

# Voting for all 234 T.N. seats, Phase 1 in West Bengal today

**The Hindu Bureau**

CHENNAI/KOLKATA

People will line up on Thursday to vote across 234 Assembly constituencies in Tamil Nadu and 152 in the first phase of polling in West Bengal.

For Tamil Nadu's over 5.73 crore electors, 75,064 polling stations have been set up in 33,133 locations. Electronic voting machines, including 1.06 lakh ballot units, 75,064 control units, and 75,064 VVPAT units, will be deployed across the State.

Each polling station will have two cameras and the proceedings will be web-cast live. Digital platforms, including social media apps, television feeds, and handles of social media influencers will be monitored, officials said.

Alliances led by the DMK and AIADMK are in the fray, with the Naam Tamilar Katchi and Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam looking to

## People's choice

Polling will be held for all 234 seats in Tamil Nadu and 152 of 294 seats in West Bengal today

Results on May 4

### Tamil Nadu

Polling stations

75,064

#### No. of electors

Male	2,80,30,658
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Female	2,93,04,905
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Third gender	7,728
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Total  
5,73,43,291

### West Bengal ■ Phase I

Polling stations

44,378

#### No. of electors

Male	1,84,99,496
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Female	1,75,77,210
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Third gender	465
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Total  
3,60,77,171

PHOTO: C. VENKATACHALAPATHY

punch above their weight in the election.

In West Bengal, the Election Commission has deployed more than 2,400 companies of central armed police personnel to ensure free and fair polls.

Around 3.60 crore voters are eligible to cast their votes in this phase and polling will be held across 44,378 stations; 59,777 ballot units, 59,980 control units, and 64,466 VVPAT machines will be deployed.

The elections are being held after a special intensive revision of electoral rolls reduced the number of voters in West Bengal by almost 12% while around 68 lakh voters were removed from the rolls in Tamil Nadu.

The remaining 142 seats in West Bengal will vote on April 29, and the votes will be counted on May 4.

**MORE REPORTS ON**

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152 SEATS GO TO POLLS IN FIRST PHASE

# The Big Bengal Exclusion: 34 lakh appeals, only 139 are cleared to vote today

Tribunals  
come out with  
supplementary  
list for first phase  
as ordered by SC



DECISION  
2026

WEST BENGAL

Atri Mitra & Damini Nath  
Kolkata, April 22

THIRTY-FOUR lakh applications regarding the voters' list pending before them, the 19 tribunals in West Bengal have managed to clear a total of 139 names for inclusion, ahead of polling for the first phase in the state on Thursday.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) published the lists with these names after the Supreme Court ordered the tribunals to consider the applications till two days before the polling dates of April 23 and 29, respectively, and release supplementary lists.



Polling personnel in Murshidabad district, Wednesday. PARTHA PAUL

Business as Usual  
By EP UNNY

Do step out and vote.  
Your votes include  
a million proxy  
' votes.



## Meet one of 139: 'All are asking how... if people want, I will not go to vote'

Ravik Bhattacharya  
Murshidabad, April 22

IT MAY be reasonable to expect voters deleted from the electoral rolls to be happy if they find their names back on the list. But Injamul Islam is not one of them.

Injamul, the chairperson of Dhulian Municipality in Murshidabad district and a Tri-



Injamul Islam is chairperson of Dhulian Municipality

namool Congress (TMC) leader, on Wednesday appeared to be apologetic and almost angry after it emerged that he was one of the 139 people back on the voter list.

The names of the 139 were cleared by tribunals ahead of polling in the first phase of the

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DECISION, PAGE 6

# The Bengal Exclusion

While announcing the release of the supplementary list for the April 23 phase on Wednesday morning, the ECI did not give out the complete list of names, or how many applications the tribunals were considering. Bengal Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Agrawal, however, told *The Indian Express* that the list comprised 139 names. Sources said these were cleared by the tribunals after considering around 650 cases.

Apart from the 139, at least some more names among the 650-odd cases will be able to vote as they had been cleared in a previous supplementary list but had applied to the tribunals due to some “concerns”, sources said.

Announced after the adjudication process marked out 27.10 lakh names for deletion due to “logical discrepancies”, the tribunals took a long time getting off the ground – despite the narrow window ahead of the polls – with confusion over

their operations continuing to persist. The ECI said earlier that the tribunals were hearing 34 lakh applications, including those seeking exclusion of names in the voting list.

With the ECI not sharing a comprehensive list, voters need to access its website, and go through separate addition and deletion lists as per their Assembly and booth number. Voters who don't figure in either of the two lists in their Assembly seat or booth can use their voter ID number to search.

Another supplementary list will be released by tribunals ahead of the April 29 voting.

The Supreme Court had invoked its special powers under Article 142 of the Constitution to direct that voters declared eligible by tribunals up to two days before polling be allowed to vote in the Bengal Assembly elections.

*The Indian Express* earlier went through at least two

dozen appeals filed by applicants through their lawyers before tribunals. The grounds in these appeals included not receiving a notice or not getting a hearing before being struck off the rolls; apprehension that the documents submitted by them were not taken into account by the judicial officers adjudicating on their eligibility; and being served notices for “logical discrepancies” that did not apply to them.

Tarique Quasimuddin, an advocate at the Calcutta High Court whose chambers have helped around 300 deleted electors file appeals, said many of the appellants had passports. “What we have experienced is that in some cases, Booth Level Officers did not advise the electors properly. They told them only one document was enough. This did not give them an opportunity to establish their claim,” he said.

Imran Zaki, a Kolkata-based businessman and educationist, has said the same in his appeal. He said that as advised by his Booth Level Officer, he submitted his passport as proof,

but his name was sent for adjudication without notice and then deleted. He suspected his documents were not placed before the judicial officer concerned.

“In the past I have flown from Europe to be able to vote, but this time I won't be able to,” Zaki wrote in his appeal.

Durri Bhalla, a cookbook author, also wrote in her appeal that her documents were not placed before the judicial officer. She said she was called, along with her husband and daughter, to submit additional documents during a hearing, and that while she brought along all, including passport, the officials said they only needed one. Her name was later struck off the rolls, even as her husband's and daughter's were not.

Kolkata resident Rafiqa Khatoon, 83, said she submitted a copy of her passport. Her appeal said she got a notice for a mismatch with her father's name, though her own name was in the 2002 roll. “My father died in 1973, so the question of mismatch can't arise,” she wrote.

# Shutdowns by ethnic groups throw life out of gear in most parts of Manipur

**Press Trust of India**

IMPHAL

Shutdowns called by various ethnic organisations severely affected life in 12 of the 16 districts of Manipur on Wednesday, officials said.

All five valley districts remained affected on the fourth day of a five-day shutdown called by a Joint Action Committee (JAC) protesting the April 7 bomb attack at Tronglaobi in Bishnupur district, in which two children were killed.

Road blockades were reported from several areas, including Sagolband and Patsoi in Imphal West dis-



**Tense times:** A 13-hour total shutdown being observed by Zomi frontal organisations in Churachandpur on Wednesday. ANI

trict, as part of the agitation, officials said.

Life in Naga-inhabited areas across six hill districts was also affected on the second day of a three-day total shutdown called by the United Naga Coun-

cil. The shutdown was against the April 18 killing of two Tangkhul Naga persons in an ambush at TM Kasom in Ukhrul district.

Supporters of the shutdown also blocked roads in Noney district and Yain-

gangpokpi in Imphal East, disrupting the movement of Central security forces, officials said.

In Churachandpur district, a 13-hour shutdown called by different organisations under the aegis of the Zomi Coordination Committee affected daily life.

The protest sought justice for BJP MLA Vungzagin Valte. Valte had suffered serious injuries in a mob attack at the onset of the ethnic violence in May 2023 and had been undergoing treatment. His condition later worsened, and he died at a private hospital in Gurugram in February this year.



## ***INS Nireekshak* arrives in Colombo for bilateral exercise**

*INS Nireekshak*, the Indian Navy's Diving Support and Submarine Rescue Vessel, arrived in Colombo on Tuesday to participate in the fourth edition of the India-Sri Lanka Diving Exercise (DIVEX 2026), scheduled from April 21.

According to the Indian Navy, the bilateral exercise will be conducted over a week and brings together diving teams from both navies to undertake specialised underwater operations. The engagement aims at enhancing interoperability, operational cohesion, and the exchange of best practices between the two maritime forces. The vessel was accorded a ceremonial welcome by the Sri Lankan Navy.

HOURS AFTER CEASEFIRE EXTENSION

# India-bound ship among three attacked by Iran in Hormuz

Vessel signalling Mundra port as destination among two seized by IRGC

Sukalp Sharma  
New Delhi, April 22

HOURS AFTER US President Donald Trump announced a unilateral ceasefire extension to make room for a potential second round of talks with Tehran,

Iran's Revolutionary Guards Wednesday fired at three container vessels in the strategic Strait of Hormuz and seized two of them, including one which had indicated India as its destination.

Liberia-flagged Epaminondas and Panama-flagged MSC Francesca were in the custody of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and were being taken to Iran, the Associated Press reported, quoting

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Iran's Revolutionary Guards displays a ballistic missile in Tehran. AP

## India may play a role in bringing peace... can't rule it out, says Rajnath

Amrita Nayak Dutta  
New Delhi, April 22

SAYING THAT "everything has its time", Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has said that the possibility of India playing a role in initiating peace in the ongoing West Asia conflict can-

not be ruled out.

Singh made these comments during an interaction with the Indian community on Tuesday in Berlin, where he is on a three-day official visit.

Responding to a question on India's possible role in

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# Hormuz

Iranian state television. Panama-flagged Euphoria was said to be stranded following the attack.

According to vessel tracking data from maritime data and intelligence firm MarineTraffic, Epaminondas had indicated **Mundra port in Gujarat as its destination, while MSC Francesca had signalled it was headed to the Sri Lankan port of Hambantota. The third container ship, Euphoria, had indicated Jeddah in Saudi Arabia as its destination.**

Indicative destination ports that ships broadcast may not be the final or the actual intended destinations, and can change mid-voyage.

The attack on the container ships came close on the heels of US forces seizing a few Iranian oil tankers that were attempting to slip through its naval blockade over the past few days. The US

has also claimed that its forces in the region have forced the diversion of around 30 ships attempting to either leave or enter Iranian ports.

Last Saturday, Iranian gunboats fired at two India-flagged ships as they tried to exit the Strait of Hormuz. The vessels, oil tanker Sanmar Herald and bulk carrier Jag Arnav, turned back into the Persian Gulf after coming under fire.

Details about the volume and nature of cargo on the Mundra-bound Epaminondas were not immediately available. MarineTraffic data indicated that the ship departed from the Jebel Ali port in the UAE on March 4, but remained stuck in the Persian Gulf following the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

According to international shipping databases, the container ship is managed and operated by Greece-based companies. Epaminondas, a Post-Panamax container ship, has a deadweight tonnage (DWT) of about 95,000 tonnes.

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# Rajnath

initiating peace in West Asia, he said: “Bharat ne koshish ki apni taraf se. Lekin aap jaante hai ki kabhi kabhi kahin koi crisis chal rahi hoti hai, kahin koi samasya rahti hai. Sabka ek samay hua karta hai. Ho sakta hai kal ka woh samay aa jaye jab ko Bharat usme apna role play kare, usko success bhi haasil ho jaye. Iss possibility ko rule out nahi kiya jaa sakta.”

“India has tried on its part. But you know that sometimes there is an ongoing crisis, a situation. Everything has its time. It is possible that tomorrow, the time may come when India plays its role in this and achieves success as well. We cannot rule out this possibility.”)

“The PM has appealed to both sides to end the war. Our PM has a very balanced approach to diplomatic matters,” he said. “The way India is moving, you must have seen that in the Strait of Hormuz, no ship from any country was able to pass through. If anyone managed to pass through seven-eight ships, it was India,” he said.

He said neither the US nor Iran considers India an enemy, and this was because of India’s balanced approach towards the crisis.

Singh said the PM had discussed the matter with US President Donald Trump and underlined the need for a solution.

He said India was the least affected country in the West Asia crisis. “Whether it is crude oil, energy, or LPG, and other things, even today, we have enough stocks. The PM has made a committee of a few senior ministers under my chairmanship. I attend it every week, and I review it regularly. There is no particular problem. There are some forces that have tried to create a crisis. But they have also been taught a lesson,” he said.

He also noted that Indian nationals stranded abroad had been evacuated.

Referring to Operation Sindoor, Singh said, “India has never attacked any country on its own, but if a neighbour tries to create trouble, then ‘dot, dot, dot’. All neighbours are fine, only one is troublesome.”

He said that while India earlier depended on imports for defence requirements, “now, instead of being importers, we have become exporters”. Singh said that India had exported defence items worth approximately Rs 39,000 crore this time.

He described the nearly 300,000-strong Indian diaspora as the strongest bridge between the two countries.

A Ministry of Defence statement said Singh also underlined that India’s stature on the global stage has grown under Modi’s leadership. “Earlier, India’s words at international fora were not heeded; but today, the whole world listens carefully,” he said.

# ‘Won’t achieve goals by bullying’: Iran says US violating ceasefire

## Trump: Agreed to request from Pak mediators

Reuters  
Washington, Dubai,  
Islamabad, April 22

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump called off attacks on Iran with no sign of peace talks restarting. Trump maintained the US Navy blockade of Iran's trade by sea, and Iran's parliament speaker and top negotiator Mohammad Baqer Ghalibaf said a full ceasefire only made sense if it was lifted. Reopening the strait was impossible with such a "flagrant breach of the ceasefire," he said in a post on X.

"You did not achieve your goals through military aggression and you will not achieve them by bullying either. The only way is recognizing the Iranian people's rights," he said in his first response to Trump's ceasefire extension.

Iran's semi-official *Tasnim* news agency earlier said the Revolutionary Guards had seized two vessels for maritime violations and escorted them to Iranian shores. The Revolutionary Guards also warned that any disruption to order and safety in the strait would be considered a "red line," *Tasnim* said.

Trump said on social media late on Tuesday that the US had agreed to a request by Pakistani



People clash with Israeli border police during a funeral procession in the West Bank village of al-Mughayyir, on Wednesday. REUTERS

mediators" to hold our Attack on the Country of Iran until such time as their leaders and representatives can come up with a unified proposal ... and discussions are concluded, one way or the other."

A source briefed on the matter confirmed on Wednesday that Trump had not set a timeline for the extension of the ceasefire.

In a show of defiance, Iran showcased some of its ballistic weapons at a parade in Tehran on Tuesday evening, with images on state TV showing large crowds waving Iranian flags and a banner in the background with a fist choking off the

strait. Captions read: "Indefinitely under Iran's Control" and "Trump could not do a damn thing", referring to the waterway, the closure of which has caused a global energy crisis.

Pakistan, which has acted as a mediator, was still trying to bring the sides together for negotiations after both failed to show up for talks on Tuesday before the two-week-old ceasefire had been due to expire.

"We were all prepared for the talks, the stage was set," a Pakistani official briefed on the preparations told Reuters. "If you ask me honestly, it was a setback we were not expecting, because the Iranians never re-

fused, they were up to come and join, and they still are."

With his announcement on Tuesday, Trump again pulled back at the last moment from warnings to bomb Iran's power plants and bridges, a threat condemned by the United Nations and others as potentially constituting war crimes. Iran had said it would strike its Arab neighbours if its civilian infrastructure was hit.

Oil prices reversed course to head higher after the shipping incidents on Wednesday, with Brent crude futures up almost 4% at \$102.2 a barrel. A first session of peace talks 11 days ago produced no agreement.

Attacks in south Lebanon strain truce on eve of Washington talks

Reuters  
Beirut, Jerusalem, April 22

AN ISRAELI strike killed two people in southern Lebanon on Wednesday, Lebanon's state news agency reported, and Hezbollah said it launched an attack drone at Israeli forces in the south, further straining a ceasefire between the Iran-backed group and Israel. On the eve of talks in Washington between Lebanese and Israeli ambassadors, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said Beirut would seek an extension of the 10-day, US-mediated ceasefire, which is set to expire on Sunday.

The US-brokered ceasefire in Lebanon emerged separately from Washington's efforts to resolve its conflict with Tehran, though Iran had called for Lebanon to be included in any broader truce. The US has denied any link between the tracks.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said the Israeli strike hit a car in al-Tiri, a village in south Lebanon, killing two people inside. Hezbollah said it attacked an Israeli artillery position in southern Lebanon with a drone, in response to what it said was an Israeli violation of the ceasefire.

# Zelenskyy seeks trilateral talks; Kyiv open to summit with Putin

Associated Press  
Kyiv, April 22

UKRAINE AND US negotiators held talks on Tuesday, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Wednesday, as Kyiv seeks to renew trilateral peace discussions with Russia despite US negotiators being preoccupied by the war in Iran. "We very much hope for the resumption of the trilateral meetings, and for a return to a path leading to an end to the war," Zelenskyy told reporters.

Meanwhile, a Ukrainian drone attack deep inside Russia struck a residential building, killing a woman and a child, Russian officials said Wednesday.

Kyiv has asked Turkey to help facilitate top-level talks and has reached out to other capitals as potential hosts, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said, adding Ukraine would consider any venue outside Russia and Belarus. "We are ... advocating for a (summit) meeting now to bring new momentum to diplomacy," Sybiha told reporters on Tuesday. His remarks were embargoed until Wednesday.

Zelenskyy has accepted an unconditional ceasefire demanded by US President Donald Trump but Putin has refused. Putin thinks that time is on his side, that Western military and financial support will fade and that Ukraine's resistance will eventually collapse, analysts say.

Meanwhile, a grim war of attrition continues along the about 1,250-kilometer front line that snakes along eastern and southern areas of Ukraine.



Russian Emergency Ministry employees work at a damaged apartment building hit by a Ukrainian drone in Syzran, Russia, on Wednesday. AP

## 'Donnyland': Naming part of Donbas in Trump's honour?

Anton Troianovski  
& Andrew E Kramer  
April 22

WHEN POLAND sought a US military base in 2018, it pitched the idea as Fort Trump.

When Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a peace pledge at the White House last year, they called the transport link it created the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity.

But the most improbable instance of President Trump's name being lent to a geopolitical flashpoint may be one that has remained out of public view until now. In Ukraine peace talks in recent months, Ukrainian officials have suggested that the slice of the country's Donbas region that Russia is still fighting for could

be named "Donnyland."

The moniker, a reference to "Donbas" and "Donald," was described by four people familiar with the negotiations, who all spoke about it on the condition of anonymity because of the secrecy surrounding them.

When a Ukrainian negotiator first mentioned the term, partly in jest, it was as part of an attempt to convince the Trump administration to push back more against Russia's territorial demands, according to three of the people familiar with the talks. President Vladimir Putin has vowed to keep fighting until Russian forces reach a key administrative boundary on the edge of the Donbas, the industrial region in eastern Ukraine where the Kremlin first started waging war in 2014. NYT

# EU unblocks long-awaited \$106-billion Ukraine loan

**Agence France-Presse**

BRUSSELS

The EU on Wednesday gave the green light to unblock a 90-billion-euro (\$106 billion) loan for Kyiv, after the deadlock was broken in a months-long row between Ukraine and Hungary over a damaged pipeline.

Diplomats said the definitive sign-off should come by Thursday as Budapest waits for Russian oil to arrive through the Druzhba pipeline after Kyiv said operations had restarted.

The feud over the pipeline pitted Hungary's former premier Viktor Orban against Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, stalling the vitally needed funds for Kyiv.

Resolving the stand-off will allow Brussels to start paying out the loan that Ukraine requires to plug its budget four years into Moscow's invasion.

"Implementation of our agreement with the EU to unblock a EUR90-billion support package for Ukraine over two years is now effectively under way," Mr. Zelenskyy, who is expected to join a summit of EU leaders in Cyprus on Thursday, posted online.

"The unblocking is the right signal under the current circumstances. Russia must end its war."

Kremlin-friendly leader Mr. Orban, who suffered a crushing election defeat



**Crude diplomacy:** Budapest waits for Russian oil to arrive through the Druzhba pipeline after Kyiv said operations had restarted. AFP

this month, had vowed that he would not budge until Ukraine repaired the pipeline hit by a Russian strike.

## **Russian oil to flow**

Officials said on Wednesday Ukraine had restarted pumping oil to Hungary and Slovakia, a day after Mr. Zelenskyy announced the repairs had been completed.

Hungarian energy giant MOL said it "expects the first crude oil shipments following the restart of the Ukrainian section of the pipeline system to arrive in Hungary and Slovakia by tomorrow at the latest".

Slovakia's Economy Minister Denisa Sakova also said the first deliveries were expected in the early hours of Thursday.

Hungary and Slovakia – among the most Kremlin-sympathetic EU member states – had accused Kyiv of dragging its feet over the repairs.

Mr. Zelenskyy has made no secret of his opposition

to the fact that some EU members still buy Russian oil and gas – a key source of revenue for Moscow to fund its invasion launched more than four years ago.

The row with Hungary has held up EU support for Ukraine at a time when the United States has largely cut Kyiv off and eased sanctions on Russian oil amid the Iran war.

Mr. Orban's loss in elections after 16 years in power had fuelled hopes the funds would be unlocked and the EU could move past the frequent blockages experienced during his tenure. But EU officials had believed they might have to wait until his pro-EU successor Peter Magyar took office in May to get it approved.

EU countries also gave the preliminary go-ahead to a fresh round of sanctions on Russia – the 20th since the war started in 2022 – that had been stalled by Hungary and Slovakia over the pipeline row.

# China praises African states for blocking Taiwan aircraft

**Reuters**

BEIJING/TAIPEI

China heaped praise on Wednesday on three African countries that refused to let Taiwan President Lai Ching-te's aircraft fly over their territories, forcing him to cancel a trip to Eswatini, while Mr. Lai vowed he would not be cowed by Beijing's pressure.

It is the first instance of a Taiwan President having to cancel an entire foreign trip due to denial of airspace access, representing a new Chinese strategy as it steps up efforts to stifle the island's efforts to engage internationally.

Mr. Lai had been due to leave for Eswatini, one of just 12 countries with diplomatic ties to Chinese-claimed Taiwan, but the previous night Taiwan said his visit had to be delayed.

Taiwan said Seychelles, Mauritius, and Madagascar had revoked permission



Lai Ching-te

for Mr. Lai's aircraft to fly over their territories.

## 'Economic coercion'

Mr. Lai said China had used economic "coercion" to get their cooperation - a claim denied by a spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office.

Zhang Han, the spokesperson, expressed appreciation for the position and "practice" of the three countries in adhering to the one-China principle.

"A just cause enjoys abundant support, while an unjust cause finds little

support," he told a news conference in Beijing, quoting the ancient Chinese philosopher Mencius.

In a separate statement, China's Foreign Ministry said it was clear there was "no longer a so-called Republic of China President in the world anymore", referring to Taiwan by its formal name.

Speaking to a meeting of his Democratic Progressive Party in Taipei, Mr. Lai said Taiwan's people have a right to engage with the world. "No country can stop this, and none will be able to. The harder China suppresses us, the more we must demonstrate a spirit of fearlessness."

Madagascar and the Seychelles said they took the decision because they do not recognise Taiwan.

Eswatini government's acting spokesperson Thabile Mdluli said the cancellation of the visit did not alter the country's two-way ties with the island.

# Rajnath Singh holds bilateral talks with German counterpart in Berlin

**Saurabh Trivedi**

NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday held bilateral talks with his German counterpart Boris Pistorius in Berlin, aimed at strengthening the strategic defence partnership between India and Germany.

According to the Ministry of Defence, the two leaders discussed a wide range of security and defence issues, with a strong emphasis on co-development and co-production of defence equipment, particularly in niche and emerging technologies.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to en-



**Diplomatic meet:** Boris Pistorius and Rajnath Singh chat during a visit to a submarine shipyard in Kiel, Germany, on Wednesday. AFP

hancing military-to-military cooperation as a cornerstone of the bilateral strategic partnership.

During the meeting, the Defence Industrial Cooperation Roadmap and Implementing Arrangement for

Cooperation in UN Peacekeeping Training were signed and exchanged, marking a significant step forward in defence collaboration.

On global issues, the Defence Minister underlined

the role of India and Germany in providing stability to the global economy amid uncertainties. He also stressed that terrorism in all its forms must be condemned unequivocally.

The German Minister welcomed the institutionalisation of service-level staff talks and future bilateral military exercises. Mr. Singh expressed hope for the participation of the German Air Force in the upcoming Exercise Tarang Shakti scheduled to be held in India later this year.

India and Germany are marking 25 years of their strategic partnership and celebrating 75 years of diplomatic relations in 2026.



## Rupee falls 34 paise to close at 93.78 against U.S. dollar

Falling for the third straight session, the rupee declined 34 paise to close at 93.78 against the U.S. dollar on Wednesday as uncertainty over U.S.-Iran peace talks eroded hopes of easing West Asia tensions and set crude oil prices on fire. Intense selling in domestic equity markets and sustained outflow of foreign capital also weighed on the domestic currency, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 93.69 and touched an intraday low of 93.87 against the greenback during the session. The domestic unit finally ended the session at 93.78 against the dollar, registering a loss of 34 paise from the previous close. On Tuesday, the rupee plunged 28 paise to settle at 93.44 against the U.S. dollar, a day after losing 25 paise on Monday. The currency had gained 47 paise in the preceding two sessions. Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said the rupee declined on an overnight surge in crude oil prices and uncertainty over U.S.-Iran talks. PTI