











# Army Chief's one-month extension sends out wrong signal

THE Chief of the Army Staff, Gen Manoj Pande, who was to retire on May 31, has been given one month's extension by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet under Army Rule 16A(4) of the Army Act, 1954. Gen Pande will now retire on June 30. The last-minute announcement of the extension amid the Lok Sabha polls has stunned many defence officers and observers, especially over the question of seniority. Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi, currently serving as the Vice Chief of the Army Staff, is the senior-most officer after Gen Pande, followed by Lt Gen Ajai Kumar Singh, the Southern Army Commander. Back in the 1970s, the Indira Gandhi-led government had extended the tenure of then Army Chief Gen GG Bewoor by one year. In the present case, of the next two senior Army commanders, one would perhaps become the next Chief. Undoubtedly, it is the government's prerogative to select any person for a particular job. However, in the case of the defence services, the situation is somewhat different due to a number of factors. In the military, seniority matters a lot and is highly revered. As one climbs up the promotion ladder, there are stringent and strict parameters against which performance is measured, assessed and evaluated. Those who reach the level of Army commanders have gone through such

evaluation at each stage, from the rank of Major (or its equivalent rank in the Navy and the Air Force) onwards. Thus, every Army commander (or Air Vice Marshal or Vice Admiral), for all practical purposes and in every respect, is fit to step into the next rank - of the Chief of his respective service. Seniority in the defence forces forms the bedrock of tradition and discipline. Earlier, when Lt Gen Praveen Bakshi, then the senior-most Army commander, was superseded (along with another commander) to promote Lt Gen Bipin Rawat, there was consternation and disappointment in the officer cadre. Lt Gen Bakshi, then in line for promotion to be the next Army Chief, had an enviable service record and was not only considered most competent but was also equally admired. Gen Rawat's elevation was linked by some observers to political considerations and undue pressure from certain quarters. Arguments are being advanced that the present Army Chief, in the best interests of the military, should have declined the extension. It is a choice that Gen Pande had to make for the sake of the Army, where he has spent the better part of his life and given his best. Unfortunately, in the Indian setting, there is often a carrot that is kept hanging. It is common in the civil services to fall for this carrot, compromising it all, and now, most



unfortunately for the country, in a few cases in the judiciary as well. The rot is epitomised by the political class, with switching loyalties and parties becoming a common feature; this holds true for a section of the bureaucracy as well. The service Chiefs are expected not only to do the right thing, but also to set things right. Generations of future officers look back at the actions of their Chiefs and strive to emulate them. Fortunately, the Indian Army has stayed well away from politics and political influence, unlike the armies in neighbouring countries such as Pakistan and Myanmar. When then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi tried to involve the Army in her move to impose the Emergency, the then Army Chief, Gen TN Raina, politely told her to keep the Army out of this venture. This one step by the Chief went a long way in keeping the Army apolitical. The practice of superseding high-ranking officers for political considerations will have, in the long run, an

adverse effect on the military's professional wellbeing and the quality of the top leadership. Military is one field which must be kept insulated from politics. Political jostling in appointments to higher ranks will do lasting damage to the military. Consequently, failure in war can lead to unimaginable disaster. No country/region knows more than India about the fallout of military defeats spread over centuries. The government has not done the right thing by giving Gen Pande a month's extension, thereby making a senior commander wiser awaiting promotion. It is a step that may prompt senior military commanders to seek political favours; this move may politicise the military in some form. In the national interest, the military should not be subjected to undesirable political interference for extending favours to some. Gen Rawat superseding two officers to become the Army Chief presumably had political overtones. So too was the case with his subsequent appointment as the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). The current CDS (Gen Anil Chauhan) had retired in the rank of Lt Gen and was working under the National Security Adviser. His elevation to the post of CDS was exceptional. The Army Chief's extension of service will perhaps open the door for another handpicked officer to step into this chair.

## Mamata Banerjee mocks PM's 'God' remark



Taunting Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his remark that he was sent by the "Parmatma for a purpose", West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said gods should not do politics and instigate riots. Addressing a rally in Kolkata, Banerjee said if Modi considered himself God, then a temple should be built for him so that he sits there and stops troubling the country. "One says he (PM Modi) is the God of the gods... one leader says Lord Jagannath is his devotee... if he is God, then God should not do politics. God should not instigate riots. We will build a temple for him and worship him there, offer prasad, flowers and if he wishes, we will also offer him dhokla," the Trinamool Congress chief said in a mocking tone. The Bengal Chief Minister's remark comes in the wake of PM Modi's recent interview with a news channel in which he reportedly said that he was not biological but sent by God. The BJP's Lok Sabha candidate from Puri, Sambit Patra, also recently said that Lord Jagannath was a "bhakt of Modi". Patra apologised for his remarks, calling it a slip of his tongue. Continuing her tirade against the PM, Mamata said, "I have worked with so many Prime Ministers, like Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who used to love me a lot. I worked with Manmohan Singh, Rajiv Gandhi, Narshimha Rao, Deve Gowda... I have never seen anyone like him, such a Prime Minister is not needed." Both Mamata and PM Modi held mega roadshows in Kolkata on Tuesday ahead of the final phase of voting on June 1. The Trinamool supremo held two roadshows in north and south Kolkata, covering on foot nearly nine kilometres.

## 'Sunday Holiday Is Not Linked To Hindus But To Christian...': PM Modi Slams JMM's 'Appeasement' Politics

Claiming that the tribal population was decreasing in the Santhal Parganas because of infiltration, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday accused the JMM-led ruling alliance in Jharkhand of "patronising" infiltrators, who he said were grabbing land and putting women at risk. Addressing an election rally in Dumka, Modi said he had heard that the term "love jihad" was coined by the people of Jharkhand and that efforts were made in one district of the state to change the weekly holiday from Sunday, which was connected to the Christian community, to Friday. "A big crisis looms over Jharkhand and that is infiltration. The Santhal Parganas is facing the challenge of infiltration. In many areas, the population of tribals is declining fast and the number of infiltrators is on the rise. The infiltrators are grabbing tribal lands. Tribal daughters are the target of infiltrators. Their security and safety are at risk. Their lives are also at risk," he said. Apparently referring to two incidents that happened in 2022, Modi said, "Tribal daughters are being chopped into 50 pieces... Being burnt alive... Someone's tongue was pulled out. Who are these people who are targeting tribal daughters? Why is the JMM government patronising them?" The PM said that he heard that the term "love jihad" was coined by the people of Jharkhand. "A friend was telling me that the term 'love jihad' emanated from Jharkhand. The people of Jharkhand have coined this term," he said. Accusing the JMM of indulging in "communal and appeasement politics", he said that despite Sunday being a holiday since the British era, in one Jharkhand district, it was changed

to Friday. "Sunday is not linked to Hindus but to the Christian community. It has been a holiday since 200-300 years. In one district, they changed the holiday from Sunday to Tuesday. First, they fought with Hindus, now they are fighting with Christians. What is going on?" Modi asked. "INDI Alliance's politics is based on the formula of communal appeasement, patronising separatists and protecting terrorists... Those who oppose it face the allegation of dividing Hindus and Muslims," he said. The PM said that the opposition INDIA bloc was providing reservations on the basis of religion. "It will not be tolerated. Till Modi is alive, reservations cannot be provided for 'vote jihad'," he said. Modi claimed that when he "unmasked" the "communal and anti-tribal" veil of the opposition, he was accused of dividing Hindus and Muslims. "They think they can frighten Modi by throwing dirt at him, but they do not know that the more they throw dirt, the more lotuses will bloom... Modi is bound to foil their propaganda of hatred," he said. Alleging that the JMM-led coalition was looting the state's resources, he claimed that the state was now known for "mountains of cash". "There are scenic mountains in Jharkhand, but now Jharkhand is known for the mountains of cash being unearthed. I had been CM for 13 years but never witnessed such huge amounts of cash. The JMM and Congress indulged in liquor scam, tender scam, mining and minerals scam, and a scam worth Rs 1,000 crore was unearthed in Sahibganj alone," he said. "The leaders are such that they don't even hesitate to change the names of their parents to grab land.



They have not even spared Army land," he added. Modi accused the JMM-led alliance of looting the foodgrains sent from the Centre for the poor and selling those in the black market. Vowing that action against corruption would be intensified in the country after June 4, Modi said scams were routine in the country before 2014 as "Congress indulged in loot 24x7", but after he came to power, he stopped it. Modi claimed the "INDI Alliance" tried hard to defeat Droupadi Murmu, who is a tribal, in the 2022 presidential polls. He said the country would see more development work in the next five years than it witnessed in the last 10 years. He promised to build 3 crore pucca houses for the poor, make 3 crore women "lakhpatti" and provide Rs 75,000 to each household under the PM Surya Ghar scheme for installing solar panels. Modi said the Santhal Parganas region was bound to develop as works for a number of projects were underway, including the Varanasi-Ranchi-Kolkata greenfield expressway and a multimodal logistics hub in Sahibganj. The PM was campaigning for BJP's Dumka candidate Sita Soren, Rajmahal nominee Tala Marandi and Godda MP Nishikant Dubey. The elections in these constituencies will be held on June 1.

# Death, Destruction At Rafah Camp After Overnight Israeli Strikes

Israel's fresh attack on the south Gaza city of Rafah has sparked global outcry after over 45 people were killed in overnight strikes that hit Palestinian relief camps. Chaotic scenes were witnessed as the strikes set fire to Palestinian tents, burning occupants to death and leaving numerous others severely injured. Witnesses recount seeing charred bodies and burned limbs as the victims' cries filled the air. "People are currently inside their homes because anyone who moves is

being shot at by Israeli drones," a resident told news agency AFP. The Israeli army has claimed the strikes targeted two Hamas operatives in the compound and the resulting inferno was caused by "unforeseen circumstances". Israeli Army's spokesperson denied the strikes led to the fire, claiming ammunition stored in the compound by Hamas sparked the flames. While US President Joe Biden warned Israel against a major military operation in Rafah, his administration

said Israel's latest strike did not cross US's red lines. Rafah residents told news agency AFP that "throughout the night, the bombing didn't stop, with air and artillery fire and vehicles advancing to the west" of the city. #AllEyesOnRafah began trending on social media in the wake of the deadly inferno as several celebrities shared messages of support. Rafah is the last place of refuge for Palestinians fleeing the Israeli onslaught. Gazans in the north were told to evacuate to the

south before Israel's military invasion. After conducting operations in central Gaza and the southern city of Khan Yunis, Israel has bombed Rafah where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are living in relief camps. The war in Gaza began after Hamas's October 7 attack on southern Israel, which resulted in the deaths of more than 1,170 people, mostly civilians. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 36,096 people in Gaza.

## Rules Changing From June 1: Driving License, Aadhar Card, And More



As June 1 approaches, numerous rules are set to change. These changes will impact daily life, making it important to stay informed. June will see alterations concerning LPG cylinder usage, bank holidays, Aadhaar updates, and driving licenses. Let's review the key changes taking effect from June 1. New Driving License Rules: The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways recently announced new regulations for obtaining a driving license in India. Starting June 1, 2024, individuals will be able to take driving tests at private driving training centres instead of government RTOs. These centres will be authorized to conduct tests and issue certifications for license eligibility. The new rules also aim to reduce pollution by phasing out approximately 900,000 old government vehicles and enforcing stricter car emission regulations. The fine for speeding remains between Rs 1,000 and Rs 2,000. However, if a minor is caught driving, they will face a substantial fine of Rs 25,000. Additionally, the vehicle owner's registration card will be cancelled, and the minor will be ineligible for a license until they are 25 years old.

### Aadhar Card Update

Planning to update your Aadhar Card? Well, you can do that till June 14. Users can simply update their Aadhar card online. However, if you choose to do it offline, then you will have to pay Rs 50 per update.

### LPG cylinder price

LPG cylinder prices are adjusted on the first of every month. On June 1, oil companies will set new gas cylinder prices. In May, these companies reduced the prices of commercial cylinders, and it is anticipated that they may lower cylinder prices again in June. Additionally, as with every day, changes in petrol and diesel prices are expected on June 1.

### Bank Holidays In June

As per the list of bank holidays issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), banks will be closed for 10 days in June. These include Sundays and the second and fourth Saturdays. Additionally, other holidays in June comprise Raja Sankranti and Eid-ul-Adha. Hence, it is recommended to review the holiday schedule before planning a visit to the bank.

## Mani Shankar Aiyar Sparks Fresh Row With 'Chinese Allegedly Invaded' India In 1962, Apologies Later For 'Mistake'

New Delhi: Former Union Minister and Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar has sparked a fresh controversy by referring to the 1962 Indo-China war as an 'alleged Chinese invasion'. Aiyar made these remarks during a book event titled 'Nehru's First Recruits: The Diplomats Who Built Independent India's Foreign Policy' authored by Kallol Bhattacharjee. Addressing the press conference, Aiyar stated, 'In October 1962, the Chinese allegedly invaded India.' The 1962 Indo-China War occurred between October and November of that year, with Chinese troops crossing the 'MacMohan line' and seizing the Aksai Chin region, which is part of India's territory. According to a purported video of an event at the Foreign Correspondents Club this evening, Aiyar, while narrating an anecdote, said, "...In October 1962, the Chinese allegedly invaded India." Later, in a brief statement, Aiyar said, "I unreservedly apologise for having mistakenly used the word 'alleged' before 'Chinese invasion' at the Foreign Correspondents Club this evening." Recognising the gravity of the situation, the Congress leader later attempted to clarify his stance, admitting that he should not have used the term "alleged", especially in the midst of an election season. He said, "I unreservedly apologise for having mistakenly used the word 'alleged' before 'Chinese invasion' at the Foreign Correspondents Club this evening." "There are various books which indicate that we could have accepted Zhou Enlai's proposal of April 1960 and avoided a word I used the expression 'alleged'. I shouldn't have done so because we are in the middle of an election," he added. Earlier this month, the Congress leader courted controversy after an interview clip of

his went viral, wherein he could be heard saying that Pakistan is a "respected nation" that also possesses an atom bomb so India must enter into a dialogue with them. He further said there have been "no efforts" from India to "reach out" to Pakistan in the last ten years.

Congress reacts to Aiyar's comment

Meanwhile, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh tweeted on Tuesday night that the veteran party leader has "subsequently apologised unreservedly for using the term 'alleged invasion' mistakenly". "Allowances must be made for his age," he said, adding that Congress has "distancted itself from his original phraseology".

### BJP slams Aiyar's remarks

BJP's IT department head Amit Malviya slammed the Congress over Aiyar's remarks. 'Mani Shankar Aiyar, speaking at the FCC, during the launch of a book called Nehru's First Recruits, refers to the Chinese invasion in 1962 as 'alleged'. This is a brazen attempt at revisionism,' the BJP leader said on X.

'Nehru gave up India's claim on permanent seat at the UNSC in favour of the Chinese, Rahul Gandhi signed a secret MoU, Rajiv Gandhi Foundation accepted funds from the Chinese Embassy and published reports recommending market access for Chinese companies, based on them, Sonia Gandhi's UPA opened up Indian market for Chinese goods, hurting MSMEs and now Congress leader Aiyar wants to whitewash the Chinese invasion, post which the Chinese have been in illegal occupation of 38,000 sq km of Indian territory,' he alleged. ED Conducts Raids At Ropar District Of Punjab In Illegal Mining Case Illegal Mining was being done



on the land attached by ED and the nearby area of Rupnagar (Ropar) district. This land was attached by ED in the infamous Bhola drug case. ?Bhola drug case is at a crucial stage of trial before the Special Prevention of Money Laundering Act court.

Fire At Parking Lot In Delhi's Madhu Vihar, Several Cars Gutted Several cars were gutted in a fire at a parking lot near police station Mandawali in the Madhu Vihar area of Delhi. The fire which broke out last night around 1:17 AM has been brought under control. <https://x.com/ANI/status/1795654360183312594>

Uttar Pradesh Deputy CM KP Maurya says, "...PM Modi is a worshiper of the Constitution. He is a protector of democracy and he bows down to the Parliament. He working to fulfil the dreams of Bhimrao Ambedkar...The people who speak about vote jihad will talk about PM Modi..."

New Delhi: As we inch closer to the final phase of the Lok Sabha Elections 2024 on June 1 and then eventually, the results announcement on June 4, 2024, there are several political developments to take a look at. Ahead of the seventh phase, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be meditating in Kanyakumari from May 30 to June 1, 2024. For all the latest political developments both nationally and internationally, stay tuned to India.com...

## Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan to join Congress? He says, 'Rahul Gandhi is'

Raghuram Rajan, former RBI Governor stated in a recent interview that his family does not want him to enter politics. He expressed, 'I have said repeatedly and people still don't believe me. I am an academic, my business is not kissing babies. I have a family and a wife, who doesn't want me to enter politics for a good reason. So rather than enter politics what I would like to do is help guide where I can.' On rumours of him joining the Congress, he reacted, 'And that's what I try and do. So where I feel government policies are going off track regardless of whether I'm government or not - I talk about it.' While talking about Rahul Gandhi, he commented, 'I think that's such a wrong portrayal in the sense



that you know he's smart, intelligent, and also brave. I think what people discount - which they should not - is this is a family which has seen the grandmother assassinated, the father blown up.' He added, 'To engage in politics, to be in the midst of crowds - if I had that experience I'd be hid-

ing in a bed all the time. So I think there are a lot of attributes that are commendable and if you look at his record of what he's been saying on events. I think he's been right during Covid... (when he said) we need to do more preparation, we need to act early. It was the Congress calling off rallies which eventually led to the stopping politicking during the second wave,' he said. Rajan further stated that Rahul Gandhi may not have all the answers or solutions, but 'he is a very reasonable leader contrary to what has is portrayed. He has strong convictions, you have to debate those convictions if you disagree with them but he's perfectly willing to engage in that debate.'

