. She kicked a lot, tangoing with the clatter of my keyboard. But, on June 19, by midday, she stopped playing footsie and finally decided to greet the world.

I caught only fragments of hushed talk about a tangled umbilical cord, and panic set in. I saw the doctor reaching for the forceps. She was out—but the cord was wrapped around her neck twice.

For a second, she didn't cry—a silence that stretched into a heart-stopping eternity. Then, a sweet, sharp wail pierced the stillness. I thought the hard part was over. I was wrong.

Despite being a natural marvel, motherhood remains wrapped in mystery, myth and superstition. We glorify it, cloak it in divinity and grace—yet the science that sustains it often remains hidden.

Even in the 21st century, a mother can find herself learning something entirely new from an Instagram reel, despite having grown up surrounded by the idea of motherhood.

A popular myth suggests that once delivery ends, struggle gives way to the serene ease of feeding a newborn. But how many of us know that our mother's hips and spine may have disintegrated to produce enough calcium-rich milk?

Yes—if a mother does not get enough calcium from her diet, her body treats her skeleton like a calcium bank, withdrawing what it needs to enrich breast milk for the baby.



My daughter was an SG baby—small for gestational age. I had to help her gain weight quickly, but I was not even sure I was lactating. Enter Sister Elsy, the hospital's lactation coach—a much-needed breath of calm. She reassured me that I was producing enough colostrum, the nutrient-dense fluid secreted in the first few days after birth. A sliver of order amid the chaos.

Often called liquid gold, colostrum is rich in antibodies and white blood cells—essentially a baby's first vaccine. The milk begins to arrive by the third or fourth day after delivery.

To produce milk, the body functions like a biological refinery, drawing glucose, amino acids and proteins directly from the mother's bloodstream. If her diet falls short, the milk does not suffer—the body compensates by dipping into its own reserves.

A growing baby requires roughly 300-400ml of breast milk per day. If dietary intake is inadequate, calcium is withdrawn from trabecular bone—the spongy, honeycomb-like structure found abundantly in the hips, pelvis and spine. So, the next time that persistent back pain refuses to fade, it may not be just post-delivery strain. It could be your bones quietly paying the price.

That breastfeeding could be 'harmful' to the mother is never talked about. Even women are unaware of it. A friend, mother of two, was as surprised as I was. "Oh! Maybe that's why the back pain and aches never end," she said, clutching her hips. Another friend continued to breastfeed her child until the child turned four. She told me mother's milk is the best food for the baby—

which is partly true. So, where do we draw the line?

Studies show that many mothers function in a state of chronic calcium deficit. Experts caution that without proper supplementation, this can raise the risk of osteoporosis—extreme bone loss that can lead to vertebral fractures.

"From 14 weeks of pregnancy to six months post-delivery, a woman should consume 1,000mg of calcium daily. Since studies have found that most Indians don't meet this requirement through diet alone, supplements are essential," said Dr Bipin Theruvil, head of arthroplasty, Medical Trust Hospital, Kochi. Neglect can also lead to osteomalacia (condition causing soft, weak bones), stress, fractures and severe muscle cramps, he said.

The situation becomes even more precarious for

mothers caught in the trap of restrictive food trends—or for those battling conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, where inflammation further complicates an already demanding biological process.

Dr Teena Anne Joy, gynaecologist at Aster Medcity, Kochi, said prolonged breastfeeding has limited nutritional value. "Feeding a four-year-old serves more as a pacifying mechanism. We recommend exclusive breastfeeding for six months, and continued breastfeeding, along with solids, till two years," she said. However, she cautioned against blaming breastfeeding alone for aches and pains. "Nutritional deficiencies, posture, and the constant bending and lifting involved in infant care all contribute. Annual check-ups are crucial, but often ignored," she said.

"During the first year postpartum, hormonal shifts cause temporary bone mineral loss. Adequate calcium, vitamin D, weight-bearing exercise, and avoiding calorie restriction below 1,800kcal are essential for bone health and long-term recovery," said a board-certified lactation consultant in Gurugram.

The daily grind of breastfeeding is a test of endurance—made harder by pumping schedules and the anxious arithmetic of not wasting a single drop.

It is messy. It is beautiful. It is a struggle. Still, dear mother, trust science. Let your 'Ga Ga' create music in your home with 'Ca'.

Co-sleeping dangers: Why doctors advise room sharing for your baby's safety

It was a standard 2am wake-up call. I blinked and squinted at the clock, as I began the instinctive mid-sleep search for the warm, swaddled bundle that was supposed to be tucked safely beside me.

My hand hit empty sheets.

Panic struck! I sat bolt upright, only to find her at the other end of the bed. It was a relatively large bed—about six feet wide—and luckily, it was pushed against the wall. She was only about three months old then, and I never imagined a human that small was capable of inchworming her way across the bed as if in a cross-country race.

Sleep was her absolute priority from day one. I would often pause and stay still for hours after she finally drifted off, terrified that even a twitch would ruin the hard-won silence. I am sure mothers everywhere curse the noise that leaves their little ones' sleep ruined. Don't even get me started on the aunties who would just turn up to wake them up—"She has been sleeping for too long, hasn't she? It is okay to wake her now." Uff!

As is the way in our families, I was looking forward to the snuggles and the 'emotional bond' of having her sleep next to me, but she had

other plans. My 'Lady Gaga' was never one for snuggle sleeping; she wants her space, and more often than not, she can be seen curled up in a corner of the bed, far from my skin. Seeing this girl care less about my snuggles than Beth Dutton (Yellowstone series) walking into a boardroom she is about to set on fire has kept me up many nights.

But then, is contact sleeping the benchmark for bonding with your child? If you think that sleeping next to your child is the popular, and therefore correct, method, doctors may have some news for you.

Co-sleeping, the kind where the mother sleeps next to the baby on the same bed, is not recommended by doctors. It carries many risks, including Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Room sharing is the recommended alternative, where the baby sleeps separately in a crib or bassinet in the same room as the mother.

"Evidence has shown that co-sleeping increases the risk of SIDS," said Dr Geeta Gathwala, head, paediatrics and neonatology, Amrita Hospital, Faridabad. "So, if the mother is co-sleeping with the baby, especially in situations where the baby is a pre-term or born with low

birth weight, the risks of SIDS are higher." She added it is a risky time for babies till they are four to six months old.

Though room sharing is commonly seen as a western practice, doctors point out that the recommendations are backed by evidence and it applies to India as well.

The Indian Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend room sharing. Though SIDS cases are rare in India compared to the west, cases do emerge.

Gathwala recalls a case around 11 years ago, when a newborn, sleeping next to the mother in bed, was found dead.

"The initial days after birth, mothers would be extremely tired and in deep sleep," explained Dr Rojo Joy, head of neonatology, Lourdes Hospital, Kochi. "Any mishap can happen. Maybe a hand coming on top of the baby can lead to smothering and hamper the baby's breathing."

Then, there is the question of emotional bonding. Should you worry that your baby may not bond with you if she sleeps at a distance? Not really. Bonding occurs during breastfeeding and physical contact

when both the mother and the baby are awake and alert. "The baby can be kept close when they are awake. During sleep, as per recommendations, it is better to practise rooming in, not bedding in," added Joy.

Seven months ago, Joy recalls a case where a two-and-a-half-month-old baby was brought dead to the hospital. That morning, the mother, on waking up, found the baby lying next to her unresponsive. No one knows what happened during the night.

Doctors advise that pillows, soft bedding and unnecessary clothes around the baby on the bed can also increase the risk of SIDS. There is also the risk of babies falling down from the bed.

"Parents should ensure that their baby always sleeps on its back and not tummy," said Gathwala.

Ultimately, every baby is different, and a mother is usually best equipped to make the final call. Still, it is a lot to ask of a mother to navigate these high-stakes choices when she is already depleted and vulnerable. Sometimes, the bravest thing we can do is follow the safety guidelines even when our hearts—and our traditions—are pulling us toward the snuggle.

Fuel distribution stable despite global crude shock: Pralhad Joshi



CHITRADURGA,

Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi on Sunday asserted that fuel distribution across India remains stable despite mounting pressure on global energy markets due to escalating geopolitical tensions in West Asia and a sharp rise in crude oil prices.

Addressing reporters here, Joshi said the union government was closely monitoring the evolving global situation and had taken steps to ensure uninterrupted fuel availability across the country. He maintained that India's fuel supply network continued to function smoothly even as international markets witnessed volatility following disruptions in global energy

supply chains.

"The rise in gas prices is linked to developments in the international market and fluctuations in crude oil prices globally. Despite these challenges, fuel distribution in the country remains stable," the Minister said.

Joshi also blamed state-level taxation for the increase in fuel prices and alleged that the Karnataka government had raised petrol and diesel prices three times, further burdening consumers.

The Minister's remarks came amid growing concern over inflationary pressures triggered by surging fuel and LPG prices. Global crude oil prices have witnessed renewed volatility amid continuing tensions in West Asia, raising fears of further

escalation in energy costs worldwide.

Opposition parties intensified their attack on the Centre over the issue. MDMK leader Vaiko strongly criticised the steep hike in commercial LPG cylinder prices, claiming that the price of a 19-kg commercial cylinder had risen by Rs 993, severely affecting restaurants, tea stalls, hotels and small businesses dependent on cooking gas.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi also targeted the government, alleging that commercial LPG cylinder prices had increased by Rs 1,380 since February, registering an 81 per cent rise in just three months. He warned that petrol and diesel prices could witness further increases if global crude oil prices continue to rise.

Meanwhile, industry analysts cautioned that sustained high crude oil prices could have a cascading impact on several sectors, including aviation and transportation. Rising aviation turbine fuel costs are expected to increase operational expenses for airlines, potentially leading to higher airfares and reduced profitability.

Despite the global uncertainty, the Centre maintained that India's energy supply position remains under control, with adequate fuel stocks and stable distribution mechanisms in place.

Ceigall India says its joint venture CIL-SAM bags Rs 918-cr order from Jaipur Metro

NEW DELHI

Infrastructure company Ceigall India Ltd on Sunday said its joint venture CIL-SAM India has bagged a Rs 918.04-crore project from Jaipur Metro Rail Corporation Ltd for design and construction works.

The contract awarded to CIL-SAM involves the design and construction of an elevated viaduct and ten elevated metro stations (excluding architectural finishing) under Jaipur Metro's Phase-II expansion covering 10.8 km, Ceigall India said in a statement.

Ceigall India holds a 74 per cent stake in CIL-SAM, while the remaining 26 per cent is owned by SAM India Builtwell Pvt Ltd.

The total bid cost of the project stands at Rs 918.04 crore (inclusive of 18 per cent GST), with an execution timeline of 34

months, it stated.

The ten stations to be constructed under the package are Praladpura, Manpura, Bilwa Kalan, Bilwa, Goner Mod, Sitapura, JECC, Kumbha Marg, Haldighati Gate, and Pinjrapole Gaushala.

Ramneek Sehgal, Chairman & Managing Director, Ceigall India, said in the statement, "Winning this Jaipur Metro Phase-II package marks an important milestone for Ceigall as we continue to diversify our infrastructure portfolio beyond roads and highways into urban mobility projects."

Ceigall India is an infrastructure engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) company, which has been engaged in the development of highways, expressways, bridges, flyovers, railway overbridges, tunnels, and runways. (PTI)

SIS targets Rs 20,000 crore revenue in FY27; eyes 5 lakh workforce by 2030

NEW DELHI

SIS Ltd, a security and facility management services provider, aims to cross Rs 20,000 crore in revenue by FY27, driven by strong double-digit growth, expansion of its service network, and a simplified regulatory framework under new labour codes, said its Group Managing Director Rituraj Sinha.

SIS, which currently employs nearly 3.46 lakh people, expects to hit an 'inflection point' in the current fiscal year with an accelerated growth in its core 'Security Solutions' and 'Facilities Management Services', led by tailwinds such as expansion of service network, new labour codes, which simplified the regulatory framework and compliance arbitrage.

The company, which also has operations in markets such as Singapore, Australia and New Zealand besides India, is targeting to increase its workforce to 5 lakh by 2030, becoming one of the top five private sector employers, as it scales up operations.

SIS, which reported a 21 per cent increase in revenue to Rs 16,030 crore in FY26, expects growth momentum to sustain on the back of new client additions from both government and private sectors, along with deeper penetration across industries

ranging from health-care, manufacturing and construction, and automobiles to e-commerce.

"In FY27, given our order book and our current run rate, we are targeting roughly Rs 20,000 crore in revenue and close to 500 crore in profit after tax," Sinha told PTI in an interaction.

He added that the company continues to see strong demand across segments, supported by increasing formalisation of the economy and rising preference for organised security and facility management services.

Besides, SIS is also taking a leap by providing AI (Artificial Intelligence) Enterprise-based solutions to its customers, which will empower them with smarter decision-making, predictive insights, and operational efficiencies by automating routine tasks, enhancing security, and tailoring solutions to specific business needs.

"This is the year where we see AI being adopted at the enterprise level, both internally and on the customer-facing side. To enhance customer service and deliver superior quality experiences, we are deploying AI across customer experience, compliance, ensuring smarter engagement and sharper value creation," he said.

Cabinet to soon approve Rs 37,500 cr incentive scheme to promote coal gasification projects

NEW DELHI

The Cabinet is likely to approve soon a Rs 37,500 crore incentive scheme to promote coal gasification projects, aimed at boosting clean energy production and reducing import dependence, sources said.

The Coal Ministry has already prepared a Cabinet note on the scheme to promote coal gasification projects, with a financial outlay of Rs 37,500 crore, they said.

The proposed scheme is aimed at accelerating surface coal and lignite gasification projects across the country, promoting self reliance by reducing import dependence on critical commodities such as LNG, urea, ammonium nitrate, ammonia, coking coal via DRI, methanol and DME, while enabling enhanced utilisation of domestic coal and lignite resources for fuels and chemicals production, and supporting the national target of 100 million tonnes coal gasification capacity by 2030.

This is a unified scheme with no categories, and the maximum financial assistance for a single project is Rs 3,000 crore, they said.

In the earlier financial incentive scheme for gasification projects the Government has provided financial under three categories which included the maximum incentive of Rs 1,000



crore per project for the private sector and Rs 1,350 crore per project for the PSUs, sources said.

According to an industry analyst, the Government's renewed push for coal gasification comes in the wake of recent West Asia tensions that have exposed the country's vulnerability to disruptions in LNG, LPG and other hydrocarbon supplies, underscoring the need to diversify energy feedstock sources.

The Government is now positioning coal gasification as a strategic lever to convert domestic coal into fuels and chemicals, reduce import dependence, and strengthen energy security at a time when

global supply chains remain fragile.

India has one of the largest coal reserves of 401 billion tonnes, uniquely positioning it to leverage domestic resources for reducing the dependence on imports and building a clean, resilient energy economy.

Coal remains the backbone of India's energy sector, accounting for over 55 per cent of the country's energy mix. As the second-largest producer and consumer of coal globally, India's coal consumption is expected to grow significantly as its energy demands continue to rise.

Gasification presents a unique opportunity for India to unlock the full value of its vast

JKNPP Bhim Reaffirms Historic Resolution, Launches Mass Movement for a Separate Jammu State

SYSTEM OBSERVER
JAMMU

JKNPP Bhim today formally announced the launch of a comprehensive political and grassroots movement to secure full statehood for the Jammu region. Addressing a press conference here today, Vilakshan Singh, President JKNPP Bhim, stated that this announcement serves as the operational roadmap for the unanimous resolution passed on March 23. The resolution, which marked the Foundation Day of the party, honours the unyielding legacy of its founder, Sher-e-Jammu Prof. Bhim Singh, and declares that the only path to secure justice, equity, and dignity is the creation of a separate state of Jammu.

During the press conference, Vilakshan Singh emphasized that alongside the demand for statehood, the JKNPP Bhim has strongly resolved to fight for the absolute protection of land and job rights exclusively for the original residents of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. He stated that for decades, the people of Jammu have contributed their labour and taxes only to witness their resources consis-



tently diverted elsewhere. Highlighting severe historical disparities in the allocation of state funds and development packages, Singh asserted that the youth of Jammu continue to face an uneven playing field in government recruitment, making strict constitutional safeguards for local lands and employment an urgent and non-negotiable necessity.

Vilakshan further highlighted that the demand for a separate state

is not born out of division, but driven by the vital need to protect a distinct geographic and cultural entity. Bound by the rich heritage of the Dogras and the diverse tapestry of Dogri, Gojri, and Pahari languages, Jammu's identity has been systematically overshadowed in a combined administrative setup. Furthermore, JKNPP Bhim pointed to Jammu's undeniable role as the economic engine of the north. Citing the millions of pilgrims visiting the Shri

Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine and the monumental discovery of vast lithium reserves in Reasi, Singh argued that an independent state budget is essential to reinvest local revenues directly into Jammu's infrastructure, industries, and its people.

Condemning the historical political voicelessness of the region, Vilakshan Singh noted that despite Jammu's vast geographic expanse, its political destiny and policies have historically been controlled by leadership centred outside the region. To rectify this and ensure the people of Jammu decide their own future, JKNPP Bhim announced the immediate commencement of a district-wise mobilization campaign. Appealing to all citizens, student unions, trade associations, and civil society members to unite under a common banner, Singh declared that the time for waiting has passed and the grassroots fight for Jammu's statehood, land, and future begins now.

Others who were present in the press conference included Naresh Chib, Rajesh Gondhi, Sanju Bhagat, Rakesh Gupta, Rajan Jawmal, Naresh Sambyal, Rohit Sharma and others

IHRACO Team Visits Chandi Mata Temple, Raises Concern Over Monsoon Damage

SYSTEM OBSERVER
JAMMU

The International Human Rights and Anti Crime Organisation J&K (IHRACO) conducted an inspection visit to the historic Chandi Mata Temple located at Upper Roop Nagar, near Aap Shambu temple Road in Ward No. 62 of Jammu North Assembly. The visit was led by Thakur Hoshiar Singh, political activist and President of IHRACO, along with several members of the organisation.

During the visit, Thakur Hoshiar Singh expressed serious concern over the deteriorating condition of the temple, which has reportedly suffered significant damage during the past two monsoon seasons. He stated that the structure and its adjoining areas have



been weakened due to soil erosion and lack of protective measures, posing a threat to the safety of devotees as well as the temple premises.

Thakur Hoshiar Singh

informed that he had already visited the site a few weeks ago and had taken up the matter with the Flood Control and Irrigation Department. Despite submitting a formal complaint

earlier, no action has been taken so far by the concerned authorities. He emphasized that with the monsoon season approaching in the next two to three months, the situation could worsen if immediate preventive steps are not taken.

Highlighting the urgency of the issue, he said that a fresh complaint has now been submitted to the concerned minister, urging immediate intervention and directions to the department for necessary action. He specifically demanded the installation of stone crates and other protective infrastructure around the temple to prevent further erosion and safeguard the site from flood-related damage.

"This is not just about infrastructure; it is about protecting a place of reli-

gious importance and ensuring the safety of the people who visit here regularly," Thakur Hoshiar Singh said. He further added that timely action could prevent a major loss and preserve the sanctity of the temple.

Members of the IHRACO team who were present during the visit included Satish Poonchi, Vice President; Satish Sharma, General Secretary; Vishal; Sandeep Manhas; Udayveer Singh; and the temple priest Pujari Sajan Sharma Ji, along with other local residents and supporters.

The team collectively appealed to the administration to treat the matter with urgency and initiate the required work without delay, keeping in view the upcoming monsoon season and the potential risks involved.

Vande Bharat train between Jammu and Srinagar hailed as 'game changer'

SYSTEM OBSERVER
JAMMU

People across Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday hailed the launch of the direct Vande Bharat Express service between Jammu and Srinagar, calling it a major step towards improved connectivity, tourism and economic growth. Passengers and stakeholders termed the development a "game changer," highlighting that the service would significantly reduce travel time, cut costs, and provide all-weather connectivity to the Valley.

"It is a game-changer for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Not only will it save time and energy, but it will ensure all-weather connectivity. It will give a big boost to trade and tourism," said Arvind Singh, a travel agent who was among those

onboard the inaugural journey. He added that tourists and pilgrims, especially those visiting the Amarnath Yatra, were previously dependent on road transport, which was often disrupted by traffic congestion, landslides, and adverse weather conditions.

"Now, pilgrims can conveniently use the train service," he said. Echoing similar sentiments, a trader, Bushan Chand, said transporting goods to the Kashmir Valley by trucks was both time-consuming and expensive. "This train service will be a game-changer for our businesses. It will ease travel and logistics. We thank the Government of India for extending the train to Jammu," he said. A government employee, Mustaq Ahmed, who was travelling

back to Srinagar, said the train would particularly benefit employees commuting between the twin capitals.

"This is the best mode of transport. One can travel to Kashmir and return the same day. The travel time has reduced to less than four hours," he said. Students and other passengers also expressed happiness over the new service. "We are very happy. Earlier, we had to travel to Katra to board a train to Kashmir. Now, the train is available directly from Jammu. We thank Narendra Modi for this," said Veenta, a Class 12 student.

Mukhtar Ahmed said that earlier travel, especially for pilgrimages, was fraught with difficulties. "Now, we can directly reach Srinagar. It will save both time and money. Road travel often

involved landslides and weather disruptions, which caused major hardships. These issues will now be minimised," he said.

Sardar Parminder, a university student, termed the initiative a commendable step by the government. "Direct connectivity between Jammu and Srinagar is highly beneficial, especially for pilgrims and tourists," he added. The direct train service is expected to boost tourism, trade, and overall socioeconomic development in the region while ensuring reliable, all-weather surface connectivity.

Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw flagged off the 20-coach Vande Bharat Express, marking the first direct train service between the twin capitals of Jammu and Kashmir. The train,

which previously operated from Srinagar to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra, will now run all the way to Jammu Tawi, bringing the country's most modern train directly to J&K's largest city and railway hub. The extended Jammu Tawi-Srinagar Vande Bharat Express will enter regular service from May 2.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had earlier inaugurated the first direct train service between Katra and Srinagar on June 6, 2025. The extension to Jammu marks another milestone in the ambitious Rs 43,780-crore railway project connecting Kashmir with the rest of the country, work on which began in the late 1990s. The first train in the Kashmir Valley started operations in October 2008.

J&K government orders major Administrative reshuffle, transfers 179 JKAS officers

Wide-ranging administrative reshuffle affects key departments across Jammu and Kashmir

SYSTEM OBSERVER
JAMMU

The Jammu and Kashmir Government has ordered a massive administrative reshuffle, transferring and posting 179 Jammu and Kashmir Administrative Service (JKAS) officers with immediate effect in the interest of administration.

According to the order, Asif Hamid Khan has been transferred and posted as Secretary in the Jal Shakti Department, while Smita Sethi has been appointed Managing Director of the J&K Housing Board. Manzoor Ahmad Qadri has been posted as Managing Director of the J&K Financial Corporation, and Mohammad Rafi has been appointed Director General, Libraries, J&K. Shahbaz Ahmad Mirza has been shifted as Member of the J&K Special Tribunal, and Rubina Kousar has been posted as Mission Director, ICPS/Vatsalya.

Among other significant postings, Mushtaq Ahmad has been appointed Director, Estates, Jammu, while Mukhtar Ahmed Chowdhary will await further adjustment orders. Nawab Din has been posted as Special Secretary in the ARI and Trainings Department. Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar has been appointed Managing Director, SIDCO,

with additional charge of SICOP, while Mufti-Farid-Din has been posted as Director, SKICC.

Gulzar Ahmad Dar has been posted as Additional District Development Commissioner, Kupwara, and Dr Ravi Shanker Sharma as Special Secretary in the Agriculture Production Department. Reyaz Ahmad Wani has been appointed Director, Rural Development, Kashmir, while Mohammad Younis Malik has been posted as Director, Entrepreneurship Development Institute.

Subash Chander Chhibber has been posted as Special Secretary in the General Administration Department, and Khurshid Ahmad Sanai as Secretary, J&K Services Selection Board. Raj Kumar Katoch has been appointed Special Secretary in the Planning Department, while Rifat Kohli has been posted as Special Secretary in the Housing and Urban Development Department. Nagendra Singh Jamwal has been appointed Director, Floriculture, Jammu.

Pankaj Raj Katoch has been posted as Director, Panchayati Raj, while Pawan Kumar Sharma has been appointed Director, Geology and Mining. Tassaduq Hussain Mir has been posted as Custodian General, and Narinder Khajuria as

Special Secretary in ARI and Trainings. Shabir Hussain Bhat has been appointed Vice-Chairman, Srinagar Development Authority, and Ashwani Kumar Khajuria as Director, Hospitality and Protocol.

Suraj Parkash Rukwal has been posted as Special Secretary in the Tourism Department, while Sham Lal has been appointed Additional Commissioner in the Divisional Commissioner's office, Jammu. Sukhdev Singh Samyal has been posted as Special Secretary in the Power Development Department, and Pran Singh as Joint Financial Commissioner, Agrarian Reforms.

Rakesh Kumar has been posted as Member, J&K Services Selection Board, while Khurshid Ahmad Shah has been appointed Vice-Chairman, Lakes Conservation and Management Authority. Mohammad Ashraf Hakak has been posted as Director, Estates, Kashmir, and Ashish Kumar Gupta as Director, Disaster Management.

Gulzar Ahmad Bhat has been appointed Administrator, Associated Hospitals, Srinagar, while Dr Nargis Suraiya has been posted as Special Secretary in the Higher Education Department. Deep Raj has

been appointed Administrator, Associated Hospitals, Jammu, and Pardeep Singh as Managing Director, J&K Handloom and Handicrafts Development Corporation.

Krishan Lal has been posted as Additional District Development Commissioner, Reasi, while Nazir Ahmad Mir has been appointed Additional District Development Commissioner, Bandipora. Shafiq Ahmed has been posted as Additional Secretary in the Agriculture Production Department, and Vir Krishan Dhar as Regional Director, Survey and Land Records, Udhampur.

Shokat Mehmood has been posted as Special Secretary in the Social Welfare Department. Jahangir Hashmi has been appointed Additional Registrar, Cooperatives, Kashmir, and Atul Sharma as Managing Director, J&K Minerals Limited. Khurshid Ahmad has been posted as OSD to Advisor to the Chief Minister.

Ritu Mahajan has been posted in the Labour and Employment Department, while Subah Mehta has been appointed Joint Director, Industries and Commerce. Vinakshi Koul has been posted as Deputy Excise Commissioner, and Neelam Khajuria as Joint Director, Industries and Commerce.

Inderjeet Singh has been posted as Joint Director, Youth Services and Sports, and Priyanka Bhat as Principal, Excise and Taxation Training Institute, Nagrota. Anil Kumar Chandail has been appointed Additional Secretary in the Health and Medical Education Department, while Ajeet Singh and Pardeep Singh Chib have been shifted within the State Taxes Department.

Several other officers have been transferred and posted across departments including Rural Development, Tourism, Industries, Mining, Social Welfare, Education, and Municipal bodies. Numerous postings have also been made at the district level, including Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, Programme Officers, and Deputy Directors to strengthen grassroots administration.

The reshuffle also includes officers awaiting adjustment who have now been assigned roles, while many have been given additional charge of posts to ensure continuity in governance.

The government has directed all officers to assume their new responsibilities immediately to ensure smooth functioning of administration across the Union Territory.

J&K Govt orders major reshuffle in Finance, Accounts and Treasury Cadre

Over 75 officers transferred and posted across departments to strengthen administrative efficiency

SYSTEM OBSERVER
JAMMU

The Government of Jammu and Kashmir has issued Government Order No. 174-F of 2026 dated April 30, 2026, ordering a large-scale reshuffle in the Finance, Accounts, and Treasury cadre in the interest of administration, with immediate effect. As per the order, Mr. Iftikhar Hussain Chouhan, Director Finance, Information and Technology Department, shall hold the additional charge of Director Finance, Chief Minister's Secretariat till the return of Mr. Mohd Araf Khan from leave.

Ms. Naila Zahoor Chib has been transferred from Director Finance, Police Headquarters J&K, and posted as Director Finance, Accountancy Training Institute, Srinagar, with a special scale post temporarily shifted to the institute. Mr. Yasir Sharief has been moved from Treasury Officer, Saddar Treasury Jammu, to Financial Advisor/CAO, J&K Sports Council, while Mr. Sachin Verma has been posted as Treasury Officer, Saddar Treasury Jammu.

Mr. Manohar Lal has been transferred to Chief Pay & Accounts Officer (CP&AO), JPDCL Kathua, while Ms. Shadab Mukhdoomi has been posted as District Treasury Officer Budgam. Mr. Alok Gupta has been posted as Financial

Advisor/CAO, J&K Prisons Headquarters, and Mr. Javed Maqbool Khanday as Financial Advisor/CAO, Government Medical College Anantnag.

Mr. Mohd Ayoub Lone has been shifted as District Treasury Officer Anantnag, while Mr. Lokesh Gupta has been posted to Baglihar Hydro Electric Project Batote. Mr. Pritpal Singh has been appointed as Chief Accounts Officer, Inspector General Registration, and Ms. Nousheen Mushtaq as Financial Advisor/CAO, Government Medical College Srinagar.

Mr. Showkat Ali Rather has been posted as Chief Pay & Accounts Officer, KPDCI Ganderbal, while Ms. Tehleela Asmat has been transferred as Treasury Officer, Saddar Treasury Srinagar. Mr. Sareer Ahmad Mir has been posted as Financial Advisor/CAO, Chief Engineer PHE Kashmir, and Ms. Mubashira Hussain as Financial Advisor/CAO, J&K Police Headquarters.

Bikram Dutt has been posted as Financial Advisor/CAO, Government Medical College Udhampur, while Mr. Laikat Khan has been posted as District Treasury Officer Rajouri. Ms. Anudeep Kour Sudan has been shifted as Treasury Officer, Additional Treasury Gandhi Nagar, and Mr. Satyan Shree Gupta has been posted as CP&AO, JPDCL

Udhampur.

Mohd Akram has been posted as CP&AO, JKPTCL Srinagar, while Mr. Irfan Majid has been transferred as Chief Accounts Officer, J&K Road Transport Corporation. Ms. Nishad Akhtar has been posted as Chief Accounts Officer, GP Fund Police Provincial Cell Srinagar.

Mohd Iqbal Pedhar has been posted as Chief Accounts Officer, SICOP, while Mr. Mohd Ashraf Ahanger has been transferred as Chief Accounts Officer, District Fund Office Kupwara. Mr. Vivek Sharma has been posted as Chief Accounts Officer, Directorate of Family Welfare.

Abdul Salam Kumar has been transferred as Chief Accounts Officer, District Fund Office Ganderbal, while Mr. Anish Singh has been posted as Chief Accounts Officer, Chief Engineer PWD (R&B) Chenab Valley Batote. Mr. Mohd Iqbal has been posted as Chief Accounts Officer, BOPEE, and Mr. Jatinder Singh as Chief Accounts Officer, Transport Commissioner Office.

Farooq Ahmad Lone has been posted as District Treasury Officer Pulwama, while Mr. Belal Ahmad Lone has been transferred as Chief Accounts Officer, Directorate of Industries and Commerce Srinagar. Mr. Kuldeep Kumar has been posted as Chief Accounts Officer, District

Fund Office Kathua.

Lokash Kumar has been transferred as Chief Accounts Officer, District Fund Office Kishtwar, while Mr. Zafar Iqbal has been posted as Chief Accounts Officer, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests. Mr. Qamar Rehman has been posted as CP&AO, Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University Rajouri.

Mohd Shafait Rehman has been posted as Deputy Director, Budget Division Finance Department, while Mr. Shah Nawaz Ahmad has been transferred as Chief Accounts Officer, Chief Engineer PHE Jammu. Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Iqbal Hakla has been posted as Chief Accounts Officer, J&K Public Service Commission.

Abdul Rashid Dostum has been posted as CP&AO, JPDCL Poonch, while Mr. Abhishek Talwar has been transferred as Chief Accounts Officer, J&K Handloom Development Corporation. Mr. Showkat Ahmad Khan has been posted as Chief Accounts Officer, Power Development Corporation Srinagar.

Dalawar Singh has been posted as Treasury Officer, Additional Treasury New Plot, while Mr. Mohammad Shafi Wani has been posted as District Treasury Officer Kupwara. Ms. Shaziya Rasool has been transferred as Chief Accounts Officer, Central Financial Organisation PDD Srinagar.

North Tech Symposium 2026: A Crucial Convergence of India's Defence Innovation Ecosystem



AVINASH BASSAN

North Tech Symposium 2026 in Prayagraj has emerged as one of the most consequential defence-technology gatherings in India's evolving military-industrial landscape, bringing together the Armed Forces, defence manufacturers, start-ups, academia, and policymakers in a coordinated effort to align indigenous innovation with battlefield necessity. Jointly organised by the Indian Army's Northern and Central Commands in partnership with the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers, the Symposium assembled 183 firms to address 87 clearly defined Army operational requirements, transforming Prayagraj into a structured platform for requirement-driven defence innovation.

Unlike conventional defence exhibitions driven by broad product showcases, North Tech Symposium 2026 has been built around operational necessity. By issuing clearly articulated battlefield problem statements and inviting industry to respond directly, the Army has created a focused framework in which technology is developed in response to frontline requirements rather than showcased in search of relevance.

This operational orientation was reflected in the technologies displayed across the exhibition floor, which collectively highlighted the Indian Army's evolving emphasis on autonomy, precision strike, battlefield digitisation, counter-drone defence, and force survivability.

Among the major attrac-

tions were multiple indigenous loitering munition and unmanned strike systems, underscoring the growing domestic push into precision drone warfare. It is worthwhile to mention that RUDRA, the multi-barrel loitering munition developed with participation from IIT Jammu, remained among the notable systems featured at the expo, drawing attention for its indigenous design and advanced strike profile.

Other showcased systems included tandem-wing loitering munitions, jet-based kamikaze drones, AI-enabled reconnaissance UAVs, and autonomous battlefield drone platforms—reflecting the Army's recognition that unmanned systems are becoming central to modern tactical and operational warfare.

Counter-drone and layered air-defence systems also featured prominently. Exhibitors demonstrated integrated anti-drone architectures combining radar, EO/IR sensors, RF detection, electronic jamming, hard-kill interceptors, and command-and-control fusion systems. Indigenous radar platforms such as AESA surveillance systems further highlighted India's expanding capability in battlefield sensor and air-defence technologies.

Beyond drones and air defence, the exhibition showcased advances in armoured mobility, ballistic protection, aerial delivery systems, battlefield sensors, and soldier survivability equipment—illustrating the widening sophistication of India's private defence-industrial ecosystem.

Yet while the scale and

breadth of technologies on display are encouraging, the ultimate significance of North Tech Symposium 2026 will depend not on exhibition optics, but on procurement outcomes.

India's defence innovation ecosystem has often demonstrated technical promise but struggled to convert prototypes into fielded capability due to protracted testing timelines, fragmented certification processes, and slow acquisition pathways. The true measure of the Symposium will therefore lie in whether the systems showcased in

Prayagraj move into accelerated field trials, funded prototype pipelines, and eventual induction into service.

If they do, North Tech Symposium 2026 may prove to be an important inflection point in India's defence-industrial evolution.

If not, it risks becoming another exhibition of unrealised promise.

Nevertheless, the event has delivered one unmistakable message: India's defence-industrial base is becoming broader, deeper, and more technologically ambitious. The participation of established manufactur-

ers, emerging start-ups, specialised technology firms, and academic institutions reflects the gradual emergence of a more integrated defence innovation ecosystem.

North Tech Symposium 2026 has demonstrated that the architecture for meaningful military-industrial collaboration is taking shape.

The challenge now is to ensure that this convergence of soldier, scientist, and industry yields not merely innovation on display—but capability in service.

Civil Defence Air Raid Mock Drill Successfully Conducted at Ramban

SYSTEM OBSERVER
RAMBAN

A Civil Defence Air Raid Mock Drill was successfully conducted today, 23rd April 2026, at Shan Palace, Ramban, under the supervision of the Deputy Commissioner Ramban Sh.Mohd Alyas Khan JKAS and the Senior Superintendent of Police Ramban Sh.Arun GuptaJKPS.

The mock drill was jointly conducted by District Police Ramban, Civil administration Ramban, IR 16th Battalion, SOG QRT Ramban, Health Department Ramban, CAPF Army, SDRF/Home Guards Ramban, and Civil Quick Reaction Teams (QRTs) Ramban, CRPF 84Bn QRT Chanderkote Ramban, Fire tender team Ramban with active coordination among all participating agencies. The exercise was further strengthened through close coordination with DySP (DAR) I/C Area Commandant HG/CD & SDRF Ramban, ensuring seamless inter-agency synergy.

The primary objective of the exercise was to assess the preparedness, response mechanism, and inter-agency coordination in

handling emergency situations such as air raids and blackout scenarios. During the drill, simulated emergency situations were created to evaluate the efficiency, alertness, and response time of the participating departments.

All the agencies demonstrated prompt response, effective coordination, and adherence to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The Health Department ensured medical preparedness, while security forces and QRTs exhibited swift action and area management during the exercise.

The drill was conducted in a highly professional and coordinated manner, highlighting the operational readiness and synergy among different departments. Such exercises play a vital role in strengthening disaster response mechanisms and ensuring better preparedness for real-time emergencies.

The exercise concluded with the administration of a pledge under the "Nasha Mukht Bharat, Jammu & Kashmir" initiative, wherein all participants reaffirmed their commitment towards building a drug-free society and spreading awareness against substance abuse.