



# MAHANAGAR METRO

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## India to seal biggest-ever defence deal with Germany within 3 months; what we know

This landmark agreement involves German firm TKMS collaborating with India's Mazagon Dock for local production, marking the first transfer of German submarine technology to a non-European country. The deal is set to enhance naval capabilities and deepen bilateral defense ties.

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
An \$8 billion submarine deal is likely to be finalised between India and Germany within the next three months, said German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius on Wednesday. He made this announcement after talks with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in the northern port city of Kiel.  
**Production of 6 submarines**  
Pistorius pointed out that the project comprised the production of six submarines in India, with the Indian government currently coordinating the next steps to finalise the pact. Talking to reporters after both ministers visited a Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems GmbH (TKMS) facility, the German Defence Minister said: "I am very, very confident that we will be able to sign the agreement soon, especially today following the talks with His Excellency Singh and his delegation."  
**Project is 'on track'**  
The submarines will be manufactured with the

collaboration between TKMS and Indian state-owned Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd. Pistorius said Singh had suggested that the deal is "on track" and pointed out that "things will be done and



inked, so to speak" within the next three months. Estimated to be worth around \$8 billion, the contract would be India's biggest-ever defence deal. The agreement would also mark the first transfer of German submarine production

technology to a non-European country. During his visit to India earlier this year, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz had discussed the proposal with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

During his three-day visit to Germany from April 21 to 23, Singh also visited the TKMS shipyard, where he boarded a Type 212 class submarine. The company officials told him about its capabilities.

**Boosting defence ties**  
India and Germany also signed and exchanged the Defence Industrial Cooperation Roadmap and an Implementing Arrangement for Cooperation in UN Peacekeeping Training. This is set to boost defence ties between the two countries.

India's Ministry of Defence said the agreements are likely to deepen institutional collaboration and create new opportunities in joint training, capacity building and defence capability development.

In Berlin, Singh and Pistorius held bilateral meetings and discussed security cooperation, co-development and co-production of defence equipment, with a focus on niche technologies.

## Delhi CM Rekha Gupta inspects healthcare services, focuses on patient care and cleanliness

Keeping the summer season in view, CM Gupta has directed the hospital administration to accord the highest priority to the availability of medicines, drinking water, cleanliness, patient convenience and all essential arrangements.

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta today conducted a surprise inspection of Aruna Asaf Ali Hospital and interacted with patients and their families to assess arrangements and the availability of doctors. She took feedback from doctors, staff and the hospital administration, and issued necessary directions to make healthcare services more modern, swift, compassionate and citizen-centric.

She said her government's commitment is to ensure that every citizen of Delhi experiences a healthcare system where treatment is timely, facilities are modern, surroundings are clean, and every patient is served with dignity. Keeping the summer season in view, CM Gupta has directed the hospital administration to accord the highest priority to the availability of medicines, drinking water, cleanliness, patient convenience and all essential arrangements. On Tuesday, CM Rekha Gupta said under the government's flagship 'Pink Saheli Smart Card' scheme, more than 5 lakh women have been issued the card so far for free travel on DTC buses.

"Latest figures show that 5.3 lakh women have adopted the facility, with all cards currently in active use," she said, claiming it as an achievement that reflects not only the success of the scheme but also the growing confidence and participation of women in the capital's public transport system.

"Our government is committed to ensuring the safety, convenience, and self-reliance of every woman and girl in Delhi. The Pink Saheli Smart Card is not just a free travel pass; it offers women a secure digital identity and a dignified, seamless travel experience," she said.

"When public transport is safe and accessible, it naturally opens up greater opportunities in education, employment, and overall progress. This initiative is helping women become more independent, which is central to the vision of a developed Delhi," said the Chief Minister. The card operates on a 'tap-and-go' system using the National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) framework, eliminating the need for paper tickets. Women can simply tap their cards at Electronic Ticketing Machines (ETMs) and board buses with ease. It enables free travel for women and transgender persons on buses, while also allowing paid use across the Metro and other modes of public transport, making it a truly integrated mobility solution. The scheme is available to all women and transgender residents of Delhi aged five and above. The card can be conveniently recharged online, and users can track their travel history, ensuring transparency and efficiency. The digital system has also improved transport data management, enabling authorities to further enhance service delivery.



## Kedarnath: Devotee dies of heart attack on first day of yatra, family alleges negligence in medical help

On the first day of Kedarnath Yatra 2026, a devotee from Gujarat died of a heart attack. His family alleged delays in medical help and transport, exposing serious flaws in the pilgrimage system despite administrative claims of preparedness and safety.

**Rudraprayag.(Agency)**  
The opening of Kedarnath Dham's doors was marked by devotion and celebration, but tragedy struck on the very first day of the Char Dham Yatra 2026. A pilgrim from Gujarat, Dilip Bhai Manu Mali (69), died of a heart attack, and his family's ordeal has raised troubling questions about the arrangements at Kedarnath.



**Family's struggle for help**  
According to his son, Hemant Mali, Dilip Bhai's health suddenly deteriorated during the pilgrimage. The family immediately called for help, but despite assurances that assistance would arrive within 10 minutes, no medical support reached them for over an hour. Forced by circumstances, Hemant carried his father on his

back to the hospital, where doctors declared him dead. The family alleged that the body remained on the helipad in the scorching sun for nearly two hours. They repeatedly requested helicopter transport for

the body, but arrangements were delayed. Hemant questioned why helicopters are available for VIPs but not for ordinary devotees in emergencies.

**Transport issues and costs**  
The family further claimed that when they sought ambulance services to transport the body to Delhi, they were asked to pay Rs 16,000. This demand added to their grief, raising concerns about the lack of dignified arrangements for pilgrims who die during the yatra.

**Official response**  
Local police confirmed that Dilip Bhai died at the Primary Health Center in Kedarnath. His body was scheduled to be transported to Rudraprayag for post-mortem. However, helicopter services were delayed due to inspections by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

## Triumph of Faith: Jain Community Showcases Unity

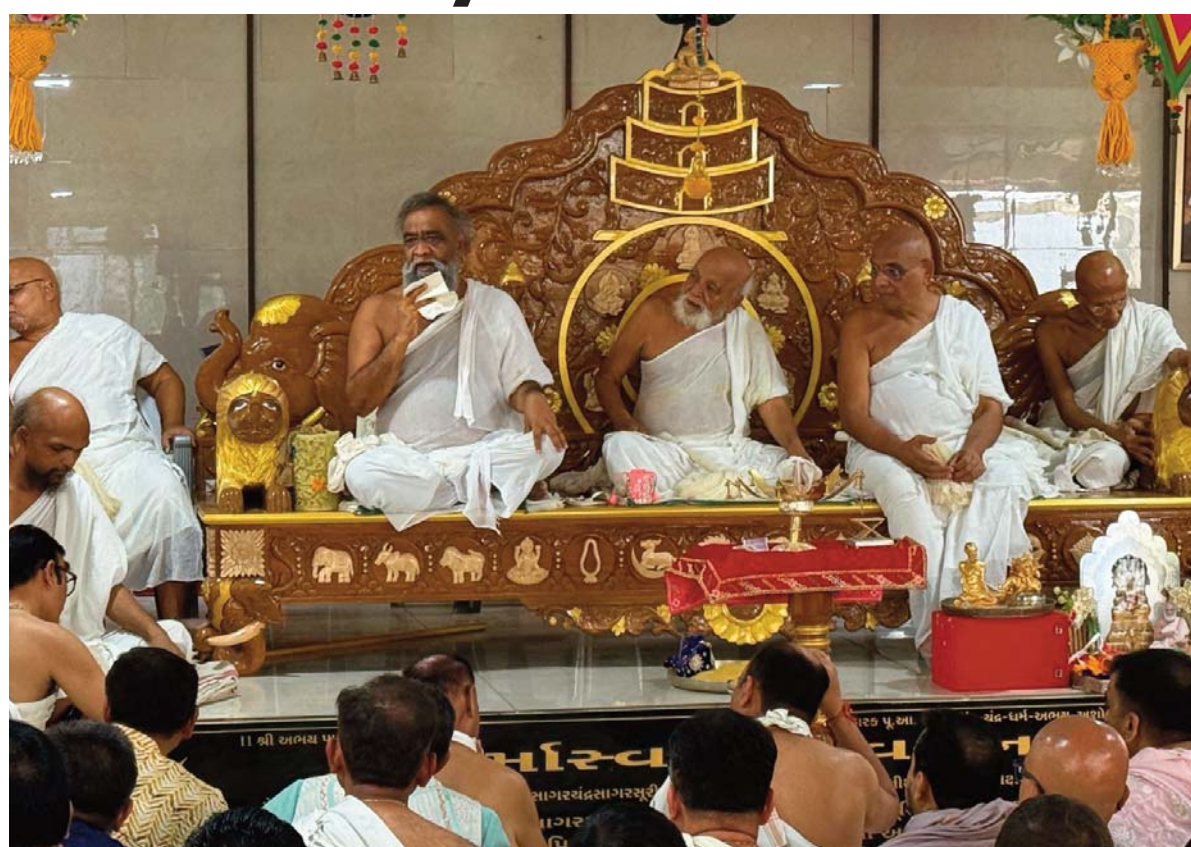
# Anjanshalaka Ceremony of Shri Abhay Parshwanath Jinalaya Concludes

**Pawan Makan (Group Editor)**  
**Surat:** Surat: The Anjanshalaka Pratishtha Mahotsav of Shri Abhay Parshwanath Bhagwan Jinalaya in Vesu concluded with great devotion and grandeur. The event was not just a religious ceremony, but a powerful reflection of unity, faith, and collective strength within the Jain community. Thousands of devotees gathered to offer prayers and seek blessings of Lord Mahavira. The entire Vesu area echoed with chants of "Jai Jinendra," creating a deeply spiritual and vibrant atmosphere.

**Successful Event Amid Controversies**  
In recent times, the event had been surrounded by certain controversies and allegations. However, the Jain community responded with calmness and unity, ensuring the peaceful and successful completion of the समारोह. The outcome sent a clear message that faith and truth remain stronger than any challenge.

**Guided by Revered Spiritual Leaders**  
The Mahotsav was conducted under the guidance and presence of Ashoksagar Suriwarji Maharaj and Sagar Chandra Suriwarji Maharaj. Their enlightening discourses inspired devotees and strengthened the spirit of discipline, devotion, and unity.

**A Strong Message of Unity**  
The grand success of the event highlighted that the Jain community stands firmly united in protecting its traditions and values. It also reinforced the importance of harmony, mutual respect, and collective responsibility.



**Key Highlights:**  
Massive Participation: Thousands of devotees attended the ceremony  
Unity Displayed: Strong sense of togetherness within the community  
Religious Significance: Rituals performed with traditional practices

**Spiritual Guidance:** Inspiring messages from revered Gurudevs  
Mahanagar Metro extends heartfelt congratulations to the entire Jain community on the successful completion of this grand and historic celebration.

## Toughest test yet for Mamata to crush challenge

This is the first election after the Election Commission of India's controversial Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of rolls resulted in 91 lakh deletions from the list.

**KOLKATA.(Agency)**  
West Bengal is all prepped up for a pulsating contest between Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress and the BJP on Thursday when 152 of the total 294 constituencies in the state go to polls in the first of the two-phase elections amid unprecedented security cover.

This is the first election after the Election Commission of India's controversial Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of rolls resulted in 91 lakh deletions from the list.

How it would impact the outcome is anybody's guess. Appellate tribunals added just 139 of the 27 lakh — whose names did not figure in the supplementary rolls — to the list of eligible voters in the first phase. Of the 152 seats in the first phase, 54 in north Bengal districts of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar, Cooch Behar, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda are seen as strongholds of the BJP. The remaining 98 seats in districts like Murshidabad, East Midnapore, West Midnapore, Jhargram, Purulia, Bankura, West Bardhaman and Birbhum, are part of the traditional citadel of the TMC.

The respective strengths of the CPM-led Left Front and the Congress will also be under test. Apart from SIR and anti-incumbency, the TMC faces serious charges like widespread corruption, poor law and order, infiltration and tribal discontent.

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## News box

## Right-of-way cleanup: 6.5k houses covered in 5 days in Gurgaon

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The five-day anti-encroachment drive ended on Wednesday with roads opened up, kiosks razed and boundary walls pulled down across some of the city's most prominent colonies. But it also laid bare a sharp divide among residents. While many welcomed the reclaiming of public land and wider carriageways, others questioned the suddenness of the exercise and the uneven way it was enforced.

Teams from the town and country planning department carried out demolitions across DLF phase 1 and 2 and several other licensed colonies, removing encroachments on road right of way, green belts and public spaces. Officials described it as one of the widest such operations in recent months, spanning nine colonies at once on Wednesday. So far, more than 20 colonies have been covered. In DLF Phase 1, the teams began from C Block, covering 14 lanes and taking action at around 250 houses, before removing four illegal kiosks in the market area. In E Block, six lanes were covered and action was taken in front of more than 150 houses. Officials said violations included extended boundary walls, gates and other structures jutting into public land. Around 50 extended walls and gates were demolished, over 130 encroaching lawns, fences and gardens were cleared, more than 30 guard rooms were removed, and 30 ramps and staircases dismantled. E Block saw some of the worst violations, with gates extending up to three feet onto the road. The drive then moved to DLF Phase 2, covering N Block, Gulmohar Marg and P Block. Six lanes each in N and P blocks were cleared, with action against nearly 250 houses. Around 15 guard rooms were demolished and more than 150 lawns and fences removed.

## Fire breaks out at flat in Gurgaon's Sector 63A society from possible short circuit

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A fire broke out on the first floor of a flat at a residential society in Sector 63A on Wednesday afternoon, triggering panic in the residential complex. No casualties have been reported in the incident.

An official said the initial assessment points to a possible short circuit as the cause of the fire. "The exact cause will be confirmed after inspection," he added.

A family of four, including two children, was inside the house when the fire broke out but they managed to escape before the flames intensified. Residents of other flats on the same floor were also moved out in time, preventing any injuries. The blaze started around 3.30pm and spread rapidly, engulfing the entire flat within minutes. Fire brigade teams rushed to the spot after receiving information and brought the blaze under control. "We received a call in the afternoon and immediately dispatched multiple fire tenders. Household items caused the fire to intensify but it was contained before it could spread further," a fire dept officer said. Sources claimed that fire extinguishers installed in the society failed to function during the emergency, raising concerns over maintenance. Furniture, appliances and other valuables in the flat were completely destroyed in the incident.

## Safety norms lacking, 8 gyms &amp; pools shut in Noida

Noida.(Agency)

Eight swimming pools and gyms in Noida were ordered to suspend operations after district inspections found they were running without meeting mandatory safety and regulatory norms. Officials said notices were issued to the operators of all eight facilities, asking them to fix the deficiencies and submit proof of compliance before reopening. The centres will remain shut until the inspection committee verifies that all prescribed standards were met.

According to officials, the action is part of an ongoing district-wide inspection drive being carried out by a technical committee constituted to monitor compliance at fitness centres and swimming facilities. A total of 30 gyms and swimming pools have been inspected so far.

District sports officer Dr Parwez Ali said the facilities sent notices include three pools at schools, one at a private club and four gyms at residential societies. "The notices were issued directing them to address deficiencies and submit proof of compliance before reopening. Operations at these centres will remain suspended until the committee verifies that all prescribed standards were met," said the officer.

The campaign aims to ensure that public-use fitness and recreation facilities maintain basic safety infrastructure, documentation and trained personnel, officials said. Currently, NOCs are being issued for swimming pools and gyms for the current financial year by the sports department at a registration fee of Rs 20,000. So far, NOCs have been issued for 18 gyms and around 198 swimming pools, of which 148 are of residential societies. For swimming pools, authorities said operators must possess safety certification, a disaster management plan, CCTV coverage, trained male and female lifeguards, fire safety clearance, water treatment documentation, laboratory reports on pH levels and emergency equipment such as oxygen cylinders, stretchers, life jackets and wheelchairs. Pools are also required to display contact details of the nearest hospital and police station, maintain visitor registers, ensure non-slip deck tiles and prominently mark water depth.

For gyms, mandatory requirements include CCTV surveillance, fire safety certification, separate changing rooms for men and women, qualified trainers, visitor registers, emergency response plans and medical emergency equipment. Operators are also required to submit ownership documents and a list of installed equipment. Officials said gyms are prohibited from selling medicines, supplements or protein products within their premises.

District Sports Department officials said periodic surprise inspections will continue and legal action may be initiated against facilities found violating prescribed norms in future inspections.

## Contractor fined Rs 5cr as NH-8 drainage project crawls

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Residents of sectors 68 to 75 are unlikely to see relief from chronic waterlogging this monsoon, with the GMDA set to miss its Aug deadline for a key drainage project in the area. The slow pace has prompted GMDA to impose a penalty of Rs 5 crore on the contractor. Conceived in 2022, the project was aimed at plugging critical gaps in drainage infrastructure across these newly developed sectors along the Southern Peripheral Road (SPR). The project involves laying a 17.6-km stormwater drainage network across sectors 68 to 75 at a cost of Rs 51 crore. Though it received financial approval in July 2024 with a completion target of Aug this year, only about 20% of the work has been done so far. "We have imposed a penalty of Rs 5 crore on the agency for slow execution and directed it to expedite the work," a GMDA official said. The project entails construction of RCC box-type drains of varying sizes to channel rainwater from sectors 68 to 75A into a master drain being developed along the SPR, from Vatika Chowk to NH-48. The system will ultimately flow into the Badshapur (Leg-III) drain.

Residents and commuters have long



struggled with waterlogging in the area, particularly at Darbaripur Road and Tulip Chowk, which are inundated during heavy rain. With key projects behind schedule, residents may have to brace for yet another monsoon marked by flooded roads and disrupted commutes. "The drainage work has been going on at a snail's pace. With the monsoon approaching, we are certain waterlogging will worsen in this area,

leading to severe traffic congestion and chaos just like every year," Ajay Sharma, a resident of Tulip Ivory, said.

Even as the internal network lags, the metropolitan authority is banking on partial relief from the ongoing construction of a master drain along SPR, known as the Leg-IV drain. The 5-km stretch between Vatika Chowk and NH-48, passing through sectors 69, 70, 75 and 75A, is targeted for completion by

June. "Most of the work is completed and only two drainage crossings are left, including at Genpact and Tulip junction. Work on the Sector 75-75A crossing is ongoing, and we are aiming to complete it before the monsoon," the GMDA official said. The Rs 105-crore Leg-IV project, which will benefit sectors 68 to 80, is expected to reduce the load on the existing Badshapur (Leg-III) drain, a key outfall that often overflows during the monsoon, flooding low-lying stretches of the SPR. This project too, has seen delays. Though it received administrative approval in 2019, it remained stuck in planning and coordination stages for nearly three years. Physical work began only in April 2023 and missed its original Oct 2024 deadline. Officials attributed early delays to factors such as monsoon disruptions, construction bans during winter months due to air pollution, and delayed permission for hillock removal and high-tension power tower. At present, Gurgaon's stormwater is channelled through three major master drains — Sikanderpur (Leg-I), Sector 42 (Leg-II) and Badshapur (Leg-III) — all leading to the Najafgarh drain.

## Sweeping machine catches fire, MCG official suspended over failure to report incident

Gurgaon.(Agency)

MCG on Wednesday suspended an official for not reporting a fire incident. The sweeping machine caught fire at Mor Chowk (Civil Lines) early Tuesday, and the senior sanitary inspector (SSI) deployed there failed to inform officials about the incident. Exercising powers under the Haryana Civil Services (Punishment and Appeal) Rules, 2016, the civic body placed SSI Harsh Chawla under immediate suspension pending disciplinary proceedings. The issue came up for discussion during a sanitation review meeting held on Wednesday, in which the MCG commissioner, Pradeep Dahiya, sought answers from him on his failure to inform the joint commissioner or any other senior official about the incident. The SSI could not be reached for comment. An order issued by MCG states

that the failure to notify the concerned joint commissioner or any senior official amounted to "gross negligence, dereliction of duty and non-performance", potentially hampering timely response



and effective management of the situation. Dahiya, in the meeting, said that maintaining administrative discipline is

the top priority. "Negligence of any kind or violation of protocol won't be tolerated. Complaints against the concerned officer regarding not taking public grievances seriously and ignoring phone calls also came to light, which also was taken seriously," said the commissioner in the meeting. After suspension, a departmental inquiry also was initiated to probe the incident, which officials said was likely due to a short circuit. The senior sanitary inspector has been directed not to leave headquarters without prior permission and must report to the designated official. As per rules of the Haryana govt, he will be entitled to subsistence allowance. The chief accounts officer of MCG has been instructed to release the allowance in accordance with prescribed norms.

## 3 months gone after launch, no operator yet to run Sadar Bazar multilevel parking

Gurgaon.(Agency)

More than three months after chief minister Nayab Singh Saini inaugurated the multi-level car parking (MLCP) facility at Sadar Bazar, the MCG on Tuesday initiated the process to appoint a private agency for its operation and management. The selected agency will be responsible for parking management and fee collection, comprehensive facility management services, and the operation and maintenance of all installed systems along with their annual maintenance contracts (AMC), as well as the overall upkeep of the premises, supply of consumables, deployment of manpower, and payment of utility charges. The civic body spent Rs 54.6 crore on the construction of the parking hub. The delay in appointing an operator has sparked concerns over planning and execution, especially for a project positioned as a solution to Sadar Bazar's chronic traffic and parking woes. "While the tenders were floated twice earlier, none of the applicants met the eligibility criteria required for selection," said an MCG official. The move raises questions over why a key urban infrastructure project, aimed at easing congestion in one of the city's busiest markets, remained without a full-fledged operational framework months after its launch.

The project was originally scheduled to be completed in Dec 2021. The structure comprises three basement levels along with a ground floor and six upper floors, accommodating 294 equivalent car spaces (ECS). The facility is equipped with 29 mechanical stack parking systems installed in the third basement, along with dedicated electric vehicle infrastructure, including 10 charging points each for cars and two-wheelers. The stalled parking facility is not an isolated case but part of a wider pattern across Haryana. Across the state, of 737 projects announced by the CM in the last few years, 148 are still unfinished. This includes 72 classified as pending and 76 listed as in progress.

## Woman found dead near drain in Faridabad was killed by lover

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A 22-year-old man was arrested on Tuesday in connection with the murder of a 48-year-old woman whose body was found near a drain in Faridabad on April 17. Police had earlier arrested his father, who is accused of helping him flee and conceal evidence after the crime.

A crime branch team of Faridabad police arrested the main accused, Brahmjeet, on April 21, while his father, Jagwinder (49), was arrested on April 18 and later sent to judicial custody after police remand.

Police said the woman was in a relationship with the accused for around one and a half years. Investigations revealed that after Brahmjeet got married in Jan 2025, he stopped meeting her, which led to tensions between them. The accused alleged that she had been pressuring him to continue the relationship. On the day of the incident, Brahmjeet allegedly took



the woman to the electricity board office and later persuaded her to accompany him towards a secluded stretch near the drain between Kabulpur and Dhatir. This was when he assaulted and killed her. "After the murder, the accused disposed of the body in the drain before fleeing to Palwal. His father helped him escape", Yashpal

Yadav, police spokesperson, said.

Police said the victim, a native of Bihar, lived in Faridabad with her family. On April 15, she left home to pay an electricity bill at the Sector 58 electricity board office but did not return. A complaint was filed by her son, following which a search was launched. Her body was recovered from a drain in the Kabulpur area on April 17.

A case has been registered against the two under sections 103(1) (murder), 238(a) (causing disappearance of evidence or giving false information to screen an offender) and 249 (harbouring or concealing an offender to screen them from legal punishment) of BNS at Sector 58 police station.

## Lawyers say basic documents not given, can't move bail pleas for Noida protest accused

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

Lawyers representing three labour activists taken into custody by Noida police for allegedly inciting violence during the April 13 industrial workers' protest in the city said on Wednesday they were unable to move bail applications in court as they had neither received copies of the arrest memo nor the remand application filed by police. Kabir and Manik Gupta, counsel for Aditya Anand -- who police have identified as the main conspirator -- Satyam Verma and Himanshu Thakur, said they had also strongly objected to the arrests, citing violation of procedure. "The arrests are illegal because they were carried out without following due procedure under law. Unless the grounds (of arrest) are disclosed and our client is served with an arrest memo, the arrests cannot be called legal," Kabir said. The accused are currently in judicial custody, with a police request for remand set to be heard on Thursday. Only two persons among 43 individuals named in one of the FIRs registered at Phase 2 police station, the area that witnessed largescale vandalism, linked to the April 13 protest have applied for bail so far. Aakriti and Srishti, both Delhi University students, were arrested along with fellow accused Rupesh Roy and Manisha on April 11 after a preceding protest by a section of

industrial workers on April 10. So far, nine FIRs linked to the protests have been registered at five police stations in the city, naming 203 people. Sector 63 and Phase 2 police stations have registered three FIRs each. The cases have been filed under various BNS sections, Section 7 of Criminal Law Amendment Act and Section 3/4 of Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act. Four persons not named in the FIRs, Ankesh Rawal, Rudra Pratap, Prabal Pratap and Shobhit, have, meanwhile, filed bail applications. The FIRs have also been filed against 'unknown', which leaves scope for police to include more names as the investigation progresses.

Rajnish Yadav, the lawyer representing Aakriti, said her bail application would be heard on Thursday by the special judge, SC/ST court. "Police may file for their remand as the gadgets confiscated from them are in the police station," he said.

Yadav agreed with other defence counsel that putting together a legal fight was proving to be a challenge in the absence of basic documents. "We ran from pillar to post to get a copy of the remand application and many people arrested are from other states who do not have a bailer

here. They have not got an arrest memo," he said. Advocate Kabir added, "Under the IT Act, once any gadget or digital



device is seized by police, they must generate a hash value, which is an algorithm for authenticating electronic records. It creates a unique, immutable 'digital fingerprint' of data, ensuring data integrity and allowing verification of electronic signatures, but in this case, police have not followed that as well."

One of the prosecutors told TOI they had objected to defence interventions in applications for police remand. "It is in the interest of proper investigation that police get a chance to interrogate them and take into its custody evidence that may prove important in the due course," a

prosecutor said. Noida Police commissioner Laxmi Singh told TOI all legal documents had been shared with the defence as well as with court. Verma (62) is the Hindi editor of a book titled 'Documents of Bhagat Singh and his comrades'. He also wrote for Mazdoor Bigul, a monthly newspaper for workers. He completed his schooling from Gorakhpur and his postgraduation from BHU. Mazdoor Bigul, after which the organisation Mazdoor Bigul Dasta that police claim is behind the April 13 violence is named, is distributed from Janchetna bookshop in Lucknow. Katyayini, a friend of Satyam and a poet-author, told TOI on Wednesday, "Satyam has been a journalist for 20 years with UNI Lucknow and Delhi, and specialises in translating complex texts, including medical, IT, legal, literature and philosophical works, from English to Hindi. His work includes translations of The Peasant by Honore de Balzac, The Jungle by Upton Sinclair, and short stories by Jack London and Mark Twain." His father Lal Bahadur Verma was a historian, author and academic who taught at Gorakhpur and Allahabad universities.

# Zombie drug 'Pregabalin' sold without prescription despite legal restrictions

Carried out a sting operation to find out if the Schedule H drug – Pregabalin – can be obtained over-the-counter in Mumbai. This is what our reporter found.

**Mumbai. (Agency)**

Recently, a video went viral showing a man in an extremely disoriented state on a road in Maharashtra's Thane. Rumours said he was under the influence of a so-called 'zombie drug'. However, police later clarified that the man overdosed on Pregabalin, a medicine used to treat nerve pain. The medicine is a Schedule H drug, which means it can only be sold with a prescription from a registered doctor and breaching it is illegal. India Today conducted a sting operation in Mumbai's Mira Road-Bhayandar area to see whether this prescription-only drug was being sold over-the-counter. Our reporter went to as many as four medical stores, and each one was openly selling the Schedule H drug without following the

rules. They were being shown the name of the medicine on a mobile phone, and that was good enough to obtain it.

At the first medical store, our reporter asked for Pregabalin by simply displaying the name 'Pregabalin 300 mg' on his mobile phone. The chemist said the 300 mg version was unavailable but offered 75 mg tablets and was ready to sell them without asking for a prescription. Another medical store had the 300 mg tablets. Therefore, our reporter not only purchased them but even prepared a bill before he left the store. Here too, the medicine was available without any prescription.

The third medical store also did not have 300 mg tablets but offered 75 mg ones. The shopkeeper acknowledged that the medicine is used to treat nerve pain but still

agreed to sell it without asking for a prescription.

At the fourth medical store, Pregabalin 75 mg tablets were offered without a prescription. The shopkeeper even suggested taking four 75 mg tablets as an alternative to a 300 mg dose and advised buying 150 mg tablets instead, indicating how easily such medicines can be accessed.

The reporter spoke to neurosurgeon Dr Adil Chagla, who explained the grave impacts of Pregabalin, without medical supervision.

He said that the medicine affects sensations in the nervous system and is typically prescribed for seizures.

"These drugs affect sensations in the nervous system. They were originally developed for



seizures but are also prescribed to reduce nerve pain. Without proper medical supervision, misuse can be dangerous," he told, cautioning that selling such drugs without a prescription is illegal.

He also called for ethical responsibility from chemists, stressing that a person's life is associated with the tablet.

In the Thane case, wherein the viral video was recorded earlier last week, the man – identified as Sameer Rajendra Rawal, 22 – told police that he had been addicted to Pregabalin tablets for the past two years. A labourer from Nepal's Achham district, he came to Mumbai a month ago in search of work and currently lives on a footpath outside Borivali railway station in Mumbai.

He said that he typically buys a strip of 10 tablets for Rs 100 and consumes them to get intoxicated.

Police have submitted a report to the Thane FDA seeking action against the medical shop owner for illegally selling scheduled medicines without a valid prescription. The chemist has reportedly shut the shop and is currently on the run.

## Short news

**Severe hot winds likely in 95 mandals over two days in Andhra**

**VIJAYAWADA. (Agency)**

The Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority has warned of severe heatwave conditions across the State over the next two days.

Managing Director Prakhar Jain said that on Thursday (April 23), 95 mandals are likely to face severe hot winds, while another 101 mandals may experience heatwave impact. On Friday (April 24), forecasts indicate 50 mandals under severe heatwave and 52 mandals under hot wind conditions.

On Wednesday, Kadapa recorded the highest temperature at 44.4°C, while 202 mandals reported maximum temperatures above 41°C. District-wise severe heatwave alerts for April 23 include Srikakulam (19), Vizianagaram (24), Manyam (3), Alluri (5), Polavaram (8), Visakhapatnam (1), Anakapalle (13), Kakinada (10), East Godavari (6), Eluru (3), and NTR (3).

APSDMA urged people to avoid exposure to hot winds, protect eyes with quality sunglasses, and prevent hot air entering the ears. Vulnerable groups such as those with heart problems, diabetes, and hypertension should avoid venturing out in the heat. Hydration with lemon water, buttermilk, coconut water, and safe drinking water is recommended. Farmers and livestock keepers were cautioned not to take shelter under trees during sudden thunderstorms accompanied by lightning. For heatwave-related information and assistance, APSDMA control room numbers are available: 112, 1070, 1800 425 0101. Officials emphasised preventive measures are critical to reducing health risks during this severe heatwave spell.

**60 bonded labourers of Odisha rescued in Tirupati**



**TIRUPATI. (Agency)**

Tirupati District Collector S Venkateswar led a special operation on Wednesday to rescue 60 bonded labourers in Tirupati rural areas.

Revenue, Police and Labour departments officials carried out the operation and rescued migrant workers from Odisha who had been working for the past five months at a brick kiln in Pudipatla village. Authorities said the management paid each family an advance of Rs 45,000 but only Rs 1,000 per week thereafter. When the management attempted to relocate the workers, the Collector deployed teams from the DSP, RPF and local police. Teams traced the workers and brought them to Collectorate.

Officials identified and rescued all remaining workers, including women and children, and provided food, shelter and security. Authorities issued release certificates on Wednesday, making them eligible for rehabilitation, and sent them to Odisha by train.

The Collector ordered an inquiry under the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, and directed officials to register an FIR against brick kiln owners and their associates. Officials said efforts are on to rescue others.

## Stray dog goes on biting spree at UP wedding venue, guests flee in panic

**Eyewitnesses said the sudden attack led to a stampede-like situation, with women and children screaming and running for safety, some even falling and getting injured in the rush.**

**Uttar Pradesh. (Agency)**

More than 60 people, including guests and family members, were injured after a stray dog went on a biting spree during a bride's farewell at a banquet hall in Budaun, triggering panic and chaos, officials said on Wednesday. The incident occurred on Monday at the Abhinandan banquet hall on Bilsa Road under the Bisauli police station limits, when the dog entered the premises and began attacking people indiscriminately.

Eyewitnesses said the sudden attack led to a stampede-like situation, with women and children screaming and running for safety, some even falling and getting injured in the rush.

The dog later moved onto the road and attacked passersby and shopkeepers before fleeing towards a nearby village,

where it apparently bit cattle. Those injured included men, women and children, including Manisha (9), Pooja (12), Vijay Pratap (15), Kanchan (16), Pinki (26), Ramesh (50), Madan Lal (66), Sunita (35)



and Chandravati (40), among others. The injured were taken to the community health centre (CHC) in Bisauli, where they

were administered anti-rabies shots before being discharged. Some of the victims also sought treatment at private hospitals.

The medical officer at the CHC, Arvind Verma, said 109 people were registered for anti-rabies treatment on Monday, of which around 60 were linked to the banquet hall incident.

The incident triggered anger and fear in the locality, with residents alleging negligence by the municipal authorities.

The locals claimed that despite spending funds on stray dog management, no immediate response was seen on the ground, as the dog was still roaming freely. Additional District Magistrate Arun Kumar said instructions have been issued to the executive officer of the Bisauli municipal body to take necessary action and address the issue at the earliest.

## MSCB scam: ED case ends as Mumbai court discharges Rohit Pawar, others

**Mumbai. (Agency)**

A special court under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) on Thursday discharged NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar faction) MLA Rohit Pawar, Congress leader and former minister Ranjeet Deshmukh, along with several other political figures, in the Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank (MSCB) scam case investigated by the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

The case dates back to 2015, when activist Surendra Mohan Arora filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) before the Bombay High Court, alleging large-scale corruption in the Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank. The petition claimed that public funds were siphoned off

through irregularities and criminal misconduct by bank officials and associated entities.

In 2019, the High Court examined the allegations and directed the Mumbai Police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) to register a First Information Report



(FIR). Following this, a case was registered at MRA Marg Police Station and investigated by the EOW. The ED subsequently initiated a parallel probe by filing an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) against several politicians and their associates. The EOW later filed a closure report, which was opposed by complainants, including Arora and activist Anna Hazare, as well as the ED. However, the special court rejected the closure report in February this year. Counsel for Rohit Pawar, advocates Pranjal Agarwal and Kushal Mor, then sought his discharge from the ED case, arguing that proceedings under the PMLA cannot continue without a "predicate offence".

She described the comments as deeply distressing, humiliating and inappropriate, given her recent medical trauma.

She further alleged that Attar repeatedly commented on her marital life and childlessness, which caused her significant mental anguish.

"I found his manner of speaking about my personal life deeply humiliating, so I did not respond. However, he repeatedly brought up the subject despite my clear discomfort," she added. The survivor also said that she personally knew the accused, Danish Shaikh, Tausif, Raza Memon, Shafi Shaikh, Shahrugh Qureshi and Asif Ansari, and had herself been subjected to alleged inappropriate behaviour by them.

## It seems I cannot crack jokes: Karnataka minister on FIR over Rs 500 bet remark

**The Minister said the matter of betting was over then and there itself, once the game was over, but it was raked up after a private individual filed a complaint in the court.**

**Karnataka. (Agency)**

A day after a court ordered registering an FIR against him for his statement during a Kabaddi match that he lost Rs 500 bet with the Deputy Commissioner, Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara on Wednesday said, "It seems I cannot crack jokes".

The Minister said his utterance during the match was casual and was not meant to promote betting. "I had said so casually during a Kabaddi match. In the countryside, we speak casually sometimes. Of course, it is wrong in the eyes of the law, but what is important is the context in which I had said that," Parameshwara told reporters here.

"Had I asked people to bet on the



game and promoted betting, that would not be proper," he said.

"But it is a pure lie to say that I, being someone holding an important position, am promoting illegal activities. It all depends on

how you perceive it," he said.

The Minister said the matter of betting was over then and there itself, once the game was over, but it was raked up after a private individual filed a complaint in the

court. "It appears that I cannot even crack jokes, but I respect the law. When I am holding a portfolio that protects law and order, I have to respect the law.

I have now left it to the law to take its course," Parameshwara said. When reporters asked him why he could not explain the context to the court, the Minister said he had not received any notice.

"I would have explained to the court not to take the matter seriously had I received a notice. All of a sudden, the order was passed," he said.

The 42nd Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Court recently directed police to initiate a probe following a private complaint

filed by H R Nagabhusan.

The court also instructed Kodigehalli police in Tumakuru to conduct a detailed investigation.

According to sources, during a state-level pre-university kabaddi tournament in Tumakuru recently, Dakshina Kannada defeated Vijayapura 36-26 in the boys' final.

After presenting the prize, Parameshwara jocularly remarked, "I lost Rs 500. I had placed a bet with the Deputy Commissioner that the Vijayapura team would win."

The remark, though made in a lighter vein, drew criticism, with some questioning the propriety of such statements from a person holding a key position.

## Gulf chokepoint and shifting energy order

Financial markets staged a cautious relief rally as oil prices retreated from recent highs. Perception and reality alternate to reflect the temperament amid high volatility. The shuttering at the Strait of Hormuz was always plausible as Iran's defensive salvo and was forecast to precipitate a deeper crisis than that of the 1970s. An incessant global energy insecurity, resting on a shaky and contentious opening of the passage, could set the stage for stagflation. A flashback to December 17, 2010 in Tunisia, a North African nation, a short distance across the Mediterranean from Europe. Police harassment and humiliation of a street vendor outside the governor's office in the town of Sidi Bouzid led him to self-immolate. His death in January 2011 was the beginning of the Arab Spring. The initial pro-democracy protests in Tunisia reverberated through Egypt, Syria, Morocco, Algeria and other parts of North Africa. Social violence and civil wars erupted in Libya and Yemen, eventually deposing the rulers of the two oil-rich nations and resulting in major production outages. The oil price flare cast a shadow of uncertainty and financial insecurity over global economies for the next three years.

At a formal meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries members in June 2011, Iran, under sanctions on its oil, dissented from increasing the group's production. Saudi Arabia, at the time, unilaterally decided to increase its output by 1 million barrels per day to make up for the loss of Libyan light crude and stabilise the market, as the UAE also released more oil to ease prices. Oil lingered above \$100 for the next three years, as Brent averaged around \$108 in 2013. Global supplies flowed unhindered, and by the end of 2014, prices declined almost 50 percent, touching \$62, as US Shale production surged. In sharp contrast, restraints at the strait, impeding the Gulf's oil and gas transit, shall permanently reset global energy and politico-economic equations.

Conveniently interpreting the recent protests in the Islamic Republic as a replay of the mood of the populace at the time of the Arab Spring, the US-Israel duo saw enough ground to defend "freedom for the people" of Iran. Resting on the rhetoric of regime change, they sought to primarily derail Tehran's nuclear ambitions. Unfortunately, the military action may have succeeded in isolating the West from the Iranian masses, who are confounded by Donald Trump's "help is on its way" call, followed by death and devastation inflicted by the US-Israel bombing in the midst of negotiations.

The Islamic Republic derives around 60 percent of its budget revenue from oil and gas. Though employment in the oil sector, direct and indirect, is estimated at around 4 percent of the working force, the industrial and mining sectors provide jobs to 35 percent, as per 2023 World Bank estimates.

The war has resulted in extensive damage to Iran's energy, industrial and civilian infrastructure. Hits at the South Pars and Mahshahr petrochemical hubs damaged facilities responsible for 85 percent of the Republic's petrochemical exports. A prolonged conflict shall dent trade relations with its neighbours and constrict long-term business opportunities for the ailing economy. A vast portion of its population lives in dire financial hardship and an estimated 55 percent of retirees do not receive any pension. As the senselessly inflicted war scales down subsidised State welfare, it shall whip up emotions of retribution for the West. The image of misplaced trust shall thus flip the 'survival' card and resurrect populist support for the nuclear programme. Shadow fleets are reported to have conveyed around 1.1 to 1.5 million bpd of Iranian oil through the strait in March, mostly destined for China. Though resting on a fragile and obscure system, it has thus far prevented a sharp supply shock and substantially filled Iran's coffers. Partially compensating for its sea-bound supply loss at the strait, Saudi Aramco's East-West Pipeline (built during the 1980s Iran-Iraq war).

## Hormuz hurdle impedes peace push

Pakistan remains at the forefront of mediation as Iran-US ceasefire nears its end

FIELD Marshal Syed Asim Munir, the Pakistani Army Chief and principal power-broker in his country, led a delegation to Tehran last week as part of mediation efforts to resolve the US-Iran conflict. The first round of talks (April 11-12) in Islamabad, held after the announcement of a fragile ceasefire for a two-week period, had collapsed. The ceasefire is set to expire on April 22. Pakistan's role as a facilitator of direct talks between the US and Iran has received considerable global praise. Munir — US President Donald Trump's "favourite" Field Marshal — has emerged as the unlikely but much acclaimed negotiator, even though his close links with top leaders of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) have been noted with some disquiet in US intelligence circles.

However, the Tehran talks, which concluded on April 17, have not reduced tensions around the Strait of Hormuz. Conflicting statements have been made by Iranian and US leaders. On April 17, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi announced that the Strait was "completely open" to commercial vessels for the remainder of the ceasefire period. He also indicated that this was linked to the Israel-Lebanon truce. Tehran presented this opening as a goodwill gesture following Pakistani mediation and the broader de-escalation efforts. The impact on the oil market was immediate — Brent crude fell by 10 percent to below \$100 per barrel. President Trump initially welcomed the Iranian statement enthusiastically, adding that the Strait was "fully open and ready for business", but with a caveat. He reiterated that the US naval blockade of Iranian ships and ports would remain in full force until a comprehensive deal — including the contentious nuclear issue — was reached.

Predictably, Iran reversed its position. On April 18, the IRGC declared that the control of Hormuz had "returned to its previous state." This meant a return to the restricted passage monitored by the IRGC due to the continuing US blockade, which Tehran called a "breach of trust."

Regrettably, there have been reports of IRGC gunboats firing on merchant vessels, including two Indian-flagged tankers attempting to transit the Strait, without full Iranian coordination or approval. These ships were forced to turn back. Hormuz remains tense, with a US

naval blockade of Iranian ports in place and the IRGC seeking to impose its own regulations for transit. No ships transited the Strait on April 19. The Iranian position is firm — the Strait "will not remain open" while the US blockade continues. This impasse will adversely impact energy security for major oil importers dependent on Hormuz. This includes all major economies, barring the US and Russia.

The EU, China, Japan and India are among those most affected. At a meeting in Paris (April 17), convened by France and the UK — India attended it as an observer — a consensus was reached regarding the Strait and the need to ensure unhindered "transit passage", as envisioned by international law and customary maritime practice. The joint statement issued by French President

dilemma is that while the right of transit passage through international straits (such as Hormuz) without restrictions or tolls is the bedrock of international trade, who can and will ensure compliance amid the ongoing war? Invoking the sanctity of international law to censure Tehran is an indefensible position when the US and Israel have torn the law book to shreds while embarking upon their unprovoked war against Iran on February 28. Pushed to the wall and having been subjected to intense aerial bombing and relentless destruction of infrastructure — death toll in excess of 3,000, including schoolchildren, and the threat of erasure as a 'civilisation' — the Iranian government has used its only significant lever: control of Hormuz.

The current tactical challenge is to remove the mines that have been laid by Iran to thwart a ground invasion by US troops. Over the past few weeks, many of these mines, reportedly laid in a haphazard manner, have shifted. This makes the mine-clearance efforts all the more complicated. In the interim, Trump has announced that a substantive deal with Iran is on the anvil and that he may visit Islamabad to reach closure with characteristic fanfare — and strengthen his claim to the Nobel Peace Prize? While such an outcome would be welcome and mark an end to a war that was unleashed more to advance Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu's personal interests, it is unlikely that Iran will agree to the draconian US demands related to the nuclear issue.

In an unusual move, Trump has rebuked Israel for its continued offensive against Lebanon, where the death toll has reached almost 2,300. In a social media post, the US President asserted: "Israel will not be bombing Lebanon any longer. They are PROHIBITED from doing so by the USA. Enough is enough." Will Netanyahu come to heel?

Trump has announced that if Tehran does not reopen the Strait of Hormuz, the bombs will drop again. His warning regarding the ceasefire: "Maybe I won't extend it, but the blockade is going to remain. So you have a blockade, and unfortunately we'll have to start dropping bombs again." If Munir can convincingly square this prickly circle, he might well be in the running for a peace prize, competing with his current mentor!



Emmanuel Macron and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer underlined "the determination of the international community to support freedom of navigation, to stand up for international law, and to protect global economic stability and energy security." The statement welcomed the Iranian announcement to reopen the Strait, but subsequent events have upended this optimistic note. How the global community responds to the Iranian stance remains indeterminate at this stage. The central

## Humanity first: Heed Pope's warning on AI misuse

India, which will host the 2030 Commonwealth Games and has set its sights on the 2036 Olympics, must go all out to improve its image

POPE Leo XIV's recent warning that artificial intelligence can fuel "polarisation, conflict, fear and violence" deserves global attention. At a time when AI is celebrated for speed, convenience and innovation, the Pope has reminded the world that technology without ethics can become dangerous. AI is not inherently evil, but neither is it neutral. Its impact depends on how humans choose to design, deploy and regulate it. Recent events validate his concerns. Across elections worldwide, AI-generated deepfakes and cloned voices have been used to spread falsehoods, confuse voters and weaken trust in democratic institutions. Fraudsters have also used voice-cloning tools to impersonate family members or officials, tricking victims into handing over money. What once required skill and resources can now be done cheaply and at scale. The anxiety is no longer confined to



misinformation. Warnings surrounding Anthropic's advanced AI model Mythos show that the next frontier may involve threats to financial systems and

cybersecurity. If powerful AI can identify vulnerabilities, automate attacks or enable fraud on banking networks, the consequences could extend far beyond the digital world. Financial panic, disrupted payments and shaken public confidence can destabilise societies as surely as political propaganda can. There is also an environmental price. AI's rapid expansion depends on vast data centres and minerals such as cobalt and lithium, often extracted at heavy ecological and human cost. Yet rejecting AI is neither possible nor wise. Used responsibly, it can revolutionise medicine, education, disaster response and productivity. The real challenge is governance. Governments must create robust laws, companies must embed transparency and safety into their systems and citizens must build digital literacy. International cooperation is equally essential. The defining question of this age is not whether machines can think, but whether humans can act responsibly.

## How to save senior citizens from cyber scams

Where traditional politicians trade in credibility (fragile or fluctuating), Trump deals in defiance. He pre-bunks every critique, pre-labels every attack, and also pre-loads every scandal into a persecution playlist

CONSIDER a person who dedicates decades to working and serving the nation and family, saving every rupee carefully, retiring with pride, owning a modest home, only to have his hard-earned lifelong savings wiped out by a single phone call. This is a lived reality across India for thousands of senior citizens who are targeted by cyber criminals, exploiting technology for financial theft. Recognising these threats, the Supreme Court has summoned the Reserve Bank of India and major banks, labelling the crime as "absolute robbery." The Prime Minister also highlighted the issue in one of his episodes of Mann Ki Baat. The financial and human toll of the crime is staggering. The scale of the issue is significant. Digital arrest fraud, where scammers pose as law enforcement officers on video calls to extort money, has spread nationwide. No law or recognised authority allows individuals to be "arrested" via a video call. In 2024, as many as 1,23,000 digital arrest fraud cases were officially reported, resulting in financial losses of Rs 1,935 crore — almost triple the losses suffered in 2022. Across all types of digital fraud, more than Rs 54,000 crore was reported lost from April 2021 to November 2025. As DGP of the Haryana Police, I reviewed the issue with all stakeholders. We concluded that halting immediate fund transfers was essential.

These scams are highly organised, led by international criminal networks. Victims receive calls from people impersonating authorities from the TRAI, CBI, ED, FedEx, Customs or the police. The caller usually claims that the victim's Aadhaar card has been misused, that a suspicious parcel bears their name, or that a linked bank account has received illegal funds. An arrest warrant, they warn, has been issued — but the matter can be

"resolved quietly" if the victim cooperates and, if secrecy is maintained. The word 'confidential' is weaponised with surgical intent. Isolating the victim from the family is the very cornerstone of the scheme. A frightened older adult, alone and too ashamed to reach out to his or her children, can be held captive in front of a screen for days. In one Gurugram case, a victim was kept on a video call for 10 consecutive days and Rs 79 lakh was transferred across 40 mule accounts — money that vanished within minutes through a "dark room" overseas mafia operated remotely out of Taiwan. Investigations have also traced these networks to Cambodia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Vietnam, and China. Covert operations by the Haryana Police's cyber wing have uncovered startling findings: last year, 4,500 people from Haryana alone travelled to Thailand under suspicious circumstances, with evidence pointing to forged passports, donkey routes and organised scam centres where young Indians are trafficked and coerced into cyber slavery.

Haryana is not merely a passive victim. Several regions within the state have become active nodes in a nationwide cybercrime network. Areas such as Nuh, Bhiwani, Palwal, Hatangaon, Manota and Hasanpur have emerged as significant centres of cybercrime. Gurugram, due to its extensive financial infrastructure, serves as both a primary target for high-value fraud and a base for organised criminal operations. A 24-year-old woman from Gujarat was recently apprehended at the Delhi airport for operating from Cambodia for a Chinese-run syndicate, which maintains a direct connection to the digital arrest racket. To counter this, the Haryana Police have mounted a multi-faceted response: nine recruiters channelling youth into Southeast Asian



scams have been arrested, 35 FIRs filed in deportation-linked cases, many SIMs blocked and devices tracked, and mule accounts dismantled. Active operations against overseas networks continue.

The damage from these crimes underscores the need for stronger solutions. In the first quarter of 2026 alone, digital arrest scams in Haryana resulted in losses of Rs 10.78 crore — with HDFC Bank customers losing Rs 3.63 crore, Bank of Baroda customers Rs 2.13 crore and SBI customers losing Rs 1.71 crore. Records show that most victims are senior citizens. Their trust in authority — not naivety — makes them vulnerable. Having grown up respecting institutions, they view the uniform as a symbol of safety. Their accumulated savings and isolation when contacted make them prime targets for fraudsters. A review of hundreds of cases shows that isolation is the common thread behind these scams' success. If any trusted contact intervenes, the scam usually fails — criminals are thwarted when secrecy or fear is broken. This understanding has led to India's first dual-OTP authentication for senior citizens. It is an effort by the Haryana Police in collaboration with HDFC Bank. Similar collaborations with more banks are likely

to follow. It's a simple, transformative solution that immediately stalls large money transfers.

For transfers of Rs 1 lakh or more by senior citizens, a second OTP is sent to both the account holder and a trusted family member. Funds are transferred only after both codes are entered, preventing fraudsters from bypassing family alerts: "Your father/mother is attempting to transfer Rs 3 lakh. Currently, seniors aged 60 and above can enrol voluntarily. Making it mandatory for those aged 75 and above is under consideration. Haryana is the first state with this model, and its results may shape national policy.

Dual-OTP authentication is a part of a broader, multi-layered strategy. Each police official keeps a list of at least 60 senior citizens in his/her respective beat and directly educates them about current scam techniques. Bank staff — often the last line of defence — are being trained to spot and report large withdrawals by elder customers. The national cybercrime helpline, 1930, is available for reporting incidents and authorities state that prompt action has led to significant recoveries. Looking ahead, AI-powered alerts for unusual transactions may offer greater protection, but human vigilance remains crucial. Family members must stay connected regularly with their elderly parents, beyond festivals and birthdays. Be aware of their banking activities, protect their passwords and remind them that no government agency ever arrests or demands money over video calls. Vigilance by police officials and bankers can protect senior citizens from major losses. Fraudsters thrive on secrecy. Families and law enforcement are now forming a united defence. Only collective action can help prevent cybercrime.

# Be organised at your Workplace

All that clutter in your cubicle can cause stress and negatively affect your productivity. Organizing your desk and work routine will help you focus on your work better. Here are a few desk clean up and cubicle organising tips.

#### Tips to organize your work space:

##### Planning is worth the effort

Planning isn't as boring and time-consuming activity as you think it is. Proper planning will give you the overall picture of your tasks at work. It saves time and energy. Plan your day and this will help you slot timings for your meetings and other tasks. You will be successfully able to pull items together in a short amount of time.

##### Streamline your supplies

Keep only supplies you need on a daily basis on top of your work area. Your drawer at work is just like your cupboard at home. So rearrange it in a way that things that you hardly use are at the bottom. Discard the excess, duplicates and out-of-date items.

##### Take small steps

Take it one by one. Break large projects

down into small and schedule these steps into your day. Spend no more than 30 minutes tackling one task or area. Do one thing at a time.

##### Communicate effectively

You may wonder how communication can help tidy up your desk, but concise and clear communication can cut down on paper messages, emails and time spent on the phone. Be clear when communicating to others, especially when leaving a message on voice mail or email. This way you are more likely to get a full response, even if the other party doesn't reach you directly.

##### File it, don't pile it

Create a filing system that works for you. Even a "to file" bin or folder is okay as long as you tend to it on a regular basis. In addition, open and process all mail. Don't let mail pile up.

##### Manage your time

In order to have a more organized, balanced work style, you need more time. We can't control how many hours are in a day, but successful people spend their time wisely.



Figure out the tasks that need to be done and set an appropriate time in which to do them.

##### Energize your work routine

Work can be boring, you may feel sleepy but there are ways you can breathe new life into your daily grind. The change in routine will not only energize your brain and body, it will even readjust your attitude. Take 10 minute breaks or go for a walk to feel fresh and better.

With the mercury showing no signs of relenting, Mumbaiers are truly feeling the heat. And while people find different ways to cool off, babies and toddlers often get very irritable because they can't deal with the sweltering heat. Keeping your baby cool during these summer months is very essential — you don't want an uncomfortable and sick baby on your hands!

## Is your baby feeling the Heat?

- One of the most important things to keep in mind is to ensure that you dress your baby up in comfortable clothing. And nothing can be better than cotton onesies and shorts. Muslin baby tops will also allow your baby's skin to breathe and not make him/her uncomfortable. Don't go for synthetic clothing since that will simply attract heat and cause your baby's delicate skin to break out into pimples or rashes.

While it is best to avoid taking your baby out in the sun, if it is unavoidable, dress your baby up in light coloured, long sleeved clothing and don't forget a hat or bonnet. Apply sunscreen on your baby's skin as well.

- While taking your baby out for a walk in the neighbourhood, make sure that the pram isn't crammed with toys or milk bottles since that can make

the child uncomfortable. Allow enough breathing space and use a cotton cloth as a base for your baby to lie on.

- Don't forget that babies wear nappies almost all the time — so ensure that you select ones that will keep your baby well-protected as well as comfortable. And nappy rashes are very common. Hence, allow your baby to be without a diaper for some time in order for the skin to heal naturally.

- Again, your baby will be cranky (and won't even be able to tell you why) if he/she gets dehydrated. Hence, keep your baby well fed by breastfeeding every now and then. Fresh coconut water and juices are also healthy options for slightly older babies.

- Don't go overboard with the use of talcum powder on your baby. It often happens that parents put so much powder on a baby that it leads to respiratory problems in the child. Limit the use and keep it away from your child's nose.

- There are tons of baby pools available in the market. These come in different sizes and shapes to suit your space and tastes. Buy a baby pool and allow your child to splash around for a few minutes. Most babies love water and this will also help keep them cool.



## Boost your child's aptitude with Workshops

Mumbai witnesses various kinds of workshops for young minds during this time of the year. These classes are great for strengthening their learning abilities, while teaching a new trade craft. We list down a few popular ones and how they benefit...

**Puppetry:** A form of theatre performance, hand puppets are great for developing your speaking and listening skills.

They also allow one to be imaginative and come up with ideas by enacting, comprehending and formulating a story that requires one or more characters.

**Papercraft workshop:** This workshop allows one to titillate their creative capacities and further improve motor coordination. It also improves self-control and patience, since one requires precision while making paper or cardboard cut-outs. This activity also promotes flexibility, while making the whole experience creative.

**Storytelling workshop:** This highly interactive session involves communicating with readers by using different kinds of expressions like voice modulation — animated voices, facial and hand movements. A storytelling workshop allows children to identify with the characters in a book, along with helping them use their imagination.

**Theatre workshop:** Apart from being a promising career path in the long run, an acting workshop in theatre helps young minds to speak, memorise, act decisively and responsibly. It also increases the ability to concentrate and follow directions and strengthens interaction with others. It also teaches a child teamwork and self-discipline. It boosts their confidence and prepares them for all sorts of challenges.



#### Meditation/

**yoga workshop:** There are many classes that are held across the city to promote wellness through yoga and meditation. These workshops promote community or group feelings in kids. A class like this freely allows children to mix around with people their own age, while also promoting positivity, flexibility and a sense of overall well-being.

**Pottery workshop:** This skill-enhancing art is ideal for children and even adults who wish to get creative with their hands. However, this form of class, is often labelled therapeutic because it helps maintain the cognitive, social and physical fitness of individuals. Pottery also increases hand-eye coordination. Further, it reduces anxiety and depression and increases positive energy.

**Robotics workshop:** The demand for kids opting for tech or gadget-savvy workshops in robotics has gone up considerably in the city. These are organised to make school-level science interesting for children. It helps them familiarise with the components used in the process of building a robot — motors, sensors, light etc. It also enhances their skill and keeps them engaged during their free-time.

## Safety precautions for when your pet is alone

Leaving your pet alone for a few hours - here's what you should do to ensure his comfort

Pets are like family members and it literally kills you to leave them alone when you simply have to go for unavoidable events. Here's what you should do to ensure they are okay for the few hours you leave them alone for. 1. Make sure there is plenty of fresh water and food for them.

2. Leave your pets out in the open or make sure there is place for them to urinate or defecate. Your pets have been trained to not do their business in the house and so you will only make them go through torture if they can't go when they have to.

3. Leave some of their comforting toys around them to play with so that they don't get too lonely - it could be their cushy pillows or mats or beds or even those stuffed

toys they like to tear apart - make sure there are so small parts they can choke on though.

4. Keep them in a place where other strays from outside cannot come in and they are safe. Your pet might be as feisty as anything you know - but they are alone and you won't be around to help if they get into a bad fight. 5. Get neighbours to check on them once every while so that you're updated about how they are doing.





5 ways to keep your

# Child busy on a Train journey



**Kids and train journeys don't go along too well. It is almost always difficult to keep a child busy when you are on the train for a long journey as kids tend to get bored and irritated easily.**

While feeding them from time to time and making them sleep are age-old tricks that parents rely on for momentary respite, here are a few other ways to keep your child busy on a long train journey:

1. Be patient and take your kid for a walk. You might have to answer, "Are we there yet" quite a lot of times but don't lose your patience. Since kids find it difficult to sit still at a place for long, they tend to be anxious about how long they have to sit at the same place. Take them for a walk inside the train. Stand with them at the door for a while and let them enjoy the view from the door. That would help them feel fresh from time to time.

2. Use play-dohs to keep them busy. Board games might get boring after a certain point of time, but play-dohs are far more interesting and creative and work better when it comes to keeping children busy for a long time. Carry coloured play-dohs for your kid and teach them to create new figurines. Give them time to create whatever they want to and help them with ideating their models. Encourage them to be as creative as they can.

3. Draw a town and create a story. Carry a couple of A3-sized papers with you, crayons and toy cars. Draw a small town with a marketplace, houses, amusement park, a school, your kid's best friend's

house, a circus, a hospital, etc. Then make your child drive through town. Help them in planning a day and make his or her ride interesting by creating car chases and escapes. If your kid is old enough, make him or her create the town.

4. Help your kid in making a book. Take a few white papers, fold them together and make a book. Carry some colour pencils and ask your kid to fill the book with his or her favourite things — like their favourite, flower, animal, superhero, etc. Make the book cover as interesting as possible with

your kid's name on it so that he or she is attracted and interested in the activity. Writing their names in a decorative way on the cover will give them a sense of belonging.

5. Let your child have fun. If your kid is happy after interacting with a fellow passenger or wants to play with another kid on the train, let them indulge in it. Let them have fun by indulging in some activity with your co-passengers. If you force your child to sit still at one place while he wants to play with the kid on the other seat, you will end up making him or her cranky. However, keep an eye on your child as he or she plays around.

## How to pet-proof Your home

**Planning on buying a pet? If you want to keep one, you need to ready your home, so that you keep your pet safe, as well as your home tidy!**



- Instead of a carpeted flooring, having a wooden flooring is advisable, as keeping a pet means constantly having to clean the floor. Since your pet will wet the floor, or shed fur, vacuuming the carpet will become tiresome.  
- Just like you would do with young kids, keep all breakable articles out of reach. If you have any valuables or any other showpiece that is fragile, stow it away safely in the cupboard. Pets like cats and dogs who like to

jump around the room can break them.  
- Don't forget to keep things like bathroom cleaners, phenyl, insecticide sprays etc safely hidden. There is a possibility that your pet can gain access to them and can cause itself bodily harm. Do the same with medicines and toiletries.  
- Whenever you open your windows for fresh air, keep an eye on your pet or install a screen. You pet, if it's a cat, dog or a bird, might escape or fall out of the window.

Scary as this seems, daring to be authentically ourselves is an act that is part of who we truly are. Psychologist Maslow said that we are often and constantly moving towards a fully self-actualised presence. Carl Jung gave us wholeness, a view that we are always seeking to feel whole. When I see people step into their greatness, their purpose, their dream, I want to do more of that myself. When you see someone you admire, do what they do with such ease, joy and purpose, you want to step into the possibility of doing the same.

Our deepest fear, that we are powerful beyond measure, often manifests in procrastination, in not feeling motivated enough. Sometimes we feel numbed out, and at other times, we feel overwhelmed by the amount of things we need to get around to during the day that owing our purpose, living it, seems best when pushed to another day. What do you do when you are in this space? How can you gather your bearings, from what seems like a few difficult days, and live in connection with your joy?

Here are three guideposts/practices  
1. Trust: You are where you need to be, to fully experience this moment for what it is, so that you can discern what your response can be the next moment. Trusting that I am where I need to be, I acknowledge that I could be less rushed and hurried, that I could practice standing in my truth and my limits rather than getting carried away by my habitual patterns of behaving. When you can trust yourself and your path, you will find that what you are doing here and now is part of your magical purpose, it is where your light needs to shine.

2. Simplicity: I dig simplicity, clarity and silence. But many times, out of force of habit, I choose complexity, confusion and noise. When we take our thoughts that feed fears and stories of a abandonment seriously, we become confused about our dreams, our purpose and we question whether we should even do what we are doing. Allowing these thoughts and emotions to simply flow like a river and responding with kindness, compassion and love towards ourselves (first) and others (next) is what choosing simplicity means. I



## 3 simple practices to make your Dreams come true

**In several little pockets of the world, brave and courageous women and men take a leap and follow their dream every day.**

am, of course, not saying this is easy. After a hard day, I came home and took some time out, breathing and writing. Then, my husband massaged my back and did some spinal adjustments and voila, I was feeling better again! Sometimes, we can sit in the difficulty of our mood for long stretches of time, and then

realise that something as simple as a massage can completely heal us. Remembering these simple responses towards ourselves and our mental health go a long way in living a simple and purpose-filled life.

3. Doing the work: I believe that giving our dreams wings means doing the work every single day. And when we do something every single day, alongside kissing our babies, brushing their teeth, giving them a bath, reading them bedtime stories, cooking and washing, we make our life fully lived. We end up shining in our own brilliance.

# 11 killed in UP's Mirzapur as truck rams multiple vehicles, Bolero catches fire

**The truck sustained a brake failure and rammed into another truck from behind. In the sequence of events, an Alto car, along with a Bolero, was also hit, resulting in the loss of lives.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
At least 11 people died in a road accident after a truck lost control and hit multiple vehicles in Uttar Pradesh's Mirzapur on Wednesday (April 22). As per the preliminary investigation, the multi-vehicle accident occurred around 8.30 pm. The truck, which was travelling on a route descending from the Dramandganj valley towards the Lasoda area, hit a container truck after suffering a brake failure. Meanwhile, an alto car got trapped between the two trucks and was hit by the truck. In the sequence of events, a Bolero car, which was carrying several passengers, was also hit and immediately caught fire. The passengers who were trapped inside

were burned to death. The truck driver also sustained severe injuries and is presently undergoing treatment under serious circumstances. Confirming the number of deaths to the press, Aparna Rajat Kaushik, a senior police official from the region, said, "So far, 11 deaths have been reported, and efforts are underway to establish the identities of the victims." Adding further, she mentioned that the police have been successful to trace the family members of some of the victims and are in the process of contacting them. **RESCUE OPERATIONS BEGAN SHORTLY**  
Upon learning about the incident, the state authorities reacted swiftly by

deploying police personnel and the fire brigade to the place of occurrence. Kaushik mentioned that the rescue operations began shortly with the help of the residents. At present, police personnel remain deployed at the site, and efforts are ongoing to restore traffic movement on the affected route, a report by news agency PTI said. Meanwhile, it has come to light that one of the trucks involved bears a Bihar registration number, while the other is registered in Madhya Pradesh. Among the cars involved, one is from Sonbhadra district and another from Mirzapur district, Kaushik told the presspersons. A detailed probe into the matter is also underway.



## UP Property Dealer, Under Debt, Poisons Pet Labrador, Then Dies By Suicide

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
A 33-year-old property dealer, who was under a huge debt, poisoned his pet dog and then died by suicide in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly. Nikhil Arora was living alone with his pet Labrador named 'Premi' in a rented apartment. According to the police, Nikhil's financial situation had deteriorated due to his parents' treatment, and he had to sell his house. He had also incurred a significant debt, causing him mental stress. On Wednesday, Nikhil was supposed to go to his friend Dheeraj's house for dinner. Suspicious of his absence, Dheeraj and other acquaintances went over to his



house. However, they found the door locked from the inside. Soon after, they called the police - who broke open the door and found Nikhil and his dog's body lying next to each other. Cops recovered buttermilk packets and an empty sulphas container from his room. Officials said that Nikhil mixed sulphas tablets (a highly toxic pesticide used to preserve stored grains) in buttermilk and first gave it to his dog and then consumed it himself. Locals said that Nikhil loved his dog a lot and suspected that he may have poisoned the dog out of fear of who would take care of him after his death. Police are currently investigating the case, and both Nikhil's and his dog's bodies have been sent for post-mortem, officials said.

## Nashik TCS Unit's Passwords Stored In Obscene Language: Victim

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Shocking details continue to emerge in the alleged sexual harassment and 'conversion' case at the Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) in Nashik, with one of the victims claiming that the company unit's passwords were stored in "obscene language". The victim, while recording her statement before the Women's Commission, said she was repeatedly subjected to mental harassment, inappropriate behaviour and conversations since her training days by one of the accused - Raza Memon. The woman alleged that the accused would call her into his cabin and talk obscenely. He also said things to hurt her religious sentiments, she said.

Raza Rafiq Memon, 35, is among the employees of the TCS' BPO unit in Nashik who have been arrested. According to her, when she complained about Memon's behaviour to the company unit's manager, she was ignored. Shortly later, two other accused - Danish and Tausif - digitally stalked her and spread rumours about her.

**Nashik TCS case**  
The incident came to light after a woman accused a colleague, Danish Sheikh, of establishing a physical relationship with her after falsely promising marriage in 2022 - when he was already married to another woman. According to a police report, Nida Khan - one of the accused who is on the run and the sister of Danish Sheikh - allegedly made derogatory remarks about the complainant's faith and attempted to pressure her to change her religion. It is further alleged that Khan and another individual, Tausif Akhtar, concealed the fact from the complainant that Danish Sheikh was already married to another woman. As the police started investigating the matter, seven more women came forward, claiming that their senior colleagues mentally and sexually harassed them, and the human resources department ignored their complaints. These events reportedly took place between February 2022 and March 2026.

## Ex-help raped Alwar woman 12 hours before raping and killing IRS officer's daughter

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
23-year-old Rahul Meena's night of violence began with a rape in Alwar and ended with an attack in Delhi that resulted in the death of a 22-year-old woman. Rahul Meena was arrested on Wednesday night after allegedly raping and murdering the daughter of an IRS officer in Delhi's posh Amar Colony area. The Delhi rape and murder, targeted a home where he was employed as a help until a few months ago, came barely 12 hours after the rape of a woman in Alwar. On Tuesday night at around 10.30 pm, the accused Rahul Meena allegedly entered his neighbour's house in Alwar, pushed and assaulted her before raping her. He is also accused of covering her mouth, strangling her, and throwing her to the floor before committing the rape. He allegedly bit the victim at several places on her body. While leaving around 11 pm, he

**A 23-year-old former house help allegedly carried out two rapes within 12 hours -- first in Rajasthan's Alwar and then in a Delhi apartment belonging to his former employer, the police said.**



threatened her and asked her to keep quiet, warning that if she informed anyone, he would kill her along with her husband and children. An FIR was registered by Alwar Police based on the victim's complaint.

The next morning, Rahul reached Delhi and entered a housing society in south-east Delhi's Amar Colony at around 6:30 am. He then proceeded to his former employer's flat at around 6.39 am. He left the house around 7.30 am. When the girl's parents returned home from the gym at around 8 am, they found their daughter lying in a pool of blood. Her clothes were torn, and she was found naked from the waist down. **THE HORROR THAT UNFOLDED INSIDE DELHI FLAT**  
According to the police, Rahul headed straight to the victim's study room, which was separately located on the rooftop of the flat. The woman was studying for her UPSC exams when Rahul barged in, strangled her despite her resistance, and then struck her with a lamp and a heavy object, causing her to bleed profusely and subsequently.

## 'Proceedings Used As Online Tool In Political Campaign': Trinamool In Court

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Court proceedings are being used as a convenient lightning rod for political campaigning on social media by the opposition, Menaka Guruswamy, representing Mamata Banerjee in the I-PAC raid case, told the Supreme Court on Thursday. As the case was being heard in New Delhi, Phase 1 voting in Bengal was underway. A video clip of the exchange between Menaka Guruswamy and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Enforcement Directorate, was posted on X by the BJP's Amit Malviya. The post suggested that Mamata Banerjee's lawyer had referred to her as "Queen." Guruswamy today raised sharp objections to post by Amit Malviya calling it an "abuse" of court proceedings. She pointed out that while she was making submissions on changes in law before and after independence, her submissions were misrepresented to show that she was

calling Mamata Banerjee "Queen". Guruswamy was arguing that the writ petition filed by the Enforcement Directorate, seeking a CBI probe against Mamata Banerjee and the senior officials who accompanied her when she "walked into the midst" of an ongoing raid on the I-PAC premises in Kolkata in January, is not maintainable.

The Supreme Court had previously made it clear that the Chief Minister's conduct during an ongoing raid could not translate into a "Centre-State dispute."

**The Courtroom Exchange**  
"Now, please see my lords, and this is where Mr Seervai very nicely shows us the difference between our constitutional state and what was. What the Union is asking for takes us back to pre-constitutional India," Guruswamy argued. "Mandamus does not lie against the crown... there can be no mandamus to the sovereign... because there would be an incongruity in the queen commanding herself to do [an act]."



## Man not liable to pay maintenance if DNA rules out paternity: Supreme Court

**The case arose from a relationship in which the appellant, employed as domestic help in the respondent's household for three years, alleged that the respondent established a sexual relationship with her on the pretext of marriage. The parties eventually married in March 2016, and a child was born the following month, in April 2016.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
The Supreme Court has held that a man cannot be compelled to pay maintenance for a child once a DNA test conclusively establishes that he is not the biological father — even if the child was born during the subsistence of a valid marriage. A Bench comprising Justice Sanjay Karol and Justice NK Singh upheld a Delhi High Court judgment and dismissed an appeal filed by a woman challenging the denial of maintenance to her daughter. **BACKGROUND OF THE CASE**  
The case arose from a relationship in which the appellant, employed as domestic help in the respondent's household for three years, alleged that the respondent established a sexual relationship with her on the pretext of marriage. The parties eventually married in March 2016, and a child was born the following month, in April 2016.



However, the marital relationship deteriorated rapidly, leading the woman to approach the court in July 2016. She sought interim maintenance of Rs 25,000 per month and a protection order for herself and her minor child against her estranged husband and his family. **TRIAL AND APPELLATE FINDINGS**  
During the proceedings, the Trial Court allowed

the respondent's request for a DNA test. The report concluded that the respondent was not the biological father of the child. Relying on this finding, and noting that the appellant had allegedly concealed her income, the Trial Court rejected her plea for interim maintenance. The First Appellate Court upheld this decision, observing that the claim for the child's maintenance was no longer being pressed and agreeing with the Trial Court on the issue of concealment. **DELHI HIGH COURT'S OBSERVATIONS**  
The Delhi High Court examined the legal presumption of legitimacy under Section 112 of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, which ordinarily protects children born during a valid marriage. The Court said that protection of this section would have been available to the appellant only if the DNA test, which has attained finality, had not been conducted, since the intent of the Section.

## Pir Panjal is fenced. How do Pak terrorists still cross into J&K?

**The mountains and forests of Pir Panjal do not obey man-made lines, but the Indian Army heavily guards this border along the LoC. It is now fenced and watched round the clock. But how do Pakistani terrorists still manage to cross into Jammu and Kashmir, and massacre civilians like they did in Pahalgam?**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

A year ago, when 26 civilians were brutally killed in Pahalgam's Baisaran Valley, the Pakistani terrorists who carried out the massacre emerged from the tree line of the meadow. Baisaran, located above Pahalgam town, is surrounded by forested slopes. Imagine it as a hidden bowl in the mountains, among the most treacherous in India. This mountain range, called the Pir Panjal range, shapes the mountain zone close to Baisaran Valley. Pir Panjal has a history, quite a long one, when it comes to terrorism. Back in the 2000s, when it was not fenced, it allowed cross-border terrorism. Military officers recount that till the mid-2000s, terrorists from Pakistan would cross into India in hordes, as the range extends into Pakistan as well, with a substantial stretch lying in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK). Today, it is heavily fenced, and experts say infiltration from this route has reduced to a great extent.

Experts say that most of the infiltration now happens from semi-flat border terrains, such as the Ramgarh-Chambliyal belt and the Khora Post area in Samba sector. But there are instances when terrorists, trained by the Pakistani military, take Pir Panjal's treacherous route to enter India. Despite being well guarded, it remains one of the most difficult terrains to secure. The terrorists behind the Pahalgam carnage used the Pir Panjal forest cover to their advantage. The jungles of the Pir Panjal range, full of coniferous trees like pine, fir and deodar, form a canopy stretching for kilometres across the Line of Control (LoC), making it difficult for surveillance drones to do their job efficiently. However, there are also stretches of open, rocky ground, along with terrain that remains snow-covered for much of the year. This is terrain where there is heavy deployment of the Indian Army, and where special forces units operate in full force. A serving Lt Colonel says ambushes are set up in these forests depending on intelligence that comes from the ground.

## Sensex, Nifty post notable losses amid weak global cues, sustained FII selling

New Delhi,(Agency)

The Indian equity markets posted sharp losses early on Thursday tracking cautious global cues and sustained foreign institutional selling, after the recent rally. As of 9.25 am, Sensex lost 671 points, or 0.85 per cent, to reach 77,845 and Nifty dipped 179 points, or 0.74 per cent, to reach 24,198. Main broad-cap indices showed divergence with the benchmark indices, as the Nifty Midcap 100 dipped 0.34 per cent, and the Nifty Smallcap 100 lost 0.16 per cent. All sectoral indices traded in red except pharma as well as oil and gas up 0.71 per cent and 0.02 per cent. Nifty auto and consumer durables were the top losers down 1.03 per cent and 1.61 per cent respectively. (Also read: BSE gets SEBI nod to launch derivatives on Sensex Next 30 index)

The immediate support zone of Nifty is placed at near 24,100-24,000, while resistance is observed in the 24,400-24,500 range. In the previous session, benchmark indices on a weaker note after failing to sustain higher levels. Selling pressure was visible in banking and financial stocks following their recent outperformance. IT stocks also remained weak, tracking subdued global cues and uncertainty in overseas markets. FMCG, Energy and other defensive sectors showed relative resilience.

The US markets gained after President Donald Trump extended a ceasefire with Iran, saying it was warranted due to Tehran's "seriously fractured" government. President Trump said the ceasefire will be in place until Iran submits a proposal or concludes talks, even as the US military continues its blockade of Iranian ports. On the fundamental side, earnings remain a strong tailwind, with Q1 earnings growth tracking and forward EPS estimates seeing upward revision, market participants said.

## HDFC Defence Fund boosts stakes in HAL, Eicher, Aequs, Sedemac; stocks in focus

New Delhi,(Agency)

Mutual Funds made several significant changes to their portfolios during the last quarter of the previous financial year, 2025-26. HDFC Defence Fund raised stakes in four companies - Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Eicher Motors, Aequs Limited and Sedemac Mechatronics. The fund house invested in the select companies with strong fundamentals, growth potential, and stable performance. Notably, the investments were across sectors such as defense, auto, manufacturing, and industrial companies.

### Hindustan Aeronautics Limited

HAL is one of leading defence PSU company in the country, manufacturing fighter aircraft, helicopters, and aviation systems. HAL shares were trading at around Rs 4,360.80 as compared to its 52-week high of Rs 5,166. The fund house purchased 50,000 shares of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, bringing its total holdings to 2.55 million shares.

### Eicher Motors

Eicher Motors manufactures popular Royal Enfield motorcycle and is also engaged in the business of commercial vehicles. The company's shares were trading at around Rs 7,112.50 at the time of writing this article on Thursday. The stock is down 12 per cent from its 52-week high of Rs 8,233. The fund infused money to buy 45,000 stocks of the company. At present, HDFC Defence Fund possesses 4.95 lakh shares of Eicher Motors.

### Aequs Limited

Aequs has a diversified manufacturing business, operating in the aerospace, consumer, and industrial sectors. The company's shares were trading at around Rs 182.72 today, while its 52-week is Rs 206. The fund purchased 10.51 lakh shares, bringing its total holding to 17.68 lakh shares.

### Sedemac Mechatronics

HDFC Defence Fund infused money to buy shares of Sedemac. The fund house purchased the shares of the particular company for the first time.

## India's gross FDI remains strong, but net flows stay near record lows: Morgan Stanley

New Delhi,(Agency)

India's foreign direct investment (FDI) outlook remains mixed, with strong gross inflows offset by persistently weak net inflows, according to a report by Morgan Stanley. The report noted that gross FDI is likely to remain well supported, driven by both greenfield and brownfield investments. However, net FDI is expected to stay subdued in the near term due to higher repatriation of capital and rising outward investments by Indian firms.

"The outlook for gross FDI remains constructive, even as net FDI may remain subdued in the near term," the report said. Gross FDI refers to total foreign investment entering a country, while net FDI is the residual amount after accounting for repatriation of profits and capital, as well as outward investments by domestic companies. According to the report, gross FDI equity inflows into India rose to \$90.8 billion on a 12-month trailing basis in January 2026, equivalent to 2.3% of GDP. This represents a 13% year-on-year increase from \$80.3 billion in January 2025. Gross FDI excluding repatriation also climbed to a three-year high of \$36.3 billion, up 38.4% year-on-year. In contrast, net FDI remained near historic lows at just \$0.5 billion, weighed down by elevated capital repatriation and a sharp rise in outward investment. Repatriation has stayed above \$50 billion for the second consecutive year, while outward FDI has surged to \$35.8 billion—more than 2.5 times higher over the past two years. The report highlighted that while headline inflows remain strong, net FDI trends are more critical from an external stability perspective, as they represent a more durable source of financing for India's current account.

# Global oil shock could push up electricity prices in India: Report

**Coal currently accounts for roughly 70% of India's electricity generation, making the country particularly sensitive to changes in its price.**

New Delhi,(Agency)

A recent report by ISI Markets has warned that global oil supply disruptions could feed into higher electricity prices in India, underscoring the country's continued exposure to fluctuations in fossil fuel markets. The report draws a close connection between international energy prices and domestic power tariffs, noting that movements in crude oil and coal have historically been mirrored in India's electricity costs. With oil prices expected to rise in the event of supply shocks—such

as disruptions along key global shipping routes—the impact is likely to be transmitted to end users, including households and industries. "Households and corporates—especially in industry—will have to contend with rising electricity prices resulting from supply shocks," the report observed.

It added that any global shift toward coal as an alternative during periods of oil disruption could place additional upward pressure on coal prices. Given coal's central role in India's energy system, such trends would have direct implications for power tariffs. Coal currently accounts for roughly 70% of India's electricity generation, making the country particularly sensitive to changes in its price. According to the report, this heavy dependence means that volatility in global fossil fuel markets—whether in oil or

coal—tends to feed through into domestic electricity pricing. Historical patterns reinforce this link, with past spikes in crude oil and coal prices often coinciding



with increases in electricity tariffs. The report suggests that this correlation is likely to persist in the absence of a significant structural shift in the energy

mix. At the same time, it highlights India's accelerating transition toward renewable energy as a key long-term buffer against such volatility. Since 2017, renewable sources have accounted for the majority of new power capacity additions in the country, driven largely by solar and wind projects. However, the report points out a gap between installed capacity and actual electricity generation from renewables, indicating challenges in utilisation, integration, and grid efficiency.

Despite these constraints, India's expansion of clean energy is positioned as central to its broader strategy to enhance energy security, reduce import dependence, and stabilise long-term power costs.

The report concludes that sustained investment in renewable energy, coupled with improvements in system efficiency and grid performance, will be essential if India is to better insulate itself from future global energy price shocks.

## Rs 2 lakh outstanding balance limit, peer-to-peer transaction capped at Rs 25,000 -- Here's all about RBI's draft PPI guidelines

New Delhi,(Agency)

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released the Master Direction on Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPIs), 2026, a conducive framework for long term growth of PPIs with enhanced security of transactions. RBI has said that these directions shall apply to all Prepaid Payment Instrument (PPI) Issuers and System Participants, while a non-bank entity shall seek authorisation for issuance of PPIs by submitting an application. The central bank has said a non-bank applicant shall have a minimum net-worth of Rs 5 crore, and shall submit a certificate from its statutory auditor. A non-bank PPI issuer shall attain a minimum net-worth of Rs 15 crore by the end of the third financial year of authorisation. The minimum net-worth, as applicable, shall be maintained by a non-bank PPI issuer on an ongoing basis. RBI draft PPI guidelines: Issuance and Loading of PPIs. In its Conduct of PPI Business guidelines RBI clearly laid down instructions for Issuance and Loading of PPIs. RBI has mentioned the

following points  
a. A PPI may be issued as a card, wallet, or in any such form/instrument which can be used to access the PPI and to use the amount therein. No PPI shall be issued in the form of a paper voucher.



- b. A PPI may be loaded by debit to a bank account or another PPI, or by cash, unless specified otherwise. A Special Purpose PPI may be loaded by a credit card as well.
- c. A bank PPI issuer may load PPI through Business Correspondents (BCs).
- d. A non-bank PPI issuer may load PPI through its agents in person, in accordance with the provisions outlined by RBI in circular

C O . D P S S . P O L C . N o . S - 384/02.32.001/2021-2022 dated August 03, 2021 on 'Framework for Outsourcing of Payment and Settlement-related Activities by Payment System Operators', as amended from time to time. RBI framework on General Purpose PPI

RBI said a Full-KYC PPI would be issued after completing customer due diligence (CDD) process, in accordance with MD on KYC. A Full-KYC PPI shall be issued subject to the following conditions: i. An issuer can issue only one such PPI to a holder at any point in time.

ii. Such PPI should have a minimum validity of one year from the date of issuance. iii. The amount outstanding in such PPI shall not exceed Rs 2,00,000 at any point of time.

iv. The total amount debited from such PPI during a month should not exceed Rs 2,00,000. PPI issuer may set limits within these ceilings, considering the risk profile of the PPI holder, other operational risks, etc.

## Asian stocks retreat, oil tops USD 100 despite fresh records on Wall Street

**A growing sense of unease over prospects for an end to the Iran war, which is in its eighth week, is weighing on investor sentiment even after US President Donald Trump extended a ceasefire.**

HONG KONG,(Agency)

Stocks retreated in Asia on Thursday after an initial jump that pushed Japan's Nikkei 225 index above 60,000 for the first time, while oil prices gained as investors reacted to shaky prospects for more talks on ending the war with Iran.

US futures also fell back after indexes on Wall Street rallied to records a day earlier, helped by strong corporate earnings. Markets in Japan and South Korea briefly touched new records,

driven by buying of tech shares. Tokyo's Nikkei 225 lost 1.5% to 58,707.60 after climbing to 60,013.98. South Korea's Kospi was 0.1% lower at 6,414.57, giving up earlier gains after briefly surpassing 6,500. The government reported a better-than-expected 1.7% annual economic growth rate for the January-March quarter, boosted by strong exports, particularly of computer chips used in the artificial intelligence boom.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng shed 1.1% to 25,865.88, while the Shanghai Composite index fell 0.8% to 4,073.71. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 declined 0.8% to 8,770.70. Taiwan's Taiex sank 1.6% and the Sensex in India lost 0.6%.

A growing sense of unease over prospects for an end to the Iran war, which is in its eighth week, is weighing on investor sentiment even after US President Donald Trump extended a ceasefire. It's

unclear whether and when another round of peace talks will take place.

Iran fired on three ships in the Strait of Hormuz on Wednesday after the US began imposing a sea blockade of Iranian ports last week, and Trump said the US would continue its blockade of Iranian ports. Maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, where roughly a fifth of the world's oil normally passed before the war, is still largely halted and the likelihood of its reopening dimmed after Iran's Revolutionary Guard seized two of the three ships that were attacked. Global energy prices have surged on the Iran war energy shock. Brent crude, the international standard, was 1.5% higher early Thursday at USD 103.39 per barrel. It was around USD 70 a barrel before the Iran war began in late February.

Benchmark US crude was up 1.8% to USD 94.66 per barrel.



around 4 million units annually," he added.

Currently, Maruti Suzuki operates manufacturing facilities in Gurugram, Manesar and Kharkhoda in Haryana, along with Hansalpur in Gujarat, with a combined installed capacity of approximately 2.4 million units per year. As part of its expansion plans, the company has identified land for a fifth manufacturing plant at Khoraj Industrial Estate in Sanand, Gujarat. Once fully operational, the new facility is expected to add an annual capacity of 1 million units. Maruti Suzuki presently produces 17 models across more than 650 variants, serving both domestic and international markets.

## Petrol, diesel prices be increased to Rs 25-28 per litre after state assembly polls? Petroleum ministry says...

**In a post on X, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has said that such media reports are "fake", adding that fuel rates remain unchanged.**

New Delhi,(Agency)

The Petroleum ministry has dismissed reports of increase in petrol and diesel prices post elections in several states.

In a post on X, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has said that such media reports are "fake", adding that fuel rates remain unchanged. "There are some news reports suggesting a price hike of petrol and diesel. It is hereby clarified that there is no such proposal under consideration by the Government," Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has tweeted. The ministry said that such news items are designed to create fear and panic amongst the citizens and are



mischievous and misleading. "In fact, India is the only country where petrol and diesel prices haven't increased in the last 4 years. Govt of India and Oil PSUs have taken relentless steps in order to insulate the Indian citizens from steep increases in

international prices," Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas wrote. Government's rebuttal on a prospective price rise of petrol and diesel came on the back of the report published by Kotak Institutional Equities. The

report indicated that petrol and diesel prices in India could undergo a steep hike after the ongoing state assembly elections get over on April 29. Kotak Institutional Equities said that petrol and diesel could see a price rise of Rs 25-28 per litre, amidst crude oil rates hovering close to \$120 per barrel. Global oil prices edged higher on Thursday due to a stalemate over the next round of peace talks between the United States and Iran that kept the energy artery Strait of Hormuz effectively closed. The June contract for Brent on the Intercontinental Exchange traded at \$103.35 a barrel, up around 4 per cent from the previous close. Meanwhile the June futures contract for West Texas Intermediate on the New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX) rose 1.62 per cent to 94.47 a barrel. The central government has time and again reiterated that it remains committed to ensure the affordability of essential fuels including petrol, diesel, LPG.

Short news

## In Finland, Mann urges diaspora to be a catalyst in further propelling economic development of Punjab

Chandigarh.(Agency)

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Wednesday urged the Punjabi diaspora in Finland to play an active role in the socio-economic development of the state. The chief minister, who is on a visit to Finland, along with a Punjab government delegation, on investment promotion outreach, said Punjab is making rapid development under the incumbent regime, and every Punjabi should be a part of this historic move.

Mann urged the diaspora to act as a catalyst in further propelling the economic development of the state through their expertise.

Mann also advocated for a deeper and mutual collaboration with Finland in the area of the White Revolution, particularly in dairy systems, animal science and value-added food processing to benefit the farmers of the state.

Highlighting that Punjab has a good partnership with Finland as teachers from the state are sent here for training on existing ties, the chief minister expressed his keenness to further strengthen this mutually beneficial partnership to boost the progress of Punjab and the prosperity of its people. "Finland's economy is robust and progressive, with key areas of manufacturing, including electronics, engineering and forest products driving exports, along with dairy and other sectors," Mann said.

Mann also held a detailed meeting with Indian Ambassador to Finland Hemant H Kotalwar and discussed avenues for boosting bilateral trade and strengthening cooperation between Punjab and Finland.

## Lifting trash from one point only to dump it in close proximity: Residents of Daumajra wake up to new reality

Chandigarh. (Agency)

Residents of Dadumajra on Wednesday woke up to a brazen civic apathy, something which they videographed too — trucks lifting trash from one point of the dump only to transfer it to the other point hardly 100 feet away.

While Municipal Corporation (MC) Commissioner Amit Kumar refused to comment on the issue when asked, Chandigarh Mayor Saurabh Joshi said that the matter, if it occurred, will not be taken "lightly". "I will ask the authorities concerned as to why this is happening. If this has happened, it will not be taken lightly. Dump is a serious issue for all of us. Strict action shall be taken for this," Joshi said.

He added that today itself the Sub Divisional Officer told him that CCTVs have been installed.

Dyal Krishan, a local resident while speaking to The Indian Express, said that the authorities are just pretending that the waste is being cleared and place levelled. "However, when we tracked the movement of trucks, they were dumping the lifted waste at a point nearby. This does not solve the solution. It is just like spreading the waste," he said.

"People are just being fooled. We have shot the video of the entire sequence from point A to point B. This is not the way things are done. Only a few days ago the Mayor came here to inspect and say that the waste should be cleared as soon as possible. But this is how they are clearing the present trash."

## Customs begins disposing of 16 tonnes of trafficked cigarettes worth Rs 17 crore seized from Kerala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.(Agency)

In one of the biggest purges it has undertaken, the customs department has begun disposing of around 16 tonnes of cigarettes that were brought into the country without paying taxes.

The contraband, whose market value has been pegged at Rs 17.43 crore, is being destroyed at a high-temperature cement kiln. Customs sources said the consignments dispatched for disposal comprised 1.07 crore cigarette sticks that were seized from the Malabar region in the past two years. The disposal is being done in an undisclosed cement factory in central Kerala and the whole exercise is expected to take up to 30 days, said a customs source.

"Up to 500kg cigarettes are disposed of each day. The contraband was seized from Malappuram, Thrissur and Kozhikode districts. We occasionally dispose of smaller quantities of cigarettes like 500 to 1,000 kg. However, this time the volume of contraband to be destroyed is huge," the source said.

The seized contraband include those smuggled via countries such as Nepal and Bangladesh or counterfeits made here.

"There is a practice of buying cigarettes that have crossed expiry date from other states and then repackaging them as foreign brands. Since the owners do not show records to reflect they are genuinely imported goods, we treat them as smuggled," said a source.

# Gadoli encounter: Court cites self-defence, procedural lapses for acquittal of 5 cops

Haryana cops were cleared in 2016 encounter by court on March 27

Mumbai.(Agency)

IN THE detailed judgment acquitting five Haryana policemen for the alleged fake encounter of gangster Sandeep Gadoli, the sessions court said that the policemen had fired in self-defence.

The court noted that Gadoli was a convict who had been sentenced to life imprisonment and was out on bail, hence there was a reasonable apprehension "enough to put the right of self defence into operation".

The accused policemen had claimed that they had fired at Gadoli in a hotel room in Andheri on February 7, 2016, in self-defence after he shot at them first.

"...analyzing and scrutinising the material with the plea of self-defence raised by accused police personnel, it is established in all probability that the police personnel who were on duty for apprehending a person with heavy criminal antecedents i.e. a life convict on bail have duly made out circumstances to



recognise the right of private defence within certain reasonable limits while apprehending Sandip Gadoli.... One police person was having grievous injury on his forehead due to firearm. These bodily injuries caused to the police persons is certainly reasonable apprehension enough to put the right of self defence into operation," the court said in the order, which was made available on Wednesday.

On March 27, the court had acquitted the five

men along with two others from the case. The court said that two of the policemen had sustained injuries including on a vital part, that is his forehead.

"...the accused police personnel have brought on record probabilities and on weighing the same they are acceptable, natural, reasonable, and consistent with human experience. Hence, in view of the above discussion and the probable eventualities brought by accused persons on record by way of cross-examination, I accept the plea of accused police personnel that they acted in their self-defence in the given set of circumstances," the court said. It also said that there was no sanction to prosecute the men, although they were public servants, who were discharging their official duty. "...even if it is assumed that the accused persons acted in excess of their official duty, then also they are entitled to claim protection of section 197 of the Criminal Procedure Code," the court said.

## Nod for Metro 5 & 5A linking Thane, Bhiwandi, Kalyan and Ulhasnagar

The decisions were taken at a meeting of the state's infrastructure development committee chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

Mumbai. (Agency)

The State government on Wednesday approved the Rs 18,130.55 crore Mumbai Metro Line 5 and 5A project, cleared a proposal to raise loans for land acquisition for three expressways in Vidarbha, and sanctioned Rs 1,063 crore for works related to the Nashik-Trimbakeshwar Kumbh Mela in 2027. The decisions were taken at a meeting of the state's infrastructure development committee chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.



**Changes to Metro 5**

Earlier a 24.9-km line with 17 stations at the cost of Rs 8,416.51 crore, a list of changes to the Metro line 5 between Kapurbawdi, Thane to Bhiwandi to Kalyan were approved. The first phase of the Line 5, from Thane to Bhiwandi,

was left largely unchanged as it nears completion. This portion with six elevated stations over 11.9 km has a price tag of Rs 6,741.34 crore.

In the remaining portion, between Bhiwandi to Kalyan, however, one station between

Dhamankar Naka and Temghar city was made underground. With a length of 10.475 km, the phase 2 has over 6 stations at a cost of Rs 7,326.13 crore.

The one station was made underground due to the presence of a flyover on the route in Bhiwandi, where the construction of an elevated metro would require its demolition, exponentially adding to traffic. Additionally, a double decker integrated metro and flyover will be constructed between Ranjanoli Junction and Durgadi Chowk.

The Kalyan APMC station has also been removed from the line's alignment, as it is now a part of the Line 12. The government also approved the Line's extension, Line 5A, which will extend 11.83 km with seven stations, at a cost of Rs 4,063.08 crore.

## APCRDA intensifies second phase of land pooling

VIJAYAWADA.(Agency)

The Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA) is pressing ahead with the second phase of the Land Pooling Scheme (LPS 2.0) for Amaravati.

On Wednesday, APCRDA Additional Commissioner A Bhargava Teja, inspected the ongoing employment survey in Vaddamanu, Karlapudi, and Endrayi villages, issuing directions to officials and survey staff. Farmers interacting with him expressed satisfaction over government assurances of annual lease payments, loan waivers, and yearly lease hikes. APCRDA officials confirmed that lease benefits under LPS 2.0 will begin from May 2026.

The inspection was attended by BL Chennakeshwar Rao (Director, Lands-Capital Region), G Panduranga Ramakrishnan (Deputy Director, Survey), N Yesuratnam (Deputy Collector) and survey teams.

In a separate development, Kollabattula Karthik formally assumed charge as Additional Commissioner of APCRDA at the headquarters in Rayapudi on Wednesday. After performing puja rituals in his chamber on the third floor, he was welcomed by Joint Director (Communications) G Ramaraju.



APCRDA Commissioner V Vijayarama Raju, A Bhargava Teja, Office Management Director Vallabhaneni Srinivas Rao, HR Director B Mallikarjuna Reddy, and others.

**Grievance Day for Amaravati farmers every Monday**

For the resolution of issues faced by farmers and agricultural labourers of the People's Capital Amaravati, a 'Grievance Day' is being conducted every Monday at the APCRDA Head Office in Rayapudi. The Grievance Day, previously held on Saturdays, will

be now held on Mondays.

From 10.00 am to 1.00 pm every Monday, the Commissioner and Additional Commissioner, along with senior officials from various departments, will receive petitions at the APCRDA office. Residents of the capital region are requested to take note of this change.

Additionally, for the convenience of farmers and local residents, petitions are received on working days during office hours at the Citizen Grievance Centre located at the APCRDA Head Office in Rayapudi.

## Andhra HC issues notice to govt on PG medical students' 'workload'

VIJAYAWADA.(Agency)

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Wednesday took cognisance of a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) alleging that postgraduate (PG) medical students in government medical colleges and teaching hospitals are being made to work beyond prescribed duty hours.

The court directed both the Centre and the State government to file detailed counter-affidavits in the matter. A division bench comprising Chief Justice Dhiraj Singh Thakur and Justice Challa Gunaranjan issued notices to the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Secretary, the National Medical Commission (NMC), the State Chief Secretary, the Director of Medical Education, and Dr NTR University of Health Sciences.

The matter has been posted for further hearing on June 17. The PIL was filed by Guntur-based senior doctor Dr A Venkateswarlu, who contended that PG medical students are being subjected to excessive workloads, often working up to 24 hours or more continuously.

During the hearing, counsel V. Lakshmi Harish, appearing for the petitioner, informed the court that in some instances, PG doctors were working up to 36 hours without a break. He argued that the guidelines of the National Medical Commission, which stipulate a maximum of 12 working hours except in emergencies, are not being implemented. Even in cases where doctors work extended hours during emergencies, they are entitled to compensatory rest the following day, he added.

## Gujarat High Court permits high-tension lines on agri land in Morbi

Court says projects of 'national importance' can't be stalled by objections of private landowners

Vadodara. (Agency)

Emphasising that projects of "national importance", such as the laying of electricity transmission lines, cannot be stalled by objections of private landowners, the Gujarat High Court recently dismissed petitions of farmers from Morbi district who had challenged an order from the administration, and permitted a transmission company to lay high-voltage lines on their agricultural land.

Justice HM Prachhahak dismissed the petitions, citing the accepted legal position that transmission projects aimed at evacuating large-scale renewable energy are matters of larger public interest. The Court agreed with the respondent company's submission, which stated that "private interests must yield to the larger public good".

The petitioners, who are landowners from

Rapar in Morbi district, had sought directions against the state authorities, including the district magistrate and collector of Morbi, who passed an order in July 2025, allowing Halvad Transmission Ltd. to lay an overhead transmission line under the transmission system for evacuation of additional 7GW of RE power from Khawda RE Park.

The petitioners' advocate VB Mehta submitted that no consent had been sought by the authorities from the landowners and that the notice issued in the newspapers, as part of the process, did not specify the lands through which the transmission lines would pass. The counsel also submitted apprehensions raised by the petitioners about the "psychological terror" of having high-

voltage transmission lines over fertile fields, stating that it "creates a continuous actionable hazard as agricultural



operations require presence from dawn to dusk, these lines pose a life-threatening risk to farmers, laborers, and livestock for the projected 25-year lifespan of the project... and diminish the mental well-being and labour productivity of the rural

community." The HC cited the principles laid down by the Supreme Court in the case of Power Grid Corporation of India that "for laying down any electricity supply-line by the licensee, there is no prior consent required by the licensee under the Indian Electricity Act, 2003..."

The HC considered the submissions of senior advocate Percy Kavina on behalf of the transmission company that the petitioners' obstruction, "based on a purely pecuniary claim for compensation, cannot be allowed to halt a project of national importance" and cited the judgments of various high courts that have held that projects of public interest cannot be obstructed by landowners as the "balance of convenience lies overwhelmingly with [the company]."



## NEWS BOX

## Laura Wolvaardt's South Africa outclass India to take 3-0 series lead



Mumbai. (Agency)

India scored their highest-ever total against South Africa but still suffered a nine-wicket thrashing at the hands of the home team, with skipper Laura Wolvaardt leading the way with a splendid ton in the third women's T20 International against South Africa here on Wednesday. South Africa thus took an unassailable 3-0 lead to clinch the five-match series. The remaining two WT20Is in Johannesburg and Benoni is now rendered inconsequential. Put in to bat, India made 192 for 4 -- their highest ever against South Africa -- with captain Harmanpreet Kaur and opener Shafali Verma scoring 66 and 64 respectively. But, South Africa captain Wolvaardt slammed 115 off just 53 balls while her opening partner Sune Luus struck 64 not out off 42 deliveries against a hapless Indian bowlers to easily chase down the target of 193 with 21 balls to spare and take an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-match series. South Africa reached 193 for 1 in 16.3 overs. This was the third highest successful run chase in women's T20I history after West Indies and England overhauled 212 and 198 against Australia and India respectively in 2023 and 2018.

Wolvaardt, who has been in top form in the series having made 51 and 54 in the first two matches, struck as many as 14 boundaries and five sixes while toying with the Indian bowlers. Luus, who had made 13 and 57 in the first two matches, hit six boundaries and two sixes. The South African duo were together for 183 runs for the opening wicket before Wolvaardt got out in the 16th over. Veteran India all-rounder Deepti Sharma failed yet again with the ball as she continued to search her first wicket in the series. She returned with figures of 0/46 in 3.3 overs on Wednesday. Earlier, captain Harmanpreet Kaur and opening batter Shafali Verma struck a half century each as India produced a far better batting performance to post 192 for 4. Shafali continued his impressive form as she struck his second consecutive half century while it was the first half ton for Harmanpreet in the series. She had made 47 not out and 12 in the first two games which India lost to trail 0-2 in the five-match series.

## BCCI is killing Indian players: Lalit Modi lashes out at board

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Former IPL chairman Lalit Modi has strongly criticised the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), accusing it of overworking players and prioritising money over player welfare.

Modi's comments came in response to an NDTV report which stated that India head coach Gautam Gambhir was unhappy with the team's packed schedule ahead of the upcoming one-off Test against Afghanistan. According to the report, Gambhir was concerned that several Indian players would be involved in the IPL 2026 final on May 31 and might have to join the national squad almost immediately for the Test match



against Afghanistan, which begins on June 6. This could force the selection committee to call up reserve Test players for the fixture, despite India's recent struggles in home red-ball cricket. Reacting to the report, Modi said that the board was "killing" Indian cricketers with relentless scheduling and treating them like "mules." "The BCCI is killing its players with the hectic scheduling. Guys, stop this outrageous scheduling you are putting the boys through. They need time with their families and just some time off. You do not need the money," Modi said. He further added that the board should focus on player welfare rather than financial concerns, claiming that the IPL had already created enough long-term financial security for Indian cricket.

"I created annuity revenue that the world envies. You will never have to worry about that while sitting in those chairs. Do something good with your decisions, for heaven's sake. The welfare of the players is paramount. Do not overwork them," he said. Earlier, India Test captain Shubman Gill had also spoken about the lack of preparation time before red-ball assignments, saying that there should be at least two weeks of camp before heading into a Test series.

# Donald Trump envoy pushes FIFA to replace Iran with Italy at World Cup 2026

**FIFA World Cup 2026 faces fresh controversy after a proposal to replace Iran with Italy from none other than USA President Donald Trump's envoy. While the suggestion has sparked debate, FIFA has not indicated any change to the current tournament lineup**

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

A fresh controversy has emerged ahead of the FIFA World Cup 2026, with a proposal from a key U.S. official putting Iran's participation under the spotlight. According to a report from the Financial Times, an envoy to Donald Trump has suggested that Italy replace Iran in the tournament. The suggestion, reportedly made to Gianni Infantino, has added a political dimension to an already sensitive situation involving travel concerns and geopolitical tensions. Iran had earlier raised the possibility of relocating their matches away from the United States due to the ongoing conflict, but

FIFA has so far maintained that the schedule will remain unchanged. U.S. special envoy Paolo Zampolli confirmed the suggestion while speaking to the Financial Times, framing it as both a footballing and personal aspiration. "I confirm I have suggested to Trump and (FIFA president Gianni) Infantino that Italy replace Iran at the World Cup. I'm an Italian native and it would be a dream to see the Azzurri at a US-hosted tournament. With four titles, they have the pedigree to justify inclusion," Zampolli said. The proposal has also drawn attention because of Italy's absence from the tournament. The four-time world champions failed to qualify after losing their playoff, marking a third straight World Cup miss, a surprising run for one of football's traditional powers. The idea, however, remains only a suggestion at this stage, with no official response from FIFA or other governing bodies.

**WILL IRAN PLAY FIFA WORLD CUP**

2026?

For now, Iran are still scheduled to participate in the tournament. The team has already qualified and is set to play its group-stage matches in the United States, with fixtures lined up in Los Angeles and Seattle. Despite

preparations are continuing as usual. Officials from Iran have echoed a similar stance, stating that the team will follow FIFA's final decision while continuing their preparations for the tournament.

**CAN FIFA REPLACE IRAN WITH ITALY IN THE WORLD CUP?**

Any potential replacement would ultimately be decided by FIFA. Under tournament regulations, the governing body has the authority to select a replacement team if a qualified nation withdraws. However, the process is not straightforward. Typically, continental confederations push for replacements from within their region. In this case, the Asian Football Confederation would likely argue for another Asian team to take Iran's spot. That makes Italy's inclusion highly unlikely unless FIFA makes an exceptional call. Despite their history and four World Cup titles, Italy did not qualify through the standard route.



earlier concerns about travel and requests to shift matches to Mexico, FIFA has indicated that all games will go ahead as planned. Gianni Infantino also reaffirmed during a recent visit to the Iranian camp that

## MI vs CSK: Will MS Dhoni spice up strange IPL El Clasico of fallen giants?

**IPL 2026, MI vs CSK: Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings face off in IPL 2026's first El Clasico on Thursday, but this time the contest carries a different edge, with both five-time champions still searching for consistency. The spotlight, as ever, is on MS Dhoni, who is on the verge of a return after a calf strain, while Rohit Sharma is also pushing to come back from a hamstring injury.**

Mumbai. (Agency)

Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings return to centre stage on Thursday, but this time the spotlight falls as much on who might return as on the contest itself. Two former champions still searching for consistency, two sides with five titles each, now looking to steady campaigns that have yet to find full rhythm. At the heart of it all is MS Dhoni, whose legacy continues to shape this rivalry. On the 12th anniversary of the IPL's first match, he was hailed as the league's greatest captain by a panel of experts, a reputation built on nights like the 2010 final, when his Chennai Super Kings beat a Sachin Tendulkar-led Mumbai Indians to win their first title. Sixteen years on, Dhoni is once again central to an MI vs CSK build-up. The former CSK captain is on the verge of a return after a calf strain, and his availability could shape the tone of IPL 2026's first El Clasico at the Wankhede on Thursday. There is similar anticipation around Rohit Sharma, who has been recovering from a hamstring injury. Both

were out in the middle during training on Wednesday, batting alongside each other in a scene that brought back memories of past contests.



**WILL DHONI, ROHIT RETURN?**

Their journeys have run alongside each other for nearly two decades.

Rohit Sharma and MS Dhoni first shared a field on October 1, 2006, in the Challenger Trophy in Chennai, one turning out for India Red, the other for India Blue. Since then, they have been part of 652 matches across formats, sometimes as teammates, often as opponents, and almost always at the centre

## Harry Kane, Luis Diaz send Bayern Munich past Leverkusen into German Cup final

LEVERKUSEN. (Agency)

Harry Kane and Luis Diaz scored as Bayern Munich won 2-0 at Bayer Leverkusen on Wednesday to reach the German Cup final for the first time since 2020.

Just three days after Bayern sealed back-to-back Bundesliga titles with a home win over Stuttgart, Kane and Diaz got the goals to keep hopes of a treble alive. Bayern's comfortable victory avenged their defeat by Leverkusen in the round of 16 last season. They will face either holders Stuttgart or Freiburg in the final. The Bavarian giants have won a record 20 German Cups but had not reached the showpiece in Berlin for six years, their longest drought since the turn of the century. "We're going to Berlin. I'm looking forward to it. It was a goal of ours to get to Berlin, to reach the final, experience that, the guys said it's an incredible

experience, so we've done nearly all the work," said Kane. "We've had a lot of away



games, tough games, we've had to grind it out. Now we've got one more to go. In a final anything is possible. We're feeling good." Leverkusen, the 2024 cup winners, were appearing in a third successive semi-final but struggled under the bright lights as

Bayern pinned them back. Diaz and Kane forced good saves from Leverkusen goalkeeper Mark Flekken inside the opening 20 minutes but the England captain eventually broke through. Jamal Musiala threaded a pass through from the right which was intended for Diaz, but Kane was on hand to smash in when the ball evaded the Colombian completely. Leverkusen improved after the break. Nathan Tella, who scored the only goal when Leverkusen eliminated Bayern last season, forced a spectacular save from Manuel Neuer early in the second half. Tella thumped a low shot that required Neuer to fully extend himself to swat the ball away. In the final half hour, Bayern had the better chances to score with Josip Stanisic, Kane and Diaz all going close to putting the match to bed.

## Lamine Yamal's World Cup 2026 hopes in doubt after FC Barcelona injury scare

**Delhi Capitals' Venugopal Rao addresses the controversial decision to bowl Nitish Rana for his full quota and the tactical middle-order collapse that handed SRH a 47-run victory in Hyderabad.**

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Lamine Yamal has sparked fresh injury concerns for FC Barcelona after limping off during their La Liga clash against Celta Vigo, putting both his club run-in and international ambitions under a cloud. The 18-year-old's early exit has now raised doubts over his availability for the upcoming FIFA World Cup 2026. Barcelona secured a narrow win to maintain their lead at the top of the table, but the result was overshadowed by Yamal's injury. The teenager, widely seen as one of

the brightest prospects in world football, had just given his side the lead before being forced off the pitch. Head coach Hansi Flick confirmed that the club is still awaiting clarity on the severity of the injury. "We have to wait until tomorrow. We have to see what it is. I think it's something, because he felt it and I think also after a goal he wouldn't have left the pitch without a reason. Of course, it's a pity that Lamine is injured now," Flick said. The concern within the squad was also evident, with teammate Gavi stressing how important Yamal has become to the side.

"To me Lamine is the best. Of course, for us it's a bad situation, because he's a very important player for us. He was very upset in the dressing room because he knows how crucial he is for us. I don't know how long the injury will take but I hope it's as short as possible," Gavi said.

**HOW DID LAMINE YAMAL GET**

**INJURED?**

Yamal's injury came at a moment that should have been a highlight. He won a penalty late in the first half and stepped up to convert it,



calmly putting Barcelona ahead. However, immediately after striking the ball, he pulled up and grabbed the back of his left leg. The forward dropped to the ground in discomfort even as teammates approached to celebrate. Medical staff attended to him on

the field, but it quickly became clear he would not be able to continue. Yamal walked off on his own before heading straight down the tunnel, rather than staying on the bench, which raised further concern about the seriousness of the issue. Initial reports have suggested a possible hamstring injury, with early assessments indicating a muscle tear in his left leg.

**WILL LAMINE YAMAL MISS FIFA WORLD CUP 2026?**

If the early diagnosis of a hamstring tear is confirmed, Yamal could be sidelined for around five weeks. That timeline would effectively rule him out of Barcelona's remaining fixtures this season, including the highly anticipated El Clasico against Real Madrid. More importantly, it puts his participation in the World Cup in serious doubt. The tournament is set to begin on June 11, leaving very little recovery time if the injury proves to be significant.



compelling contest, but not enough awareness from LSG on a night where two points slipped away far too easily. Three defeats in a row at home. Seven on the bounce at the venue. And now, a chase of 160 that never truly gathered shape. Lucknow Super Giants find themselves trapped in what feels like an Ekana Bhool Bhulaiya. Combinations have been shuffled, roles reassigned, surfaces tweaked, yet the outcome remains unchanged.

**THREE BALLS, THREE POOR SHOTS**

Even in the press box, there was a sense of unease after Rajasthan Royals were restricted. The plan to contain Vaibhav Suryavanshi had worked, but confidence in LSG's chase was fragile at best. Their struggles with the bat this season have rarely allowed for optimism. That unease proved justified.



# Medha Shankr

## On Marriage Proposals Before 12th Fail: 'Relatives Didn't Know I'll Be Successful'

Nearly three years after 12th Fail, which marked her acting debut, Medha Shankr is now gearing up for the release of her sophomore feature, *GINNY WEDSS SUNNY 2*. The film revolves around two individuals – a peppy Delhi girl and a shy small-town simpleton – and their families navigating the complexities of an arranged marriage. But do opposites really attract? Medha exclusively tells News18, “Yes, I do believe so. If two people have contrasting personalities, there will be attraction. But there should be similarities in their values.” One would assume that having earned the moniker of ‘national crush’ following the super success of 12th Fail, she would be flooded with attention from men. But Medha asserts that there have been no ‘proposals’.

She, in fact, recalls how her relatives would bring prospective matches before her first film happened, expecting her to meet men through arranged set-ups. “They would keep bringing this topic up earlier. They didn’t know that I would end up having a successful career. They would think that acting is just a hobby for me and that I would eventually go back home after four years,” she says.

But all of that changed post 12th Fail. “They would bring me rishtas earlier and I would go, ‘What is this?’ But after 12th Fail released, everyone went quiet. They were like, ‘Achcha, iska career kahin toh jaa raha hai.’ So, now, nobody brings me marriage rishtas,” Medha states. She heaves a sigh of relief that she has a supportive family, who doesn’t hurry her about tying the knot. Medha reveals that she herself is in no rush either. “There’s no pressure from home to get married. My dad has never put that kind of pressure on me. I’m lucky that way. But yes, he does tell me ki time se kar lena aur jisse karni ho, usse kar lena. He understands that my work needs me at present. Abhi time hai shaadi mein. But eventually, I do want to get married,” she remarks.

As for *GINNY WEDSS SUNNY 2*, Medha is sharing screen space with Avinash Tiwari and their chemistry has already captured the imagination of netizens. Talking about him, she shares, “Avinash and I’ve very different personalities. I wouldn’t call him shaant. In fact, it’s a whole character that he plays! I bring out his crazy side. So, if I’m not around, he could be quite boring (laughs).”

“Mere energy se he becomes very entertaining. He may tell you that he’s scared of me but don’t believe him! He’s the calmer one between the two of us. I, on the other hand, am very fun loving. I love laughing and my goal in life is to be happy. I don’t like people giving me stress. And the one thread of commonality between me and Avinash is that we’re both very sensitive,” she adds.



## Did Yuzvendra Chahal Send 'Cute' DM To Taniya Chatterjee While Married To Dhanashree Verma? Actress Reacts



Taniya Chatterjee recently made headlines after she revealed that Yuzvendra Chahal had messaged her on Instagram. During her interaction with the paparazzi, the actress exposed Yuzvendra Chahal’s DM, alleging that the former RCB spinner had called her “cute” in 2023. What started as a routine paparazzi moment quickly snowballed into a full-blown controversy, drawing intense social media attention, alleged PR involvement, and even legal action. The situation has only escalated further given its timing, coinciding with ongoing chatter about Chahal’s past relationship with ex-wife Dhanashree Verma, turning it into one of the most widely discussed topics in recent times. Recently, in an interview with the Free Press Journal, Taniya Chatterjee reacted to the buzz around her brief interaction with Yuzvendra Chahal, especially as it resurfaced amid discussions linked to Dhanashree’s earlier comments about alleged infidelity in their marriage. She said, “Oh my God. Like, I don’t even know him that well, I barely know him. It was just two DMs, only cute stuff. So that’s it.”

She further revealed that it was the public reaction that brought the matter into the limelight for her. Taniya added, “People kept messaging me and telling me that at that time he was married, so people were telling me that while being married he was sending me that message, cute one.”

Taniya avoided making any direct claims against Chahal, clarifying that their interaction was brief and harmless. She also said that the situation has been blown out of proportion.

Yuzvendra tied the knot to Dhanashree in December 2020, and they reportedly separated in 2024 before finalising their divorce in 2025. The “cute” DM by Chahal was sent in 2023, which has fuelled the speculations.

Meanwhile, Taniya earlier revealed that Chahal has filed a defamation case against her. Expressing her disappointment, she revealed that she has been getting trolled and humiliated but no one is questioning Yuzi.

## Virat Kohli's Ex-GF Reacts To Being Dragged In 'Instagram Like' Row; Deepika Padukone Shoots Amid 2nd Pregnancy



Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh are one of the most loved couples in town. After welcoming their first child, Dua, in 2024, the duo is now all set for their baby number 2. On Sunday, Deepika and Ranveer took to social media and announced their second pregnancy. Since then, the internet has been going gaga over the two. While Ranveer is currently riding high on the success of *Dhurandhar: The Revenge*, mommy-to-be Deepika is busy with her work commitments. A while ago, director Punit Malhotra took to social media and dropped a lovely picture with her from the sets.

AI is becoming quite a problem for many celebrities, with people using the technology to morph their images without their permission. This has led many, including Amitabh Bachchan and Salman Khan, to seek protection of their personality rights. Now, in a surprising turn of events, a new controversy has taken over the internet. Pictures of Bollywood actress Alia Bhatt promoting a Pakistani clothing brand have spread on social media.

At a time when the world continues to feel divided along cultural and political lines, a small yet meaningful moment from Anne Hathaway has struck a chord with fans online. While promoting *Devil Wears Prada 2*, the actor casually used the word “Inshallah” during an interaction – a phrase of Arabic origin that translates to “God willing.”

*Dhurandhar 2: The Revenge* is almost in its final run at the box office, and the Aditya Dhar directorial continues to break records. Recently, the movie became the third-highest-grossing Indian film, beating *Pushpa 2: The Rule*, and now, with its 33-day total standing at Rs 1,758.96 crore worldwide, can the Ranveer Singh starrer make another record? Time will tell. The first and second spots for the highest-grossing Indian films worldwide are held by Nitesh Tiwari’s 2016 Bollywood family sports drama *Dangal*, starring Aamir Khan (Rs 2,090 crore), and *Baahubali 2: The Conclusion* (Rs 1,788 crore). Now, as the spy thriller continues to earn at the box office, Ranveer Singh’s film is just Rs 30 crore away from dethroning *Baahubali 2: The Conclusion*, and the probability of that happening is quite high.



# Zeenat Aman

## 'Was Not A Very Good Actress,' Says Mumtaz: 'How Many Awards Did She Get? Not Everyone Is A Star'

Veteran actress Mumtaz has said that Zeenat Aman was not a good actress. She said that she is ready to apologise to Zeenat, but she stands by her statement. Mumtaz mentioned that the term “star” is used too loosely, and that only actresses like Madhubala, Rekha and Nargis were true stars among heroines. Mumtaz said, in a chat with Vicky Lalwani, “Zeenat Aman, okay. Zeenat Aman was not a very good actress, sorry to say—I would say sorry to her as well. How many awards did she get? If you call everyone a star, how will that work? Not everyone is a star.”

She added, “Not everyone can be a star; not everyone can be Dilip Kumar. It takes years to become a star—you lose your hair by the time you get there.” She mentioned, “Meena Kumari, Madhubala, Nargis, Rekha—these were the real stars among heroines.” This criticism comes after Mumtaz slammed Zeenat Aman’s take on live-in relationships in 2024. While Zeenat argued that live-in is a good way of life for couples, Mumtaz dragged her and said, “Zeenat should be careful with what she is advising. She has all of a sudden come into this huge social media popularity, and I can understand her excitement about sounding like a cool aunty.”

“But giving advice that is counter to our moral values is not the solution to increasing your following. Aap Zeenat ko hi le lo misaal ke taur par (Take Zeenat for example)... She knew Mazhar Khan for years before marrying him. Her marriage was a living hell. She should be the last



person doling out advice on relationships,” she had said then.

Meanwhile, Zeenat Aman was recently seen on *The Royals*, and her performance was appreciated by fans and critics alike. She will also appear in *Bun Tikki* with Abhay Deol and Shabana Azmi. The film is directed by Faraz Arif Ansari. Jyoti Deshpande, Dinesh Malhotra, and Marijke Desouza have produced the film under designer Manish Malhotra’s banner, Stage 5 Productions.

NEWS BOX

At least 10 killed in Pakistan mining project attack

**QUETTA. (Agency)**  
A group of militants killed at least 10 people at a copper and gold mining project in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province, officials said on Thursday, the latest violence in a region facing an armed separatist movement. About 40 militants on motorcycles and other vehicles stormed the mining project site of Pakistani company National Resources Private Limited (NRL) in the Darigwan area of Chagai district on Wednesday. "The attack left ten people dead, including seven workers and three security personnel," a local administration official told AFP on condition of anonymity as he was not authorised to speak to the media. "There are unconfirmed reports that militants also took some employees hostage," he added. A local police official, also speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed the details of the attack to AFP. The company acknowledged the attack late Wednesday, saying security forces responded "promptly and have secured the area". No group claimed responsibility, but local ethnic separatist groups have intensified their attacks in the region in recent years, including on mining projects. Pakistan's poorest province and largest by landmass, Balochistan lags behind the rest of the country in almost every index, including education, employment and economic development. Baloch separatists accuse Pakistan's government of exploiting the province's natural gas and abundant mineral resources without benefiting the local population. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), the province's most active armed separatist group, in February launched a string of coordinated attacks across the region that killed more than 190 people. Separatists have in the past killed workers based on their ethnicity, targeting ethnic Punjabis and Sindhis and accusing them of being outsiders to the province.

A look at China's behind-the-scenes role in Iran war diplomacy

**BANGKOK. (Agency)**  
China's role as an unofficial mediator in the latest war in West Asia is drawing attention across the world as it seeks to project the image of being a responsible global power, while US actions are straining its long-standing alliances. China's profile in international diplomacy has risen in recent years, thanks to active efforts from its diplomats. Long reluctant to get involved in conflicts far from its borders, it has nevertheless emerged as a major player with attempts to mediate conflicts from Southeast Asia to Europe. With the Iran war, Beijing is not an official mediator, but all parties — including Washington and Tehran — say it has played an important role in trying to de-escalate the conflict.

Experts say Beijing's strategies for diplomacy in multiple conflicts have looked similar and have had mixed success in influencing negotiations, but the efforts come at an opportune time, as US actions under President Donald Trump have increased tensions with traditional diplomatic allies.

In the Iran war, experts say, China's close economic and political ties to Tehran put it in a unique position of influence as the conflict hurts the global energy supply, especially in Asia. Trump says China encouraged Iran to negotiate ceasefire.

Trump has said he believes China helped encourage Iran to negotiate the fragile ceasefire that he has now extended. Diplomats told The Associated Press that Beijing, the biggest purchaser of sanctioned Iranian oil, used its leverage to urge the Iranians back to the negotiating table for historic face-to-face talks in Pakistan earlier this month. Beijing has not confirmed that account, likely because it does not want to be seen as part of a US-led security framework, said Yaqi Li, a researcher at the S.

Pentagon assessment says clearing Hormuz Strait mines could take six months

**WASHINGTON. (Agency)**  
A Pentagon assessment said it could take six months to completely clear the Strait of Hormuz of Iranian-laid mines, which could keep oil prices high, the Washington Post reported on Wednesday.

Iran has all but blocked the vital waterway since the start of a war with the United States and Israel, sharply driving up oil and gas prices and disrupting the global economy. The Strait — through which one-fifth of the world's oil and gas passes in peacetime — has remained largely closed during a shaky ceasefire, with the US imposing its own blockade.

Even if hostilities end and the blockade lifts, it could take months to clear the waterway of mines, according to a Pentagon assessment, the Washington Post reported, citing officials close to the discussion. The assessment added that it was unlikely such an operation would begin before the end of the war.

The six-month estimate was shared with members of the House Armed Services Committee during a classified briefing, the Post reported. Lawmakers were told that Iran may have placed 20 or more mines in and around the strait, some floated remotely using GPS technology which makes them harder to detect, according to the report. AFP has contacted the Department of Defense for comment. Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell told the Washington Post that its information was "inaccurate." Iran's Revolutionary Guards have warned of a "danger zone" covering 1,400 square kilometres — 14 times the size of Paris — where mines may be present.

Iran's parliament speaker said the Islamic republic would not reopen the strait as long as the US naval blockade remained. A spokesman for German transportation giant Hapag-Lloyd cautioned last week that shippers needed details on viable routes as they remain fearful of mines. When the Hormuz Strait briefly reopened at the start of the ceasefire this month, only a few ships trickled through amid fears of attacks or mines. Earlier in April, the US Navy said its ships transited the waterway to begin removing the mines, but that claim was denied by Iran's Revolutionary Guard, which threatened any military vessels attempting to cross the channel.

Lebanese journalist killed as Israeli strike hits house where she sought cover

**Amal Khalil was covering renewed Israel-Hezbollah fighting that began in early March amid a wider regional war, and had taken shelter in a house in al-Tiri after an earlier Israeli strike hit near her vehicle.**

**Beirut. (Agency)**  
A Lebanese journalist was killed Wednesday in an Israeli airstrike on a house in southern Lebanon where she had taken cover while reporting on the Israel-Hezbollah war. Her body was only retrieved from the rubble hours later, rescue workers said. The daily Al-Akhabr newspaper says its reporter Amal Khalil was killed in the southern village of al-Tiri. Khalil had been covering

the conflict in Lebanon between Israel and the Lebanese Hezbollah militant group that resumed in early March, in the shadow of the US-Israeli war in Iran. She took cover in the house in al-Tiri after an earlier Israeli airstrike hit near the car she was traveling in with another colleague. The Lebanese health ministry said the first strike killed two people. A second Israeli strike then hit the house in al-Tiri where Khalil and her colleague Zeinab Faraj had taken cover. At first, rescue workers were able to get to Faraj, who was seriously wounded, and retrieve the bodies of two killed in the first airstrike. But they were fired on by Israeli forces so they were forced to halt attempts to reach Khalil, the ministry said. Khalil remained under the rubble for hours before the Lebanese army, civil defense and the Lebanese Red Cross were able to get to the scene hours later. Khalil's body was retrieved shortly before midnight, at least six hours after the

strike. Israel's military said individuals in the village had violated the ceasefire, endangering its troops. Israel denied that it targets journalists or that it prevented

between Israeli and Lebanese officials in Washington on extending the ceasefire that went into effect last Friday. Khalil, who was from southern Lebanon, had been covering

the area since 2006 for al-Akhabr. Her latest reporting was about Israeli demolitions of Lebanese homes in villages where Israeli troops are now positioned inside Lebanon. Her death brings to nine the number of journalists killed in Lebanon so far this year.

At least 2,300 people have been killed in Israeli strikes and more than 1 million displaced since the latest Israel-Hezbollah war erupted on March 2. Earlier on Wednesday, Reporters Without Borders called for international

pressure on the Israeli army to allow Khalil's rescue. Committee to Protect Journalists expressed its "outrage" at the apparent targeting of the two journalists and warned the obstruction of rescue efforts "may amount to a war crime."



rescue teams from reaching the area. It said the incident was under review. "Killing of journalists is a crime and a flagrant violation of international and humanitarian law," said Lebanon's Information Minister Paul Morcos. Khalil's death comes on the eve of the second round of direct talks

Iran says won't reopen Hormuz as long as US blockade remains

**Under orders from Trump, the US Navy is attempting to block vessels heading to or from Iranian ports, seeking to ramp up pressure on the Iranian economy even without all-out war.**

**BEIRUT. (Agency)**  
Iran vowed Wednesday not to reopen the Strait of Hormuz so long as a US naval blockade remained in place despite a ceasefire extension, as it announced the seizure of two ships trying to cross the strategic waterway. As the clock ticked for a return to the war that has engulfed the region, US President Donald Trump had said Tuesday he would maintain the truce to allow more time for Pakistani-brokered peace talks. Iran said it welcomed the efforts by Pakistan but made no other comment on Trump's announcement.

"A complete ceasefire only has meaning if it is not violated through a naval blockade," said Iranian parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, who led Tehran's delegation in the first round of talks in Islamabad.

"Reopening the Strait of Hormuz is not



possible amid a blatant violation of the ceasefire." Oil prices, which have soared since Israel and the United States attacked Iran on February 28, kept inching up from the uncertainty on whether war will resume, although US stock prices gained ground. Trump had said he wanted to give time for Iran's "fractured" leadership to come up with a proposal, in what many

observers saw as a face-saving way to avoid renewed war. Trump told the New York Post that talks could resume in Pakistan within two to three days, even though Iran has not confirmed participation and Vice President JD Vance put on hold his travel to Islamabad on Tuesday. Trump also claimed that Iran at his request had halted alleged plans to execute eight women arrested over massive anti-government protests in the weeks before the attack. But Iran's judiciary described his remarks as "false news", saying the women had never faced the death penalty. Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards said they forced two ships to the Iranian shore from the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow gateway for one-fifth of the world's oil. "The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps naval force this morning identified and stopped in the Strait of Hormuz two violating ships," the Guards said in a statement. They identified the vessels as the Panama-flagged container ship MSC Francesca and the Liberia-flagged Epaminondas.

Iran rejects Trump's claim of 'fractured' leadership, calls remarks propaganda

**DALLAS. (Agency)**  
Iran on Wednesday dismissed US President Donald Trump's claim that its leadership is "seriously fractured", accusing him of spreading falsehoods and engaging in propaganda amid ongoing tensions over a ceasefire and negotiations. Responding to the claim, Seyyed Mehdi Tabatabaei, Deputy of Communications and Information Dissemination in the office of the President of Iran, said that assertions of division among Iran's leadership are part of an "enemy's unplayed political and propaganda game." In a post on X, Tabatabaei emphasised unity within the country, stating, "The line of discord and division among the country's highest officials is the enemy's unplayed political and propaganda game against Iran. The unity and consensus among the field, the street, and diplomacy these days is unprecedented and exemplary." He further criticised the US, in a veiled reference, saying, "Instead of weaving lies, they should cease their breaches of promise, bullying, and deceit; the door to negotiation based on fairness, dignity, and rationality remains open."

The remarks came after Trump, in a post on Truth Social, claimed that divisions within Iran's leadership had prompted a request to delay potential military action against the country. On Tuesday, Trump announced the extension of the ceasefire with Iran, citing the need to allow Tehran's leadership more time to formulate a unified proposal for negotiations. Trump, in his post, stated that the decision followed concerns over internal divisions within Iran's government and appeals from international stakeholders. Based on the fact that the Government of Iran is seriously fractured, not unexpectedly so and, upon the request of Field Marshal Asim Munir, and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, of Pakistan, we have been asked to hold our Attack on the Country of Iran until their leaders and representatives can come up with a unified proposal," the post read. Trump further said he had directed the US military to continue a blockade while extending the ceasefire, adding that forces would "remain ready and able" until Iran presents a unified proposal and discussions are concluded. "I have therefore directed our Military to continue the Blockade and, in all other respects, remain ready and able, and will therefore extend the Ceasefire until such time as their proposal is submitted, and discussions are concluded, one way or the other," the post added. However, diplomatic signals from Iran indicate conditions for restarting negotiations. Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations Amir Saeid Iravani said that Tehran is willing to resume talks only after the United States ends its naval blockade of Iranian ports, which Iran considers a violation of the ceasefire deal.

Missing for 3 days, Bangladesh temple caretaker's body found hanging from tree

**A temple caretaker in Bangladesh, missing for three days after being called out by unidentified individuals, was found hanging from a tree in a remote hilly area of Cox's Bazar.**

**JERUSALEM. (Agency)**  
A temple caretaker who had been missing for three days was found dead in a hilly area in Bangladesh's Sadar Upazila on Wednesday, Daily Sun reported citing police. The victim, identified as Nayan Das, 35, was from Satkania and worked at the Pulishshora Ghona Naag Panchami Temple in Khurushkhul Union. This is the first reported incident of a Hindu killing in Bangladesh after general elections were held earlier this year. The country has witnessed several killings of Hindus since the ousting of former Prime Minister

Sheikh Hasina. According to police and local sources, a group of unidentified individuals allegedly called Nayan out of his residence in



the Khurushkul area around 9 pm on Sunday. He went missing soon after. Family members filed a general diary (internal police record of daily station events) with Cox's Bazar Sadar Model Police Station on Monday night after failing to locate him. Locals and Nayan's colleagues began searching for him in the surrounding areas the

following day. On Wednesday afternoon, a group of 30 to 35 people found his body hanging from a tree in a remote hilly area east of the temple and informed police. Police recovered the body, which had a scarf wrapped around the neck, and sent it to Cox's Bazar General Hospital morgue for an autopsy. Officer-in-Charge Mohammad Samiuddin of Cox's Bazar Sadar Model Police Station said the postmortem report would determine whether the death was a murder or suicide. "Police are working to uncover the mystery behind the incident," he said. However, a temple associate, requesting anonymity, alleged that Nayan might have been killed and later hanged, claiming there were injury marks on his neck. Jony Dhar, general secretary of the Cox's Bazar Puja Udjapan Parishad, said, citing the family, that Nayan had left home on April 19 after being called by unidentified individuals and never returned.

Russian oil to Slovakia resumes flowing through pipeline that crosses Ukraine

**BRATISLAVA. (Agency)**  
The flow of Russian oil to Slovakia through the Druzhba pipeline that crosses Ukraine has resumed, Slovak Economy Minister Denisa Saková said Thursday, a breakthrough in an issue that has caused a major diplomatic spat in Europe. The development is expected to unblock a large financial assistance package for war-ravaged Ukraine. Populist Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico welcomed the development, calling it "good news." "Let's hope a serious relation between Ukraine and the European Union has been established," Fico said. He thanked all those involved in solving the issue, including the European Commission and Hungary. Hungary and Slovakia were locked in a feud with Ukraine since Russian oil deliveries to Hungary and Slovakia through the pipeline were halted in January after the pipeline was damaged. Ukrainian officials blamed the damage on Russian drone attacks. Hungary's nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who was recently defeated in an election, accused Ukraine of

deliberately delaying repairs — an allegation that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy denied. Fico said Thursday he still didn't believe the pipeline was damaged at all and alleged that the pipeline and oil "were used in the current geopolitical battle." Ukraine and most of its European backers oppose imports of Russian oil which have helped to fund Russian President Vladimir Putin's war against Ukraine, now in its fifth year. But unlike the rest of the European Union, Hungary and Slovakia still depend on Russia for their energy needs.

For two months, the two countries have accused Ukraine of failing to repair the damaged pipeline. Citing the issue, Hungary blocked a massive EU loan to Ukraine while Slovakia refused to endorse new sanctions against Russia until the supplies resumed. The flow resumed after three months at 2 a.m. Thursday, the Slovak economy ministry said, lifting a major obstacle to approving

the EU funds for Ukraine later Thursday, just as EU leaders gather for a summit in Cyprus. Ukraine desperately needs the 90 billion euro (\$106 billion) loan package,

The 27-nation EU had originally intended to use frozen Russian assets as collateral for the loan. But that option was blocked by Belgium, where the bulk of the frozen



assets are held. In December, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia agreed not to stop their EU partners from borrowing the money on international markets as long as the three countries did not have to take part in the scheme. But Orbán, who has repeatedly blocked EU aid to Ukraine, angered the other 24 countries by later reneging on that deal over the pipeline dispute and as campaigning heated up ahead of the April 12 election that he lost in a landslide. The EU has also been trying since February to push through a new raft of sanctions against Russia, which Hungary and Slovakia have blocked due to the oil feud.

originally agreed in December, to prop up its war-ravaged economy and help keep Russian forces at bay for the next two years. Delayed deals