



# THE FREE PRESS JOURNAL

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**NATION**

Amid Kathua encounter, two more rebel groups sever Hurriyat ties

**GAMES**

*RCB bank on experienced batters to break 17-year Chennai jinx against CSK*



**Cinema** Delnaaz Irani opens up about her divorce

**Edit** Unfortunately, the joke is on Shiv Sena, Shinde and Mumbai



**RELIGIOUS INTERFERENCE** | CM M K Stalin steers resolution saying the bill will adversely affect the minority community

## TN assembly wants Waqf bill withdrawn

PTI  
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu Assembly on Thursday passed a resolution against the Centre's proposed Waqf amendment Bill 2024 and insisted that the Union Government recall it since it would badly affect the minority Muslims.

Chief Minister M K Stalin charged the provisions in the amendment bill amount to interference in religious affairs. The resolution was passed amidst a protest and walkout by the BJP members and found support from all other parties including the principal opposition AIADMK and BJP's ally, the PMK.

BJP charged the resolution was ruling DMK "usual divisive politics." Piloting the resolution, Stalin said the attempt to amend Waqf Act would hinder the Waqf Board's powers.

"This is against the freedom of religion. This is hurting Muslim sentiments... We will continue to oppose this." — M K Stalin



This is against the freedom of religion. This is hurting Muslim sentiments... We will continue to oppose this. — M K Stalin

pose this," he asserted.

Listing the consequences of the Bill, the chief minister said the Central government wanted to amend the Bill leading to government control over the Waqf Board and properties.

"This will affect the autonomy of the Waqf Boards,

transfer the rights to survey the lands to district collectors from the survey department commissioner, remove the board's powers in deciding on its lands, and include two non-Muslims as members in the board. This amounts to interference in the religious affairs," he claimed.

"Further, the repeal of Section 40 of the Waqf Act is a constitutional violation of religious freedom under Article 26. It is necessary to register our protest against this deceptive law," he said opposing the Bill.

► Contd on | Nation

Kunal Kamra does such things deliberately. He disrespected Dy CM Ekhnath Shinde, Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, PM Modi, and even the Supreme Court. Now it's time for Shiv Sena to respond. We are ministers, but first, we are Shiv Sena members, and we hold the power to act accordingly. If Kamra has the courage, he should make public statements instead of hiding behind his remarks. We will ask the Dy CM to instruct the police to find him and take appropriate action."

► Contd on | Nation

## Desai threatens 'third degree' for Kamra

Megha Kuchik & Prajakta Pol  
MUMBAI

Shiv Sena minister Shambhuraj Desai has issued a stern warning, suggesting that stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra will face severe repercussions, in-

cluding third-degree treatment, and be placed inside a tire. Desai claimed that Shiv Sena workers have refrained from taking action only because Ekhnath Shinde instructed them to stay silent.

Regarding the Kunal Kamra controversy, Desai stated,

power to act accordingly. If Kamra has the courage, he should make public statements instead of hiding behind his remarks. We will ask the Dy CM to instruct the police to find him and take appropriate action."

► Contd on | Nation

## Dhankhar no to privilege notice against Shah

Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar  
NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday rejected a privilege motion moved by the Congress against Union Home Minister Amit Shah for allegedly "casting aspersions" on Congress Parliamentary Party leader Sonia Gandhi while speaking about the PM Relief Fund during his reply on a Bill on Tuesday.

The notice for the motion was moved by Congress general secretary and Rajya Sabha MP Jairam Ramesh who charged that Shah had cast aspersions on Gandhi in the House during a debate on the Disaster Management Bill 2024.

Shah had stated during the discussion that, "The PM National Relief Fund was created during Congress rule... During Congress rule, one family used to have control. In this, the Congress president used to be the member. The Congress president was in the government fund. What answer will you give to the people?"

He had also asked, "How was the fund used? The PM Rahat Kosh funds were given to Rajiv Gandhi Foundation. Who runs it? The Congress and its then president and her family run it."

Contrasting this with how things are run under BJP rule, Shah had also charged that several public sector undertakings and even organisations involved in conversion used to fund Rajiv Gandhi Foundation.

## Dhankhar no to privilege notice against Shah

Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar  
NEW DELHI

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## Auto stocks hit by Trump's 25% tariff

FPJ News Service  
MUMBAI

Finally, the much-awaited Damocles' sword of tariffs has become a reality as US President Donald Trump on Wednesday announced a sweeping new import duty of 25 per cent on imported passenger vehicles, light trucks and components.

The new tariffs come into effect from April 2, with charges on businesses importing vehicles starting on April 3, and taxes on parts effective from May. Sending shock waves to the global automotive

The tariff on auto imports throws uncertainty over India's \$7 billion of exports to America, which exporters worry could squeeze margins

markets, including India, pivotal auto stocks slumped in morning trade, with Tata Motors losing over six per cent to Rs 661.35 on the Bombay Stock Exchange. Ashok Leyland lost 4.60 per cent, M & M 1.70 per cent, Bajaj Auto 1.48 per cent and Apollo Tyres 1.41 per cent, and the BSE auto index quoted lower at 48,286.47.

► Contd on | Nation

## TELANGANA RESOLUTION

# 'Population not sole basis for delimitation'



Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy speaking in Assembly on Thursday

ganised by his government soon on delimitation. The participants should join forces to resolve the issues with the Centre, he said.

The comments of some union ministers that the Centre has not taken up the delimitation issue is only half true, he said. Though the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014 spoke about increasing the number of constituencies in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, the Centre had said it would take up the delimitation of constituencies only after the 2026 Census, he said.

The Centre, however, carried out delimitation of constituencies in Jammu and Kash-

mir as well as Sikkim based on population, the CM said.

He alleged that Telangana and other southern states are not getting funds from the Centre proportionate to the taxes paid by them, while states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh get more than what they do.

The resolution said that the states which have effectively implemented the population control programme pushed by the Centre, and consequently whose population share has come down, should not be penalised. Therefore, population should not be the sole yardstick for delimitation, it said.

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## Briefs

### MUMBAI NIA notice on Vaze plea

A special NIA court has issued a notice to Delhi Police on dismissed officer Sachin Vaze's plea seeking investigation records related to the 2021 Antilia bomb scare case. According to prosecution, after the Antilia car bomb scare on February 21, 2021, a Telegram channel, Jaish-Ul-Hind, claimed responsibility, but later denied involvement in the incident. Investigation traced the post to a Tihar jail phone, prompting a separate Delhi Police case. Vaze alleges NIA requested but didn't submit these Delhi Police records to court. He has hence asked the court to call for records and documents. NIA opposes the request, calling the documents irrelevant and a delaying tactic.

### MUMBAI Natya Mandir renamed

The Charity Commissioner has ordered the renaming of Dadar's Shivaji Natya Mandir to 'Shri Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Natya Mandir' following a petition by Ravindra Jadhav Kotapkar. While initially omitting the honorific 'Shri,' authorities have now complied with the full renaming request. Jadhav said, "The original single-name reference to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was deemed disrespectful. Our campaign's success ensures proper recognition for the Maratha king." Established on December 31, 1943, the Shri Chhatrapati Shivaji Smarak Mandal Trust operates Mumbai's historic Shivaji Natya Mandir in Dadar West. This cultural landmark has fostered generations of theater artists and hosted distinguished figures across politics, arts and journalism.

### MUMBAI Plea against TISS protest

A group of citizens and students have petitioned Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, demanding legal action against those involved in an 'unlawful protest' near Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) on Wednesday. They also seek investigation into the demonstration's 'funding'. The protest, organised by several student groups and activists, was held in response to the Bombay High Court's decision to uphold the suspension of Dalit PhD research scholar Ramdas PS. The demonstration was met with police intervention shortly after it commenced. However, protest organisers have countered these claims, stating that their demonstration was a peaceful exercise of their democratic rights.

### MUMBAI Actor named in fraud case

A major fraud case has been registered against 15 individuals, including Bollywood actor Shreyas Talpade, for allegedly duping people out of crores under the guise of a chit fund scheme. According to reports, the accused were running a company named 'The Loni Urban Multistate Credit and Thrift Cooperative Society Limited,' which promised villagers lucrative returns on their investments. The company, after collecting crores from unsuspecting villagers, reportedly shut down operations and fled the district. The fraudulent scheme had been operational in Mahoba for the past ten years before coming under legal scrutiny.

**RECOGNISING CHALLENGES** | Govt medical college and hospital at Nanded and Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar under scrutiny

## Panel to look into deaths at two state med colleges



**October 2023**

31 patients, including 16 infants, died in the span of a few days at Nanded Govt Medical College and Hospital

**Urvi Mahajani**  
MUMBAI

Observing that incidents of infant deaths in hospitals should not reoccur like it did in government hospitals in Nanded and Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar in 2023, the Bombay High Court has constituted a five member expert committee to examine the issue and suggest short-term and long-term measures.

A bench of Chief Justice Alok Aradhe and Justice MS Karnik was hearing a batch of petitions, including a suo motu (on its own) petition, highlighting concerns over the high number of deaths at government hospitals in Nanded and Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar districts last year. Several infants had died in these hospitals due to a shortage of staff and medical

**June 16**  
Deadline to submit the report

The issue is serious. We do not want it to reoccur. Hence, certain short-term and long-term measures need to be taken

**High Court**

equipment, particularly ventilators.

The court has requested the committee to visit hospitals and government medical colleges in Nanded and Sambhajinagar district and to submit a report "with regard to infrastructure and medical facilities available at these colleges".

In October 2023, within a few days, a total of 31 patients died while undergoing treatment.



**October 2-3, 2023**

18 people, including infants, died at the Govt Medical College and Hospital in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar

**Ravikiran Deshmukh**  
MUMBAI

ment at the Nanded Government Medical College and Hospital. Sixteen of these were infants. At the Government Medical College and Hospital at Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, 18 deaths including infants, were recorded between October 2 and 3, 2023.

At the time, the government had told the court that there does not seem to be any gross negligence on the part of the hospitals, however, the incidents occurred as the hospitals were burdened with a heavy inflow of extremely critical patients.

The bench, on Thursday, opined that it would be better if a team of medical experts studied the issue and reasons behind the incident and suggest measures that could be undertaken by the government. "The issue is serious.

The entire exercise had to be completed in two months and a report submitted, on or before June 16, the bench said.

We do not want it to reoccur. Hence, certain short-term and long-term measures need to be taken," the bench said.

The court constituted a committee comprising the secretary of the state public health department; the directors of the health sciences and medical education department; deans of the state-run JJ hospital in Mumbai and the medical college and hospitals at Nanded and Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar districts.

"We request the committee to visit the two hospitals at Nanded and Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar and submit a report on the infrastructure and medical facilities available at these hospitals," the court said.

Apart from Shelar, the BJP



**Shelar panel to study cases against netas**

**Ravikiran Deshmukh**  
MUMBAI

The Mahayuti government has reconstituted the cabinet sub-committee tasked with deciding on the withdrawal of cases against political party leaders and workers.

The committee, headed by IT minister Ashish Shelar, includes two members each from the BJP, the Shiv Sena and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).

The committee evaluates cases filed against politicians by the police during agitations for public causes and recommends their withdrawal.

According to a government resolution (GR) issued on Thursday, the panel provides suggestions and recommendations to government pleaders regarding specific cases.

The committee evaluates cases filed against politicians by the police during agitations for public causes

is represented by protocol minister Jaikumar Rawal, while the Shiv Sena's members include industries minister Uday Samant and tourism minister Shambhuraj Desai. The NCP's delegation comprises sports minister Dattatraya Bharne and relief and rehabilitation minister Makrand Patil.

The previous committee, formed in June 2023, had three members each from the BJP and the Shiv Sena. However, the NCP (led by Ajit Pawar), which joined the Mahayuti alliance in July 2023, was not included at the time.

## UBT shut out of legislative committees

**Ravikiran Deshmukh**  
MUMBAI

The Shiv Sena (UBT) received a huge shock on Thursday when it was ignored for the crucial legislative panel – the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), whose chairman is picked from the largest party in the Opposition. Instead, the committee will be headed by Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar, who is the party group leader in the state assembly.

It's not just the chairmanship of the PAC, but none of the Shiv Sena members have been accommodated in it when at least two Shiv Sena MLAs have found a place in other panels – Estimates Committee, the Public Enterprises Committee and others

### IN BRIEF

**1** None of the Shiv Sena (UBT) members have been accommodated in the PAC

**2** The panel will be headed by Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar, who is the party group leader in the state assembly

**3** Two Shiv Sena MLAs have found a place in other panels – Estimates Committee, the Public Enterprises Committee and others

trative part.

Besides, the chairman of the PAC gets a government vehicle and enjoys the protocol of a minister.

On the other hand, the Sena MLAs Varun Sardesai and Sanjay Potnis have found a place in the committee on the Public Enterprises, headed by the BJP member Rahul Kul. Its MLAs Rohit Patil and Kailas Patil have been appointed as members of the Estimates Committee, headed by the Shiv Sena member Arjun Khottkar.

There are 13 joint committees where members from the Assembly and the state Council are nominated. In an important decision, the chairmanship of the committee on Minorities has been given to Andheri East MLA Murji Patel, a BJP leader who joined the Shiv Sena before the elections. On previous occasions, the chairmanship of the committee was preferably given to an MLA from the Muslim community. The committee will have four members – Abdul Sattar (Shiv Sena), Sana Malik (NCP), Harun Khan (Shiv Sena UBT) and Sajid Khan Pathan (Congress).

## 'Accused wanted to quit when he smelt foul play'

**TORRES SCAM**

**Charul Shah Joshi**  
MUMBAI

In the Torres investment scam, the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) has filed a voluminous chargesheet, with new revelations emerging every day. As per the chargesheet, the whistle-blower chartered accountant Abhishek Gupta, who helped set up the jewellery business of Torres under the parent firm Platinum Hearn Pvt Ltd, told the EOW that accused Surve wanted to resign in December when he suspected foul play. Surve, with Gupta's help, had sent a complaint to the police and other central agencies about the fraud on January 2, Gupta has claimed in his statement.

Gupta claimed that Surve had realised that Ukrainian nationals were defrauding the company as there was no information available about who was operating it and what its core business was.

He claimed that Surve had come to his office, where he explained the entire operation of the company and sent a written complaint to several agencies on January 2 at 4:38am by email. After the said email, Gupta received a message from Artem (a wanted accused) asking him to reach the Parel office. At the Parel office, he was asked to prepare a video blaming Tausif Riyaz for the scam. After preparing

Sources revealed that several illegal Bangladeshi nationals who were hiding in Nagpur fled the city after the violence. The Mumbai Crime Branch is now tracking down other Bangladeshi nationals who are allegedly living in Nagpur under fake identities.

**'We oppose those who celebrate Pak victory'**

**Kalpesh Mhamunkar**  
MUMBAI

Reacting to criticism over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative 'Saugat-E-Modi' food kit to 32 lakh poor Muslim families in India as a gift for Ramzan Eid, BJP state president Chandrashekhar Bawankule emphasised his party's commitment to communal harmony in India. He stated, "The BJP is not against Muslims. Our opposition is against those who, while residing in India, carry Pakistani flags during rallies.

As per the chargesheet, Gupta also pointed out several irregularities in the accounts, claiming that the Torres management wanted to pass off Rs13.76 crore funds infused by accused Lallan Singh as a loan.

In his statement, Gupta claimed that in November/December 2024, while he was conducting the statutory audit of Platinum Hearn for 2023-24, he noticed a loan of Rs13.76 crore had been taken. Also noticed were loans related to firms namely Astrozen Pharmaceuticals (Rs45 lakh), Miracal (Rs2.69 crore), Mulund Online Services (Rs87.96 lakh), Oath Advisory Pvt Ltd (Rs3.67 crore), Prisah FMH and Security Services INC (Rs5.73 crore) and Sunil Restaurant and Bar (Rs32.83 crore).

Gupta alleged that when he asked for records, he was provided an investment agreement but no details. He was later told that the firms belonged to Singh, who took cash from Platinum Hearn and deposited it into the accounts of these firms. These companies later routed the same funds back to Platinum Hearn.

"Those who once said 'Batenge to Katenge', are now distributing Saugat-E-Modi," Thackeray said. He further questioned the BJP's integrity, asking how their leaders would now visit Muslim households when they had been "cornered during the elections." Thackeray also demanded clarity whether their distribution of food kits would continue after the upcoming Bihar elections.

## Nikam: Ghule leader of sarpanch killers

**Kalpesh Mhamunkar**  
MUMBAI

**Activist Anjali Damania demands that Dhananjay Munde be named as an accused in the case**

Damania, who has made several allegations against NCP leader Dhananjay Munde since the murder, expressed concerns over certain points raised during the hearing. She said Nikam's claim about Ghule is "based on misleading

information". Casting doubt on the narrative, Damania said, "Santosh Deshmukh's murder occurred on the instructions of the arrested accused Walmik Karad, so presenting Ghule as the gang leader seems suspicious."

Damania further demanded that Munde should be named as an accused, alleging that the minister "guided" the arrested individuals.

"If the phones of those arrested are seized and checked, I believe it may lead to Munde,"



**Preserving culture**

Framji Dadabhai Alpaivala Museum at Khareghat Colony, the city's only community museum dedicated to Parsi artefacts, reopened on Thursday after extensive restoration and upgradation –Vijay Gohil

## FIR against Wadhwa Group in ₹57 crore cheating case

**FPJ News Service**  
MUMBAI

**Wadhwa Group accused of failing to honour financial commitments in a redevelopment agreement**

funds as part of a settlement deal, the Wadhwa Group companies – Wadhwa Holdings Pvt Ltd and Wadhwa Realty Pvt Ltd – allegedly defaulted on payments for redevelopment of Unnat Nagar Akshaya Cooperative Housing Society, Goregaon.

The case, which was filed at Goregaon police station and later transferred to the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Mumbai police, accuses Wadhwa Group directors, including Navin Makhija, of allegedly failing to honour financial commitments in a redevelopment agreement.

According to the complainant Policon Realtors promoter Shafeel Hussain Tanwar, despite receiving additional floor space index (FSI) and

vacate and changes in Mhada rules resulting in a stay order. In 2009, Wadhwa Group was brought in to complete the project, agreeing to pay Rs5 crore and allocate 18% of the saleable flat but paid only Rs2.5 crore and failed to initiate construction. Despite a revised agreement in 2013, Wadhwa Group refused further payments and did not meet construction deadlines, states complaint in the FIR against Wadhwa Group directors.

According to senior police officials, after court-appointed arbitration, Wadhwa Group did not honour the settlement terms, leading to the filing of the FIR. There was no response from the Wadhwa group.

Sources revealed that several illegal Bangladeshi nationals who were hiding in Nagpur fled the city after the violence. The Mumbai Crime Branch is now tracking down other Bangladeshi nationals who are allegedly living in Nagpur under fake identities.

**RSS to open more shakhas**

Mumbai: As it heads for its centennial on Vijayadashami Day on October 2, 2025, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has announced plans to increase the number of shakhas, or branches, from over 83,000 to 1,00,000 during the year. The landmark year will not be an occasion for celebrations, but a period to introspect on the organisation's journey and plans for the future, said Vitthalrao Kamble, Konkan Prant Karyawah, RSS, at a press conference in Mumbai on Wednesday.

# ED arrests city bizman in ₹764 crore SBI fraud

**Charul Shah Joshi**

MUMBAI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested city-based businessman Vijay Gupta of Vindhavasini Group on money laundering charges.

The CBI has registered cases against Gupta for defrauding the State Bank of India to the tune of Rs764.44 crore by availing credit facil-

ties based on forged and fabricated documents.

The ED arrested Gupta on Wednesday night for allegedly failing to cooperate with the agency. He was later produced before a special court.

The ED also contended that, for the purpose of preparing false accounts, the auditor was bribed to get credit facilities from the SBI on the basis of forged and fabricated documents. The agen-

cy's probe revealed that Gupta bribed a relationship manager at SBI to the tune of 59 lakh to obtain credit facilities.

## Vijay Gupta of Vindhavasini Group allegedly availed credit facilities based on forged documents

It is the claim of the prosecution that by defrauding the banks, the accused, along with others, their companies/firms generated proceeds of crime to the tune of Rs764.44 crore.

The defence, however, claimed that the loan amount of Rs155 crore, which was taken and disbursed in the bank account of M/s Ruby Mills Ltd, saw Rs54 crore

returned to the bank as the transaction was never completed.

The court, however, at this stage, did not accept the arguments, saying it was not supported by documents.

The court, after considering the prosecution's allegations and the need to trace the beneficiaries, money trail and properties, remanded Gupta to ED custody till April 2.

## 2 new apps for PWD road complaints

**Ravikiran Deshmukh**

MUMBAI

The state government has given its approval for the PCRS 2.0 App for citizens to lodge complaints about potholes and maintenance of the roads under the Public Works Department (PWD).

The government has approved two different Android apps – one for citizens and one for PWD engineers. The department has developed the Pothole Complaint Redressal System – PCRS 2.0 for the online registration of complaints. Besides, myPWD App has been developed for the engineers who will act on the complaints within a prescribed time frame.

The engineers will respond to the alert mode developed for the app. The deputy engineers will get seven days, the executive engineers will get 15, and the superintendent engineer will get 30 days to act on the complaints under the alert mode.

Last year, the PCRS system was launched online without the app.

## Disha's father offers to have narco test

Satish Salian, father of celebrity manager Disha Salian, once again met Crime Branch Joint Commissioner Lakhmi Gautam on Thursday and said he was willing to undergo a narco test. "The accused should also undergo the test," he said. Salian was accompanied by his lawyer, Nilesh Ojha. Speaking to the media, Ojha claimed that Disha's post-mortem report was falsified. He demanded that instead of relying on the post-mortem report, statements from witnesses should be recorded. He also urged the police to recreate the crime scene in the presence of the Salian family and the media.

**-Poonam Apraj**

**HEALTHCARE BOOST | Civic body aims to improve health facilities in suburbs**

# BMC to outsource doctors for ICUs at peripheral hospitals

- IN BRIEF**
- 1 **Intensivists include anaesthesiologists, and surgeons**
- 2 **Facilities that will outsource intensivists include Rajawadi and Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Hospital**
- 3 **Move is expected to decrease load of existing staff and doctors, BMC says**

**Devashri Bhujbal**

MUMBAI

To increase the availability of Intensive Care Units (ICU), the BMC has decided to outsource intensivists' services for 153 ICU beds in its peripheral hospitals. The intensivists include anaesthesiologists, surgeons and postgraduates in general medicine (MD). The appointments will be made within two months and contracts will be for two years.

The medical facilities that

will outsource intensivists include Rajawadi Hospital, Ghatkopar (11 beds); Bhabha Hospital, Kurla (20); Bhabha Hospital, Bandra (12); and Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Hospital, Kandivali (16).

The BMC has 16 peripheral hospitals, which handle more than 42 lakh OPD patients, admit over 2.5 lakh patients, and conduct 42,000 surgeries per year. The outsourcing of intensivists is expected to decrease the load of existing staff and doctors.

Most of the peripheral hos-

pitals are located in the suburbs. The civic body, in its 2025-2026 budget, had said that, given the rising population in the suburbs, emphasis will be given to increase availability of speciality services and ICU beds.

"The BMC is successfully running around 50 ICU beds by outsourcing intensivists. The outsourcing for 153 ICU beds is in final stage and contract will be in less than two months," the medical superintendent of the BMC's peripheral hospitals, Dr

Chandrakant Pawar, told The Free Press Journal on Thursday.

A medical officer at one of the hospitals said, "The major hospitals [KEM Hospital, Sion Hospital, Cooper Hospital, BYL Nair Hospital] do not need outsourcing as they have sufficient resident doctors. However, for peripheral hospitals, we lack postgraduates in medicine. With outsourcing, more ICUs will start and the BMC will be able to provide better healthcare facilities."

## MID-DAY MEAL SCAM

# Former school principal denied pre-arrest bail

**FPJ News Service**

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Thursday refused pre-arrest bail to the former principal of a school accused of misappropriation of food grains provided by the government as part of the midday meal scheme for students.

A bench of Justice Rajesh Patil said accused Radha Narayan was not showing true and correct facts, and hence, her custodial interrogation was required.

The case against Narayan is that, during Covid-19, she misappropriated food grains worth around Rs5 lakh provided to the school by the state government under the midday meal scheme. The grains were to be handed over to the students.

The court, in its order, said the scheme is intended to give students nutritious meals but it was found the purpose for which the government is spending public funds is not reaching them.

"The principal is not showing true and correct facts. Prima facie, it appears there's something more than what meets the eye," Justice Patil said in the order.

The court dismissed the application filed by Narayan noting, "The physical presence of the present applicant is necessary for the purpose of interrogation."

Radha Narayan accused of misappropriating food grains worth around ₹15 lakh during Covid-19

The court, however, refused to accept this contention and said there is no explanation as to why the accused did not think it appropriate to at least click some photographs of the damaged food grains.

She did not even think it appropriate to write at least an email to the municipal corporation and the educational officer, the HC said.

"In Mumbai due to rains there is water-logging... Presuming for a minute there was water-logging in 2021 in the school compound, then certainly the said water-logging must be happening every year," the court said.

The accused being principal could have avoided this situation by storing the food grains on a higher floor of the building, HC said, adding no such efforts were taken for reasons best known to her.

The court dismissed the application filed by Narayan noting, "The physical presence of the present applicant is necessary for the purpose of interrogation."

# Hawkers rule the roost in Ghatkopar

**FPJ News Service**

MUMBAI

For the past several years, the roads of Ghatkopar, especially on the west side, have been taken over by hawkers who sell garments, mobile accessories and other goods. "They do business right on the road, blocking vehicular traffic. But neither the BMC nor the police take any action against them because they are given hefty haftas," a local resident, Girish Jain, said.

Even though there is a Bombay High Court order banning hawking within 150 metres of railway stations, hundreds do business with impunity. "It is hawker raj in Ghatkopar. Now shopkeepers are beaten up if they raise their voice," Dewang Kumar, another resident, said.

Station Road, MG Road, Maneklal Estate Road, etc, are now controlled by hawkers with underworld connections. The local unit of the BJP led by ex-corporator Pravin Chheda has taken up this serious issue with the help of its city leaders.



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## A PANEL DISCUSSION ON

### "Free Speech and Censorship in the Age of Social Media: Necessity or Overreach?"

Government Law College, Mumbai, in association with D. M. Harish Foundation

| MODERATOR - MR. HARESH JAGTIANI, SR. ADV. |

| PANELISTS - HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE G. S. PATEL (RETD.) |

| H. E. MR. HAIM DIVON | MR. ASHWIN SANGHI | MR. CYRUS BROACHA |

| MS. ARTI RAGHAVAN | PROF. KISHU DASWANI |

FRIDAY, 28 MARCH, 2025

Venue: Auditorium, Government Law College, Churchgate  
Refreshments will be served at 5:30 pm  
Panel Discussion will begin at 6:00 pm

Ms. Tanisha Singh  
General Secretary  
Moot Court Association

Asst. Prof. Shaikh Nuzhat  
Professor In-charge  
Moot Court Association

Dr. Mrs. Asmita Vaidya  
Principal  
Government Law College

## 15 months to repair Swami Narayan flyover and SCLR

**Shefali Parab-Pandit**

MUMBAI

Following recommendations from a consultant, the BMC has undertaken structural repair and strengthening of the Santacruz-Chembur Link Road (SCLR) and Swami Narayan flyover in Kurla. The estimated cost of the work is around Rs31 crore and work is expected to complete in the next 15 months.

SCLR is a 6.45-kilometre-long and 45.7-metre-wide arterial road, linking the Western Express Highway in Santa Cruz with the Eastern Express Highway in Chembur. The six-lane road was developed as part of the World Bank-funded Mumbai Urban Transport Project, with an investment of Rs454 crore. The subsequent phase of construction was financed by

## Cost of Vikhroli bridge spirals to ₹104cr from ₹37cr

**Shefali Parab-Pandit**

MUMBAI

The Vikhroli East-West connector has faced multiple delays that have not only extended its completion timeline but also resulted in significant cost escalations.

The work order for the project was issued in 2018, with the bridge initially expected to be completed within 18 months. However, it is now projected to be ready just before the monsoon. These delays have led to a rise in the project's cost, which has escalated from Rs37 crore to Rs104 crore.

The connector, designed to link Lal Bahadur Shastri Marg and the Eastern Express Highway, is now expected to open for traffic by the end of May. Initially scheduled for completion by October 2020, the project faced delays due to several factors, including design changes, encroachment, land handover issues and the pandemic. As a result, the deadline has been extended multiple times, from May 2023 to December 2024, and now to May 2025.

A civic official said, "The girders have cracks, the footpath needs restoration... The surrounding area has overgrown plants that need removal, and the bridge's paintwork and rust also need attention.

Structural strengthening is essential to ensure the bridge's long-term safety, durability and functionality. Similarly the flyover in Kurla also needs repairs."



**Shefali Parab-Pandit**

MUMBAI

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**One held for offensive post****Agencies****MUMBAI**

A man from Malwani in Malad West has been arrested for allegedly making objectionable remarks against Maratha warrior Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj. The accused was been identified as 50-year-old Wajid Hazrat Momin. He allegedly uploaded a post on social media, referencing Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Wajid has been booked for inciting religious sentiments.

**Man stabbed in crowded hotel****Megha Kuchik****MUMBAI**

A 24-year-old man was attacked with a knife at a Bandra hotel for apparently refusing to offer a seat. The clip of the brutal assault has gone viral on social media. According to the police, the incident took place at Mohammad Hotel in Behram Nagar, Bandra East, on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday. In the visuals, the accused, Wasimullah Siddique, can be seen repeatedly attacking the victim, Faizan, in the crowded hotel. While the latter is said to be in stable condition, the former, a tailor, has been arrested.

**'Reckless' auto driver hits man****Agencies****MUMBAI**

A 33-year-old man, Aditya Chavan, was allegedly brutally attacked by an autorickshaw driver, Salman Khan, and his accomplice following an argument. The altercation escalated when Chavan confronted Khan over "reckless driving". Khan and his accomplice assaulted Chavan with sticks, leaving him severely injured. The Deonar police have registered a case and are hunting for the alleged assailants. They are reviewing CCTV footage from the area to gather additional evidence.

**Goregaon rly stn FOB to shut****FPJ News Service****MUMBAI**

Commuters at the Goregaon railway station will have to adjust their travel routes as the old north foot over bridge (FOB) is set to close for dismantling and reconstruction. The bridge will be inaccessible for 180 days, starting April 2. Passengers can use the new north FOB, which is located adjacent to the old structure. "The closure is part of ongoing efforts to modernise station infrastructure and improve commuter safety," said an official.

**Insurer gets ransom email****Poonam Apraj****MUMBAI**

A leading insurance company has filed a police complaint, alleging that it has received a threat email demanding Rs3 crore ransom in Bitcoin. The sender warned that if the money was not paid, the company's confidential data would be leaked. The N M Joshi Marg police have filed a case of extortion and a probe is on with the help of cyber experts. The angle of an insider's involvement is also being investigated. According to the police, the insurance company, located at Peninsula Park, Lower Parel, received the email a week ago. The sender demanded 4.2 Bitcoins, which is around Rs3 crore. Fearing data exposure, the insurer lodged a police complaint on Tuesday after conducting an internal investigation. A case has been filed under the Information Technology Act.

**A NEW HIGH | IIM-M has received 5.6L applications this year; last year figure was 13,500; rebranding a factor behind rise**

**IIM-M records a 4,000% surge in applications****Vikrant Jha****MUMBAI**

The number of applications for admission to the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Mumbai has witnessed an extraordinary surge this year, with a staggering 5,59,887 candidates vying for a spot, compared to just 13,534 applicants in 2024. This reflects an unprecedented rise of 4,034%. Despite this overwhelming number, only 500-530 students will eventually secure admission to the prestigious institute.

The general Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme received 2,69,356 applications this year, compared to 9,430 in 2024. The MBA in Operations and Supply Chain Management programme saw 77,618 applications in 2025, a stark rise from 2,665 last year. Similarly, the MBA in Sustainable Management received 2,12,913 applications, a massive jump from just 1,439 in 2024.

IIM-D director Prof Manoj Tiwari attributed this sharp increase to several factors. He said last year the institute's website was not linked in the

**GOLD STRIKE | 10% rise in total job offers; 198 companies participated, up from 180 last year; Microsoft offers highest package of ₹54 lakh**

**100% placement for IIM's '25 batch****Vikrant Jha****MUMBAI**

The Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Mumbai has once again achieved a 100% placement rate for its

**General MBA 2,69,356 applications (2024: 9,430)**

**Operations and Supply Chain Mgmt 77,618 (2024: 2,665)**

**Sustainable Management 2,12,913 (2024: 1,439)**

dropdown menu of the list of colleges provided by the Common Admission Test (CAT) as the administration had already approved the website for the 2024 admission cycle when they were rebranded as IIM Mumbai.

The rebranding of the institute, formerly known as the National Institute for Training in Industrial Engineering (NITIE), has played a crucial role in enhancing its visibility and appeal. The renaming was officially approved in August 2023 after the propos-

sal was passed in both Houses of Parliament.

Prof Tiwari said, "The most important factor has been the development of cutting-edge, industry-friendly courses. We thrive to make our students industry-ready at the time of graduation by imparting skills that are required in the changing nature of industries."

Vivek Khanjode, the dean of academic affairs, said Mumbai is a go-to location for industries from across the country, and that has nat-

**State to geo-tag schools for better policy planning****FPJ News Service****MUMBAI**

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has announced the introduction of the parenting calendar for the forthcoming academic session. The initiative is designed to facilitate structured and timely communication between parents and teachers, addressing critical aspects such as behavioural changes, exam-related stress and the specific needs of children with special educational requirements.

The parenting calendar will incorporate structured orientations, scheduled meetings and a range of initiatives to facilitate engagement between schools and parents.

By offering comprehensive guidance for effective interactions, the calendar will serve as a strategic guide for parental involvement, encouraging active participation in students' academic and personal development.

The geo-tagging project is part of the government's broader effort to streamline data collection and improve school infrastructure. Information gathered through the project will be consolidated and made available on the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) Plus portal, a national platform that

provides key insights on various aspects of schools, including student and teacher numbers, infrastructure, and facilities.

By integrating geo-tagged school data with information from other government departments, the state aims to create a more cohesive and accessible system for educational planning. The consolidated data will help authorities improve resource allocation, enhance program effectiveness, and ensure that every school is accounted for in policy decisions.

A budget of Rs1.04 crore has been approved for this project, and the government has already signed an agreement with MRSAC to begin the process.



The state government, in alignment with the National Education Policy 2020, has approved the development of five online courses focusing on indigenous folk art and handicrafts. The initiative aims to preserve the state's cultural heritage, while students with hands-on learning experiences in traditional crafts.

These programmes will cover Warli painting, pottery and sculpture, craftsmanship (card-making), bamboo work and weaving. Each course will follow a structured curriculum across three levels – basic, intermediate, and advanced – totalling approximately nine to 10 hours, with each level comprising around three hours of content.

**'Threatening or attempting suicide ground for divorce'****Agencies****MUMBAI**

A spouse threatening or attempting to commit suicide amounts to 'cruelty' and is a valid ground for divorce, the Bombay High Court (HC) has said.

In the order passed last month, Justice R M Joshi of the HC's Aurangabad bench upheld the decree passed by a family court dissolving a couple's marriage. The woman had moved the HC challenging the family court order. The man had alleged his wife threatened to send him and his family to jail by committing suicide. This amounts to cruelty under provisions of the Hindu Marriage Act, he said in the plea seeking divorce before the family court.

The HC bench said the evidence submitted by the husband and other witnesses before the family court more than sufficiently demonstrates that the husband's contention of cruelty is proved. The man has not only alleged that the wife used to threaten him and his family to send them to jail by committing suicide but, in fact, also once made an attempt to end her life, the court said. "Such an act on the part of the spouse would amount to such a cruelty that

it becomes a ground for decree of divorce," the HC said. The bench refused to quash the family court order granting divorce, noting that no perversity is seen and hence no interference is required.

As per the case, the couple got married in April 2009 and has a daughter. The man, however, claimed his in-laws used to frequently visit his house and cause interference in his marital life. He said that in 2010, his wife left his house and went to her parents' home, refusing to return.

The man also claimed his wife had threatened to commit suicide and once even attempted to end her life. He alleged that his wife said she would file false complaints against him and his family.

The woman, in her plea, said she was abused by her husband and his father and hence left the matrimonial home. She denied having caused any cruelty to her husband.

According to the police, the incident occurred between February 15 and March 12. It all started when the complainant, resident of Pune, received a call from a unknown person who claimed that her Aadhaar card information had been misused to open a bank account for money laundering.

Claiming to be a senior inspector in the Nashik police force, the scammer also shared a bogus Enforcement Directorate (ED) notice with the senior citizen, warning that she is under surveillance of law agencies. The fraud also threatened the complainant that if she would not cooperate, they would impli-

**Being made scapegoat, counter-alleges member****TDR FRAUD****Urvi Mahajan****MUMBAI**

One of the members of the Green Garden Apartments CHS Ltd in Deonar, Gaurav Chopra, who is a chartered accountant, has alleged that the managing committee (MC) members have committed a fraud and siphoned crores under the garb of paying consultants.

Chopra, a resident of the society since December 2022, has filed an affidavit before the Bombay High Court, claiming that the MC executed fraudulent transactions, and is now attempting to make him scapegoat for exposing the financial irregularities.

His affidavit comes in response to a suit filed by the society against him, its former chairman and multiple real estate developers, challenging the validity of transferable development rights (TDR) sale agreements allegedly executed without general body approval.

The society has also sought a refund of Rs16.51 crore allegedly paid unlawfully to two consultancy firms. Advocate Prerak Chaudhary, representing Chopra, said that his client has also filed a criminal complaint with the Govandi police, accusing the MC of cheating and criminal breach of trust. Chopra's affidavit alleged that MC members misused society funds to pay legal fees for their personal defense, violating the Maharashtra Cooperative Societies Act.

Chopra has also alleged that his signature was forged on a July 2023 mortgage deed executed between the society and JP Nestor LLP. He is in the process of taking legal action in this regard.

The controversy dates back to August 2023 when the BMC awarded TDR to the society as compensation for 7,284.10 sq m land acquisition in 1986. The MC subsequently sold the TDR to developers, executing agreements between August and September 2023. However, Chopra claims that while the MC was fully aware of these transactions, it has now conveniently chosen to challenge them to deflect from financial irregularities.

According to Chopra's affidavit, the society's financial

**IN BRIEF**

**1 Chopra files affidavit before HC, levels serious allegations against the managing committee of Green Garden CHS**

**2 Also files a criminal complaint with the Govandi police, accusing the committee of cheating and criminal breach of trust**

**3 Despite the society receiving ₹46 crore from the TDR sale, its financial statements showed only ₹25.17 crore, points out the affidavit**

records for 2023-24 revealed consultancy expenses amounting to Rs20.38 crore. He found that Rs6.5 crore was paid to JP Nestor LLP (defendant 3) for assisting in obtaining TDR, while Rs13.80 crore was transferred to NV Consultants (defendant 4), whose role remains unclear. Also, Rs3.42 crore was recorded as outstanding payments to NV Consultants. Despite the society receiving Rs46 crore from the TDR sale, its financial statements showed only Rs25.17 crore, the affidavit claimed. In December 2024, Chopra lodged a complaint with the deputy registrar of cooperative societies, prompting an inspection of the society's records. Later, an audit flagged several financial discrepancies, including payments made to NV Consultants.

The registrar issued a show cause notice to the MC for failing to conduct an annual general meet (AGM) for 2024-25. In response, the MC attempted to hold an AGM on January 5, 2025. However, members refused to adopt the financial statements, further raising suspicions.

Chopra pointed out that while the suit challenges the TDR transactions, it does not seek relief against the society's secretary and treasurer, who were responsible for approving all transactions. This, he argued, indicates that the suit is a ploy to shift blame away from key decision-makers. The suit is likely to come up for hearing next week.

**Man gets life term for killing cousin who helped police****Charul Shah Joshi****MUMBAI**

A sessions court has sentenced a 32-year-old man from Malwani to life imprisonment for killing his cousin following a dispute over providing the CCTV footage to the police, who were hunting for the convict's brother in another case. Six other accused – the man's siblings – were awarded two years of imprisonment for unlawful assembly.

Sultan Shaikh, the complainant and father of victim Nazir, resided with his family, including two sons and three daughters, in Malwani. His sister-in-law, Naseem Qureshi, lived in the same lane with her four sons, two daughters and her husband.

When Shaikh and his sons, Faiz and Pandey, installed a CCTV camera outside Shaikh's house. His daughter showed the footage to the officials, after which they left.

This irked Qureshi, who visited Shaikh's house and argued with him. Later, her another son Shahnawaz arrived and asked him to meet outside to resolve the dispute. When Shaikh and his sons, including Nazir, reached the spot, they were attacked by Qureshi's children, said the prosecution. It added that they fatally stabbed Nazir and also attacked neighbours Faiz and Rakesh Pandey after which they left.

Public prosecutor Sudhir Sapkale examined 17 witnesses, including Faiz and Pandey. Pending the trial, Shaikh passed away in 2023. The court, however, held only Shahnawaz guilty of murder, while acquitting the others of murder charges. The judge said, "From the facts and circumstances, it is evident that the common object of the assembly (of the accused siblings) was to voluntarily cause hurt to Sultan." It can't be concluded that they were aware their actions could result in Nazir's death, the court said. Hence, except for Shahnawaz, others can't be held liable for murder, it added.

**After Growel's Mall shuts, BMC starts action for lack of OC****Dhairya Gajara****MUMBAI**

The BMC has finally initiated the process to prosecute Growel's 101 Mall for non-compliance of occupancy certificate (OC) rules. The establishment recently wound up its operation following the Bombay High Court order over failure to obtain environmental clearance.

The FPJ had reported about the mall's breaches earlier. Located in Kandivali (E), the mall was served eviction notices twice in the past, however, it didn't pay heed to them. Notably, the civic body didn't initiate the prosecution process back then.

On January 27, the deputy chief engineer from building proposals (BP) department had issued eviction notices to six licensees, including Croma, Reliance Nippon Life Insurance, Grauer & Weil India Ltd (the mall's parent company), Fun O Kids, Home Town and Mobitech Creations Pvt Ltd.

As they failed to vacate the premises once again, the BMC has now initiated the process to prosecute the mall and the businesses for operating illegally from the complex's A wing. The BP department has submitted the report to the legal wing, which will file a

complaint against the violators, sources have revealed.

"An engineer visited the site and gathered proof that they failed to vacate the premises. This will be used against the violators. After scrutiny, the legal wing will file the complaint for failure to obtain OC and trading without permission," said an official.

In November 2024, Kandivali's Lokhandwala Residents' Association founder and social activist Shishir Shetty had served a legal notice to the Chief Minister and BMC chief for their "inaction" over the mall's violations. The notice highlighted the BMC's "failure to take over the reserved plot, non-compliance of environment clearance and lack of OC".

In August 2021, member of legislative council Pravin Darekar had highlighted the OC issue. Subsequently, the BMC had issued an eviction notice to the mall, but it remained defiant.

**Gearing up for Gudi Padwa**

Artist giving final touches to the 22-foot statue of Sant Dnyaneshwar at Bedekar Sadan in Girgaon for Gudi Padwa Shobha Yatra —Vijay Gehl

**Senior loses ₹2.57cr in digi arrest****FPJ News Service****MUMBAI**

Posing as police, the scammer extracted Rs2.57 crore from a 74-year-old woman after trapping her in a digital arrest scam and threatening to implicate her son in a money laundering case if their demands were not met.

The woman, in her plea, said she was abused by her husband and his father and hence left the matrimonial home. She denied having caused any cruelty to her husband.

According to the police, the incident occurred between February

**SAVE MUMBAI** | The incessant drilling reverberated in both houses of the legislature recently; what didn't find a mention was the dangerous acrobatics citizens engage in daily, and plumes of dust erasing the skyline and choking respiratory passages

# Roadworks: Never-ending trail of ditches, dust



Bora Bazaar, Ballard Estate, Fort



Ganpatrao Kadam Marg, Lower Parel



Peer Khan Street, Nagpada



Bhai Jivanji Lane, Charni Road



Dinkar Gangaram Zarapkar Chowk, near Opera House



Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel



Grant Road



Outside Borivali railway station Platform 1



St George Hospital, CSMT

**PoP issue no worry for eco-friendly Girgaoncha Raja**

**Manoj Ramakrishnan**  
MUMBAI

While the state government and Plaster of Paris (PoP) Ganesh makers are caught in a stalemate over the legality of the idols, Girgaoncha Raja pandal at Nikadwari Lane is now reaping benefits of its nearly century-old tradition of environmentally safer festivals. The 98-year-old Girgaon mandal will inaugurate this year's celebrations on Gudi Padwa, which falls on Sunday, with 'Shadu Mati Pujan Sohala'. The ritual marks the start of the idol's creation for the festival in August-September. Shadu mati is the clay that the government has suggested as a substitute for PoP, which can cause environmental damage to water bodies.

Ganesh Lingayat, secretary of Nikadwari Lane Sarvajanik Shri Ganeshotsav Mandal, said, "There are difficulties in creating and immersing tall clay idols. It takes us 65 days to create the idol and hence it is made at the pandal site." That is the reason why the pandal organises puja so early, he said, adding that the mechanism and trolley used for immersing clay idols are different.

Environmentalist Rohit Joshi said that there are many examples of sarvajanik mandals that have abandoned PoP and switched to clay idols. He is the petitioner in the public interest litigation seeking strict implementation of the 2020 Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) guidelines against immersion of PoP idols in natural water bodies.

Many mandals are waiting for the end of the legal deadlock to start planning for the festival. Nayan Dumre, secretary of Fortcha Raja Sarvajanik Utsav Mandal, said, "I do not agree with the argument that PoP is harmful to the environment. There has been a trend for tall idols since the 1990s. The festival is



**BACKGROUND**  
The Girgaon pandal was established in 1928 with a one-foot idol made of clay; its height was increased to 18 feet around 1982-83. In 2024, the 21-foot idol was carved from clay, bamboo, grass and other natural materials. Weighing 3,500 kg, it was certified as the tallest idol sculpted from shadu mati in the World Records Book of India.

in the rainy season and mandals are worried about the stability of clay idols. However, we will look at options after the court hearings."

Lingayat agreed that idols towering between 30 and 40 feet are difficult to sculpt with clay. "The tall idols are one of the attractions of Mumbai's world-famous Ganeshotsav festival. Also, I do not think there is any conclusive proof that PoP idols are not eco-friendly," said Lingayat.

However, Joshi dismissed the claims that tall idols cannot be sculpted with clay. "This is a fake narrative that is being passed around. A sculptor can create an idol out of any material. The idol manufacturers are spreading the propaganda because PoP idols are cheap, easier to make and give higher profit margins," said Joshi.

## State to celebrate poet Narayan Surve's birth centenary in '26

**FPJ News Service**

MUMBAI

on Thursday in Prabhadevi, at the third anniversary of 'Marathi Athav Divas' at the Surve Sahitya Sammelan at Ravindra Natya Mandir. Shelandar also declared that starting next year, cash prize of Rs50,000 will be awarded in his personal capacity to a distinguished literary figure in the field of labour literature. This award will be presented annually during the Narayan Surve Sahitya Sammelan. The Surve Sahitya

Sammelan, presided over by veteran theatre artist Pramod Pawar, honoured long-time supporters of 'Marathi Athav Divas', including Bhau Korgaonkar, Dr Mahesh Keluskar, and Ashok Naigaonkar, for their unwavering support. Also, budding writers such as Pradeep Awate, Yogita Rajkar, Madhukar Matondkar, Sunil Ubale, Sujata Raut, and Safar Ali Isaf were felicitated with the Jahirnama Award.

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09051	Dadar	Bhusaval	Mon,Wed,Sat	30.06.2025
09052	Bhusaval	Dadar	Mon,Wed,Sat	30.06.2025

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**NOTICE INVITING TENDER** Date: 28.03.2025

NTT No.	Brief Work Description	Estimated Cost ( $\text{₹ Lacs}$ )	Cost of EMD ( $\text{₹ Lacs}$ )	Pre bid Meeting Date	Due Date & Time of Submission	Date & Time of Bid Opening
AEML/MDB/2024-25/68	Supply B Services of Miscellaneous Material required for commissioning of proposed 33/11kV DSS in Mumbai Distribution Area	452.9	4.0	07.04.2025 11.30 hrs.	21.04.2025 16.00 hrs.	22.04.2025 16.00 hrs.
AEML/MDB/2024-25/69	DMS System Upgrade at 650 Nos of 11kV CSS Locations at AEML	4B2.4	4.8	14.04.2025 11.30 hrs.	28.04.2025 16.00 hrs.	29.04.2025 16.00 hrs.
AEML/MDB/2024-25/70	Supply of Assorted ratings of Streetlight LED	119.5	1.0	10.04.2025 11.30 hrs.	21.04.2025 16.00 hrs.	22.04.2025 16.00 hrs.
AEML/MDB/2024-25/71	Supply of Assorted sizes of RCC Tiles	462.3	2.0	04.04.2025 11.30 hrs.	18.04.2025 16.00 hrs.	19.04.2025 16.00 hrs.
AEML/MDB/2024-25/72	Construction of Postal Colony Chembur DSS (Beggars Home DSS)	878.0	8.8	15.04.2025 11.00 hrs.	21.04.2025 16.00 hrs.	22.04.2025 16.00 hrs.
AEML/MDB/2024-25/73	Construction of Four Bunglow DSS (Mudran Kamgar DSS)	512.0	5.1	15.04.2025 12.00 hrs.	21.04.2025 16.00 hrs.	22.04.2025 16.00 hrs.
AEML/MDB/2024-25/74	Construction of Shivali Nagar EV DSS	289.0	2.9	15.04.2025 11.30 hrs.	21.04.2025 16.00 hrs.	22.04.2025 16.00 hrs.
AEML/MDB/2024-25/75	Construction of Charkop Sector 2 DSS (Saint Mary Niheda DSS)	712.0	7.1	15.04.2025 15.30 hrs.	21.04.2025 16.00 hrs.	22.04.2025 16.00 hrs.
AEML/MDB/2024-25/76	Design, development and deployment of integrated Power Management software platform, with comprehensive support for a period of 3 years;	500.0	5.0	11.04.2025 11.30 hrs.	26.04.2025 16.00 hrs.	28.04.2025 16.00 hrs.
AEML/MDB/2024-25/77	Erection, Removal and Replacement of Octagonal Street Light Poles and other related activities	56.1	0.5	07.04.2025 11.30 hrs.	18.04.2025 16.00 hrs.	19.04.2025 16.00 hrs.

All materials and services will be as per Adani Electricity Mumbai Limited specifications / BOQ.

Pre bid meeting will be done in person / electronically / telephonically and same will be communicated separately.

For details with respect to Services / Materials, Qualifying Requirements, Terms & Conditions, Services / Submission of Tender documents etc.

please visit our website [www.adanielectricity.com](http://www.adanielectricity.com) → Open Tenders. The Tender documents will be available on the above link by 28th March, 2025.

Tenderer must submit their bids online / via electronic submission. Vendor should keep checking the website [www.adanielectricity.com](http://www.adanielectricity.com) for any Corrigendum / Amendment. No separate information regarding Corrigendum will be published in the newspaper.

Date: 28.03.2025

## Public toilets, police chowky on coastal road

**Shefali Parab-Pandit**

MUMBAI

Marine Drive. To evaluate the feasibility of this proposal and obtain the required NOC for the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), the civic body has appointed an environmental expert consultant. M/s Building Environment India Pvt Ltd has been appointed as the consulting firm to obtain

the necessary NOC. It has also been assigned the task of constructing the walkway between Lotus Jetty and Vadodara Palace, where a protective wall will be erected. Additionally, it will assess the feasibility of strengthening the wall and obtaining the CRZ clearances for this work.

**THE FREE PRESS JOURNAL**

**Senior Diplomat Haim Divon speaks to Free Press Journal exclusively on the public discontent and the brute suppression of liberal voices by Israeli PM Netanyahu, the threat from Iran and why the youth is fleeing Israel**



**The Big FPJ Dialogue with Haim Divon**

**Senior Diplomat, Israel**

**Afrida Ali**  
Executive Editor

Scan QR Code to watch Interview



**Briefs****MUMBAI**  
**AC services on 3 routes**

The Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) has launched AC bus services on three key routes from Thursday, enhancing passenger comfort. Routes include A-7 (Vijay Vallabh Chowk-Vikhroli), A-511 (Ghatkopar-Nerul), and AC-53 (Ghatkopar-Kalamboli). Services will be gradually introduced with 30 new buses from wet lease operators. The routes will operate at intervals ranging from 15 to 50 minutes, with the earliest departure at 4:05am and the latest at 12:30am. BEST aims to modernise transport, reduce congestion, and promote sustainability.

**MUMBAI**  
**Crackdown on fake tickets**

The Central Railway vigilance team uncovered a fake ticket scam where agents issued confirmed tickets from remote stations and resold them at inflated prices in Mumbai. Inspections on Godan Express (March 24) and Pawan Express (March 26) found reprinted fake tickets originally issued from Ara, Jangali, and Gadarwara stations. Passengers with forged tickets were penalised. Agents reportedly charged Rs3,000-5,000 for tickets worth Rs1,000. Authorities are conducting raids to apprehend those involved and ensure fair ticketing practices.

**MIRA-BHAYANDAR**  
**Scam: Woman loses ₹2.39L**

A 29-year-old woman from Bhayandar, who is employed with a business software development services firm, became the latest target of cyber crooks and lost ₹2.39 lakh in a part-time job fraud. The complainant said that she received a message on her WhatsApp number from an unidentified sender with an offer of a part-time job. The crooks deposited Rs1,200 as earnings for the tasks she completed during the initial stages. She later deposited more than ₹2.39 lakh but never got the money back. A case was filed Navghar police station in Bhayandar.

**RAIGAD**  
**SHRC ruling in assault case**

A Raigad woman approached the Maharashtra State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) after police allegedly refused to register her complaint against her husband, son, and brother-in-law for sexual assault. In her complaint to the SHRC, the woman also alleged that multiple officers had abused her over time. The SHRC, after receiving the complaint, repeatedly sought explanations from the police. The authorities later informed the commission that a case of rape and other offences under the Indian Penal Code

# Missing two-year-old killed by neighbour

**Raina Assainar**  
NAVI MUMBAI

Within 24 hours of finding a missing toddler's body at her home in Taloja, Navi Mumbai police arrested 29-year-old man Mohammed Ansari, the victim's neighbour. Ansari, originally from Jharkhand, lived opposite the victim, two-year-old Harshika Sharma, with his wife and three sons. The children often played



together, leading to frequent arguments between their mothers. Ansari, who recently lost Rs42,000 in an online game, planned to extort money from the girl's father.

On Tuesday afternoon, when Harshika briefly entered her house while playing in the verandah, Ansari saw an opportunity. He sent his children outside with Rs20 for chocolates, picked up Harshika when her mother

went inside, strangled her with a shoelace, and hid her body in a rxine bag.

That night, as a foul smell spread, the family discovered the bag on their bathroom loft, containing their daughter's body. The police, along with the crime branch and a dog squad, launched an investigation.

They identified the bag as Ansari's, which he had found on a train six months earlier.

He confessed to the crime, saying he couldn't dispose of the body as police were searching the building.

Ansari will be produced in court on Friday. Taloja police, led by senior inspector Pravin Bhagat and Crime Branch Unit III, headed by inspector Hanif Mulani, are investigating the case further.

The crime branch and a dog squad, launched an investigation.

**SCHEME ENDS | BMC to end scheme from April 5 due to public complaints of overcharging and extortion; lack of monitoring and accountability led to failure**

## Why clean-up marshals failed

**Devashri Bhujbal**  
NAVI MUMBAI

The BMC on Thursday announced that the 'Clean-Up Marshals' scheme will be discontinued from April 5, following several complaints from the citizens accusing the marshals of overcharging and extorting money.

The marshals were appointed under the 'Swatch Mumbai Abhiyaan'. However, the question arises: Despite multiple suspensions and revisions, why did the scheme fail?

According to Mumbai-based social activists, the scheme was bound to fail as the marshals were appointed by private contractors, who are not answerable beyond a point, unlike government servants. "One of the main reasons is lack of monitoring and accountability. The prime appointing agency was the BMC, and we did not see the civic officials conducting an audit of actions taken by the marshals on the ground. There was no transparency,



and the men misused their powers. They did nothing but loot the public," said Clarence Pinto, an activist from Kalina.

Pinto said that citizens will welcome the decision of discontinuing Clean-Up Marshals. Activist Anil Galgali highlighted that the marshals were busy extorting money from people only for throwing garbage and spitting. They

were supposed to remove unauthorised hoardings, which never happened. Additionally, they took actions in non-permissible areas like hospitals, causing more trouble to citizens.

In a statement released by the BMC, the primary reason given for discontinuing the Clean-up Marshals is violation of rules. "Not taking actions

**IN BRIEF**

- 1 Activists claim marshals extorted fines but failed in key tasks like removing illegal hoardings
- 2 Violations included acting in non-permitted areas, collecting extra fines, and damaging BMC's reputation
- 3 Only BMC staff will collect fines; contractors will no longer be appointed

against places notified by the administration, repeated visits, inspecting and taking actions in places not permitted by the BMC like private hotels, construction sites, etc., collecting additional fines from the violators, irregularities in the job among others. The Clean-up Marshals' behaviour also damaged the reputation of the BMC," it said.

Shenoy added that the objective of the government seemed to be increasing the revenue through penalties rather than training citizens.

"If hefty fines are to be imposed on the common man for not following rules, fines should also be imposed on the government servants who fail to do their duties diligently," he said. Deputy municipal commissioner, Kiran Dighavkar, said, "As the BMC's by-laws will change, the penalties and actions to be taken will also be revised. Going further, the BMC will not appoint contractors for collecting fines. It will be done by the BMC staff only."

## Drug lab busted in Raigad; 2 held with MD worth ₹50cr

**Somendra Sharma**  
NAVI MUMBAI



The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has busted a Mephedrone (MD) manufacturing lab in Raigad and arrested two persons, including a chemical science graduate. Officials seized 46kg of MD worth Rs50 crore in the operation, sources said.

The chemical science graduate has been identified as R Shedge, who had topped in Chemistry, was previously arrested in 2018 and 2009 in similar cases, and another accused is KN Palkar.

On March 22, NCB Mumbai officials, under the supervision of additional director Amit Ghawate, seized 46.8kg of a white powdery substance purported to be MD and arrested the duo from Bhandup. The drug was found hidden in a plastic container at one of the accused's residences.

During Shedge's examination, it was revealed that he manufactured the drug in a lab at Mahad Industrial Area, Raigad. The lab was raided, and a suspicious chemical was seized. Shedge, a known supplier, has two NDPS Act cases registered against him by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) and was out

## 2 gold traders cheated of ₹1.45 crore

**Megha Kuchik**  
NAVI MUMBAI

The BKC police have registered an FIR against three persons for allegedly cheating two diamond merchants out of Rs1.45 crore. According to the FIR, Sandeep Bhadani, 37, a Mira Road resident engaged in diamond trading through his friend Niles Kalthiyia's company, DJ Diamond, had been dealing with agent Rajesh Aviya for four years.

On May 1, 2024, at 11 am, Aviya introduced Bhadani to diamond trader Hardik Desani, who assured payment within 30 to 45 days if a deal was finalised. Bhadani agreed and handed over 142.43 carats of diamonds worth Rs37.86 lakh. Before the deadline, Desani requested more diamonds, and Bhadani, through Aviya, provided an additional 132.77 carats worth Rs46.46 lakh, with Aviya generating a receipt.

After 45 days, Desani repeatedly delayed payments and gave multiple excuses. He later asked for more diamonds, promising to settle all dues together but failed to pay or return the diamonds.

Bhadani later learned that Desani and his associate, Upendra Doshi, had similarly defrauded another diamond merchant of diamonds worth Rs60.75 lakh.

## METRO LINE-9 1ST PHASE LIKELY BY YEAR-END

**Project progress**

MMRDA is expediting Metro Line-9 construction

Phase 1 (Dahisar East to Kashigao) targeted for completion by year-end

**High-Level meeting**

Metropolitan Commissioner Dr Sanjay Mukherjee met Alstom India MD Anil Kumar Saini

Discussions focused on fast-tracking signalling works and leveraging global expertise

**Execution strategy:**

Use of advanced technology for efficiency

Team leaders assigned for better coordination

Emphasis on maintaining world-class standards

**Benefits**

Faster connectivity between Mumbai suburbs and Mira Bhayandar

Reduced travel time and congestion

Strengthened public transport and sustainable urban mobility

TEXT: Kamal Mishra

## IIT-B technique for 3D metal printing

**FPJ News Service**

NAVI MUMBAI

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT-B) have introduced a novel technique that enhances the efficiency and strength of 3D metal printing. The innovation, termed 'in-situ laser remelting', allows for the production of denser and stronger structures at a rate 2.5 times faster than conventional methods.

The study, led by PhD student Rajendra Hodgir under the guidance of Professors Ramesh Singh and Soham Mujumdar from the department

ment of mechanical engineering, addresses the persistent issue of structural defects in high-speed 3D metal printing.

The team incorporated a crucial additional step in the printing process, wherein each printed layer is reheated with a laser before the next layer is added. "High deposition rates – printing a lot of material too quickly – often lead to defects such as porosities, cracks, and residual stresses," explained professor Mujumdar. "In some cases, large grains can weaken the overall structure. Smaller grains are usually preferred since their bound-

aries act as barriers to crack propagation, making the material stronger and tougher," the professor said.

By remelting each layer immediately after deposition, the technique reduces porosity in the final product by 83%, improves surface smoothness by 59%, and enhances microhardness by 34%. Unlike other post-processing techniques, which require additional machinery and time-consuming treatments, this method operates seamlessly on existing 3D printing machines. "It's happening on the same machine. You just turn off the powder

and run the laser," Mujumdar added.

The research was conducted at the Machine Tools Lab in IIT-B using an experimental laser Directed Energy Deposition (L-DED) setup developed by Professor Singh's group. The team determined that using a laser power of 2000 W and a scan speed of 400 mm/min produced the densest final structure in stainless steel (SS316L), a material widely used in aerospace, biomedical, and industrial applications.

The researchers believe that their technique could strengthen India's free-

reliance in advanced manufacturing, reducing dependence on imported high-precision components. The team is refining the process to optimise efficiency further. Instead of remelting after every layer, they are investigating whether applying the technique every second or third layer can achieve similar benefits at a lower cost.

Also, they are developing computational models to predict how different remelting parameters influence material properties, potentially enabling smarter and more optimised manufacturing processes.

The Panvel Municipal Corporation (PMC) has collected Rs 10 crore in property taxes in the last four days. With another four days left, PMC has ramped up its recovery efforts by moving beyond pre-seizure and warrant notices and initiating the seizure of properties belonging to tax defaulters. So far, 132 properties have been seized. "The intensified drive has prompted a surge in taxpayer response," an official said.

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## HC calls for illegal structure survey in Navi Mumbai

**Urvi Mahajan**  
NAVI MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court has directed the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) to conduct a "thorough survey" to ascertain within four months the number of illegal or irregular constructions in its jurisdiction. The court has also asked the civic body to issue notices to owners or occupants concerned and provide them an opportunity to be heard before initiating further action.

A division bench of Chief Justice Alok Aradhe and Justice MS Karnik was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by Kishor Shetty, raising concerns about illegal constructions in Navi Mumbai and seeking strict action. Additionally, the bench was addressing a contempt petition filed by Rajeev Mishra, highlighting the authorities' failure to comply with a 2018 judgment mandating action against illegal structures.

In its order, the court noted that the PIL alleged rampant illegal construction within the NMMC's jurisdiction and the civic body failed to take effective action despite issuing notices.

Senior counsel for NMMC, Anil Anturkar, acknowledged that the civic body, as a statutory authority, is duty-bound to ensure the removal of such constructions. The court clarified that the NMMC must

**DIRECTIVES**

The court asked the civic body to issue notices to owners or occupants concerned

Court noted that the PIL alleged rampant illegal construction within the NMMC's jurisdiction

Civic body failed to take effective action

adhere to the guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court regarding demolitions. It also granted aggrieved parties the liberty to seek legal recourse. The court disposed of the PIL and scheduled the contempt petition for a hearing after two weeks.

In October 2024, the HC had taken a serious view of the unchecked illegal constructions in Navi Mumbai and said that they were causing "enormous difficulties to urban residents". The HC had then directed the planning authorities – NMMC, MIDC, and CIDCO – to take strict action or face contempt proceedings.

Initially, an order was passed on November 8, 2018, which had mandated the demolition of existing illegal structures and the prevention of new ones. Earlier, NMMC had filed an affidavit stating that 6,565 illegal constructions had been identified, with partial demolition carried out on 3,096 structures.

**VALUATION DISCREPANCIES**

## Diamond smuggling: Valuation dispute gets accused bail

**Pranali Lotlikar**  
NAVI MUMBAI

The Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate of the Esplanade court, Mumbai, has granted bail to a man arrested for allegedly smuggling diamonds worth Rs1.65 crore. The court observed discrepancies in the valuation of the diamond and said the fixing of the valuation of the diamonds would take time; hence it granted him bail on a personal bond of Rs1 lakh.

The court noted that the dispute over valuation should be determined during the trial and that further custody was unnecessary, as the accused had already provided statements and the goods were seized. The bail conditions include surrendering his passport for six months, cooperating with probe, and not influencing witnesses.

The accused, Riddham Kakadiya, was arrested on May 1, under the Customs Act, 1962, on allegations of concealing and smuggling diamonds. However, the defence argued that the valuation of the seized diamonds was inflated to make the offense non-bailable. The

court noted that the dispute over valuation should be determined during the trial and that further custody was unnecessary, as the accused had already provided statements and the goods were seized. The bail conditions include surrendering his passport for six months, cooperating with probe, and not influencing witnesses.

Several police personnel had also been injured in such attacks and forced to make a hasty retreat. Since the killing of Jaffer in Chennai on Wednesday, an eerie silence prevailed in the locality. Security has been stepped up in the locality to avoid any law and order issue and the situation is presently under control, an official from Khadakpada police station said. Jaffer's family has been informed about the incident, the police said.

ADGP-Greater Chennai Police Commissioner A Arun told reporters that Jaffer and two others tried to fly out of Chennai after committing the crimes. According to police, Jaffer opened fire on cops and police had no other choice to shoot him and he was injured but succumbed later.

## Forger forges judge's sign

PTI  
PUNE

An accused in a case of forgery and copyright violation has allegedly secured anticipatory bail from the Bombay High Court using a fake order with a forged signature of a Pune court judge, police said on Thursday. The accused, Haribhai Chemte, got the bail in January, and is currently absconding, they said. According to police, CTR Manufacturing Pvt Ltd, a Pune-based firm, filed a complaint in 2022 after finding their patented drawings and designs had been misused by a Chennai-based company.

Investigations suggested that some employees of CTR, in collusion with officials from the accused firm, were involved in the unauthorised use of these proprietary designs. Chemte, who worked in the quality control department at CTR Manufacturing between 2016 and 2017, was allegedly involved in the design theft, as per police sources. The Vimanik police in Pune registered a case in 2022 on charges of forgery and copyright violation. During the investigation, Chemte's name also cropped up and he was named among the several accused in the case. "Chemte, whose anticipatory bail application was pending before the Bombay High Court, hatched a conspiracy," a police officer said. "He faked a court order under Section 169 of the CrPC, bearing the forged signature of a Judicial Magistrate (First Class) in January this year, and submitted the fraudulent handwritten order to the Bombay High Court to secure bail," the official said quoting the fresh FIR now registered against the accused.

**UNDOCUMENTED | Lack of 'smashan dakhla' creates ordeal**

# Katkari community faces hassles during cremation

Indu Bhagat

PUNE

Datta Baban Jadhav (65) belonging to the Katkari community, died on Mar 25 around 6pm due to an alcohol overdose. However, his body was only cremated the following day at 2pm. For over 18 hours, his body lay on the streets of Khadakwala in Pune. The relatives were unable to perform the last rites due to a lack of necessary documents. They claimed that when they approached officials for a 'smashan dakhla' (cremation certificate), they were asked for basic documents like an Aadhar card, which they could not provide as the community does not possess them. Speaking to The Free Press Journal (FPJ), Gangu Datta Jadav, wife of the deceased, said, "My husband was an alcoholic. On Monday evening, after dinner, he drank alcohol and went to sleep, but later when we checked, he had passed away. Afterwards, we struggled to perform the last rites as no one was ready to give us the materials required for cremation. The officials asked us for documents, but we are poor and don't know how to obtain the documents."



"We struggled to perform the last rites as no one was ready to give us the materials required for cremation. The officials asked us for documents, but we are poor and don't know how to obtain the documents."

—Gangu Datta Jadav  
wife of the deceased

"The authorities are performing their duties—cremation cannot be performed without a 'smashan dakhla', so we can't really blame anyone. These people do not have documents, and hence, the delay was caused."

—Kiran Survase  
Tahsildar, Haveli taluka

an Aadhar card, which we don't have. After trying everything, we finally contacted a journalist who made a few calls to senior officials. With his help, the police arrived, and the cremation could finally take place. We request the authorities to provide us with all the required documents." Meanwhile, speaking to the FPJ, Kiran Survase, tahsildar, Haveli taluka, said that the family was allowed to

proceed with the cremation after hearing their problems. "This is not our failure; we organise camps to provide documents. These people had gone to Karnataka and have recently returned, which is why they lack documents. The authorities are performing their duties—cremation cannot be performed without a 'smashan dakhla', so we can't really blame anyone. These people do not have

documents, and hence, the delay was caused," Survase told the FPJ.

"A week ago, a camp was held to begin the documentation process for the Katkari community, and basic documents were provided to them. Another camp is scheduled, and within a month, every individual from the community will have the necessary documents," he added. Last month, the FPJ published a report highlighting the challenges faced by the Katkari community due to the lack of essential documents. The report had an impact, prompting the Pune district collector to direct officials to set up camps in areas with a significant Katkari population, particularly those residing near the NDA. According to the data shared by the officials, the authorities have so far worked on 491 documents, including corrections and new issuances.

# PMPML records 53k breakdowns in 3 years

Ankit Shukla

PUNE

The Pune Mahanagar Parivahan Mahamandal Limited (PMPML) witnessed a total of 53,243 bus breakdowns over the last three years. According to data obtained by The Free Press Journal (FPJ), 14,015 PMPML buses broke down in 2022, including 4,067 self-owned and 9,948 leased ones. The number increased in 2023, with 17,784 buses breaking down—7,134 PMPML-owned and 10,649 leased. In 2024, the situation worsened, with a total of 21,444 breakdowns, including 6,349 self-owned and 15,085 leased buses.



owned and 976 leased buses. In March so far, 349 self-owned and 879 leased PMPML buses have broken down.

There seems to be no end in sight for this issue. Activists and commuters have expressed disappointment with the state of the public transport in Pune. On the other hand, the officials blame ageing buses for the expiry of their lifespan.

## WCI earns COBIS accreditation

Staff Reporter

PUNE

Wellington College International Pune (WCI Pune) has been accredited by the Council of British International Schools (COBIS) just two years after its launch. The five-year membership follows a rigorous inspection in December 2024, confirming the school meets high standards in British education.

As part of its partnership with Wellington College UK, WCI Pune recently hosted key figures, including governor Mark Milliken-Smith and head of Sustainability Ana Romero. They engaged with students, teachers, and parents, discussing Wellington's values and future collaborations.

Romero praised WCI Pune's commitment to sustainability and plans to partner with the school to enhance student engagement with environmental initiatives. The COBIS membership and ongoing ties with Wellington UK reinforce WCI Pune's commitment to excellence in education.

## Gaffe: Dhangekar uses Congress logo in social media post

Staff Reporter

PUNE

In a social media gaffe, Shiv Sena leader Ravindra Dhangekar found himself in an awkward situation on Thursday after posting an image featuring the Congress logo. The post quickly caught the attention of netizens, prompting Dhangekar to quickly change it with the bow-and-arrow logo of Shiv Sena.



Congress. I have formed good relations with the Congress leaders. I have nothing against anyone in the party," he said.

Dhangekar was elected as an MLA on a Congress ticket from the Kasba Peth Assembly seat in the by-poll held in 2023, where he defeated the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in its bastion. However, he lost the seat in the 2024 Maharashtra Assembly polls. Before that, Dhangekar faced defeat in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections from Pune, where he lost to the saffron party's Murlidhar Mohol.

## Police arrest driver accused of bus blaze

PTI

PUNE

The driver of a private firm's bus that caught fire in Pune's Pimpri Chinchwad area on Mar 19, leading to the deaths of four employees and injuries to six, was arrested on Thursday, a police official said.

Janardhan Hambardekar, who was among those injured in the horrific incident, was placed under arrest after he was discharged from a private

hospital, the official said. "We have arrested him after he was discharged from hospital today. He will now be produced in court," Hinjewadi police station senior inspector Kanhaiya Thorat said.

Four employees of Vyoma Graphics at Hinjewadi near Pune lost their lives after driver Hambardekar, using highly inflammable chemical benzene, allegedly set the running bus on fire in the morning that day, as per police.



### Preparations for Gudi Padwa

Gudis are on sale at the Tulshibaug area ahead of Gudi Padwa.

Photo: Anand Chaini

## Traffic speed increases by 10.5%, 50 jams cut: Addl CP Manoj Patil

Ankit Shukla

PUNE

Pune's Additional Commissioner of Police Manoj Patil claimed in a press conference held on Thursday that the city's traffic speed has increased by 10.5% by increasing the carrying capacity of existing roads and 50 traffic jams have been reduced.

Speaking with the media, Patil informed that it was done using two techniques—IRC 106-1990 and IRC SP 043-1994. In urban areas, the former helps in low-cost traffic management techniques, while the latter helps in improving the capacity of roads, Patil claimed.

In this regard, under the guidance of Pune City's Commissioner of Police

Amitesh Kumar, Joint Commissioner Ranjan Kumar Sharma, and Patil, an extensive study of all traffic-related issues in Pune was conducted.

The study was based on practical observation and the use of specific traffic engineering principles, to increase the carrying capacity of existing roads and reduce traffic congestion. This was done by working in coordination with the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) and other government bodies.

As part of this effort, 265km of 33 major roads were identified for improvement, and several initiatives were launched to enhance the traffic flow.

Choubey said the wardens are assisting the traffic teams to regulate and manage traffic across our city. "However, their role is strictly to support the traffic officials; they are not authorised to either check the documents or fine a violation on their own," he added.

### ₹71 lakh collected in fines from private buses

The Pimpri-Chinchwad CP said the cops have collected

Rs71 lakh in fines from 6,013 private buses in the last month for violating the rules. "Private buses have been ordered to not ply on the roads in places like Pimpri, Chinchwad, Nigdi, Wakad, Sangvi, Kalewadi, Nashik Phata, etc. Their routes have been changed accordingly.

Also, no private bus will stop to pick up passengers," he added.

### Action against modified silencers

Choubey said the Pimpri-Chinchwad Police have launched a drive against motorcycles with modified silencers. "All our traffic divisions have been instructed to clamp down heavily on this menace. Action is being taken consistently and will be continued," he added.

Chikhli to a fine of ₹20,000 and four days of imprisonment for driving under the influence of alcohol. The same day, Rajkumar Bharti from Nehru Nagar, Pimpri, was sentenced to a fine of ₹20,000 and three days of imprisonment (sic)," Choubey shared.

### Corruption in passport verification

An X user alleged that the police demand money for passport verification.

Responding to the post, Choubey wrote, "We have zero tolerance for corruption of any kind at any level. If our personnel has sought money from you for processing of your Passport/PCC, pls report on 8087705112. Anonymity will be ensured. Also, no private bus will stop to pick up passengers," he added.

"Two instances where drunk & drive cases were brought to a logical conclusion, which we believe will set a strong precedent : On 25.03.2025, the court sentenced Dattatray Tiptre of

## PCMC bags first prize for property tax

Staff Reporter

PIMPRI

The Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) has been awarded the first prize by the state government under the Rajiv Gandhi Prashastiya Gatiyatma (PRAGATI) campaign and competition for its innovative initiatives to improve property tax collection. PCMC has also received a cash prize of Rs10 lakh, as per a Government Resolution issued by the General Administration Department. PCMC's Property Tax Department has implemented a series of reforms and digital interventions to boost tax revenue.

Key initiatives include the introduction of online payment systems, property attachment and auction mechanisms, geo-sequencing of properties, and assigning unique UPIC IDs to each property. These steps have directly contributed to a significant increase in tax collection. PCMC submitted a proposal outlining these reforms to the state's PRAGATI campaign, where it was evaluated and selected by the State-level selection committee for the first prize.

**Awarded ₹10 lakh under the PRAGATI campaign for innovative measures to boost Property Tax collection**

## passion for plants

# Data scientist creates 500-plant garden on balcony

Staff Reporter

PUNE

A techie in Pune has created a mini jungle on her small balcony with a whopping 500 plants. Working as a data scientist in IT for the last 15 years, somewhere along the way, Manasi Dunakhe realised the dream she always had—a quiet dream—to have a small garden of her own. And 2018 was the year when finally happened when she moved into her own house. She started her plant jour-

ney with a lot of excitement, but it didn't go the way she had imagined. "The plants I brought home from the nursery looked great at first, but most didn't survive. It was discouraging. I realised I need to learn and relearn a lot," she said.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, she returned to gardening more seriously. "With so much uncertainty and stress, this became my way of coping. I started studying the basics—understood how soil, drainage, light, and plant

needs actually work—and slowly, things started growing," she added.

After COVID, what began as a hobby turned into something far more meaningful for Dunakhe. In those unpredictable times of COVID, her plants and her hobby kept her grounded. "Even now, gardening gives me a sense of calm and clarity. It slows me down, teaches patience, and gives me something to return to when everything else feels overwhelming," Dunakhe added as she clearly spoke

mosquitoes can be an issue. I've found that neem oil sprays with Azadirachtin help a lot, especially when used regularly. They keep not just plant pests in check but also help control mosquito breeding without using any harsh chemicals."

"I truly believe everyone should try growing something. It doesn't need to be a big garden—even a few pots on a windowsill can bring you joy, calm, and a surprising sense of connection," Dunakhe concluded.



epaper.freepressjournal.in

**WEE HOUR RAID | Victim alleged business rivalry behind attack**

# Firing incident creates sensation in Nawabpura

**FPJ News Network**

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

An unidentified man fired a round at a young motorcyclist in the Nawabpura area on Wednesday at around 4am. The motorcyclist was saved as the bullet missed the target. However, the sound of firing in the wee hours created a sensation in the entire Nawabpura area.

Habib Mohammad Salim Qazi (33), a resident of Nawabpura, is a real estate professional and has around 100 ancestral shops, which he has given on rent. On Wednesday at around 4am, he had gone to bring toasts, needed for Saheri, as the holy Ramzan month is going on. While returning, a 6-foot tall man, covering his face with a handkerchief, stopped Qazi and started abusing him. The man then took out a pistol from his pocket and fired at Qazi. However, he was saved as the shooter missed the target. Then the shooter fled from the



scene.

Qazi was completely terrified and immediately informed the incident to the Jinsi police. The police then visited and inspected the spot. The forensic team and a dog squad were also called. A used cartridge was found on the spot.

Based on the complaint lodged by Qazi, a case has been registered with the Jinsi



## 2 take PhD admissions using forged documents

**FPJ News Network**

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University (BAMU) has cancelled the PhD admissions of two candidates who secured entry in 2001 using forged MPhil degrees.

Pro Vice-Chancellor Valmik Sarwade confirmed that complaints have been lodged.

Asma Idris Khan, secretary of Kohinoor Education Society, and Maqsood Khan Anwar Khan, its joint secre-

tary, gained admission for PhD in English and Hindi, respectively, in 2001, without an entrance test, using MPhil degrees purportedly from DY Patil University, Pune.

However, activist Nagraj Gaikwad has flagged discrepancies in their admission and the degrees that they had used, prompting BAMU to verify the MPhil degrees with DY Patil University, a quarter-century after the admissions.

DY Patil University confirmed the documents were

fake.

The university has now cancelled the admissions. Earlier, a case was registered against the Kohinoor Education Society for forging a Karnataka-based university's medical course degree. Similarly, a bogus law degree from Jaunpur University was also made by the institute, it's alleged.

A case in this regard has been registered with the City Chowk police station against the chairman and the secretary of the society.

## Gawade reveals plan to regularise illegal plots

**FPJ News Network**

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

The survey of the illegal land and plots coming under the jurisdiction of Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar Mahanagar Region Development Authority will be conducted with the help of the students of the Government Engineering College (GEC). The residents, tehsildar, block development officer and other concerned officers should co-operate with the students for the survey, directed Divisional Commissioner Dilip Gawade.

Gawade interacted with the tehsildar, block development

officer, deputy superintendent land record, registrar, Gunthewari cell chief and concerned officers regarding the survey of the unauthorised land. Planner Harshal Baviskar, joint planner Ravindra Jayebhaye, illegal construction chief Sunanda Parve, deputy planner and other officers were also present.

Gawade said the survey of the unauthorised plots and illegal construction in the jurisdiction of Mahanagar Region Development Authority will be conducted. Based on the survey, the officers of the revenue and the panchayat department

should create awareness among the people and directives should be issued to the talathis, gram sevaks and surveyors. The land record department should conduct the measurement of the land for regularising the plots after completing the Gunthewari procedures. Proper decisions should be taken after completing the procedures by the registrar's office.

After the regularisation of the plots and illegal constructions, it will be possible for the needy to get bank loans easily. They can even sell these plots easily, Gawade said.



## Bees attack foreign tourists in Ajanta

**FPJ News Network**

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar is known for the world heritage sites of Ajanta and Ellora all over the world. Several foreign tourists visit these monuments every year. However, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which has the responsibility to maintain these sites, seems to be apathetic towards providing facilities and security to foreign tourists.

Last Monday, some foreign tourists came to visit the Ellora caves, but they were attacked by a bunch of honey bees in the caves. They were injured in the attack and the issue of the

security of the tourists in the caves came to the fore. After the bees' attack in Ellora caves on Monday, the foreign tourists were attacked by the bees at the Ajanta caves on Tuesday. Some tried to save themselves by covering themselves with the dupattas and some of them managed to escape.

As the Summer is getting se-

vere, the incidents of attacks by the bees at the historic sites of Daulatabad Fort, Ellora and Ajanta are on the rise. Around 90 tourists were attacked in Cave No. 15 in Ellora on Monday. The tourists included five foreign tourists as well. They were immediately taken to the Government Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) for treatment.



**67 GPs declared TB-free in Nanded**

**FPJ News Network**

NANDED

Out of the 248 gram panchayats in 16 talukas of the Nanded district, 67 have been declared as complete tuberculosis (TB) free and they were felicitated with mementoes. The awards were given to make efforts according to the prescribed criteria to make the gram panchayats TB-free. The sarpanch, gramsevaks, health officers, community health officers and employees were felicitated by ZP CEO Meghna Kawali by giving mementoes, certificates and bouquets, in a function held on Monday.

Additional District Collector Pandurang Borgaonkar, ZP Deputy CEO Manjusha Kapse, District Civil Surgeon Dr Nilkanth Bhosikar, Resident Health Officer Dr Rajabhai Butte, Ardhapur Rural Hospital Medical Superintendent Dr Vidya Zine, District TB Officer Dr Satish Kapurwad, City TB Officer Dr Badiuddin and World Health Organization's Advisor Dr Samyak Khaire and others were present.

Last year, out of 86 gram panchayats, 67 were declared TB-free and they received the bronze trophies. Hence, as they were selected again this year, they were felicitated with silver trophies.

Kawali said it is important that awareness should be created among the people about the eradication of TB. The patients should be identified and they should be given the required medication immediately.

Borgaonkar, Dr Bhosikar and other officers also spoke on the occasion.



317.93 pts



105.10 pts



5 paise



₹365



₹200

SENSEX 77,606.43

NIFTY 23,591.95 | USD/INR 85.74 | GOLD 91,000.00 | SILVER 1,01,700.00

**Briefs****Q-commerce corners 2/3 of all e-grocery orders in 2024**

More than two-thirds of all e-grocery orders and one-tenth of e-retail spends happened on quick commerce platforms in 2024, underlining how QCommerce - with its promise of under 30 minute delivery - is "revolutionising" the way consumers buy in India, according to a report by Flipkart and Bain and Company.

**Cos raise record funds via equity and debt in FY25**

Indian corporates raised record-high funds through equity and debt in the financial year 2024-25, despite market fluctuations, a new report said on Thursday. A report by PRIME Database showed that the public equity fundraising surged by 92 per cent to Rs 3.71 lakh crore. When rights issues were included, the total amount reached nearly Rs 3.88 lakh crore.

**Crude oil discovered in Ballia, UP**

A major crude oil reserve has been discovered near Sagarpali village in Ballia district, Uttar Pradesh, with ONGC launching exploration efforts, according to a Times Now report on Thursday. The reserve, found on the land of freedom fighter Chittu Pandey's family, could lead to large-scale drilling and land acquisitions, significantly impacting local farmers. ONGC officials suggest that if successful, additional wells will be drilled at other identified locations within the 300-km crude oil belt, stretching from Sagarpali in Ballia to Phaphamau in Prayagraj.

**Saudi Aramco looks to invest in India**

Saudi Aramco is in talks to invest in two planned refineries in India as the world's top oil exporter looks for a stable outlet for its crude in the world's fastest-growing emerging market, Reuters reports. India, the world's third-biggest oil consumer and importer, wants to become a global refining hub as Western companies cut crude processing capacity in their shift to cleaner fuels.

**Sebi cancels registration of 72 RAs**

Sebi on Thursday cancelled the registration of 72 entities as research analysts after they failed to pay the required renewal fees, rendering their certificates of registration invalid. Sebi said that the "main purpose of cancellation of certificate of registration, as research analyst, of the notices (72 entities) is to prevent the misuse of their expired certificate of registration with Sebi on unaware investors".

**BIG BOOST** | Right measures to accelerate capital inflows**RBI set to double investment limit for foreign individuals****FPJ News Service**

MUMBAI



The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is set to double the investment cap for individual foreign investors in listed companies to 10% to boost capital inflows, according to two senior government officials and documents reviewed by Reuters.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), pressured by poor earnings, high valuations and prospects of US tariffs, have pulled more than \$28 billion of Indian stock markets since September's record high in the benchmark NSE Nifty 50, Reuters reported on Thursday.

To boost foreign investment, India is widening to all foreign investors the benefits it had until now, which were restricted to overseas Indians, while also raising applicable investment limits, the officials said.

"It is felt that these propo-

sals may be implemented as early as possible," the central bank told the government in a letter last week, pointing to disruption in capital inflows among recent developments in the external sector.

Emails seeking comment from the finance ministry, the central bank, and the market regulator, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), did not get any response.

The plans envisage allowing all foreign individual investors to invest a maximum of 10% in a listed company, the document showed. That is up from 5% holding in an Indian added.

**RBI to discuss liquidity framework with market participants**

The RBI has invited market participants for a meeting next week to collect feedback on a new liquidity management framework, according to four people aware of the matter. The meeting is scheduled for Apr. 3, days before the MPC begins its three-day meeting on Apr. 7. "We'll have to see what they have in mind and we are still figuring out what suggestions to give," one of the persons said on the condition of anonymity.

"We are broadening this to include all individual foreign investors."

The central bank, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), will also raise to 24% the combined holding limit for all overseas individual investors in an Indian listed company, from 10% now, the officials added.

**US economy grew 2.4% in Q4****PTI**

NEW DELHI

The US economy expanded at a healthy annual 2.4 per cent pace the last three months of 2024, supported by a year-end surge in consumer spending, the government said Thursday in a slight upgrade of its previous estimate of fourth-quarter growth.

But it's unclear whether the United States can sustain solid growth as President Donald Trump wages trade wars, purges the federal workforce and promises mass deportations of immigrants working in the country illegally.

The Commerce Department said that growth in gross domestic product - the nation's output of goods and services - decelerated from a 3.1 per cent pace in July-September.



around 169 GW, and the country has crossed 223 GW of non-fossil-fuel capacity, including 103 GW solar and nearly 50 GW wind capacity.

He also said that the government has come out with viability gap funding as far as offshore wind projects are concerned.

"We are quite on track. I am quite confident that we will achieve 500 GW by 2030 and we are the third largest producer of renewable energy in the entire world," Joshi said.

According to the minister, there are investment commitments of Rs 32 lakh crore in the domestic renewable energy sector which is growing at a healthy pace.

**India on track to achieve 500 GW renewable energy target: Joshi****PTI**

NEW DELHI

India is on track to achieve the 500 GW renewable energy target by 2030 as investment commitments of Rs 32 lakh crore have been received, Union Minister for New & Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi said on Thursday.

Addressing a session at Times Now Summit 2025, Joshi said renewable energy project bids are out for a capacity of

May 30, 2024. However, this peak demand was successfully met with only a marginal gap of 2 MW, the Minister of State for Power said in a reply to the Lok Sabha.

In 2025-26, Naik said a peak demand of 277 GW is expected as per the mid-term review of the 20th Electric Power Survey.

"The country is confident to meet this projected demand

with optimal usage of existing and under construction capacities," he said.

Besides, all power generation companies, including independent power producers (IPPs) and central generating stations, have been advised to generate and maintain full availability on a daily basis, excluding the period of planned maintenance or forced outage.

**SEBI investigates insider trading at IndusInd bank****FPJ News Service**

MUMBAI

**Regulator plans new penalty system**

SEBI is working on a new penalty system that would prevent brokerage firms from being fined multiple times for the same violation.

The proposal, which has been under discussion for the past year, aims to stop different stock exchanges from imposing separate penalties for a single default. The SEBI is in talks with stock exchanges to implement this rule, which would help reduce the financial burden on brokers.

**SEBI proposes limiting expiry days of derivatives contracts to Tue & Thu**

SEBI on Thursday proposed that expiries of all equity derivatives contracts of an exchange will be uniformly limited to one of either Tuesdays or Thursdays. This would provide optimal spacing between expiries across exchanges, while avoiding choice of either the first day of the week or the last day as an expiry day.

The market regulator, SEBI, is looking for details of trades made by five senior officials when they were aware of

**I-T dept offices to remain open on Mar 29-31****PTI**

NEW DELHI

Income tax department offices across the country will remain open on March 29 to March 31 to facilitate taxpayers in completing pending tax-related business for the fiscal year.

The ongoing financial year 2024-25 ends on March 31.

The Income tax department offices across the country will remain open despite the weekend and Eid-Al-Fitr which may fall on Monday.

In an order, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said "to facilitate completion of pending departmental work, all the Income Tax Offices throughout India shall remain open on 29th, 30th and 31st March, 2025."

**Govt plans to borrow ₹8L cr from mkt in first half of FY26****PTI**  
NEW DELHI

The Centre is planning to mobilise Rs 8 lakh crore through dated securities during the April-September period of 2025-26 to fund the revenue gap, the finance ministry said on Thursday.

Out of the gross market borrowing of Rs 14.82 lakh crore estimated for 2025-26, Rs 8 lakh crore or 54 per cent is planned to be borrowed in the first half (H1) through the issuance of dated securities, including Rs 10,000 crore of Sovereign Green Bonds (SGBs), according to an official statement.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in the Budget, proposed to borrow Rs 14.82 lakh crore by issuing dated securities to meet revenue shortfall in the next financial year.



**FM Nirmala Sitharaman, in the Budget, proposed to borrow Rs 14.82 lakh crore by issuing dated securities to meet revenue shortfall in the next financial year**

ings and other sources.

"Coming to 2025-26, the total receipts other than borrowings and the total expenditure are estimated at Rs 34.96 lakh crore and Rs 50.65 lakh crore, respectively. The net tax receipts are estimated at Rs 28.37 lakh crore," Sitharaman had said in her Budget speech.

**Markets maintain resilience on renewed hopes of macro fundamentals, Q4 earnings****FPJ News Service**

MUMBAI



buying in L&T, Reliance Industries, and Bajaj Finance supported to maintain the uptrend on Thursday.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 317.93 points to close at 77,606.43. The NSE Nifty gained 105.10 points at 23,591.95.

"Key indices maintained

optimism throughout the day,

driven by sustained foreign purchase of blue-chip stocks. However, the 25% tariff on auto imports imposed by US President Trump has affected auto stocks and raised concerns. Despite

these challenges, the broader market demonstrated resilience, supported by expectations of improved domestic fundamentals. Attention is now focused on the US-India trade meeting, which commenced on Wednesday, aiming to provide greater clarity on the bilateral trade agreement between the two nations," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Investments told The Free Press Journal.

"The market has turned cautious as the reciprocal tariff day approaches. Institutional activity suggests that while FIIs are not overly concerned about tariffs, DIIs are taking a cautious stance. Despite net institutional buying remaining good, the market drifted down indicating concern and fear," said Dr. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments.

**India will soon roll out first indigenous chips as semiconductor units take shape'****PTI**

NEW DELHI

and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnav stated on Thursday.

Speaking at the Times Now summit, the Minister emphasized that India's electronics manufacturing sector, once negligible, has now become one of the top three export sectors.

"The first is the Public Investment in infrastructure where the government is investing nearly Rs 11 lakh crore in social, digital, and physical infrastructure. As a result, India has become the second-largest 5G market in the world and the Indian Railways is set to become the second-largest carrier, transporting 1.6 billion tons this year," he said.

The minister highlighted that India had missed past opportunities due to restrictive laws, but significant reforms in recent years have

**Gilts erase most gains on yr-end profit booking by traders****Informist**

MUMBAI

Government bond prices erased most of the day's gains in the last half hour as traders sold bonds to book profits before the end of the financial year, dealers said. Though Friday is the last trading day for the financial year, only trades up till Thursday would be accounted for in the 2024-25 (Apr-Mar) profit and loss accounts since gilts are settled on a T+1 basis.

The 10-year 6.79%, 2034 bond ended at INR 101.31, or 6.60% yield. Intraday, the 10-year benchmark yield had fallen below 6.58% for the first time since Jan. 17, 2022.

Healthcare industry has the largest number of billionaires in India at 53, followed by consumer goods with 35 entrants and industrial products with 32 entrants, according to the list.

Most of the sales were concentrated in the 10-year benchmark, while other bonds were off highs but held onto some gains as traders maintained their view of a light Apr-Sept borrowing plan.

He was speaking at the Times Now Summit here.

When asked whether Indian industry should tighten its seat belt and whether there will be any turbulence on April 2, the commerce minister said the India growth story will be intact and the country will continue to power the global economy. "India, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will continue to steer its economy with our motto of India first. And we are very, very committed and confident that we will take India in the Amrit Kaal to become a global superpower."

A team of US officials, headed by Assistant US Trade Representative for South and Central Asia Brendan Lynch, is here for negotiations on the proposed bilateral trade pact.

**Hurun Global Rich List****Billionaires' wealth a third of India's GDP**

Adani biggest wealth gainer

**PTI**  
NEW DELHI

The cumulative wealth of 284 Indian billionaires is a third of the country's GDP, a report said on Thursday.

Gautam Adani, who helms the conglomerate headquartered in Gujarat's Ahmedabad, has emerged as the biggest wealth gainer globally with a Rs 1 lakh crore jump in his fortune to Rs 8.4 lakh crore, as per

billion fortune has helped him reclaim the title of being the richest Asian.

Adani, who had suffered a significant setback to his fortunes after the Hindenburg report pointing to governance lapses in the conglomerate, saw a 13 per cent increase in his fortunes in the last year.

The country is home to 284

billionaires whose cumulative wealth rose by 10 per cent to Rs 98 lakh crore, or a third of the country's GDP, the report said.

Interestingly, amid the concerns on concentration of wealth in few hands, the list

**Briefs**

**RBI may cut repo rate by 25 bps in Apr**

The RBI's monetary policy committee is expected to cut benchmark interest rate by 25 basis points in its policy review meeting next month to push growth, India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) said on Thursday. "We expect the headline inflation in FY25 to cool off to 4.7 per cent. Monetary easing may be limited to 75 bps in FY26," Ind-Ra Chief Economist and Head Public Finance, Devendra Kumar Pant said.

**Zaggle acquires 38.34% stake in Mobileware**

Zaggle Prepaid Ocean Services has acquired a little over 38 per cent stake in payment solutions provider Mobileware Technologies for around Rs 22.85 crore, according to a top company official. In a strategic investment, Zaggle has invested Rs 15.60 crore in Mobileware Technologies to acquire a 26 per cent stake on a post-issue and fully diluted basis, Avinash Godkhindi, Managing Director and CEO, Zaggle said.

**Promoter KKR sells 5.8% stake in JB Chemicals**

Global investment firm KKR on Thursday divested a 5.8 per cent stake in JB Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals for Rs 1,460 crore through open market transactions. New York-based KKR offloaded shares in four separate transactions on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). KKR-affiliate Tau Investment Holdings Pte is the promoter of JB Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals. As per the bulk deal data, Tau Investment Holdings sold a little over 89.83 lakh shares, amounting to a 5.78 per cent stake in Mumbai-based JB Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals.

**BoI partners New India Assurance**

Bank of India and New India Assurance have entered into a strategic partnership to offer a wide range of general insurance products to customers of the public sector bank. With this tie-up, Bank of India's customers will have access to insurance solutions, including health, motor, personal accident, home, and commercial insurance products offered by NIACL, a systemically important insurance company, the lender said in a release.

**Studds files IPO papers with Sebi**

Helmets manufacturer Studds Accessories has filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to float an IPO. This marks the company's second attempt to go public. Previously, the company had filed draft papers nearly seven years ago. The IPO will be an OFS, with the promoter group and other shareholders selling 77.9 lakh shares, according to the DRHP filed on Wednesday.

**ICAI to hold CA final exams 3 times a year**

Chartered accountants' apex body ICAI has decided to conduct the CA final examinations three times a year. Currently, the examination is held twice a year. In a release on Thursday, the ICAI said the historic decision aligns with global best practices and will provide students with greater opportunities.

# AESL acquires Mahan Transmission

**PTI**

NEW DELHI



Adani Energy Solution Ltd, the electricity transmission unit of the billionaire Gautam Adani-run conglomerate, on Thursday announced the acquisition of intra-state transmission project Mahan Transmission Ltd.

In a stock exchange filing, the company said it has "executed Share Purchase Agreement (SPA) with REC Power Development and Consultancy Limited (RECPDCL) for acquiring 100 per cent equity shares of Mahan Transmission Limited (MTL)."

MTL is a Rs 2,200-crore intra-state transmission project.

The project scope includes establishment of 2,800 Mega

Volt-Amperes (MVA) of substations capacity and 740 circuit kilometers (ckm) of transmission line, taking AESL's transmission network to 26,668 ckm and 89,986 MVA of transformation capacity. The project will be delivered by April 2027.

The project, housed under Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) Mahan Transmission Ltd, will

evacuate 1,230 MW of power from Adani Power's upcoming 1,600 MW expansion unit at Mahan in Madhya Pradesh's Singrauli district and feed into the state grid. The project is expected to aid MP's industrialisation push by ensuring reliable and efficient transmission of electricity.

AESL won the project under the Tariff Based

## 10 Adani group stocks end higher

Ten Adani group stocks ended higher on Thursday, with Adani Energy Solutions rising nearly 9 per cent, in tandem with an optimistic trend in the equity market. Shares of Adani Energy Solutions soared 8.84 per cent, Adani Green Energy surged 5.25 per cent, Adani Power jumped 4.39 per cent, Adani Total Gas advanced 2.32 per cent, Ambuja Cements went up 2.13 per cent, Adani Enterprises climbed 2.05 per cent, Adani Wilmar (1.85 per cent), Sanghi Industries (1.66 per cent), ACC (1.44 per cent), and Adani Ports (1.38 per cent) on the BSE. The stock of NDTV dipped 0.39 per cent.

Competitive Bidding (TBCB) mechanism, and REC Power Development and Consultancy Ltd (RECPDCL) was the bid process coordinator.

This is AESL's seventh order win this fiscal year, taking its transmission order book to Rs 59,761 crore.

"This acquisition is pro-

posed to further AESL's strategy for enhancing value for its shareholders through organic as well as inorganic opportunities," the filing said. "MTL will evacuate 1,230 MW of power from Adani Power's upcoming 1,600 MW expansion units at Mahan in Singrauli district and feed into the state grid."

## BIS raids warehouses of Amazon and Flipkart, seizes substandard goods

**PTI**

NEW DELHI



The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has conducted extensive raids on Amazon and Flipkart warehouses here, seizing thousands of products lacking proper quality certifications, the government said on Thursday.

In a 15-hour operation on March 19 at an Amazon Sellers Pvt Ltd warehouse in Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area, BIS officials confiscated more than 3,500 electrical products,

including geysers and food mixers, valued at approximately Rs 70 lakh.

A separate raid at Instakart Services, a Flipkart subsidiary, resulted in the seizure of 590 pairs of sports footwear without required manufacturing marks, worth around Rs 6

lakh, an official statement said. This operation is part of a broader nationwide drive by BIS to enforce quality standards. In the past month, similar raids were conducted in multiple locations, including Delhi, Gurugram, Faridabad, Lucknow, and Sripuram.

These raids are critical to ensuring consumer safety and maintaining product quality standards, the statement added.

Amazon and Flipkart have not yet commented on the raids.

## Jindal Stainless looking at investing ₹40K cr to set up plant in Maharashtra

**PTI**

NEW DELHI



the state cabinet subcommittee. The meeting was chaired by deputy chief ministers Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar and other senior leaders.

The proposal, with an estimated investment of Rs 40,000 crore, is scheduled to be developed over the next 10 years, which is expected to create more than 15,000 jobs.

The proposed stainless steel facility will have a total melting capacity of 4 million tonnes per annum and will be constructed in phases, with the

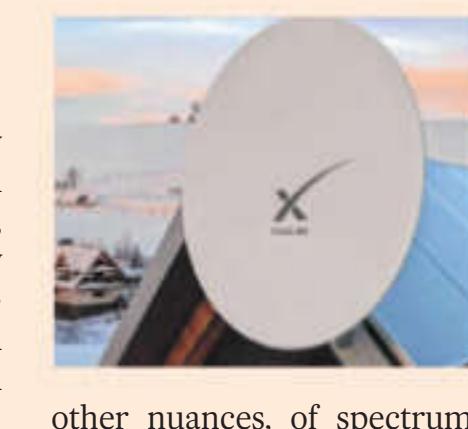
steel production and reducing our dependence on imports. The new facility will expand our presence in India and the world, set new benchmarks in technology, sustainability, and product excellence, and cater to emerging industries that are critical to India's future development."

This facility will manufacture a comprehensive range of stainless steel flat products with varying grades, finishes, and thicknesses for diverse established sectors.

## Jefferies expects limited capacity, premium pricing from Starlink

**PTI**

NEW DELHI



Starlink's current capacity may be able to support 0.18 million subscribers in India for now, going up to 5.7 million users by 2030, and the "limited capacity" could necessitate premium pricing, Jefferies said on Thursday.

India will be an important market for Starlink but its launch is unlikely to be disruptive to telcos here.

The observations made by Jefferies in its latest report assumes significance given that Starlink, the satellite-based broadband from the skies' services, is eyeing the Indian market with great interest as Indian regulator TRAI readies to spell out rules, and

other nuances of spectrum allocation to satcom players. Starlink's imminent launch in India will help it monetise a large capacity given India's large area. Our analysis suggests that Starlink's capacity will support 0.18 million subscribers at present and 5.7 million subscribers by 2030," the report said.

This could necessitate premium pricing, in line with what it has done in other markets.

"The government also seems to be balancing the interests of Satcom operators and telcos which bodes well. Starlink's launch is unlikely to be disruptive to telcos," as per Jefferies' analysis.

Starlink, it noted, has about 4.6 million subscribers globally with North America being the largest market.

While LEO or Low Earth Orbit satellite networks have their capacities distributed across the globe, they target larger countries as it unlocks a larger portion of their capacity.

"With Starlink not having access to the top-2 countries by area (Russia/China), other large countries such as India (7th largest) have become more important," it said.

## Restaurant services in hotels with room rent above ₹7,500 per day fall under 18% GST: CBIC

**PTI**

NEW DELHI

Hotels charging a room rent above Rs 7,500 a day at any time in any financial year will be considered 'specified premises' for the next fiscal and restaurant services provided inside such premises will attract 18 per cent GST with input tax credit, the CBIC said on Thursday.

From April 1, 2025, the taxability of such restaurants which operate inside hotels will be on the basis of value of supply (transactional value). This would replace the concept of 'declared tariff' which included charges for all amenities provided in the unit of accommodation (given on rent for stay) like furniture, air con-

ditioner, refrigerators or any other amenities, but without excluding any discount offered on the published charges for such unit.

"For the period starting from 01.04.2025, the value of supply of hotel accommodation in the previous FY, i.e., the transaction value charged for the said supply, would be the basis for determining whether the premises providing hotel accommodation service mandatorily falls under the category of 'specified premises' or not in the current FY," the CBIC said in a FAQ issued on the topic of 'Restaurant Service' supplied at 'Specified Premises'. Restaurant services inside such hotel units would automatically attract 18% GST, with input tax credit (ITC).

This growth would be over the high base created last season, when the room AC industry witnessed a surge of 30-40 per cent in volume in May and June due to the unrelenting heatwave in most parts of the country. "We have planned for around 25-30 per cent growth. We will be able to meet that," said Thiagarajan, adding that he expects to sell around 1.7 million units of room ACs in FY26. Bluestar, which on Thursday unveiled a lineup of 150 models, expects a major growth to come from smaller towns and rural regions.

"It is actually the middle class aspirational consumers who are beginning to buy," he said, adding, "Now it is also evident from the fact that this year, for example, Bluestar's 40 per cent sale will be through consumer finance".

According to Thiagarajan, Bluestar's more than 65 per cent sales come from smaller tier-III, IV & V places.

However, he added that the demand from Indian cities is also expected to grow as people are purchasing their second or third ACs.

## Credit to industry rises 7.3% as on fortnight ended Feb 21

**PTI**

NEW DELHI

as on the fortnight ended February 21, 2025 (20 per cent for the corresponding fortnight of the previous year).

RBI released the data on sectoral deployment of bank credit for February 2025 collected from 41 select banks, accounting for about 95 per cent of the total non-food credit deployed by all scheduled commercial banks.

On a year-on-year (y-o-y) basis, non-food bank credit as on the fortnight ended February 21, 2025 grew at 12 per cent as compared to 16.6 per cent for the corresponding fortnight of the previous year (February 23, 2024).

In a regulatory filing on Thursday, HUDCO said the Bond Allotment Committee has approved the raising of bonds as unsecured, taxable, redeemable, non-convertible, non-cumulative NCDs (non-convertible debentures) of face value of Rs 1,00,000 each aggregating up to Rs 2,000 crore on a private placement basis.

The coupon rate is 7.19 per cent. Bonds are redeemable at par at the end of the 10th year while interest payment will be on a yearly basis.

The base issue size is Rs 500 crore with a green shoe option of Rs 1,500 crore, taking the total issue size to Rs 2,000 crore.

HUDCO provides finance/credit facility to the housing and infrastructure sectors/ sub-sectors, with special emphasis on urban development.

## BSNL revenue impacted by 4G delay, stiff competition, says MoS Telecom

**PTI**

NEW DELHI



Revenue of BSNL has been impacted due to delay in the rollout of 4G services as well as stiff competition in the mobile segment, Parliament was informed on Thursday.

In a written reply to Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for telecom, Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar said BSNL has awarded purchase orders for one lakh 4G sites out of which 83,993 sites have been installed and 74,521 are on air as on March 8.

"The revenue of BSNL is impacted due to delay in roll-

out of 4G services as well as stiff competition in the mobile segment," the minister said.

In response to a question on voluntary retirement scheme, Sekhar said the government approved the first revival package in 2019 to reduce the operating cost of BSNL by debt restructuring through sovereign guarantee bonds as well

says BSNL has awarded purchase orders for 1 lakh 4G sites out of which 83,993 sites have been installed and 74,521 are on air as on March 8

as VRS. "After implementation of VRS in 2019, the employee cost of BSNL got reduced by 51 per cent. As a result of the above, BSNL started earning operating profit from 2020-21.

At present, no proposal for VRS in BSNL is under consideration in the department," the minister said.

## BIS Mumbai Branch Office-II hosts walkathon

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS),

Mumbai Branch Office-II, successfully conducted a Walkathon on Thursday, as part of its ongoing efforts to promote consumer rights, product quality, and awareness about standardization. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from over 350 members of various Standards Clubs, representing leading educational institutions. The Walkathon, organized in line with the World Consumer Rights Day cel-

ebractions (March 15), aimed to instill a deeper understanding of BIS standards, certification processes, and consumer protection measures among young minds. Carrying banners and placards advocating for ISI-marked products, Hallmarked jewelry, and the BIS Care app, students engaged with the public, promoting informed consumer choices and the importance of adopting quality-certified products.

## Jio Platforms bags prestigious Intellectual Property awards

Jio Platforms Ltd (JPL), a subsidiary of Reliance Industries Ltd has announced its remarkable achievement of winning two intellectual property awards for its critical role in India's technological sovereignty and digital independence. Jio Platforms was honoured with the National Intellectual Property Awards by the Government of India and simultaneously recognized by the World Intellectual Property Organization for its exceptional technological and innovation at a

function in New Delhi. Ayush Bhatnagar, Senior Vice President at JPL said, "These awards validate our approach of combining innovation with a deep commitment to solving real-world challenges. We are not just creating technologies; we are building capabilities that can drive national growth and global competitiveness in the digital era through 5G, 6G and Artificial Intelligence."

KOHINOOR GROUP UNVEILS PUNE'S SEVENTH YOUTHVILLE

Kohinoor Group on Wednesday unveiled Pune's 7th Youthville on Wednesday. Kohinoor Group MD Krishnakumar Goyal unveiled Ultimate Living Space for students and professionals. Youthville aims to provide fully furnished living spaces with excellent amenities, high-speed Wi-Fi, 24/7 security, and a homely dining experience. Its unique feature is a mobile app that allows residents to manage rent payments, request services, and receive updates. Kohinoor Group Managing Director Krishnakumar Goyal and his wife Rajbala Goyal inaugurated Youthville, a modern living space designed for students and working professionals in Pune. Youthville is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities and aims to provide a comfortable, inclusive, and pleasant living experience. This marks the third Youthville in the Senapati Bapat Road area and seventh in Pune.

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# Institutional support gathers momentum



## Motilal Oswal Team

MUMBAI

Nifty Index opened negative but witnessed a good comeback of the bulls after the profit taking of the last two sessions. It recovered above 23600 levels in the first hour post which it consolidated at the higher band of the day in a range of 60 points throughout the day. It formed a bullish candle on the daily frame and closed with gains of around 100 points but has started to make lower highs - lower lows from the last two sessions. Now if it holds above 23500 zones then bounce could be seen towards 23750 then 23900 zones while on the downside support can be seen at 23400 then 23200 zones.

On option front, Maximum Call OI is at 24500 then 24000 strike while Maximum Put OI is at 23500 then 23000 strike. Call writing is seen at 23600 then 24000 strike while Put writing is seen at 23600 then 23300 strike. Option data suggests a broader trading range in between 23000 to 24000 zones while an immediate range between 23400 to 23800 levels.

S&P BSE Sensex Index opened on a weak note but quickly rebounded, turning positive early in the session and maintaining its gains throughout the day. The index remained range bound within 200 points for the rest of the

session and ultimately closed with gains of around 320 points. On the daily charts, it formed a bullish candle, reflecting strong buying interest at key support levels. Now it has to hold above 77300 for strength towards 78000 then 78300 zones whereas supports are placed at 77300 then 77000 zones.

Bank Nifty Index opened on a negative note but managed to hold 51000 zones and saw strong recovery towards 51650 zones in the initial hour of the session. Later it remained consolidative between 51500 to 51700 levels and formed a strong bullish candle on daily scale as buying was visible at lower levels to finally close with decent gains of around 370 points. Overall bias is positive and small follow up buying could set the next leg of rally. Now it has to hold above 51250 zones for an up move towards 52000 then 52250 levels while on the downside support is seen at 51250 then 51000 zones.

Nifty future closed positive with gains of 0.31% at 23595 levels. Positive setup seen in Adani Green, BSE, JK Cement, Bank Of Baroda, Paytm, Bajaj FinServ, PB Fintech, Glenmark, PNB, Gail India, United Spirits, Ramco Cements and DMART while weakness in Sona Coms, Tata Motors, AU Bank, IRFC, KPT Tech, Tata Elxsi, Petronet LNG, Ashok Leyland, JSL, Lupin, Zydus Life and Hind Copper.

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DATA SOURCE: CAPITALINE



participation in Round - 11 of Commercial coal block auction recently conducted by the Ministry of Coal. This move towards backward integration ensures a consistent and reliable supply of raw materials essential for steelmaking, thereby mitigating risks associated with supply chain disruptions and price volatility.

## Zen Technologies:

● Zen Technologies has been awarded an order valued at approx. Rs 152 crore by the Ministry of Defence, Government of India. The order is for the supply of Zen's state-of-the-art Integrated Air Defence Combat Simulator (IADCS) for the L70 Gun, further reinforcing the country's pursuit of technological self-reliance in the defence sector.

## Asian Paints:

● The Board at its meeting held on 27th March 2025 approved an additional capex cost of Rs 690 crore on account of pre – operative expenses and certain escalations in project costs for setting up a manufacturing facility for Vinyl Acetate Ethylene Emulsion (VAE) & Vinyl Acetate Monomer (VAM) and Ethylene storage & handling facility in Dahej, Gujarat. The aggregate project cost now stands at Rs 3,250 crore as against earlier cost of Rs 2,560 crore.

## Max Fin Services:

● Eight entities, including ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund, Morgan Stanley and Societe Generale, on Thursday collectively bought a 1.6 % stake in Max Financial Services for Rs 611.60 cr through open market transactions. Shares were picked up by these eight entities at an average price of Rs 1,112 apiece, taking the aggregate transaction value to Rs 611.60 crore.

## Antony Waste:

● Antony Waste has proposed a scheme of Merger by Absorption of AG Enviro Infra Projects with the company and their Respective Shareholders and Creditors. This initiative is designed to optimize the group structure, strengthen operational synergies, and deliver superior services to clients. It strategically aligns with Antony Waste's vision to drive long-term operational efficiencies, reduce costs, and optimize resource utilization, ultimately improving management bandwidth.

## Jindal Steel & Power:

● Jindal Steel & Power (JSP), has signed the agreement for the Saradhpur Jalatap East coal block. This acquisition stems from JSP's successful

## Hot stocks

Company Name	3/26/2025	7 DSMA	21 DSMA	50DSMA	250 DSMA	BSE 1 Year High Price	Pulsecore
Vedanta	464.15	465.18	439.76	437.36	442.88	527.00	100
RHI Magnesita	464.85	449.52	414.44	439.41	565.97	754.90	100
Kalyan Jewellers	474.15	465.44	452.98	481.24	559.91	794.60	100
Tanla Platforms	481.70	493.78	464.33	524.03	793.13	1086.05	100
Elgi Equipments	489.25	499.06	463.89	500.85	619.06	799.00	100
Granules India	492.50	501.33	491.32	529.68	537.76	724.55	100
Borosil Renew.	495.90	513.69	518.09	524.12	509.03	644.00	100
G N F C	496.30	491.71	494.42	530.04	627.01	776.60	100
Sona BLW Precis.	496.40	501.76	501.23	513.02	633.74	767.80	100
Adani Power	497.80	515.61	504.05	506.82	604.59	896.75	100
HEG	499.20	443.34	398.12	389.75	441.22	619.25	100
Berger Paints	500.80	504.05	498.35	487.12	516.36	629.60	100
Archean Chemical	503.15	544.01	532.77	534.48	650.98	831.00	100
Graphite India	503.20	471.96	429.26	452.14	540.68	709.45	100
Dabur India	509.00	503.65	499.00	512.97	559.39	672.00	100
Shoppers Stop	513.45	506.04	506.44	551.22	693.35	943.65	100
Eureka Forbes	525.55	527.83	509.55	522.39	517.61	648.40	100
Varun Beverages	527.95	533.83	496.50	518.40	592.43	682.84	100
Balrampur Chini	529.35	531.22	482.48	475.62	495.64	692.85	100
Ambuja Cements	531.80	513.60	493.06	505.03	587.96	706.85	100
Sumitomo Chemi.	533.40	521.74	495.32	496.53	497.32	628.00	100
Minda Corp	534.50	534.40	517.37	539.64	503.16	652.90	100
Indian Bank	542.05	536.08	519.93	522.81	539.81	626.35	100
CCL Products	552.45	568.96	575.91	604.54	647.63	854.00	100
JSW Energy	553.60	560.67	515.50	505.62	636.60	804.95	100
Praj Industries	556.20	561.11	529.15	593.22	670.53	874.30	100
Emami	557.80	565.84	551.94	558.33	642.02	859.20	100
LIC Housing Fin.	561.40	560.94	533.52	549.93	639.58	827.00	100
Triveni Turbine	563.00	567.32	540.36	585.31	650.28	885.00	100
AU Small Finance	573.10	539.81	536.70	559.93	620.14	755.00	100
Gujarat Alkalies	577.35	556.93	537.68	610.71	749.31	900.00	100
ICICI Prudential	588.50	579.02	560.43	583.98	653.21	795.00	100
Nippon Life Ind.	588.50	572.33	542.57	570.16	636.72	816.05	100
Jindal Stain.	594.10	622.40	621.83	621.67	708.18	848.00	100
Adani Total Gas	598.05	616.04	595.35	612.23	787.09	1197.95	100
TTK Prestige	606.35	608.08	617.85	680.60	800.06	1022.00	100

## Upwardly & Downwardly Cos

Company Name	3/20/2025	3/27/2025	Days	Gain/Loss %	Per Day Average
Affle India	1508.55	1645.45	5	9.07	136.90
Ambuja Cements	504.55	543.05	5	7.63	38.50
Coforge	7578.20	8112.70	5	7.05	534.50
ICICI Securities	837.30	895.70	5	6.97	58.40
Grasim Inds	2460.90	2617.15	5	6.35	156.25

## Top percentage gainers

Company Name	3/26/2025	3/27/2025	% chg
Jindal Worldwide	55.51	66.59	19.96
Aegis Logistics	786.05	903.20	14.90
Garware Tech.	820.00	932.50	13.72
Mah. Scooters	1029.80	11614.50	12.78
Akzo Nobel	3317.05	3703.80	11.66
RHI Magnesita	464.85	514.15	10.61
Firstsource.Solu.	325.20	356.15	9.52
Shoppers Stop	513.45	561.40	9.34
Prism Johnson	126.20	137.40	8.87
Adani Energy Sol	802.90	873.85	8.84
Thermax	3474.20	3756.70	8.13
Prvi Speci.	1510.20	1626.55	7.70
ERIS Lifescience	1312.20	1407.80	7.29
DCM Shriram	1043.75	1119.80	7.20
CreditAcc.			

## corporate gallery

### F-TAM Thane Telugu Community Hosts Grand Pre-Ugadhi Celebrations



The F-TAM Thane Telugu Community celebrated Pre-Ugadhi on Sunday, March 23, 2025, at My School, Mandapada, with over 100 enthusiastic attendees. Jaganbabu Ganji, President of the Federation of Telugu Associations of Maharashtra (F-TAM), warmly welcomed all participants. The event was graced by Chief Guests SVR Murty and Radhini Murty, who highlighted the significance of celebrating festivals with family and children. The celebrations featured vibrant traditional dance performances by women and children, adding to the festive spirit. Attendees brought homemade traditional dishes, sharing and enjoying them together in a spirit of unity and joy. F-TAM actively organizes weekly Telugu and Marathi learning classes for its members. The organization also provides matrimonial counseling, youth introduction forums, and support for young entrepreneurs. The event was successfully organized by Dr. Aishwarya, Sujana, Kiranmayee, Sunil, Haritha, Vani, and other dedicated team members.

### CR GM felicitates Divyangjan Railway Employees



Dharam Veer Meena, General Manager, Central Railway felicitated 11 Divyangjan Railway Employees with Role Model Awards as part of "Special Day for Divyangjan" at a function organized by the Personnel Department of Central Railway under the aegis of Central Staff Benefit Fund (CSBF) at CSMT auditorium on March 26, 2025. The awards were presented to Divyangjans for rendering outstanding services in spite of their disabilities and setting an example for others to follow. Meena, General Manager & Chief Guest of the function also presented various Divyang friendly equipments to 7 Divyangjan Railway Employees including Laptops (with special user friendly software) to 4 employees, 1 Smartphone, 1 pair of Smart AI Glasses and 1 Walking Stick each to the remaining 3 employees. The General Manager also presented an Ankle & Foot Orthoses and a Static Bicycle to 2 Divyangjan wards of Railway Employees. Speaking on the occasion, Meena said that Central Railway has a work force of 1253 Divyangjan employees and all possible steps are being taken to empower them by providing the necessary tools to enhance their capabilities and ease their daily activities including provision of special facilities in their place of work. Earlier Meena gave an auspicious start to the function in the traditional way by lighting the lamp. P P Pandey, Principal Chief Personnel Officer & Chairman, CSBF welcomed the Dignitaries with plant saplings and presented the Welcome speech.

### MoU between Indian Army and ADRIN on LAKSHYA-PT



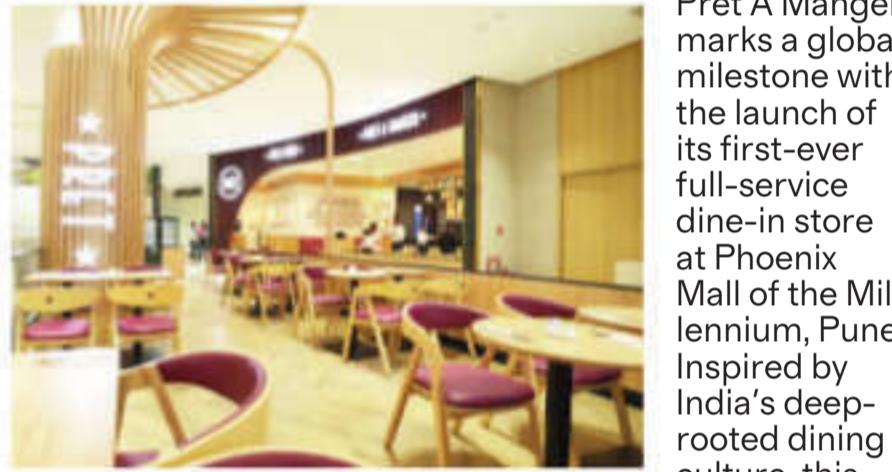
Towards inclusion of Niche Technology in Precision Targeting, a MoU was signed between Indian Army and NSIL/ADRIN for design & development of precision targeting software "Location Awareness & Knowledge Based Solution for High Resolution 3D Layer Archive for Precision Targeting" (LAKSHYA-PT) on 27 Mar 2025. LAKSHYA-PT is an indigenously Designed & Developed Software which will facilitate target acquisition with a sub-decimeter accuracy. A cost effective & path breaking solution based on indigenous satellite imageries, it will strengthen the sensor-shooter link and reinforce Indian Army's initiatives for a low-cost, high impact technology through Atma Nirbharta.

### "Your Safe Space": Azorte Redefines Fashion For Gen Z's Multi-Dimensional Lives



AZORTE, one of India's fastest-growing fashion and lifestyle destinations, unveils its latest campaign, "Your Safe Space," a celebration of Gen Z's fluid identity and fearless self-expression featuring Bollywood stars Khushi Kapoor and Vedang Raina. Conceptualized by FCB Ulka, the campaign embraces the beautiful contradictions that define today's youth: bold yet vulnerable, minimalist yet maximal, expressive yet effortless. Through an expressive narrative featuring Khushi Kapoor and Vedang Raina, the campaign taps into the real, raw emotions of this generation: the joy of dressing-up juxtaposed against the comfort of bed-rotting, the love for fast fashion and staying on trend, while battling the guilt of its impact, the need for connection accompanied by the fear of vulnerability that comes with it. The narrative of the brand film aims to explore the dualities of Gen-Z, a values-driven, conscious generation that experiences the world through its dichotomies. Through this film, AZORTE moves beyond fashion, and becomes the space where Gen Z doesn't have to choose—they can be everything, all at once.

### Pret A Manger Unveils Its 1st-Ever Full-Service Dine-In Store Globally – Inspired By India



Pret A Manger marks a global milestone with the launch of its first-ever full-service dine-in store at Phoenix Mall of the Millennium, Pune. Inspired by India's deep-rooted dining culture, this new format redefines Pret's experience—offering guests the warmth of leisurely, sit-down meals, a first in the brand's worldwide portfolio. Spanning 989 square feet, the Pune store is designed to cater to the evolving preferences of Indian consumers who appreciate fresh, high-quality food in a relaxed setting. This launch represents a key moment in Pret's India journey, blending its signature hand-crafted food with a thoughtfully curated dine-in experience. Pune's vibrant food scene and growing base of young professionals make it an ideal location for Pret's innovative venture. Given the notable increase in dining out among young consumers, Pret A Manger's commitment to freshly prepared, nutritious meals position it well to meet the evolving demands of India's young patrons.

### SCOPE Biennial Elections 2025-27 results declared



K. P. Mahadevaswamy, CMD, NBCC (India) Ltd. elected as Chairman, SCOPE. Results of SCOPE Biennial Elections 2025-27 were declared by Atul Sobti, Director General, Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE) and Returning Officer, in the presence of representatives of Member Public Sector Enterprises. The newly elected SCOPE Executive Board will assume office from 1st April 2025. As per the results declared, K. P. Mahadevaswamy, CMD, NBCC (India) Ltd. has been elected as Chairman, SCOPE. Brajesh Kumar Upadhyay, CMD, Goa Shipyard Ltd. has been elected as Vice Chairman, SCOPE. Other members elected to the Executive Board of SCOPE are: Manoj Jain, CMD, BEL; Shantanu Roy, CMD, BEML; Tajinder Gupta, Director (Power), BHEL; Dr. Yatinendra Dwivedi, Director (Personnel), POWERGRID; Anil Kumar Jadli, Director (HR), NTPC; Adhip Nath Palchaudhuri, CMD, Balmer Lawrie; Ayush Gupta, Director (HR), GAIL; Ms. Usha Singh, Director (HR), MOIL; Arvind Kumar, Director (Refineries), IOCL; Uttam Lal, Director (Personnel), NHPC; Lokesh Kumar Aggarwal, Director (Finance) ITDC; Manish Patil, Director (HR), ONGC; Ms. Sangeeta Ramkrishna, Director (HR), CWC; Ms. Rashmi Govil, Director (HR), IOCL; Krishna Kumar Singh, Director (Personnel), SAIL; Lalit Kumar Gupta, CMD, Cotton Corp; S.B. Mohanty, CMD (I/O) & Director (Finance), IREL; Barendra Senapati, Director (Finance), HAL.

Declaring the election results, Atul Sobti remarked that the consistent and active involvement of member PSEs in SCOPE Board elections reflects their strong confidence in SCOPE's vision and numerous initiatives as the apex organization representing Public Sector Enterprises in India.

## CORPORATE CORNER

### Jio Institute Marks Milestone with First Convocation Ceremony

#### Inaugural Convocation Celebrates Graduates in AI & Data Science, Digital Media & Marketing Communications, and Sports Management

Jio Institute, set up by Reliance Industries and Reliance Foundation, hosted its first convocation ceremony marking a significant milestone in the institution's journey of academic excellence. The event, held at the Institute's campus in Navi Mumbai, was attended by distinguished guests, faculty, students, and their families, as well as prominent industry leaders and academic experts. The ceremony was graced by the esteemed presence of Ms. Arundhati Bhattacharya, CEO and Chairperson of Salesforce India and South Asia, who was the chief guest for the occasion. Dr Dipak C Jain, Vice Chancellor of Jio Institute presided over the Convocation. This momentous event marks the fruition of the vision of Jio Institute's chairperson Mrs. Nita Ambani and Chairman Mukesh Ambani, who envisioned creating a world-class institution that would combine academic rigor with Indian values. The ceremony recognized the achievements of its students who have completed rigorous academic programs in a diverse range of disciplines, including cutting-edge Post Graduate Programmes in Artificial Intelligence and Data Science, Digital Media & Marketing Communications, and Sports Management. Dr. Raghunath A. Mashelkar, Chancellor of Jio Institute, while addressing the students, emphasized the Institute's mission: "Jio Institute is not just an institution; it is a movement – a beacon of learning where innovation, courage, and excellence converge to shape the leaders of tomorrow." He continued by urging the graduates to "Stay curious, stay restless, stay compassionate. Let purpose be your compass and lead with integrity – be fearless, audacious, and unstoppable. The future belongs to you." Ms. Arundhati Bhattacharya, Chief Guest for the evening, in her convocation address remarked at the grand vision of Jio Institute. Drawing inspiration from the epic 'Mahabharata', she urged the students: "Whatever job is given to you, learn to excel at it, learn to think out of the box, and be the person who can be relied upon to meaningfully solve for challenges", she continues: "if you can do this, you will always find your place in every professional space". Dr Shailesh Kumar, Dean, Jio Institute highlighted the achievements of the institute. Since its inception three years ago, Jio Institute has attracted meritorious students from 26 states across India and four countries, a testament to the institution's increasing recognition both domestically and internationally. He added that Jio Institute's one-year, full-time and residential PGPs are designed to combine an intensive industry-driven curriculum with project and case-based learning, interspersed with experiential learning intervention such as capstones, industry sessions & conferences, field visits, international immersion and internships. These students learnt from diverse faculty with expertise in both academia and industry with faculty coming from renowned universities like Northwestern, University of Houston, Georgia University, PACE University, University of California, University of New Haven, Victoria University, Singapore Management University as well as practitioners, who bring industry experience from companies like Google, Microsoft, Deloitte, McDonald's, TCS, Amul, Sony, Tata Play, Mynta, World Pickleball League and Hero Electric among others. Leading companies such as EY, KPMG, PwC, Suzlon, Swiggy, GEP Worldwide, Bennet Coleman, Reliance, Motilal Oswal, Kotak Asset Management and Hindalco have been key recruiters. More than 50 companies offered internships to Jio Institute students this year. The Institute has also made significant progress in research. With over 30 research papers published in top-tier journals like 'Nature', 'IEEE Transactions', 'Cell', and several faculty members presenting their work at prestigious conferences such as CVPR, MICCAI, and ICCV. The convocation concluded with a collective sense of achievement, as graduates celebrated their academic accomplishments and looked forward to embarking on their professional journeys.

## whispersinthecorridors

Dr Suresh Mehrotra



### Will a journalist be new CIC Maharashtra?

A journalist from Nagpur Rahul Pandey is likely to be appointed new Chief Information Commissioner Maharashtra. He is presently Information Commissioner.



### Ms Nazhat J Shaikh proves her mettle in male dominated management

Ms Nazhat J Shaikh is proving her mettle in the preponderance of male dominated management. She is one of the 27 women Board members out of 700 Board Members in Public Sector Undertakings (PSU). Ms Shaikh was appointed as Director (Finance) Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers Limited with effect from December 1, 2021. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Commerce from Mumbai University and is a qualified Chartered Accountant. She is a certified SAP FI Consultant. She started her career with RCF in the year 1989 as Accounts Officer. She was selected as Director (Finance) in National Film Development Corporation, a CPSE under the administrative Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and joined on November 24, 2015, after taking lien from Rashtriya Chemicals & Fertilizers Ltd. She re-joined RCF as Executive Director Finance on August 1, 2019. She was entrusted with various responsibilities relating to Finance in Trombay, Fertilizer Marketing & Corporate during her service period in RCF. She was also given charge of IT responsibilities during the crucial period of SAP ERP implementation/upgrade. She has been a member of Women's Cell and Complaints Committee for prevention of Sexual Harassment and during the tenure also served as Chairperson of the Committee briefly. She was facilitator for conduct of Gender audit in RCF. On rejoining as ED(Finance), she was responsible for the entire finance, accounting, taxation and related reporting and compliances, treasury function and financial concurrence of all proposals. She has a rich experience of more than 29 years in the fertilizer industry. At NFDC, she was holding additional charge of the responsibilities of Managing Director of NFDC for a brief period. Being one of the two Functional Directors, she got an exposure to the non-finance areas including media & production business, film festivals and promotion in addition to HR, legal & administrative functions. She was awarded Best Woman Employee Award in Executive Category (3rd place) instituted by Forum of Woman in Public Sector (under the aegis of SCOPE) in February 2014 and the CFO100 Next Award 2013 instituted by the CFO institute.



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### Rishi Kumar Bagla elected Chairman, CII Western Region



Rishi Kumar Bagla, Chairman & Managing Director, BG Electricals and Electronics India Ltd. has been elected as the Chairman of CII Western Region for the year 2025-26. Mr Vir S Advani, Chairman & Managing Director, Blue Star Ltd. has been elected as the Deputy Chairman, CII Western Region. Their names were announced at the first meeting of the reconstituted Western Regional Council held on Thursday. The Western Region stands ready to enter a transformative era of economic growth and sustainable development. Elected leaders, dedicated to fostering the region's success, will lead the charge on initiatives that resonate with the goals of both businesses and communities, ensuring a prosperous future

for all. The major focus areas for the Western Region will include:

1. Ease of Doing Business & Responsible Business – To enhance Ease of Doing Business, CII Western Region shall continue to advocate for national and state-level policy reforms that simplify regulations and reduce bureaucratic hurdles. While it is CII's objective to facilitate growth for its members, it will also encourage members to operate ethically, with a strong commitment to sustainability, social responsibility, and transparency.
2. Cost of Doing Business – By advocating for favourable policies and providing shared resources and training among other measures, CII Western Region will strive towards lowering operational and regulatory expenses for members.
3. Ease of Living – CII Western Region will actively engage in advocating in policies that improve infrastructure, public services, and quality of life for residents. Focus will also be on initiatives that support environmental sustainability, reduce pollution, and enhance safety.

**Briefs**NEW DELHI  
PM Modi writes to Yunus

Greeting Bangladesh Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus and people of the neighbouring country on its National Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said this day "stands as a testament to our shared history and sacrifices, that have laid the foundation of our bilateral partnership."

Bangladesh celebrates its National Day on March 26, the day in 1971 when the country till then a part of Pakistan declared its independence.

In a letter extending felicitations to Yunus and people of Bangladesh, Modi said, "The spirit of the Liberation War of Bangladesh continues to remain a guiding light for our relationship, which has flourished across multiple domains, bringing tangible benefits to our peoples."

NEW DELHI  
**CBSE cracks down on 'dummy schools'**

CBSE students not found attending regular schools will not be allowed to appear for Class 12 board examinations, officials said and added that the onus of taking admission in "dummy schools" lies with students and parents. In its ongoing crackdown on "dummy schools", the Central Board of Secondary Education is contemplating amending examination bye-laws to disallow such students from appearing in the board exams and will have to take the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) test. "In case candidates are found missing from school or are found to be non-attending during surprise inspections undertaken by the board, such candidates may not be allowed to appear for the board examination. The onus of not attending regular school also falls on the concerned student and his or her parents," a senior board official told PTI.

NEW DELHI  
**25,000 km of highway to be widened: Min**

A total of 25,000 km of two-lane highways in the country will be converted into four lanes for Rs 10 lakh crore, and it will help reduce accidents on the roads significantly, Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said in Lok Sabha on Thursday. Gadkari also said that 16,000 km of national highways will also be converted into six lanes for Rs 6 lakh crore.

**Suvendu warns of TMC's imminent fall**

Senior BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari on Thursday warned the ruling Trinamool Congress of an 'imminent change' in West Bengal in the 2026 assembly polls, stating that no political party stays in power forever.

Addressing a public meeting in Baruipur, South 24 Parganas, Adhikari said,

**FINALLY, TRUCE?** | Union home minister Amit Shah says 'Under Modi govt, separatism is breathing its last'

**Amid Kathua encounter, 2 more rebel groups sever Hurriyat ties**FPJ News Service  
NEW DELHI / JAMMU

Security personnel take positions during an encounter which broke out between terrorists and security forces in Kathua district, Thursday

and an initial exchange of gunfire resulted in death of three police personnel dead and injuries to two security personnel.

The officials said that two terrorists were killed in the onslaught led by the Special Operations Group (SOG) of the Jammu and Kashmir Police and assisted by the Army, the BSF and CRPF.

Adding to the tension, three security personnel, including a Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), were reportedly trapped near the gunfight's location, adjacent to a rivulet concealed by dense foliage.

**RAIDS ON**  
Elsewhere, the Jammu and Kashmir People's Movement

(JKPM) and the Democratic Political Movement (DPM) publicly denounced the Hurriyat and its separatist agenda, pledging allegiance to the Constitution of India.

Scores of residences of the second and third rung members of the Hurriyat Conference have been raided by the security forces since Monday.

The fresh wave of raids spread from south Kashmir's Kulgam, Shopian and Pulwama to central Kashmir's Budgam and Srinagar and north Kashmir's Baramulla.

Most of the raids were on the second and third rung members of the factions of Hurriyat, either led by the

Mirwaiz or late Syed Ali Shah Geelani.

A senior leader of J&K People's Movement, considered a close aide of Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, was also asked to sign a dissociation form.

**TERRORISTS INTERCEPTED**

Earlier, a group of terrorists was intercepted on Sunday evening within a 'dhok', a local term for an enclosure in a nursery, in Sanyal village near the International Border with Pakistan.

A subsequent massive search operation, involving the police, army, NSG, BSF, and CRPF, utilised advanced technical and surveillance equipment, including helicopters, UAVs, drones, bullet-proof vehicles, and sniffer dogs.

The search teams discovered evidence on Monday, including four loaded magazines of M4 carbine, two grenades, a bullet-proof jacket, sleeping bags, tracksuits, food packets, and materials for constructing improvised explosive devices (IEDs) near the Hiranagar encounter site.

Police believe that the terrorists infiltrated on Saturday, possibly via a ravine route or a newly constructed tunnel from across the border.

**Govt: India developing reusable launch vehicle**Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar  
NEW DELHI

On the lines of the reusable launch vehicle technology that NASA has been using for a long time, India is also developing similar technology, the Centre told the Rajya Sabha on Thursday.

In the case of India, it is the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) which is developing a winged body Orbital Re-entry Vehicle (ORV), which will be launched into orbit using an ascent vehicle and subsequently re-enter into the earth's atmosphere for an autonomous approach and landing on a runway, Minister of State for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences Jitendra Singh said in a written reply in the

Upper House.

He said ISRO is now designing and developing the critical technologies required for demonstrating booster stage recovery in Vertical Take-off and Vertical Landing (VTOL) mode, which will enable recovery and reusing of the spent booster stages multiple times. He said the Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV) that has been approved by the Centre has also been configured as a three-stage launch vehicle with a recoverable and reusable first stage.

**DRDO's D4 for urban areas soon**Dharmesh Thakkar  
MUMBAI

(hard kill) from a distance of up to 3 km.

The interceptor drones, which would autonomously engage rogue UAVs mid-flight, is designed to adapt to terrains, threat levels and operational environments with speed, precision and non-collateral impact," confirmed a senior DRDO scientist.

The indigenous integrated counter-drone solution is designed to detect and neutralize rogue unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) with precision. The D4 system can instantly detect and jam micro drones (soft kill) and use a laser-based kill mechanism to terminate targets

frequency (RF) detection, Radar and electro-optical tracking, AI-powered threat classification, electronic jamming and spoofing, Hard-kill and soft-kill neutralization amongst other tech innovations.

**ALREADY DEPLOYED**

The D4 system is already deployed at forward bases to monitor infiltrations and drone drops, strategic installations like ammunition dumps, airbases and communications hubs, Border Out Posts (BOP) to detect cross border trafficking and recon drones by the multiple security agencies.

**Judge case: Cong MPs seek Min statement**Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar  
NEW DELHI

Senior Congress MPs on Thursday pressed for a discussion on the issue of the recovery of cash from the official residence of former Delhi High Court judge Justice Yashwant Varma earlier this month. The issue had earlier been raised in the Rajya Sabha where Chairman Jagdeep Dhankar had also met the floor leaders of all political parties earlier this week to discuss it.

In the Lok Sabha, Deputy Leader Gaurav Gogoi moved and adjournment motion to seek a discussion on the issue before any other business was taken up. However, his demand was not accepted by the Chair.

Another Congress MP and

friendly banter, said that Raghav Chadha's exposure to the western world would help people within the country.

"I was amused, sir, if Member Raghav Chadha does not take offense, he observed the number of fans in the bank, the condition of the bank, how many were whitewashed and not painted. I am really so, so satisfied. There are MPs who are otherwise very busy with many things internationally," she said.

**FIM's humorous take on Chadha's bank remarks**

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, on Wednesday, had a humorous response to Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha for raising the issue of the conditions of banks in Parliament. Addressing the Rajya Sabha, Sitharaman, in a

former union minister Manish Tewari also raised the issue in the House as he expressed concern over the alleged recovery of cash from the judge's residence during a fire incident there on the day of Holi. Tewari also urged Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal to make a statement on the issue in the House.

**Friday namaz on roads barred for safety, says Sambhal police**PTI  
SAMBHAL (UP)

There is no restriction on offering namaz in Sambhal in the traditional manner but gathering in large numbers on rooftops has been prohibited to prevent accidents, top police officials said on Thursday.

Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh continues to remain tense since November 24 last year when violence erupted in the city's Kot Garhi locality during a survey of the Mughal-era Jama Masjid. The incident led to the death of four people due to gunfire while several people including police personnel sustained injuries.

Sambhal Superintendent of Police (SP) Krishna Kumar Bishnoi said clear instructions

have been issued to ensure that namaz is offered only at designated Eidgahs and mosques, and not on roads.

Bishnoi said a security strategy has been put in place for Friday, with the deployment of 10 companies of the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) and Rapid Response Force (RRF).

The force will be stationed across key locations, and their deployment will be adjusted according to the situation.

**Jama Masjid prez denied bail**

A local court on Thursday rejected the interim bail plea of Shahi Jama Masjid president Zafar Ali and posted his regular plea on April 2, officials said.

Additional district judge II Nirbhan Narayan Rai heard the interim bail plea and dismissed it, said additional district government counsel Hariom Prakash Saini.

During the hearing, he said, Ali's lawyer argued for interim bail, but the prosecution opposed it, citing serious charges against him, including assembling a mob, inciting violence, damaging public property, and fabricating facts.

**Stalin slams UP CM; says 'darkest political black comedy'**

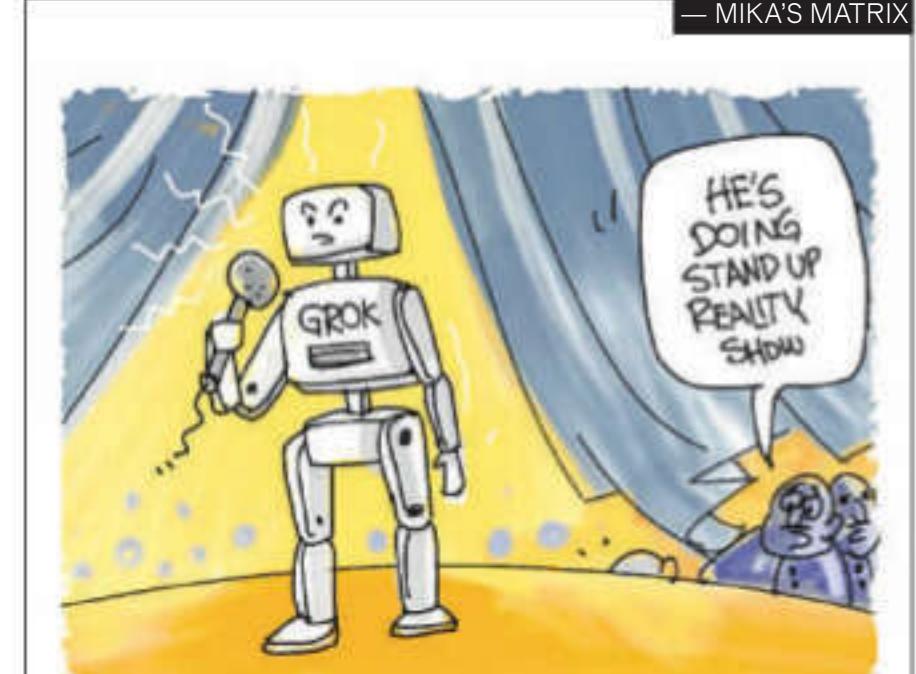
Chennai:

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Thursday lashed out at his Uttar Pradesh counterpart Yogi Adityanath on the language row, dubbing his remarks as

**LANGUAGE ROW**

"political black comedy" and said his state was not opposing a language, but its "imposition and chauvinism."

"And now Hon'ble Yogi Adityanath wants to lecture us on hate? Spare us. This isn't irony - it's political black comedy at its darkest."

**Rajesh Moudgil**

CHANDIGARH



The Haryana government has announced to change a gazetted holiday into a restricted holiday on the occasion of Eid as Monday – May 31 – as it is the closing day of the financial year.

The government notification issued in the regard read: "In partial modification of the government notification issued vide even number dated 26.12.2024, it is notified that Eid-ul-Fitr, i.e. 31st March 2025, shall be observed as a Restricted Holiday (Schedule-II) instead of a Gazetted Holiday, due to the fact that 29th and 30th March 2025 are weekend off days and 31st March being the closing day of the Financial Year 2024-2025".

Pertinently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which

**A restricted holiday for government employees is an optional holiday that they can decide whether they want to take or not**

had earlier declared a bank holiday on March 31, has also cancelled the holiday as it is the last day of the financial year.

For record, a restricted holiday for government employees is an optional holiday that they can decide whether they want to take or not, while a gazetted holiday is a mandatory public holiday during which government offices, banks and government institutions remain closed.

However, replying to the objections of the Congress members, chief minister Nayab Saini asked them not to make a political issue in the context as the change was made because of said reason.

Newton's third law states that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. The Earth is round. Lakshman Seth (former Haldia MP) had once threatened to break my legs if I crossed the river. Where is he today? Sushanta Ghosh (CPI-M leader from West Midnapore) has disappeared. Till 10 years ago, people believed Lalu Prasad and Mulayam Singh Yadav would remain forever. Their

days are gone. TMC's leaders will not always be around."

His remarks come in the backdrop of an alleged attack on his convoy last week, reportedly by Trinamool Congress supporters, while he was on his way to Baruipur.

The constituency includes areas represented by Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee, with whom BJP legislators have had a tense

face-off in the just-concluded session of the Assembly.

Adhikari took a dig at Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, questioning the ruling party's overconfidence.

"Buddha Babu (late former chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee) used to say we are 235 and the opposition is 30. You have not even reached 235. What makes you so arrogant? The TMC won't be in power for too long," he said.

**Stalin slams UP CM; says 'darkest political black comedy'**

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**LANGUAGE ROW**

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— PTI

**Andhra CM finalises 'Zero Poverty - P4'**

Amaravati: Andhra CM N Chandrababu Naidu has announced the launch of the Zero Poverty - P4' initiative, a platform designed to enable the wealthy to support the underprivileged. The programme will be launched on Ugadi (Telugu New Year), and the CM reviewed its final structure at the Secretariat.

The CM emphasised participation in P4 is entirely voluntary, and no one should feel obligated to contribute. NRIs can also take part, similar to the Janmabhoomi programme from his previous tenure, which received strong public support.

The platform is open to anyone willing to help, with the government's role limited to connecting donors and beneficiaries. No additional financial assistance will be provided by the state.

Naidu stressed on the importance of encouraging the affluent to come forward and contribute. He directed officials to ensure that beneficiary selection is error free.

Beneficiaries will be called 'Bangaru Kutumbam' (Golden Families), while donors will be referred to as 'Margadarsi' (Guides). The final list of beneficiaries will be decided transparently through gram sabhas and ward sabhas to avoid any disputes.

The CM clarified P4 is separate from the govt's welfare schemes and is focused solely on uplifting the most disadvantaged sections of society. He instructed officials to ensure there is no public confusion about the programme.

**MASSACRE | Mentally ill man slits throat of 3 daughters, son after wife leaves to meet parents**

# Dad kills 4 kids, hangs self in UP

**Biswajeet Banerjee**

SHAHJAHANPUR



A 36-year-old man allegedly killed his four children before ending his own life by hanging himself at his home in Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur on Wednesday night.

Superintendent of Police Rajesh Dwivedi said Rajiv Kumar used a sharp weapon to slit the throats of his three Smriti, 12, Kirti, 9, and Pragati, 6, as well as his son Rishabh 4. Following the gruesome act, he moved to another room and hanged himself.

The crime came to light on Thursday at 7am when Rajiv's father, concerned that the house remained locked from inside, climbed onto the terrace and entered through a side passage. Upon discovering the horrifying scene, he informed the police.

According to SP Dwivedi, Rajiv had suffered a serious head injury in an accident a year ago and had been undergoing treatment since then. His father stated Rajiv often displayed aggressive behaviour due to his condition. On Wednesday, his wife went to her parental home. The reason remained unclear.

During the investigation, police found the weapon used in the killings, along with a sharpener Rajiv had used to refine its edge before committing the crime. The bodies have been sent for the post-mortem, and further probe is on to ascertain the exact motive behind the tragedy.

The incident has cast a pall of gloom over the village, as neighbours and relatives struggle to come to terms with the shocking loss of innocent lives.

## FROM THE SECOND FRONT I-T puts...

But according to the tax department, he has apparently been hiding crores somewhere in the midst of his nimbu paani ammosambi stock! "I'm so stressed that my blood pressure has gone through the roof. My mother, who already suffers from depression, has been shaken by this," he said, still trying to figure out if he should laugh, cry, or just disappear into his juice blender. For now, Rahees can only hope the tax authorities take one sip of reality and realise they may have squeezed the wrong lemon.

Receiving astonishingly high-income tax notices is not as uncommon as one might think. In April 2023, a resident of Madhya Pradesh, earning approximately Rs53,000 per month, was bewildered upon receiving an income tax notice demanding Rs113 crore. The tax authorities alleged underreported income linked to transactions from 2011-12, suggesting the individual was a promoter of a diamond trading company. The resident, however, claimed that apart from his PAN and photograph, none of the evidence pertained to him, indicating potential identity misuse.

It is not only the common man who gets inflated I-T notice, even political parties have it. Take the case of

the Congress, which received income tax notices worth Rs3,567 crore. In March 2024, the party was served a notice for Rs1,823 crore covering assessment years 1994-95 and 2017-18 to 2020-21. Subsequently, fresh notices amounting to Rs1,745 crore were issued for assessment years 2014-15 to 2016-17. The Congress alleged that this was an act of "tax terrorism" aimed at financially crippling the opposition ahead of elections.

### Preparations on...

respecting the unique cultural and civilizational identities of all nations around the world," he said.

He also said that the two sides have been working together within the United Nations, the G-20, BRICS, the SCO and other multilateral platforms. "I would like to extend our gratitude on behalf of Russia for the fact that India, including its Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been following a balanced approach to the Ukraine crisis at all times and called for settling it through dialogue and by addressing its root causes," Lavrov said. He said that Russia fully shares this approach and has been expressing its readiness to hold talks from the moment this crisis started.

These talks must pave the way for settling the conflict and ensuring lasting peace by removing the conflict's root causes," he added.

stated, "This seems to be tied to transactions worth Rs. 1.5 to 2 crore." On X, Kanal posted, "Kamra's channel should be demonetized, and financial transactions should be blocked. I have over 300 screenshots of payments linked to videos targeting the Prime Minister and others. These accounts must be scrutinized, as evidence points to Khalistani funding." Kanal submitted a letter to Khar police on Thursday, requesting an investigation into these financial irregularities. He provided receipts of financial transactions as part of his complaint.

Meanwhile, the Khar police issued two summons to Kamra on Monday and Wednesday, but he has not appeared yet. Kamra criticized the media on X, calling them "vultures" and accusing them of miscommunication for the ruling party. He added, "If they shut shop tomorrow, it will be a favour to the country."

In response to Kamra's post, a reply on X stated: "Come to Mumbai and face the law. No one is above the law. The media is an integral part, and this is your biggest mistake—intentional due to your sad attitude. Grow up. Whatever you think or say cannot be right. Whether the media stays open or shuts is God's will."

### Dhankhar no to ...

"Even Zakir Naik's NGO gave a donation of Rs 50 lakh... They talk about transparency of the BJP," he had charged.

In his notice submitted to Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar, Ramesh claimed that Shah made "unfounded allegations against Sonia Gandhi with a premeditated motive to malign her reputation".

Terminating the minister's statement as "blatantly false" and "defamatory", he had moved the privilege notice against Shah under Rule 188 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States (Rajya Sabha).

Ramesh had added that "even though the Home Minister didn't take the name of Smt. Sonia Gandhi but he had categorically by implication referred to her and imputed motives to her vis-à-vis the functioning of the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF)"

In his response, Dhankar said that Shah had supported his statement by presenting a January 24, 1948 press release from the government's Press Information Bureau (PIB) on the formation of the PMNRF under then-Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and how then president of the Indian National Congress was part of its management.

He rejected the privilege notice and held that Shah had not committed any "transgression" since his remarks were "absolute adherence to truth."

### 'Population not ...

"It is to be noted that the purpose and intent behind the 42nd, 84th and 87th Constitutional amendments aimed at national population stabilisation are yet to be achieved," it said.

Hence, while continuing with the freeze on the number of parliamentary seats, taking state as a unit, redrawing

the boundaries of parliamentary constituencies can be taken up, duly augmenting the SC and ST seats as per latest population and also providing reservation for women, it said.

The resolution also sought increasing the number of seats in the State Assembly from 119 to 153 as per the AP Reorganisation Act and as per latest Census. The Centre should introduce necessary constitutional amendments for the purpose, it said.

Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar announced the resolution was adopted.

### Auto stocks hit by...

Among auto components and equipment firms Bharat Forge lost 4.28 per cent, Samvardhana Motherson International 7.59 per cent, ASK Automotive 1.82 per cent, and Sona BLW Precision Forgings 6.69 per cent.

The tariff on auto imports throws uncertainty over India's \$7 billion of exports to America, which exporters worry could squeeze margins. India is not a large exporter of cars to the US, but Tata Motors' subsidiary Jaguar Land Rover is an established brand in the US market. Over 23 per cent of Jaguar Land Rover (4 lakh units) sold in 2024 were in the US where exports from its UK plants. Corporate analyst opine, "Jaguar's profitability may be negatively impacted as passing on added costs to consumers may hit its US market share."

Tariffs will impact export-oriented segments. Trump's latest 25% duty on all car imports to the US will impact Tata Motors which exports a significant chunk of JLR cars to the US," Dr V K Viyakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments told The Free Press Journal.

"New tariff will lead to strained international economic, political and trade relations, and ultimately the consumers will pay the price. Potential retaliation from trade partners is expected any time."

Indian auto ancillary firms are expected to see the biggest hit as they export a lot of components to the US market. Sona BLW Precision Forgings, Bharat Forge, and Samvardhana Motherson International Limited will take a hit. Sona BLW derives over 40 per cent of its revenues from US exports, while Bharat Forge gets 37 per cent from sales to the US, experts said.

The move may also lead to the shutdown of many car production companies in the US who largely depend on auto parts and components from India and other markets. The Indian auto components industry is likely to face more challenges as our exports to the US are high. Indian vehicle makers, however, are less likely to be impacted as there are no direct exports of fully built cars from India to the US, analysts said.

Among the hardest hit stocks, according to sources, were exporters based in Japan, Germany, and South Korea, which sell many of their cars in the US. Car and auto part prices witnessed a dramatic upswing in the aftermath of the Covid-19. Experts one Thursday warned US consumers to prepare for more price hikes spurred by the tariff.

Kanal alleged, "Amounts like 400 dollars and 300 euros have been sent to Kamra from Canada, America, and Pakistan. This is not income earned through hard work, but illegal money disguised as 'tips'. Just a day ago, Kamra received 400 dollars. This is terrorist funding and action should be taken to ban Kamra's YouTube channel within 24 hours." Kamal also linked these funds to political backing, specifically referring to Sanjay Raut.

Kanal claimed Kamra had called him, asking how he could go against the law, but Kamal responded by asserting Kamra was the accused. Kamal further

denied the allegations and filed a complaint at Khar police station, urging an investigation into potential illegal financial transactions tied to Kamra's YouTube channel. He demanded a ban on Kamra's channel.

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### PUNJAB'S 'WAR AGAINST DRUGS'

## BIG FISH ON POLICE RADAR

**Rajesh Moudgil**

CHANDIGARH

trade in the state.

The development came close on the heels of the DGP Punjab directing all the commissioners of police and senior superintendents of police (SSPs) to identify and catalogue the main drug suppliers or peddlers in their respective districts within 7 days.

About the said anti-drugs campaign launched on March 1, 2025, he said the same has resulted in arrest of 4,142 drug smugglers and led to recovery of 146.3kg heroin, 85.3kg opium, 19.95 quintals poppy husk, 769 lakh intoxicant tablets/capsules, 1 kg ICE and Rs5.83 crore drug money from the smugglers.

### In the Courtyard

## India on brink of 1 person 1 family: SC

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday observed while India upholds the philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', we struggle to maintain unity within our own immediate families. A bench of Justices Pankaj Mital and SVN Bhatti was hearing a plea by Samtola Devi, 68, seeking the eviction of eldest son, Krishna Kumar, from family home in Sultanpur, UP. "In India we believe in 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' ie the earth, as a whole, is one family. However, today we are not even able to retain the unity in the immediate family, what to say of building one family for the world. The very concept of 'family' is being eroded and we are on the brink of one person one family."



### Sarhul guest

A Sarna committee delegation invites Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren to take part in the natural grand festival "Sarhul" procession in Ranchi.

### From the front page

#### TN assembly ...

The resolution stated that the people were living in religious harmony in India and the Constitution has provided rights for all people to follow their religion.

"The elected governments have the right to protect it. The Assembly unanimously insists that the Union Government should completely withdraw the Waqf Amendment Bill as it severely affects the minority Muslims," it read.

Earlier speaking on the resolution, BJP member Vanathi Srinivasan said the Centre decided to amend the Waqf Act following complaints of irregularities in the management of the Waqf properties.

"A Joint Parliamentary Committee met people's representatives and obtained their opinion," she said.

Immediately, Law Minister S Regupathy said the Centre had not responded to the objections raised on the issue. Stalin said two DMK members part of the JPC were not allowed to speak nor were their views recorded.

PMK's G K Mani and AIADMK's S P Velumani supported the resolution.

Later, speaking to reporters outside the Assembly, Vanathi Srinivasan accused the ruling DMK of enacting a 'political drama' on religious harmony and said the state government has a separate ministry under its control to administer the Hindu temples. "And he (Chief Minister) is teaching a lesson on religious freedom. The (Central) amendment has been proposed to ensure transparency in administration. This (resolution) is the usual DMK's divisive politics of majority and minority. It has been brought for politics and a drama has been enacted," she charged.

**Desai threatens ...**

Shiv Sena (Shinde) office bearer Rahul Kanal, who was involved in vandalising the Uncontinental auditorium, alleged that Kamra received terrorist funding from Khalistani sources. Kanal accused Kamra of using this illicit funding to destabilise the country's integrity and law and order. Kanal made these allegations on X (formerly Twitter), filing a complaint at Khar police station, urging an investigation into potential illegal financial transactions tied to Kamra's YouTube channel. He demanded a ban on Kamra's channel.

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## KATHUA ENCOUNTER | Terrorists infiltrated recently are believed to be members of Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad

# 4 cops, 3 ultras, killed in daylong gunfight in J&K

PTI  
JAMMU

Three terrorists and four policemen were killed and 7 others including a deputy superintendent of police injured in a fierce day-long gunfight in a remote forested area of Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua, officials said on Thursday.

The encounter started around 8am amid intensified operations led by J&K Police against a recently infiltrated group of ultras believed to be members of Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) outfit, the officials said.

However, it was not immediately clear whether it was the same group that had been evading an earlier cordon in Sanyal forest of Kathua region or another batch of infiltrated terrorists.

The gunfight triggered intense firing and explosions, the officials said, as dozens of local youth were seen assisting the security forces to carry heavy weapons and ammunition deep inside a gorge.

The encounter, centred near Jakhole village in the Ghati Juthana area of Rajbagh, involved a group of approximately five terrorists and an initial exchange of gunfire resulted in injuries to six policemen including the sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) leading a search party, the officials said.

They said that three terrorists were killed in the onslaught led by the Special Operations Group (SOG) of the Jammu and Kashmir Police and assisted by the Army and CRPF.



A security man stands guard during the encounter with terrorists in Kathua

Adding to the tension, five police personnel, including the SDPO, were reportedly trapped near the gunfight's location, adjacent to a rivulet concealed by dense foliage.

However, the SDPO — a DSP rank officer — was evacuated from the scene late this evening, while three of his personal security officers were found dead, official sources said, adding the fate of another missing policeman was unknown immediately.

The J&K Police have neither confirmed nor denied the death of the policemen, saying a clear picture will emerge once the parties reach the scene on Friday morning.

The bodies of the terrorists were also not retrieved so far as security forces halted the operation for the night, the officials said.

The operation will be resumed with the first light of the day on Friday as two more

terrorists are believed to be trapped in the area. They are also presumed dead but their bodies could not be located by the drones, the officials said.

Besides the SDPO, two more policemen were admitted in Kathua hospital and their condition was stated to be "stable". Two Army men were also injured and shifted to military hospital.

Special troops of Army were airdropped at the scene of the encounter in the evening to further strengthen the cordon around the area, the officials said, adding bodies of two terrorists were noticed by drones and would be retrieved on Friday morning.

Meanwhile, the People's Anti-Fascist Front, a proxy outfit of JeM, claimed responsibility for the firing on the police party. Notably, a group of terrorists were intercepted by the SOG in the Hiranagar sector of Kathua

on Sunday evening.

Despite a massive search operation, the terrorists managed to escape the initial cordon, the officials said, adding it is assumed that the same could have been possibly spotted near Jakhole, approximately 30 kilometers from the initial encounter site.

The terrorists were moving through the forest area when a police party headed by a SDPO moved in after getting specific information, the officials said, adding they came under heavy fire resulting in the gunfight.

Reinforcements from the police, Army, and CRPF were immediately deployed in the area. The quiet village Suffain in Kathua was shattered by the relentless sounds of gunfire, grenades, and rocket fire as a fierce exchange raged throughout the day, punctuated by a series of powerful explosions.

"The professor repeatedly implies that India is a Hindu nationalist state actively oppressing minorities," said Bhatt.

—AP

Houston Univ's Hindu course kicks up storm

The content of a course on Hindu religion offered by the University of Houston has sparked controversy, with an Indian-American student and activist accusing it of being "Hinduophobic" and "distorting India's political landscape". The American university has said it was "reviewing the concerns raised" by the student.

The controversy is over the University of Houston's Lived Hindu Religion course, which is offered to students online. The video lectures are delivered by Professor Aaron Michael Ullrey weekly.

Vasant Bhatt, a political science major at the University of Houston and Hindu-American activist, has complained to the dean of the university's College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences under which the course — Lived Hindu Religion — is offered.

"Hinduism, according to Professor Ullrey, was not an ancient, lived tradition but a colonial construct, a political tool weaponised by Hindu nationalists, and a system of oppression against minorities," Bhatt told India Today.

Bhatt shared a quote from the syllabus which says, "The word 'Hindu' is recent, not found in scriptures. Hindutva, or 'Hindu-ness', is a term that Hindu nationalists those who believe Hinduism should be the official religion of India, use to designate their religion and denigrate others, namely Islam". In his recorded lecture on "political Hinduism", Professor Ullrey refers to PM Narendra Modi as a "Hindu fundamentalist".

"The professor repeatedly implies that India is a Hindu nationalist state actively oppressing minorities," said Bhatt.

## Man kills wife, stuffs body in suitcase, informs in-laws



**Bengaluru:** A man who allegedly murdered his wife, stuffed her body into a suitcase, and fled to Pune. The accused, Rakesh from Maharashtra, was tracked down using call detail records and detained by Pune police.

The crime came to light when Rakesh reportedly called his wife's parents and confessed to the murder. The victim, 32-year-old Gauri Anil Sambekar, had a background in mass media and communication. She was unemployed and staying at home, while Rakesh worked as a project manager at Hitachi.

The couple, originally from Maharashtra, had been living in Doddakannahalli under Hulimavu police station limits for two months.

According to sources,

hanging case. "When our Hulimavu police inspector reached the house, it was locked. After gaining entry, they found a suitcase in the bathroom. That's when we realised it was an offence. The FSL team opened the suitcase and discovered a woman's body with injury marks all over," she said.

Authorities attempted to trace Rakesh, but he was missing. Investigators tracked his location through CDR and alerted Pune police, who arrested him. A team from Hulimavu police has travelled to Pune to bring him back to Bengaluru for further investigation.

"The body was not cut into pieces; it was intact. The exact nature of injuries will be confirmed after the postmortem report," DCP Fathima added.

## UP man gets wife married to paramour

**Lucknow:** Bablu, who recently married off his wife to her lover, was scared for his safety and the brutal murder of a man in Meerut by his wife and her lover. "In recent days, we have seen husbands have been killed by their wives," Bablu told news agency PTI, adding, the recent Meerut case encouraged him to make the move.

"After seeing what happened in Meerut, I decided to get my wife married to her lover so that we can both live peacefully," he said.

Bablu, who works as a labourer, got his wife Radhika married to Vishal Kumar, after finding out about their affair. Bablu and Radhika got married in 2017 and have two children.

Locals say Radhika had been in a relationship with Vishal for about a year-and-a-half. Bablu's family later came to know of her affair with Vishal and informed Bablu. He tried to work things out first, but decided to arrange his wife's marriage to Vishal.

"I decided to arrange their marriage to avoid potential harm to myself. In recent days, we have seen husbands have been killed by their wives," Bablu said.

"After seeing what happened in Meerut, I decided to

get my wife married to her lover so that we can both live peacefully," he added.

He went to court and solemnised the marriage of his wife and her lover, and then took them to a temple, where they exchanged garlands and wedding vows.

Bablu requested Radhika to keep his two children, a demand she agreed to. Bablu was referring to the murder of a 29-year-old man by his wife and lover in Meerut.

Saurabh, 29, was found murdered and his dismembered body was hidden in a cement-filled drum. The accused—his wife Muskan Rastogi, 27 and her lover Sahil Shukla, 25—meticulously planned 29-year-old Saurabh Rajput's murder.

## Bombs hurled, shots fired near BJP leader's house in Bengal

PTI  
KOLKATA

Unidentified miscreants hurled bombs and opened fire outside the house of BJP leader and former MP Arjun Singh in West Bengal's Bhatpara, police said.

A youth suffered injuries in the attack, which took place late on Wednesday. Singh and his close associates reportedly chased the assailants, forcing them to flee. On Thursday afternoon, police summoned Singh for questioning at Jagaddal police station. As he did not appear, a police team visited his residence in the evening, sources said.

A large police contingent, including Rapid Action Force personnel, was deployed in the area to control the situation.

Several empty cartridges and live bombs were recovered from the site, officials said. "The situation is now under control. Those involved will not be spared...legal action will be taken against the culprits," Barrackpore Police Commissioner Ajay Thakur said.

Violence erupted following a dispute between 2 groups of workers. Singh alleged Trinamool councillor Sunita Singh's son Namit was behind the attack. "He opened fire in front of police. There was indiscriminate firing and bombing."

## Asaram's land may be acquired for 2036 Oly

**T**he land of Ahmedabad's Asaram Ashram, owned by Asaram Bapu, serving a life sentence in a rape case, is likely to be acquired as India bids for the 2036 Olympics, sources told India Today. The Asaram Ashram is among the three ashrams close to the under-construction Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Sports Enclave, sources said.

A 5-member committee of the Gujarat government is speaking to Asaram Ashram officials to acquire the land for the sports complex, a proposed Olympic village and sports grounds will be built in an area of over 650 acres.

The areas near the Narendra Modi Stadium have been included in the upcoming sports complex. This includes Bhat and Koteshwar areas. There are old buildings in these two villages and there are three ashrams — Asaram Ashram, Bharatiya Seva Samaj, and Sadashiv Prajna Mandal —

which have been accused of illegal encroachment on government land several times.

Asaram Ashram spokesperson Neelam Dubey said the ashram officials provided documents of the ashram's ownership after the government approached it some time ago.

"The whole matter is in the high court so we can't comment on it as the matter is sub-judge," Dubey added.

In January, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India was

using all of its resources to secure the hosting rights for the 2036 Olympics. At the opening ceremony of the 38th National Games in Dehradun, Modi said hosting the Games in India will boost the profile of Indian sports. The Indian Olympic Association has submitted a Letter of Intent to the Future Host Commission of the International Olympic Committee, formally expressing India's interest in hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2036.



Hyderabad priest jailed for life for murdering the woman, Apsara, in 2023 over marriage pressure

## Priest gets life for killing lover, sealing body in septic tank

**A** Hyderabad court on Wednesday sentenced a priest, Venkata Sai Surya Krishna, to life imprisonment for the 2023 murder of a woman with whom he was having an extramarital affair.

The court also awarded an additional 7 years of imprisonment for tampering with evidence in the case.

According to investigators, Sai Krishna, already married, had developed a relationship with the woman, Apsara, by making false promises of marriage. The two were reportedly involved in an affair for some time. However, when Apsara began pressuring him to follow through on his promise and marry her, Sai Krishna plotted to eliminate her.

The suspect was detained with the help of a civilian, police spokesperson Eline Roovers told The Associated Press. That night, they had dinner at Wednesday's verdict.

On June 3, 2023, he convinced Apsara they were going on a trip to Coimbatore. That night, they had dinner at

## 1KW SOLAR PANEL FOR RAJ CONSUMERS ON THE CARDS

Manish Godha

JAIPUR

Amending the free electricity scheme of the previous Congress government for domestic consumers, ruling BJP in Rajasthan is planning to install 1kw solar panel for each consumer. It will be linked to the PM Suryaghar Yojna (PM Suryaghar Scheme).

The Ashok Gehlot government launched the free electricity scheme of up to 100 units. The proposed scheme reaches 96 lakh domestic consumers with a maximum discount of up to

Rs562.50 per month. Of them, 62 lakh consumers get a zero bill, burdening the government exchequer with Rs5,600 crore yearly. Around 16 lakh domestic consumers still don't avail of the scheme, as they are not registered.

The BJP government cannot discontinue the scheme due to political compulsions. It has planned to link it with solar energy, and raise the monthly free electricity limit to 150 units. The proposed scheme will produce 4-5 units daily. For consumers with no roof, community solar panel installations will be done at the electricity substations or

community centres or other locations with ample space.

According to Rajasthan's energy department officials, the Centre gives a subsidy of Rs30,000 to install the solar panel under the PM Suryaghar Yojna, while the remaining Rs18-20,000 would be borne by the state.

"This one-time expenditure of installing solar panels will rid the government of the annual subsidy burden, and reduce the demand and dependence on fossil fuels," said a senior official. The existing subsidy will continue unless a timeframe is set to join the amended scheme.

The man who carried out the attack in the Dutch city was injured as he was stopped by a passerby. The attack happened near Dam Square in the late afternoon. No motive has been established.

The suspect was detained with the help of a civilian, police spokesperson Eline Roovers told The Associated Press.

## K'taka govt hikes milk price by ₹4

**Bengaluru:** The Karnataka Cabinet on Thursday gave nod to hike milk prices in the state by ₹4.

According to the details, the additional amount will be paid to farmers.

The development comes after a heavy demand by farmers, various organisations, and the Department of Animal Husbandry. Milk federations across the state are backing the price hike.

Quoting sources, IANS stated that KMF and farmers' organisations were demanding a hike of ₹5 per litre. However, the government had decided to increase the milk prices by ₹4.

dairy farmers.

He had also opposed the hike but assured the Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) that a decision would be taken by the cabinet soon.

It was also reported that the state cabinet would decide on hiking the price of Nandini milk supplied by the Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) on Thursday.

Quoting sources, IANS stated that KMF and farmers' organisations were demanding a hike of ₹5 per litre. However, the government had decided to increase the milk prices by ₹4.

## Amsterdam stabbing spree: 5 hurt, 1 nabbed

**A**msterdam: A knife-wielding assailant seriously wounded 5 people in a stabbing attack on a busy shopping street in Amsterdam before he was taken into custody, police said on Thursday.

The man who carried out the attack in the Dutch city was injured as he was stopped by a passerby. The attack happened near Dam Square in the late afternoon. No motive has been established.

The suspect was detained with the help of a civilian, police spokesperson Eline Roovers told The Associated Press.

On June 3, 2023, he convinced Apsara they were going on a trip to Coimbatore. That night, they had dinner at Wednesday's verdict.

DMK our sole enemy, ready to join hands with like-minded party: EPS

**Tuticorin:** DMK was AIADMK's "sole enemy" and the latter was ready to join hands with any like-minded party for an alliance, AIADMK chief Edappadi K Palaniswami said. Palaniswami, whose recent meeting with Home Minister Amit Shah has sparked off speculations of an AIADMK-BJP alliance, however said electoral pacts are only firmed up ahead of the hustings. Assembly polls in TN are slated 11 months from now.

Speaking to 'Al Jazeera', Ranjani said, "I freaked out. It was terrifying. I always thought living in Columbia housing would be safe, but here were ICE officers, on

the door. I realised no one was really helping me at that point. I had to leave."

Ranjani packed up in haste and left.

She said her fear of how to explain everything to her parents in India. She knew they would be terrified when they learnt what was happening.

After learning the situation, her parents left their home in Chennai and stayed with relatives. On March 9, after several days of confusion, Columbia informed Ranjani that her student status had been officially revoked.

The situation worsened after US Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem posted a video of Ranjani at LaGuardia airport, calling her a "terrorist sympathiser" in a now-viral X post.

## WILL COLUMBIA RE-ENROLL HER?

Ranjani stated she is now appealing to Columbia University to reinstate her enrolment, as she believes her academic work is complete and she can finish her PhD without returning to the US.

"I was really scared

# Govt firm on illegal constructions, says no scope for regularisation

**COMMITTEE TO EXAMINE HC ORDER, RECOMMEND LEGISLATION; GOVT MULLS SETTING UP SPECIAL LAW WING TO GUIDE ON ILLEGALITIES**

**THE GOAN | NETWORK**

**PANAJI**

While reiterating the government's plan to bring in legislation to protect the rights of people affected by the High Court order on unauthorised constructions, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Thursday categorically stated that no "illegal" structures or constructions would be "regularised".

"We are in the process...either to have a policy decision or bring in legislation to regularise the unauthorised constructions as a relief to the affected parties. Let me make it clear, only unauthorised structures would be regularised...not a single illegal construction would be regularised. No illegalities would be allowed," Sawant told media persons after chairing a High Powered Committee meeting.

The meeting, which was also attended by Revenue Minister Atanasio Monserate, Panchayat Minister Mauvin Godinho, Tourism Minister

**SAWANT SPEAKS**

- Only unauthorised structures would be regularised, not a single illegal construction would be regularised
- The government has already decided to amend the Goa Regularisation of Unauthorised Construction Act to regularise unauthorised structures up to 1,000 sqm in urban areas and 600 sqm in rural areas
- Clear instructions have been issued to the authorities to ensure that no more illegal structures come up in the government land, comunidade land or road sides



Rohan Khaunte and Environment Minister Aleixo Sequeira, also decided to form a committee under Secretary Revenue to examine the HC order and to recommend pros and cons of bringing in legislation. Sawant said that the government has already decided to amend the Goa Regularisation of Unauthorised Construction Act to regularise unauthorised structures up to 1,000 sqm in urban areas and 600 sqm in rural areas. "I am repeating it again, no illegal

structures would be regularised," he said.

Sawant said that clear instructions have been issued to the authorities to ensure that no more illegal structures come up in the government land, comunidade land, road sides or any other places as identified by the High Court and if any citizen comes across, should dial 100 and file complaint with the police. "The deputy collectors are empowered to take immediate action," he said.

The Chief Minister informed that based on the HC directions, the authorities have issued notices to illegal commercial establishments located along road-side. "They are directed to remove their structures within 15-20 days failing which we will remove it," he said.

Sawant maintained that whatever action the government is currently initiating is based on the High Court order only.

During the just concluded Budget Session, the Chief Minister had said that "we need to make a distinction between illegal and irregular constructions." Meanwhile, Revenue Minister Atanasio Monserrate said that a committee under Revenue Secretary with district collectors as members would be set up to recommend pros and cons and how we can go ahead with the legislation. "The issue is vast and we need to study

**Tenant verification to cover industries, temporary workers**

**PANAJI:** To further strengthen security measures, the government has decided to extend its ongoing tenant verification drive to industrial estates and labourers temporarily hired for various projects.

everything," he said.

The government is considering setting up a Special Law wing under Advocate General to guide the government on the issue.

In compliance with a recent order of the High Court, the Directorate of Panchayats and Urban Development issued instructions to panchayats and municipal councils across Goa to identify and act against illegal constructions.

**HC disposes of writ plea on illegal structures in Bogmalo**

**PANAJI:** The High Court of Bombay at Goa on Thursday disposed of a writ petition about illegal constructions in Chicolna, Bogmalo, after the Administrator of Comunidades (South Goa) assured the court that structures already served notices would be removed.

The petition, filed last year by the Forum Against Corruption, Illegalities and Destruction along with two others, objected to illegal RCC construction in property bearing Survey No. 4/1 of Chicolna, Bogmalo, which belongs to the Comunidade of Chicolna.

## GEC to assess Goa's water needs until 2047

**PROJECTED REQUIREMENT IS 31.64 TMC: ECONOMIC SURVEY**

**THE GOAN | NETWORK**

**FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY**

- Goa will require 31.64 TMC of water for sustainable development
- 4 projects completed: Rs 430 crore spent, yielding 75 MCM of water
- 11 ongoing projects: 50% completed, expected cost Rs 800 crore, to produce 165 MCM of water

sources up to 2047.

"The projected requirement is 31.64 TMC, serving as a roadmap for sustainable water resource planning and development up to 2047," it said.

The government said that

the water availability, in both quality and quantity, is vital for sustainable development and the Prime Minister's National Water Mission aim is to ensure Water, Food, and Health Security.

To support this mission, the Department undertook 15 Capital Incentive Projects between 2019-2020 and 2024-2025, with a planned investment of Rs 1,280 crore to harvest 240 MCM (600 MLD) of water.

Of the 15 planned projects, four have been successfully completed, costing Rs 430 crore and yielding 75 MCM of water. The remaining 11 projects, which are 50 per cent complete at a cost of Rs 480 crore, are projected to cost Rs 800 crore and produce 165 MCM of water.

# Filthy and unhygienic: Mapusa fish and meat market poses grave health risk

**THE GOAN | NETWORK**

**MAPUSA**

If you are a regular at the Mapusa fish and meat market, it's time to think twice before stepping into this cesspool of filth and contamination.

A damning health inspection report has revealed shocking levels of unsanitary conditions, illegal operations and an imminent public health hazard lurking in the market.

A joint inspection conducted by the Health Officer of the Urban Health Centre, Dr Dinesh Parab, along with a sanitary inspector and municipal authorities, has exposed the appalling state of the fish and meat market.

The report has confirmed that the market is not only functioning in a squalid and putrid environment but is also operating without mandatory health permissions. The findings are alarming.

None of the meat stall owners possess the required



A market chamber clogged with sludge and stagnant, putrid water, releasing a noxious stench. (Right) Stairs leading to the first-floor meat market covered in dirt and stained with betel nut splashes.

**SANS MANDATORY PERMISSIONS**

- None of meat stall owners possess required health NOC
- Chicken shop owners found blatantly violating hygiene standards
- Inspection team finds complete lack of proper water connections
- Gutters, chambers choked with filth, stagnant dirty water

health No Objection Certificate (NOC), raising serious concerns about the quality and safety of the meat being sold

to unsuspecting customers. Further, chicken shop owners have been found blatantly violating hygiene standards,

with meat being stored in unsanitary conditions.

Gutters and chambers are choked with filth and stagnant dirty water, releasing a noxious stench that engulfs the area.

Plastic waste and garbage are strewn across corridors, while public toilets – crucial for maintaining hygiene – remain closed. Even more disturbing, broken gutter covers allow contaminated water to flow directly into a nearby nullah, which itself is clogged

with garbage. Highlighting the gravity of the situation, Dr Parab has written to the Chief Officer of the Mapusa Municipal Council, Chandrakant Shetkar, urging immediate corrective measures to avert a full-blown public health crisis. The report has also been forwarded to the Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Bardez and the Director of the Food and Drugs Administration for swift action.

Sawant, also Home Minister, further stated that in the future, contractors hiring temporary labourers will be required to get them verified. "Certain incidents have occurred at (construction)

90.64% clear HSSC exams; pass rate rises by 5.64% from last yr

**COMMERCE TOPS WITH 93.31 PC; SANGUEM LEADS AMONG TALUKAS; GIRLS OUTSHINE BOYS; SSC RESULTS BY APRIL 15**

**THE GOAN | NETWORK**

**PORVORIM**

An overall 90.64 per cent of students have been declared successful at the HSSC board exams, with 16,030 of the 17,686 students passing the exams conducted by the Goa Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education in the State in February.

The overall success this year was 5.64 per cent better than the HSSC results in 2024, stated Goa Board Chairman Bhagirath Shetye while announcing the results on Thursday.

Shetye said the girls outshone the boys yet again this year. While 8,525 of the 9,224 girls passed (92.42 per cent), the pass percentage for the boys was 88.69 per cent with 7,505 of the 8,462 passing their exams.

Comparing the performance of the different streams, Shetye informed that students from the commerce stream performed exceptionally well this year also, with 4,745 of the 5,085 students passing the exams (93.31 per cent).

The science stream registered a passing percentage of 91.32, with 5,558 of the 6,086 clearing the board exam.

In the arts stream, 3,703 of the 4,068 students were declared successful, recording

**THE REPORT CARD**

- 90.64% of students passed, with 16,030 out of 17,686 clearing the exam
- Girls: 92.42% pass rate (8,525 out of 9,224 passed)
- Boys: 88.69% pass rate (7,505 out of 8,462 passed)

**STREAM-WISE**

- Commerce: 93.31% (4,745 out of 5,085 students passed)
- Science: 91.32% (5,558 out of 6,086 students passed)
- Arts: 91.03% (3,703 out of 4,068 students passed)
- Vocational: 82.71% (2,024 out of 2,447 students passed)
- Special needs students: 83.84% pass rate

**TALUKA-WISE**

- Highest pass percentage: Sanguem Taluka (95.92%)
- Lowest pass percentage: Sattari Taluka (81.22%)

a passing percentage of 91.03.

The vocation stream recorded an 82.71 per cent success, with 2,024 of the 2,447 students passing the exam.

The pass percentage for children with special needs stood at 83.84.

Shetye said the 3,066 students availed of sports merit marks, while 126 students have passed the exam with the help of sports merit marks.

While comparing the results across talukas, the Goa Board chairman said Sanguem Taluka registered highest success (95.92 per cent), while Sattari taluka registered the lowest passing percentage of 81.22.

Shetye mentioned that the tentative date for supplementary examination for Std 12 will be on April 21, while the tentative date for the next annual HSSC exam is February 10, 2026.

He also informed that the SSC results of the Goa Board will be declared by April 15.

The portal for the verification of marks will be open from April 1. The fees for the verified photocopy of the answer book is Rs 350 per subject and the fees for the revaluation of answer book is Rs 700 per subject. Verification of marks in absentia is Rs 100 per subject.

## Migrant workers in industrial estates will be verified: CM

**SAYS CONTRACTORS WILL HAVE TO GET TEMPORARY LABOURERS VERIFIED**

**THE GOAN | NETWORK**

**'GOA 100 PC SAFE FOR WOMEN'**

**PANAJI**

To further strengthen security measures, the government has decided to extend its ongoing tenant verification drive to industrial estates and labourers temporarily hired for various projects.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant announced that the verification process for migrant workers in industrial estates will soon commence but assured that it would not disrupt daily industrial operations.

"The migrant workers in industrial estates will have to undergo tenant verification. The process will be coordinated between the Labour and Police departments to ensure smooth functioning. Companies that have not complied will be asked to do so," Sawant said, speaking to the media on Thursday.

Reiterating that Goa remains 100 percent safe, the CM acknowledged isolated incidents involving migrants. He revealed that so far 70,000 tenants have been verified and sought cooperation from Goans regarding the same.

Sawant, also Home Minister, further stated that in the future, contractors hiring temporary labourers will be required to get them verified. "Certain incidents have occurred at (construction)

sites. We want to curb that," he said, adding that the tenant verification process has now moved online for easier implementation.

Responding to concerns over women's safety, particularly raised by Mahila Congress, Sawant reiterated Goa's security measures. "Goa is 100 percent safe for solo and group travellers including women. Our police services including helplines and the Pink Force are in place... any isolated incidents have been detected," he added.

On a different note, the CM also called for collective efforts in keeping the state clean. Urging stricter enforcement, he directed the police to take action against owners/ occupants of vehicles caught littering on roads. "The cleanliness sector is a shared responsibility," he said

law enforcement in ensuring security. "Police must be proactive in identifying suspicious individuals. Tourists' safety is important but so is ensuring locals' safety from tourists," he stated, indicating recent cases where visitors were involved in crimes against Goans.

On a different note, the CM also called for collective efforts in keeping the state clean. Urging stricter enforcement, he directed the police to take action against owners/ occupants of vehicles caught littering on roads. "The cleanliness sector is a shared responsibility," he said.

**Briefs**

DHOLERA

**Tata Group's plea for more land for chip plant**

Dholera: Tata Group, which is building its semiconductor chip fabrication plant at Dholera, has requested an additional 80 acres of land from the Gujarat government to expand the facility, according to reliable sources familiar with the development. The company, through its subsidiary Tata Electronics, is currently constructing the plant on 20 acres of land already allocated by the state government. The additional land will be used for mixed-use development, including residential facilities for the plant's 3,000 to 3,500 employees. Sources indicate that approximately 3,000 studio apartments will be built, catering to both Tata Electronics employees and those working for raw material suppliers to the chip fabrication plant. A large shopping complex with entertainment and dining options will also be constructed on the new land, alongside sports and other amenities.

The Gujarat government has reportedly provided a Letter of Support to Tata Electronics, committing to allocate a total of 163 acres for the project, with an additional 63 acres available for future expansion if needed. The initial 20 acres have already been allocated.

GANDHINAGAR

**Overhead power lines being shifted underground**

To prevent damage to power lines in coastal districts during natural calamities like storms or cyclones and to ensure a continuous electricity supply to farmers, the work of undergrounding overhead lines in phases is currently in progress. As of December 1, 2024, under the Sagarkhedu Sarvangi Vikas Yojana in Junagadh district, two power feeders covering 16.97 km of power lines have been planned for conversion into underground cables at a cost of more than ₹2.74 crore to secure the power infrastructure and ensure uninterrupted power supply, said Energy Minister Kanubhai Desai while replying to a question raised by an MLA in the Legislative Assembly today. Providing further details, Energy Minister Desai stated that under the Sagarkhedu Sarvangi Vikas Yojana, ₹4,964.29 lakh has been spent in Junagadh district and ₹1,164.29 lakh in Jamnagar district over the last two years, amounting to a total expenditure of ₹9,256.04 lakh as of December 31, 2024. After Cyclone Biparjoy, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel decided to provide underground electricity lines, new substations, replacement of dilapidated wires, and new electricity connections in coastal districts under the Sagarkhedu Vikas Yojana in the interest of farmers and citizens.

**ACTION OVERDUE | Runway Basic Strip Strengthening project was officially sanctioned to ensure ground's strength to support aircraft**

# Concern over Surat Airport's runway's safety among flyers

Melvyn Thomas

SURAT



Surat Airport, one of Gujarat's fastest-growing aviation hubs, is at the center of a brewing crisis. Frequent fliers and airport activists have submitted a formal representation to Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarpur Rammohan Naidu, demanding urgent action on the long-overdue Runway Basic Strip Strengthening project. The delay, despite a work order being issued, poses a serious safety risk to aircraft operations and threatens compliance with International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) standards.

The project was sanctioned to enhance the stability and strength of the runway strip, ensuring that in the event of an aircraft veering off the main runway, the damage is minimized. However, the unjustifiable delay in execution has left Surat Airport vulnerable to potential accidents and disruptions in airline operations.

## Decade-Long Delay Raises Safety Concerns

Initially planned during the 2016-17 runway expansion, the runway strip strengthening

project was officially sanctioned with a work order issued on September 28, 2021, by the Airports Authority of India (AAI). Despite this, work remains incomplete, leaving the airport in violation of ICAO-mandated safety standards.

A key requirement of the project is achieving a California Bearing Ratio (CBR) of 15 at a depth of 150mm, a measure that ensures the ground's strength to support aircraft in case of an accidental excursion. Sardar Vallabhrai

National Institute of Technology (SVNIT) Surat conducted a study confirming that soil stabilization is essential to meet this requirement, yet no substantial progress has been made.

A senior AAI official, speaking on condition of anonymity, warned that delays in execution could increase project costs by 30% due to escalating material prices. "Every passing month makes this project more expensive and more difficult to execute. Further delays will force flight suspen-

sions and operational disruptions," he stated.

## Aviation Safety at Stake

Industry experts emphasize that runway strip strengthening is a non-negotiable safety measure. Without a reinforced strip, an aircraft overshooting or veering off the runway could suffer severe nose gear damage, leading to catastrophic consequences for passengers.

"Aviation safety cannot be compromised. The ICAO mandates strict compliance

with runway strip stabilization, yet Surat Airport continues to lag," said an aviation safety consultant. "In case of an accident, the consequences will be disastrous, and accountability will be questioned at the highest levels."

## Activists Demand Immediate Action

Airport activists argue that the delay not only puts passengers at risk but also affects Surat's aviation growth and credibility. "Surat Airport has witnessed a tremendous rise in passenger traffic. However, infrastructure issues like this undermine confidence in the airport's operations," said a frequent flier who participated in the representation to the minister.

The representation submitted to Minister Kinjarpur Rammohan Naidu demands immediate intervention to push the AAI to complete the project without further delay. With Surat Airport already under scrutiny for non-compliance with ICAO-mandated safety upgrades, activists fear that failure to act now could lead to regulatory consequences and potential flight suspensions.

## SOLAR PUMP PROJECT

### GUVNL incurs Rs 600 cr loss

#### FPJ NEWS SERVICE AHMEDABAD

In a glaring oversight, Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam Limited (GUVNL) has bypassed the Centre's recommendation to install solar pumps equipped with Universal Solar Pump Controller (USPC) technology. The Gujarat government had already invested 200 crore in these pumps, yet they remain unused—resulting in an estimated 600 crore loss in electricity savings.

Another crucial change addresses pre-1999 property transactions. Previously, missing stamp duty could be cleared by paying ₹250 plus the missing duty amount. Under the new amendment, property owners will now have to pay double the missing duty amount.

The Bill also proposes an amendment to Article 36, increasing the fine for foreclosure-related cases to ₹5,000. However, in a significant relief

## Coconut oil price increases

#### FPJ NEWS SERVICE SAURASHTRA

The price of coconut oil has touched new heights, with a 15 kg can now costing around ₹4,000 due to continuous price hikes in Gujarat. Coconut oil, already at high prices, has witnessed a significant increase recently. The price of coconut oil has risen by ₹100 per 15 kg can, reaching ₹3,900-₹3,950 in the Saurashtra oil market. The price of coconut oil has increased by ₹750 per 15 kg can in last three months, with the average price for a quintal in India ranging from ₹26,000 to ₹29,000. In Gujarat, coconut is grown on around 27,000 hectares of land, yielding approximately 25 crore coconuts annually.

Mevani alleged that Gujarat's farmers, in contrast, earn a mere 11,000-12,000 annually per family due to the state's failure to implement this technology. He further pointed out that even Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised USPC technology in his 'Mann Ki Baat' address.

Raising the issue in the Gujarat Assembly, Congress MLA Jignesh Mevani cited an example from Rajasthan, where the Ashok Gehlot-led government installed 1,000 USPC-equipped solar controllers. A single farmer in the state reportedly earned 6 lakh in one year by utilizing this advanced technology on six acres of land.

Mevani alleged that Gujarat's farmers, in contrast, earn a mere 11,000-12,000 annually per family due to the state's failure to implement this technology. He further pointed out that even Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised USPC technology in his 'Mann Ki Baat' address.

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**ALL FOR NAVRATRI | It is for the time that such a demand has arisen**

# After Delhi, demand for meat shop closure in Bhopal crops up

**Our Staff Reporter**  
BHOPAL

Demand for closer of meat shops during the Chaitra Navratri festival has cropped up in Bhopal on the heels of organisations' making such a request to the Delhi government.

Bharat Raksha Manch, led by member of the BJP's Parlia-

**Organisation led by members of RSS has written a letter which gets BJP leader's support**

mentary Board Satya Narayan Jatia, dash off a letter to the collector of Bhopal on Thursday demanding closure of all

those shops, which are selling meat in the open, till Navratri.

In the letter, it was mentioned that meat was selling in the open, despite the Chief Minister's instructions to stop such practice.

Sale of meat in such a way spoils the spirits of a religious festival, the letter said.

In the letter, it was also mentioned that selling meat in

the open will not be tolerated in a country like India.

Legislator Rameshwar Sharma supported the letter of Bharat Raksha Manch.

Those who speak about Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb should stop selling meat on their own during Navratri, Sharma said.

The Hindus worship their deity in these nine days, so

those who speak about the Hindu-Muslim unity should close their meat shops, Sharma said.

Sharma further said the meat sellers would not be forced to close their shops, but they should willingly do so.

Navratri is beginning from March 30. If it has happened for the first time that such a demand has cropped up.

## Damoh egg vendor gets notice for Rs 6 cr tax dues



Egg vendor Prince Suman show the GST notice at Patharia, Damoh district

**Our Staff Reporter**  
BHOPAL

An egg vendor in the Damoh district has been served a Rs 6-crore tax dues notice from the Central Excise and Customs Department (CBEC), which collects GST. All because the defaulter, a Delhi-based firm, is allegedly registered in the name of the aggrieved, Prince Suman.

According to the notice, a firm called Prince Enterprises was started in Ward 33 of Delhi in 2022. This company did business of about Rs 50 crore from 2022-23 to 2023-2024 by trading in leather, wood, and iron but did not pay GST, which added up to about Rs 6 crore. Unfortunately, it was in the name of Prince

**■ Delhi-based defaulter firm is allegedly registered in the name of the aggrieved, Prince Suman**

**■ Family writes to Damoh SP, I-T dept for investigation**

Suman, a resident of Ward No. 14 of Patharia Nagar in Damoh.

Prince said he had never been to Delhi. In 2023, he was in Indore to work as a labourer but denies having shared his PAN or Aadhaar details with anyone then. Since the CBEC department

has asked Prince for bank statements and other supporting documents, the family is worried.

Prince's father Sridhar Suman, who runs a small grocery shop, has written to the Superintendent of Police to investigate the matter.

His lawyer Advocate Abhilash Kharw said, "After getting the information, we have also corresponded with the Income Tax Department. A complaint has also been lodged with the police so that the conspiracy hatched against egg vendor Prince be exposed. Prince went to Indore to work as a labourer in 2023. He worked there for about a year. Right now, he is supporting his family by running the egg cart in Patharia Nagar."

Now that his remark has kicked up a row, the legislator gave a clarification on his

## SC stays probe against RERA chairperson

**Our Staff Reporter**  
BHOPAL

The Supreme Court on Thursday, has stayed the inquiry initiated against AP Shrivastava, chairperson of Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA). Defence counsel took the ground of Rule 35 of Madhya Pradesh Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Rules, 2017 stating that the state government shall make a preliminary scrutiny with respect to such charges.

High Court Judge Justice Manindar Singh Bhatti has been handed over a probe into the allegations against Shrivastava. To remove RERA chairman, it is necessary to probe

allegations against him by a High Court judge and prove the charges. After receiving complaints against Shrivastava, the state government wrote to the Chief Justice of the High Court, Justice Suresh Kumar Kait who appointed Justice Bhatti to probe allegations. The probe will be conducted according to section 26 of RERA Act. The RERA chairman can be removed only if he is declared insolvent or found guilty of immoral act or mentally unfit to work. He can be removed in case he has made money through illegal means and it has an impact on his work or if he has misused his office so much that it has gone against public interest.

## Marijuana of Kalimela forests keeps addicts on 'high'

**Farhan Ahmed Siddiqui**  
BHOPAL

With source of majority of marijuana seized in Bhopal traced to Odisha, the Crime Branch is keeping a strict eye on suspicious vehicles arriving from those routes. The smugglers are using different modus operandi to smuggle ganja from Odisha which they sell in Bhopal in smaller quantities through dealers and peddlers. Police officials said that majority of marijuana smugglers during questioning confessed bringing it from Odisha. They were in contact with local farmers and ganja cultivators and book their consignments before they reach Malkangiri of Odisha which has emerged as the biggest source of marijuana across many states. Kalimela region of Malkangiri has vast inaccessible terrains where local tribal communities grow marijuana in forest areas. However, lured of hefty cash, marijuana plants are now also grown on fertile fields hidden between other crops. Despite, regular drive Odisha police has not achieved much success in curbing marijuana cultivation due to interference of Maoists groups who take their share of profits from cultivators in return of providing protection to them.

ACP (crime branch) Mukhtar Qureshi said there



### Scheme vehicles used

Besides using trains to smuggle marijuana, specially modified vehicles known as 'scheme vehicles' are often used in smuggling it from Odisha. Special cavities and boxes are made in such vehicles to hide marijuana packets. In September last year, the crime branch arrested two persons with a traveller vehicle in which over 4 kilogram of marijuana was hidden in a specially designed cavity on the roof of the vehicle. In August 2023, cops nabbed notorious smuggler Rais Radio with a large consignment of marijuana hidden in specially designed boxes under the seat of his car.

is no big organised gang found involved in marijuana smuggling in Bhopal. However, local marijuana smugglers buy it from farmers in Odisha at a cheaper rate and sell it to dealers and peddlers in smaller quantities to earn cash. Under the ongoing

drive against them, the crime branch is keeping an eye on activities of persons having past records of marijuana smuggling. Many of them have been arrested with marijuana worth several lakhs of rupees during the past three days, he added.

## 60% of posts lying vacant in ESB that recruits govt staff

Vyapam's name has been changed, but problems persist

**Nitendra Sharma**  
BHOPAL

The state government has promised to fill one lakh posts in government departments. The recruitment to these posts will be done through the Madhya Pradesh Employees' Selection Board (MPESB).

The government has changed the name of Vyapam, and rechristened it as Employees' Selection Board. During Thursday's hearing, the High Court dismissed interventions raised on grounds of pollution, directing the intervenors to approach the state government if they wished to propose any suggestions. The National Green Tribunal (NGT)'s central bench also advised the intervenors to approach the High Court, which is actively monitoring the incineration process.

troller, joint director, principal system analyst, deputy director, accounts officer, cyber security specialist, assistant director, superintendent, assistant programmer and accountant are lying vacant.

Then the number of employees working on other positions is less than required, which affects ESB's working.

The ESB conducted two recruitment examinations and an eligibility test last year. It also conducted five admission tests.

The Board has planned to conduct 16 recruitment and five admission tests this year.

Against this backdrop, it may not be possible for the ESB to conduct so many examinations.

Because of shortage of staff, the ESB is getting a large number of work done through outsource agencies.

Disputes over the results of the examinations conducted by ESB have cropped up many times. Despite this, employees are not being recruited to the ESB after the Vyapam scam.

## Govt assures HC: UCC waste to be disposed in 72 days

**Our Staff Reporter**

BHOPAL

The state government has assured the High Court that 350 metric tonnes (MT) of chemical waste from the Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) site in Bhopal, which has been lying there for over 40 years, will be incinerated within 72 days at Pithampur.

The assurance was made in a status report presented before the principal bench of Jabalpur High Court on

private waste treatment facility in Pithampur industrial town near Indore on January 1, 2025. This move was in compliance with the High Court's order dated December 3, 2024.

However, the transfer of waste had triggered massive protests in and around Dhar district, leading the authorities to delay their plans. Subsequently, a three-phase trial was conducted at Pithampur.

The first 10-tonne batch of Union Carbide's toxic waste

was incinerated on February 28, marking the first trial run of the 40-year-old hazardous material under the supervision of the Bhopal Gas Tra-

gedy Relief and Rehabilitation Department.

The first trial, out of the three approved by the High Court, was conducted at a burning rate of 135 kilograms per hour. This process commenced soon after the Supreme Court (SC) rejected a petition challenging the Madhya Pradesh government's plan to dispose of 358 tonnes of Union Carbide's waste in Pithampur. The apex court also refused to stay the three trial runs of 10 tonnes

each, as sanctioned by the High Court on February 18.

During Thursday's hearing, the High Court dismissed interventions raised on grounds of pollution, directing the intervenors to approach the state government if they wished to propose any suggestions. The National Green Tribunal (NGT)'s central bench also advised the intervenors to approach the High Court, which is actively monitoring the incineration process.

## FIR against three builders for irregularities in Green Life City

**Our Staff Reporter**

INDORE

An FIR was registered against colonizers Atul Surana, Arun Dagaria and Pushpendra Thakur on Thursday, after the authorities received a number of complaints about gross irregularities in the development of Green Life City located in Biadia village of the district.

To note, collector Asheesh Singh had received several complaints against these colonizers. Additional collector Gaurav Benal informed that after several complaints about Green Life City Colony located in Biadia village developed by these colonizers, revenue staff and SDO were directed to register an FIR immediately.

After investigation, it came to light that plots in the colony were sold without receiving permission from the Town and Country Planning (TNCP) Department. It was also found that the colony was developed after almost 12 years of getting colony development permission on September 17, 2012, and out of 32

## Woman refuses to do chores, mother-in-law commits suicide

**Our Staff Reporter**

INDORE

A 65-year-old woman committed suicide by consuming a poisonous substance at her place under MIG police station limits on Wednesday afternoon. The woman allegedly took the drastic step following an argument with her daughter-in-law who refused to do household chores and with her son over monetary dispute.

According to the police, the deceased was identified as Dwarkabai, a resident of Kannu Patel Ki Chowki. Her neighbours said that the woman's son had married a few months ago. She had asked her daughter-in-law to do household chores which she refused to do and later had an argument with her son over money. She brought some poisonous substance from somewhere and went straight to the bathroom where she consumed it. She was rushed to MY hospital where she died during the course of treatment. She is survived by her son and daughter-in-law as her husband has passed away.

## 27 gas cylinders confiscated from Sarafa Bazaar

**Our Staff Reporter**

INDORE

In a major crackdown in connection with fire safety violations, a raid was conducted in the Sarafa Bazaar area, leading to the seizure of 27 gas cylinders being misused for jewellery-making.

District supply controller M L Maru said, "The joint investigation team, comprising officials from the Food and Civil Supplies Department, conducted a surprise inspection at Shop No. 63, Kamla Tower, Bada Sarafa Bazaar. It was discovered that the shop was illegally using domestic LPG cylinders for melting metals and manufacturing jewellery, posing a serious fire hazard in the densely populated market area."

During the raid, officials seized one fully filled 19-kg cylinder, 17 partially filled 19-kg cylinders, and nine partially filled 14-kg cylinders. Additionally, the shop lacked fire extinguishers and essential fire safety equipment, further increasing the risk of a potential disaster. Upon further inquiry, the shop owner was unable to produce valid storage permits for the gas cylinders.

As a result, all seized cylinders were confiscated, and a case was registered under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. Officials have warned that similar inspections will continue across the city to prevent illegal gas storage and misuse. The Food and Civil Supply

## Fire in air-cooling godown, no casualties

**Our Staff Reporter**

INDORE

A major fire broke out in an air-cooling godown behind Anoop Talkies under MIG police station limits on Thursday morning. The fire caused panic in the area and a large crowd gathered on the spot as thick black smoke billowing into the sky was visible from several kilometres away.

Fire tenders, police and IMC teams rushed to the spot to control the situation. The godown was locked and covered with tin sheds on all sides, so an earthmover machine was called to remove the sheds, debris and gutted goods. The prompt action of the fire brigade team prevented the fire from spreading to nearby houses.

Prima facie, the cause of the fire was said to be short-circuit. However, police are also investigating whether some miscreants intentionally set it on fire. No casualties have been reported, but a significant financial loss is expected.

According to the fire brigade, they received information



Department under the Indore district administration has launched a city-wide inspection drive against the illegal use of domestic LPG cylinders for commercial purposes. Collector Asheesh Singh emphasised that fire safety violations will not be tolerated, and strict action will be taken against those endangering public safety. The district administration has urged businesses to adhere to legal storage guidelines to prevent potential fire incidents.

ASI Sushil Kumar Dubey of the fire brigade said that the godown was owned by one Satyapal. As there was a garbage dump behind the godown, it was possible that someone burnt garbage and the fire spread to the godown, he said.



at 11:50 AM and a fire tender along with water tankers was dispatched for a fire-fighting operation. After struggling for around an hour, the fire-fighters managed to douse the flames using around 10,000 litres of water.

**DRI makes 3rd arrest in gold smuggling scam**

A gold dealer was arrested for allegedly assisting Kannada actress Harshavardhini Ranya alias Ranya Rao in disposing of smuggled gold, sources said on Thursday.

The dealer, a native of Balalari, was questioned in connection with the case following which he was arrested by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence on Wednesday, they said. According to sources, Sahil Jain has been accused of assisting and abetting Rao in disposing of smuggled gold and sharing the sale proceeds. Gold bars worth Rs 12.56 crore were seized from Ranya, the step-daughter of DGP rank officer K Ramachandra Rao, at Kempegowda International Airport on March 3 upon her arrival from Dubai.

Following this, searches were conducted at her residence, where officials recovered gold jewellery worth Rs 2.06 crore and Indian currency amounting to Rs 2.67 crore. Ranya Rao and hotelier Tarun Raju have already been arrested in connection with the case.

**BENGALURU  
Kannada actress Ranya Rao denied bail**

A sessions court in Bengaluru on Thursday rejected the bail plea of Kannada actress Harshavardhini Ranya alias Ranya Rao in the gold smuggling case.

According to the prosecution, Ranya admitted to using hawala channels to facilitate gold purchases.

In response, the authorities have issued a notice to initiate a judicial investigation, which they believe will uncover further financial irregularities.

The case also involves Tarun Raj, an aide of the actor, who has been named as the second accused.

Officials claim that Ranya handed over the smuggled gold to a merchant named Sahil Jain, who was arrested by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) on Wednesday. This brings the total number of arrests in the case to three.

During the hearing, DRI lawyer Madhu Rao revealed that Ranya and Raj made approximately 26 trips to Dubai together, often departing in the morning and returning the same evening.

**BENGALURU  
CM for launch of Gadag-Kustagi rail line**

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has requested Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav to schedule the inauguration of the much-awaited Gadag-Talkal Junction-Kustagi railway line in April.

He also urged the Railways Minister to invite Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, as a distinguished guest for the occasion, citing his longstanding contributions to Karnataka's development.

In a letter to the Railway Minister, Siddaramaiah emphasised that expanding railway infrastructure is crucial for economic growth, regional connectivity, and social development.

He noted that with this vision, the Gadag-Wadi railway line project was approved in the 2013-14 railway budget to establish a vital link between the Mumbai-Karnataka and Kalyana-Karnataka regions.

This long-pending project, spanning 275 km and estimated to cost Rs 22,000 crore, is expected to significantly boost trade, mobility, and economic integration across Karnataka, he said.

"I am pleased to inform you that the 60-km stretch from Gadag-Talkal-Kustagi and the 45-km stretch from Wadi to Shahapur are now ready for operations. The people of these regions have been eagerly awaiting the commencement of railway services, and their aspirations must be fulfilled without further delay," he wrote in a letter dated March 25.

Siddaramaiah highlighted the "proactive" and "substantial" role played by the Karnataka government in supporting the project. According to him, the state government has borne 50 per cent of the total project cost.

**CASTE RECAST**

**Deciding on a quota matrix acceptable to all**

# Internal quota: Karnataka govt to go for survey of SCs to gather empirical data

**NT Correspondent**

BENGALURU

Accepting Justice H N Nagamohan Das Commission's interim report, the Karnataka Cabinet on Thursday decided to go for a survey of Scheduled Castes (SCs) in the state, to decide on internal reservation among them.

The one-man commission of the retired High Court judge submitted the interim report to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah earlier in the day, just ahead of the Cabinet meeting.

The government has been under pressure from SC communities and from within the ruling Congress party to implement internal reservation at the earliest, for which empirical data is needed, and the government has decided to go by the recommendation of the commission to gather the data.

The internal reservation is aimed at slicing up the 17 per cent reservation matrix given to 101 scheduled castes.

"The Cabinet has accepted the interim report sub-



Justice Nagamohan Das submitted the report on providing internal reservation to Dalits to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Thursday. Ministers KH Muniyappa and HC Mahadevappa were present

mited by Justice Nagamohan Das Commission." Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil said.

Briefing reporters about the Cabinet's decision, he said to ensure that the internal reservation process happens at a fast pace, it has been decided to request Justice Nagamohan Das Commission to oversee

new survey and gathering of data.

"The commission has suggested that 40 days is required for the survey to be completed. Naturally it may take five to ten days for preparation, so it has been decided to extend the commission's tenure by two months, for it to complete the process and submit the

report within 60 days--two months," he added.

Noting that the commission has made four major recommendations, Patil said they include conducting a fresh survey and gathering of data for scientific classification of sub castes among SCs in Karnataka; and that, using advanced scientific and technological

The government has been under pressure from SC communities and from within the ruling Congress party to implement internal reservation.

devices, a new survey can be done in 30-40 days.

"It has also recommended for preparing a required questionnaire for a fresh survey, and constituting a high-level committee to oversee mobilisation of resources for the survey is to be conducted, and training of the staff required for it; and provisioning among the sub castes of SCs from quantum of reservation that is available by following the criterion mentioned in the report, on the basis of the data gathered from the new survey."

A section of SCs, especially 'SC Left', have been

demanding internal reservation, alleging that only a few influential sub-castes were taking away majority of the benefits, while many communities were still marginalised.

The government, in November last year, appointed Justice Nagamohan Das to head a commission to recommend internal reservation among SCs, after the Supreme Court allowed the states to provide internal reservation, and the Cabinet agreed to implement internal reservation.

In a landmark verdict delivered by the Supreme Court on August 1 last year, it held that states are constitutionally empowered to make sub-classifications within the SCs, which form a socially heterogeneous class, for granting reservation for the uplift of castes that are socially and educationally more backward.

Social Welfare Minister H C Mahadevappa said survey can be done in 40-45 days using advanced technologies. There are 6,000 panchayats and more than 300 urban local bodies, and a host of officials to manage things, he said.

## Two killed as bus runs over them

**NT Correspondent**  
BENGALURU

Two men on a motorcycle died after a BMTC bus crashed into and ran over their two-wheeler on Old Airport Road, police said on Thursday.

The deceased have been identified as Tapas (33), a Rapido rider, and Aditya Bose (31), the pillion rider. Both were natives of West Bengal, they said.

The bus driver, who fled the scene after the accident, has been taken into custody, while efforts are underway to nab the conductor in connection with the incident, they added.

According to a statement from Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC), the accident occurred at 10.33 pm on Wednesday near the ISRO Signal on HAL Main Road, Bengaluru. The electric bus was en route from Kempegowda Bus Station to Kadugodi.

A BMTC official stated that a review of CCTV footage indicated the two-wheeler attempted to overtake the bus. In the process, it collided with an oncoming car.

## Karnataka to hike milk prices by Rs 4 per litre from April 1

**NT Correspondent**

BENGALURU

Milk prices in Karnataka will increase by Rs 4 per litre starting from April 1, said state Cooperation Minister K N Rajanna on Thursday.

The Minister said the price increase comes in response to the pressure from milk federations and farmers.

Addressing reporters here, he said, "The decision to hike the prices is by the milk federation, they were asking for Rs 5 hike per litre, the government agreed and decided for Rs 4 hike



from April 1. The entire Rs 4 that has been hiked should go to farmers..." The milk price revision comes in the wake of hikes in bus and metro fares, as well as power tariffs. Earlier, Karnataka Milk Federation

(KMF) chairman Bheema Naik too had hinted at the possibility of a hike in the milk prices.

Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) markets its dairy products under the 'Nandini' brand. In 2024, the KMF had hiked the milk price by Rs 2 per packet and increased the quantity per packet by 50ml. KMF has been maintaining that the price increase in 2024 was not a hike as the quantity of milk supplied had also increased. At present, regular Nandini toned milk (blue packet) of 1,050 ml is priced at Rs 44.

## Governor asks youth to focus on skill education, utilise new tech

**NT Correspondent**

mysuru

Governor Thawarchand Gehlot on Thursday stated that skill education is the key to the country's development.

He stated that higher education is a key pillar for the country's development, during the 20th convocation of Karnataka State Open University held at its campus Mukthagan-gothri in the city.

The governor asked the students to concentrate on nation building and contribute their mite to national progress. India has emerged as the 5th largest economy in the world. Students must also give equal importance to conservation of the environment, he said.

As failures are the stepping stones to success, the governor asked students



to overcome failures and emerge successful in their studies without losing hope. With new technologies, Artificial Intelligence and data science gaining momentum, he asked the youth to make use of these technologies for betterment of the country.

The governor also hailed the contributions of KSOU in promoting higher education through the distance learning mode.

He conferred honorary doctorates on Chitradurga Ideal Education Society chairman Irfanullah Sharif and Kalaburagi based Sharana basaveshwara Vidayavardhan Sangha chairperson Dakshayini Appa.

Meanwhile, a 57-year-old doctor from Chikmagalur scored a hat-trick by completing an MA in Sanskrit. Earlier he had completed his MA in Kannada and History.

**NT Correspondent**

BENGALURU

Rebel MLA Basangouda Patil Yatnal, who has been suspended by the BJP, on Thursday said vested interests who rampantly indulged in adjustment politics weakening the party in Karnataka have gone scott free, while those who wanted to reform it to end the one family-centered politics have been suspended or given notices.

He said he will continue to abide and work by the principle of "Nation First, Party Next, Self Last", in letter, spirit and practice.

The BJP on Wednesday expelled rebel MLA and former union minister Yatnal from the primary membership of the party for six years, for repeated violations of the party discipline. He had been openly critical of Vijayendra, accusing him of indulging in "adjustment politics" with the ruling Congress.

"Those vested interests

who rampantly indulged in adjustment politics weakening the party in Karnataka and leading to its defeat in the impregnable fortress of BJP such as Kalburgi, Koppal, Raichur, Bellary, Chikkodi constituencies have gone scott free without any disciplinary action ; while those who wanted to reform the party by wanting to end the one man upmanship and family-centered politics have been suspended or given notices," Yatnal posted on X.

He has also been criticising Vijayendra and his father -- veteran leader and former CM B S Yediyurappa-- for trying to keep the party under their clutches.

"Those vested interests

who rampantly indulged in adjustment politics weakening the party in Karnataka and leading to its defeat in the impregnable fortress of BJP such as Kalburgi, Koppal, Raichur, Bellary, Chikkodi constituencies have gone scott free without any disciplinary action ; while those who wanted to reform the party by wanting to end the one man upmanship and family-centered politics have been suspended or given notices," Yatnal posted on X.

He said two legislators, who have openly rebelled against the party and seen supporting the Congress party, have either been ignored or sent a notice only after being pressurised by the party workers.

The high command has

## HC: Act against judge for 'fake' SC verdicts

**NT Correspondent**  
BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court has directed action against a city civil court judge for citing non-existent Supreme Court rulings while deciding an application under the Code of Civil Procedure.

In an order issued on March 24, Justice R Devdas of the High Court expressed concern over the judge's conduct, stating that the matter warranted further investigation.

"What is more disturbing is that the learned judge of the City Civil Court has cited two decisions that were never delivered by the Apex Court or any other court," it observed.

"The learned Senior Counsel appearing for the plaintiffs has clearly stated that such decisions were not cited by the plaintiffs' counsel. This act on the part of the judge is disturbing," the court said.

Inspections revealed that more than ten colleges had illegally transferred students during a review meeting of the state paramedical board.

Several institutions were also found to be failing to provide the necessary teaching and training for their courses, it added.

"Close down such colleges. We must send a strong message to these institutions," the minister directed, while also assuring that students would be relocated to better institutions.

The case arose from a revision petition challenging the civil court's jurisdiction in a commercial dispute.

Senior Counsel Prabhulal Navadgi, representing the petitioners, argued that the lower court had rejected their application solely based on citations of judgments that did not exist.

## Eco Initiative

### Amazon India, SayTrees to restore Bengaluru's Yamare lake

**NT Correspondent**

BENGALURU

Amazon India on Thursday announced its collaboration with a city-based NGO to restore Bengaluru's Yamare lake, with plans to replenish 270 million liters of water annually.

The restoration project at Yamare Lake, near Sarjapur Road in Greater Bengaluru, is expected to expand the lake's water volume from less than one acre to 21 acres upon completion, the company said.

"Working with SayTrees, a local environmental organisation, Amazon plans to replenish more than 270 million liters of water annually to benefit the local community. Once completed, this project will help Amazon progress toward its goal of returning more water to communities in India than it uses by 2027," the statement added.

According to its website, SayTrees leads various initiatives, including research, education, awareness campaigns, and advocacy on the importance of environmental preservation and tree plantation.

Yamare Lake has suffered significant degradation, partly due to its past use as a waste disposal site. The rejuvenation efforts aim to expand the lake from its current size of 0.6 acres to approximately 21 acres, the statement said.

The project aims not only to transform the lake into a thriving ecosystem but also to significantly improve water availability and groundwater infiltration, benefiting both the environment and the communities that rely on them for their livelihoods."

rounding communities, it added.

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, who also holds the water resources portfolio, said, "Effective corporate stewardship can be a game-changer in saving not just our water bodies but also the communities that rely on them for their livelihoods."

## Govt cracks down on sub-standard paramedical colleges

**NT Correspondent**

BENGALURU

Announcing a crackdown on paramedical colleges "failing" to meet quality norms, Karnataka Minister for Medical Education and Skill Development Sharad Prakash Patil on Thursday directed officials to withdraw affiliations and shut down institutions that do not meet infrastructure and teaching standards.

The move followed reports from officials highlighting serious lapses in several private colleges during a review meeting of the state paramedical board.

Instances included colleges operating in cramped spaces with inadequate facilities—one institution had just a single microscope for hundreds of students, while another functioned without lighting, officials informed.

According to a statement from the Minister's Office, he emphasised that many private institutions paint a

## NEWS in SHORTS

ASIFABAD  
Child Protection dept officials prevents child marriage

Child Protection department officials in association with local police and the women development and child welfare department prevented the marriage of a minor girl by counselling her parents at Esapur village in Kerameri mandal near Asifabad on Thursday. District Child Protection Officer (DCPO) officials said in a statement, that they jointly averted the wedding of a minor girl scheduled to be performed with a 40-year-old man from Chandrapur district in Maharashtra by providing counselling to parents of the bride and groom, following a tip-off. The girl was shifted to the Sakhi One Stop Centre for counselling. Officials said that performing child marriages was an offence as per the law. He advised the public to report child marriages by contacting toll free 1098 or 112. He cautioned that a groom, elders and priest could attract an imprisonment up to 2 years if found guilty.

HYDERABAD  
Women's University receives UGC recognition

Veeranari Chakali Ilamma Women's University has received the University Grants Commission (UGC) recognition under Section 2(f) of the UGC Act, 1956. The UGC recognition was granted based on the Telangana Universities (Amendment) Act, 2025 (Act No.6 of 2025). Earlier, in April 2022, the State government had declared Osmania University College for Women aka Koti Women's College as the State's first women's university. Subsequently, Telangana Legislative Assembly passed the Veeranari Chakali Ilamma Women's University Bill, formally establishing it as a State university. The recognition makes the university eligible for various academic and research grants, providing a significant boost to its development, a press release said.

MANCHERI  
Police rescue driver trapped in cabin of truck

Police rescued a driver who was trapped in a cab of a truck that rammed into another stationary lorry by struggling for two hours near Somanugadu village in Kasipet mandal on Thursday morning. Kasipet police said that Burjith Singh from Madhya Pradesh sustained injuries when he was stuck in the cabin of the truck carrying steel when the vehicle dashed against the lorry, which was parked on the national highway due to breakdown. On receiving information about the incident, police rushed to the spot and tried to retrieve Singh, but in vain. They then provided treatment to the driver with the help of the staffers of the medical department. The doctors administered saline to Singh in the cabin. Police managed to bring the driver out by cutting the cab into two pieces. The driver was immediately admitted to a hospital in Bellampalli. His medical condition was learnt to be stable.

# Bhimavaram railway station to get a makeover

**55% works completed, entire project by the end of the year**

## METRO INDIA NEWS | BHIMAVARAM

The Bhimavaram railway station is in for a makeover along with upgradation of 53 railway stations in Andhra Pradesh. Prime Minister Modi laid the foundation stone for stations redevelopment in the state of Andhra Pradesh during August'2023 and February'2024.

Bhimavaram Town (BVRT) Railway station in Vijayawada Division is one of the 53 Railway stations on SCR's jurisdiction of Andhra Pradesh State which is being redeveloped under ABSS with an expenditure of Rs. 32.37 Crores. Bhimavaram Town is a NSG-3 category station in Vijayawada - Bhimavaram Junction section with an average foot fall of 7587 passengers per day and annual earnings of 33.20 crores. All express & passenger trains are having stoppage at this station.

Blurb: 53 Railway stations across the state of Andhra Pradesh served by South Central Railway (SCR) are being redeveloped with a cost of Rs. 2.611 crores

Bhimavaram Town railway station is in West Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh. It is one of the principal trade



centers of paddy in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Agriculture-based businesses like food processing, aqua culture, rice mills etc., are the chief sources of the town's revenue. Bhima-

varam is famous for the Gunupudi Someswara (Somarama) temple, which is one of the five holy Pancharamas and the temple of the local deity Mavullamma. The Shiva

## Works Completed

- Platform surface
- Cover over platform shelters
- Waiting hall
- Modular toilet
- Façade
- Circulating area
- Lifts works

lingam is known for changing its color according to the lunar month: Black during Amavasya (No moon day) and white during Pournami (full moon day).

## Telangana government aims for a plastic-free state

## METRO INDIA NEWS | HYDERABAD

Telangana Legislative Council Chairman Gutta Sukhender Reddy emphasized the need to reduce plastic usage and protect the environment, stating that it is the collective responsibility of all citizens. He pointed out that excessive plastic use is polluting the surroundings and causing environmental degradation.

As part of efforts to curb plastic consumption, the Telangana government has launched an awareness campaign promoting the use of jute bags. Gutta Sukhender Reddy welcomed this initiative, calling it a positive step



towards a cleaner and greener Telangana.

Today, Telangana Minister Konda Surekha and Chief Secretary Shanti Kumari met Gutta Sukhender Reddy at the Legislative Council and

## Rs 2.4 crore donations pour into TTD Trusts

**Tirumala:** Donations to the tune of Rs 2.45 crore pour into various Trusts of TTD on Thursday. Three different donors, including one from Sri Lanka, donated to different trusts of TTD.

Jineshwar Infra Ventures from Chennai Rs 1 crore and the Sri Lankan donor donated Rs 1 crore to SV Annprasadam Trust of TTD while Pacific BPO Pvt Ltd, Noida, has donated Rs 45 lakh to SV Pranadana Trust.

The respective donors handed over the DDs for the said amounts to TTD Trust Board Chairman BR Naidu and Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary at Ranganayakula Mandapam on Thursday.

## Krishna district to be free from illicit liquor by May 1

## METRO INDIA NEWS | AMARAVATI

Government of allowing unchecked alcohol distribution, leading to a 40,000 crore revenue loss for the state.

He also pointed out that poor-quality liquor and lack of proper regulations led to an increase in illegal alcohol imports from neighboring states. The Jagannadhapuram tragedy, where 42 people lost their lives due to spurious liquor, underscored the urgent need for stricter control.

Minister Ravindra highlighted that the Navodaya initiative, first launched in 2016, had successfully made 11 out of 13 districts in Andhra Pradesh illicit liquor-free. However, in the past five years, alcohol consumption patterns changed dramatically, with illegal liquor production thriving. The minister accused the previous gov-

ernment of allowing unchecked alcohol distribution, leading to a 40,000 crore revenue loss for the state.

He also pointed out that poor-quality liquor and lack of proper regulations led to an increase in illegal alcohol imports from neighboring states. The Jagannadhapuram tragedy, where 42 people lost their lives due to spurious liquor, underscored the urgent need for stricter control.

Additional de-addiction centers will be established to help those struggling with alcohol addiction. As part of the awareness campaign, Minister Ravindra and District Collector D.K. Balaji unveiled promotional materials and flagged off a Navodaya 2.0 campaign vehicle, which will travel across the district educating people about the dangers of illicit liquor.

## KTR pledges to donate organs

**Hyderabad:** Taking everyone by surprise, K T Rama Rao, proposed a special initiative to the Speaker, suggesting that a campaign be organized within the Assembly premises to enable MLAs to register as organ donors. "If members are willing, let us initiate a signature drive right here in the Assembly," he said.

He pledged his commitment to organ donation on the floor of the Telangana Legislative Assembly. His announcement came during a session where the Assembly was deliberating the Telangana Transplantation of Human Organs Bill, a significant legislative step toward regulating and promoting organ donation in the State. "Organ donation is a profound humanitarian act that can save countless lives," he emphasized, underscoring the transformative potential of such contributions.

## NGO backed by former Vice Prez Venkaiah Naidu reunites boy with family after 14 yrs

**Nellore:** Former Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu-backed NGO, Swarna Bharat Trust (SBT), has facilitated the reunion of a lost boy, with his family from Uttar Pradesh after 14 years.

According to the NGO, Neeraj's father had moved to Mumbai in search of a livelihood with his two sons, Neeraj and Dheeraj, leaving his wife and daughters in their native village in Uttar Pradesh.

"Punvas Kannaujia of Baragona, Uttar Pradesh, and his family have been reunited with their son Neeraj, who went missing 14 years ago. This reunion was made possible by the benevolent efforts of Deepa Venkat, Managing Trustee of SBT," the NGO

said in a release on Thursday.

An eight-year-old Neeraj, now around 21, was found by Gudur railway police after wandering away from his family's care in Mumbai after 14 years.

According to the NGO, Neeraj's father had moved to Mumbai in search of a livelihood with his two sons, Neeraj and Dheeraj, leaving his wife and daughters in their native village in Uttar Pradesh.

Neeraj frequently pleaded with his father to take him around Mumbai, but Kannaujia refused, explaining that the metropolis was too vast and unfamiliar for them to explore freely, unlike their village.

Driven by wanderlust, the young

boy ignored his father's warnings and secretly boarded a local train in Mumbai one day, slipping away from home, the NGO said.

What began as an adventurous train ride turned into a two-month-long journey across various states until Neeraj eventually arrived in Gudur, Nellore district. There, the railway police found him and entrusted his care to SBT.

At SBT's Bridge School, which supports school dropouts from poor families, orphans, and children of single parents, Venkat personally oversaw Neeraj's education and skill development.

He completed his schooling and was also trained in plumbing, elec-

trical repairs, driving, and automobile maintenance.

As time passed, SBT made several attempts to locate Neeraj's family based on the limited information he could recall.

On the eve of Holi, Venkat sent Neeraj accompanied by senior SBT employee, to East Malad, Mumbai, to search for his family.

After multiple efforts and inquiries with shopkeepers, juice vendors, bakery workers, barbers, and even the local police, they finally managed to contact his family in Uttar Pradesh through a barber.

A series of emotional video calls followed, filled with tears of joy as family members recognised Neeraj.

## Severe heat waves forecast for 47 mandals across AP

## METRO INDIA NEWS | AMARAVATI

The Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority (APSDMA) has forecast severe heat wave conditions in 47 mandals across the state on Thursday.

"Severe heat waves are likely to impact 13 mandals in Srikakulam district, 14 in Visianagaram district, 11 in Parvathipuram Maniyam district, four in Kakinada district, two mandals each in East Godavari, Anakapalle and NTR districts," said APSDMA managing director R Kurmanand in a release.

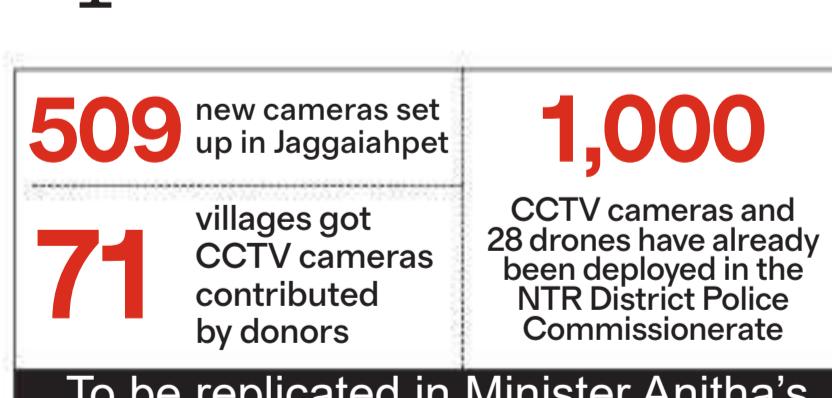
## Jaggaiahpet would serve as a model for crime control

## METRO INDIA NEWS | AMARAVATI

Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha revealed that a drone was recently deployed in Visianagaram, leading to the capture of individuals involved in gambling activities.

Anitha inaugurated the pilot project for CCTV camera installation in Jaggaiahpet, marking a significant step toward crime prevention. With 509 new cameras set up, she stated that Jaggaiahpet would serve as a model for crime control.

She also announced that the initiative would soon be implemented in her constituency, Payakaraopetta. The minister commended MLA Srirantataya for his proactive efforts and lauded



Commissioner of Police Rajesh Babu and his team for their dedication. She extended her gratitude to donors who contributed to the installation of CCTV cameras in 71 villages within Jaggaiahpet. She noted that 1,000 CCTV cameras and 28 drones have already been deployed in the NTR District Police Commissionerate. She asserted that

every home must also have a CCTV camera. The minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to cracking down on illicit activities, including alcohol abuse, drug trafficking, gambling, and other anti-social behaviour.

She also emphasized the importance of the Shakti App and Shakti Teams in ensuring women's safety. Speaking at the event, Anitha addressed



# Crowds turn Empuraan release into a global Pooram

HD Bureau

KOCHI

Mohanlal and Prithviraj Sukumaran's latest venture, 'L2: Empuraan', has not only captivated audiences but also set a new benchmark in film marketing within the Malayalam industry.

The meticulous crafted promotional campaign has played a pivotal role in the film's unprecedented success, both domestically and internationally.

The journey began with the unveiling of a cryptic poster on Kerala Piravi day, featuring a mysterious figure adorned with a red dragon. This enigmatic imagery sp-

arked widespread speculation and discussions among fans, effectively building anticipation.

Subsequent character posters, released on significant dates such as the birthdays of lead actors, further fuelled curiosity.

The teaser launch on Republic Day in Kochi and an 18-day character reveal campaign introduced the 36 principal cast members, maintaining a steady stream of engagement leading up to the film's release.

The strategic approach translated into remarkable box office figures. 'L2: Empuraan' amassed over ₹80 crore in pre-sales, a feat pr-



viously unseen in Malayalam cinema. The film's opening day witnessed collections surpassing ₹5 crore in India within the initial hours, with global figures

reaching approximately ₹4-4.5 crore. Notably, in North America, advance ticket sales exceeded \$125,000, setting a new record for Malayalam premieres in the re-

gion.

Reports from Dubai talked about a festive air around the theatres showing the film, with fans celebrating the opening with drums and

dances. Some offices reportedly declared a holiday to allow staff to watch the first day show.

Industry analysts have lauded the marketing efforts. Taran Adarsh, a North India-based film analyst, commended the team for creating substantial buzz beyond traditional markets. He noted that while the film enjoyed a smooth initial run, it faced competition from other major releases, highlighting the importance of sustained promotional strategies.

The film's budget, reportedly around ₹180 crore, underscores the high stakes involved. Discussions within

**Shared syringes spread HIV among drug users**

HD Bureau

KOCHI

Ten individuals in Valanchery, Malappuram district, have tested positive for HIV, with health authorities attributing the infections to the communal use of contaminated syringes among drug users. The Kerala AIDS Control Society's routine screening, focusing on high-risk groups such as sex workers and drug users, initially identified one positive case. Subsequent contact tracing revealed nine additional infections within the same network, including three migrant workers.

Health officials suspect that the virus spread through the shared use of an HIV-contaminated syringe. Efforts are underway to identify and test other members of the group to prevent further transmission. District Medical Officer R Renuka emphasized the importance of timely intervention, stating that the goal is to ensure all affected individuals receive appropriate treatment promptly.

The incident has raised concerns about the broader implications of needle-sharing practices among drug users in the state. An excise department survey indicated that 80% of drug users consume substances in groups, often sharing needles, which significantly heightens the risk of HIV transmission.

The health department has initiated extensive screening processes, not only targeting the immediate contacts of the infected individuals but also extending to their families and the wider community.

**Centre rejects minister's US visit**

HD Bureau

KOCHI

The Union Government has declined permission for Kerala's Industries Minister, P. Rajeeve, and his delegation to attend the American Society for Public Administration annual conference in Washington, D.C., where they were scheduled to present Kerala's 'Year of Enterprises' initiative.

Minister Rajeeve expressed his discontent with the decision on social media, describing it as "extraordinary" and lamenting the missed opportunity for Kerala to showcase its achievements on an international platform.

The ASPA conference, set from March 28 to April 1, is a significant event in the field of public administration, drawing delegates from 152 countries. The delegation included Industries Principal Secretary Muhammad Haneesh.

## Menstrual device trials on tribals raise alarm

HD Bureau

KOCHI

The Kerala State Human Rights Commission has initiated a suo motu case against Wayanad Engineering College following allegations of unethical human experimentation involving bio-electronic devices designed for menstrual health. Additionally, the Democratic Youth Federation of India raised funds for 100 houses by collecting and selling scrap materials. College students associated with the National Service Scheme contributed ₹10 crore to the township project, exemplifying widespread community involvement.

Despite the state's proactive measures, challenges persist in securing adequate funding. The Chief Minister pointed out that although ₹2,221 crore was required for the rehabilitation project, the central government declined to meet these demands. Requests to declare the disaster a national calamity did not receive a positive response, highlighting the financial hurdles.

ring-like devices, intended to assess women's menstrual cycles, were distributed to female students. Subsequently, the trial allegedly expanded to tribal settlements without securing mandatory permissions from the Department of Scheduled Tribes Development and the Health Department.

The Department of Scheduled Tribes Development had previously stipulated nine conditions for conducting such trials, including obtaining prior approval from the health department. However, the health department reportedly denied permission due to the involvement of an overseas institution.

The commission will address the case during its session on April 8 at the PWD Guest House in Sulthan Bathery. Wayanad Engineering College, located in Mananthavady, is the sole engineering institution in this predominantly tribal district. Affiliated with Kannur University, the college offers undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

**CENTRAL APATHY | Chief minister said Centre provided no help so far and going by past experience nothing may be expected in future as well**

## Stone laid for Wayanad rehabilitation township

HD Bureau

KOCHI

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has inaugurated a township project aimed at rehabilitating 402 families displaced by the devastating landslides in Wayanad.

The ceremony took place at Elstone Estate in Kalpetta, where the Chief Minister unveiled the project plaque and laid the foundation stone. This initiative underscores the state's commitment to restoring normalcy for those affected by the calamity.

The landslides, which occurred on 30 July 2024 in the Mundakkai and Chooralmala regions of Wayanad, resulted in the tragic loss of 266 lives, with 32 individuals reported missing. Rescue operations successfully saved 630 people from the debris. In the aftermath, the displaced families have been residing across 16 panchayats in the district, awaiting permanent housing solutions.

Addressing the gathering,



Chief Minister Vijayan highlighted the collective resilience and unity demonstrated by the people of Kerala during the rescue and relief efforts. He emphasized that, despite financial constraints, the state undertook the mission to rehabilitate the landslide survivors with robust public support. "Kerala's unity and humanity helped us execute this project. We proved that determination can overcome even the impossible," he remarked.

The chief minister said that despite much expectations,

the Centre did not provide any help for the rehabilitation of the affected people and going by past experience, it would be highly unrealistic to expect anything in future as well. The township project is designed to provide comprehensive facilities to the rehabilitated families. Each of the 430 houses will be constructed on seven-cent plots, ensuring adequate living space. The township will also feature essential amenities, including schools, playgrounds, a library, and community centers, fostering a conducive environment for the residents. Revenue Minister K Rajan, who chaired the event, stated that the government would sponsor the education of 21 students who lost their families in the landslides.

The state government has acquired 64 hectares of land from Elstone Tea Estate for the township project, depositing ₹26.5 crore as compensation. Wayanad District Collector DR Meghasree noted that the High Court permitted the foundation stone-laying ceremony by symbolically taking over the

## Sudheeran asks CM to scrap liquor policy

HD Bureau

KOCHI

Senior Congress leader V.M. Sudheeran has urged Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to withdraw the state's current liquor policy, highlighting the increasing availability of alcohol and the alarming spread of contraband drugs in Kerala.

In his letter, Sudheeran emphasized the need for immediate action to curb these issues, referencing the Left Front's 2016 election manifesto, which promised a phased reduction in liquor availability and consumption. He accused the government of deviating from this commitment by facilitating widespread access to alcohol.

The state's new liquor policy for the financial year 2025-2026 has faced delays, with the cabinet postponing discussions due to disagreements on key issues.

One contentious proposal involves eliminating the 'dry day' observed on the first day of each month. The State Beverages Corporation has recommended this change, arguing that the monthly closure results in significant revenue loss.

BEVCO's Managing Director, Harshita Attaluri, stated that closing liquor outlets on the first of every month serves little purpose and negatively impacts the state's finances. The government is also considering whether to limit this exemption to liquor shops in



designated tourism areas.

In January, the Excise Department approved the establishment of beer and wine parlours at 74 tourism locations across Kerala. This initiative allows restaurants in these designated zones to obtain licenses for serving beer and wine during specific periods, with fees adjusted accordingly.

Additionally, there are proposals to upgrade Kerala Tourism Development Corporation beer parlours into full-fledged bars in a phased manner. Currently, KTDC operates over 60 beer parlours statewide.

The government's approach has drawn criticism from various quarters. The Communist Party of India, a coalition partner, expressed dissatisfaction, claiming that its views were disregarded in formulating the new liquor policy. Opposition leader V.D. Satheesan also criticized the government's decision to sanction more bars and distilleries, arguing that such moves contradict earlier stances favouring reduced alcohol availability.

### CM blasts media for 'anti-Left bias'

HD Bureau

KOCHI

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has accused certain corporate media outlets of fostering an anti-Left narrative. Speaking at the inauguration of the new Deshabhimani newspaper building in Kozhikode, Pinarayi Vijayan asserted that these media institutions are distorting facts and disseminating misinterpreted content, which he believes could pose a threat to the nation's secular fabric.

Currently, children in Kerala can enroll in Class 1 at the age of five. Education Minister V. Sivankutty highlighted that over half of the state's students already commence their formal edu-

cation at six. He emphasized that this shift is supported by research indicating that children are better prepared for formal education at this age, a practice already adopted by many developed countries.

The NEP 2020 introduces a 5+3+3+4 curricular structure, emphasizing the importance of early childhood care and education for children aged three to eight years.

This framework recommends that students enter Grade 1 at six years old to ensure they receive adequate foundational learning.

In February 2024, the central

## Class I admission age 6 years from '26

HD Bureau

KOCHI

The state government has announced that, starting from the 2026-27 academic year, the minimum age for admission to Class 1 will be set at six years. This decision aligns with the National Education Policy 2020, which advocates for children to begin formal schooling at this age.

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This framework recommends that students enter Grade 1 at six years old to ensure they receive adequate foundational learning.

In February 2024, the central

government directed all states and union territories to implement this age criterion for Class I admissions. While some states had al-

ready adopted the six-year minimum age, others, including Kerala, are now aligning their policies accordingly.

offgrid

## Boy comes to school with liquor to celebrate end of exam

HD Bureau

KOCHI

A secondary school student in Kozhencerry, Pathanamthitta district, arrived at the Secondary School Leaving Certificate examination under the influence of alcohol. Teachers became suspicious due to the student's unusual behaviour during the exam and, upon inspecting his bag, discovered a bottle of liquor and approximately ₹10,000 in cash. The student was subsequently sent home.

The initiation into substance use often begins at home, with students experimenting with alcohol found within their households.

This behaviour is sometimes influenced by observing family members who consume alcohol, leading to early exposure and subsequent sharing among peers. The state is witnessing a troubling surge in drug networks targeting school neighbourhoods, ensnaring unsuspecting children into substance abuse and, eventually, addiction. This escalating crisis has sent shockwaves through the community, prompting urgent calls for comprehensive intervention.

Investigations have uncovered that these networks employ female carriers to befriend and lure school-going girls into the world of narcotics. Once entrapped, these girls are often coerced into becoming carriers themselves, perpetuating the cycle of abuse. M.R. Ajith Kumar, Additopaperfreepressjournal.in

General of Police and state nodal officer for the anti-drug campaign 'Yoddhav,' highlighted this disturbing trend, noting a significant increase in substance abuse cases among school children, with a majority being girls. The proximity of small roadside eateries, known locally as 'tattukadas,' and petty shops near schools has exacerbated the problem. These establishments have been identified as active sellers of contraband to students, providing easy access to illicit substances. Law enforcement agencies have intensified crackdowns, but the pervasive nature of these networks presents a formidable challenge.

Recent data from the excise department underscores the severity of the situation. In Ernakulam district alone, 16 cases of drug seizures were reported from educational institutions, including schools and colleges, since June 2021. This figure surpasses that of other districts, with Kottayam reporting four cases, Kozhikode and Kollam three each, and Palakkad one case during the same period. These statistics suggest a targeted approach by drug peddlers towards students, exploiting their vulnerability. A study published in the Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine reported a 31.8% prevalence of substance use among college students in central Kerala. Another study highlighted that 19% of adolescents exhibited mild to high substance abuse, with 66% showing average to high levels of suicidal ideation.

The Kerala Excise Department's 2020-2021 survey revealed that 86.8% of adolescents aged 13-18 had used alcohol, with 19.9% using marijuana and 18.2% engaging in solvent drug use. The survey also noted that cigarette and marijuana smoking were significantly more likely among students whose parents were separated. The financial dynamics within families also play a role in this crisis. An increase in parental income has led to more generous allowances for children. While intended for positive use, this excess pocket money has, in some instances, been diverted towards purchasing illicit substances. The trend is particularly evident in single-parent families, where parenting can result in larger discretionary funds for the child. The ramifications of this crisis extend beyond individual families, affecting the broader societal fabric. Educational institutions are grappling with increased incidents of violence and behavioural issues linked to drug addiction. Reports indicate frequent confrontations among students, clashes with teachers, and gang-like violence within schools. In response, parents are resorting to purchasing drug-testing kits in bulk to discreetly screen their children at home, reflecting the pervasive anxiety gripping the community.

**Briefs****RAIPUR  
Minister  
approves  
₹580 cr**

Chhattisgarh Labour Minister and Chairman Lakhan Lal Dewangan reaffirmed the government's commitment to labour welfare, emphasizing that more workers should benefit from departmental schemes. He highlighted Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai's vision of ensuring equal opportunities for workers' children. Addressing the Board of Directors' meeting of the Chhattisgarh Bhawan and Construction Workers' Welfare Board at Nava Raipur, Dewangan approved ₹580.11 crore for the financial year 2025-26 to support construction workers' welfare schemes. He directed officials to expedite the registration and renewal of workers on the e-labor portal. The minister also asked for the expansion of food centres under the Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh Shram Ann Yojana to all districts. Currently, the scheme operates in 13 districts with 41 food centres.

**JAGDALPUR  
Eight new  
deputy  
collectors in  
Bastar**

The General Administration Department, Government of Chhattisgarh has issued posting orders for eight newly appointed Deputy Collectors in various districts of Bastar Division. These appointments are based on the results of the 2023 joint competition examination conducted by the Chhattisgarh Public Service Commission. As per the order, Ravi Shankar Verma has been assigned to Sukma, Mrinamayi Shukla to North Bastar Kanker, Ms. Nandani and Satyendra Kumar Banjare to Bastar, Manish Baghel to Dantewada, Saurabh Dewan to Narayanpur, Nidhi Pradhan to Bijapur, and Lakeshwar Yadav to Kondagaon. These officers, included in the main list recommended for the State Administrative Service, will serve a three-year probation period from the date of assuming charge. They have been appointed under the junior category pay scale matrix, Level 12.

**RAIPUR  
CGHB  
transfer five  
officials**

Chhattisgarh Housing Board (CGHB) has transferred five Additional Commissioners of the Board on Thursday. In this regard, Commissioner of the CGHB Kundan Kumar has issued an order. Additional Commissioner of Durg Zone and Headquarters Nava Raipur H K Joshi has been appointed as Additional Commissioner of Nava Raipur Zone and Headquarters Nava Raipur. Additional Commissioner Raipur Zone and Nava Raipur Ajit Singh Patel has been appointed as Bilaspur Zone. Additional Commissioner Bilaspur Zone M D Panariya has been appointed as Durg Zone.

**CBI RAIDS | Congress Statewide Protest****CBI raids conducted for PM speech: Bhupesh Baghel****Staff Reporter**

RAIPUR

Congress organized massive protests across the state against the CBI raids conducted on the premises of former Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and the leaders associated with the Congress party. Apart from burning effigies of CBI, ED, and ruling BJP government, the Congress party addressed a joint press conference in the Congress State Headquarters Raipur on Thursday.

In a joint press conference held at the Rajiv Bhavan on Thursday, ex-CM Baghel raised several questions over the sanctity of the raids, and termed them politically motivated. ED is working on the directions of BJP leaders sitting in the government at Centre breaching all the standard practice, violating the constitutional guidelines to intimidate the opposition leaders.

Saurabh Chandrakar and Ravi Uppal are the owners and mastermind operators of the Mahadev betting app has taken the citizenship of Vanuatu and freely operate the app, setting up new businesses sitting in Dubai and the government failed to arrest the both. We demand immediate arrest of both the accused, Baghel said.

Saurabh Chandrakar and Ravi Uppal openly organize the recital programme of storyteller Pradeep Mishra in Dubai. If the government wanted to arrest the duo, it could have taken help from Mishra, who is presently carrying out a recital programme in Surguja.

Mishra could have chanted a mantra and immediately brought him back to India from Dubai, but that too could not happen. Actually the government want to intimidate, defame and torture the opposition leaders so it is carrying out ED and CBI raids, Baghel alleged.

The former CM levelled serious allegations against CBI and said, in his absence his official residence was raided, CBI Officers came out from his residence with bags meanwhile at his Bhilai residence where his family

**Cong workers burn effigy of BJP govt****Staff Reporter**

RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Congress leaders and workers staged a protest against the BJP-led Central government by burning its effigy at Gandhi Maidan on Thursday. The protest was in response to the CBI raids conducted at the residences of former Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, MLA Devendra Yadav, and other Congress leaders.

During the demonstration, Congress workers raised slogans against both the Central and State BJP governments. A minor scuffle broke out between the protesters and the police during the effigy burning.

District Congress Committee (Urban) President Girish Dubey accused the BJP



**IN RAIPUR:** During the protest, District President Girish Dubey, former MLA Vikas Upadhyay and other Congress workers were present.

members including the female members reside the raids were carried out in absence of any female officers, Baghel alleged.

He accused CBI officers of taking original copies of his

ancestral properties, which was already probed by then Raman Singh government and nothing illegal found.

Actually, the raids are conducted in consideration of Prime Minister Modi's visit on

March 30. As the CBI and ED failed to find anything illegal, they are trying to implicate in a false case so that the content can be created for Modi's speech, ex-CM Baghel alleged.



## The Free Press Journal

Founder Editor: S Sadanand

# The battle over Rana Sanga

**T**he attack on the house and properties of Samajwadi Party MP Ramji Lal Suman in Agra by Karni Sena is a blatant act of lawlessness that must be condemned. The mob violence was triggered by Suman's speech in Parliament on March 21, where he made a rhetorical remark questioning whether Rana Sangha should be considered a "traitor" for inviting Babur to defeat Ibrahim Lodhi. Whether or not his historical interpretation was accurate, the right place to counter his arguments is Parliament, not through violence and intimidation. Unfortunately, Karni Sena chief Mahipal Makrana escalated the situation by warning that what happened in Agra was just a "trailer" and that worse would follow if Suman did not apologise. This is a direct threat to free speech and an attempt to silence elected representatives through fear. In a democracy, differences should be settled through debate, not violence.

The controversy over Rana Sangha's role in history is a matter for historians, not mobs, to discuss. It is true that Babur referred to Rana Sangha as the "greatest Indian king" in his memoirs, the Baburnama, and that he received some proposals from the Rajput leader. However,

**Adityanath claims that no riots have occurred in UP under his leadership, implying that electing his party is the only way to maintain peace.**

historians disagree on whether this makes Rana Sangha a traitor. What is beyond dispute is that Rana Sangha was a formidable ruler, with a kingdom stretching across Rajasthan, Haryana, parts of Gujarat, and Uttar Pradesh. He inflicted significant defeats on Ibrahim Lodhi, the last ruler of the Delhi Sultanate, before Babur ultimately won at Panipat with superior weaponry. These are academic debates, not justifications for violence.

Instead of condemning such violent tendencies, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has often added fuel to the fire. His recent statements about demolishing mosques allegedly built over temples and suggesting that Muslims can live only at the mercy of Hindus are deeply troubling. Adityanath claims that no riots have occurred in UP under his leadership, implying that electing his party is the only way to maintain peace. This logic dangerously suggests that the mere presence of opposition parties leads to violence, ignoring the fact that law and order is the duty of the state, not a political weapon. Groups like Karni Sena have repeatedly engaged in vigilante violence, from attacking filmmakers to targeting individuals over perceived insults to historical figures. Such caste-based militias must be disbanded. India is a constitutional democracy, not a feudal society, and the rule of law cannot be replaced by mob justice. If those in power encourage, tolerate, or fail to act against such groups, they risk undermining the very foundations of democracy. As the saying goes, if the fence starts eating the crop, where will all this end?

# About Blacks, Whites & Greys

**K**erala's Chief Secretary, Sarada Muraleedharan, recently sparked a debate with her Facebook post responding to a comment about her tenure. The anonymous remark stated that her leadership was "as black as her husband's was white". This statement, apart from being factually inaccurate, exposes a deeper issue—society's persistent obsession with skin colour. She is not black, nor is her husband, V. Venu, whom she succeeded, white. If anything, both of them fall somewhere in between, in the vast spectrum of grey. However, judging a person's ability or character based on complexion is not just absurd but also regressive. It reflects a mindset that should have been discarded long ago. Unfortunately, Kerala, despite its high literacy rates and social progress, is not immune to such colour biases. Swami Vivekananda, one of India's greatest thinkers and saints, faced discrimination in Kerala due to his dark complexion and was even questioned about his caste when he tried to enter a temple in Kodungallur, where St Thomas arrived in the first century and the first mosque outside of Arabia came up. This led him to famously call Kerala a "lunatic asylum".

Even in Hindu mythology, Lord Krishna, revered as an incarnation of Vishnu, was dark-skinned. His complexion, described as Shyam (dark or bluish), never diminished his stature among Hindu deities. Yet, in modern India, skin tone continues to dictate social attitudes, particularly in areas like marriage, where matrimonial advertisements still demand "fair" brides. This colour fixation may be a colonial hangover from nearly two centuries of British rule, which associated fair skin with power and privilege. Ironically, in Western countries, particularly in Britain and the US, tanned skin is considered attractive, and children of interracial couples are often admired for their unique beauty. There is also a historical perspective to consider. Ancient religious texts frequently describe rakshasas (demons) as black, reinforcing a negative connotation. Some scholars argue that these descriptions were attempts by the invading Aryans to demonise the native Dravidians, further embedding colour prejudice in the social fabric.

Black is not inherently bad. Henry Ford, the pioneer of modern automobiles, once remarked, "All colours are good if they are black." His reasoning was purely functional, black paint dried faster and reduced manufacturing costs. Ultimately, what matters is not the colour of one's skin but the quality of one's work. The Chief Secretary has far more important tasks than responding to petty, colour-based remarks. Kerala would be better served if its people moved beyond such outdated prejudices and focused on merit, governance, and progress—things that are neither black nor white but simply right.



MumbaiNaama

SMRUTI KOPPIKAR

**Y**eh Tamil Nadu kaisa pocheha, bhai?" (How do I reach Tamil Nadu, brother?) that a self-confessed attacker asked his target, comedian Kunal Kamra, with a curious mix of desperation and bravado, has to be an epic question of our time. This came, as is widely known by now, from a Shiv Sena worker of the Eknath Shinde faction over a telephone call to Kamra after his parody song went viral. In it, without naming Shinde, Kamra called him a traitor.

What followed was typical Sena-style retribution – vandalising the venue and the hotel where he had recorded the show, threatening him with dire consequences using the same old set of cuss words and terror, filing an FIR against him, and chest-thumping themselves about the "strong action" they took against an insult to their boss. The desperation to reach Kamra in Tamil Nadu and smack him in order to score a few brownie points with the boss while struggling to locate the place on India's map would have been funny if it was not so appalling. It made me think: the more the Shiv Sena changes, the more it remains the same, and Mumbai loses.

The muscle-flexing caller should have known that Tamil Nadu was former Madras given the hate that

was generated against 'Madrasis' by the late Sena chief Bal Thackeray in the 1980s. But that's the story, isn't it? The philosophy, the targets, the methods, and the foul language that Mr Thackeray had set out with in June 1966 continue to prevail nearly six decades later when the world operates in a different context. Mr Thackeray termed it thokshahi, translated as the rule by force, which was his pun on lokshahi or democracy. He was not a fan of democracy, it must be remembered.

To expect Shinde's Sena to follow democratic norms and take the matter to court would have been unSenalike. The thokshahi approach does not surprise anyone who has lived in Mumbai through the 1980-90s and 2000s, when the Sena revelled in it to drive home a point. Shiv Sainiks dug up pitches at the Wankhede Stadium in 1991 and Delhi's Ferozeshah Kotla in 1999 to prevent cricket matches against Pakistan; vandalised homes and offices of people they did not agree with; tore into shops and set goods aflame; and, of course, delighted in rioting during the 1992-93 riots in Bombay. The police mostly stood by and watched, as they did when the comedy venue was vandalised this week.

This is about the Shiv Sena. Under Uddhav Thackeray, it made faint-hearted attempts to evolve into

a political party of stature and substance, but the party's cadre did not match step with his reimagination of the Shiv Sena. More than the Thackerays, Shinde, who swears by thokshahi, appeared the real deal to thousands of Sainiks. He turned traitor to the Thackerays and seized the party in June-July 2022. Kamra called him just that.

This is about the rebellion. The saga about turncoat Sena leaders began way back in the 1990s when Chhagan Bhujbal walked out with MLAs, then Raj Thackeray and Narayan Rane, among others. Bhujbal was attacked most viciously. Mr Thackeray's contemptuous description of him as 'Lakhoba Lokhande' stuck; no one dared call him by his name in speech or in the party newspaper Saamna. Ironically, the man who led the mob at the venue of Kamra's show, Rahool Kanal, was once in the inner coterie of Aaditya Thackeray.

This is about comedy too. While Kamra is brave in many ways and has taken on the establishment, his brand is droll humour with gendered cuss words that are best avoided; we are in 2025, and gendered gaalis are simply not okay. That said, comedians, cartoonists and artists have a role in society as it closes in, to express reality in ways that journalists cannot or will not. If it hurts sentiments of yes-men and

loyalists, then they must reflect and learn to laugh. Or, they could become a joke themselves, holding up posters of Shinde while torching Kamra's, giving a face to his parody song. But reflection and course correction have never been the Sena's strong suits.

This is about what the party has meant and done to Mumbai with the philosophy and approach it has had over five decades. Indeed, it collectively Maharashtra and championed the cause of Marathi sub-nationalism. But in articulating this with the muscle-flexing slash-and-burn approach, mostly with the mute inaction or silent approval of the local police, the city's character has been hurt and damaged. Mumbai, the entertainment capital and the cricket hub of the country, has long felt the shadow of the muscle-flexing approach.

Its creative industries existed or flourished by humouring the Sena, if not totally genuflecting, always keenly aware of the smell of fear and vandalism that the party could unleash at a nod from the boss. Editors, journalists, scholars, filmmakers, actors, singers, cricketers, painters and poets have all felt the chill of the threat that the party issued if it found their work or alliances objectionable. This was no way to nurture Mumbai's ecosystem that fuelled the growth and expansion

of the creative industries, but the party could not care less. It did not understand then and does not understand now that the right to offend, mock, and shock.

This is about the common person that the Sena says it speaks for. Habitat Studio, the venue, and Hotel Uni-continental, where it was housed, clarified that recent events made the management rethink, and "we are shutting down till we figure out the best way to provide a platform for free expression without putting ourselves and our property in jeopardy." The jobs that it provided for scores of people, like waiters, ushers, and support staff, are probably off the table too. Migrants to Mumbai drawn by the opportunities it offers are lost. Did Kanal and his mob of hurt sentiments think of them? Will Shinde look after their families? And how ironic that Mr Thackeray, himself a cartoonist, taught his boys not to chuckle at a joke but to slash, burn and threaten the comedian and his venue. The muscle-flexing did not help Mumbai in the past decades; it won't now.

Smruti Kopikar, senior journalist and urban chronicler, writes extensively on cities, development, gender, and the media. She is the Founder Editor of the award-winning online journal 'Question of Cities' and won the Laadli Media Award 2024 for her writing in this column.



Here There &amp; Everywhere

SAYANTAN GHOSH

**T**he recent controversy surrounding Justice Yashwant Varma, a sitting judge of the Delhi High Court, has thrust the Indian judiciary into an uncomfortable spotlight. Following a fire at his official residence on March 14, 2025, reports emerged of a significant amount of unaccounted cash being discovered, sparking widespread debate about judicial integrity and accountability. While the judge has denied any wrongdoing, calling it a conspiracy to malign him, the incident has reignited calls for systemic reforms to ensure transparency within India's judiciary. Here are five critical points underscoring why this case highlights the urgent need for accountability in the judicial system.

The judiciary in India is often hailed as the last bastion of justice, a pillar of democracy that commands rare public confidence. However, the discovery of allegedly large sums of cash at a judge's residence—whether substantiated or not—strikes at the heart of this trust. Reports indicate that the incident, coupled with the Supreme Court's initial response of transferring Justice Varma to the Allahabad High Court, has left

citizens questioning whether the system protects its own rather than upholds justice. Legal experts have argued that such incidents fuel perceptions of impunity, especially when the judiciary opts for internal enquiries over transparent investigations. Without clear answers about the origins of the cash or the circumstances of the fire, the public is left to speculate, further eroding faith in an institution meant to exemplify integrity.

The Supreme Court's decision to transfer Justice Varma to his parent court in Allahabad, rather than initiating a more robust investigation, has drawn sharp criticism. A three-member committee was later formed to probe the allegations, and judicial work was withdrawn from the judge, but many see these steps as belated and insufficient. Critics, including senior legal voices, have pointed out that transferring a judge facing such serious allegations does little to address the root issue—it merely shifts the problem elsewhere. The Allahabad High Court Bar Association's vehement opposition, labelling their court as not a "dumping ground," underscores the perception that this move sidesteps accountability rather than enforcing it. This case highlights a broader

pattern where internal mechanisms, such as in-house enquiries, are preferred over external scrutiny, raising questions about their effectiveness in delivering justice.

India's judicial history offers few instances of sitting judges facing formal consequences for misconduct. Allegations against judges have typically been resolved through resignation or internal handling, rather than criminal prosecution or public accountability. Legal analyses point out that only a handful of impeachment motions have been initiated, with none resulting in conviction. This precedent creates a shield of inviolability around judges, making it difficult to address corruption or malfeasance head-on. In the Justice Varma case, the lack of immediate suspension or a transparent probe aligns with this trend, suggesting that the judiciary struggles to confront its own vulnerabilities. The contrast with how politicians or bureaucrats are swiftly targeted for similar allegations amplifies the need for a consistent standard of accountability across all public offices.

The controversy has reignited debates about the collegium system, which governs judicial appointments and transfers in India.

Critics argue that the lack of transparency in how judges are selected and disciplined contributes to systemic flaws. In this instance, the SC collegium's swift decision to transfer Justice Varma—followed by a clarification that it was unrelated to the cash allegations—has fuelled speculation about behind-the-scenes manoeuvring. Legal scholars and political figures have called for reforms to make the appointment process more open and rigorous, ensuring that only individuals of impeccable character ascend to the bench. The Justice Varma case serves as a stark reminder that without such reforms, the judiciary risks harbouring individuals whose actions could undermine its credibility.

Ultimately, the Justice Varma saga underscores the pressing need for institutional mechanisms to ensure judicial accountability without compromising independence. Proposals like bringing the judiciary under the Right to Information Act or establishing a stronger oversight body have been debated for years, yet little progress has been made. The current system, reliant on self-regulation and rare impeachment proceedings, is ill-equipped to handle allegations of this magnitude. Legal

experts have suggested that suspending judicial duties pending a thorough investigation, coupled with public disclosure of findings, could set a new standard. This case could be a turning point—if India's judiciary seizes the opportunity to implement reforms that balance independence with accountability, it might restore public faith and strengthen its moral authority.

The Justice Yashwant Varma case is more than an isolated scandal; it is a litmus test for the Indian judiciary's commitment to integrity. The allegations, the response, and the ensuing debate reveal deep-seated issues that cannot be brushed aside with transfers or internal probes. For an institution tasked with upholding the rule of law, accountability must begin within its own ranks. Only through transparency, decisive action, and systemic reform can the judiciary reclaim its role as the conscience keeper of India's democracy.

The author, a columnist and research scholar, teaches journalism at St. Xavier's College (autonomous), Kolkata. His handle on X is @sayantan\_gh. Views are personal.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Jostling for space**

The Greater Chennai Corporation has plans to build 200 km of pavements across the city at a cost of Rs 200 crore. This is good news for hawkers and encroachers, for they are the ones who derive maximum benefit from such 'development' schemes. The second beneficiary would be the two-wheeler riders who will now have more parking space for their vehicles if past experience is anything to go by!

P.G. Menon, Chennai

**Why should MPs get paid more?**

At a time when the common man is finding it extremely difficult to make both ends meet, the ruling BJP government has deemed it right to hike the salary and daily bhatta of MPs and also increased their pensions! Most of the MPs are multi-millionaires and are not dependent on their salaries or daily bhatas. Many of them complete their five-year term without raising a single point in Parliament. There are many senior people

across sectors who deserve a hike in pensions for their survival but are denied the same by the government.

Tharcius S. Fernando, Chennai

**Dhoni still the best**

Dhoni's stumping of SKY, probably the fastest stumping ever effected in just 0.12 seconds at the age of 43, has proved that he is still the fastest behind the wickets in the shortest format of the game. No wonder, MSD is adored by thousands of fans, wherever he plays. Keep it going, MSD, age is no matter. We would like to see you play as long as possible. Also, thanks to IPL for unearthing wonderful new talents like Virat Kohli, Piyush Chawla, and others.

Venu Soundar, Chennai

**Not funny**

That Indians are peculiarly thin-skinned has been proved on a number of occasions. But the dubious honour of possessing the prickliest of skins must go to Indian politicians. Politicians

cians love humour when they are holding the mic. However, when the joke is on them, they threaten with defamation lawsuits. It is an alarming situation where the state acts arbitrarily and sends bulldozers to level a location where a joke was made, and the man who delivered the lines is chased, harassed, and persecuted.

Gregory Fernandes, Mumbai

**Undemocratic**

The governors of non-BJP-ruled states have been intentionally stalling or blocking the passage of bills in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, etc. The centre-state clash reached a new low when the Kerala government petitioned the Chief Justice of India against the President for stalling the passage of 7 of its bills.

It is distinctly undemocratic for the BJP to misuse the offices of the President and the governor to disrupt the opposition governments. It is unbecoming as well to drag the highest office of

the nation to SC.

P.R. Ravinder, Hyderabad

**Multilingualism**

Madhya Pradesh has set an example in front of the nation by promoting multilingualism by introducing multiple languages in schools in the rural areas. The heart of the nation is 4th in the country to offer three languages at the upper primary stage and 6th at the secondary stage. Learning multiple

languages can enhance the scope of education for every individual and is, thus, crucial. It can broaden the aspects of learning for children, and its significance must be realised by all the other states as well.

Tanvi Telang, Ujjain

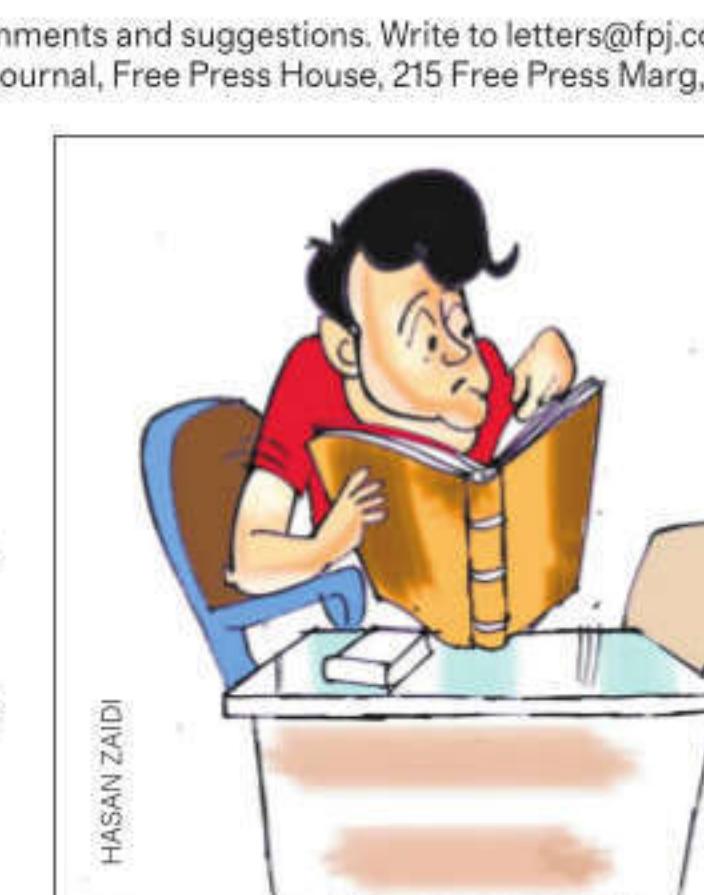
**Political gimmick**

The Bharatiya Janata Party has planned to launch the "Saugat-e-Modi" campaign. Special kits will be distributed to Muslims and other minorities during the festive seasons. Till today, the BJP leaders were shouting that Hindus are in crisis, now through this campaign, the BJP is trying to befriend the Muslim community. This shows that this campaign is nothing but a political gimmick targeted at the minority communities to garner votes.

Sudhir G. Kangutkar, Thane

# Unfortunately, the joke is on Shiv Sena, Shinde and Mumbai

Comedians, cartoonists and artists have a role in society as it closes in to express reality in ways that journalists cannot or will not

**Student suicides**

With reference to the article "More students die than farmers" in the FPJ dated March 26, I would like to comment that in a democracy, the welfare of all communities is important and the woes of one section of society must not be used to distract people's attention from the woes of another section. So, in the case of students, prevent suicides by addressing mental health issues through counselling; and in the case of farmers, do the very same and address their woes legally, in court or through an out-of-court settlement.

Peter Castellino, Mumbai

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## NEW GUIDELINES

**Bangla govt can cut access to sat net**

## Agencies

DHAKA

Satellite service providers operating in Bangladesh must route internet traffic through local gateways and connect to an International Internet Gateway (IIG) for data supply, giving the government the ability to shut down internet access if needed.

According to the final version of the guidelines titled, "Regulatory and Licensing Guidelines for Non-Geostationary Orbit (NGSO) Satellite Services Operators in Bangladesh", the licensee must establish at least one gateway system within the territory of Bangladesh before commencing its service, the Daily Star reported. However, the commission encourages the licensee to establish redundant gateways.

Additionally, any user terminal placed and used within the geographical boundaries of Bangladesh must be authenticated and served through this local gateway. All traffic from these terminals must be routed through this local gateway to provide services under these guidelines within Bangladesh. The licensee must connect its NGSO gateway with any of the licensed IIGs to carry international internet data traffic.

For seamless operation, the licensee must have redundant connections from the licensed IIGs. The regulator has issued the guidelines at the time when the government has taken an initiative to allow Starlink to launch its services in Bangladesh. Earlier this week, in a statement, Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus directed authorities to ensure Starlink's commercial launch within 90 days.

Starlink typically delivers bandwidth through two methods. One involves connecting to ground stations (gateways) that link to the global internet via fiber-optic networks, including submarine cables, requiring local ground stations. The other method relies on inter-satellite links, allowing data to be transmitted through space, bypassing local internet gateways and reducing dependence on submarine cables. Bangladesh has chosen the former, making government-imposed internet shutdowns technically feasible.

**The Bangladesh Telecommunication Act, 2001 permits internet shutdowns during emergencies**

**SIGNAL CHAT JOURNALIST'S VERSION | Wonders if sensitive war plans should be discussed on such a platform**

# 'They invited me, now they're attacking me'

**Agencies**  
WASHINGTON



The Signal chat incident, involving The Atlantic's editor-in-chief **Jeffrey Goldberg**, exposed a disturbing level of casualness among high-ranking US officials regarding sensitive information. President Trump's response was characteristically aggressive, labeling Goldberg a "loser" and a "sleazebag." National Security Advisor Michael Waltz escalated the rhetoric, branding him "scum".

In an interview with the BBC, Goldberg detailed how he got a message on his phone to join, via the publicly available Signal messaging app, by an account under Waltz's name. He assumed it was a hoax. But he found his unexpected inclusion in the chat, where officials like Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth, CIA Director John Ratcliffe, and Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard discussed operational details of a Yemen military operation.

"I wish there was a Le Carré quality here," Goldberg remarked. "But he asked me to talk. I said yes. And next thing I know, I'm in this very strange chat group with the national security leadership of

the United States." Waltz attributed the inclusion to a mistake, claiming he meant to add someone else. Waltz denied ever meeting the editor. Goldberg countered, asserting they had met multiple times.

He also ridiculed Waltz's attempt to enlist Elon Musk's help in investigating the error, stating, "Really, you're going to put Elon Musk onto the question of how somebody's phone number ends up in someone's phone? I mean you know, most 8-year-olds could figure it out." The core issue, as Goldberg pointed out, was the officials' use of Signal for such sensitive communications: "Should you, as national security officials, be doing this on Signal on your phone?"

After Trump and other officials downplayed the information shared, Goldberg released the full text messages, including Hegseth's operational details.

## Republican senators break ranks, call for probe

**Agencies**  
WASHINGTON

In rare signs of unrest, top Republican senators are calling for an investigation of the Signal leak scandal and demanding answers from the Trump administration, as they raise concerns that it will become a "significant political problem" if not addressed properly.

"This is what happens when you don't really have your act together," the Alaska Republican senator Lisa Murkowski told The Hill. Senior national security officials testified before the Senate intelligence committee on Tuesday, where the national intelligence director, Tulsil Gabbard, and CIA director, John Ratcliffe, were grilled by lawmakers over the scandal. The national security officials said "no classified material" had been shared in the chat. Republicans are now calling for investigations, as well.

According to The Hill, top Republican senators are

calling for various committees to investigate the leak, including the Senate armed services committee and the Senate intelligence committee. The Mississippi senator Roger Wicker, who chairs the armed services committee, said he would be asking the defence department's inspector general to investigate the scandal.

**Kash Patel, FBI director**

FBI Director Kash Patel was not part of a Signal chat in which other Trump administration national security officials discussed detailed attack plans, but that didn't spare him from being questioned by lawmakers this week about whether the nation's premier law enforcement agency would investigate. Patel made no such commitments during the course of two days of Senate and House hearings. Instead, he testified that he had not personally reviewed the text messages as Trump says it's "not really an FBI thing."

## Ukraine allies meet in Paris



Leaders of the 'Coalition of the willing' stand by Ukraine, in Paris on Thursday —AFP

**Agencies**  
PARIS

## SUMMIT THREE

France pledged 2 billion euros in military aid to Ukraine as 30 leaders met in Paris with President Zelensky to discuss strengthening Ukraine's position and potential roles in a peace deal with Russia. This third "coalition of the willing" summit, initiated by France and Britain, reflects European concerns about waning US support for Ukraine. Attendees included the

British, Polish, and Italian Prime Ministers, the NATO secretary-general, and the Turkish Vice-President.

The summit followed Zelensky's agreement to ceasefire talks aimed at restoring US aid and intelligence sharing. US President Donald Trump, in office since January 20, has said he wants to broker a swift end to the war. But bilateral talks

between the US and the warring sides have not significantly reduced hostilities. "First and foremost (we will discuss) the immediate support for Ukraine. It must go on because it is necessary to continue the resistance," President Emmanuel Macron told reporters on Wednesday evening at a press conference with Zelensky. He pledged a further 2 billion euros in French military support, including missiles, warplanes and air defence equipment.

The accusations relate to an alleged plan to stage a pro-Bolsonaro coup in the months

## Ex-Prez of Brazil to be tried for 'coup bid'

**Agencies**  
RIO DE JANEIRO

Brazil's former President Jair Bolsonaro will stand trial for allegedly orchestrating a violent plot to seize power through a military coup. The country's supreme court decided he and seven others should stand trial for crimes including involvement in an armed criminal organization, coup d'état and violently attempting to abolish Brazilian democracy.

The ruling leaves the far-right populist, who governed Brazil from 2019 until the end of 2022, facing political oblivion and a possible jail sentence of more than 40 years. On Wednesday, five supreme court judges unanimously ruled that there was sufficient evidence for all these men to face prosecution and officially declared them defendants.

The accusations relate to an

alleged plan to stage a pro-Bolsonaro coup in the months between the US and the warring sides have not significantly reduced hostilities. "First and foremost (we will discuss) the immediate support for Ukraine. It must go on because it is necessary to continue the resistance," President Emmanuel Macron told reporters on Wednesday evening at a press conference with Zelensky. He pledged a further 2 billion euros in French military support, including missiles, warplanes and air defence equipment.

The accusations relate to an

alleged plan to stage a pro-Bolsonaro coup in the months



TikTok operating in the US will be wrapped up by the early April deadline. NBC News reported that Vance did not offer details on who the potential buyers could be but noted that some issues could push a final agreement past the deadline. TikTok and ByteDance have not publicly commented on the talks. It's also unclear if ByteDance has changed its position on selling TikTok, which it said early last year it does not plan to do.

## What will happen on April 5?

If TikTok is not sold to an approved buyer by April 5, the original law that bans it nationwide would once again go into effect. However, the deadline for the executive order doesn't appear to be set in stone and the President has reiterated it could be extended further if needed.

## North Korea sends 3k more troops to Russia, says Seoul



File photo of North Korean soldiers in Russia —AP

**Agencies**  
SEOUL

North Korea appears to have sent at least 3,000 additional soldiers to Russia early this year, South Korea's military said on Thursday, demonstrating Pyongyang's continued support for Moscow's war on Ukraine as world leaders push for an end to the three-year conflict.

The news comes as Russia's

Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko said a visit

by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to Russia is being prepared, according to state media TASS. The reinforcements, sent in January and February, add to the roughly 11,000 troops North Korea has sent to Russia so far, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said. About 4,000 of them have been killed or injured in combat, according to Seoul.

PyonYang has also sent a

"significant amount" of short-

range ballistic missiles and about 220 pieces of 170-millimeter self-propelled howitzers and 240-millimeter multiple rocket launchers, South Korea said. It said the North's contributions are "expected to increase according to the situation". These developments are taking place amid shaky efforts by the White House to broker a ceasefire between Kyiv and Moscow.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russia's

President Vladimir Putin,

meanwhile, have been deepening security ties since they

signed a landmark defence

pact last year and pledged to

use all available means to provide immediate military assistance in the event the other is attacked.

Putin's top security advisor Sergei Shoigu met with Kim last week in Pyongyang, where he conveyed Putin's "warmest wishes and greetings".

## US halts \$12 bn grant for state health

**Agencies**  
WASHINGTON

The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has revoked approximately \$12 billion in federal grants allocated to states during the COVID-19 pandemic. These funds supported vital public health initiatives, including infectious disease tracking like measles and bird flu, mental health services, and addiction treatment.

State officials and lawmakers have strongly condemned the decision. Public health officials in Lubbock, Texas, were instructed to halt work funded by grants that aided in responding to a measles outbreak. HHS stated the grants were primarily used for COVID-19 testing and vaccination, arguing the pandemic is over and the funds are no longer needed.

Senator Patty Murray revealed that the Trump administration terminated over \$11 billion in CDC funding and roughly \$1 billion from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Washington state alone lost over \$160 million, jeopardizing more than 200 jobs. Murray criticized the move, claiming it would hinder the state's ability to combat infectious diseases and provide essential mental health and substance abuse services. New York Governor Kathy Hochul announced her state faces a \$300 million funding cut.

## 'NETANYAHU WILL NOT ALLOW POLLS TO BE HELD'



File photo of a protest in Jerusalem

### Is there growing dissent inside Israel?

Absolutely. The polarization in Israel is alarming. Protests are increasing because some extreme-right ministers have told him they'll quit the coalition if he doesn't. Losing them would mean losing his government.

### What about Israel's economy and morale—how are they holding up?

The economy is suffering.

Reservists called to duty aren't contributing to civilian sectors. Tourism has plummeted.

High-tech is holding up, but overall, there's widespread damage.

Morally, there's general frustration, even anger. People feel the government isn't prioritizing the hostages or their suffering, and instead is consolidating political power.

There's serious concern.

Netanyahu wants to fire the attorney general and change how judges are appointed—

making the system more politically controlled. These moves, combined with his refusal to step down or form an inquiry committee (as was done after the Yom Kippur

war), show erosion of democratic checks and balances.

### Why is the younger lot fleeing Israel?

Many are protesting; some are even leaving the country. There's deep polarization, but also a sense that if elections were held today, Netanyahu would likely lose. He knows that, which is why there are fears he might delay elections further.

### What has been achieved by Israel with this conflict? What is the logic of continuing a war that looks increasingly unequal?

It is. And we in Israel feel that pain too, especially those of us from the Labor camp. It hurts to see Gaza's suffering. Many Israelis want the war to end—not out of sympathy for Hamas, but because the humanitarian cost is unbearable and disproportionate. The hostages must come first. That's what the protests are saying.

Could this war set a dan-

### gerous precedent—bombing civilian zones in the name of targeting terrorists?

War is always terrible. There

are no sterile wars. But

international law has clear

boundaries. What's happening now must be reassessed.

At some point, we must turn

the page—like Europe did

after World War II or the

U.S. with Vietnam. Germany,

once our enemy, is now

Israel's closest ally in

Europe.

### Can Israel turn the page while Netanyahu remains in power?

I hope we don't have to wait

for him to leave. But many

believe only political change

can bring real progress. If

President Trump or any

influential figure says

"enough is enough," that

could shift the equation.

Right now, half the country

believes this war is politi-

cally motivated. That's dan-

gerous—for Israel, and for

peace in the region.

Scan QR code to watch the full interview on YouTube channel

## Gunmen single out Punjabis, kill 6

**PTI**  
KARACHI

Suspected insurgents shot and killed six people from Punjab after offloading them from a bus in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province, officials said on Thursday. While five passengers died on the spot, one succumbed to injuries later. The attack took place in the Gwadar district of the province when armed men stopped a Karachi-bound passenger bus from Gwadar near the Kalma area on the Ormara highway late on Wednesday, said Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Hafeez Baloch.

"Armed men killed six passengers after checking their ID cards and took away three others," he said, adding that all victims belonged to the country's Punjab province. No group claimed responsibility for the attack, but in the past, ethnic Baloch terrorist groups carried out such targeted attacks against the people of Punjab. The militants also stopped three long-body trailers carrying urea from Gwadar port by setting up roadblocks and set them on fire. Security forces moved

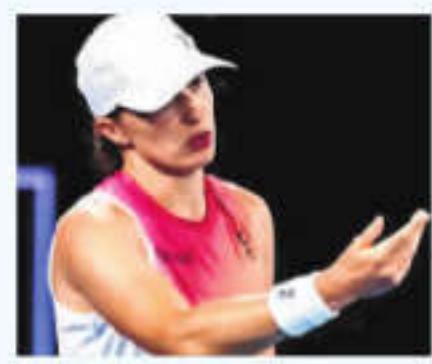
towards the area where militants had blocked highways, with operations to clear the roads underway. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the attack on the passenger bus and directed relevant authorities to investigate and prosecute those responsible. "The terrorists are the enemies of the country's development and prosperity of Balochistan," the Dawn newspaper quoted President Asif Ali Zardari as saying. Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti took to X to condemn the incident and said, "Off loading innocent passengers from a bus and murdering them based on their identity is a heinous and cowardly act."

He pledged that the "war against hardcore terrorists would continue and they would be brought to justice by all means", according to the report. Insurgents have stepped up their attacks on security forces and civilians in recent months and it is not the first time that militants have stopped a bus, offloaded people from Punjab province and killed or kidnapped them.</



## Briefs

**MIAMI**  
Swiatek given extra security protection



Iga Swiatek was given extra security protection at the Miami Open after being verbally attacked during a practice session by a man who had sent the five-time Grand Slam champion harassing messages via social media. "We monitor the network to catch these types of issues. Constructive criticism is one thing, and threats, hate speech or even disturbance during training is another - this cannot be condoned," a statement from Swiatek's team said Wednesday.

"We reported the matter to the tournament organizer, as well as to the WTA... which reacted immediately and took additional precautions, such as additional security, for which we are very grateful." Earlier a stalker was removed from Emma Raducanu match in Dubai.

**BUENOS AIRES**  
Argentina hopes Messi will play WC



Argentina is proving it can win without Lionel Messi, just in case he opts not to play in the 2026 World Cup. After Argentina secured a spot in next year's competition, the main question now is whether the 37-year-old star will play in his sixth tournament and try to win back-to-back championships. "We will see what happens, there's plenty of time," Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said. "We must go one game a time otherwise (we) will be speaking about the same thing the rest of the year and we need to leave him alone, we will see. He will decide it whenever he wants, let's not drive him crazy with this." The last two big victories against Brazil and Uruguay came without Messi.

**LAUSANNE**  
Doping shame: Two-year ban for Baboryko



Russian wrestler Dmitry Baboryko was banned for two years on Thursday after taking a breast cancer drug that counters the effects of using steroids. Baboryko tested positive for tamoxifen at the under-23 world championships last October in Albania, the International Testing Agency said on announcing the ban on behalf of the United World Wrestling governing body. He accepted the two-year sanction including being disqualified and stripped of the silver medal from the heavyweight 130-kilogram class in Greco-Roman wrestling, the ITA said. Russian wrestlers can compete in UWW events as approved neutral athletes who have not directly taken part in or publicly supported the war against Ukraine.

**FIREWORKS** | Earlier Shardul's four wickets helped visitors limit SRH to 190/9

## Pooran, Marsh lead LSG chase

**PTI**  
HYDERABAD

Lucknow Super Giants made light-work of 191 chase to defeat hosts Sunrisers Hyderabad by five wickets in an IPL match here on Thursday. LSG scored 193/5 in 16.1 overs. Shardul Thakur continued his dream comeback with a four-wicket haul to help LSG restrict a power-packed SRH to 190 for nine.

Later, Nicholas Pooran coming at No 3 scored breezy 70 in 26 balls to light up the LSG chase. The West Indies' southpaw hit six sixes and as many boundaries to share 116-run partnership with Mitchell Marsh after Aiden Markram was removed by Mohammed Shami in the second over. Marsh made 52 in 31 balls to prove an ideal foil to menacing Pooran. Abdul Samad and David Miller gave the finishing touches. Pat Cummins (2/29) and Mohammed Shami (1/37) were among the wicket-takers for SRH.

Opting to bowl, Shardul (4/42) gave LSG a fiery start, removing Abhishek Sharma and last match centurion Ishan Kishan in consecutive balls in the third over.

Shardul sent packing Sharma with a short delivery before getting Ishan Kishan caught behind off an innocuous delivery down the leg side. Travis Head (47 off 28), however, looked in ominous form as he took the attack to the opposition and used his brute power to deal in boundaries and sixes.

Head was particularly brutal against Avesh, who sprayed the ball on both sides, with the Australian hitting him for two sixes and one four to pick up 18 runs in the fourth over.

Head, however, was lucky



Lucknow Super Giants' Shardul Thakur (C) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Sunrisers Hyderabad's Ishan Kishan in Hyderabad on Thursday. AFP

**Nicholas Pooran smashed a blistering 70 in 26 balls, while Mitchell Marsh chipped in with a 31-ball 52, guiding the visitors to a chase of 193/5 in just 16.1 overs.**

as he got two reprieves. Head skied Ravi Bishnoi's first ball down the ground, and Pooran stationed at long-on had all the time in the world to get under the ball and take a simple catch but the West Indian put it down.

The missed chance proved costly as Head slammed Bishnoi over covers for a maximum. Bishnoi had another chance to claim the wicket of Head in the fifth ball of the sixth over but he failed to latch on to a difficult return catch.

Young Aniket Verma played a 13-ball 36-run cameo that included five sixes but fell to leg-spinner Divyesh Rathai, caught by David Miller.

### Scoreboard

**Sunrisers Hyderabad**

**Innings:**

T Head b Yadav 47, A Sharma c Pooran b Thakur 6, I Kishan c Pant b Thakur 0, N Reddy b Bishnoi 32, H Klaasen run out (Yadav) 26, A Verma c Miller b Rathi 36, A Manohar c Samad b Thakur 2, P Cummins c Rathi b Khan 18, H Patel 12\*, M Shami c Badoni b Thakur 1, S Singh 3\* **Extras:** (W-6, NB-1) 7 **Total:** (20 Overs) 190/9 **Fow:** 1-4, 2-120, 3-138, 4-154, 5-164 **Bowling:** Abhishek 2-0, 20-0, Shami 3-37-1, Simarjeet 2-0-28-0, Cummins 3-0-29-2, Zampa 4-0-46-1, Patel 2-0-28-1, Kishan 0.1-0-4-0

**Lucknow Super Giants**

**Innings:**

M Marsh c Reddy b Cummins 52, A Markram c Cummins b Shami 1, N Pooran lbv b Cummins 70, R Pant c Shami b Patel 15, A Badoni c Patel b Zampa 6, D Miller 13\*, A Samad 22\* **Extras:** (lb 1, w 13) 14 **Total:** (16.1 Overs) 193/5 **Fow:** 1-4, 2-120, 3-138, 4-154, 5-164 **Bowling:** Abhishek 2-0, 20-0, Shami 3-37-1, Simarjeet 2-0-28-0, Cummins 3-0-29-2, Zampa 4-0-46-1, Patel 2-0-28-1, Kishan 0.1-0-4-0

## Moeen used to play second fiddle

I'm used to bowling with someone who is better than me, says Ali

**PTI**  
GUWAHATI

A candid Moeen Ali, who temporarily but successfully filled the void of Sunil Narine during Kolkata Knight Riders' IPL match against Rajasthan Royals, says he is "used to bowling with someone who is better than me."

Part of a KKR attack that also has Varun Chakaravarthy in its ranks, Moeen worked well in tandem with the Indian mystery spinner and choked RR in the middle overs to restrict them to 151 for nine in their contest here on Wednesday.

"My job was to keep it tight, so that he can build the pressure and maybe get wickets. I'm used to bowling with someone who is better than me and has more mystery than me. My job is to bowl as tight as I can and hopefully that builds pressure for that person to then get wickets," Moeen said at the post-match press conference.

"Varun is bowling outstandingly well as we know and he is a brilliant bowler. He has improved so much over the last two-three years. It is amazing to bowl with some-

body like that," he added.

While the 37-year-old Moeen rose to the challenge to return impressive figures of 2/23 from four overs, his younger spin colleague Chakaravarthy finished with 2/23 in his full quota of four overs.

RR enjoyed a fruitful Power Play, scoring 54 runs in the first six overs but the introduction of spin changed the complexion of their innings.

Moeen dismissed Yashasvi Jaiswal in his second over but his best moment of the game came when he sent back Nitish Rana with a classic off-spinner that turned away sharply from the left-handed batter to hit the middle stump.



KKR's Vaibhav Arora celebrates with Moeen Ali (R) in Guwahati on Wednesday. AFP

## RCB look up to batters to end 17-year Chennai jinx

Virat Kohli was the only player part of the RCB team which beat Chennai Super Kings in 2008 at Chepauk; Bhuvneshwar, Pathirana fitness in focus

**PTI**  
CHENNAI



Virat Kohli was at his best against KKR in the opening game and will be key again for RCB. AFP

struck to win their home matches on a pitch that offers considerable help to spinners.

They have the ever-familiar Ravindra Jadeja and have brought back 'old boy' R

Ashwin through last year's players' auction. The Chennai side has also added Afghanistan left-arm wrist spinner

Ravindra, Rahul Tripathi, Vijay Shankar, Sam Curran, Shaik Rashid, Anshul Kamboj, Mukesh Choudhary, Deepak Hooda, Gurjapreet Singh, Nathan Ellis, Jamie Overton, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Ramakrishnan Ghosh, Shreyas Gopal,

Vansh Bedi, Andre Siddarth.

**Royal Challengers Bengaluru:** Rajat Patidar (c), Virat Kohli, Yash Dayal, Josh Hazlewood, Phil Salt, Jitesh Sharma, Liam Livingstone, Rasikh Salam, Suyash Sharma, Krunal Pandya,

Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Swapnil Singh, Tim David, Romario Shepherd, Nuwan Thushara, Manoj Bhandage, Jacob Bethel, Devdutt Padikkal, Swastik Chhikara, Lungi Ngidi, Abhinandan Singh, Mohit Rathee.

**RCB face big challenge at Chepauk, says Shane Watson**

**PTI**  
CHENNAI

Former Australian all-rounder Shane Watson said Royal Challengers Bengaluru will have to tweak their team composition to suit the demands of the Chepauk pitch in their second IPL match against Chennai Super Kings here on Friday.

The Royal Challengers are coming off a fine win over Kolkata Knight Riders, but Watson believes that they will face a bigger challenge against Chennai.

The pitch is expected to retain its character for this match as well, and the RCB batters, led by Kohli, will have to lift their game several notches to outwit an experienced bowling unit.

RCB batting unit should be clever more than downright aggressive to score off CSK's three-pronged spin unit, and Kohli should lead that charge.

The pitch is expected to retain its character for this match as well, and the RCB batters, led by Kohli, will have to lift their game several notches to outwit an experienced bowling unit.

The Royal Challengers are coming off a fine win over Kolkata Knight Riders, but Watson believes that they will face a bigger challenge against Chennai.

"It's going to be a huge challenge for RCB to go to Chepauk, especially given the quality of bowlers CSK have at their disposal. RCB will likely need to adjust their team composition to counter CSK's strengths. But make no mistake -- Chepauk is a fortress," said Watson, a JioStar expert.

"CSK's entire setup is built around excelling in Chennai. Just look at the three spinners who bowled brilliantly in their opening game against MI -- Ashwin, Jadeja, and Noor Ahmad. They are going to be a real handful on that surface," he added.

"He wants to just improve and keep raising the bar. So, he is a special player. And at this point in time, the way I see it, he is batting as confidently and as well as he has ever done in the IPL."

Karthik also played down his recent struggles against spin.



"He's coming on some serious runs in the Champions Trophy. He's batted well in the recent past against spin, especially in white-ball cricket. So, I don't want to go too deep into stats," Karthik.

"I'm not very aware. But if I remember, in the World Cup final, he got runs where it mattered. And apart from that, in the Champions Trophy, he had a good tournament, second-highest run-getter (fifth)."

"And that doesn't come without playing spin because, in Dubai, as you all know how well it helped the spinners, he was very aware. So, I believe right now, he is batting as well as he has ever done."

## impact player rule

'It can pose issues for the development of all-rounders'

**PTI**  
NEW DELHI

The Impact Player rule in the IPL is working at the moment but it could pose issues for the development of all-rounders at some stage, reckons New Zealand and Gujarat Titans all-rounder Glenn Phillips.

The rule has divided opinions but the BCCI has extended it to at least the 2027 edition.

It essentially gives teams the license to go hard from ball one with the cushion of an

extra batter in the form of an Impact Player. Similarly, teams can also bring in a specialist bowler instead of an all-rounder.

"I'm neither here nor there for it. It definitely allows a lineup to do different things. But I do feel like there could be an issue at some stage with all-rounders losing out and not being so prevalent

**Glenn Phillips,** Gujarat Titans all-rounder

"So for now, it's a great entertaining brand of cricket.

But I think what the IPL has done really well is changed the rules to what the environment is going through.

"So, obviously, the impact player rule is working at the moment, but then they could very well have another rule that comes in and go off with the impact player rule and bring another entertainment element into the game," said Phillips, arguably the best fielder in the modern game.

Last season, Rohit Sharma said he was not a fan of the impact player as it hinders the

growth of Indian all-rounders. Ahead of the 2025 edition, Hardik Pandya said it is difficult to draft a developing all-rounder in the starting eleven unless one is a pure all-rounder like him.

Phillips also backed the lifting of saliva ban.

"You know, we've brought saliva back this year, which obviously will potentially enhance reverse swing as well. The bowlers need to be able to have something going for them if there's an extra batter going around."



**Briefs**

MUMBAI

**SA Premier Malinauskas visits MCA**

The Premier of South Australia, Peter Malinauskas, visited the iconic Wankhede Stadium on Thursday, where he was warmly welcomed by Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) President Ajinkya Naik, who presented him with a memento. As part of the visit, the Premier of SA participated in a friendly game of cricket alongside MCA officials and underprivileged children. Former MCA President Ashish Shelar also joined in.

MUMBAI

**Anahat leads the charge at Indian Open**

Anahat Singh, Joshua Chinappa and Abhay Singh secured a semi-final spot at the JSW Indian Open at Bombay Gymkhana on Wednesday. In the quarter-final match, India's No 1 Anahat Singh, who is supported by JSW defeated Egyptian Nadien Elhammamy 3-2 after a thriller. Joshua overcame top seed Akanksha Salunkhe 3-2. In the men's draw, Abhay Singh defeated Malaysian Ameeshenraj Chandaran 3-0 in the quarterfinal. Veer Chotra lost to Egyptian Kariem El Torkey in 27 minutes. The Egyptian won with a scoreline of 0-3 (11-4, 11-8, 11-5).

**KHELO INDIA PARA GAMES** | Tamil Nadu runners-up, UP third; 18 national records were created across six disciplines over the course of eight days

# Haryana retain championship

**FPJ News Service**

NEW DELHI

After eight days of intense sporting action, the second edition of the Khelo India Para Games came to a close on Thursday with Haryana once again finishing on top of the team standings with 34 gold medals. Tamil Nadu (28 golds) and Uttar Pradesh (23 golds) finished second and third, respectively in the overall standings.

Featuring close to 1300 athletes, competing across six sporting disciplines at three venues in New Delhi - Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium, IG Indoor Stadium and Karni Singh Shooting Range - Khelo India Para Games 2025 witnessed truly memorable moments, highlighting endurance, unyielding spirit, and the power of human will to overcome any challenges.

Eighteen national records were created in KIPG 2025 with Jaspreet Kaur (Punjab), Manish Kumar (Haryana), Seema Rani (Punjab), and Jhandu Kumar (Bihar) winning gold medals in Para Powerlifting.

Additionally, 14 track and field athletes Dilip Mahadu Gavit (Maharashtra), Sharath Makanhalli Shankarappa (Karnataka), Manish Kumar (Haryana), Manjeet (Haryana), Bhavani Munniyandi (Andaman & Nicobar Islands), Lalitha Killaka (Andhra Pradesh), Khushboo Gill



Haryana finished on top of the team standings with 34 gold medals in the 2nd edition of Khelo India Para Games on Thursday.

(Tamil Nadu), Enbatamizhi S (Tamil Nadu), Keerthika Jayachandran (Tamil Nadu), Lakshmi (Haryana), Usha (Haryana), Dolly Gola (Delhi), Jaspreet Kaur Sran (Punjab), and Fatima Khatoon (Uttar Pradesh) also broke national records.

With 12 female competitors breaking national records, KIPG 2025 highlighted the growth of women athletes in India in para sports. A total of 596 medals (189 gold, 189 silver, 218 bronze) were distributed by the end of the tournament with 346 medals (110 gold, 109 silver, 127 bronze) won by male athletes

and female athletes taking home a total of 250 medals (79 gold, 80 silver, 91 bronze).

Like the first KIPG held in December 2023, Haryana once again dominated with a total of 104 medals (34 gold, 39 Silver, and 31 Bronze). In the inaugural edition Haryana had won 105 medals (40 gold, 39 Silver and 26 Bronze).

Speaking on the win, Team Haryana chef-de-mission Giriraj Singh said, "I would like to thank the countrymen for showing so much interest in Khelo India Para Games. The Government of India and SAI has an immense role to play in the

medals our athletes are bringing today. Through this initiative of Khelo India Para Games, our athletes will get a chance to play in international tournaments like Paralympics, Asian Games and Commonwealth Games."

Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu which had finished third in the first KIPG, climbed to the second position with 74 medals (28 gold, 19 Silver and 27 Bronze), while Uttar Pradesh, which had finished second the last time, finished in the third position with 64 medals (23 gold, 21 Silver, and 20 Bronze).

Team Tamil Nadu chef-de-

mission Raja said, "Our Tamil Nadu team gave an excellent performance. Team SAI organized a great tournament and all arrangements were fantastic, including the travel and food. It was a fantastic event."

Team Uttar Pradesh chef-de-mission Mudrika Pathak said, "The tournament was very well organized and provides a great opportunity for grassroot level players. I would like to thank everybody who was involved in organizing it on behalf of team Uttar Pradesh. We are very happy with our performance in the tournament."

On the final day of the Games on Thursday, Gujarat dominated the table tennis competition at the Indira Gandhi Stadium where the closing ceremony was held. Gujarat won 21 medals, including four golds, five silvers and 12 bronze. Haryana won a total of eight, with three golds.

The 50-year-old Yezdi Aspi Bhamgara from the state finished with the gold medal, defeating Gujarat's Vikas Thakur 3-1 in the Men's Class 6 category.

"I have been a para table tennis since 2005. But, I used to play able bodied table tennis as well. Winning the gold medal here feels good because I have worked hard for to reach this stage. I practice for three to four hours every day, because of which I am here," Yezdi said.

# CBC Cricket Club outclass Chhaava 11

Chhaava suffered another defeat against Tega Titans in Nashik

**FPJ News Service**

MUMBAI

CBC Cricket Club emerged victorious by 23 runs against Chhaava 11 in an intense match of the Nashik Premier Industrial League T20 cricket tournament on Thursday. CBC Cricket Club posted a formidable total of 189/6. Chhaava 11, despite valiant efforts, managed 166/9 in their chase.

**Harshal Nikale** was a standout performer, scoring 57 runs off 47 balls. He also contributed with the ball, taking one wicket in his four overs while conceding 30 runs. A. Chavan impressed with his economical bowling, taking two wickets for just 22 runs in four overs, while G. Dulakre picked up two wickets in four overs for 35 runs. The Titans' all-round performance ensured a convincing win.



taking three wickets for just 16 runs in three overs. B. Jadhav provided additional support for Tega Titans with his bowling, picking up two wickets in four overs for 35 runs. The Titans' all-round performance ensured a convincing win.

**Kenkre FC defeat Hope United FC in MPL**

Kenkre FC clinched a commanding 3-1 victory over Hope United FC in an intense match of the Mumbai Premier League at Neville D'Souza Ground, Bandra on Thursday.

The game stood at 1-1 at halftime, with an additional four minutes and six seconds played beyond the regulation 45 minutes.

However, Kenkre FC dominated the second half of the match, securing two more goals to seal the win, with the final whistle blowing after six minutes and eight seconds of added time, marking the full-time score.

## racing legacy

# Shah retires after 55-year illustrious career at 87

**Joe Williams**

MUMBAI

Passion is a powerful force, often igniting intense feelings of love, hate, or anger. But for veteran horse trainer Syed S. Shah, it has always been about love — a deep, unwavering love for horses and the sport of racing. After an illustrious career spanning 55 years at the Royal Western India Turf Club (RWITC), the 87-year-old trainer has officially hung up his boots.

"It's the passion and love for

these beautiful creatures, as well as the people around them — the syces, handlers, and countless others who make it all possible," Shah shared, reflecting on his life-long journey. Fondly known as "Sayed Bhai" in racing circles, he leaves behind a legacy built on dedication and warmth.

For Roxana Rustomjee, Shah's trusted assistant for 39 years, the farewell is bittersweet. "It has been an incredible journey. He's not just been my boss; he's my mentor, father figure, and

It's the passion and love for these beautiful creatures, as well as the people around them

**Syed S. Shah**  
Veteran horse trainer

you love, luck, and great health always. Dear Bossy!" said Roxana Rustomjee, affectionately called Roxy by her friends in the racing world.

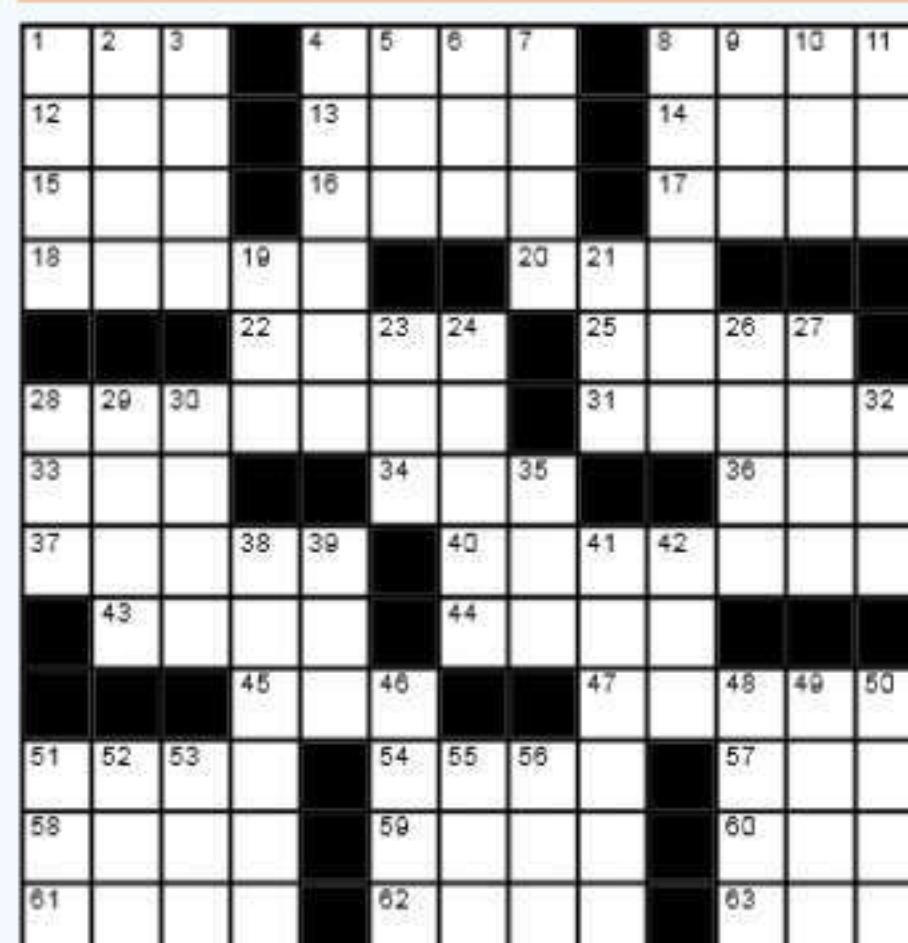
Fittingly, Shah's final race saw his six-year-old mare, Golden Rule, clinch a thrilling victory, offering a perfect ending to his distinguished career. As he steps away from the track, he remains passionate about the sport, now eager to contribute from behind the scenes and mentor the next generation of trainers.

"Age has caught up with

me," Shah admits with a smile, "and it's time for the youngsters to take the reins."

Shah earned his trainer's license in 1969, learning the ropes from his elder brother, S.M. Shah. Following in his brother's footsteps, he trained horses for several prominent owners, gaining a reputation for his commitment and expertise. Over the years, he notched more than 900 victories, a testament to his skill and perseverance. His legacy will continue to inspire the racing community for years.

## Crossword #1454



**Across**  
1 Stomach muscles  
4 American Inst. of Aeronautics and Astronautics  
8 Irish parliament  
12 Corp. head  
13Blazer  
14 \_\_\_\_ uncertain terms : quite emphatically? (2,2)  
15Literary initials  
16Rudely abrupt  
17Belted out a tune  
18Run away to marry  
20Snooze  
22Apple's tablet  
25Clutter  
28Royal rod  
31Special influence  
33Mine material  
34300 for Tiberius  
36Genetic molecule  
37Move rhythmically with music?  
40Section deleted from a film  
43A cow-shed  
44January to December  
45Actress Merkel  
47Support tower  
51Serene and sedate  
54Friend or ally  
57Self-esteem  
58Over or above  
59Rude person  
60Inertial Ref. Unit  
61Wagers  
62Those singular items  
63Roman bronze - "sea" change?

**Down**  
1 Land measure  
2 Telephone pioneer  
3 Only fair (2-2)  
4 Take that offered  
5 Debtor's note  
6 \_\_\_ Paar: 1954 Guru Dutt movie  
7 Memo starter  
8 Cause to vanish  
9 Music director Malik  
10Pub or local  
11Wood-cutting record?  
19Small seed  
21Annual maintenance contract  
23Pendulum's path  
24Dummy  
26Fizzy drink  
27Gone under  
28Female pig  
29Grouch  
30Like congers  
32Thomas Alva Edison's initials  
35Actor's signal  
38Donald, Melania, Eric & co?  
39Japanese Buddhist philosophy  
41Thin candles  
42Sample  
46Ancient church desk  
48Star Wars princess  
49Fearsome giant  
50French word for "we"  
51Taxi  
52Had a meal  
53Selling unit at an auction, perhaps  
55Activity on Node, abbr.  
56Pedal digit

## YOUR DAY By Vinayak Vishwas Karandikar

**Aries:** It is a period of spiritual awakening and transformation for you. You may need to travel or spend time out of home. Cautious investment strategies are advised; unexpected expenses may arise, especially related to education, vehicles, tourism or health. Success in tourism, shipping, fishery, and religion is seen. Lucky no.: 1; Lucky colours: Yellow, Orange

**Taurus:** For you, it is a time to focus on health and long-term planning, with patience yielding positive results. A stable income, with possible gains from real estate or inheritance, is seen. Expect expenditures on travel, repair work or health. Success for those in consultancy, communications, and the occult sciences. Recognition for hard work is likely. Lucky no.: 5; Lucky colour: Green

**Gemini:** It is a time for intellectual growth, new learning opportunities, and travel for you. Gains through communication-based work or freelancing are seen. Expenses may arise for businesses, travel or related to spouses. Success in education, religion, and tourism is indicated. Networking is the key; avoid office politics. Lucky no.: 8; Lucky colours: Light Blue, Black

**Cancer:** You will gain emotional maturity and career progress with strong intuition guiding your decisions. Savings will improve, but travel or medical expenses are possible. Steady progress in education, tourism, and religion, with support from colleagues, is seen. Family bonds will get strengthened, and you may go on pilgrimage. Lucky nos.: 2, 3; Lucky colours: Silver, Yellow

**Leo:** You will focus on self-development and leadership, but decisions should be taken wisely. Gains from creative pursuits are seen; however, avoid impulsive spending. Expenses may arise related to premium services, travel or children. Promotions and success in creative or leadership roles are indicated. Avoid disputes. Lucky no.: 9; Lucky colours: Red, Gold

**Virgo:** It is a reflective period for you for organising life and pursuing spiritual growth. A stable income with unexpected gains is indicated, but avoid overspending on business expansion or education. Success in education, travel, and analytical fields is seen. Avoid perfectionism. Religious activities may strengthen bonds. Lucky nos.: 7, 8; Lucky colours: White, Blue

**Libra:** It is a period of spiritual awakening and transformation for you. You may need to travel or spend time out of home. Cautious investment strategies are advised; unexpected expenses may arise, especially related to education, vehicles, tourism or health. Success in tourism, shipping, fishery, and religion is seen. Lucky no.: 1; Lucky colours: Pink, Green

**Scorpio:** A transformative phase for you requiring resilience and inner strength. Good financial growth is seen, but avoid risky investments. Expenses may arise related to children or education. Opportunities in finance, teaching, and transformative roles are indicated. Patience will yield long term rewards. Emotional intensity and disputes may occur. Lucky colours: Maroon, Yellow

**Sagittarius:** It is a period of optimism, personal growth, and travel for you. Gains through teaching, publishing, or foreign connections are seen. Expenses on health or education may arise. Success in advisory roles or higher education is indicated. A mentor may play a key role. Harmonious relationships are there, but disputes or ill health are possible. Lucky nos.: 4, 9

**Capricorn:** Hard work and discipline will lead to success for you. Travel is likely. A steady income with travel or entertainment-related expenses is seen. Promotions and recognition are expected, especially in education and communications. A pilgrimage or foreign trip is indicated. Health issues like muscle pain, ear problems or breathing discomfort may arise. Lucky nos.: 6, 10

**Aquarius:** It is a phase of innovation and unconventional thinking for you. Gains through technology or education are seen. Avoid lending money. Opportunities in banking, consultancy, and creative fields are indicated. Family bonds will become stronger; relatives may visit you. Some people may suffer from flatulence or muscle pain. Lucky no.: 5

**Pisces:** It is a creative and spiritual phase for you, requiring initiative and balance. Gains through artistic pursuits are seen, but avoid overspending. Expenses related to travel or health may arise. Success in counselling, education, and travel-related fields is indicated. Romantic fulfillment is indicated, but family time may be limited. Issues like weight gain or obesity may trouble you.

**FPJ - SUDOKU - 345**

**WHAT TO DO:** Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Every puzzle has only one correct solution.



**Solution**  
1 5 4 9 3 8 7 2 6  
2 7 4 5 1 3 9 6 8  
3 8 6 9 2 4 5 7 1  
4 9 1 3 2 7 6 8 5  
5 7 3 4 8 6 9 1 2  
6 2 8 5 4 3 7 9 1  
7 1 6 9 8 7 5 4 3  
8 3 2 9 7 6 1 5 4  
9 4 5 6 8 3 2 1 7

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## Sadhana - Why are you doing what you are doing?

In all my years of teaching, I see a common pattern among the so-called spiritual people. Very often, they perform some technique in the name of sadhana without a clue why they are doing it and what its effect is on the body and mind. They just keep doing it because some charismatic person with clever marketing has presented the so-called ultimate technique.

These people have spent time, energy, and a lot of money, only to end up disillusioned after a few years. Yet they keep saying, "Oh, it helped me a lot." But how exactly did it help? Nobody knows! Whether it is a worldly activity or a spiritual one, you need to be clear about:

- What you're doing
- Why you're doing it
- What the goal is
- How what you are doing is connected with the ultimate goal

If all these are not clear, and the person just continues with the practice, believing something will happen, nothing is going to happen. As my teacher used to say, "Whatever has to happen has already happened."

In traditional teaching, these things are clarified right at the beginning:

No authentic spiritual teacher will ask you to give up your logic and reasoning. They will encourage you to use your logic and reasoning to understand what is being said and expressed.

In fact, in the Indian tradition, in the Gita, Krishna says to serve the teacher with many questions. Let your questions be the service, indicating that learning and understanding are most important. Without that, your spiritual practice can remain trivial at the worst or help you handle certain aspects of your mind at the best.

The writer is the founder of Aarsha Vidya Foundation. You can write to him at aarshavidya@gmail.com

## GODDESS LAKSHMI MESSAGE FOR THE DAY

A day of emotional wisdom, playfulness, calculated risks, action, and adventure.

Listen to your intuition. A wise person will guide you. You will spend time on self-care and shopping.

Travel or travel plans will be made. Loved the flower arrangement.

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## The finest first impression: Tips to decorate your home entrance

Trupti Palav

**T**he entrance of your home works as the impression card for the rest of your space! Decorating the entrance of your home can create a warm and inviting atmosphere for your guests and make a positive first impression. Ideally, select design and decor elements that suit your style and the architecture of your home. Here are some useful tips to help you enhance the entrance of your home.

**Clean and maintain**

Begin by ensuring the entrance area is clean and well-maintained. Avoid adding anything old or unused objects by the door. Sweep the walkway, trim any overgrown bushes, and fix any broken or loose elements, such as steps or railings.

**Place an outdoor rug**

Place an outdoor rug outside the front door to define the entrance area and add a layer of texture and colour. Ideally, select the rug design that matches the theme of your home. For example, a classic style home can be accentuated with a Persian, Oriental style rug.

**Impress with door and hardware**

Make the front door the focal point. You can repaint or refinish it in a bold and inviting colour. Update the hardware like the doorknob, knocker, and letterbox for a fresh look.

**Feature greenery**

Potted plants or flower arrangements near the entrance are ideal to add a splash of colour and natural beauty. Select plants that are suitable for the light and climate conditions in your area.

**Define the entrance with artwork**

Hang artwork or wall decor i.e. sculptural pieces, mirror, decorative masks, etc near the entrance to create a focal point and showcase your style. Ensure to select pieces that are weather-resistant or protected from the elements.

**Add welcome mat**

A welcoming doormat at the front door can add a touch of personality and serve a practical purpose for guests to wipe their feet. Consider attractive options with bold prints, and wordings to keep the entrance decor interesting!

**Adding seating for ease**  
If space allows, a small chair or bench can make a functional and decorative addition to your entrance. It provides a place for people to sit while putting on or taking off their shoes.

**Form symmetry and balance**

Create a sense of balance with your decor, such as matching planters or lanterns on either side of the door. Symmetry can create an appealing and organized look!

**Give it a personal touch**

Incorporate personal touches like a nameplate, monogram, or a small DIY project that reflects your family's personality and style. For instance, if you are an art enthusiast, then create an artwork of your choice to mark your territory!

**Excessive use of alcohol-based astringents****Natural homemade astringents**

Making astringents at home is quite easy. The best part is that homemade astringents are just as effective as store-bought ones, with the only difference being that they are made using natural ingredients. The following homemade astringents are easy to prepare at home.

**Cucumber**

Cucumber acts as a natural astringent and helps cleanse and lighten the skin.

**How to:** Rub freshly cut cucumber slices on your skin to assist in reducing dark spots before washing it off with water.

**Rosewater**

Rose water, a natural astringent, helps cleanse pores and gently tone the skin. Apply homemade rose water daily to maintain your skin's health.

**How to:** Boil a cup of water, add rose petals, and boil until the water absorbs the color of the rose flower. Stir a few drops of lemon essential oil into the rose-infused water.

Apply it daily before retiring to bed.

Amritika K

**A**fter a long day, astringents can help remove makeup or other chemically-laden products from the skin. However, excessive use of alcohol-based astringents can cause the skin to appear dry and dull. To assist you, we've compiled a list of natural homemade astringents suitable for all skin types.

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A still from *Sikandar*



## Salman's humble response to Bishnoi

Rashita Sahni

Bollywood's Bhaijan Salman Khan is currently going all out to promote his upcoming film *Sikandar*. This Eid, the superstar will return to theatres in his badass avatar with the A.R. Murugadoss action thriller, alongside Rashmika Mandanna. Recently, the superstar held a special press conference with the media where he opened up about his future projects including an exciting movie with Sanjay Dutt, age gap with co-stars and the multiple death threats that he has received from gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, linked to the 1998 Blackbuck poaching case.

Breaking silence over receiving death threats from the Bishnoi Gang, Salman shared that he has left everything to God and stated that he knows how long he will live. Salman stated, "God, Allah - everything is upto him. I will live as long as I am destined to live. Just that, sometimes, I have to move with too many people with me. That becomes a problem." In 1998, during the shooting of *Hum Saath-Saath Hain*, Salman and his co-stars Saif Ali Khan, Tabu, Sonali Bendre and Neelam Kothari were accused of allegedly killing a Blackbuck in the forests near Jodhpur. Ever since then, he has been receiving death threats from gangster

Salman finally spoke about receiving death threats from Lawrence Bishnoi: I will live as long as I am destined to live

Lawrence Bishnoi and the Bishnoi gang, who consider the Blackbuck sacred.

Salman was also asked about his 31-year age gap with *Sikandar* co-star Rashmika Mandanna. He opened up on this and said he cannot work with young actresses like Ananya Panday and Janhvi Kapoor because people start talking about the age gap. Salman said, "If I want to work with Ananya or Janhvi, people have made it difficult for me because then they talk about the age gap. I work with them thinking it's giving them a good opportunity, and even when people will talk, I will continue to work with them."

Salman ended the conversation on a high note as he revealed he is all set to do a movie with close friend and his big brother Sanjay Dutt. Confirming the news, he said, "I'm doing it with my elder brother in the industry...Sanjay Dutt." When quizzed about revealing more details on the film, Salman added that the director and producer for the film is not confirmed yet.

Well, looks like Salman has a really good lineup of films after *Sikandar*. For the unversed, *Sikandar* will open in theatres on March 30. Directed by A.R. Murugadoss, the film also features Rashmika Mandanna, Kajal Aggarwal, Sathyaraj, Sharman Joshi and Prateik Babbar in key roles.



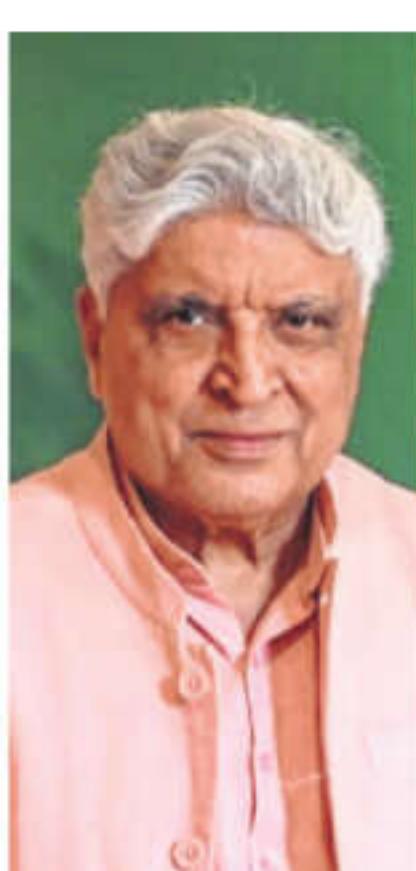
Pic: Varinder Chawla

## Filmy Shots



### Kartik Aaryan's bike outing with Sreeleela

Actor Kartik Aaryan is all set to star in Anurag Basu's next, which also marks the Bollywood debut of south sensation Sreeleela. The two are currently shooting for the highly-anticipated film in Siliguri, and several photos from the sets of the film have now gone viral. In the photos, Kartik can be seen sporting his rugged look with overgrown hair and beard, which has been the talk of the town of late. In one of the photos, he can be seen riding a motorcycle with Sreeleela behind him, and in another picture, the actor can be spotted with a wound on his hand. Fans are eagerly waiting to see their on-screen chemistry and what the film has to offer.



### Neha Kakkar breaks silence after backlash

Bollywood playback singer Neha Kakkar finally responded to the backlash she has been facing after being accused of arriving over three hours late at her recent Melbourne concert. The controversy escalated further when a video of Neha breaking down in tears on stage went viral, where she apologised to the audience for the inconvenience. Taking to her Instagram story on Thursday, Neha posted a cryptic

message which read, "Wait for the truth, you'll regret judging me so quickly." Along with the text, the singer also added a pensive, upset and remorseful face emoji. With this, Neha indicated that there's more to the story than what has been said on social media. Her statement comes after social media was flooded with criticism over her delayed appearance and a reportedly short one-hour performance.

### Javed Akhtar slams negative people

Mohanlal performed a puja for Mammootty's health at Sabarimala temple recently, however, the move sparked controversy. On Wednesday, Javed Akhtar took to X to slam critics and praised the two Malayalam actors' friendship and bond. The veteran writer tweeted, "I wish every Mamooty of India had a friend like Mohan Lal and every Mohan Lal had a friend like Mamooty (sic)." He further wrote, "It is obvious that their great friendship is beyond the understanding of some small, narrow minded, petty and negative people but who cares (sic)."



### Sara Ali Khan breaks silence on Saif Ali Khan getting stabbed

Bollywood actress Sara Ali Khan finally broke her silence on her father, actor Saif Ali Khan, being attacked and stabbed at his Mumbai residence in January this year. The actress mentioned how the incident could have gotten much worse, and shared that it made her realise the importance of life. During her appearance on NDTV Yuva, Sara spoke about the affect that the incident had on the Khan family. "It could have gone so wrong... and I am so grateful that everything is fine. It was a reminder almost of the life we have," she said.

[epaper.freepressjournal.in](http://epaper.freepressjournal.in)

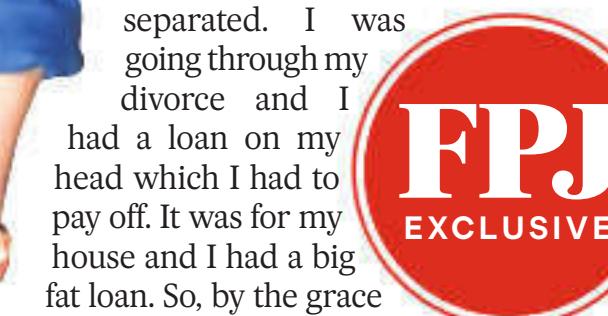
Rashita Sahni

**K**al Ho Naa Ho fame Delnaaz Irani has had her own share of ups and downs in her personal life. The actress, who tied the knot with actor Rajeev Paul in 1998, ended her 14-year-long marriage in 2012. Now, Delnaaz has opened up about her past in an exclusive conversation on *The Free Press Journal's* chat show *Sheroes*. The actress got candid and explained what exactly led to their relationship biting the dust.

When asked about dealing with financial lows during her divorce, Delnaaz said, "I was going through a bad phase personally when we (Rajeev Paul and I) were separated. I was going through my divorce and I had a loan on my head which I had to pay off. It was for my house and I had a big fat loan. So, by the grace of God, I got *Bigg Boss* and paid it off with the money I earned from the show. I don't think there was anything major."

Delnaaz also mentioned that while *Bigg Boss* taught her a lot, it was also an extremely challenging phase. She said, "I was going through my divorce in July and I got offered the show in September. So within a few months of my divorce and hence, I was very vulnerable. And then I was not alone, if I was alone, I would have been in a better space. My ex-husband (Rajeev Paul) was there 24/7 in front of my eyes, so that was even more difficult."

When asked how she got out of an emotionally challenging phase after her divorce, Delnaaz said, "I am a very happy person. I don't take



## Had a big fat loan on my head after my divorce

Delnaaz Irani opens up about her divorce from Rajeev Paul: I was very vulnerable!

any situation very seriously and even with the downs in life, I think this too shall pass. It's not like I didn't have tears or I didn't cry or I didn't have my difficult situation but coming out of a particular situation is more important than crying over it. I didn't want to lead a life where I was miserable or I had to lie to myself." For the unversed, Delnaaz and Rajeev separated in 2010, and their divorce came through in 2012. The same year, the duo participated in Salman Khan's *Bigg Boss* 6, just 2 months after being legally divorced.



Scan QR code to watch the full interview on FPJ's YouTube channel



## Glamour, elegance at Lakme Fashion Week

The curtains have officially risen on one of India's most anticipated fashion extravaganzas—Lakme Fashion Week 2025, in partnership with the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI). Returning with its 25th edition, the event kicked off on March 26 with an unforgettable

opening show that left the audience mesmerised. The iconic designer Anamika Khan set the tone for the week with her breathtaking 'Silver Collar' collection, and all eyes were on Ananya Panday, who walked the ramp as the showstopper in a dazzling, futuristic ensemble.



Pics: Instagram\_@lakmefashionwk

Nushrratt Bharuccha dazzles as the showstopper at NIF Global's 'THE RUNWAY' during Lakme Fashion Week, in partnership with FDCI. Her stunning presence and impeccable style steal the spotlight, making the event an unforgettable celebration of fashion, elegance, and creativity on the grand runway.

# Joyous wedding tunes

From *Ikk Vaari* to *Zohra Jabeen*, these songs will make any special occasion even more memorable

## CJ Desk

Whether it is love, varied life experiences or the joy of getting hitched, Hindi film music has a song for every mood and occasion. Wedding songs that capture the joy and warmth of family gatherings hold a special place in everyone's heart with

tracks like *Mehndi Laga Ke Rakha* (*Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*) and *Didi Tera Devar Deewana* (*Hum Aapke Hain Koun*) continuing to dominate wedding celebrations even today.

While retro hits remain timeless, new wedding songs have also found their way to dance floors. Here is a curated list of the latest wedding tracks that perfectly blend romance, nostalgia, and vibrant energy.



### Nach Punjabban – Jugjugg Jeeyo

*Nach Punjabban*, composed by Tanishk Bagchi is a remix of Pakistani singer Abrar Ul Haq's *Nach Punjabban*, originally released in 2002. With Varun Dhawan, Kiara Advani, Aamir Kapoor, and Neetu Kapoor lighting up the screen, the song instantly struck a chord with audiences. With the kind of infectious energy it radiated, this song from the movie *Jugjugg Jeeyo* soon became a wedding season favourite. It also has that joyful rhythm that can make even the guests hit the dance floor with enthusiasm, ensuring a memorable celebration. The song is available on T-Series.



### Ikk Vaari – Mere Husband Ki Biwi

Featuring Arjun Kapoor, Rakul Preet Singh, and Bhumi Pednekar, the peppy number *Ikk Vaari* from the movie *Mere Husband Ki Biwi* implores you to dance your heart out with friends and family. Filled with rich *dhol* beats, the song is composed by Tanishk Bagchi, sung by Romy, and penned by Mudassar Aziz. With its blend of modern and traditional elements, *Ikk Vaari* effortlessly fits into events like *Mehendi*, *Sangeet*, receptions, *baraat* performances, couple entries, and flash mobs. The song is available on Jjust Music's YouTube channel.



### Maahi Ve – Kal Ho Naa Ho

Whenever you think of a wedding playlist, *Maahi Ve* from the 2004 superhit movie *Kal Ho Naa Ho* will easily find a place in it. Featuring Shah Rukh Khan, Preity Zinta, Saif Ali Khan and Jaya Bachchan, the song is sung by Sadhana Sargam, Sujata Bhattacharya, Udit Narayan, Sonu Nigam, and Shankar Mahadevan. The music is composed by Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy, with lyrics penned by Javed Akhtar. Even after so many years, its melodious tune and heartfelt lyrics continue to make it a family favourite. It is available on Sony-MusicIndiaVEVO.



### Aai Nai – Stree 2

The duo Sachin-Jigar's trendy composition, Jani Master's choreography and the vibrant performance by Shraddha Kapoor and Rajkummar Rao made the song *Aai Nai* from *Stree 2* a non-stop party starter soon after its release. Sung by Pawan Singh, Simran Choudhary, Divya Kumar and Sachin-Jigar, the song is penned by Amitabh Bhattacharya. Its playful lyrics and rhythmic beats make it a perfect choice for pre-wedding functions like *Mehendi* or *Haldi*. The upbeat tempo also adds a touch of fun and cultural flair to the festivities. The song is available on Saregama Music's YouTube channel.

### Zohra Jabeen – Sikandar

The song *Zohra Jabeen* from Salman Khan's upcoming movie *Sikandar* has already made its way to the list of latest chartbusters. Composed by Pritam, the song's lyrics are penned by Sameer and Danish Sabri, while Nakash Aziz and Dev Negi have lent their voices. The catchy hook steps featuring Salman Khan and Rashmika Mandanna add to the appeal of the song. The rap portion, written and performed by Mellow D, further enhances the song's mood, making it a perfect foot-tapper for gatherings and parties. Released on March 4 on Zee Music Company's YouTube channel, the song has already crossed 40 million views and continues to trend.



## Ram Charan's 16th film is titled *Peddi*

### CJ Desk

**P**eddi is the title of Ram Charan's 16th feature film, the makers announced on Thursday, coinciding with the Telugu star's 40th birthday.

Production house Mythri Movie Makers revealed the title of the movie, being directed by Buchi Babu Sana, on its official social media pages.

"A Man of the Land, A Force of the Nature. #RC16 is #PEDDI. Happy Birthday Global Star @AlwaysRamCharan," the studio said on Instagram.

Charan, the star of movies such as *Magadheera*, *Yevadu*, *Rangasthalam* and *RRR*, also shared the poster of the movie on his Instagram handle.

"A FIGHT FOR IDENTITY!! #RC16 is #Peddi. A @buchibabu\_sana film," he wrote.

Bollywood star Janhvi Kapoor will play the leading lady in the movie. The film is her second Telugu project after *Devara*, headlined by Charan's *RRR* costar Jr NTR.

The cast also includes Kannada megastar Shiva Rajkumar, Jagapathi Babu and *Mirzapur* actor Divyendu Sharma.

*Peddi* is presented by Mythri Movie Makers and Sukumar Writings under the banner of Vriddhi Cinemas.

The film is produced by Venkata Satish Kilaru, with music by Oscar-winning composer AR Rahman, cinematography by R Rathnayulu, production design by Avinash Kolla and editing by Navin Nooli.



Emraan Hashmi looks strong as he holds a weapon in first poster of *Ground Zero*

## Emraan's intense *Ground Zero*

### CJ Desk

**A**ctor Emraan Hashmi on Thursday dropped a gritty and intense first poster of his upcoming film *Ground Zero*, where he is seen boldly holding a weapon, likely an AK-47.

Emraan took to Instagram, where he shared the new poster. In the image, he appears strong and determined, holding what seems to be an AK-47 and has *Ground Zero* written on it in a dramatic tone. The actor seems to be looking out over a war-torn or conflict-ridden city.

The background shows a city in turmoil with buildings damaged, fires burning, and

black smoke rising. "The untold story of a mission that changed Kashmir forever. #GroundZero in cinemas on 25 April, 2025. #AbPrahaarHoga," he wrote in the caption section.

The film is said to be set after the 2001 Parliament attack, where a BSF officer leads a 2-year probe uncovering the mastermind Ghazi Baba, enabling India's biggest anti-terror operation.

Excel Entertainment presents an Excel Entertainment Production, produced by Ritesh Sidhwani & Farhan Akhtar the film is directed by Tejas Deoskar. The film is releasing in cinemas on April 26, 2025. On March 24, when Emraan turned 46, he announced the sequel of *Awarapan*, which has been locked for April 3, 2026 release. "Bas mujhe kuch aur der zinda rakh. #Awarapan2 in cinemas, 3rd April 2026. #Awarapan2 @Visheshb7 @Visheshfilms #MukeshBhatt #VisheshFilms," Emraan captioned the post.



Emraan Hashmi looks strong as he holds a weapon in first poster of *Ground Zero*

## Shoojit Sircar recalls his theatre days

### CJ Desk

**M**arking World Theatre Day on Thursday, ace filmmaker Shoojit Sircar recalled his days in Delhi when he worked with an amateur group Delhi.

Sircar took to Instagram and shared a black and white photograph, reminiscing about the time when he was actively honing his skills by performing with a theatre group.

"Throwback to my theatre days in Delhi! Sharing this photo from my time with 'Act One', the group that shaped me into the person I am today. I'm for paper.freepressjournal.in"

ever grateful to my Act One friends and our mentor, the legendary N K Sharma (Panditji)! Thank you, Parthiv, for sharing this pic. Wishing all my fellow thespians a very Happy World Theatre Day! #WorldTheatreDay #TheatreLife #ActOne," he captioned the post.

Shoojit Sircar is best known for making films like *Vicky Donor*, *Piku*, *October* and *Gulabo Sitabo*. He recently collaborated with Abhishek Bachchan and came up with *I Want to Talk*, which explores themes of resilience, human connection, and the emotional journey of a father striving to rebuild his fractured relationship with his daughter.



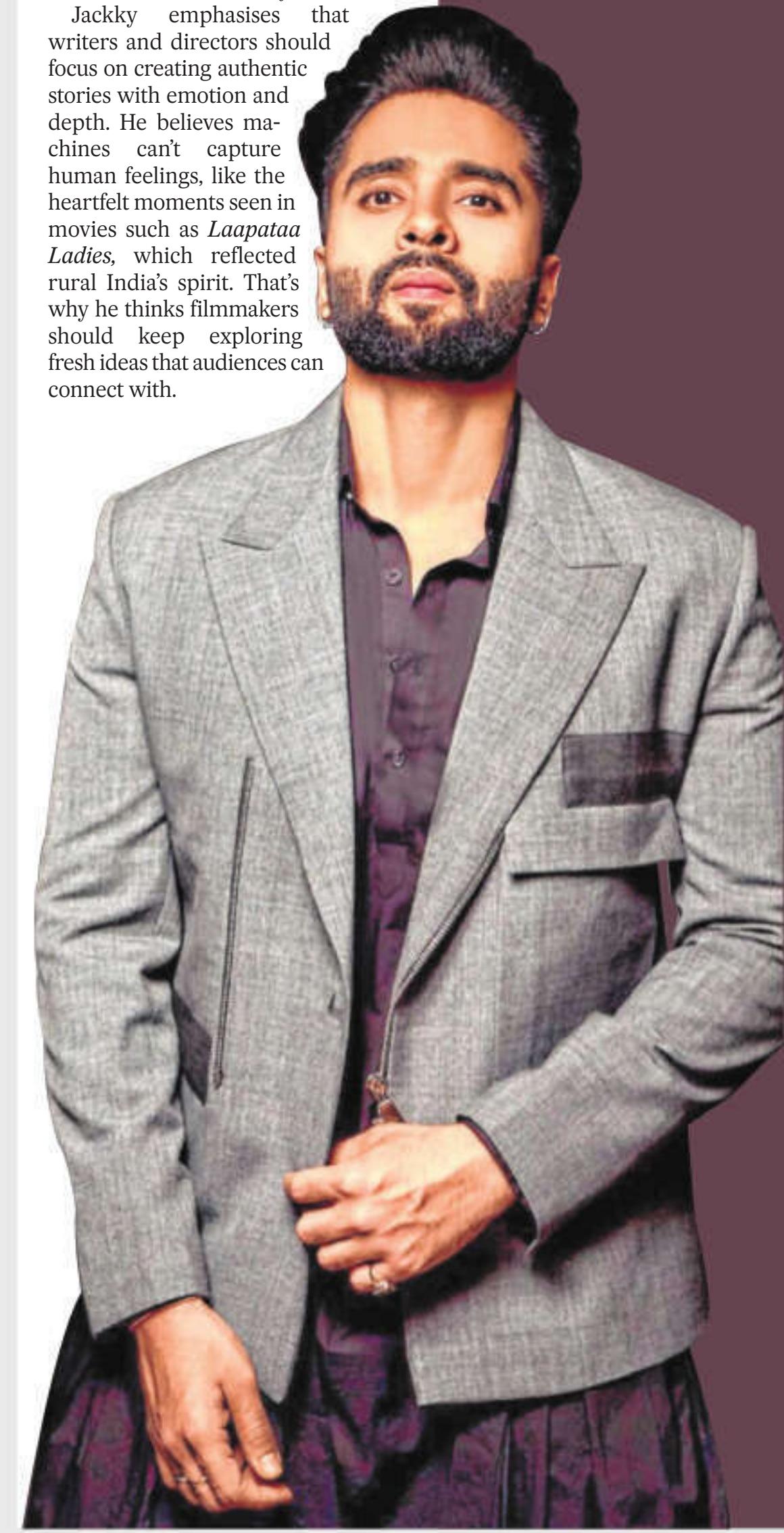
## AI can empower creators: Jackky Bhagnani

### CJ Desk

**R**ecently, the trailer for India's first AI-powered film with virtual stars sparked a debate about whether AI could replace human creativity. While AI has been used in movies for tasks like de-aging actors, this is the first time virtual heroes are being used in a main film.

Actor-producer Jackky Bhagnani says that AI tools already help filmmakers with tasks like scheduling, organizing data, and post-production work. Some AI tools even suggest plot ideas or help with writer's block. However, he believes overusing AI could affect real human creativity.

Jackky emphasises that writers and directors should focus on creating authentic stories with emotion and depth. He believes machines can't capture human feelings, like the heartfelt moments seen in movies such as *Laapataa Ladies*, which reflected rural India's spirit. That's why he thinks filmmakers should keep exploring fresh ideas that audiences can connect with.





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How you  
see things  
is crucial  
to success



Attitude is a little  
thing that makes a big  
difference

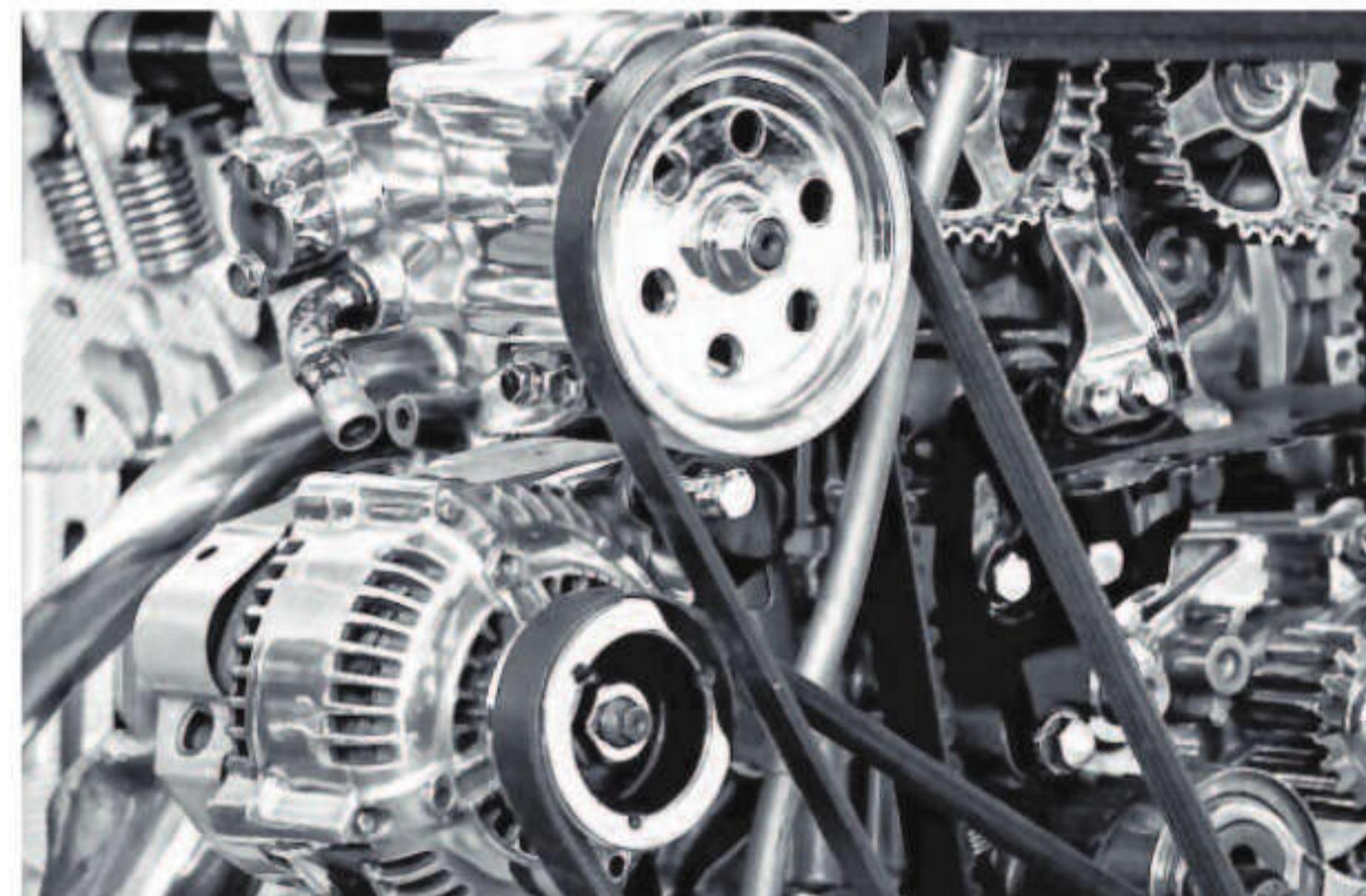
-WINSTON CHURCHILL

SILVER LINING IN DARK CLOUD

## Trump tariffs may benefit Indian auto parts industry

US President Donald Trump's latest tariff move to impose 25 per cent tariffs on auto and auto component imports could potentially reshape the international automotive supply chain. The Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) sees this as a potential opportunity for India.

Speaking exclusively to ANI, Ajai Sahai, Director General and CEO of FIEO, said car exports to the US are insignificant, so it won't have much impact on Indian automakers. "Let's look at the numbers. In car exports, the United States is barely a blip on India's radar. Out of India's USD 6.8 billion car export in 2024, the US accounts for less than USD 10 million - that's less than 0.13 per cent of our car exports," said Sahai. However, the



auto components sector tells a different story. Approximately 30 per cent of India's auto component exports go to the United States. With the new 25 per cent tariff affecting all countries,

even those who were previously enjoying zero-duty access, India finds itself in an advantageous position. "We are quite competitive in the auto components sector. This tariff might actually divert business towards India," added Sahai. "We have nothing to worry about in the automobile sector. In fact, for auto parts and components, I personally believe India will emerge as a gainer," Sahai said.

**Did you Know?**  
President Trump has signed a proclamation implementing a 25 per cent tariff on auto imports, effective April 2nd. This tariff covers fully assembled cars and key automobile parts.

## Pak to tap into China capital market

Pakistan Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb hinted that the debt-ridden country may issue Panda bonds in yuan this year to tap into China's extensive capital market, according to a media report. Speaking in an interview with China's CGTN during the Boao Forum for Asia, Aurangzeb said Pakistan was ready to engage the Chinese interbank bond market after previously issuing debt only in Western markets.

## Stalin hails Revanth Reddy

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Thursday hailed the move of Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy over the state assembly passing a resolution on proposed delimitation and said it seeks to uphold justice, equity and the federal spirit. Chief Minister, Stalin referred to the Joint Action Committee meeting held in Chennai earlier this month and said "we will not let anyone redraw India's future unfairly."



## High mobility vehicle

BEML Ltd has launched its indigenously designed and manufactured High Mobility Vehicle (HMV) 12x12 at its Palakkad complex in Kerala. Developed for the DRDO, this state-of-the-art vehicle enhances operational mobility for India's Defence forces while advancing the nation's vision of Aatma Nirbhar Bharat in strategic military assets. The HMV 12x12 is engineered for extreme terrains and challenging climatic conditions, making it a vital asset for Defence operations. It is powered by a BSIII-compliant engine and features a 7-speed Allison Automatic Transmission, supporting a Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) of 65 tons.

## LSG's comfortable win over SRH

Lucknow Super Giants registered a comfortable five-wicket win over Sunrisers Hyderabad in their IPL match in Hyderabad on Thursday. Opting to bowl, Shardul Thakur's four-wicket haul helped LSG restrict SRH to 190/9. Nicholas Pooran then smashed a blistering 26-



ball 70, while opener Mitchell Marsh chipped in with a 31-ball 52, guiding the visitors to a chase of 193/5 in just 16.1 overs. Pat Cummins (2/29) and Mohammed Shami (1/37) were among the wicket-takers for SRH. Travis Head top-scored for SRH with a 28-ball 47, while Nitish Kumar Reddy (32), Heinrich Klaasen (26), and Aniket Verma (36) made useful contributions for SRH.



“

I find scores of extremely talented yet grossly underpaid actors in theatre

- PALLAVI JOSHI



## Showers, pools, ice cubes for Delhi Zoo denizens

**A**nimals at the Delhi zoo will get a cool treat--fruit ice cubes- while water sprinklers will be installed for tigers, lions, leopards, and jackals to help them beat the heat during the summer season. From April 1, all 'summer action plan' measures will be implemented to provide the animals with comfort during the heat, Zoo Director Sanjeev Kumar said. From air coolers in en-

closures and frequent water showers to shaded resting areas and running water in pools, the zoo will take various measures to keep the animals comfortable this summer. The National Zoological Park will roll out a series of summer care measures, Kumar said. The zoo will also set up water coolers in holding cells and adjust the animals' diet to lighter, summer-friendly meals.

SOUTH INDIAN FILMS ARE HIT IN NORTH BUT...

## The reverse doesn't happen

In a candid interaction with the media during the promotional event of his upcoming film 'Sikandar', Bollywood superstar Salman Khan , when asked about the reception of Bollywood films in the South Indian market, admitted that his films face an uphill battle in terms of popularity there. "The fan following down south is incredibly strong, and while I enjoy immense love from fans, it doesn't always translate into box-office success when my films release there," said Salman. He pointed out that South Indian cinema's unique appeal lies in its local roots and cultural connection, which makes it harder for Bollywood films to replicate similar success despite the growing trend of pan-India releases. Salman Khan highlighted the significant difference in the

### Did you Know?

While South stars have carved their niche in Bollywood, Salman noted that Bollywood films often struggle to achieve the same level of affection and box-office numbers in the South.



reception of South Indian films in Bollywood compared to the reverse. "Rajinikanth, Chiranjeevi, Suriya, and other South Indian stars enjoy massive fan followings here in Bollywood, and we go to their films. But the reverse doesn't always happen," Salman said.

## Vigilance to keep SE Asia polio-free

Surveillance and vigilance are necessary to ensure South-East Asia region remains polio-free, said the World Health Organization on the 11th anniversary of being certified polio-free on Thursday. Poliomyelitis (polio) is a highly infectious viral disease that largely affects children under 5 years of age. The highly transmissible virus invades the nervous system to cause paralysis. In a historic milestone, 11 years ago on March 27, 2014, the WHO South-East

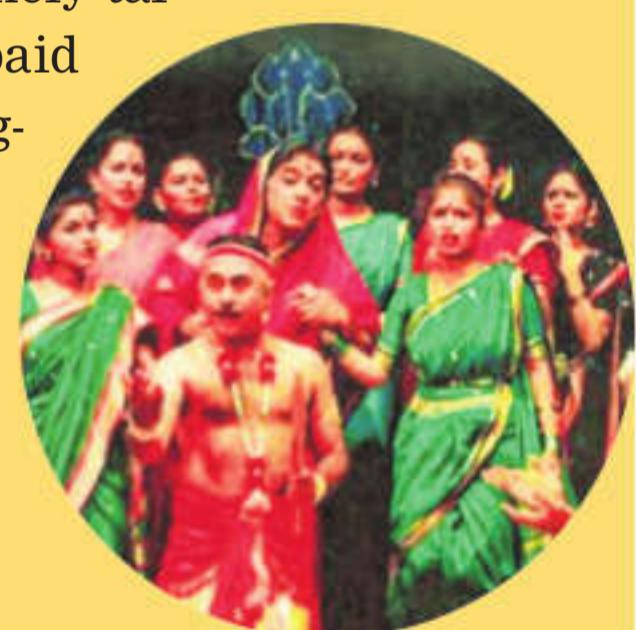


Asia Region was certified as free of all types of wild polioviruses. Saima Wazed, WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia stated that eradic-

tion of polio in the SE Asia region was a "daunting and uphill task" and "required relentless effort and innovative strategies."

## Theatre in Maha in sad state

On the occasion of World Theatre Day on Thursday, actress Pallavi Joshi recalled her memories and said that in Maharashtra theatre has survived because it's easy on the pocket to buy tickets. "When the ticket prices are low, the collection is lower, which means the share of actors' money and the margin of producers profit is also on the lower side. It is a sad state of affairs," Pallavi said. She said that she finds scores of extremely talented yet grossly underpaid actors in theatre. "The bigger stars still manage to make some money, but the rest of them still need to depend on a regular job to get by, and treat theatre as a hobby," she said.



## Gold medallist was paralysed neck down

In a testament to human determination, 21-year-old Rishit Nathwani has transformed a life-altering sports injury into a remarkable journey of triumph. His recent gold medal victory in the men's table tennis Class 5 event at the Khelo India Para Games 2025 is not just a personal achievement but a beacon of hope for aspiring para-athletes across India. Nathwani's life took an unexpected turn in 2017 during a casual kabaddi match. "I got hurt in my back," Rishit recalls while speaking to SAI Media. "This caused paralysis from the neck down." The prognosis was grim. Doctors were pessimistic about his recovery, suggesting he might never leave his bed. But Rishit and his family refused to accept this fate. Spending two months in rigorous rehabilitation at Kokilaben Hospital in Mumbai, Rishit Nathwani gradually regained movement in his upper body.





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Salman doesn't just break his own ribs  
he breaks other people's ribs too!

- AAMIR KHAN

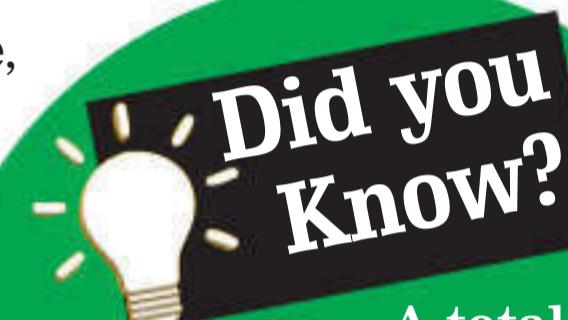
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KHELO INDIA PARA GAMES CONCLUDE

# Haryana champ, Tamil Nadu runner-up

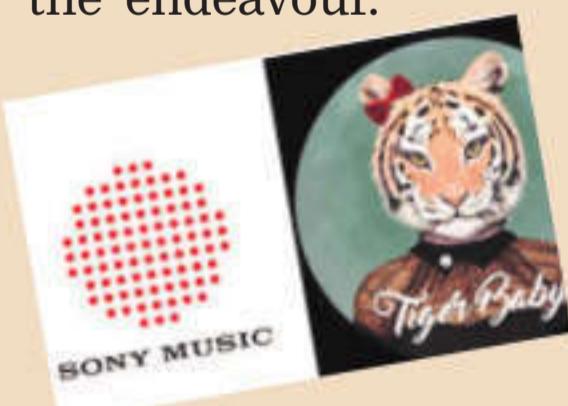
After eight days of intense sporting action, the second edition of the Khelo India Para Games came to a close on Thursday with Haryana once again finishing on top of the team standings with 34 gold medals. Tamil Nadu (28 golds) and Uttar Pradesh (23 golds) finished second and third, respectively, in the overall standings. Featuring close to 1,300 athletes, competing across six sporting disciplines at three venues in New Delhi - Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium, IG Indoor Stadium and Karni Singh Shooting Range - Khelo India Para Games 2025 witnessed truly memorable moments, highlighting endurance, unyielding spirit, and the power of human will to overcome any challenges. Eighteen national records were created in KIPG 2025 with Jaspreet Kaur (Punjab), Manish Kumar (Haryana), Seema Rani (Punjab), and Jhandu Kumar (Bihar) winning gold medals in Para Powerlifting, as per a press release from SAI Media. Additionally, 14 track and field athletes Dilip Mahadu Gavit (Maharashtra)



**Did you Know?**  
A total of 596 medals (189 gold, 189 silver, 218 bronze) were distributed by the end of the tournament with 346 medals won by male athletes and female athletes taking home a total of 250 medals.

## NEW MUSIC LABEL FOR NEW TALENTS

Sony Music Entertainment India and Tiger Baby Films on Thursday announced their collaboration for Tiger Baby Records, a music label that aims to nurture new music talents. Led by directors Zoya Akhtar and Reema Kagti, Tiger Baby along with Sony Music Entertainment India has joined hands with singer-composer Ankur Tewari for the endeavour. Tiger Baby Records is also set to feature original music of various styles by different artists.



## Hema flags deepfake tech

BJP MP Hema Malini on Thursday raised in Lok Sabha the issue of "deepfake" technology targeting celebrities and asserted that this cannot be taken lightly as it tarnishes the image of the person concerned and casts a tremendous impact on the victim's mental health. Raising the issue during Zero Hour, she said AI and deepfake technology have swept the world and, they also target celebrities belonging to the film industry.



## QUICK NEWS

### Rashmika fears heights

Actress Rashmika Mandanna has revealed that she fears deep waters and heights. The actress treated her fans with a question and answer session on Instagram, where she was asked about her "biggest fear." To which, she said: "Hmmm. Heights or deep waters." She is an ardent K-Drama fan.

### Mohanlal is still learning

Malayalam movie icon Mohanlal is nothing short of a legend, with a spectacular career spanning over four decades and a filmography of over 400 films. Despite his towering legacy, Mohanlal says he is still learning and wants to become a "good actor."

### K'taka has 393 tigers

The Forest Department on Thursday announced that the estimated population of tigers in Karnataka's five tiger reserves stands at 393, based on the Phase IV monitoring survey conducted by the state in 2024. As part of the annual monitoring of tigers and in the country's tiger reserves, the survey was conducted between November 2023 and February 2024.

## Shoojit recalls his theatre days

Marking World Theatre Day on Thursday, ace filmmaker Shoojit Sircar recalled his days in Delhi when he worked with an amateur group. Sircar shared a black and white photograph, reminiscing about the time when he was actively honing his skills by performing with a theatre group. "Throwback to my theatre days in Delhi! Sharing this photo from my time with 'Act One', the group that shaped me into the person I am today. I'm forever grateful to my Act One friends and our mentor, the legendary N K Sharma (Panditji)."



## Sustainability in fashion

Actor Nushrratt Bharuccha shared how fashion has evolved over time and sustainability has become an important factor. "I think in fashion, what I like is that we have evolved to sustainability because deep in my heart, I believe that we can't be such consumerists. There has to be a limit on how much we can consume, and I think the best way to stop consumption is to recycle and reuse what we already have. Give me this outfit, and I can wear it in five different ways. That is what I really like about fashion."



## Jitni umar likhi hai, utni likhi hai

Bollywood star Salman Khan says heightened security due to death threats from the Lawrence Bishnoi gang has significantly restricted his movements and cramps his style. The security protocol has impacted his daily routine, Khan told reporters on Wednesday night. "Bhagwan, Allah sab unpar hai. Jitni umar likhi hai, utni likhi hai. Bas yahi hai," he said. "I cannot do anything about it (security). Khallas. So I go from Galaxy (home) to shoot to Galaxy, no detours," he added. The 59-year-old could earlier be seen cycling around the city unhindered by his security team.





“ Prepare teams based on ‘merit’ like India and not favouritism  
- KAMRAN AKMAL



WOMEN'S NAT'L BOXING C'SHIP

## Dominant railways defend title

Railways stamped their authority on the 8th Elite Women's National Boxing Championship, emphatically defending their title with nine medals in total, as all five of their finalists clinched gold at the Shaheed Vijay Singh Pathik Sports Complex in Greater Noida on Thursday. Haryana finished second with six medals, including two gold and a string of silver medals, while All India Police (AIP) came in third with seven medals, including one gold. Throughout this week-long tournament, which adhered to the World Boxing Technical & Competition Rules, 188 boxers from 24 state units competed across ten weight cate-

gories. Overall, the Railways secured five gold medals and four bronzes. Second-placed Haryana achieved two gold, three silver, and one bronze medals. Meanwhile, the All India Police accumulated one gold, four silvers, and two bronzes. Furthermore, the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) President Ajay Singh announced an INR 50,000 cash prize for the championship's top performers, with Jaismine Lamboria of Services Sports Promotion Board (SSPB) winning the Best Boxer Award and Simranjit Kaur of Punjab being named Best Challenger. Laxmi was awarded Best Referee, while Rekha Swami took home Best Judge.

**Did you Know?**  
The Youth National Boxing Championship is set to take place in April in Greater Noida, followed by the Junior National Championship in Nainital in May.



## RR's back-to-back defeats evoke concern

Former India wicketkeeper-batter Robin Uthappa feels that Rajasthan Royals (RR) need to reflect on their auction strategy and analyse their shortcomings after suffering back-to-back defeats in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025 season. Rajasthan lost to Sunrisers Hyderabad in their opening fixture before facing their second straight defeat against defending

## South Australia PM at Wankhede

The Premier of South Australia, Peter Malinauskas, visited the iconic Wankhede Stadium on Thursday, where he was warmly welcomed by Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) President Ajinkya Naik, who presented him with a memento. As part of the visit, Peter Malinauskas participated in a friendly exhibition game of cricket alongside MCA officials and underprivileged children. Former MCA President Ashish Shelar also joined in, adding to the spirit of enthusiasm. Premier of South Australia, Peter Malinauskas, along with a delegation of state officials, is on an official tour of India and has previously visited Ahmedabad too. The MCA has recently organised the golden jubilee celebrations of the construction of the iconic Wankhede Stadium, which hosted the final of the 2011 World Cup, which was won by hosts India. The MCA hosted a series of spectacular events to mark the stadium's golden jubilee.



## Salman is better actor: Aamir

Salman Khan is the better actor, said superstar Aamir Khan, lauding his Bollywood contemporary for his emotional scenes on the big screen. The two actors collaborated for a promotional video ahead of the release of Salman's latest film "Sikandar" on Sunday. The film is directed by A R Murugadoss, who had earlier directed Aamir in the 2008 blockbuster "Ghajini". In the video, uploaded on YouTube, the actors asked Murugadoss to judge them based on different parameters. Salman Khan asked the filmmaker, "Who's the better actor?"



champions Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) on Wednesday. Despite adding 14 players of their choice in last year's mega auction in Jeddah, the Jaipur-based franchise have not found the right balance in the playing 11 so far. Compared to their batting line-up, Rajasthan fall short in the bowling department with struggling Jofra Archer and Sandeep Sharma.

CELEBRATE RAJASTHAN DAY ON MARCH 30! COOK, CREATE, PLAY AND LEARN!

# Rajasthan's rich heritage with us today and enjoy a fun-filled, educational experience

**TINA KHATRI**

This weekend, let's take a journey through the royal state of Rajasthan, with activities that will let you explore its food, art, and fun traditions.

We kick off with a delicious treat - Rajasthani Churma Ladoo! This mouth-watering snack is a traditional favourite, perfect for satisfying your sweet tooth while learning a bit about Rajasthani cuisine.

Next, unleash your creativity with Lippan Art, a traditional Rajasthani

craft that uses clay and mirror work. It's easy to make and a great way to introduce yourself to the beautiful art of Rajasthan. You can create stunning designs and add a personal touch with bright colours.

For a bit of outdoor fun, we have Khil Khilana, a balloon game that will have you hopping and laughing! Finally, test your knowledge of Rajasthan with our Rajasthan Quiz! Answer questions about its cities, forts, culture, and traditions. Challenge your friends to see who knows Rajasthan best!

## RAJASTHANI CHURMA LADDOO

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 2 tbsp ghee (for dough) + 2 tbsp (for greasing)
- 1/2 cup jaggery (or sugar)
- 1/2 tsp cardamom powder
- 1/2 tsp baking powder (optional)
- 2 tbsp chopped nuts (optional)
- Water as needed

### INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1. Prepare Dough:** Mix flour, baking powder, and a pinch of salt; add ghee and water to knead into stiff dough.
- 2. Shape Laddoos:** Roll the dough into 1-inch balls.
- 3. Bake Method:** Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F); bake ladoos for 15-18 minutes until golden brown.
- 4. Microwave Method:** Grease a plate, microwave ladoos on high for 2-3 minutes until golden brown.
- 5. Prepare Churma:** Crush the baked ladoos into pieces, mix with jaggery, cardamom powder, and nuts.
- 6. Shape Laddoos:** Roll churma mixture into ladoos.
- 7. Cool and Serve:** Let ladoos cool completely and store in an airtight container.



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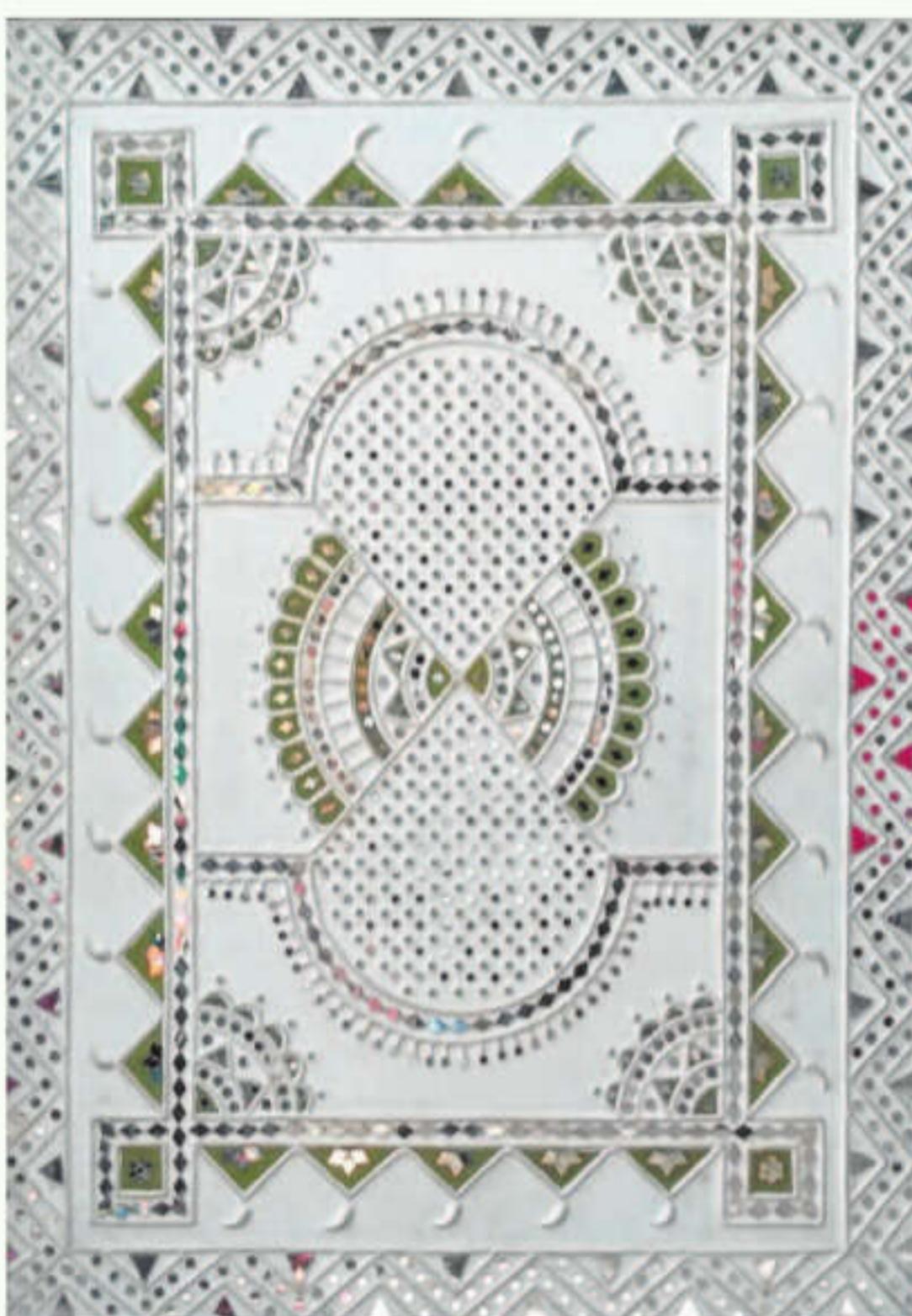
## LIPPAN ART CRAFT

### MATERIALS

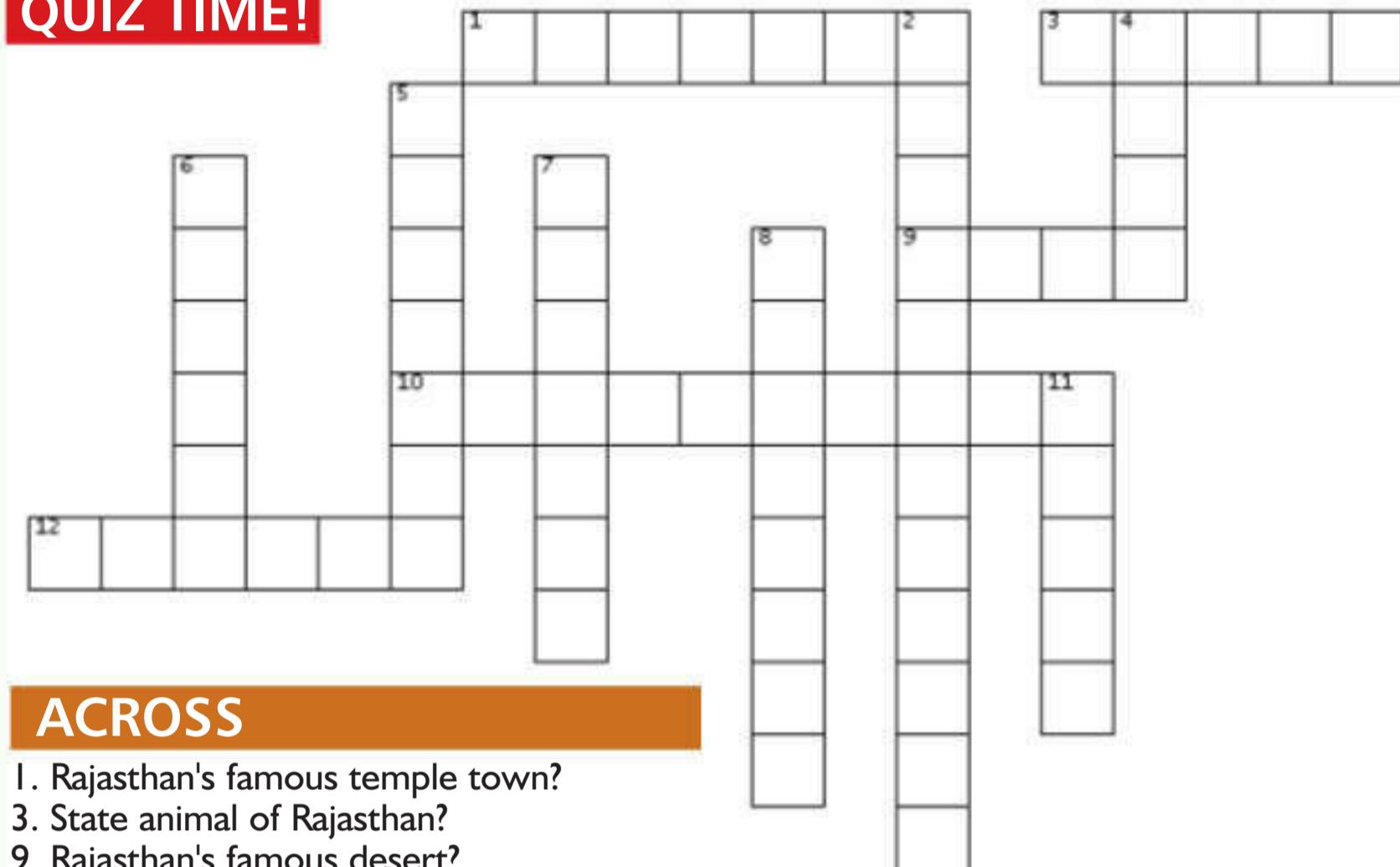
- Air-dry clay (or dough made from flour and water)
- Cardboard or a wooden base
- Glue
- Mirror pieces (or foil paper cut into small squares)
- Acrylic paints (optional: bright colours like red, yellow, blue)
- A paintbrush
- Rolling pin (optional)
- Small sticks or tools for shaping designs

### Steps

1. Prepare the Base:  
• Take a piece of cardboard or a small wooden board as the base for the craft.
2. Make the Clay Designs:  
• Roll small amounts of air-dry clay into tiny balls and flatten them into small discs.  
• Use a rolling pin to flatten the clay if needed. You can also create different shapes like spirals or circles.
3. Arrange the Clay on the Base:  
• Arrange the clay pieces in a design, like a circular pattern, flowers, or simple lines. Leave space in between the clay pieces to add mirrors later.



## QUIZ TIME!



### ACROSS

1. Rajasthan's famous temple town?
3. State animal of Rajasthan?
9. Rajasthan's famous desert?
10. Famous fort in Jodhpur?
12. Largest city in Rajasthan?

### DOWN

2. Rajasthan's national park famous for tigers?
4. Famous fort in Jaipur?
5. Rajasthan's traditional dance form?
6. Rajasthan's popular festival?
7. Famous lake in Udaipur?
8. Rajasthan's traditional fabric?
11. Rajasthan's primary language?



## KHIL KHLANA

### PLAYERS:

- 2 or more players.

### MATERIALS:

- Balloons (lightweight).

### OBJECTIVE:

- Keep the balloon in the air using only the head or feet, without letting it touch the ground.

### HOW TO PLAY

- 1. Inflate Balloon:** Fill the balloon with medium air.
- 2. Rules:**
  - Only head or feet can be used.
  - No hands allowed.
  - If the balloon touches the ground, the player is out.
- 3. Winning:** The last player/team who keeps the balloon in the air wins.

### VARIATIONS

- **Team Play:** Teams take turns keeping the balloon in the air.
- **Time Limit:** Set a time and count how long the balloon stays up.

### BENEFITS

- Improves coordination, balance, and teamwork.
- Great for physical activity and fun!



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