

MAHANAGAR METRO

VOICE OF THE CITY, PULSE OF THE NATION

EC circular not incorrect: SC setback for Mamata Banerjee before Bengal results

The TMC had moved the apex court on Friday seeking the appointment of state government nominees as counting supervisors, alleging this was being denied. The party argued that central government employees could be influenced by the ruling party at the Centre, affecting the level playing field during counting of votes.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Supreme Court on Saturday refused to intervene in the Election Commission of India's decision to appoint only central government and Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) employees as counting supervisors and assistants for the counting of votes in West Bengal on May 4, dealing a setback to the Trinamool Congress. A special two-judge bench of Justices PS Narasimha and Joymalya Bagchi observed that the Election Commission has the right to choose its own officers and that the circular appointing central government employees could not be struck down on those



grounds. "All these employees, in exercise of their duty, are under the control of the Election Commission, so it doesn't matter if they are central or state government employees," the court observed. The court said no further directions were required beyond recording the Election Commission's counsel's statement that the circular would be implemented in "full letter and spirit". The TMC had moved the apex court on Friday seeking the appointment of state government nominees as counting supervisors, alleging this was being denied. The party argued that central government employees could be influenced by the ruling party at the Centre, affecting the level playing field during counting of votes.

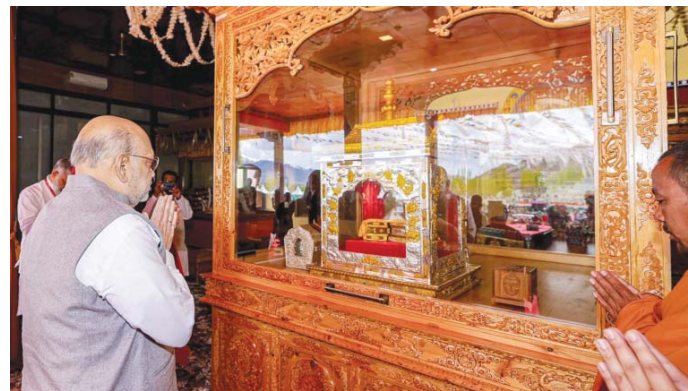
"Article 324 is not a wild horse. You can't do anything you like, whenever you like. They (the Centre) fear possible irregularities, but that's pointing a finger at the state government," said Kapil Sibal, who represented the TMC in the court. Article 324 vests the superintendence, direction and control of elections in the Election Commission. The Election Commission, for its part, told the court it was following its April 13 circular and explained that the arrangement is reciprocal: Where the counting supervisor is from the central government, the counting assistant is drawn from the state government, ensuring at least one state government official is present at each counting table. Following the apex court's observations, the TMC shifted its stance and called for the implementation of the circular, asserting that the poll body should appoint state government employees in line with its circular.

POLITICAL TENSIONS IN WEST BENGAL

The TMC's move came amid escalating political tensions during the second phase of polling on April 29, with both the TMC and BJP trading allegations of intimidation and interference. Several constituencies witnessed clashes between rival supporters.

Ladakh living land of dharma: Amit Shah on Buddha relics return to UT after 75 years

"Last time when these relics came to Leh, very few could pay their respects due to the lack of connectivity. Today, after 75 years, people from Ladakh, Kargil and even followers of other religions will be able to draw spiritual inspiration from them," he said.



Leh.(Agency)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday described the return of sacred relics of Gautama Buddha to Ladakh after 75 years, coinciding with the Buddha Purnima, as a historic reunion.

Addressing a gathering at Jivetsal in Leh during the 2569th Buddha Purnima celebrations, Shah said Ladakh has been a "living land of dharma" that preserved and nurtured Buddhist knowledge for centuries. "Last time when these relics came to Leh, very few could pay their respects due to the lack of connectivity. Today, after 75 years, people from Ladakh, Kargil and even followers of other religions will be able to draw spiritual inspiration from them," he said.

The relics had been brought to Leh in 1950 for an exhibition, after Ngawang Lobzang Thupstan Chognor (popularly known as the 19th Kushok Bakula Rinpoche) requested then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to send the relics to Leh to raise the spiritual morale of the people. Shah said the region has, for centuries, remained a centre of spirituality and preservation of Buddhist knowledge. "This land is not merely geographical, but a vibrant laboratory of culture and compassion," he said while referring to the Dalai Lama.

Highlighting Ladakh's role in the transmission of Buddhist thought, Shah said the region served as a key corridor through which teachings originating in India spread to China and beyond. He noted that Kashmir, too, was once a major centre of Buddhist learning, particularly of Mahayana philosophy and art, and facilitated Ladakh's early engagement with Buddhism. He also referred to the role of Emperor Ashoka's envoys and the Silk Route in disseminating Buddhist thought.

"The presence of these relics in Ladakh reminds us that India's civilisation, for thousands of years, has been built on the foundations of peace and coexistence," he said, adding, "Amid conflict and unrest, only the path of peace and compassion can provide solutions."

Fadnavis govt wants to make Marathi a must for auto, taxi drivers. BJP allies from Bihar and UP have a word of caution

Last month, Maharashtra Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik had said that starting May 1, Marathi would be compulsory for all licensed auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers. He had warned that those who are unable to read, write or speak the language might risk losing their licences.

Lucknow, Patna.(Agency)

The rule to make Marathi mandatory for auto drivers in Maharashtra, which has now been deferred, has evoked sharp reactions across the political spectrum in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. In Bihar, the BJP's national spokesperson, Guru Prakash Paswan, told The Indian Express, "The BJP believes in both national unity and cultural diversity. Respecting the Marathi language and Maharashtra's identity is important, but India's spirit also dictates that every citizen should have equal opportunity anywhere in the country. We are still looking into the matter as it is currently at an evolving stage." Rajiv Ranjan Prasad, the national spokesperson for BJP ally JD(U), said, "The



Maharashtra government's decision might be helpful to local residents, but a large number of non-Marathi people, including taxi drivers, have lived there for years. These taxi drivers must be

given adequate time to learn Marathi."

Sanjay Nishad, a minister in the UP government and chief of the NISHAD party, an NDA ally, said, "Knowing a regional language is one thing and making it mandatory is another. If the government wants to bring such rules, then an arrangement should first be made to train them in the regional language. Still, such restrictions are not right. They disturb harmony."

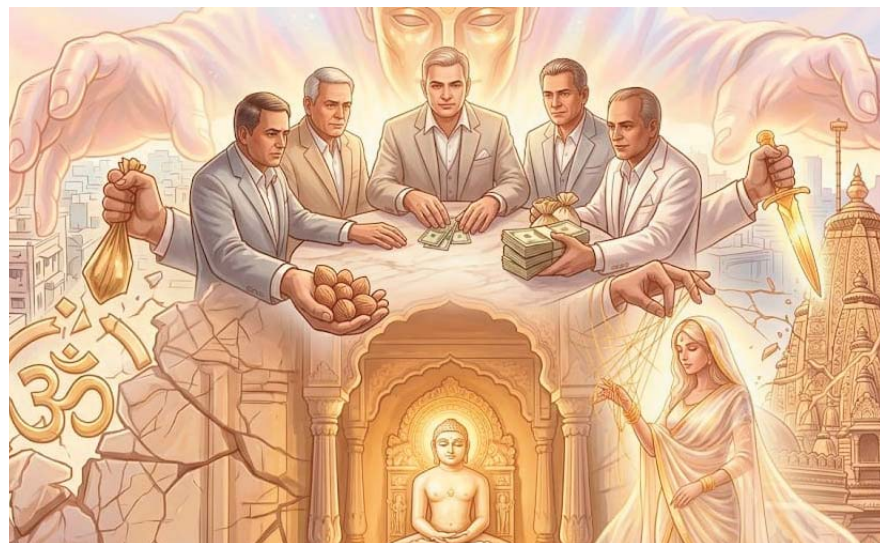
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MAHANAGAR METRO | SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

A Dangerous Conspiracy for Dominance in the Jain Community: The Sinister Game of 'Honey Trap', 'Supari', and Crushing Emerging Groups

Pawan Mekan (Group Editor)

Surat: Ahimsa, sacrifice, and spiritual discipline — these are the core principles laid down by Lord Mahavir, forming the foundation of the Jain community. However, today, this very foundation appears to be under threat from within. Self-serving elements are allegedly eating away at the community like termites. The Investigative Desk of Mahanagar Metro has accessed shocking inputs and internal murmurs that are not only alarming but also signal a serious threat to the very existence of the Jain community. Is the blind race for dominance leading some members to betray their own? Are rising and popular Jain groups being systematically targeted and crushed through unethical and dirty tactics? The 'Syndicate' Behind the Conspiracy Sources within influential circles of the community point towards the existence of a powerful 'syndicate' — a group allegedly orchestrating activities to divide and destabilize the community. Certain names are repeatedly surfacing in discussions, including Jagat Parekh, Vikram Bafna,



Kalpesh Singhvi, and Hardik Hudiya. The allegations are grave. It is being claimed that these individuals are acting as operatives, while influential figures working behind the scenes are allegedly funding and directing a larger agenda to suppress emerging groups within the community. Inside the Alleged Dirty Game Plan Investigations have revealed several disturbing tactics allegedly being used: Honey Trap Networks: Attempts to trap and blackmail influen-

tial leaders of Jain organizations. Targeting Religious Institutions: Creating controversies around Jain temples (Jinalayas) to destabilize faith centers. Character Assassination: Defaming fast-growing organizations through rumors and social media campaigns. Divide and Rule Strategy: Engineering ideological and administrative conflicts within different sects of the Jain community. A Community Under Threat Once a flourishing and unified com-

munity, the Jain population has already been shrinking demographically and is categorized as a minority. Experts and senior thinkers within the community warn that internal conflicts and power struggles could accelerate this decline. Voices from within express deep concern: "If such alleged syndicates and their handlers are not socially boycotted and stopped, the Jain community could face irreversible damage." Mahanagar Metro's Stand: The Masks Will Fall This is not just a report — it is a wake-up call.

The visible players may just be pawns. The real question remains: Who are the masterminds behind the funding and strategy? Who fears the unity of the Jain community? Mahanagar Metro makes a firm commitment: This investigation will not stop here. Our team has already traced the deeper roots of this alleged syndicate. In the coming editions, we will present concrete evidence, facts, and expose the faces operating behind the scenes. The truth will come out — and the revelation will be explosive.

'Contractualisation of democracy': Suvendu Adhikari slams TMC over counting staff deployment in Bengal

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Leader of Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly Suvendu Adhikari on Saturday raised concerns over the deployment of contractual employees for vote counting in Pingla and Daspur constituencies, alleging it could compromise the integrity of the electoral process. The BJP leader accused the ruling All India Trinamool Congress of attempting to manipulate the mandate and urged the Election Commission of India to intervene.

In a post on X, Adhikari questioned whether "the fate of democracy" was being handed over to contractual workers, calling it a "grave concern" and a direct assault on the sanctity of the democratic process. He said he was "appalled" by the counting orders issued for 227-Pingla and 230-Daspur Assembly constituencies, where a significant number of contractual and casual employees were assigned key counting duties.

He questioned the deployment of 'Jibika Sebaks,' 'Sahayaks,' and 'Contractual DEOs' for the counting of votes, alleging that they are vulnerable to political pressure.

"How can 'Jibika Sebaks,' 'Sahayaks,' and 'Contractual DEOs' be entrusted with the sensitive task of handling EVMs, VVPATs, and Postal Ballots? These positions are inherently vulnerable to political pressure and lack the institutional accountability required for a process as sacred as the counting of votes. The orders reveal a shocking reliance on non-permanent staff for high-stakes roles: Pingla AC (227): Contractual staff like Bipalendu Bera (JS), Sankar Pahari (JS), and Naba Kumar Apik (BLS) are embedded in the Counting and Compilation teams. Even the "Reserve Tagging" involves staff like Swapan Middya (BLAA). Daspur AC (230): The order is littered with Sahayaks, VLEs, and Contractual DEOs across the Compilation Team, EVM Movement, and even the Sealing of EVMs/VVPATs," the BJP leader

News box

Section 163 imposed ahead of NEET-UG 2026

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A total of 18 examination centres have been designated in the district, where 6,875 candidates will appear for the test. Gurgaon: The district administration on Friday announced stringent security and administrative measures for the NEET-UG 2026 examination, scheduled to be held on May 3.

Deputy commissioner Uttam Singh said Section 163 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) has been enforced across the district to regulate movement around examination centres and ensure the fair and peaceful conduct of the test. Eighteen examination centres have been designated in the district, where 6,875 candidates will appear for the test. Under the provisions, assembly of people within a 200-metre radius of exam centres has been prohibited. The order also bans carrying weapons, parking vehicles, use of loudspeakers, and operation of Wi-Fi or any electronic devices in the restricted zone. Additionally, photocopy shops and coaching centres located within 500 metres of the centres have been directed to remain closed on the day of the examination. The administration has imposed strict restrictions on items allowed inside examination premises. Mobile phones, Bluetooth devices, earphones, smartwatches, pen scanners, and all other electronic gadgets are completely prohibited. Candidates will also not be permitted to carry bags, purses, belts, jewellery, cameras, calculators, pen drives, or any written material. Only admit cards, a passport-size photograph, valid identity proof, and a transparent water bottle will be allowed.

June 15 takeoff for Noida airport, IndiGo to operate inaugural flight

Noida.(Agency)

Noida International Airport will launch commercial flight operations on June 15, ending the wait for a second civil aviation hub in Delhi-NCR. IndiGo will operate the inaugural flight, with Akasa Air and Air India Express to follow shortly.

The announcement comes after the airport cleared a regulatory hurdle that stalled its launch. Last week, expat CEO Christoph Schnellmann was replaced, as rules require an Indian national to head airports. Schnellmann moved to the board as executive vice chairman, and CFO Nitu Samra was appointed interim CEO.

The change enabled the airport to secure approval for its Aerodrome Security Program from the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security on April 28, confirming that its security framework and operating procedures met regulatory requirements. It received the aerodrome licence from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation on March 6 and was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 28.

The airport, a greenfield project developed on land acquired from six villages in Jewar, sits around 80 km from Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport and 60 km from Noida City Centre. In its first phase, it will operate one runway and a single passenger terminal with an annual capacity of 12 million passengers.

Officials said initially, the operations will begin with domestic flights. International services are expected to follow after a stabilisation period, with operating hours set to expand progressively towards round-the-clock services as systems are tested. While routes, schedules and passenger service details have not been announced yet, the airport is to connect.

Skywalk held up, Metro commuters forced to pack into pathway to switch from Sec 51 to 52

Noida.(Agency)

A single hour of rain on Thursday evening was enough to turn the temporary walkway between Aqua Line's Sector 51 and Blue Line's Sector 52 metro stations into a muddy stretch. Commuters, some carrying children, others lugging baggage, jostled for footing on the narrow walkway as crowds poured out of both stations during the evening rush.

The chaos, captured by commuters and shared widely on X, showed swarms of passengers stranded in the four-metre-wide passage, carefully taking each step to avoid slipping. For daily commuters on this route, the scene was familiar, but only wetter than usual.

At the heart of the problem is a Rs 40-crore skywalk that Noida Authority built and then discovered it could not open. The L-shaped, air-conditioned structure, equipped with travelators and launched in March 2023 with a one-year completion target, was delayed after officials realised a beam at the Sector 51 entry point blocked access. Rather than removing the beam, the Authority has now decided to extend the skywalk by 100 metres to route around it. Excavation has begun, but completion is at least two months away.

The 400-metre interchange is an ordeal on a dry day. Commuters exiting Sector 51 station have to first walk to the rear of the building, take a circuitous route to reach the front, then navigate the uneven, constricted walkway — one metre wide in some places and 3-4 metres wide in others. Midway, the footpath ends, and pedestrians are forced onto the road before turning left towards Sector 52 station. A skywalk pillar stands in the middle of the walkway. Barricading for the skywalk construction lines one side, hoardings for an upcoming commercial store line the other. The temporary shade erected years ago has long since rusted away, leaving only iron bars with no shade from sun or rain.

"The rainfall on Thursday led to waterlogging at this stretch. We were forced to wade through accumulated water, carefully placing each step," said Anmol Kumar, a Sector 52 resident, a BTech student in Greater Noida who takes this route daily. "I wonder how long it will take to make the skywalk operational."

Gurgaon launches fever survey amid fears of early dengue, malaria rise

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Anticipating a rise in dengue and malaria cases in the coming months, the health department on Friday began a city-wide fever survey that will be conducted from the 1st to the 15th of every month till October, an official said. The survey for the month of May has already begun, he added. The move comes after Gurgaon recorded an unusually wet April this year. The city received 23.8 mm rainfall against the normal 7.7 mm, a 209% surplus, according to IMD. Health officials said the excess pre-monsoon rain, coupled with rising humidity, could create favourable breeding conditions for mosquitoes earlier than usual.

About 102 teams have been deployed for the survey.

"Our teams will be checking all areas and specifically where cases were reported in past years, besides identifying water-holding containers that can act as

breeding grounds for disease-carrying mosquitoes," said district surveillance officer Dr Jai Prakash.

He added that while there is no reason to panic right now, all residents should exercise caution. "At present there is no clustering of fever cases, but people need to be cautious. We have established a centre through which doctors can call their patients daily to check their status in case anyone is found positive," he said.

Officials said apart from house-to-house fever surveillance, all positive larval breeding sites will be geo-tagged to build a database for regular monitoring through the monsoon. These hotspots will be compared with previous years' surveys to identify recurring clusters and potential outbreak intersections. The teams will also intensify checks in

dengue-prone localities and past hotspots to ensure breeding is curbed before peak season.

Dengue cases in Haryana generally begin rising from May onward and intensify



between July and Oct. The state has seen fluctuating but substantial vector-borne disease burdens in recent years. Haryana reported 11,835 dengue cases and 54 malaria cases in 2021, followed by 8,996

dengue and 50 malaria cases in 2022. In 2023, the state logged 8,081 dengue and 85 malaria cases. In 2025, Haryana reported 2,033 dengue cases, indicating that while numbers were lower than peak outbreak years, the disease remained a significant seasonal threat.

In Gurgaon, dengue has remained a recurring concern despite year-to-year variation. The city reported 440 dengue cases in 2022, 276 cases and one death in 2023, 186 cases in 2024, and 64 cases in 2025. Health officials said the lower tally last year should not lead to complacency, particularly given this year's wetter-than-normal pre-monsoon conditions. While malaria outbreaks are relatively uncommon in Gurgaon compared with dengue, surveillance is critical as malaria cases are typically reported between Feb and Sept.

Bitta's convey hit twice in one night

GURGAON.(Agency)

A police escort vehicle assigned to former Punjab cabinet minister and All-India Anti-Terrorist Front (AIATF) chairperson Maninderjeet Singh Bitta was rammed by a car allegedly driven by a drunk man in the city on April 29 — and as his cavalcade crossed into Delhi later that night, a second incident occurred near Mahipalpur, where a woman allegedly struck another vehicle in the convoy.

The exact time of the second incident was not immediately clear. Police arrested the accused driver in the Gurgaon case, Sunil alias Vicky, ruling out any other motive.

"The accused was in an inebriated state and dozed off, following which he rammed his vehicle into a divider and also collided with the rear of the police escort vehicle," said investigating officer Surrender Singh.

The first incident occurred at 10.20pm. The govt vehicle was part of a Quick Reaction Team (QRT) escort assigned to Bitta from DLF 2 police station. Bitta has been accorded Z+ security following multiple attempts on his life.

According to police, a Brezza overtook the escort vehicle three times in a risky manner before suddenly ramming into its rear, damaging the light assembly, side panel and rear bumper. The police team intercepted the Brezza and apprehended the driver. A complaint was filed by constable Mahesh Kumar who was driving Bitta's vehicle, and the Brezza was taken to Sector 17/18 police station.

The driver was sent for medical examination to the civil hospital in Sector 10 the same night, where a doctor noted the smell of alcohol. Due to ongoing VIP duty, the formal complaint could not be submitted that night. After it was received on Thursday, police arrested Sunil and registered a case under sections 281 (rash driving), 125 (endangering human life), and 324(4) (mischief) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, along with Section 185 (driving under the influence) of the Motor Vehicles Act.

Sharp spike in wheat stubble fires, April incidents jump nearly 2.6 times from last year

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Wheat residue burning this April recorded a sharp spike in Haryana, with 1,565 farm fire incidents logged between April 1 and 30 — a 157% increase over the 608 cases recorded during the same period last year, according to Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

While the count remains below the 2,033 cases recorded in April 2022, this year's surge signals a rebound in open-field residue burning after two relatively controlled seasons — 266 cases in 2023 and 177 in 2024.

Fire activity remained moderate through most of April before a dramatic late-month spike, particularly after April 24, suggesting accelerated post-harvest field



clearing as wheat harvesting peaked across districts. The steepest escalation came in the final five days, when incidents rose rapidly from around 500 to more than 1,500.

Jind emerged as the biggest hotspot with 264 incidents, followed by Rohtak (241), Jhajjar (183), Sonapat (127), Kaithal

(115), Karnal (114), Sirsa (98), Panipat (85) and Hisar (81).

These districts, largely concentrated in the agrarian belt, accounted for the bulk of the state's fire burden. Mahendragarh reported zero incidents for the fifth straight year, while Panchkula and Rewari remained among the lowest.

The city recorded 19 incidents — higher than zero cases last year but low compared with major farming districts. Faridabad logged 20 cases and Palwal 38. Experts warned that this summer's fire counts surpassing even the 2025 paddy season figures is a significant red flag. "The amount of smoke produced doesn't change with the season, but how our atmosphere handles it does.

Girl (7) run over by her own school bus in Greater Noida as she tries to cross road

Noida.(Agency)

A 7-year-old schoolgirl died after she was allegedly run over by her school bus in Greater Noida on Thursday. The child had just deboarded the bus at Roshanpur in Dankaur and was crossing the road in front of it when the driver allegedly moved the vehicle forward, crushing her under the wheels before she could react. She was rushed to a nearby hospital, where doctors declared her dead. The bus driver has been arrested.

Police said the girl was a nursery student of Dhruv Public School in Talda village. Officials said the incident occurred around 11.30 am when the child and several other students were dropped near her home following a half-day at school.

According to police, the girl's grandmother was expected to pick her up but could not reach in time as families were not informed about the early dispersal. While other children moved



behind the bus to cross the road, the girl walked in front of the vehicle.

"There was no helper present to supervise the children. The driver allegedly started the bus while the child was near the front wheel," a police officer at Dankaur station said. The driver, identified as

Charan Singh, a resident of Talda village, allegedly drove off after the incident, continuing to drop other children before parking the bus near the school. Passersby alerted the police through the emergency helpline, while family members rushed the child to hospital.

Police said the bus was later seized and the driver taken into custody around 2 pm. A case has been registered under BNS sections 281 (rash or negligent driving) and 106 (death due to negligence).

Police are also investigating why the bus did not have an attendant, a mandatory safety requirement for school transport. The school did not respond to queries.

Traffic police data show a decline in road accidents in the city, with fatalities falling 13.2% in the first quarter of 2026 compared with the same period last year. However, officials said lapses involving school transport remain a critical area of concern.

Commercial LPG price surge to make eating out, ordering costlier

Gurgaon/Noida.(Agency)

Eating out and ordering in are likely to get significantly costlier as a sharp rise in commercial LPG cylinder prices squeezes restaurants, street vendors and large-scale food operations alike — with most saying they can only absorb the pressure for so long before passing it on to consumers.

The hike has pushed up operating costs across the board and, coupled with recent minimum wage increases, is compressing margins at both ends. For now, most restaurateurs are holding off on menu revisions and exploring alternatives.

"We will explore electric induction and piped gas connections to mitigate the impact. We don't want to pass on the cost to the customer as of now," said Joy Singh, owner of Raasta Cafe and secretary of National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI). He flagged that availability of commercial LPG cylinders is a persistent problem in itself.

Noida restaurateurs echoed the wait-and-watch approach. "The price of



commercial LPG cylinders has been fluctuating for a while, with one of the most significant hikes seen now. We are not in a position to change menu prices yet — we want to see how far this goes," said Varun Khara, president of NRAI's Noida chapter. He added that reprinting menus is an added cost, and establishments are currently absorbing

the hikes as losses. "The price hike is hurting our pockets. We are running our establishments out of our own pockets right now," he said.

Others are less optimistic about how long that can last. "Margins are shrinking, and if the situation continues, passing costs to consumers will be unavoidable," said another restaurant owner.

Industrial-scale food operations say a price revision is already a given. PFTI chairman PK Gupta, who supplies around 30,000 corporate meals daily, said fuel accounts for 10% of input costs. "Commercial LPG was first raised by Rs 400 in March and now by Rs 993," he said, adding that supply constraints compound the pressure. "We are not getting the required number of cylinders." Haryana's recent minimum wage hike has added another layer of cost.

Street vendors, with the least room to absorb shocks, haven't waited — prices are already up, with another round flagged. "It is becoming difficult to operate under the current situation,"

said Mani, who runs a small restaurant in Sector 14.

The 5kg portable cylinders — used largely by migrants without domestic connections — have also risen by Rs 261 to around Rs 810, as they are priced on par with commercial cylinders.

Earlier in March, NRAI had written to Union petroleum minister Hardeep Singh Puri, urging the govt to ensure adequate supply of commercial LPG cylinders to restaurants. The association noted that the supply situation on the ground had not improved and warned that the fresh hike in commercial LPG prices would put additional pressure on restaurants and the wider food services sector.

"At a time when businesses are struggling, govt in Haryana and UP have raised minimum wages, and now there's another increase in commercial LPG prices. Instead of supporting an industry that generates employment and revenue, more obstacles are being created," Deepak Maini of PFTI said. India imports nearly 60% of its LPG, with much of it routed.

Video shows Jabalpur cruise boat rocking dangerously, overturning amid strong winds

Over 30 revellers were on board the ill-fated boat when the tragedy struck them at Bargi Dam in the Narmada River backwaters on Thursday, leaving nine people dead and several others missing.

Jabalpur, MP. (Agency)

At least nine people lost their lives in a boat capsize accident in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur, raising safety concerns around public amusement facilities and exposing grave administrative and management lapses. Over 30 revellers were on board the ill-fated boat when the tragedy struck them at Bargi Dam in the Narmada River backwaters on Thursday, leaving nine people dead and several others missing.

Following the incident, several before and after videos of the capsize have gone viral on social media, prompting huge public response and grief. One such video shows the boat wildly foundering amid gusty winds and strong river currents as the weather worsened. The clip shows the cruise boat overturning, struggling to

maintain its balance, before finally capsizing as those on the banks of the river filmed the event with their mobile cameras.

The boat completely disappeared and capsized in a matter of a few minutes.

MOMENTS BEFORE TRAGEDY STRUCK

Another video recorded just moments before the cruise boat capsized has also surfaced. The video shows tourists enjoying the cool weather and strong winds. Those on the boat had no idea of the danger looming nearby. In the video, the passengers are seen enjoying the pleasant weather as strong winds blow over the water. The force of the wind can be clearly seen in the footage.

However, within minutes, the weather



suddenly deteriorated, and the boat capsized, killing nine of them.

The footage also shows that none of the passengers were wearing life jackets at the time.

Some later put on life jackets, helping to save many more. Officials estimate that the use of safety equipment eventually resulted in

the survival of around 25 people.

THE JABALPUR CRUISE CAPSIZES

The Jabalpur accident occurred on Thursday evening at the Bargi Dam on the Narmada River, where a sudden storm engulfed the entire area. Caught in the surging waters and strong winds, the boat lost its balance and capsized. The death toll rose to nine after five more bodies were recovered from the capsized boat on Friday.

Rescue continued with teams from the Army, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), and the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) searching the reservoir, while low visibility continued to hamper rescue efforts. Officials feared that more bodies might still be trapped within the wreckage of the boat. According to

eyewitnesses, the weather rapidly deteriorated, and strong winds caused the river to swell.

Several passengers reportedly signalled danger and pleaded with the boat crew to turn back, but their warnings were ignored, and the boat drifted before capsizing. Later, some locals used ropes to rescue passengers wearing life jackets. Following this incident, the state government has banned the operation of other similar cruise boats and launched an investigation into the tragic accident.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed deep condolences over the incident, announcing financial assistance of Rs 2 lakh to the families of the deceased and Rs 50,000 to the injured from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF).

Short news

Madras HC bins plea for case against seven ex-mins, says it will be ED's call

CHENNAI. (Agency)

In a significant ruling, the Madras High Court has held that mere registration of an FIR on a predicate offence does not mandate the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to register a case on money laundering but the subjective satisfaction of the authorised officer of the agency is essential for initiating such proceedings.

Dismissing petitions seeking directions to the ED to register Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) based on FIRs registered by the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) against seven former AIADMK ministers, the court said the central agency is free to decide on initiating money laundering proceedings under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) against them.

The ruling was given by the first bench of Chief Justice Sushrut Arvind Dharmadhikari and Justice G Arul Murugan on petitions filed by DMK MP R Girirajan seeking ED action on the ex-ministers for alleged misappropriation of public funds.

"The registration of FIR in a predicate offence does not ipso facto mandate the ED to register an ECIR, but it is only based on the satisfaction of the authorised officer from the predicate case and the materials available. This court cannot substitute the satisfaction of ED, which is to be arrived at from the materials available, in accordance with PMLA," the bench said in a recent order.

GVMC property tax collections jump to Rs 230 crore in April

VISAKHAPATNAM. (Agency)

Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation recorded total property tax collections of Rs 230.13 crore in April 2026, an increase of Rs 66.47 crore compared with Rs 163.66 crore collected in April 2025.

Speaking with the , GVMC Revenue Deputy Commissioner Srinivasa Rao said the rise was driven by increased use of the 50 per cent interest waiver on property tax arrears and the 5 per cent rebate on early payments. He said property owners opted to clear pending dues in lump sum to avail the benefits, which improved collections during the month.

As part of the April inflow, GVMC also received Rs 20.02 crore from Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited's refinery and marketing divisions towards property tax under 5% rebate scheme.

Officials said the scheme encouraged large-scale settlement of dues within GVMC limits. Payments were accepted at Saukaryam Centres and through online services on the GVMC website using assessment numbers.

The April performance comes in the backdrop of overall annual revenue growth for 2025-26. GVMC collected Rs 620.85 crore in total tax revenue during the financial year, up from Rs 510.15 crore in 2024-25, showing an increase of Rs 109.93 crore.

Officials said this represented a 21.5 per cent rise in overall revenue, supported by improved assessment and recovery mechanisms. The corporation also increased property tax demand by about Rs 90 crore during the year and recovered nearly Rs 60 crore from the revised demand. Zone-wise data showed the Visakhapatnam zone contributing Rs 591.27 crore in property tax, Rs 507.08 crore in house tax and Rs 84.19 crore in vacant land tax.

WWII-Era Bomb Found In Assam Village, Army Safely Defuses Device

The rusted device, nearly 12 inches long and 6 inches in diameter, was discovered in a populated zone, prompting the Indian Army to rush in a specialised bomb disposal team

Assam. (Agency)

A World War II-era unexploded bomb triggered panic in Assam's Ledo-Lekhapani area in Tinsukia district after it was found in a residential locality, forcing authorities to launch an urgent safety response. The rusted device, nearly 12 inches long and 6 inches in diameter, was discovered in a populated zone, prompting the Indian Army to rush in a specialised bomb disposal team, seal off the area and evacuate residents before safely moving and defusing the explosive without damage or injury.

Acting immediately after receiving information, the Indian Army's Red Shield Sappers deployed a specialised Bomb Disposal Team to the site. Army personnel quickly sealed off the

surrounding area, evacuated residents from the danger zone, and enforced strict



safety measures to prevent any mishap.

Following a careful assessment, the explosive was safely transported to an

isolated location away from habitation. Experts then carried out a controlled neutralisation operation, successfully destroying the device without any collateral damage. Officials described the operation as highly coordinated and professionally executed, highlighting the Army's rapid response and technical expertise in handling explosive threats.

The incident also serves as a reminder of the region's historical connection to World War II, where parts of Northeast India once played a strategic role during military operations in the eastern theatre.

The Indian Army reiterated its commitment to ensuring civilian safety and maintaining peace and security across the region through timely and effective action.

UP Congress President Ajay Rai Hospitalised After Fainting At Lucknow Home

Lucknow. (Agency)

Uttar Pradesh Congress president Ajay Rai was hospitalised in Lucknow after he fell unconscious due to low sodium levels, party leaders said on Saturday. They said he was admitted to Medanta Hospital on Friday evening and is stable.

"Ajay Rai was admitted to Medanta Hospital in Lucknow at around 6 pm on Friday after he fell unconscious as his sodium levels had dropped. He fell unconscious at his residence in Lucknow. For the entire day, he was engaged in party programmes and had also gone to the airport," Uttar Pradesh Congress spokesperson Anshu Awasthi



told PTI. Congress in-charge of Uttar Pradesh Avinash Pande told PTI, "Now, he (Ajay Rai) is stable and I am also reaching Lucknow." Medanta Hospital Director Dr Rakesh Kapoor told PTI that Rai collapsed

at his home on Friday evening and was subsequently admitted to the hospital's emergency ward.

Medical examinations revealed that Rai was suffering from a sodium deficiency and elevated blood pressure. Doctors administered immediate treatment and he is doing significantly better now, Kapoor said. A team of doctors is monitoring his health. Rai is conversing with others and his condition is stable, he added.

In a post on X late Friday night, Prime Minister Narendra Modi wished Rai a speedy recovery. Rai hails from Varanasi and had contested the 2024 Lok Sabha elections against PM Modi from the parliamentary constituency.

2 Days Before Counting, Bengal Holds Repolling At 15 Booths After Complaints

The voting is being held in 11 polling stations in the Magarhat Paschim assembly constituency and four in Diamond Harbour.

Kolkata. (Agency)

Repolling is being held today in 15 polling stations in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district, where voting was held on April 29 in the second phase of the assembly elections, after the Election Commission (EC) received complaints of irregularities. The voting is being conducted in 11 polling stations in the Magarhat Paschim assembly constituency and four in Diamond Harbour. The polling began at 7 am and will continue till 6 pm.

The repoll order was based on reports received from returning officers and observers of the two constituencies and "material circumstances". The poll panel had reportedly received 29 complaints of repolling from Diamond Harbour and 13 from Magarhat.

Repolling is generally demanded by political



parties, candidates, polling agents, or even observers, citing specific irregularities such as electronic voting machine (EVM) malfunction, booth capturing, intimidation, or violation of the secrecy of voting.

The decision on a repoll in the Falta constituency in Diamond Harbour would be taken on Saturday as a report from the assembly segment is still awaited, a poll

body official told the news agency PTI.

Politics Over Bengal Repolling

The BJP had alleged rampant electoral malpractices in certain polling stations of both the assembly seats under the Diamond Harbour Lok Sabha constituency, which is represented by Trinamool Congress (TMC) national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee. The EC had deputed its special observer, Subrata Gupta, to fact-check the allegations from the ground.

Trinamool's Kunal Ghosh said that the BJP demanded repolling in Diamond Harbour and Magarhat as it knows it will be "defeated by a big margin". "The mandate is against the BJP, and it will remain the same," Ghosh said.

The BJP's Suvendu Adhikari, who is the leader of the opposition in the Bengal assembly, said there had been

"malpractices in several booths" to "favour" the TMC.

"We are happy with the repoll decision of the poll body," he said.

Record Voter Turnout In Bengal

The two-phase West Bengal assembly polls ended on Wednesday with what the election watchdog said was the state's highest-ever voter turnout of about 92 per cent. Bengal, which has a voter base of 6.81 crore, saw a 93 per cent turnout in phase 1 on April 23, while phase 2 saw a poll participation of 91 per cent. Previously, the highest voter turnout in Bengal was recorded in 2011, when about 84 per cent voters had exercised their franchise. This year, 92 per cent of women voters turned up at the polling stations in the first phase, compared to 90 per cent of men. In Phase II, the participation of women electors was marginally higher compared to men.

Cardio-metabolic diseases: A burden that can't just be sweated off

Richard Doll was a famous British epidemiologist. Along with Richard Peto, a brilliant Oxford statistician, he led a long-term study of thousands of British doctors to identify factors which impacted their health. The study, which started in 1951, carefully documented deaths and analysed them by cause and age. It showed that half of all regular smokers were killed by their tobacco habit. Half of those deaths occurred in middle age. On average, regular smokers lost about 10 years of their life expectancy compared to non-smokers. Deaths occurred mainly from cardiovascular disease and a variety of cancers. Stopping smoking before the age of 30 years averted a majority of these premature deaths.

This study catalysed public policy interventions for tobacco control worldwide. The World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and India's own tobacco control legislation emerged in 2003. Craving for nicotine, which is as addictive as heroin or cocaine, requires a determined effort for cessation. Such efforts are countered by the tobacco industry, which attempts to retain nicotine addicts in its grasp by luring them with novel products such as e-cigarettes and nicotine pouches. Reducing the risk of avoidable mid-life mortality became a major goal of public health experts, who directed their attention to modifiable risk factors like tobacco consumption (in any form), unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, uncontrolled hypertension and poorly managed diabetes. Doll made the case for impactful public health and clinical interventions which reduce the risk of premature death by succinctly stating, "In old age death is inevitable, but death before old age is not." He lived to be 92, proving his point.

Delaying death should not be the only goal of public health. Death may come late but disease, damage and disability should not come long before. It is, therefore, necessary to adopt a life course approach to promote policies which prevent acquisition of risk at a young age (childhood and adolescence), early detection of risk factors and their effective control in young and middle-aged adults, coupled with clinical care of manifest disease to avert fatal outcomes and reduce disability at all ages.

Cardio-metabolic diseases (CMDs) are presently the leading cause of death, globally and in India. They encompass a cluster of diseases characterised by disordered glucose and lipid metabolism, resulting in damage to blood vessels in different parts of the body and multiple organ dysfunction which can manifest as acute life-threatening emergencies or chronic prolonged deterioration of health. Coronary heart disease (heart attacks) and stroke (paralytic brain attacks) are the most prominent disorders in this group along with diabetes. Peripheral vascular disease (which can lead to gangrene of limbs), fatty-liver disease and vascular dementia are among others now featuring in the expanding cluster of CMDs. For a variety of reasons, Indians are especially vulnerable to such diseases. Physiological adaptation to poor intrauterine and early-childhood malnutrition makes them vulnerable to 'rebound adiposity', as they gain access to more food in later years. Low skeletal muscle mass makes them more insulin resistant and glucose intolerant, leading to many millions affected by diabetes and pre-diabetes. Fat accumulation in and around abdominal organs (visceral adiposity) is especially dangerous, as it stokes rampant inflammation, scorching blood vessels and scarring many organs. Lack of physical activity ensures that the muscles remain insulin resistant. Smoking too increases insulin resistance, as do unhealthy fats in the diet.

Trinco story travels a long way

Languishing since 1987, the Trinco Energy Hub will be connected with multi-purpose pipelines and power grids between Sri Lanka and India.

The Gulf War has at least had one positive effect -- the creation of larger strategic oil reserves. One of the most significant measures is the Trincomalee (Trinco) Oil Tank Farms project in Sri Lanka. Languishing since 1987, the development of the Trinco Energy Hub is now on the anvil, to be connected with multi-purpose pipelines and power grids between the two countries. In a smart diplomatic move, New Delhi sent Vice-President CP Radhakrishnan, who also happens to be Tamilian, to Sri Lanka recently, in what was the first bilateral visit by any Vice President to Sri Lanka, raising the protocol from the customary contact of Foreign Minister Jaishankar who last visited Colombo in December 2025. The Radhakrishnan call was significant for three reasons: it focused on transforming Trinco as an energy hub; it helped revive the "Tamil question"; and it embedded India's strategic stature as first responder in India's neighbourhood. Like the landslide political victory of the Rashtriya Swatantra Party in Nepal, Sri Lanka's left-wing National People's Power party stormed into power in 2024 decimating traditional parties, including the once-strong Tamil bloc.

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake a former Marxist from the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) party, which in the 1980s had opposed the 1987 India-Sri Lanka Accord, has recognised Delhi's preeminence in the region and highlighted its Neighbourhood First policy by recounting India's crucial interventions: the economic crisis in 2022; the financial lifeline that followed the crisis of debt; and relief during cyclone Dityah. Radhakrishnan said India will stand with Sri Lanka's "successes and struggles like an affectionate elder brother", a term that rebounded in Nepal. In its election manifesto NPP had said: Trinco oil tank farms will be renovated with support of a friendly foreign country. Last month, with Radhakrishnan and Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri flanking him, Sri Lanka Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath called the Trinco project a permanent solution to the developing energy crisis in the Indian subcontinent, whilst referring to the ongoing war in the Persian Gulf. Misri, earlier Deputy High Commissioner in Colombo, briefed the media in Colombo on several bilateral matters, including the Trinco Energy Hub. It will be instructive to recall the strategic importance of Trinco

Harbour and Port as penned by former Sri Lankan Admiral Ravi Wijegunaratne, who noted that the Dutch, French and British colonial powers contested Trincomalee because it was the gateway to the Bay of Bengal. British admiral Lord Nelson described Trinco as "the finest and deepest harbour in the world". In 1935, the British built 100 oil tanks with impregnable Manchester steel, with the capacity to hold 1 mn tonnes of petroleum, long enough for six months of strategic petroleum reserve. For Sri Lanka, Trincomalee is a 'national asset'. In the past, several trade unions and political parties have protested energy cooperation with

The Tamil question over the years has been relegated to 'Tamil aspirations'; this is true even for those in the political doldrums especially after the political mauling of the fractured Tamil parties in the Northern Province, considered a Tamil stronghold for decades. NPP won three of nine seats in Jaffna districts, topping the vote share for the first time; remarkably, a non-Tamil national alliance had won seats in Jaffna. The Tamil National Alliance, which at one time had 16 seats, is today reduced to 12 seats. (Back In 1977, Tamil United Liberation Front was the main opposition party with 18 seats.) Provincial elections have not been held for seven years but there is

no indication they will be held anytime soon. While Dissanayake has been telling Tamils that the new Constitution will address the "Tamil question", Radhakrishnan informed Tamil leaders that he had discussed the issue with his Sri Lankan interlocutors.

Certainly, the Tamils have genuine reasons to be upset with Sinhala majority rulers, whether they belong to the Left or the Right. The Tamils point out that the spirit of the India Sri Lanka accord, which was a treaty between two countries -- which guaranteed under a proposed 13th Amendment equality between Tamil and Sinhala, opening the door to a federal model of power sharing and devolution within a 'united, undivided and indivisible Sri Lanka' -- has not been implemented.

The late Tamil leader, R Sambanthan, had said: "India has special duty in ensuring the resolution of the Tamil question".

But no longer do Indian leaders even mention the implementation of the 13th Amendment or talk about reconciliation

that followed military excesses during the Eelam war. Admittedly, Colombo has built a memorial to uphold the sacrifices of 1257 Indian Peace Keeping Force soldiers who facilitated the ultimate defeat of LTTE, back in 1990.

Traditionally, Sri Lankan leaders used to say: "We look to India for our security and China for economic growth". After the 2022 economic meltdown and debt crisis, the tables have been turned, especially after India provided the \$4 billion financial lifeline.

Still, the Trinco Energy Hub is breaking news. Colombo's Daily Mirror, a premier newspaper, described it as follows on April 22: "It is no longer a matter of strategic vision but how urgently it can be executed".



India, seeing it as a ceding of sovereignty. That's why, despite several agreements and MoUs, none could fructify. The three decade-long Tamil Eelam war didn't help.

In 2003, Indian Oil Corporation signed a 35-year lease to develop 15 oil tanks, with an annual payment of \$ 100,000. Sri Lanka Oil Corporation utilises 16 tanks for fuel storage, offshore bunkering and has rented three to Prima Flour Mill Singapore for water storage. Radhakrishnan discussed the renovation of oil tanks and laying of a multi purpose oil transfer pipeline between Karaikal/Chennai to Trincomalee. A solar power project is also under construction in Sampore in Trinco. The iron is hot for the Trinco Energy hub to be finally executed.

New Zealand trade deal: Positive way forward, address concerns too

The risks of a trade deficit in the face of rising imports call for domestic reforms that incentivise innovation and good practices

MERCHANDISE trade between India and New Zealand stood at a modest \$1.3 billion in 2024-25. India's share in the island country's total import market of \$47.5 billion last year was just 2 per cent. Billed as historic, the free trade agreement (FTA) aims for a dramatic, long-term shift. The push to diversify exports to a high-income market also opens doors for a larger Indian footprint in the Asia-Pacific region. The positives are many. There are concerns too. The deal, once ratified, will cut or remove tariffs on 95 per cent of exports to India. Conversely, since 58 per cent of New Zealand's tariff lines are already duty-free, its offer to fully open up the field for Indian exporters provides an opportunity, but the gains could be limited in a competitive environment. The risks of a trade deficit in the face of rising imports call for domestic reforms that incentivise innovation and good practices. Forestry and



horticulture exporters from New Zealand could gain a foothold in a market that values scale and reliability.

Among fruit growers in Himachal Pradesh as well as Jammu and Kashmir, already reeling under extreme weather patterns, the prospect of cheaper apples or kiwi fruit on sale poses another challenge. New Delhi's quota and time limits may not be enough to assuage apprehensions. A focus on improved crop produce, storage and supply chain strategies is essential. No sweeping liberalisation for milk powder or mass dairy exports comes as a relief, though how it plays out is uncertain. Access across 118 services sectors in New Zealand is an encouraging sign. For Indian students and professionals, more visa pathways and post-study work rights are a huge plus. Even as the possibility of uneven benefits looms, doubling trade by 2031 could just be the momentum the partnership needs.

Building resilience against Mythos brahmastra

The marriage of IoT and AI is a transition that dwarfs the original Internet's impact

In the 'Sauptika Parva' of the Mahabharata, after the war at Kurukshetra, Ashvatthama and Arjuna each unleash the Brahmashirastra, a weapon of such totality that Vyasa himself must intervene. Arjuna, at Krishna's counsel, withdraws his. Ashvatthama cannot, and in bitterness turns his towards the womb of Uttara. The sequence is instructive. Certain divyastras were withheld because their release would unmake the world, and the danger lay not in the weapon alone but in the asymmetry of those who held it. In 2019, OpenAI announced that a large language model it had trained was too dangerous to release. It was GPT-2. It was released within months. Seven years on, the same warning has returned, and this time the warners are harder to dismiss. On April 7, Anthropic -- now valued at roughly \$800 billion -- declared its latest model, Claude Mythos, "substantially beyond" anything previously trained. CEO Dario Amodei decided against a general release. The UK's AI Security Institute, the only non-US entity granted access, confirmed that Mythos completed a 32-step simulated cyber intrusion no prior model had accomplished. n.thropic claims Mythos has identified severe 'zero-day' security flaws across every major operating system and web browser, including a flaw that had evaded detection for 27 years, and others in Unix-family systems including FreeBSD. CrowdStrike claimed that AI-enabled cyberattacks were up 89 percent in 2025, and the average time between initial access and malicious action has fallen to 29 minutes, a 65 percent acceleration over the 2024 average.

That is the controversy, shorn of dramatisation. A private American firm has built an autonomous agent capable of chaining multi-step intrusions -- privilege escalation, lateral movement, exfiltration -- against the commodity software stack on which the world's banks, hospitals, power grids and payment systems rest. It has then

decided, unilaterally, who may use it to patch themselves.

Anthropic's Project Glasswing's 40-odd early-access firms include Apple, Microsoft, Google, J P Morgan, Goldman Sachs, Cisco, CrowdStrike and the Linux Foundation. Eleven of the named partners are American. The only non-US door opened has been to the UK. The European Commission has met Anthropic three times and not been given the model. Germany's BSI has received briefings, not access. Canada's finance minister has compared the threat to a closure of the Strait of Hormuz. The Bank of England's governor has said Anthropic may have "cracked the whole cyber-risk world open". India has no seat at this table. India's scheduled commercial banks, NPCI's UPI rails, the core banking stacks of public-sector lenders, GSTN, DigiLocker, FASTag, state load-despatch centres and CDDT servers run on precisely the commodity operating systems and browser runtimes in which Mythos has identified flaws. It was reported on April 22 that the Reserve Bank is reduced to consulting the Federal Reserve and Bank of England about a model it cannot examine. NPCI is attempting to secure early access and is being told that the servers are American and that local-data testing in foreign jurisdictions is not feasible. Britain's worst-case bank-hack modelling, published before Mythos existed, described direct debits failing, rents and wages unpaid, ATMs frozen, point-of-sale payments rejected at petrol stations and a run beginning on rival lenders. The challenges for the Indian government are of three kinds. First, access. The proposition that a private corporation may decide who is permitted to defend themselves is one no sovereign should accept. Second, regulatory scaffolding. The IT Act of 2000 was drafted when broadband penetration in India was below 1 percent. Section 70A of that Act

constitutes the National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC), but confers no evaluation power over foreign-trained models. The DPDP Act of 2023 addresses personal data, not frontier-



model dual use. CERT-In's directions of April 2022 mandate 6-hour incident reporting, but are silent on pre-incident model evaluation. MeitY's AI advisories are, well, advisory. Third, time. Anthropic itself expects comparable models to proliferate, including to less safety-conscious open-source labs, within 18 months. What is to be done? Several concrete measures, each of them overdue. One, statutory evaluation access. The IT Act should be amended (whether by a new dedicated provision or by an extension of CERT-In's powers under Section 70B) to require any frontier-model developer offering commercial services in India to submit the model for capability and misuse evaluation by a designated national evaluator, on the AI Safety Institute's template. No evaluation, no licence to operate. The UK, a jurisdiction of almost 70 million, secured such access in under two years. India has 1.4 billion, and a payments system processing over 18

billion transactions a month. Two, an Indian AI Safety Institute, with statutory backing and the technical apparatus to conduct independent capability, jailbreak and agentic-behaviour evaluations. Not another advisory body. An institute with teeth.

Three, live red-team capacity at CERT-In and NCIIPC, running frontier-model-generated exploits against the critical information infrastructure sectors already notified (power, banking, telecom, transport, strategic public enterprises) rather than producing compliance checklists. Four, a mandatory Software Bill of Materials (SBOM) for every critical information infrastructure operator, on the lines of US Executive Order 14028 of May 2021, with machine-readable SBOMs deposited with NCIIPC. Without an SBOM, a bank hearing that Mythos has found a FreeBSD zero-day cannot tell whether it runs FreeBSD, and where. Five, revision of the RBI Cyber Security Framework for Banks of June 2016. Its 30-day patching window for critical vulnerabilities is obsolete. For zero-days of CVSS 9.0 or above (indicating critical severity of vulnerability, the highest risk level), the standard should be 72 hours, with direct regulatory reporting and secondary escalation to CERT-In. The Securities and Exchange Board's parallel framework for market infrastructure institutions requires the same upgrade.

Six, a diplomatic track. The India-US Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) already covers AI cooperation on paper. Frontier-model safety evaluation access should be folded into its operative agenda, not left to the next ministerial communiqué. A parallel mechanism with the UK, given its privileged access, is more urgent. This is a bilateral question ex ante, not a multilateral aspiration ex post. Seven, liability. Section 43A of the IT Act,



I had fruit smoothie for Breakfast

for a week, here's what happened

Many among us do things off our way to lose weight. I belong to this league. The thought came to me a month ago to alter my diet for the better while I was working out at home following an app which promised a 30-day transformation. It was working, indeed, but I wasn't satisfied. Like a typical Arian hankers quick results, so do I. So, there I went with my fruit smoothie challenge.

Full disclosure: Though I had thought that I would also alter my other meals besides my breakfast, I was only partially successful. Some days, as I had longed, I had salads for my dinner and skipped the traditional meal with daal and rotis. While when hunger pangs took better off me, I couldn't resist and had a bowl of daal and a bowl of vegetable with a multigrain roti.

I had decided to pull some fruits, vegetables and nuts in my smoothies and had decided to keep it more or less same for the seven days. I avoided the frozen variety and went only for fresh and organic selection.

Day 1
My experience of not eating any grain for my breakfast was pretty much non-existent. I belong to a typical Punjabi family that cannot start its day without paranthas. Though I had tweaked it a bit for myself and had added muesli, oats, daliya and poha for variety, fruits and fruits alone had never happened for me. But I didn't mind this fact today. I was looking forward to see a drop in my weighing scales and I was told it happens in the kitchen.

I pulled in a banana, an apple and a kiwi in my

blender, poured in half a cup of low-fat milk and added walnuts, cashews, almonds and raisins. After a minute's blend, it gave me a fine, thick, limish smoothie. It tasted fine. I liked the afterword more. I was hungry again in two hours and felt lighter throughout the day.

Day 2
I followed a similar routine and pulled in exactly the same ingredients with two exceptions. I added two strawberries and a spoon of peanut butter. This changed the taste of my smoothie to make it a little more on the side of sour. I supposed that my kiwi was also a little more tart than the previous day. It left me with a pleasant acidic kick in my mouth.

Day 3
A good riddance was happening with this happy replacement of my morning breakfasts with smoothies. I would usually sip tea after my multigrain paranthas, poha or vegetable daliya in the mornings. But you can't have it after a smoothie. This reduced my tea intake to one in a day (in the evening) from two previously.

On the third day, I decided to give my smoothie a vegetable kick. Today I pulled in a banana, a green apple, a kiwi, some spinach leaves and an orange carrot. I added some water to it. It made a mix of over a glass and was too heavy but I somehow had it. I am also not a fan of spinach personally, so I thought what better way to have it than by masking its taste among fruits I love. But this experiment failed, kind of.

For the past two days, I felt hungry again in two hours so I assumed it will happen today also because fruits and vegetables are nothing but fibre and will

get digested. But it was four hours already and I could still not have anything more. A chef-friend suggested me to drink at least three to four glasses of water to rid that feeling of bloatedness because it was too much fibre for my body. Not that it was bad, it just needed more water to digest itself.

Day 4 and 5
The fourth and the fifth day were almost the same. I replaced my banana for a mango. It got yummiier and tangier. With nutritionist Rujuta Diwekar siding with mangoes so much, I gave them a green signal too. The smoothie turned out really yummy on the fifth day particularly because, I assume, the mango was very sweet and pulpy. After the spinach disaster, my stomach would have thanked me today.

Day 6 and 7
It was the weekend. I usually indulged in a heavy breakfast on holidays. But this time, though I couldn't but I made a deal. I did have smoothies in the mornings but I treated myself during lunch. That's how I made sure my stomach loves me again. I had melon-based smoothies on the sixth and seventh day. I took watermelon, pomegranate and a kiwi and blended them. I did not add water because watermelon already gives a flowy texture to the drink. This time, I kept nuts for dressing and sprinkled a few walnuts and almonds over my smoothie. It tasted delicious. This was, by far, the best smoothie I had yet made.

Conclusion
Having raw fruits and vegetables first thing in the morning is definitely worth two days a week. It made my digestion better (though I was sipping hot lemon water in the mornings too and that could have aided my ailing digestion as well), made me feel like I had the optimal amount of food in the morning and kept me gladly hungry throughout the day. Above all, I felt happier as I was leading a healthy way of life. Sometimes, it was difficult managing to make it or get it made in the mornings as it needs an extra effort from your end. There would be days when you would simply not feel like toiling for it and have what's made for others in the family but as I said, two days a week is healthy enough. Keep them as a source of nutritive variety and have cereal in milk, daliya, oats or multigrain paranthas on other days.

As far as my weight was concerned, there wasn't much difference on my weighing scale but I could see myself shedding inches. It was the beginning after all and it sure did give me goals and a determination to achieve them.

Ever lost your cool at the tiniest thing, and five minutes later wondered why? Sometimes small things that happen every day, like spilling water or being unable to find your socks, can send you into a flying rage. But why did you lose your cool? You are not going through any life crisis — your job doesn't require you to clock in insane hours and your personal life is looking up. What many of us don't realize is that stress can be caused by several little factors that, on the surface, seem harmless.

Smartphones

Your do-it-all phone is supposed to make your life easier since you can check your mail, chat with friends, play games and add final touches to your presentation, all on the go. So if anything, it should be a stress-buster, right? Wrong. The ability to stay in touch wherever you are and at any time of the day, makes it hard for you to focus on the task at hand; be it in the office, in a party or a picnic. And that phantom buzz — the feeling that your phone vibrated even when it didn't — is a classic sign of stress. People get obsessed with their phones and keep thinking about why they haven't got any calls or texts in a while. All this constantly inflates your stress.

Cubicle-free offices

Most offices today have done away with cubicles. In 'open plan' offices, everyone can see what everyone else is doing. And without realizing it, the things that your colleagues do can add to your stress. Strong perfumes, loud conversations, squeaky chair wheels or the constant prying eyes on your computer screens, can all evoke a reaction within you. Haven't we all clenched our fists in frustration and felt the need to punch the person sitting next to/across from us at least once?

Noise

Finding a quiet corner has become close to impossible, even in our homes. Throughout the day we are bombarded with noises — horns blaring in the traffic, phones ringing in the office, the passing of cars outside your bedroom, the buzz of tube lights or the hum of your computer fan. We are used to many of these noises and don't even notice them anymore, but that doesn't mean that you are immune to their effects. Constant background noises raise your blood pressure, and secretly also affect your ability to pay attention, all thanks to the build up of stress.

Rude encounters

Being hung up on by someone on the phone, told off by the auto driver or ignored by a salesperson — all these can result in stress. When you feel insulted, the thought tends to linger long after the incident has passed. This plays on your mind, and any negative thoughts can spark off stress. In the long-run, it can alter your

Bedtime habits for Good sleep

Like with most other things, there's a protocol for peaceful bedtime. A comforting bath, softly-lit ambience, relaxing conversation and no stimulants... are some factors that decide whether you'll sleep well. Studies prove a good sleep hygiene solves long-term sleep issues.

Lay out your clothes

You can help your body recognise that bedtime is looming by setting routines and repeating them every night, like laying out your nightwear. If people establish nightly routines, they can help their brain shift into sleep mode faster.

Fix the lights

As it starts getting dark outside, your body releases the chemical melatonin, which peaks at 2-3 am.

refreshed.

Cut the noise

High intensity sounds can cause arousals (periods of wakefulness in sleep) resulting in poor quality of sleep. It results in fatigue during the day. For instance, intense traffic noise causes increased cortisol levels, resulting in poor sleep. So, what content you watch or listen to before sleeping is also crucial. Soothing chants or symphonies, a light banter with kids or simply catching up with your spouse can put you at ease.

o nap or not to nap

Snoozing while travelling or catching short power-naps in between work is a habit with most of us. However, studies have shown that sleep is best



It automatically makes you sleepy. Any kind of light (gadgets, phones, iPads) that interferes with the secretion of melatonin, causes a delay in sleep and poor quality slumber. Lights in the bedroom should be dimmed and gadget use avoided for at least one hour prior to bedtime.

No stimulants

A heavy meal or spicy snack too close to bedtime can leave your digestive system working overtime. Also, any substance high in caffeine or nicotine acts as a stimulant and interferes with the ability to fall asleep. They are best avoided for at least 4-6 hours before bed. Also, contrary to common belief, alcohol relaxes and induces sleep only initially. In the long run, it actually keeps you from getting the deep, restorative REM sleep you need to feel



obtained in a single and continuous block and such frequent naps during the day may eventually hamper a restful night's sleep. Breakfast, rich in vitamin B6, and sunlight exposure in the morning hours (for at least 10 min) is known to improve sleep quality.

What's Stressing You out?



hormones and weaken your immune system.

Automated customer assistance

Waiting for what seems like an eternity and pressing all the buttons on your keypad just to get to speak to the customer care representative is a shared irritant. These systems are designed to save companies money, but all they manage to do is steadily raise your frustration. Even though you may not use this service on a daily basis, a single call is enough to stress you out. Getting agitated during or after the call is an instant sign of this.

Bedroom lights

Finding complete darkness is difficult. It's late, you have turned off all the lights in your bedroom and drawn the curtains, but still the light from the streetlamp manages to find its way into your room. If not that, it's the bright LED air conditioner display, your glow-in-the-dark alarm clock, or simply that you have left the TV on. Sleeping eight hours a night is not enough; mind needs uninterrupted, good-quality sleep, and this is not possible with a bright stimulus.

Not paying attention to your appearance

You may pretend to not care about how you look, or how the world views you, but one frown after looking in the mirror is a sign that your appearance has an effect on your psyche. There is a strong link between how you present yourself and how the world views you. When people respond positively, you feel good, and the opposite holds true when you get negative feedback. Not being happy with how you look hits your confidence, and constantly thinking about it,

leads to stress.

Mess

Gravy stain on the carpet, toys scattered everywhere, or the stack of dirty dishes in the sink. A messy living environment can make anyone irritated, especially if it feels like you are the only one who seems to give a hoot about it. Coming back to a messy house after a long day at work makes things that much more annoying. This only adds to your to-do list, no longer making your home a place where you unwind and relax.

Dieting

Ever noticed how someone on a diet is easily irritated? Dieters consume fewer-than-required calories and even end up skipping meals. This sends the body into craving mode, resulting in irritation, headache and fatigue. Cheating on the diet makes you guilty, and blaming yourself for the binge trip results in enormous stress.

Social networks cause stress to Children

Scientists believe that the quality and size of the social relationships nurtured in childhood may have important physiological consequences for physical and mental health for youth. Researcher Mark V. Flinn said that cortisol and salivary alpha-amylase are secreted in response to outside pressure or

A lot of research has shown the significance of social relationships in influencing adult human behavior and health, but children's perception of their social networks correlates with stress and how it may influence development is still untapped. A research team from the University of Missouri has determined that children and adolescents physically react to their social networks and the stress those networks may cause.



tension. A part of the autonomic nervous system, release of cortisol in the system is quick, unconscious and can be measured in saliva; therefore, measuring cortisol is a good indicator of stress in the body.

He added that the typical physiological response to stress is the release of hormones like cortisol into the system. In the study, the researchers wanted to explore the association between children's personal social networks, as well as perceived social network size and density with biomarkers like cortisol and alpha-amylase that can indicate levels of stress in youth.

Flinn said that using the data they have collected they found out children who were stressed about the size and density of their perceived social networks had elevated anticipatory cortisol levels and responded by secreting more alpha-amylase.

The study appears in the journal Social Neuroscience.

Blazing summer raises Fever pitch

dehydration or nausea.

Doctors spoke to said that while prolonged exposure to sun was the main cause of such conditions, diabetics were susceptible even more. The worst time to step out in this heat would be between 12 noon and 3pm, they said.

Doctors advise heavy intake of fluids to avoid dehydration.

Dr Rommel Tickoo, senior consultant (internal medicine) Max Hospital, Saket, said 2-3 people were consulting him in OPD daily over complaints of nausea, headache and weakness. "These are the classic symptoms of heat exhaustion. I haven't come across any heat-stroke case, though," Tickoo said.

Safdarjung Hospital, too, had reported a rise in



cases of fever and headache linked to increased body temperature.

A doctor said: "Heat cramps and exhaustion are common among labourers or sales executives who are outdoors during the hottest part of the day."

Drinking enough water, the doctors said, could help ward off heat-related illnesses. Also, one should avoid a sudden change in temperature. Dr Anoop Misra, chairman, Fortis C-Doc, said people with pre-existing illnesses, for example diabetes, were highly vulnerable to heat-related ailments as they were already on medications that interfered with body's cooling system. "Hot weather leads to a decrease in blood pressure and a change of medication is required in patients suffering from hypertension, heart disease and diabetes," he added.

Early symptoms of a heat stroke are weakness, dry tongue and cramps.

Sweltering heat can affect the skin too, if precautions, such as appropriate clothing and application of sunscreen, are not followed. Fungal allergies are also common during summer because of excessive sweating.

Today, the gym is not the only place that you can visit to shed some pounds or stay in shape. Now, there are a number of whacky workouts that aren't just fun — they're effective too! So, get your workout clothes out of the closet and take your pick from one of these unusual workouts...

- Cardioke, which comprises doing cardio while singing loudly (cardio + karaoke), is another unusual fitness trend that is finding a lot of takers. The idea is to associate lyrics with certain workout moves.

- The FitWet bike is a combination of a hot tub attached with an exercise bike. While your torso remains above the water level, your butt and legs are submerged as you pedal away. The underwater workout is said to do wonders for your legs.

- AcroYoga is said to improve your flexibility and strength. It is a mixture of yoga and partner acrobatics. In this, you perform certain yoga postures while you balance on your partner.

- PiYo is an amalgamation of yoga and pilates, and works on burning fat, improving flexibility and building muscle. Since it doesn't focus on high impact movements, it is ideal for those who are prone to injuries.

- Always wanted to try pole dancing but were apprehensive about giving it a shot? Give Polga a try. Polga is the combination of pole dancing

Unusual workouts for a fit bod

yoga, said to boost your strength and open up your joints, apart from improving coordination.

- While the Paleo diet has its takers, did you know about the Paleo fitness regime? The workout involves different ways in which you can build your strength, which include carrying heavy items, hanging from branches and running.

- Miley Cyrus has made twerking so popular that now there are actually classes that offer this style as a workout. Because of its high-intensity cardio moves, twerking is an effective way to tone your thighs, abdomen and butt. Just ensure you don't hurt your back though.

- Fancy doing an aerial workout? Aerial silk is getting increasingly popular in the city and comprises using a long piece of fabric that is hung from the ceiling to perform acrobatic moves. It has numerous benefits, which include improving your motor skills, strength, endurance and coordination. The workout is great for your shoulders, backs, chest, arms and legs and even increases mental alertness.



The capital is clearly feeling the heat, what with a spurt in the number of people being rushed to hospital with exhaustion,



"Central Staff, Give Credence": Top Court To Trinamool Over Plea Against Poll Body

The Supreme Court's observation comes just days after the Calcutta High Court upheld the decision of the Election Commission

New Delhi.(Agency)
The Trinamool Congress's arguments that a central government employee would necessarily go against them has a fallacy, the Supreme Court said today. That fallacy, the court pointed out, is the assumption itself and instead, the Trinamool should "give the government employees some credence".
The Supreme Court's observation comes just days after the Calcutta High Court upheld the decision of the Election Commission (EC) to appoint central government and public sector unit (PSU) employees as counting supervisors and assistants, dismissing a petition filed by the Trinamool.
Senior lawyer Kapil Sibal, representing the party led by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, referred to a circular issued by the EC and said, "It says there has been apprehension from various quarters regarding discrepancy. They want another

central government nominee. Is this not pointing a finger at the state?"
Justice Joymalya Bagchi replied, "It hardly matters if he is a central government nominee or not. It is to the subjective satisfaction of the EC. Your counting agents will be there and so will others. Then counting assistant, counting supervisor and microobserver who is a central government officer."
We cannot hold that this notification is contrary to the regulation since one is a central government officer, but the others are not. To choose wholly from one pool cannot be said to be incorrect," Justice Bagchi said.
Counting in the West Bengal assembly election is scheduled on Monday. Justice PS Narasimha also questioned Sibal's line of reasoning: "What is this proportionate representation concept? All of them are



employees of the government."
"But the state government nominee has not been appointed," Sibal said.
"So have you written to them. You were challenging the circular and now you are saying to follow it," Justice Narasimha replied.
The EC told the Supreme Court that the state

government's apprehensions are wrong because state government officers would also be part of the process and present at the counting booths.

Even in the Calcutta High Court, the observations had said such appointments fell within the exclusive discretion of the EC and did not suffer from any illegality or lack of jurisdiction. Similar to today's Supreme Court's observation, the high court had said there was no restriction mandating selection only from state government employees, and authorities were free to appoint personnel from central or state services, including PSUs. Appearing for the EC, senior lawyer DS Naidu said the returning officer is a state government employee with overarching power to deploy personnel from any pool of government employees.

Centre Gives Contractors Extension, Waives Penalties Amid Middle East War

New Delhi.(Agency)
The Ministry of Finance has said that contractors and suppliers executing contracts with government entities will be given additional time and will not face penalties if their work has been disrupted due to the ongoing Middle East situation, according to an official memorandum. In the Office Memorandum issued by the Department of Expenditure, the government clarified that delays caused due to such disruptions will be treated under the "Force Majeure" clause, which allows relief in extraordinary circumstances beyond human control.

"A Force Majeure (FM) means extraordinary events or circumstances beyond human control... such as a war...", the ministry said, adding that such a clause "frees both parties from contractual liability" when obligations cannot be fulfilled due to such events.

The ministry further stated that in cases where contracts have been impacted due to the prevailing Middle East situation, "the procuring entities may invoke Force Majeure."

The relief applies to contracts with government agencies across goods, services and works, the memorandum indicated, covering suppliers, consultants and contractors engaged in public procurement.

It added that contractors will not face penalties for such delays. "The supplier would not be liable for imposition of any such sanction so long as the delay... is the result of an event covered in the FM clause," the memorandum said. The government also provided clarity on timelines, stating that deadlines for completion of contracts due on or after February 28, 2026, "may be extended for a period of not less than two months and not more than four months without imposition of any cost or penalty." According to the memorandum, such extensions will be decided on a case-by-case basis after examining the validity of claims under the Force Majeure provisions.

Delhi moves to declare leprosy a notifiable disease to strengthen surveillance

New Delhi.(Agency)
The health department has proposed that leprosy be declared a notifiable disease under the Delhi Epidemic Diseases Act. The proposal has been sent for approval, placing Delhi in line with other states that already follow this system.

If approved, clear guidelines will be shared with all healthcare providers—government and private—and they will have to report every new case of leprosy to the District Leprosy Officer. This includes clinics, hospitals, and individual doctors.

The goal is to better track cases, detect the disease early and ensure patients receive proper treatment. The



standard treatment, known as Multi-Drug Therapy, is available free of cost in government facilities.

India had officially eliminated leprosy as a public health problem in 2005, but the country still accounts for nearly 59% of global annual new leprosy cases. A recent pan-India study found that 44.1% of leprosy patients are managed by private health facilities and go unreported to the National Leprosy Eradication Programme. This creates hidden pockets of infection, allowing the disease to spread silently.

Health experts believe that making leprosy notifiable will help solve this problem. It will improve tracking, ensure uniform treatment and reduce the risk of drug resistance. The move is expected to reduce stigma as well.

FTII to conduct nationwide re-exam after Delhi centre disruption in entrance test

New Delhi.(Agency)
The Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) on Friday announced its decision to conduct a nationwide re-examination for its entrance test following disruptions reported at a centre in Delhi on April 26. The institute announced that the decision was taken after reviewing findings from a committee constituted to investigate the incident.

In its official statement, the FTII stated that the re-test would be held for all papers across the country to ensure fairness and maintain the credibility of the examination process. It further noted that concerns over "operational deficiencies" and a major disruption at the Delhi centre had affected the overall perception of integrity, making a uniform re-

examination necessary.

The issue arose at one of the Delhi centres where the exam had to be cancelled in a specific building after a delay in the distribution of



question papers. According to reports, a group of candidates had allegedly entered the strong room, manhandled staff and created a law-and-order situation. Following the incident, an emergency meeting was held involving the examination agency and centre officials, and the

test for candidates in that building was cancelled.

Police personnel and an FTII-appointed observer were present at the site. Later, during the second shift, additional concerns were raised by candidates, prompting the observer to recommend the cancellation of that session as well in the same building.

However the FTII clarified that candidates would not be required to submit fresh applications for the re-examination. Their existing registration details would remain valid. "The institute will release a revised schedule and issue new admit cards through its official website at least one month before the exam date," read the notification.

Difficult to prove 'aggressive sex' by accused: Delhi HC gives bail in murder case

New Delhi.(Agency)
The Delhi High Court has granted bail to a man accused of the killing a sex worker through aggressive sex, saying that merely because her bite mark was on his thumb, it could not be said that it was he, and not two associates, who carried out the aggressive act which turned out to be fatal.

According to the prosecution, the deceased was a sex worker whose services were availed by four accused persons, including the present accused, and in the course of the alleged act, he strangled the woman to death. The four accused then dumped her body.

Justice Girish Kathpalia noted that there was no direct evidence in the case, and regarding circumstantial

evidence also, "there was no witness who had seen the deceased last alive with any of the accused persons." The judge further said that the possible evidence connecting

the accused with the "so-called aggressive sex" could have been obtained through forensic examination, but according to FSL, no sexual activity was detected on examination of the body.

"In other words, even if the prosecution's version is assumed to be correct to the effect that the accused persons engaged the services of the deceased for sex and one of them carried out aggressive sex, which turned fatal for the deceased, it cannot be said as to which of the four accused persons was responsible for that," the judge said. The judge noted that the remaining three co-accused had been released on bail, saying there was no reason to detain the present accused further.



Hyderabad weather: IMD predicts rain and drop in temperatures after heatwave

Hyderabad is set for a major weather shift in the first week of May as IMD predicts a significant temperature drop below 40°C and above-normal rainfall, providing much-needed relief after a record-breaking heatwave in April.

New Delhi.(Agency)
After a brutal April where the mercury pushed past 45°C in several districts, the city is finally set to receive some breathing room. On Friday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) in Hyderabad confirmed that the first week of May is set to bring a welcome shift, marked by a dip in temperatures and above-normal rainfall across Telangana. While the state has been sizzling, the transition to cooler weather will be a gradual process varying from one region to another.

Hyderabad prediction for today

The temperature in the surrounding districts like Medchal-Malkajgiri, Rangareddy, or Sangareddy will witness extreme heat. While the city is expected to see maximum temperatures stabilise comfortably under the 40°C mark.



As per the weather forecast, the temperature is a bit high at 40°C with sunny conditions during the day, transitioning to partly cloudy in the night with a low of 27°C. While the sun will still be out, the oppressive heatwave feel is fading. The residents in Vikarabad and Bhongir can also expect this immediate respite as the peak summer intensity begins to wane.

What to expect in the coming week?

The outlook for the rest of Telangana for the first week of May is looking much wetter and cooler than usual. A cyclonic circulation over interior Maharashtra, combined with a trough stretching down to Tamil Nadu, is expected to trigger rainfall across the region. While Hyderabad gets early relief the northern districts like Adilabad and Nizamabad will have to tough it out for about three more days with temperatures still hovering between 41°C and 44°C.

However, by May 4, the rain is expected to hit these northern pockets too which will bring the mercury down. Overall, the IMD predicts that daytime temperatures throughout the first week of May will remain below the normal average for this time of year, offering a rare and much-needed break from the gruelling summer sun.

New NPS fee rules to kick in from July; Tier-II costs, dormant fees in focus

New Delhi.(Agency)

Come July and National Pension System or NPS subscribers will witness a tweaking of account-level charges. It follows the decision of the regulator PFRDA (Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority) to tighten annual maintenance costs especially for Tier-II and dormant accounts.

The matter has been clarified by a circular issued by the PFRDA and it seeks to introduce a more uniform framework across account types. One of the immediate changes that NPS subscribers will face is the alignment of annual maintenance charges for Tier-II accounts with that levied on Tier I accounts within the same sector, government or private. Thus there will no longer be different rates between Tier I and Tier II. PFRDA has also kept a safeguard for accounts with low balance. The government is trying to popularise NPS to create a pan-India pension system.

Charges for dormant account

The regulator has said that dormant accounts will attract reduced but continuing charges. It has also said that an NPS account will be treated as dormant if the subscriber makes no contribution for four consecutive quarters. Once an NPS account becomes dormant, it will face a charge of 10% of the applicable rate and this fee will continue till the account is again activated.

Relief for some accounts

While PFRDA emphasised the fees on the dormant accounts, NPS-Lite accounts and those under Atal Pension Yojana will not face any fees/charges even if the balance is zero. This will ensure that subscriber with low income are not hauled up for their inability to contribute.

India's forex reserves decline \$4.82 bn to \$698.49 bn; gold reserves dip too

New Delhi.(Agency)

On recently, in late February, India's forex reserves reached an all-time high of \$728.49 billion. According to data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday, India's foreign exchange reserves declined by \$4.82 billion to \$698.49 billion in the week ending April 24. Foreign currency assets (FCAs), the largest component of the reserves, declined by \$2.84 billion to \$554.62 billion. Gold reserves declined too. It must be noted that India's forex reserves rose by \$2.3 billion to reach \$703.30 billion in the week ended April 17. The quick descent from the all time high only seven weeks earlier is explained by the continuing US-Iran war, which is showing no movement towards lasting peace. The conflict broke out on February 28 and the one of the major fallout was a downward pressure on the Indian rupee. Due to this downward pressure, the forex reserves in India has come under pressure and declined by as much as 4.11% in these few weeks.

Decline in gold reserves

Gold reserves of India declined too. It went down by \$1.90 billion to touch \$120.24 billion. Special Drawing Rights or SDRs fell by \$67 million to reach \$18.77 billion. It must be mentioned that Special Drawing Rights is not a currency. It was created by the IMF in 1969 and constitutes a potential claim on the freely usable currencies of IMF member countries. It was created to provide financial stability. India's reserve position with the IMF also declined by \$15 million to reach \$4.85 billion.

White-collar hiring in April went up 6% with insurance taking the lead: Report

NEW DELHI.(Agency)

In war-torn April, white-collar hiring increased by 6% compared to that in April a year ago, said a report on May 1. The hiring was nudged up by performance in the insurance, BPO/ITeS and real estate sectors, said the Naukri JobSpeak Index report. The biggest jump in hiring took place in the insurance sector which surged by 21%. Three other sectors registered double digit growth in hiring. These were BPO/ITES with 15%, real estate with 12% and healthcare with 11%. Education also was close to double-digit growth and posted a 9% rise in white collar hiring. Naukri JobSpeak Index publishes a monthly report which tracks the job market and hiring activities in the country.

Sectors which declined

While the five sectors witnessed a surge in hiring, a few declined. Among these were telecom and banking sectors. These Hiring in these sectors have been inching down for four months on the trot said the report. Telecom registered a slide of 11% while banking had a fall of 10% in April. Hiring in the sunrise Global Capability Centres too registered a decline of 4%. Sectors where hiring was flat in the previous month were IT, pharmaceuticals and automobiles.

City-wise hiring activity

Job creation in April was the most prominent in the southern cities. Among the cities that witnessed the highest growth in hiring were Hyderabad, Bangalore and Chennai. Hyderabad emerged on top with 12% growth, while Bengaluru came second with 7% and Chennai emerged third with 6%. The Delhi-NCR was at 3% while Kolkata just managed 1% growth. The financial capital of the country Mumbai happened to be the only metro that recorded a decline of 3%. However, among the bigger cities (tier II) to witness strong hiring activity in April were Jaipur with 12%, Coimbatore with 11% and Ahmedabad with 7%.

Air India to cut international flights till July amid fuel surge, airspace curbs

New Delhi.(Agency)

Air India will reduce its international flight operations through June and July as a sharp rise in aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices and ongoing airspace restrictions have made several routes unprofitable, according to an internal communication accessed by .Air India CEO and Managing Director Campbell Wilson told staff that the airline has "no choice but to trim schedules in June and July" amid mounting operational challenges. The airline has already reduced some flying in April and May due to the "massive rise in jet fuel prices," combined with airspace closures and longer flying routes.

The move comes days after India's airline industry has sought

urgent government intervention as a sharp rise in jet fuel prices begins to strain operations and push up costs. In a letter to the Civil Aviation Ministry, the Federation of Indian Airlines (FIA), which represents carriers such as Air India, IndiGo and SpiceJet, warned that the sector is facing "extreme stress" due to soaring aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices.

The surge in ATF prices, driven by the broader impact of the Middle East war, along with adverse currency exchange rates and restricted airspace, has significantly affected Air India's international operations. Many international routes have become unviable, forcing the airline to scale back services.

Aviation fuel, which typically accounts for around 30-40% of



airline costs, has now risen to as much as 55-60% of operating expenses, according to the industry.

Airspace restrictions following the West Asia conflict have compelled Air India to take longer routes for several

international destinations, leading to higher fuel burn and increased costs. Wilson described the situation as "extremely challenging" and said it has left the airline with limited options. While domestic flight profitability has also taken a hit,

government intervention has helped reduce the degree of impact on those operations.

In his message to employees, Wilson sought "continued solidarity" from staff as the airline navigates the crisis. He acknowledged the disruption caused to passengers and crew schedules, expressing hope that the situation in the Middle East stabilises soon and that key routes, including the Strait of Hormuz, reopen.

Air India Group is estimated to have incurred losses of over Rs 22,000 crore in the financial year ending March 31, 2026.

Wilson, who has announced plans to step down later this year, said the airline will aim to return to normal operations once fuel prices ease and airspace constraints are lifted.

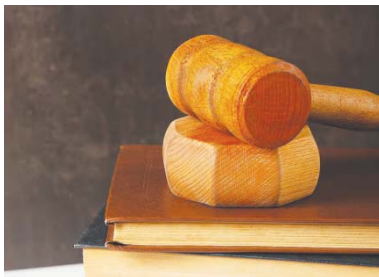
India on US priority watch list: Concerns over IP rule mount

New Delhi.(Agency)

India is on the 'priority watch list' of the US in the latest Special 301 Report for 2026, released on April 30, due to persistent differences over intellectual property (IP) rules, especially in the pharmaceutical sector. India has remained on the priority watch list since the 1990s, reflecting long-standing divergences over patent standards and access to medicines.

According to the latest Special 301 Report, India is one of six countries on this list due to ongoing concerns regarding the protection and enforcement of IP rights, especially in the pharmaceutical and digital sectors.

The US Trade Representative (USTR) flagged inconsistent progress in India's IP regime, noting steps such as the Patents (Amendment) Rules, 2024 and increased staffing at the patent office. "There continues to be a lack of progress on many long-standing IP concerns raised in prior Special 301 Reports. India remains one of the



world's most challenging major economies with respect to the protection and enforcement of IP," stated the report.

Section 3(d) of India's Patents Act prohibits patenting new forms of known substances unless they demonstrate significantly enhanced therapeutic efficacy.

It prevents evergreening, where companies extend patent terms for minor modifications. According to the USTR, such provisions create uncertainty for innovators. Although,

India's stance is fully compliant with WTO norms.

Flagging the absence of data exclusivity provisions, the US also criticised India's compulsory licensing framework, which allows third parties to produce patented drugs under public interest conditions. The report also noted that India is one of the top countries of origin for counterfeit pharmaceuticals seized at the US border in Fiscal Year 2025 and is also a leading source of counterfeit medicines distributed globally.

The US also flagged high customs duties on IP-intensive products—including information and communications technology (ICT), solar gear, medical devices, pharmaceuticals and capital goods—as a sustained concern. It also questioned whether India has any mechanism in place to prevent unfair commercial use or disclosure of proprietary test data submitted for regulatory approvals in pharmaceuticals and agro-chemicals.

Tata Sons has no way out from listing: InGovern

NEW DELHI.(Agency)

Markets advocacy group InGovern has said that the Reserve Bank of India's April 10 and 29 directions on upper-layer non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) leave the Tata Group with no option but to go public. It termed Tata Sons' attempt to remain a private entity by seeking to de-register its NBFC licence as "dead on arrival".

Filed in March 2024, the application has now been rendered substantively and procedurally deficient by the evolving regulatory landscape of 2026, the group said in a report. It added that, to uphold the integrity of financial markets and ensure compliance with the 2026 framework, the RBI should issue a definitive public order rejecting Tata Sons' application for de-registration of its NBFC licence at the earliest.

"With these directions from the RBI, the



regulatory landscape has shifted significantly, and there is no remaining legal basis to provide an exemption to an entity of this magnitude. Tata Sons should be issued a clear directive to initiate the listing process as an upper-layer NBFC by the March 2027 deadline, in strict accordance with the latest master directions," the report said.

While the April 10 draft directions

propose a strictly quantitative Rs 1 lakh crore asset threshold for automatic upper-layer classification, the April 29 directions make it amply clear that even indirect exposure to public deposits or credit renders parametric scoring and debt-reduction defences obsolete, the report said. It may be noted that, to circumvent the September 2025 RBI deadline for upper-layer NBFCs to list — issued in October 2022 — Tata Sons retired over Rs22,000 crore of debt by March 2024 and, in the same month, moved an application to the regulator to cancel its NBFC licence.

However, the RBI has neither formally accepted nor rejected the application yet. In its latest upper-layer NBFC list issued in January 2025, the RBI included Tata Sons. This is despite it being a core investment company that does not accept public deposits or have outstanding debt.

GCCs turn to hybrid models as AI push reshapes operations

Industry leaders say the growing reliance on external partners is not a sign of structural weakness, but a deliberate strategy

New Delhi.(Agency)

India's Global Capability Centres (GCCs) are increasingly deepening ties with consulting and IT services firms, as they navigate rapid shifts in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and global product ownership. The move marks a shift towards hybrid operating models, particularly among mid-sized centres balancing capability-building with speed and cost pressures. Industry leaders say this growing reliance on external partners is not a sign of

structural weakness, but a deliberate strategy.

"GCCs are not structurally dependent on external partners, nor is this a temporary gap," said Arindam Sen, Partner and GCC Sector Lead – Technology,

Media & Entertainment and Telecommunications at EY India.

"The reliance is often intentional and strategic. GCCs

may consciously choose not to

insure everything to avoid fixed-cost

lock-in, reduce risk, and maintain

flexibility." Instead, many GCCs are

choosing to keep high-value, complex

problem-solving in-house, while

tapping external partners for

specialised skills and speed. This is

particularly visible in fast-evolving

areas such as artificial intelligence.

"Areas such as AI are evolving too

rapidly across agentic AI, GenAI, and

platforms, for it to be efficient or cost-



effective to internalise everything," Sen said. "GCCs may deliberately leverage partner ecosystems to accelerate innovation, access specialist capabilities, and maintain speed and resilience, while retaining strategic ownership and decision-making control in-house."

Shalini Pillay, Partner & India Leader – Global Capability Centres at KPMG in India, described the shift as part of an ongoing evolution rather than a

structural reset.

"Adopting Hybrid Operating Models has been core to the evolution of the model... GCCs have increasingly leveraged third parties to bridge some very fundamental gaps," she said.

According to Pillay, the current phase is being driven by three factors: "1) AI velocity gap 2) infrastructure and speed of adoption and 3) skills asymmetry."

She added, "This is not a structural transition but a transition phase driven by the pace of AI adoption and digital transformation."

As global enterprises struggle to prepare for AI at scale, GCCs are increasingly using external partners to build readiness. "They are leveraging third party to get better prepared from a data readiness, process intelligence and hence organisation readiness perspective," Pillay said.

Short news

Anna University's 'Train-the-Trainer' to upskill faculty members

CHENNAI.(Agency)

As part of efforts to future-proof engineering education, Anna University through its Centre for Academic Courses (CAC) has announced a series of 'Train-the-Trainer' programmes that will upskill faculty members in affiliated colleges to "bring industry practices directly into classrooms". The university expects a wave of proposals seeking introduction of specialised courses in chip design, VLSI, EV systems and related domains. This comes on the back of a significant expansion in engineering education last year, when the total sanctioned intake rose from around 1.80 lakh to over 2.02 lakh seats. Notably, over 1,100 additional seats were added in electronics and allied streams closely linked to semiconductor technologies.

To ensure teaching quality keeps pace with this growth, the university developed the 'Train-the-Trainer' programmes.

One such programme, 'RTL to GDS II VLSI Design Flow Using Open Source EDA Tools' will be held from May 25 to May 30 at the College of Engineering, Guindy campus. It will provide hands-on training in the complete chip design cycle -- from RTL design and synthesis to GDS II generation using tools such as OpenROAD and Magic.

"Faculty members must be trained in end-to-end design methodologies to effectively prepare students for semiconductor careers," a university official said. "These programmes are designed to bring industry practices directly into classrooms," the official added.

Cop sexually harasses woman on beach in Chennai's Besant Nagar,

CHENNAI.(Agency)

A police head constable was arrested on Friday for allegedly sexually harassing a 21-year-old woman, who was consuming food with her college friend in a car at the Elliot's beach in Besant Nagar on Wednesday night, and for extorting Rs 8,000 from them.

According to sources, the woman, who is from Adyar and pursuing engineering at a private college in Kelambakkam, was sitting in the car at the beach and consuming food with her college friend from Arumbakkam around 8 pm on Wednesday when Joseph (34) flashed torchlight into the vehicle and entered inside.

Joseph is a head constable attached to the High Court Campus police station. He, however, showed an identity card and told the two that he was part of the Shastri Nagar police and demanded money. He threatened to "disclose" the duo's "relationship" to their parents, book a case against the two and take them to the police station if they failed to pay. The male student then headed to a nearby ATM to withdraw money. In the meantime, Joseph questioned the woman and sexually abused her. When her male friend returned, the accused took Rs 8,000 from him and rode away on a motorcycle, sources said.

After returning home, the woman narrated the incident to her sister, who, in turn, alerted their parents. Following this, her father lodged a complaint with the Shastri Nagar police on Thursday.

'Modi Tattva', RSS, Hinduism & patriotism in Vadodara MSU's new Sociology courses

VADODARA.(Agency)

A MODULE on 'Modi Tattva', lessons on RSS fieldwork and a return to Indian knowledge systems — Maharaja Sayajirao (MS) University of Baroda has introduced a new curriculum that is set to study Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership as a concept, integrate indigenous knowledge systems, Hindu religion studies and nationalism in three major courses. These will now be part of the 10 papers of the fourth year of the BA Sociology course as well as the first year of the two-year Masters in Sociology programme.

The modules, 'Sociology of Bharat', 'Hindu Sociology' and 'Sociology of Patriotism', are courses of four credits each, which form part of the restructuring of sociology education at MSU from the forthcoming academic year starting in June, designed to "align academic framework with India's civilisational knowledge, contemporary governance and lived social realities".

Conceptualised by the university's Sociology Department head Dr Virendra Singh, who is chairperson of the Board of Studies of MSU as well as a part of Niti Aayog Project for monitoring public policies and a member of the district administration's 'Vadodara 2047' plan, the approach seeks to build what he called a "practice-oriented, inquiry-driven sociology, rooted in both historical depth and present-day relevance."

Singh told The Indian Express on Friday that 'Modi Tattva' — a part of the Sociology of Patriotism course — is a study of the leadership of the Prime Minister, drawing from German sociologist Max Weber's concept of "charismatic authority".

GBA's pick to draft city master plan awaits government nod

BENGALURU.(Agency)

The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has finalised an agency through global tenders to draft the first-ever master plan for the city with a 20-year horizon and is likely to have the target set for 2047, officials in the civic body's town planning department said.

The officials said the last approved master plan — RMP 2015 — was drafted in 2005, and the new one will be prepared for 2047 for 686.82 square kilometres of the city, driven by data including the latest developments and the plan laid for the evolving needs of the city.

A senior official of the department told, "Three bidders took part in the tender process for drafting the master plan based



on Geographic Information System (GIS) for Bengaluru, of which two were chosen for the financial bidding. The final bidder has been selected by the GBA and sent to the state government for approval.

"All previous master plans for the city were prepared by the Bangalore Development

Authority (BDA). This is the first time the GBA is drafting the city plan. Earlier, the combined area of Bengaluru — those under the GBA and those under the BDA — was 1,207 square kilometres. With the BDA drafting the master plan for the areas under it, GBA's master plan would cover 686.82 square kilometres," the official said.

While the BDA is drafting Revised Master Plan 2041, the GBA is aiming for 2047. The official said both master plans will be in sync, as geographically there is a

boundary but both are aimed at a larger Bengaluru. "Generally, the master plans are prepared for 20 years, and the new one is aimed at 2047. A final decision on the year would be taken at a later stage," the official said.

Around Town: The Chembur jalebi shop built by a Partition family that even the Kapoors loved

MUMBAI.(Agency)

The Jagwani family arrived in Bombay from Sindh, Karachi, with nothing. No place to stay, no shop — only a trade they knew. For years after Partition, they made do with what they had: a home that doubled as a small factory, turning out ladoos, halwa and sugar candy 'lollipops', and selling them wherever someone would buy — on trains, at Irani hotels and coffee houses around the city, wherever there was a customer. It was Magumal Khatumal Jagwani who eventually made the leap to a proper street presence. Not a shop, but a cart. "The kind vegetables are sold from," said Bharat Magumal Jagwani, 62. A modest start for what would become one of Chembur's most enduring sweet shops, now known as Satu's Sweets Snacks and Namkeen.

The business name 'Satu's' was handwritten on a slate in chalk. "It was named after my great-grandfather Satumal Magumal Karachiwala, who had a thriving business in Karachi. My grandfather Khatumal Satumal Jagwani and father also worked there before they had to



upend their lives," said Bharat. That cart was parked near what is now the Crime Branch office in Chembur, shared Bharat's son Krishna, 32, adding that when the establishment came up and the cart had to move, the government gave them a small space to set up shop. It was no more than 10 by 10 feet.

In 1958, Magumal Khatumal Jagwani moved into that shop and formalised the business. "There was no shutter, just a cloth tied across the front at night. One kadhai. One product: jalebi. Alongside it was a tea stall called Satu's Tea and Cold Drink Centre, separated from the sweet

shop by a partition," recalled Bharat.

The jalebi was the reason people came. And it still is. All the celebrities from nearby RK Studio and Homi Wadia's Basant Studio would pack samosa and jalebi from here. "Raj Kapoor would personally come every Sunday to buy jalebis.

My father would make it himself. Even his son Rajiv used to come before he entered the film industry. Randhir and Rishi would also come, as did Dara Singh and Dharmendra," shared Bharat, who joined the business in 1972 after completing his 10th standard. He expanded it. First came Bengali sweets. Then, within a year or two, a full snacks counter — patties, chole bhature, dal pakwan, kachori, vada, dhokla and papda.

Then an entire range of kaju varieties beyond just katli, say mewa bites, mawa jalebi, sitting alongside Sindhi delights like sev barfi, which old Sindhi customers still call singar ki mithai. The shop that began with one pan of jalebi now offers more than 200 varieties of sweets and over 15 kinds of namkeen.

Proposal for directly-elected mayor for Hyderabad civic polls under consideration

HYDERABAD.(Agency)

Will voters directly elect their mayor in the upcoming civic polls across Hyderabad's Core Urban Region (CURE)? While the state government has not announced a decision, the proposal is under active discussion and could shape elections due this year for the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), Cyberabad Municipal Corporation (CMC) and Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation (MMC), each with populations exceeding one million.

The debate has gained traction following a recent report by NITI Aayog titled Moving Towards Effective City Government: A Framework for Million-Plus Cities (2026). It recommends that mayors in large cities be directly elected by citizens and serve fixed five-year terms. The proposal includes a mayor-

in-council system, shifting the role from largely ceremonial to executive, with greater authority over civic administration.

The recommendations aim to improve accountability, continuity and

executive power. Administrative authority largely rests with municipal commissioners, often resulting in blurred responsibilities, weak political oversight and reduced accountability.

Urban policy experts argue that a directly elected mayor could provide clearer leadership, reduce political bargaining and enable faster decisions on core civic services such as sanitation, infrastructure, water supply and transport.

The idea is not entirely new to Hyderabad. Under the former Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad, voters directly elected their mayor in 2002.

Teegala Krishna Reddy won that election, defeating Mir Zulfiqar Ali. The system was later replaced with indirect elections following the formation of GHMC, where alliances among parties, including All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen, have often influenced outcomes.



decision-making in urban governance. States have been urged to amend municipal laws in line with the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, which seeks to strengthen local self-governance. In Telangana, however, mayors are currently elected indirectly by corporators and hold limited

Man sexually assaults minor girl at her residence in Hyderabad; POCSO case registered

HYDERABAD.(Agency)

Goshamahall police arrested a man on Friday for the alleged sexual assault of a minor girl. The incident, which took place on April 28, led to charges under both the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the POCSO Act.

According to the police, the accused, identified as Shailender Singh, allegedly orchestrated a situation to isolate the victim at her residence by sending her younger siblings away to buy tea powder. Once alone, Singh reportedly entered the victim's bedroom and physically assaulted her. The complaint states that the accused used criminal force to silence the girl, covering her mouth so forcefully that she briefly lost consciousness due to a lack of oxygen. The matter came to light on the night of April 30 when the victim, supported by her father and aunt, approached the authorities. Following the incident, Singh allegedly attempted to intimidate the family into dropping the matter.

Upon receiving the complaint on April 30, police immediately registered a case under sections 74, 75, 76 (relating to sexual assault and outraging modesty), 351, and 352 (Criminal Intimidation and Assault) of the BNS and section 7 and 8 (Sexual Assault on a minor) of the POCSO Act. Investigation is underway.

NIA visits Mumbai Press Club after it suspends three members over Bhima Koregaon accused gathering

MUMBAI.(Agency)

Two days after the Mumbai Press Club suspended three members over an event attended by accused persons out on bail in the Bhima Koregaon case, officials of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) visited the club seeking documents related to the gathering, according to a statement issued by the club Friday.

The development pertains to a January 19 event at the Mumbai Press Club that was attended by several accused in the 2018 Bhima Koregaon case — these included Varavara Rao, Vernon Gonsalves, Arun Ferreira, Gautam Navlakha, Anand Teltumbde, Hany Babu, Rona Wilson and Sudhir Dhawale — all of whom are currently out on bail.

The Press Club said the gathering had taken place in the presence of former office-bearers, including former president Gurbir Singh. The club stated that while granting bail, the Supreme Court and the special NIA court had imposed conditions restricting some of the accused from meeting one another while out on bail. According to the club, the January 19 gathering raised questions about a possible violation of those conditions.

Following an internal inquiry based on complaints from two members, the club's managing committee suspended three members — former president Gurbir Singh, senior journalist Bernard D'Mello and Shrikant Modak — stating that they had



organised or facilitated the gathering.

In its statement, the club said its inquiry committee reviewed documents, CCTV footage and statements from staff members before concluding that the three had "collectively facilitated a gathering

that may have led to violations of bail conditions within the Club premises", exposing the institution to "significant legal and reputational risk".

On April 29, the club said, NIA officials approached its office-bearers after learning about the suspensions through media reports and sought documents related to the incident. "We have been contacted by NIA officials and are extending full cooperation. All relevant documents sought by the agency have been shared and all necessary assistance has been extended in accordance with applicable laws and procedures," the club said in its statement Friday.

NEWS BOX

Riyan Parag unfazed after vaping row, says he does not have to answer his critics

New Delhi. (Agency)

Rajasthan Royals captain Riyan Parag delivered a pointed response to questions around his recent off-field controversy after RR slipped to a seven-wicket defeat against Delhi Capitals in IPL 2026 at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium on Friday.

Parag, who led from the front with a blistering 90 off 50 balls, was asked in the post-match interview whether his innings had helped answer some of the criticism that had followed him in recent days. The RR skipper, however, made it clear that he had little interest in responding to outside noise. "I don't think I need to answer any critics or whoever's talking about it, but at the end of the day, my job is to get two points. So my score, my innings doesn't really matter if we've lost the game," Parag said after the match.

The Royals captain's sharp response came after a week in which scrutiny around him had intensified, both for his form and for events away from the field.

Parag brushes aside recent controversy Parag had come under the scanner earlier this week after being reprimanded for using an e-cigarette in the Rajasthan Royals dressing room during their previous fixture against Punjab Kings in Mullanpur.

The incident drew criticism and prompted disciplinary action, with Parag fined 25 per cent of his match fee. The matter also sparked wider debate, with the BCCI and IPL governing authorities understood to be reviewing whether further action was necessary. The controversy quickly became one of the biggest talking points around the Royals captain, especially given his patchy returns with the bat this season. But Parag offered no interest in engaging with the criticism, insisting his focus remained solely on results and RR's push for points in the closing stages of the league phase.

His post-match remarks reflected that stance, with the 24-year-old making it clear that personal narratives mattered little if the team failed to get over the line.

Mumbai Indians trust Suryakumar Yadav: Coach Jayawardane backs struggling star

New Delhi. (Agency)

Mumbai Indians head coach Mahela Jayawardane has backed Suryakumar Yadav to come good despite his struggles in IPL 2026. Ahead of a crucial clash against Chennai Super Kings, the coach made it clear that the team continues to trust their senior batter to return to form.

Suryakumar's recent dip has been under the spotlight as MI look to turn around their season. Speaking at the pre-match press conference, Jayawardane addressed the concerns around his form.

"I mean, he just won the World Cup as captain and was the Player of the Tournament last year. So what more can you say? We've had conversations about him. If you look at his batting in the nets, he practises as well as anyone. Even in matches, he's hitting the ball well. But the way he's gotten out a few times has been unfortunate. Sometimes he's hit a shot and been caught at the boundary, and at other times he's just faced a couple of good balls," Jayawardane said. "We just keep encouraging him. If you look at Surya, he's had three or four brilliant years, not just last season. Players are human, and sometimes they go through a phase where things don't go their way. He understands that, and he'll come back with a smile and play the way he knows best," he added.

MI head into the CSK clash needing a strong performance, sitting ninth on the table with just two wins from eight matches. With the tournament entering a crucial phase, the team will be hoping their experienced players step up.

HOW HAS SURIYAKUMAR YADAV'S FORM BEEN IN IPL 2026?

Suryakumar's numbers this season underline the concern. In eight innings, he has scored 162 runs at an average of 20.25 and a strike rate of 140.87, which is below his usual standards in the middle overs. The bigger issue has been the lack of impact innings, with his last six scores reading 6, 33, 0, 15, 36 and 5.

"We just keep encouraging him. If you look at Surya, he's had three or four brilliant years, not just last season. Players are human, and sometimes they go through a phase where things don't go their way. He understands that, and he'll come back with a smile and play the way he knows best," Jayawardane said.

Josh Inglis back for bottom-of-the-table LSG, boosts morale ahead of MI clash

IPL 2026: Jos Inglis has reportedly

rejoined Lucknow Super Giants

before their clash with Mumbai

Indians. His return comes as LSG

battle poor form with Matthew

Breetzke heading home for

personal reasons.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Australian wicketkeeper-batter Jos Inglis is back in the Indian Premier League and is reported to have joined his new franchise, Lucknow Super Giants (LSG), ahead of their crucial clash against the Mumbai Indians on May 4. LSG currently sit at the bottom of the table alongside MI, with just four points from eight games. There has been no official confirmation from the franchise, but according to an ESPNcricinfo report, the

Australian will be available for selection as LSG look to regain momentum in what has been a difficult campaign so far. The report also states that South African batter Matthew Breetzke has left the squad mid-season due to personal reasons.

"Breetzke, meanwhile, has returned to South Africa. He had left the LSG squad before the April 26 home game against Kolkata Knight Riders, which went down to a Super Over. It is understood Breetzke went back primarily because a close family member on his wife's side passed away recently. There is no information yet on whether Breetzke will return to the tournament," the report added.

WILL INGLIS BRING AN END TO LSG'S WOES?

Inglis, meanwhile, had informed the franchise that he would miss the initial part of the IPL due to wedding-related commitments. The

Australian tied the knot on April 18 in Western Australia. He was bought by LSG for 8.60 crore following an impressive



maiden IPL stint with Punjab Kings last season. The wicketkeeper-batter scored 278 runs in 11 innings at a strike rate of 162.57, including one fifty-plus score.

He is expected to play a key role for a struggling LSG batting unit that has failed to

fire this season. Their overseas star Nicholas Pooran has averaged just 10.25, while openers Aiden Markram (24.12) and Mitchell Marsh (26.50), along with captain Rishabh Pant (27), have been unable to deliver in crucial moments.

This phase of the tournament could prove to be make-or-break for LSG, who can no longer afford slip-ups if they are to remain in contention for a playoff spot. The week ahead is particularly demanding, with three matches lined up:

Monday, May 4 against Mumbai Indians in Mumbai, Thursday, May 7 against Royal Challengers Bengaluru in Lucknow, and Sunday, May 10 against Chennai Super Kings in Chennai.

With Inglis now available, LSG will hope his inclusion injects much-needed energy and consistency into their campaign as they attempt to get their season back on track.

Train, post, recover and repeat: A survival guide for India's up-and-coming athletes

New Delhi. (Agency)

India has no shortage of sporting talent. Walk into any training facility in the country, and you will find dedicated, disciplined competitors who have given years of their lives to their sport. Some of them are very good. A few are exceptional. Most of them, you will never have heard of. The ones you have heard of are doing fine for themselves. Virat Kohli sells everything from energy drinks to luxury cars. The big names in cricket, tennis and badminton are on billboards, fronting campaigns, signing deals that would make most professionals envious. Fame, in Indian sport, is extraordinarily lucrative. But fame is also extraordinarily rare.

For the vast majority of Indian athletes, there are no billboards. There are no brand deals landing in the inbox. There is just the

training, the competition, the recovery, and the monthly reality of trying to fund all three without a salary, a sponsor or a safety net.



The question of how they survive, financially and professionally, is one that Indian sport has never adequately answered. Niharika Vashisht has found one answer. The triple-jumper is among a select group of

Indian athletes who have cleared the 13-metre mark to qualify for the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya this September. She has been competing for fifteen years. She has also been a content creator for five. In her telling, one career would not have survived without the other.

THE ECONOMICS OF BEING AN ATHLETE IN INDIA

Ask Vashisht what it actually costs to maintain an elite sporting career, and she does not hesitate. Physiotherapy runs to around Rs 1,500 a session, once or twice a week. Quality supplements, especially imported ones, cost Rs 30,000 to Rs 35,000 a month. Then there is daily nutrition, organic food, strength and conditioning, and the various other expenses that stack up quietly in the background. Not to forget the usual expenses like accommodation, travel, and everything else.

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi send-off costs Jamieson: DC star penalised for RR game flashpoint



New Delhi. (Agency)

Delhi Capitals pacer Kyle Jamieson has landed himself in trouble for the fiery send-off he gave to Vaibhav Sooryavanshi during the game in Jaipur on Friday, May 1. Jamieson was given a warning and one demerit point for breaching Level 1 of the IPL's Code Of Conduct for players and team officials.

The incident took place in the second over of the game, as the RR opener once again showed no fear and took on the New Zealand pacer in the very first delivery he faced against him and got a boundary. Jamieson didn't let the early hit faze him. He held his line and lengths, kept it tight, and struck back almost instantly—nailing a pinpoint yorker that beat Sooryavanshi and cut short the teenager's stay before he could get going.

Clearly pumped after the wicket, Jamieson wheeled around in celebration and locked eyes with Sooryavanshi on his way back, his intense stare adding bite to the early breakthrough.

"Kyle Jamieson, Bowler, Delhi Capitals, has accumulated one Demerit Point and received a warning for breaching Level 1 of the IPL's Code of Conduct for Players and Team Officials during Match No. 43 against Rajasthan Royals (RR) at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium, Jaipur."

"Jamieson was found to have breached Article 2.5 of the IPL's Code of Conduct, which relates to using language, actions or gestures which disparage or which could provoke an aggressive reaction from another player in the match."

"The incident occurred in the second over of the first innings, when, after dismissing Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Jamieson was found to be close to him in an aggressive manner, which could have provoked an aggressive reaction from the batter," read the statement from IPL.

CSK vs MI preview: Hardik Pandya under fire as Mumbai Indians seek Chepauk revenge

New Delhi. (Agency)

With the possibility of finishing with the wooden spoon looming over the Mumbai Indians, Hardik Pandya's much-debated captaincy will be under intense scrutiny as they look to end their losing streak against the very side that began it.

Mumbai have a habit of making late pushes for the playoffs, and this derby against their eternal rivals could provide the perfect platform for MI to signal a return to contention. They come into this counter with back-to-back losses at home and only have two wins in eight games this season thus far. Chennai Super Kings, on the other hand, are stuck in mid-table, unable to string together consistent wins—a very hot-and-cold season by their lofty standards. 'Thala' MS Dhoni, who helped set those standards, appears far from returning to the side due to a calf injury.

Ironically, his absence could serve as a positive in some ways, as his presence around the team continues to draw support and could help galvanize them for a late push toward the playoffs.



They currently have three wins from eight games. CSK will hope to draw inspiration from that crushing win at the Wankhede and complete a double against their arch rivals.

VULNERABILITIES

Opener Sanju Samson has begun to find

form, but the injury to Ayush Mhatre has disrupted the middle-order balance. The team has already cycled through 19 players this season and still hasn't settled on its best XI. Two points against Mumbai can help revitalize their campaign especially since two of their next three games after the Saturday fixture come against bottom-placed Lucknow Supergiants. But for starters, they need a solution to their impact sub woes.

The situation is similar for MI, where key players like Suryakumar Yadav and Jasprit Bumrah have yet to hit peak form. Captain Pandya has plenty to ponder, especially as his side has rotated through as many as 22 players this season, given the injury setbacks the team has faced this season. With time running out and the top half of the table beginning to pull away, neither team can afford further slip-ups.

PSG-Bayern, What a disaster game: Guardiola attends Stockport game, mocks UCL clash

Pep Guardiola joked about skipping

PSG vs Bayern's 9-goal thriller, calling

it a "disaster game" as he instead

watched Stockport County in League

One. He also brushed off fixture

congestion talk as Manchester City

chase Arsenal in the Premier League

title race.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola joked about missing the nine-goal thriller between Paris Saint-Germain and Bayern Munich on Tuesday, April 28, as he chose instead to watch Stockport County face Port Vale ahead of his side's Premier League clash against

Everton. City are currently three points behind leaders Arsenal, with a game in hand in the title race.

Despite thrilling PSG-Bayern encounter, Guardiola was seen in light-hearted mood when explaining his decision to attend an English League One fixture rather than watch one of club football's biggest European clashes, which ended in a dramatic 5-4 scoreline. Stockport lost the game 1-2.

Speaking to the media ahead of the Everton game, Guardiola was quoted by ESPN as saying: "The day before I saw the calendar, the PSG-Bayern game, and I said, 'What a disaster game, the managers are not good, really s*** players!' I am in love with English football and I went to see Stockport." The City boss, who appeared relaxed, also downplayed any frustration over fixture congestion as his side continue their push across multiple competitions. City



face a demanding end to the season after Premier League matches against Crystal Palace and Bournemouth were rescheduled around their FA Cup final against Chelsea.

The rearrangements were necessary due to City's progression in domestic cup competitions, but the updated schedule has left them with three matches in seven days between May 13 and May 19. Their season concludes with a home fixture against Aston

Villa on May 24.

City were reportedly unhappy with the timing of the rescheduled fixtures, particularly the Crystal Palace match originally set for March, which they felt could have been moved earlier. However, Guardiola accepted the situation.

"It is what it is," he said. "When we won the treble and quadruple, we always had this kind of calendar. Of course it could be better, but I've never expected help. We'll go game by game. The broadcasters, Premier League, whoever decides. We will be there with 11 players plus people on the bench."

City remain in the title race, trailing Arsenal by three points but holding a game in hand, having five matches left compared to Arsenal's four. The gap could widen before they face Everton on Monday night, but Guardiola insisted the situation does not concern him.



Akansha Kapoor

Opens Up About Her Egg Freezing Struggles: 'Physically, I Was In A Lot Of Pain'

Actress Akansha Ranjan Kapoor shared her struggles with the egg freezing process during a candid conversation with Soha Ali Khan during her podcast "All About Her". In the latest episode, Soha opened up about crucial topics such as egg freezing, reproductive choices, and medical advancements. Soha asked, "When you refer to the fact that it took a lot out of you and you've done this one cycle and might wait for some time, what does that mean?" Reacting to this, Akansha Ranjan Kapoor shared that the process brought a lot of physical discomfort for her, leaving her drained. She said, "Physically, I was in a lot of pain, which I don't think happens to everybody, but I was in a lot of pain. I couldn't stand straight because it just felt like there was a big balloon inside me, and my doctor was like maybe because you're just really small. So, I couldn't stand straight, and I used to go to my sister's house. So, I live in the B wing, and she lives in the A wing. So, I would walk to her house for her to inject me, and for 2 or 3 days, I couldn't even walk as I was in so much pain. I couldn't stand it." Akansha revealed that when she asked the doctor what workout she could do, she was told she could only walk. "After the first day, there's no way I can even walk. So, that was a lot. And I did not expect to feel so physically blah. It's not a period cramp. It's not pain. It's just a discomfort, which is bloating, heaviness, like there's just a big balloon in my stomach and it'll burst any minute. So, I need to be like this, and also the hormones."



Archana Puran Singh Backs Rahul Roy After Trolls Mock His Reels: 'I Totally Binged On Them'



Actress Archana Puran Singh has come out in support of actor Rahul Roy after he shared an emotional note on social media. The actor took to his Instagram recently, and penned a long note in which he clapped back at those who made fun of his Reels with a content creator.

Responding to the same, Archana took to the comments section, and wrote, "More power to you @officialrahulroy. Love that you are doing what works for you and keeps you happy. You're always amazing and I totally binged on the reels with your OG songs. Lots of love and strength to you Rahul". Earlier, the actor wrote on social media, "I do my work with honesty and modesty. I have some legal matters to pay for, and these are not from today, they are from before the brain stroke happened."

If you mock my simplicity or make fun of my struggles, it says less about me and more about you. If you are truly so concerned, then help me find some genuine and decent work so I can pay for these cases.

At least I am earning through hard work, not by mocking others". The trolling started after the actor uploaded a few videos, which users tagged as "cringe".

In one reel, he was seen dancing on 'Tere Dar Pe Sanam', from 'Phir Teri Kahaani Yaad Aayi' featuring him opposite Pooja Bhatt. While some social media users expressed concern for Rahul after the reels surfaced, others trolled him, dismissing the videos as cringe.

Director-choreographer Farah Khan took to the comments section, and wrote, "Good luck to you Rahul". Actor Sonu Sood wrote, "Keep Rocking Brother".

Priyanka Chopra, Katrina Kaif Or Nayanthara In Tumbbad 2? Makers Eye A-Lister For Key Role



Tumbbad 2 is steadily becoming one of the most anticipated sequels in Indian cinema. The excitement around the film began building after actor-producer Sohum Shah officially joined hands with Pen Studios, headed by veteran producer Dr Jayantilal Gada, to take the cult franchise forward. A day after the makers announced the film's release date, a fresh casting update has now sparked further curiosity around the project.

Makers Looking For A Strong Female Presence? According to Hindustan Times, the makers of Tumbbad 2 are looking to bring a prominent female star on board for a pivotal role in the sequel. The film already carries massive expectations, especially after the original Tumbbad gained cult status over the years and its 2024 re-release created box office records.

A source close to the development told Hindustan Times, "Makers of Tumbbad 2 are looking to onboard a prominent A-lister for a pivotal role. They are keen on adding a strong female presence to the narrative, with names like Priyanka Chopra, Katrina Kaif, and Nayanthara being explored. While discussions are underway, nothing has been locked yet."

The update has naturally intensified speculation, given the scale of the names being considered and the possibility of the sequel expanding the mythology of Tumbbad with a more layered cast.

Tumbbad 2 Release Date Announced

On Wednesday, the makers confirmed that Tumbbad 2 will release in theatres on December 3, 2027. The announcement was made through a poster shared on social media, featuring statues of three figures with the film's title above and the release date below.

The poster also carried the tagline in Devanagari script, "Pralay aayega," which translates to "Apocalypse will arrive," hinting at a darker and possibly more expansive chapter in the franchise. The film also stars Nawazuddin Siddiqui, whose casting had been announced earlier this year by the team.

Director Adesh Prasad On Taking The Story Forward

Director Adesh Prasad, who was associated with the first film as co-director, has spoken about the challenge of building on a world that already has a strong identity.

Richa Chadha

Returns To Belly Dancing After Pregnancy: 'I Felt The Urge To Reconnect'

Actor and producer Richa Chadha is revisiting one of her long-standing artistic passions: belly dancing. The versatile performer spent time in Goa to undertake an intensive five-day course dedicated to deepening her understanding of the dance form.

A few years ago, while preparing for a special number in one of her films, Richa trained in tribal belly dancing under internationally renowned



expert Olga Meos in Kazakhstan. What began as preparation for a role soon turned into a genuine passion. The art form, known for its intense core work and precise body isolations, became a powerful tool for her fitness and creative expression. She further refined her technique with Mumbai-based instructor Shaina Lezana, committing herself to rigorous practice.

Even during the lockdown, Richa continued her training through online sessions, using the time to sharpen her movements and stay connected to dance. Apart from belly dancing, she is also a trained Kathak dancer, having trained for nearly a decade in her childhood under Pandit Abhay Shankar Mishra.

After a brief hiatus from belly dancing due to professional commitments, Richa has now chosen to reconnect with the form in a more immersive way. The upcoming course in Goa marks a renewed chapter in her journey with the dance style, one driven purely by love for the craft.

Speaking about her decision to return to belly dancing, Richa shared, "I got back to dancing about 6-7 months after my delivery, I got in touch with Dipika Vijay because she is an amazing teacher. What started as an exploration into the use of belly dance as therapy, in my post partum phase as actually blossomed into a full-blown parallel interest of mine. After a gap of a few years, I felt the urge to reconnect with it in a more dedicated way. This course in Goa is not for a role or a performance; it's purely for myself, to learn, to grow, and to fall in love with the form all over again."

On the work front, Richa will soon be seen headlining a gripping crime thriller series for a leading OTT platform.



NEWS BOX

'They want to make a deal, I'm not satisfied with it': Trump on Iran's latest proposal to end war

World. (Agency)

US President Donald Trump said Friday he was "not satisfied" with Iran's latest proposal in negotiations to end the war between the countries, rejecting the plan almost as soon as it was delivered. Iran handed over its latest proposal for negotiations to mediators in Pakistan on Thursday night, Iran's state-run IRNA news agency reported. "They want to make a deal, I'm not satisfied with it, so we'll see what happen," Trump told reporters Friday at the White House.

A shaky three-week ceasefire between the US and Iran appears to be still holding though both countries have traded accusations of violations.

Trump did not elaborate on what he saw as the latest proposal's shortcomings. "They're asking for things I can't agree to," he said.

Negotiations have continued by phone after Trump called off his envoys' trip to Pakistan last week, the president said. He expressed frustration with Iran's leadership, describing it as fractured. "It's a very disjointed leadership," he said. "They all want to make a deal, but they're all messed up."

While the ceasefire has largely halted fighting in Iran, the US and Iran are locked in a standoff over the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's traded oil and gas passes in peacetime. A U.S. Navy blockade stopping Iran's tankers from getting out to sea has Iran's economy reeling. The world economy is also under pressure as Iran maintains its chokehold on the strait.

US President Donald Trump this week floated a new plan to reopen the critical passageway used by America's Gulf allies to export their oil and gas. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi held a flurry of calls on Friday with many of his regional counterparts, including from Turkey, Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Azerbaijan, to brief.

US military reaches deals with seven tech companies to use their AI on classified systems

Washington. (Agency)

The Pentagon said Friday it has partnered with seven tech companies to tap into their artificial intelligence capabilities using classified systems, allowing the military to boost its use of AI to help it fight wars. Google, Microsoft, Amazon Web Services, Nvidia, OpenAI, Reflection and SpaceX will provide their resources to help "augment warfighter decision-making in complex operational environments," the Defense Department said.

The Defense Department has been rapidly accelerating its use of AI in recent years. The technology can help the military reduce the time it takes to identify and strike targets on the battlefield, while aiding in the organization of weapons maintenance and supply lines, according to a report in March from the Brennan Center for Justice.

But AI has already raised concerns over the possibilities of invading Americans' privacy or allowing machines to choose targets on the battlefield. One of the companies contracting with the Pentagon said its agreement required human oversight in certain situations. Such concerns were raised by a company not on the list, Anthropic, and it is now battling the Pentagon in court. The tech company said it wanted assurances in its contract that the military would not use its technology in fully autonomous weapons and the surveillance of Americans.

Donald Trump says Iran war 'terminated' as ceasefire holds, in letter to Congress

World. (Agency)

US President Donald Trump has told congressional leaders that US hostilities with Iran "have terminated," citing an ongoing ceasefire and no exchange of fire since early April, even as lawmakers press the administration on whether it needs formal authorisation for the conflict.

In letters sent on Friday to House Speaker Mike Johnson and Senate President Pro Tempore Chuck Grassley, Trump said the fighting had effectively ended after a truce first ordered on April 7 was extended.

"On April 7, 2026, I ordered a 2-week ceasefire. The ceasefire has since been extended. There has been no exchange of fire between United States Forces and Iran since April 7, 2026," Trump wrote. "The hostilities that began on February 28, 2026 have terminated."

The written assertion follows remarks by War Secretary Pete Hegseth during a Senate hearing a day earlier, where he faced questions over whether the administration must seek approval from Congress under war powers provisions, as the conflict had crossed the 60-day threshold.

Lawmakers from both parties have raised concerns about the lack of congressional authorisation, arguing that extended military engagement requires legislative approval.

In his letter, Trump acknowledged that "the threat Iran poses to the United States and its military remains significant," but said he would continue to direct US forces under his constitutional authority.

"I will continue to direct United States forces consistent with my responsibilities and pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct United States foreign relations," he wrote.

Five killed as plane carrying pickleball players crashes in Texas

A Cessna carrying Amarillo pickleball players to a New Braunfels tournament crashed near Wimberley, killing all five on board. The crash shook the tight-knit pickleball community, prompting the tournament's cancellation and a planned prayer.

Austin. (Agency)

A small plane carrying pickleball players crashed among trees in Texas Hill Country, killing all five people aboard, authorities said Friday. The crash happened around 11 pm Thursday in Wimberley, a city about 40 miles (64 kilometres) southwest of Austin, the Texas Department of Public Safety said. "The pilot and four passengers on

board were pronounced deceased on scene," Sgt. Billy Ray told reporters.

Names of the victims were not immediately released by authorities, though the Amarillo Pickleball Club in Amarillo, Texas, said they were members who were flying to a tournament. An unidentified woman wiped her eyes and fanned her face with her hands as she stood behind yellow police tape near the crash site Friday afternoon. A man consoled her.

The plane, a Cessna 421C, took off from Amarillo and was headed to New Braunfels National Airport, according to the flight history. Aerial photos posted online by the Austin American-Statesman showed the aircraft destroyed in a wooded area. Ray said federal authorities were leading the investigation.

Stacey Rohr, who lives nearby, said she was in bed when she heard a crash and "felt



everything vibrate." "It was so close I felt like it was the back of my place up in flames," said Rohr, who immediately called her landlord.

The players were heading to a pickleball tournament at the Cranky Pickle in New Braunfels, about 30 miles (48 kilometres) northeast of San Antonio, said Martin Robertson, head pro at the venue.

He said they cancelled the tournament Friday and plan to say a prayer before they start Saturday and honour the players who died.

"We're very heavy-hearted, heartbroken from this," he said. "The pickleball community is very tight-knit. Everybody knows everybody."

Dan Dyer, president of the Amarillo Pickleball Club, said he'd played many games with four of the five people who were killed. "I've handed them medals. They were excellent players. They were out to win some games," Dyer said. "Every weekend there are dozens of tournaments. Some people get the bug; others don't. But once they do, they'll travel for a tournament."

Dyer said a second plane was travelling to the event from Amarillo at the same time. Authorities said it landed safely at the airport in New Braunfels. "I haven't heard anything from him," the pilot of the second plane said, according to Air Traffic Control audio. A controller responded: "He started to move erratically, and now his track is disappeared from the scope. So we want to make sure everything's all right with him."

US approves military sales of over 8.6 billion to Middle East allies

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

US President Donald Trump's administration has bypassed congressional review to approve military sales totaling over \$8.6 billion to Middle Eastern allies Israel, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.

The State Department announcements on Friday came as the U.S. and Israel's war against Iran marked nine weeks since its start and more than three weeks since a fragile ceasefire came into effect. The State Department said U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio determined that an emergency existed that required immediate sales to those countries and waived the congressional review requirements for the sales. The announcements included approving military sales to Qatar of Patriot air and missile defense replenishment services costing \$4.01



billion and of Advanced Precision Kill Weapon Systems (APKWS) costing \$992.4 million.

They also included approval of the sale to Kuwait of an integrated battle command system costing \$2.5 billion and to Israel of Advanced Precision Kill Weapon Systems costing \$992.4 million. The State Department approved a sale to the UAE of APKWS for \$147.6 million.

The U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on February 28. Iran responded with its own strikes on Israel and Gulf states

that host U.S. bases. U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran and Israeli attacks in Lebanon have killed thousands and displaced millions. The principal contractor in the APKWS sales to Qatar, Israel and the UAE was BAE Systems BAES.L, the State Department said.

RTX RTX.N and Lockheed Martin LMT.N were the principal contractors in the integrated battle command system sale to Kuwait and in the Patriot air and missile defense replenishment sale to Qatar, the State Department added. Northrop Grumman was also a principal contractor in the Kuwaiti sale. Over the years, Washington has faced scrutiny for military ties with Kuwait, the UAE and Qatar over those countries' human rights track records that rights advocates say involve restrictions on and reported abuses of minorities, journalists, voices of dissent, the LGBT community and laborers.

14 IRGC personnel killed in blast while clearing war remnants in Iran

World. (Agency)

Fourteen members of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) were killed and two others wounded in an explosion caused by unexploded ordnance in the country's northwestern Zanjan Province, Iranian media reported. The blast occurred on Friday as IRGC demolition teams were conducting a clearance operation in a contaminated area near the city of Zanjan, according to statements carried by state news agency IRNA. The teams had entered the site to identify and neutralize munitions left behind from recent airstrikes when the explosion happened.

A statement from the IRGC's Ansar al-Mahdi unit in Zanjan said the blast was triggered by an unknown munition.



The report noted that those killed were among the force's most experienced and specialised personnel. The ammunition in the area was believed to include cluster bombs and air-dropped mines used during the conflict.

The incident marks the largest reported loss of IRGC personnel since a ceasefire took effect on April 8, highlighting the ongoing risk posed by remnants of war even after active

fighting has ended. According to the IRGC, its teams have identified and neutralised more than 15,000 unexploded ordnance across affected areas since the conflict.

The war began on February 28 when the United States and Israel launched joint strikes on Iranian cities, including Tehran, prompting retaliatory missile and drone attacks by Iran targeting Israeli territory and US assets in the region. The conflict caused widespread damage and casualties before a ceasefire was announced on April 8. Despite the ceasefire, cleanup operations continue across impacted regions, with authorities warning that unexploded munitions remain a significant threat to both military personnel and civilians.

Elite Iranian family founded crypto exchange used by IRGC to move millions: Report

Reuters found that the founders of Iran's biggest crypto exchange, Nobitex, are sons of the influential Kharrazi family. Nobitex serves as a bridge to global crypto markets and a central node in a parallel financial system used to move funds beyond the reach of Western sanctions, Reuters found. It's used by the Iranian state to route money to allies outside the conventional banking system, according to an analysis of blockchain records by crypto analytic firm Crystal Intelligence and interviews with four private financial investigators.

World. (Agency)

The sons of a powerful family with close ties to Iran's new supreme leader control the country's largest cryptocurrency exchange, transforming it from a startup into a conduit to the global economy used by both blacklisted state institutions and ordinary citizens. Since Nobitex was founded by the

two brothers under an alternative family name, it has processed between tens and hundreds of millions of dollars in transactions linked to sanctioned groups including Iran's central bank and the powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, a Reuters investigation has found.

The two are members of the Kharrazi family, one of the most influential dynasties in the Islamic Republic. Corporate records show that when the exchange started, the brothers were listed under a surname rarely used by members of the family.

The company rapidly became embedded in Iran's economy. Nobitex claims 11 million users, more than 10% of Iran's population. Locked out of international banking and facing a devalued rial and rampant inflation, ordinary Iranians use the exchange to buy and hold cryptocurrency. While Iran is subject to blanket Western economic sanctions, the exchange has



avoided being designated by the United States and its allies. Reuters could find no indications that anyone in the Kharrazi family has been sanctioned by Western governments, and was unable to determine why Nobitex has been spared the kind of penalties placed on other major Iranian economic players.

The revelation of the elite origins of the Nobitex founders by Reuters comes at a critical moment for Iran and especially the Revolutionary Guards, known as the IRGC. The IRGC has further cemented its

Court restricts abortion access across US by blocking mailing of mifepristone



World. (Agency)

A federal appeals court has restricted access to one of the most common means of abortion in the US by blocking the mailing of mifepristone prescriptions.

Friday's unanimous ruling from a three-judge panel of the New Orleans-based 5th US Circuit Court of Appeals is requiring that the abortion pill be distributed only in person and at clinics, overruling regulations set by the federal Food and Drug Administration. The ruling, which is likely to be appealed to the US Supreme Court, is the biggest jolt to abortion policy in the US since the 2022 Supreme Court ruling that overturned Roe v. Wade and allowed states to enforce abortion bans.

In the ruling, Judge Kyle Duncan, who was appointed by President Donald Trump, agreed with the state of Louisiana's contention that allowing the drug to be mailed there makes moot the state's ban on abortion at all stages of pregnancy.

"Every abortion facilitated by FDA's action cancels Louisiana's ban on medical abortions and undermines its policy that 'every unborn child is human being from the moment of conception and is, therefore, a legal person,'" the ruling states.

Mifepristone is involved in most abortions in the US

Mifepristone was approved in 2000 as a safe and effective way to end early pregnancies. It is typically used in combination with a second drug, misoprostol. Surveys have found that the majority of abortions in the US are provided via pills and that about 1 in 4 abortions nationally are prescribed via telehealth. One survey of abortion providers last year estimated that more women in states where abortion is banned obtained abortions that way than by traveling to other states.

Some Democratic-led states have laws that seek to protect providers who prescribe via telehealth to patients in places with bans. That rise in prominence is why abortion opponents have targeted the pills in legislation and litigation.

control of Iran's economy and security apparatus since the killing of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in a February airstrike at the outset of the U.S. and Israeli war in Iran. The brothers are the third Kharrazi generation at the heart of Iran's ruling establishment. Kharrazis have advised supreme leaders and occupied key political, diplomatic and religious posts. The clan is related by marriage to all three supreme leaders of the Islamic Republic: the revolutionary founder Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the late Khamenei, and Khamenei's son, Mojtaba. Brothers Ali and Mohammad Kharrazi – using the family surname Aghamir – built Nobitex into the country's dominant cryptocurrency provider. It handles an estimated 70% of Iran's crypto transactions. It's not unheard of for some Iranians to have and use alternative family names. But the brothers appear to be the only ones in their immediate family to routinely distance themselves.