

Calling Rafale a 'hero', Vice Chief of Air Staff seeks more fighter planes

Saurabh Trivedi

NEW DELHI

Vice Chief of the Air Staff Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor on Wednesday described the Rafale fighter jet as the "hero" of Operation Sindoor, and said the Indian Air Force (IAF) was looking to induct more such multi-role fighter aircraft, with Rafale planes among the contenders.

"Rafale was definitely the hero during Operation Sindoor among other heroes. The Indian Air Force is looking forward to inducting more MRFA, which is going to be Rafale or any other aircraft under deliberations. A decision has yet to be taken. We are looking for newer generation aircraft [to add] into our inventory," he said.

On reports regarding alleged strikes on Pakistan's Kirana Hills during the operation, Air Marshal Kapoor said the IAF had tar-



Vayu Shakti, an upcoming IAF exercise, will be held at the Pokharan air-to-ground range in Rajasthan on February 27. PTI

geted terror infrastructure and several military installations. "Whether we did something there or whether the explosion was caused by something else, we don't know. These videos were presented by their people; we did nothing beyond striking terror and military installations," he said. He was briefing journalists about Vayu Shakti, an upcoming IAF exercise to be held at the Pokharan

air-to-ground range near the India-Pakistan border in Rajasthan on February 27. The biennial firepower demonstration will highlight the success of Operation Sindoor and the IAF's capability to rapidly punish the enemy and dominate the operational environment.

More than 120 air assets, including 77 fighter jets, will participate. The lineup includes Rafale,

Su-30MKI, Mirage-2000, MiG-29, Jaguar, and Tejas aircraft. Helicopters will also take part, including Apache, Chinook, light combat helicopter Prachand, and advanced light helicopter, along with transport aircraft such as the C-130J, C-17, and C-295, which will make its debut at the event.

Wing Commander Ajit B. Wasane said that 277 weapons would be deployed during the exercise, which will last two hours and 35 minutes. Around 12,000 kg of explosives will be detonated across 43 events involving 23 targets. Surface-to-air systems such as Akash and SpyDer, short-range loitering munitions, and counter unmanned aerial systems will be showcased. The drill will feature integrated operations with the Army, including the deployment of M-777 howitzers, L-70 guns, and Special Forces.

Rafale, Su-30, Tejas to be part of 'Vayu Shakti' at Pokhran

Express News Service
New Delhi, February 11

THE IAF is looking forward to inducting a lot more of the newer-generation aircraft into its inventory, Vice Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor, said on Wednesday.

Addressing reporters ahead of Exercise Vayu Shakti — where the IAF will demonstrate its full spectrum of combat and firepower capabilities at the Pokhran range close to the

India-Pakistan border in Rajasthan on February 27 — he said the biennial demonstration this time assumes a different connotation as this is taking place after last year's Operation Sindoor.

He said that while long-distance targeting will not be showcased in this firepower demonstration at Pokhran range, the effects of the strikes on the ground will be demonstrated as part of it. "We will do our demonstration. What message will go out to anyone...

it is up to you to decide."

In a statement, the Defence Ministry said, "As the first, fastest and fiercest responder, the Indian Air Force will highlight its ability to rapidly punish the enemy, dominate operational environment from the outset and decisively influence the course of operations by transforming tactical actions into strategic outcomes."

It said the exercise will also showcase glimpses of how IAF plays a crucial role in humanitarian assistance and disaster management by providing rapid airlift and rescue and evacuation from conflict zones within the country as well as abroad.

"Full spectrum operations by fighter, transport and helicopter platforms including Tejas, Rafale, Jaguar, Mirage-2000, Su-30MKI, Hawk, MiG-29, C-130J, C-295, C-17, Chetak, ALH MK-IV, Mi-17 IV, LCH, Apache, Chinook and Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) will be executed," it said.

The exercise will also feature advanced weapon systems such as Short Range Loitering Munitions (SRLM), Akash, SpyDer and Counter Unmanned Aerial Systems (CUAS), carrying out day, dusk and night missions, it added. "Vayu Shakti will also highlight the success of Operation Sindoor, reaffirming IAF's primacy in airspace dominance, long-range precision targeting,

multi-domain operations and its ability to deliver decisive effects with indigenous platforms guided by the vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat,'" it said.

More than 120 air assets, comprising 77 fighter jets, which include Rafale, Su-30MKI, MiG-29, LCA Tejas, Jaguar, Mirage-2000, Apache, Chinook and LCH Prachand, Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH), among helicopters, and eight transport aircraft will be part of the exercise, with C-295 making its debut in the drill, IAF officers said.

Wg Cdr Ajit B Wasane, who conducted a presentation on the exercise, said about 12,000 kg of explosives will be detonated during the course of the exercise.



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● DELHI TRIAL COURTS: PENDENCY RISES BY ONE LAKH EVERY YEAR

Case pendency soars, marginal rise in number of judges

Nirbhay Thakur

New Delhi, February 11

A MAGISTRATE court judge in Karkardooma Court is on leave for 40 days until February-end. With 40 cases listed for each day, most are being adjourned and litigants are being given other dates.

This magistrate court is not alone. Across Delhi's trial courts, 31 out of over 300 female judges are on long leaves. While 15 are on six-month maternity leave, another 13 are on child-care leave for periods spanning between one and six months.

Two male judges, on the

other hand, are on paternity leave for about half-a-month and two others are on month-long earned or compensatory leave. Overall, about 5% of the 736 current judges are on long leaves.

Currently, a staggering 161 judicial posts lie vacant. While the sanctioned strength of judges in the city's trial court as of 2025 is 897, the working strength is 736, as per the National Judicial Data Grid.

In 2014-end, the sanctioned strength in Delhi's trial courts was 793. At the same time, in the last decade, the difference between newly instituted and

● Cases vs Judges

Year	Pending cases	Working strength	Average no. of cases per judge
2005	4.7 lakh	280	1,670
2025*	16 lakh	736	2,170

*Sanctioned strength of judges

897

disposed of cases has risen by over one lakh every year on an average, while working strength remained stagnant.

From 2018 to 2025, the difference between the cases instituted and disposed of was 1.3 lakh a year on an average. In 2019, the sanctioned strength of judges was 758. Currently there

are 16 lakh pending cases in the city's trial courts and each judge on average has a pendency of 2,170 cases.

Reports from the Capital's district courts also show that the number of pending cases in January 2005 was 4.7 lakh. At this time, the working strength of judges was close to 280 in three

court complexes — meaning each judge had a pendency of an average of 1,670 cases.

Delhi has seven court complexes and each judge, on an average, hears 1.3 times the number of cases they heard two decades ago as the working strength has not kept up.

Session courts in Delhi are hearing a handful of cases per day, but magistrate courts have cause lists, which schedule up to 80 cases a day at times. The picture is even more grim when one looks at digital traffic courts and cheque bounce courts, which sometimes hear up to 300 cases a day.

IT Act, conspiracy charges in case over ex-Army chief book

Delhi Police seek clarification from Penguin over circulation of the unpublished book on social media; they are investigating which version of the book Rahul was seen holding in the Lok Sabha

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

The Special Cell of the Delhi Police has registered a case under the Information Technology Act and provisions related to criminal conspiracy under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita in connection with the alleged leak of content from the unpublished memoir, *Four Stars of Destiny*, of former Army chief General M.M. Naravane (retd).

The police on Wednesday issued notice to Penguin Random House India seeking clarifications over the circulation of the unpublished book on social media.

A senior officer said an FIR was lodged on February 3, taking *suo motu* cognisance of reports about the circulation of the book on social media.

Investigators are probing how the content entered the public domain



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi shows a copy of *Four Stars of Destiny* during the Budget Session of Parliament in New Delhi. PTI

when formal publication clearance had not been granted.

Tracing source

Preliminary inquiries have indicated that a PDF copy of a manuscript bearing the same title is available on multiple websites. Some online marketing platforms have displayed the book's cover, suggest-

ing it is available for sale. The police are verifying the authenticity of these materials and tracing their source.

Internal leak

Another senior officer confirmed that the publisher and General Naravane were aware of the manuscript's contents.

Investigators are exa-

mining whether the material may have been accessed during the submission and editorial processes. Given the number of personnel involved in publishing workflows, the possibility of an internal leak has not been ruled out, leading to the addition of criminal conspiracy charges.

The police are also investigating which version of the book Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was seen holding in the Lok Sabha and how he may have accessed it, if at all. The officer added that the probe could extend to multiple individuals, though no details have been disclosed regarding questioning so far due to the sensitive nature of the case.

Citing potential implications for national security and official secrets, Penguin Random House and associated platforms are likely to be examined as part of the ongoing probe.

Vande Mataram to be played before National Anthem: govt.

Fresh set of guidelines issued to States and government bodies but no formal statement made by the Centre; it says when the National Song is sung or played, the audience shall stand to attention

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union government has said in a set of instructions to the States and government bodies that the National Song, *Vande Mataram*, should be sung or played before the National Anthem, *Jana Gana Mana*, when both the songs are played at an event.

The fresh set of guidelines were uploaded on the Union Home Ministry website on February 6, but no formal announcement or a statement was issued.

It states that whenever the official version of the National Song, around 3.1 minutes long, is sung or played, the audience shall stand to attention. "However, when in the course of a newsreel or documentary, the National Song is played as a part of the film, it is not expected of the audience to stand as standing is bound to interrupt the exhibition of the film and would create disorder and confusion rather than add to the dignity of the National Song," it said.

The Ministry said the instructions were being issued for general informa-

Setting the tone

Key guidelines for singing and playing the National Song

- *Vande Mataram* should be sung or played before the National Anthem when both are performed at an event

- The audience must stand at attention when the official version, around 3 minutes 10 seconds long, is sung or played

- Standing is not required if it is played as part of a newsreel or documentary



Proud moment: A tableau celebrating 150 years of *Vande Mataram* during the Republic Day Parade. PTI

- The official version shall be accompanied by mass singing during unfurling of the National Flag, cultural occasions, or ceremonial functions other than parades

tion and guidance on the official version of the song, the occasions on which it is to be played or sung, and about the need for paying respect to the song by observance of proper decorum on such occasions.

It said that *Vande Mataram*, written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, is known as the "National Song, which is to be sung on arrival and departure of the President at formal state functions and other functions organised by the government, immediately before and after the President addresses the nation

over All India Radio and television, on arrival and departure of the Governor or Lieutenant-Governor at formal state functions, when the National Flag is brought on parade, any other occasion for which special orders are issued by the Government of India".

When a band plays it

"When the National Song is played by a band, the song will be preceded by a roll of drums to assist the audience to know that it is going to be played, unless there is some other specific indication that the Na-

tional Song is about to be played," the Ministry said.

The official version shall be played accompanied by mass singing on the unfurling of the National Flag, on cultural occasions or ceremonial functions other than parades. The mass singing could be arranged by having a choir of adequate size, suitably stationed, which would be trained to coordinate its singing with the band.

It may be sung on occasions which, though not strictly ceremonial, are nevertheless invested with significance because of the presence of Ministers and others, the Ministry said.

"It is not possible to give an exhaustive list of occasions on which the singing (as distinct from playing) of official version of the National Song can be permitted. But there is no objection to the singing of the National Song accompanied by mass singing so long as it is done with due respect as a salutation to the motherland and proper decorum is maintained," the Ministry said.

"In all schools, the day's work may begin with community singing of the National Song..." it added.

Sitharaman counters LoP on farmers, food security & data

Deeptiman Tiwary

New Delhi, February 11

HOURS AFTER Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi targeted the government over the India-US trade deal, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, while defending provisions of the Union Budget, hit back at the Congress, saying it was the UPA that had “surrendered” India’s interests at the WTO and put farmers and the food security system at risk.

Replying to the discussion in Lok Sabha on the Budget, Sitharaman said, “They are talking about selling India and In-

PARLIAMENT P6



OPP PARTIES SAY BUDGET ONLY FOR PRIVILEGED

dian farmers. That Modi ji has surrendered. Modi ji will always stand steadfast in the interest of the nation. I will tell you who

sold the nation. In 2013, Congress signed a WTO agreement in Bali. There were two issues, trade facilitation and public stock holding of grains. Without securing India’s interest in public stockholding of grains, they signed the trade facilitation agreement.”

She said this would have severely constrained procurement and the public distribution system. “This meant that no procurement could happen from any Indian farmer post 2017. And we couldn’t give anything to the poor through the ration shops,” she said.

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Rahul slams Govt

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said a privilege notice will be moved against Gandhi. "We are going to file a privilege notice against Rahul Gandhi for misleading the House and making baseless statements," he said.

Quoting House rules, Rijiju said when a member intends to make a serious charge against another member, then one has to give notice and substantiate the allegation.

Gandhi said he will authenticate what he said. Stepping out of the House, he told reporters: "There are (US) Department of Justice files on Epstein files naming (Union Minister) Hardeep Puri and (industrialist) Anil Ambani. In an ongoing case against Adani, summons have been issued. The Government of India has not responded for the last 18 months. There is direct pressure

on the Prime Minister. The main thing is that no PM would do this in a normal situation. In a normal situation, no PM would do what has happened in terms of data, farmers, defence and energy security. Someone would do this only when there is a certain choke on him."

Earlier, in the House, when there was an uproar over Gandhi's remarks, Rijiju said he should not use "abusive language".

In targeting the government, Gandhi addressed US President Donald Trump over Indian data. "You (Trump) want to protect the dollar; we are your friends. And we appreciate you and will help you protect the dollar. The biggest asset for that is the Indian people. Second thing we would say is, President Trump, if you want access to this data, you have to talk to us like equals,

not your servants," he said.

"Our energy security is our energy security. Third is we understand your voter base is the farmer. But we will also protect our farmers. But the main thing I am saying is that the INDIA bloc government will go and say data is our biggest strength. We will go there as equals. And we will not be made equal to Pakistan," he said.

He said that under the deal, US imports will go up from 46 billion dollars to 146 billion dollars. "This is absurd. And they have no commitment to us... Our tariff has gone up, while theirs has come down from 16% to 0%," he said.

"We have buckled up on tariffs, handed out our data, given up control over digital trade rules; no data localisation; free data flow to the USA; limit on digital tax; no source code disclosure and 20-year tax holiday. The most valuable asset that India has and will ever have has been handed over," he said.

US deal raises questions. PM must take a leaf out of Manmohan Singh's book

TRADE DIPLOMACY is a game of chess. The real world of trade negotiations rarely conforms to David Ricardo's theory of comparative advantage where the French sell their wine to England and the British sell their cloth to France. Trade negotiations are also about asserting national power and security. The Nobel Prize-winning economist Thomas Schelling famously told the United States Congress a half-century ago, "trade policy is national security policy".

It is, therefore, entirely understandable that President Donald Trump chose to weaponise tariffs in his quest to reassert American power. US allies in Europe and Asia quickly capitulated, but China, Brazil and India had held out. It would seem from the manner in which India has agreed to end the impasse that it has also capitulated.

In matters pertaining to national security, a government should not only be doing the right thing, but should also be seen to be doing the right thing. Mere assertion and ham-handed messaging cannot substitute for clear statements of intent and purpose. Since Parliament is in session, Prime Minister Narendra Modi ought to have made a statement in the Lok Sabha rather than allow a Tweedledum-Tweedledee buck-passing performance by the ministers of commerce and external affairs. On matters of international relations, economic or political, the buck stops with the PM.

Returning from his visit to Washington, DC in July 2005 Prime Minister Manmohan Singh chose to address Parliament, offering a detailed account of his discussions with President George Bush. On the matter

of energy security, the core of the US-India civil nuclear energy agreement, Prime Minister Singh told Parliament: "That India's quest for energy security is an essential component of our vision for our development was a significant theme of my talks. I elaborated the imperative need for India to have unhindered access to all sources of energy, including nuclear energy, if we are to maintain and accelerate our rate of economic growth. I am pleased to state that the US understood our position in regard to our securing adequate and affordable energy supplies, from all sources."

For three years, Parliament was allowed to discuss in minute detail all aspects of the nuclear deal. Despite that, opposition political parties, including the Bharatiya Janata Party, voted against the deal. Many even in the Congress party were unhappy with the deal. It was Singh's transparency that earned him the trust of the Indian electorate and secured him a second term in office in 2009.

It is most unfortunate that the Modi government has fudged the issue on the final agreement with the US, with Trump making claims about a Russian oil conditionality that India has neither rejected nor accepted. It was left to the foreign secretary, Vikram Misri, to make a typically diplomatic statement that can be interpreted in various ways. Some have claimed that this was Indian tact and cleverness in the face of Trump's cowboy bravado. Unfortunately, it has come across as Indian duplicity and sophistry masquerading



SANJAYA
BARU

as Chanakyan cleverness.

Rather than celebrate the trade deal as a great achievement, the Modi government ought to have stated honestly that this was the best it could do under the circumstances to safeguard livelihoods in export-oriented sectors. India walked out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) using the language of national interest when, in fact, it was defending livelihoods in sectors that were unwilling to expose themselves to global competition.

The same motivation shaped the trade deal with Trump. It is a different matter that the Modi government did not think about the livelihood of Punjab's farmers, small and medium enterprises and traders when it closed the gates on trade with Pakistan. But then, the merchants of Surat and the shrimp farmers of the Coromandel Coast seem to have more clout.

The India-US trade deal may be the best under the circumstances, but it is not a favour done to India. It is a price India has agreed to pay to keep the US on its side. That is how the world will view the deal. This is not the first time that India has had to bend under pressure from Big Powers. But this is the first time such bending is being portrayed as a great achievement.

What Trump has delivered to India is a reality check. After humiliating Indian political leadership with jokes and jibes and what seemed like veiled threats — "I don't want to end his (Modi's) political career" —

Trump has deliberately interpreted the trade deal as Indian capitulation by explicitly linking it to ending Indian purchase of Russian oil.

That the government has been able to orchestrate support from courtiers in the think-tank and diplomatic community is understandable. *Mea culpa*. It too have had to conduct that orchestration in time in government. However, never during the negotiation of the civil nuclear deal did American leadership mock Indian leadership. Even when India temporarily turned off the taps on Iranian oil imports to please the American Jewish lobby, it was done voluntarily and was a temporary gesture aimed at securing a permanent benefit — the recognition of India as a nuclear weapons state.

Today there is no clarity on the longevity of the trade deal. Other countries, too, have been held on a short leash with uncertainty about the near future. Will Indian support to the US on various fronts and various causes be tested on a daily basis? If there is a war in the Gulf following an attack on Iran and if that disrupts oil supply to India from the Gulf, would India still be punished for accessing Russian oil?

There are still far too many questions about the deal and the government has understandably called it a "Framework for an Interim Agreement". It is best that the Prime Minister comes clean and offers his understanding of where India stands on its external economic policies vis-à-vis the US and BRICS countries rather than fudge issues and pretend to be Chanakyan.

Baru is a writer and former editor,
The Financial Express

Trump and Netanyahu meet as Iran nuclear diplomacy tops agenda

Reuters

Washington, February 11

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump hosted Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House on Wednesday, with the Israeli prime minister expected to press him to widen US talks with Iran to include limits on Tehran's missile arsenal and other security threats beyond its nuclear program.

In his seventh meeting with Trump since the president returned to office nearly 13 months ago, Netanyahu was looking to influence the next round of US discussions with Iran following nuclear negotiations held in Oman last Friday.

Trump has threatened strikes on Iran if no agreement is reached, while Tehran has vowed to retaliate, stoking fears of a wider war. He has repeatedly voiced support for a

secure Israel, a longstanding US ally and arch-foe of Iran.

In media interviews on Tuesday, Trump reiterated his warning, saying that while he believes Iran wants a deal, he would do "something very tough" if it refused.

Trump told Fox Business that a good deal with Iran would mean "no nuclear weapons, no missiles," without elaborating. He also told Axios he was considering sending a second aircraft carrier strike group as part of a major US buildup near Iran.

Israel fears that the US might pursue a narrow nuclear deal that does not include restrictions on Iran's ballistic missile program or an end to Iranian support for armed proxies such as Hamas and Hezbollah, according to people familiar with the matter.

Iran will not yield in face of aggression: Pezeshkian

Stanly Johny

Crowds thronged Tehran and other Iranian cities on Wednesday to mark the 47th anniversary of the Islamic revolution that toppled the U.S.-backed Pahlavi monarchy, and to show solidarity with the government at a time when Iran faces the threat of another war, with the U.S. shoring up military presence in the region.

On February 9, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei urged Iranians to take part in “street marches” to demonstrate national power and drive “the enemy to despair”. On Wednesday, state TV broadcast visuals of demonstrators filling the streets, carrying portraits of Mr. Khamenei and Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Islamic Republic’s founder, along with Iranian and Palestinian flags, and chanting slogans such as ‘Death to America’ and ‘Death to Israel’. State media claimed that huge crowds poured into Tehran’s Azadi Square and 1,400 cities and towns.

Resolute stance

“From the very first days of the Revolution, the enemies tried to destroy our fledgling movement through actions such as creating division and staging coups,” President Ma-



Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during the 47th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution in Tehran on Wednesday. REUTERS

soud Pezeshkian, a reformist, said while addressing a rally at Azad Square. He said Iran was not seeking nuclear weapons and was ready for verification, but added that it would not fold under pressure.

“Our Iran will not yield in the face of aggression, but we are continuing dialogue with all our strength with neighbouring countries in order to establish peace and tranquillity in the region,” Mr. Pezeshkian said. “Our country, Iran, will not yield to their excessive demands,” he added, per state media.

High tensions

This year’s anniversary celebrations are being held amid high tensions between Iran and the U.S. In the first week of January, Iran witnessed widespread anti-government protests and riots, which were put down by security person-

nel. According to Iranian authorities, at least 3,117 people were killed in violent protests and state crackdown.

The U.S. and Iran held talks in Muscat on February 6, but there was no breakthrough. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who ordered air strikes on Iran in June 2025, triggered the 12-day war, is now in Washington to meet Mr. Trump. They are expected to discuss Iran among other topics.

Mr. Trump, in an interview on Tuesday, said he is considering sending a second aircraft carrier to West Asia to prepare for military action against Iran should negotiations fail. “Either we will make a deal, or we will have to do something very tough like last time,” said Mr. Trump, referring to the U.S. air strikes on Iran’s nuclear facilities on June 22, 2025.

INVESTIGATORS IDENTIFIED A FEMALE SUSPECT BUT WOULD NOT RELEASE A NAME

At least 9 dead, 25 hurt as shooter opens fire at Canada high school

Associated Press

British Columbia, February 11

CANADIANS WERE in shock Wednesday after one of the country's deadliest mass shootings as authorities said seven people were killed at a school in remote northern British Columbia and two others were killed at a nearby home. A woman that police believed was the shooter was found dead, apparently from a "self-inflicted wound."

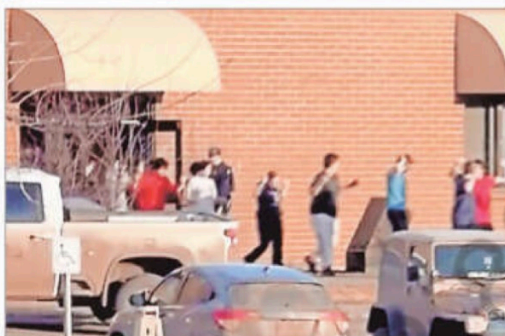
Royal Canadian Mounted Police said more than 25 people were wounded in Tuesday's shooting, including two who were airlifted for medical care with life-threatening injuries.

Tumbler Ridge in the Canadian Rockies is more than 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) northeast of Vancouver, near the provincial border with Alberta. The provincial government website lists Tumbler Ridge Secondary School as having 175 students from grades 7 to 12.

"Parents, grandparents, sisters, brothers in Tumbler Ridge will wake up without someone they love. The nation mourns with you and Canada stands by you," an emotional Prime Minister Mark Carney said as he arrived in Parliament.

Carney's office said he was suspending a planned trip to Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Munich, Germany. He had been set to announce a long-awaited defense industrial strategy in Halifax on Wednesday before heading to Europe for the Munich Security Conference.

Police found six people



A video grab shows students exiting the Tumbler Ridge School after the deadly shootings, in British Columbia, Canada, on Tuesday. AP

dead, RCMP Superintendent Ken Floyd said. A seventh person died while being transported to a hospital, and two more were found dead at a residence the authorities believe was connected to the attack. A suspect appeared to have died of a "self-inflicted injury."

Floyd told reporters that investigators had identified a female suspect but would not release a name, and that the shooter's motive remained unclear. He said police are investigating the connection between the shooter and the victims.

Tumbler Ridge Mayor Darryl Krakowka said it was "devastating" to learn how many had died in the community of 2,700, which he called a "big family."

"I broke down," Krakowka said. "I have lived here for 18 years. I probably know every one of the victims."

• Canada's worst mass murder incidents

APRIL 2025: Eleven people were killed and dozens injured in Vancouver when a man with a history of mental health issues rammed an SUV through a crowd at a Filipino community festival.

SEPTEMBER 2022: A stabbing spree left 10 people dead and injured 18 others, spanning 13 sites across the two tiny communities of James Smith Cree Nation and Weldon in rural Saskatchewan.

APRIL 2020: A gunman, who at one point masqueraded as a police officer, killed at least 16 people in Nova Scotia

JULY 2018: A man walked down a busy Toronto street, shooting randomly into restaurants. He killed two people and wounded 13.

LEADERS REACT TO CANADA SHOOTING



"My prayers and deepest condolences are with the families who have lost loved ones to these horrific acts of violence"

MARK CARNEY,
PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA



"Deeply shocked by the horrendous shooting in Canada. India stands in solidarity with the people of Canada."

NARENDRA MODI,
PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA



"Our thoughts are with the families and friends of the victims, the injured, and the entire educational community."

EMMANUEL MACRON,
FRENCH PRESIDENT



"When children are killed, no one should remain indifferent. Such tragedies should never happen anywhere, in any country in the world."

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY,
UKRAINE PRESIDENT



The people of California stand with our neighbours in Canada in grief and solidarity.

GAVIN NEWSOM,
CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR

BNP accuses Jamaat-e-Islami of trying to buy votes before polling

The accusation was made after a Jamaat leader was caught with nearly 74 lakh taka (₹55 lakh) in Saidpur airport in north Bangladesh; the Islamist party said the incident was a 'staged drama' to project the party in negative light ahead of the vote

Kallol Bhattacharjee
DHAKA

Hours before polling, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on Wednesday accused Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) of attempting to sabotage the election process by using money power.

The accusation was made after a Jamaat leader was caught with nearly 74 lakh taka (₹55 lakh) in Saidpur airport in north Bangladesh.

JeI said the incident was a "staged drama" by law enforcement agencies.

"At a time when all banks, financial institutions, business transac-



Poll fiasco: Residents walking past a campaign banner of a Jamaat-e-Islami candidate in Bangladesh's Jessore district. AFP

tions and activities are closed to prevent illegal financial dealings in the election, naturally, questions are arising everywhere - from what source did

the top leader of Jamaat in one district obtain this vast amount of money, for what purpose, to whom was it intended for, and why was he travelling from Dhaka to

Thakurgaon on the eve of election," said Mahdi Amin, spokesperson of the BNP's Election Steering Committee, alleging that there have been reports of Jamaat leaders distributing cash in multiple other constituencies including Dhaka-15, where JeI's chief Shafigur Rahman is contesting the election.

The BNP and Jamaat, which were coalition partners during 2001-06, are pitted against each other in the absence of the Awami League, whose activities remain banned.

Over the past several days, the two parties have clashed on multiple occasions and on Tuesday in

Bogura, a BNP leader was injured after he was allegedly attacked by Jamaat supporters. Mr. Amin accused JeI of collecting bKash financial transfer numbers and Voter IDs of citizens and planning to hand over cash to voters. "The Saidpur Airport incident cannot be viewed as an isolated event," said Mr. Amin. He added that "a particular party" is accumulating "domestic weapons" and intimidating voters.

Jamaat held a press conference soon after the incident was reported and said concerted attempts were being made to project the party in negative light.

SKY IS THE LIMIT: LAVROV ON TIES WITH INDIA

'Nobody except Trump said India won't buy Russian oil'

Divya A

New Delhi, February 11

STATING THAT "sky is the limit" as far as India-Russia relations go, Russia Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Wednesday said that except US President Donald Trump, nobody else has declared that India will stop buying Russian oil.

Responding to a lawmaker in the State Duma (Lower House of Russian Parliament), Lavrov said, "You mentioned that Donald Trump announced India's agreement to no longer purchase Russian oil. I have not heard such a statement from anyone else, including Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi and other Indian leaders."

As India kicks off its BRICS presidency this year with the first Sherpa meeting held in New Delhi recently, Lavrov said that External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar told the first meeting of Sherpas that energy security will be one of the top items of the summit that Russian President Vladimir Putin is expected to attend.

A new meeting between the leaders of the two countries is expected to take place on the sidelines of the BRICS summit, Lavrov told the Russian Parliament. "Russia is ready to go as far in relations with India as New Delhi would desire", he



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the State Duma in Moscow on Wednesday. AP

said, adding, "the sky is the limit".

Speaking during the Government Hour of the State Duma, Lavrov said Putin's state visit to India in December 2025 had further enriched relations between Moscow and New Delhi.

On January 1, India formally assumed the chairmanship of BRICS, a 10-member bloc comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, along with five new members. The first meeting of BRICS Sherpas and Sous Sherpas under India's Chairship was held on February 9-10 in New Delhi. It was chaired by Secretary (Economic Relations) Sudhakar Dalela, India's BRICS Sherpa, supported by

Joint Secretary (Multilateral Economic Relations) Shambhu L Hakki, India's BRICS Sous Sherpa.

BRICS Sherpas and senior officials from Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and UAE participated in the meeting. The BRICS Sherpas and Country Representatives jointly called on the External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday. During the meeting, India presented the priorities for its Chairship in 2026 under the theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability".

Several Ministries and government departments pres-

ented India's priorities and proposed activities under various BRICS thematic areas, including cooperation in health, agriculture, labour and employment, disaster risk reduction, environment, climate change, energy, innovation, ICT, security and counter-terrorism, economic and financial domains, as per a statement by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

Further, there was a productive exchange of views on institutional development of the BRICS grouping, the MEA said on Wednesday.

In line with India's approach of having a "people-centric" Chairship, presentations on cooperation in sports, youth connect, cultural engagements, BRICS Academic Forum, BRICS Think Tank Council, BRICS Civil Forum as well as the BRICS Business Council and the BRICS Women's Business Alliance were also made.

The representatives of the BRICS Partner countries participated in the opening session of the meeting. India's BRICS Chairship builds on the cooperative activities carried out under previous BRICS Chairships, and shares their perspectives in advancing priorities of resilience, innovation, cooperation and sustainability, and people-centric approach, MEA said.

(WITH PTI INPUTS)