

MAHANAGAR METRO

VOICE OF THE CITY, PULSE OF THE NATION

Election of rejection: Bengal BJP chief targets TMC day ahead of results

State BJP president Samik Bhattacharya, speaking to IndiaToday.in ahead of the Assembly results, called it an "election of rejection" of Mamata Banerjee. He projected 200-plus seats and framed the campaign around Bengali pride, identity, and a "Bengal first" sentiment.

New Delhi.(Agency)

On a Saturday night phone call with IndiaToday.in, Bengal BJP president Samik Bhattacharya sounded at ease. After weeks of campaigning in the heat and dust, the mood around him was light -- faint chatter and occasional laughter in the background, with someone, almost in passing, heard discussing the health benefits of boiled chicken soup. It has been a falter-unrest-west-bengal-election-result-may-4-counting-tmc-bjp-2904851-2026-05-02" target="_self">action-packed few days in Bengal since polling ended. The usually quiet interlude between voting and results has been



anything but calm this time. With clamour over alleged EVM tampering, repolling in some constituencies, and Mamata Banerjee's "do-or-die battle" against alleged rigging showing no signs of ebbing, Bhattacharya remained unfazed. "She will not be able to do anything this time around," he said calmly. Asked whether his confidence stemmed from a pro-BJP wave or anti-incumbency, the state party chief called it "an election of rejection." "From teacher recruitment scams to unemployment, all factors are contributing to the TMC's decline," he told. In that calm, however, comes after a year of navigating a deeply divided organisation.

When Samik Bhattacharya took charge of the BJP in West Bengal a year ago, he inherited a house divided -- a party riven by factionalism and competing power centres.

Infighting was no secret; a former state chief, now a candidate, had even told the author in 2024 of internal efforts to undercut his prospects in the Lok Sabha elections.

Yet Bhattacharya's rise had been anything but abrupt. A long-time organisational hand, he climbed silently from the grassroots, earning a reputation as a measured yet sharp communicator as the party's chief spokesperson.

In the months leading up to his elevation as BJP's Bengal chief, the trajectory quickened -- a Rajya Sabha berth in 2024, charged-up patriotic speeches in London as part of the Operation Sindoor delegation in 2025, and a visit to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's residence upon his return. Weeks later, he was handed the reins of the state unit at a moment of peak political stakes. Scepticism followed swiftly. For rivals in the Trinamool Congress, Bhattacharya's appointment was unlikely to resolve the BJP's internal divisions.

West Bengal Assembly elections result: Mamata asks TMC agents to seek recount if BJP leads by 500-700 votes

West Bengal Chief Minister and All India Trinamool Congress candidate from Bhabanipur constituency, Mamata Banerjee, on Saturday asked her party's counting agents to promptly seek a recount in booths where the BJP is ahead by a margin of 500 to 700 votes.



West Bengal .(Agency)

West Bengal Chief Minister and All India Trinamool Congress candidate from Bhabanipur constituency, Mamata Banerjee, on Saturday asked her party's counting agents to promptly seek a recount in booths where the BJP is ahead by a margin of 500 to 700 votes. West Bengal CM also advised counting agents to stay overnight near counting centres on Sunday so that they can reach early on Monday. She also issued these directions during a virtual meeting with party leaders and counting agents from all 294 Assembly constituencies ahead of the election results.

During the one-and-a-half-hour meeting, Banerjee emphasised the need for coordination and vigilance, asking party workers to reach counting centres early and function in a united manner. She also briefed them on key aspects to be kept in mind during the counting process. According to Trinamool Congress sources cited by IANS, Mamata Banerjee particularly stressed close monitoring during counting.

She added that in booths where the BJP is ahead by margins ranging from 500-700 votes to even 1,000 votes, a demand for recounting should be raised immediately.

TMC's candidate from Bhabanipur assembly constituency expressed confidence that her party would win more than 200 seats but cautioned that vigilance must not be relaxed during counting.

She also instructed that no party agent should leave the counting centre until she addresses the media on May 4.

She further advised that in constituencies where counting centres are located in rural or remote areas, candidates, their agents, and counting agents should reach the location on Sunday itself. Arrangements should be made to stay in nearby hotels or lodges to avoid delays.

Party sources revealed that several TMC candidates from West Midnapore and Bankura districts have already arranged accommodation near the counting centres for Sunday night to ensure they are fully prepared, as per IANS report.

Analysis: Tamil Nadu Heads For Dravidian Shakeout After Assembly Poll Verdict

The only word that might connect all these forces competing today but shifting loyalties tomorrow in an uneasy coalition is the adjective "Dravidian".

Tamil Nadu.(Agency)

The entry of a superstar in Tamil Nadu's politics has led to increased attention to politics in the state. The fact that an exit poll after the state assembly elections by a respected opinion poll agency, Axis My India, led by Pradeep Gupta, has given C. Joseph Vijay's Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam, a high chance of storming to power, makes the start-turned-politician even more of a headline grabber. The colourful rallies he leads with thronging crowds and speeches laden with punchlines only make the visual appeal stronger. However, it is time to look beyond all that. As this is being written, we are less than 48 hours away from the final verdict of the state polls that



took place on April 23. What we perhaps missed in the glamour of Vijay's political rain-making are the subterranean realities of Tamil Nadu politics and the likelihood of an overhaul of state politics

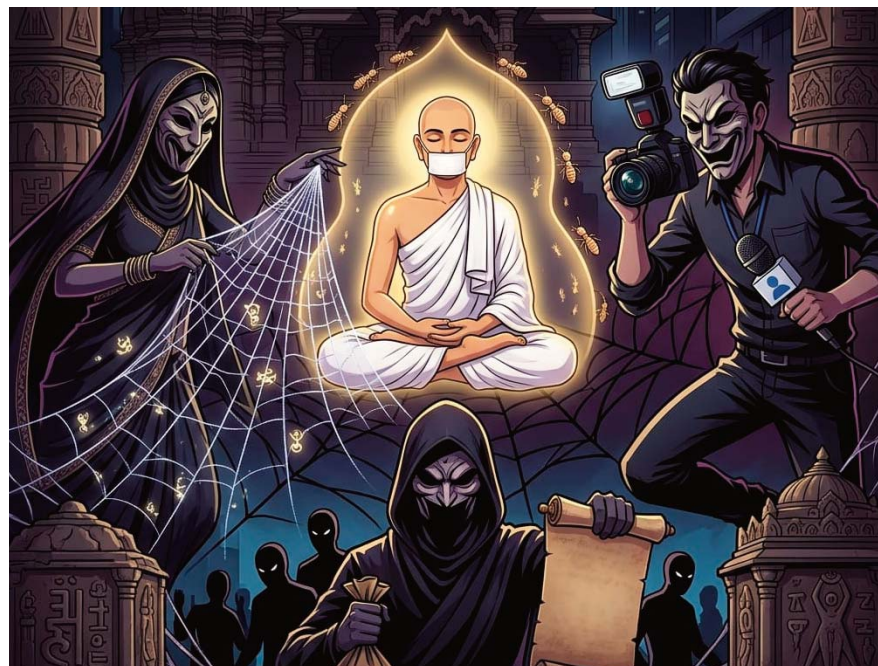
after the verdict is out - irrespective of who wins. Here's where I am tempted to borrow a memorable expression from former Prime Minister V.P. Singh, who said at the turn of the 1990s that India was heading for a "realignment of political forces." His broad reference was to the rise of the other backward classes (OBC) in northern India as a politically aspirational community, parallel to the emergence of the Hindutva-infused Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as a national force that led to the replacement of anti-Congressism with anti-BJPism. In the context of Tamil Nadu, I am tempted to call the condition we are heading for a "Realignment of Dravidian forces" that will see a Kazhagam (organisation) or Katchi (party).

Deep Conspiracy Within: Plot Against Jain Order Exposed!

Honeytrap network and fake journalists allegedly targeting saints | Who is the mastermind behind this scheme?

Pawan Makan (Group Editor)

Surat/Mumbai: The Jain community—built on the pillars of non-violence and discipline—is reportedly facing a growing internal threat more dangerous than external challenges. As Jain Acharyas and saints expand the influence of the Jain order globally, certain individuals within the community are allegedly orchestrating a campaign to defame them. A special investigation by Mahanagar Metro claims to have uncovered a network that, driven by money and false dominance, is putting the credibility of the entire Jain Sangh at stake. Jagat Parekh: 'Protector' Masking a Controversial Past One of the most prominent names emerging in this alleged conspiracy is Jagat Parekh. Presenting himself as a senior figure within the Jain Sangh, sources claim that he had been expelled earlier due to questionable and unethical activities. Reports further suggest that multiple fraud cases have been registered against him, and he has previously come under the scanner of the Ahmedabad Crime Branch. This raises a critical ques-



tion: how can someone with such a tainted background attempt to question or target revered Jain saints? The Nexus: Honeytraps and Fake Journalism The alleged network is not limited to a single individual. Names like Kalpesh Singhvi, Vikram Bafna, and a so-called journalist Hardik Hudiya are also said to be linked in this chain. According to sources,

their modus operandi includes: Targeting influential saints who are gaining prominence within the community Honeytrap attempts using fake identities and fabricated videos- Blackmail and extortion, leveraging fake media pressure to extract large sums of money Internal Conflict Weakening the Community At a time when the Jain community already

constitutes a minority, such internal conflicts could severely damage its unity and foundation. While these individuals claim to be protectors of the Jain order, their alleged actions may be eroding public trust and harming the image of saints. Experts believe that such activities, if proven true, amount not only to moral wrongdoing but also a serious betrayal of community values. Mahanagar Metro's Commitment Mahanagar Metro News states it remains committed to exposing individuals who misuse religion for personal gain. The report claims that more names and evidence are under investigation, indicating that this could be just the beginning of a larger expose. "Those who live in glass houses should reflect on their own past before casting stones at others. The Jain order stands on truth—and truth ultimately prevails." Editorial Note: This report is based on claims from sources and available evidence under investigation. Mahanagar Metro urges the community to remain cautious, avoid misinformation, and uphold the dignity of their faith and spiritual leaders.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla reconstitutes key Parliamentary panels; KC Venugopal retains PAC chair

New Delhi.(Agency)

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Saturday announced the reconstitution of four key Parliamentary committees for 2026-27, with several senior members retaining their positions, including Congress MP KC Venugopal as Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

The committees — Public Accounts, Estimates, Public Undertakings and the Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes — have been reconstituted for a new term from May 1, 2026 to April 30, 2027.

From the BJP, Faggan Singh Kulaste will continue as Chairperson of the Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, while Baijayant Jay Panda and Sanjay Jaiswal have retained leadership of the Committee on Public Undertakings and another parliamentary panel.

These committees oversee government functioning, examine reports, and make policy recommendations. Chairpersons are elected from among members through proportional representation using a single transferable vote.

The Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has 30 members, including 20 from the Lok Sabha and 10 from the Rajya Sabha. The Committee on Public Undertakings has 22 members, with 15 from the Lok Sabha and seven from the Rajya Sabha. The Estimates Committee has 30 members, all from the Lok Sabha. The Public Accounts Committee includes up to 22 members, with 15 from the Lok Sabha and up to seven from the Rajya Sabha.

The PAC functions under Rule 308(1) of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha and examines whether public

News box

Bullet hits 26-year-old in chest at birthday pool party in Bhondsi farmhouse

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A 26-year-old man was shot in the chest after a gun allegedly went off during a birthday celebration at a farmhouse in Bhondsi on Friday, leaving him injured but out of danger. The incident took place at Fallow Casa Farmhouse, where the victim, Chinkesh Dahiya, a resident of Dhanwapur, had gone with friends to celebrate his birthday. Around 1.30am, as the group was moving towards the swimming pool, a gunshot was heard, according to the complaint filed by the farmhouse manager, Sunil Kumar (31). Police are yet to ascertain the type of gun.

According to police, a gun brought to the party by one of the guests discharged, and the bullet struck Dahiya on the right side of his chest. It was not immediately clear if the bullet hit him after someone fired it or if the weapon malfunctioned.

Dahiya collapsed on the spot and was rushed to a nearby hospital before being referred to Medanta Hospital. Bhondsi police reached the spot after receiving information from the hospital and registered a case based on the complaint filed by Kumar. In his statement, Kumar said that around 35 people were present at the party, which had been booked a day earlier by a person identified as Chirag.

“At the time of booking, I had explained the rules and regulations. During the party, I heard a gunshot. When I checked, Chinkesh had been hit. He got hit during firing in the party,” Kumar stated in his complaint.

FIR after senior citizen assaulted by maintenance agency manager, bouncers over power dues

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A 65-year-old man and his son have alleged that they were abused and assaulted by a maintenance manager and bouncers at a residential society in Sohna last month, following a dispute over pending dues. Police registered an FIR on Friday after an initial probe, while the developer denied any physical attack.

The complainant, Ashok Kumar Chaudhary, a resident of Signature Global Park 4 in Sector 36, said the incident took place on April 2 after electricity to his flat was disconnected over unpaid common area maintenance (CAM) charges.

According to his complaint, Chaudhary and his son went to the society's maintenance office around 11am, citing extreme heat and requesting restoration of power. There, they met estate manager Hemant Gupta, who allegedly told them that electricity would only be restored after all dues were cleared.

Chaudhary claimed he requested that the power be resumed first and assured payment later, but the situation escalated. “As we were leaving, he blocked our way, abused us, assaulted us and grabbed me by the throat,” he alleged, adding that Gupta also issued threats.

He further alleged that when his son tried to record the incident, the manager snatched his phone and called in bouncers. The bouncers allegedly assaulted his son, detained him at the office, and forced him to delete the video before returning the phone later in the evening.

Based on the complaint, police registered a case under sections 115(2) (voluntarily causing hurt), 126(2) (wrongful restraint), and 351(2) (criminal intimidation) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita against Gupta and others.

Gurgaon quintuple murder: Man poisons wife, 4 children, then tries to slit their throat



GURGAON.(Agency)

A man allegedly killed his wife and four children before attempting suicide in Wazirpur village late on Saturday night. The accused, believed to be in his 30s and working at a salon, is undergoing treatment at a local government hospital.

Police said he poisoned his family members and then tried to slit his wrists and neck. According to police, a PCR call was received around 9:30 pm informing that a man, his wife and four children were found dead inside a house in Wazirpur village. The incident is suspected to have taken place between 9 pm and 10 pm.

Senior police officers, along with forensic and crime teams, rushed to the spot and inspected the scene.

The bodies have been shifted to the mortuary for post-mortem examination, and the relatives of the deceased have been informed.

Police said the accused is currently unfit for questioning. “He is undergoing treatment and will be examined once doctors declare him stable,” an officer said. Investigators are probing the motive behind the killings, including possible domestic or financial distress. Further action will be taken based on the accused's statement and post-mortem findings.

Dust storm lashes Gurgaon, yellow alert issued for next four days

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A dust storm swept the city Saturday night around 9.30pm, slashing visibility, followed by thunderstorm activity and lightning, with some areas recording light rainfall.

The city received 8mm of rain, according to India Meteorological Department.

A nowcast issued shortly before the event had warned that gusty winds of 30-50 kmph, accompanied by lightning and rain, were very likely within two hours.

Several areas — including Sohna Road, Golf Course Extension Road and Dwarka Expressway — witnessed intense winds that lifted loose dust and debris into the air.

The Met department said moderate thunderstorms with wind speeds of 40-60 kmph and lightning were likely over parts of Hodal, Hathin, Nuh, Palwal, Ballabgarh, Sohna, Gurgaon and Faridabad. Light rainfall was forecast

across a wider region, including Firozpur Jhirka, Punahana, Taoru, Bawal, Rewari, Pataudi, Jhajjar, Bahadurgarh, Sonapat and adjoining areas.

The sudden change was triggered by an active western disturbance over Jammu & Kashmir, coupled with localised atmospheric instability and a cyclonic circulation over Haryana — conditions conducive to dust storms and convective activity during the pre-monsoon period.

Daytime temperatures, however, remained elevated. At the KVK station, the maximum was 36.7°C, rising from 34.8°C the previous day. At NorthCap University, it reached 38.6°C, up from 37.5°C on Friday.

The minimum temperature was recorded at 30°C — five notches above normal — the highest minimum in the state. At

NorthCap University's monitoring station, the minimum was 26.1°C, up from 23°C a day earlier.



IMD said maximum temperatures are likely to rise by around 2°C over the next 48 hours, before dropping 3-4°C due to rainfall and thunderstorm activity. A yellow alert has been issued for the city

over the next four days. “Light to moderate rainfall, accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning, hail and strong winds, is expected between May 3 and May 6. Rainfall is likely at isolated places on May 3 and 6, while intensity and spread are expected to increase on May 4 and 5, when many parts of the state, including Gurgaon, may receive light to moderate rain,” IMD said.

Wind speeds are expected to pick up through this period. Gusty winds of 30-40 kmph are likely at isolated locations on May 2 and May 7, with stronger winds of 40-50 kmph expected between May 3 and May 6. On May 4 and 5, speeds could reach 50-60 kmph at isolated places,

raising the risk of damage to temporary structures and uprooting of trees. Hailstorm activity has also been forecast at isolated locations on those two days.

Man stopped from leaving society over dues, smashes gate with car, assaults guard

Noida.(Agency)

A tenant in a housing society in Sector 62 was taken into custody on Friday after he rammed through a boom barrier and assaulted a security guard when he was stopped from vacating his flat over unpaid maintenance dues.

Sukhdev Sharma, president of Rajat Vihar Society's apartment owners association, claimed Daksh Priyansh lived as a tenant in the society for several months but did not pay maintenance charges. When the AOA learned he intended to vacate, it instructed security personnel not to allow him to leave until the dues were cleared.

On Friday evening, Priyansh attempted to drive out with his belongings loaded into his car. When the guard at the exit gate refused to lift the boom barrier and asked him to settle the outstanding amount, Priyansh accelerated through it, smashing the boom barrier. He then stepped out of his vehicle, shoved guard Hoob Lal to the ground and assaulted him before bystanders intervened. Priyansh fled in his car.

After the AOA reported the incident, cops from the Sector 56 outpost apprehended Priyansh within the hour.

A senior police officer said Priyansh was arrested under Section 170 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) for disturbing peace. “Further action is being initiated following an investigation,” the officer said. The case is being handled by Sector 58 police station.

The incident has raised questions about how far housing societies can legally go in withholding exit over unpaid dues, and what happens when enforcement is left to a guard at a gate.

Monitor sector road upkeep daily, GMDA CEO tells officers

Gurgaon.(Agency)

GMDA teams will soon conduct round-the-clock monitoring and upkeep of sector roads across the city. The move follows inspections of several sector roads by GMDA CEO PC Meena on Saturday, during which he reviewed the status of maintenance work, cleanliness and drainage preparedness ahead of the monsoon. During the check, gaps in desilting, debris clearance and overall road safety measures were found.

Meena directed each division to form multiple field teams for real-time reporting, coordination and supervision.

Officials said the authority has adopted a zero-tolerance stance on negligence, identifying critical areas that require immediate attention. The teams will maintain constant contact through WhatsApp groups, which will be



monitored by the CEO.

The teams will be responsible for removing silt from drains, clearing construction and demolition waste, repairing and covering damaged or open slabs, and removing abandoned kerb stones and loose materials that pose risks to commuters.

In addition, officials have been instructed to ensure proper placement and repainting of jersey barriers to improve visibility and enhance road safety, particularly on high-

speed corridors and accident-prone stretches. The teams have also been ordered to prioritise the trimming of wild vegetation, scientific disposal of horticultural waste and upkeep of green belts, which often become dumping grounds and contribute to waterlogging during heavy rainfall.

“We are enforcing strict monitoring and accountability to ensure that sector roads remain safe, clean and fully prepared for the monsoon. Dedicated teams and real-time oversight will significantly improve execution efficiency, drainage management and overall city upkeep. Regular inspections will be conducted, and any negligence will not be tolerated,” Meena said. The move comes as the city braces for the monsoon season, during which waterlogging and clogged drains routinely disrupt traffic and expose gaps in civic preparedness.

Palm-leaf texts to archival records, city to digitise rare manuscripts

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The district administration has intensified efforts to digitise rare manuscripts, palm-leaf texts and archival records under the centre's ‘Gyan Bharatam Mission’. Deputy commissioner Uttam Singh said the national manuscript survey, announced on March 16, 2026, by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, aims to create the country's most comprehensive digital repository of heritage texts. Under the initiative, texts from homes, temples, monasteries and institutions are being geo-tagged and scanned. Emphasising public participation, the



DC urged citizens to share information about their manuscripts via the mobile app. “This initiative will help preserve our civilisational legacy. We are ensuring that while capturing digital records, the original documents remain

untouched and unharmed,” he said. Modern imaging and archival technologies are being used to ensure clarity, longevity and secure storage of scanned manuscripts. The administration is also coordinating with temple boards, math institutions and custodians of private libraries to identify and safeguard old collections. Singh said the mission will prioritise manuscripts that are 75 years old or more. Once documented, the texts will be preserved in the National Digital Repository, ensuring future generations can access India's historic knowledge base. The survey will continue until June 15. The DC reiterated that manuscript owners' rights will remain fully protected. “Our goal is preservation, not acquisition,” he said, encouraging.

NH-9 slip road shut for Metro work, vehicles forced to take 4km detour to Indirapuram

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

Construction of a metro pillar by Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) on the Indirapuram side of NH9/DME has led to the closure of the slip road connecting NH9 to CISF Road, which is one of the main arteries linking the highway with Vasundhara. As a result, traffic from Noida Sector 62 is being forced to take a detour of about 4 km, adding to congestion on an already busy stretch. A commuter coming from Sector 62 in Noida now needs to take the underpass and continue for nearly 2 km on the DME. Then he has to slip left onto the Pushta Road and continue for 1-1.5 km and traverse through Ahimsa Khand via Ram Manohar Lohia Marg before reaching the CISF Road.

“Every day I have to take this 4 km detour. There is so much traffic on this stretch during office hours and I am always running late for work,” a commuter who works in an automobile store in Shipra Sun City market, Makdum, said. “It seems dozens of development works — road, drain and now metro — have started in

Indirapuram all at once and there is no coordination between any of the authorities.”

The digging of roads across Indirapuram has made the commute more difficult. For years, Indirapuram has existed in a civic limbo. Since the township was handed over to the Ghaziabad Municipal Corporation on Oct 3, 2024, much of Indirapuram has turned into a patchwork of excavation sites. Roadsides are dug up to lay pipelines, repair drainage lines or install utility poles. In many places, pits remain open for weeks or months.

A DMRC official said the metro pillar is being constructed as part of the train reversal facility for the Line-3 extension between Noida City Centre and Noida Electronic City stations.

“The service road near Pier P386 towards Ghaziabad (close to Sector 62, Noida) will remain closed till June 2026. This closure is essential for casting

foundations of temporary support structures and placing trestles required for launching a 58-metre steel girder,” he said. “A traffic diversion plan has been obtained from the authorities, including NHA and the traffic police. The Ghaziabad traffic police has also



been informed.”

A GDA official said the construction of the metro pillar might create a problem for commuters now, but it should be seen as an extension of the 5 km Noida Electronic City to Sahibabad metro extension corridor project.

“Extension of 5.1 km Noida Electronic City to Sahibabad extension will take place in the coming years. The spot where the new metro pillar is coming up is along that alignment. Whenever work on the project starts, we will get a head start because by that time the second metro pillar in Indirapuram will already be in place,” he said.

Due to funding issues, the project is still under consideration by the state and Centre. “We have already asked DMRC to come up with a fresh DPR of three metro projects in the city, which include Noida Electronic City Sector 62 to Sahibabad; Shaheed Sthal New Bus Adda to Ghaziabad; and Vaishali on Blue Line route to Gokulpuri in Delhi,” added the official.

The Noida Electronic City Sector 62 to Sahibabad section, which will be about 5.1 km long, is also on the list. It will have five stations, including Indirapuram, Shakti Khand and Vasundhara Sector 5.

'Didi' Set for Big Comeback in Bengal, TMC Poised for Massive Majority

Mahanagar Metro Beuro

Kolkata | After the final phases of the West Bengal Assembly elections, all eyes are now on the results. Amid intense political buzz, *Mahanagar Metro*'s detailed ground survey and data analysis indicate a clear trend—Mamata Banerjee-led All India Trinamool Congress (TMC) is poised to return to power with a strong mandate.

Seat Projections: Who Gets What?

According to the analysis for the 294-member Assembly:

* TMC: 157 — 175 seats

* Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP): 60 — 80 seats

* Indian National Congress: 04 — 08 seats

* Left: 02 seats

* Others: 10 seats

Summary: The majority mark in the Assembly stands at 148. The projections suggest that TMC will not only cross this mark comfortably but could go up to 175 seats, delivering a decisive blow to the opposition.

Why 'Didi' Continues to Hold Ground



Three key factors stand out in the analysis:

1. Welfare Schemes: Initiatives like Lakshmi Bhandar and Duare Sarkar have significantly strengthened TMC's support among rural and women voters.

2. Strong Cadre Network: At the grassroots level, TMC's

organizational structure appears more active and cohesive compared to its rivals.

3. Fragmented Opposition: While the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has put up a tough fight, the lack of strong local leadership and the weak performance of Indian National Congress and the Left seem to be benefiting TMC.

Opposition Struggles to Stay Relevant

The BJP is expected to retain its position as the principal opposition with 60–80 seats. However, for Con-

gress and the Left, this election appears to be a battle for survival. Congress may remain confined within 8 seats, while the Left could be reduced to just 2 seats.

Conclusion

Mahanagar Metro's analysis suggests that voters in West Bengal have once again backed regional leadership and the state's development-oriented governance model. If these projections hold true, it would mark one of the biggest victories for Mamata Banerjee, further solidifying her political dominance in the state.

Short news

3 Years After Manipur Ethnic Violence, Families Of Missing People Still Await Them

Imphal/Guwahati. (Agency)

Three years after the outbreak of ethnic violence in Manipur on May 3, 2023, the families of missing people have renewed their appeal for justice, accountability and urgent government action, stating that more than 30 from the valley areas who went missing during the height of the crisis are still untraceable.

In a statement on Saturday, the families said the last three years have been filled with "unbearable silence, uncertainty and endless waiting," as they continue to search for answers about the fate of their loved ones.

According to the families, many of those missing disappeared during the initial phase of the violence while trying to return home, escape to safety or survive amid the chaos. Despite filing first information reports (FIRs), approaching multiple authorities and even going to the Manipur High Court with the help of lawyers and rights activists, they alleged there has been no meaningful progress in tracing the missing people.

The families asked the state government to fulfil its constitutional responsibility and ensure the cases are not forgotten. They also highlighted the legal and procedural challenges they continue to face. Under the rules, a missing person can only be legally declared dead after seven years, making it impossible for families to obtain death certificates before that period. Without death certificates, many affected families are unable to access government schemes, compensation and promised job benefits.

Jabalpur Cruise Boat Tragedy: Two More Bodies Recovered, Death Count At 11

Jabalpur.(Agency)

Bodies of two children have been recovered during an ongoing search operation in Jabalpur, officials said on Saturday. The death count has risen to 11 with the recovery of two bodies. Search operations in the area are still underway, and further details are awaited.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Friday visited the spot of wreckage of the cruise boat, which capsized in the reservoir at Bargi Dam in Jabalpur, resulting in the deaths of nine people.

Speaking at the incident site, CM Mohan Yadav said that the rescue operations are still underway and assured strict punishment to those responsible for the tragedy.

"9 bodies have been retrieved in the incident, and 28 people have been rescued. The rescue operation is still going on. A huge loss was averted due to the proactiveness of our jawans, administration and workers. We will not spare those who are found guilty in the incident," he said.

Mohan Yadav appreciated the efforts of the rescue workers and informed that Rs 51,000 will be given to the workers for their efforts.

"As soon as the administration received the information, SDRF, NDRF and our ministers and MLAs immediately went to the spot... All of them are continuously working for the rescue operation... I met the victims of the incident. I also announced Rs 51,000 for the workers who engaged in the rescue operations, and we will also honour the locals who worked in tandem with the administration," he said.

Ankleshwar's 'Bloody' Nexus: Mafia Thrives Under Khaki Protection — Is the City Heading Toward Violence?

Chhota Bazaar turns into a crime hub; alleged police loyalty at the feet of mafia don Vijay; a deeper conspiracy to defame the government?

Mahanagar Metro Beuro

Bharuch/Ankleshwar :Prohibition in Gujarat — a myth? Rule of law — a question mark? In Ankleshwar, allegations suggest that it is not the Constitution but the shadowy rule of a mafia figure named Vijay that dominates the streets. Even more alarming are claims that certain law enforcement officials, entrusted with public safety, are enabling this parallel system. Chhota Bazaar: A Crime Epicenter Located near the railway station, Chhota Bazaar has allegedly evolved into a major hub of illegal activities. Instead of law enforcement, reports suggest that criminal networks operate openly. Vijay, described as a key figure, is said to run extensive gambling operations including "Matka" and other betting rackets. The influence of this network reportedly extends beyond Ankleshwar to nearby regions like Vapi, Valsad, and Surat. Allegations of Collusion and Betrayal An investigation by Mahanagar Metro raises serious allegations against local police and LCB (Local Crime Branch) officials: Compromised policing: Sources claim that when citizens report illegal activities, instead of taking action, certain officials allegedly leak informant



details to the accused, putting lives at risk. Token raids: LCB teams are accused of conducting superficial raids, allegedly accepting hospitality and returning without meaningful enforcement action. If true, these claims point toward a dangerous breakdown of trust between citizens and law enforcement. Officials Silent on Questions Attempts by reporters to seek responses from A-Division PI Chavda and LCB PI Vala reportedly went unanswered. It is claimed that communication channels were blocked instead of addressing the allegations. Concerns Over Illicit Liquor Trade: There are also allegations of illegal liquor operations involving potentially hazardous substances. Observers warn that if unchecked, such activities could lead to serious

public health tragedies. Larger Questions Being Raised The situation has triggered broader concerns: Are certain officials acting negligently or under influence, allowing criminal networks to flourish? Could unchecked illegal activities lead to major law-and-order crises? Are local intelligence and enforcement mechanisms failing to detect or act on these issues? Call for Higher-Level Intervention With local administration allegedly under question, demands are rising for intervention by higher authorities, including specialized state agencies like the State Monitoring Cell (SMC), to conduct an independent probe. Conclusion The allegations, if substantiated, point toward a serious governance and law enforcement challenge in Ankleshwar. Citizens and observers alike are calling for transparency, accountability, and immediate corrective action. Editorial Note: This report is based on claims, sources, and ongoing investigation. The publication urges authorities to verify the facts and take appropriate action. It also appeals to the public to remain cautious and avoid spreading unverified information.

Writing with her feet, Malkangiri girl clears Class X exam in Odisha

MALKANGIRI. (Agency)

Defeating all odds, Laxmi Khemudu, a Class X student of PM SHRI Government High School in Malkangiri district's Sindhrimal, cleared the matriculation examination by writing with her feet.

Born with both hands non-functional, Laxmi refused to treat her condition as a limitation and passed the examination with a D grade. Through consistent practice, she learnt to write with her feet and appeared for the examination without the help of a scribe, despite being offered the option by the council.

District education officer Chittaranjan Panigrahi said Laxmi's achievement is a matter of pride not only for her family and



school, but for the entire education fraternity. "She has proved that physical disability cannot block talent, education and determination. Her courage and dedication will inspire many children," he said.

Born with a locomotor disability, both the hands of Laxmi are non-functional. Besides, she cannot walk or sit without support. However, she has trained herself to hold a pen between her toes and write.

Her journey to the examination hall was filled with hardship. A resident of Bandhiguda village under Sindhrimal panchayat in Malkangiri district, Laxmi hails from a poor family and depends entirely on her parents for daily activities. Her father works as a daily wage labourer while her mother is a homemaker.

Her success has sparked widespread joy in the area, with teachers, students and locals congratulating her for turning adversity into achievement.

Andhra leads in grassroots governance with 100% panchayat data validation

The PAI 2.0 framework evaluates performance across nine distinct themes, rationalising 150 indicators and 230 data points.

VIJAYAWADA. (Agency)

Andhra Pradesh has set a national benchmark by becoming one of the first states to achieve 100% data validation across all 13,310 Gram Panchayats (GPs), marking a milestone in decentralised planning and monitoring. The Government of India officially released the Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) 2.0 (2023-24) on National Panchayati Raj Day, April 24, 2026, consolidating theme-wise indicators to benchmark rural governance and development outcomes nationwide.

The statewide results highlight consistent performance, with 76.5% (10,178) of panchayats falling into the 'B' Grade category. While no panchayat achieved the elusive 'A+' grade (90–100 score), Nayanur panchayat in Kuppam mandal, Chittoor district, emerged as the overall State leader with a score of 84.67, placing it in the A Grade bracket.

Andhra Pradesh, with 591 panchayats in the

A Grade category (frontrunners), is placed third in the country when the number of panchayats is taken into consideration, with Tripura and Telangana in the first two positions. This reflects steady progress across multiple indicators, though the absence of A+ achievers underscores the challenge of meeting the highest benchmarks.

The PAI 2.0 framework evaluates performance across nine distinct themes, rationalising 150 indicators and 230 data points. Andhra Pradesh's thematic leaders demonstrate both diversity and excellence across districts.

Chemmulapali in Khajipet mandal, YSR Kadapa district, led the Poverty-Free and Enhanced Livelihoods category with a score of 97.14. Pandrapadu in Kakumanu mandal, Guntur district, topped the Healthy Panchayat category with 91.33. Kachavaram in Karempudi mandal, Palnadu district, scored 96.67 as a Child-



Friendly leader.

Yepiligunta in Marripadu mandal, Nellore district, scored 95 in Water Sufficiency. Thoopalli in Gandlapenta mandal, Sri Satya Sai district, led Clean & Green with 94.03. Gundamala in Kothapatnam mandal, Prakasam district, topped Infrastructure with 92.5. Savaragudem in Gannavaram mandal, Krishna district, led Social Security with 88.8. C. Reddy Gari Palle in Rompicherla mandal, Chittoor district, scored 92.92 in Good Governance. Finally, Durgi in Durgi mandal, Palnadu

district, led the Women-Friendly Panchayat category with 90.16. Interestingly, the Ministry has clarified that the indicators, thematic scores of the nine LSDG themes, and the overall PAI scores are computed purely on the basis of data entered and submitted by Panchayats themselves. The intent is to help States and Union Territories identify discrepancies, if any, in the data submitted at the grassroots level. The PAI 2.0 portal, powered by the National Informatics Centre (NIC), ensures high data integrity by cross-referencing GP records with national platforms such as the Poshan Tracker for nutrition, the JJM Dashboard for water supply, NREGA Soft for employment, and UDISE+ for education metrics. This integration strengthens accountability and provides policymakers with a unified dashboard to track rural development. Nationally, the index covers 2.59 lakh panchayats across .

Defections redraw Punjab's political battle lines

THE defection of seven of the 10 AAP Rajya Sabha MPs, six of them representing Punjab, and their subsequent merger with the saffron party has boosted perceptions of a resurgent BJP as a party of change committed to muscular nationalism that can ensure the security of the citizens in these difficult times. This has strong resonance in the border state that has borne the brunt of terrorism for many years. The switching of loyalties by the AAP MPs to the BJP could facilitate a possible pre-poll alliance with the Akali Dal, which is in a revival mode, with the BJP in a stronger negotiating position. This possibility will significantly alter the political dynamics in the state. In the changed scenario, the Congress could find its prospects as the principal claimant to the anti-incumbency vote negatively impacted, in what is likely to be a fiercely contested election to the Vidhan Sabha early next year. To play its rightful role in Punjab, the grand old party will need to reinvent itself as a merit-based inclusive party, appealing to the progressive imagination of the people rather than as one encouraging casteist majoritarianism contrary to the constitutional vision crafted by its leaders.

Also, the current political logic and electoral arithmetic in Punjab demand that the Congress and the AAP reassess their political strategies, particularly in view of the post-poll exigencies, including the possibility of a fractured mandate.

Ten months is a long time in politics, and the AAP being in the driver's seat can still enlist popular allegiance through a vigorous implementation of its welfare schemes, a demonstration of just and fair governance and by addressing the pervasive perception of a deteriorating law and order situation in the state. Those who insist on writing the political obituary of the AAP may find themselves celebrating too early. But beyond the considerations of realpolitik, there are larger issues that must be debated in the public realm. In these troubled times, marked by intense political and personal rivalries and a fragile socio-political edifice, Punjab can show the way for constructive and civilised politics that is conducive to a robust, consensual democracy. This is not an option but a necessity if major policy issues for Punjab's renewal as a progressive state are to be initiated and implemented. Over the years, the state has had a faltering record on major development indices and its economic strength at present is among the poorest, as per the Niti Aayog's fiscal index. In the conduct of politics, no political party can ignore the grave challenges that Punjab faces. These include the pressing issues relating to environment and climate change, health and educational infrastructure, diversification of the state's economy, religious and casteist divides and the rise of identity politics, creeping extremism and a worrying law and order situation. Clearly, visceral political and personal animosities destructive of the forging of a broad consensus on critical policy choices will not serve the cause of Punjab and the credibility of the state's political leadership. Reckless allegations against political rivals, treating them as personal enemies to be tarnished and crushed at will, have eroded the credibility of the political class as a whole, thereby denuding the democratic process of its moral legitimacy. The absence of a meaningful public discourse on substantive issues as listed herein has robbed politics of its purpose and has exposed the failure of all political parties to mould and reflect the priorities of the nation. While democratic politics cannot escape the seduction of populism, it must concede space for principles that must survive the momentary impulses as a guarantee of social and political stability. There are also fundamental questions about the means and ends. If the advancement of human dignity is the aspirational goal of our constitutional state.

Tribune flyover threatens Chandigarh's founding vision

Expanding road capacity does not solve congestion; it invites more vehicles

Chandigarh stands at a perilous crossroads where the pressures of regional expansion threaten to dismantle the very logic of its creation. The impending construction of the Tribune Flyover is more than an urban design failure; it is a fundamental rejection of sustainability and the vision of an inclusive, humane city. This 1.6-kilometer concrete monolith is an obsolete 20th century response to a 21st century crisis - an intervention that ignores the statutory mandates of the Chandigarh Master Plan (CMP) 2031 and violates the city's unique architectural legacy. We are no longer just debating a traffic solution; we are deciding whether to remain a global benchmark for humane urbanism or surrender our identity to a highway culture Le Corbusier sought to transcend. Le Corbusier conceived Chandigarh as a biological organism, where each part of the city performed a specific function within a larger, integrated whole. This harmony relied on the 7V hierarchy of roads - a carefully graded system from pedestrian paths (V7) to fast vehicular roads (V1), designed to function as a circulatory network. By separating fast-moving traffic from local movement, this structure ensured not only efficiency but also safety, environmental balance, and a humane public realm. It is a system intended to privilege order over chaos, and people over vehicles. This foundational logic is precisely what interventions like the Tribune Flyover begin to unravel. By privileging speed and volume over hierarchy and separation, such projects disrupt the delicate balance that the city's road system was designed to maintain. The most damning argument against this approach lies in decades of global evidence on Induced Demand. Cities such as Los Angeles and Houston have repeatedly demonstrated this phenomenon, where multi-billion-dollar highway expansions resulted in little to no long-term congestion relief. The reality is that expanding road capacity does not solve congestion; it invites more vehicles, exacerbates carbon emissions, and merely funnels congestion to the next junction. Chandigarh is not immune to this pattern. We have already witnessed the damage caused by short-sighted road widening, which has systematically eroded our green road berms and safety zones. By prioritising through-traffic on our V2 and V3 roads - originally designed as internal city arteries - we have allowed them to become high-speed transit corridors that serve bypassing vehicles at the expense of our residents, pedestrians, environment, and public transport. As highlighted in a recent webinar by IIT Roorkee on "City, Equality and Happiness", the global paradigm is shifting toward the democratization of road space, which is being implemented in cities across continents. Enrique Peñalosa, former Mayor of

Bogotá, Colombia famously noted that a city is only "smart" when it prioritizes the dignity of human movement over the speed of machines. India holds a unique advantage: unlike the "locked-in" car-centric cities of the West, we still have the opportunity to leapfrog directly to 21st century mobility by investing in advanced public transport and pedestrian networks. In Chandigarh, this dignity is being eroded. While the V8 cycle tracks are often viewed as a recent addition, they were integral to the original Chandigarh Master Plan (CMP) of the 1950's. Their neglect, along with the incomplete implementation of the V7 pedestrian paths has gradually pushed Chandigarh into car dependency. To be truly humane, we must prioritize the cyclist and the



pedestrian over the private car.

This struggle echoes the opposition led by Jane Jacobs against the proposed Lower Manhattan Expressway in New York, where she argued that cities are communities to be nurtured, not corridors for vehicular movement. A more recent example can be seen in Cheonggyecheon Stream in Seoul, South Korea, where the removal of an elevated highway did not lead to the predicted gridlock. Instead, it improved urban ecology, reduced ambient temperatures, and boosted tourism, demonstrating the long-term benefits of reclaiming infrastructure for people rather than vehicles. This regression in our planning philosophy is most evident in the quiet collapse of the Punjab New Capital (Periphery) Control Act, 1952. Conceived to protect Chandigarh's character beyond its borders, the Act has been reduced to a formality as uncoordinated and ever-expanding satellite townships mushroom across Mohali, Panchkula, Zirakpur, and New Chandigarh. Every morning, thousands of vehicles stream into the city, unconcerned with the invisible lines that planners once believed would hold. The result is a city absorbing pressures it was never designed to. The Chandigarh Master Plan (CMP) 2031 clearly recognizes that this is not a local problem but a regional one, calling for a binding

Interstate Regional Planning Board and an Integrated Interstate Traffic and Transportation Plan (IITTP). These are not optional instruments of governance but essential safeguards against systemic failure. Without them, we are not solving congestion. We are adding scars and placing costly bandages on a widening regional wound, treating symptoms while the underlying imbalance deepens. Ignoring this statutory vacuum carries a profound environmental and human cost. The proposed flyover disregards the Expert Heritage Committee's warnings on preserving Chandigarh's defining "open-to-sky" vistas and necessitates the felling of the historic Mango Garden. This grove is not a cluster of trees. It is living infrastructure, a quiet lung deliberately placed between the city and its pollution, a biological filter embedded into the city's original design. Its removal is not just ecological loss; it is the erasure of intent. At the same time, the termination of a high-speed corridor near GMCH-32 threatens the integrity of a designated silence zone, introducing a constant stream of noise and disruption into a space where recovery depends on calm. In the name of easing movement, we risk degrading both the air we breathe and the spaces where we heal. The path forward does not lie in pouring more concrete, but in rethinking how the city moves. Instead of a flyover that accelerates vehicles through Chandigarh, we must invest in solutions that allow the city to function at a human pace: grade-separated underpasses where necessary, intelligent traffic management and a deliberate reallocation of road space toward pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. This is not an abstract ideal. It is the difference between a city where daily needs can be met within a short walk and one where every errand demands a cross-city drive. Restoring self-sufficient neighbourhoods means revitalising sector markets so they serve everyday life, not niche specialisation that pulls people across sectors unnecessarily. When movement is local, pressure on the entire system eases. When streets are designed for people, not just vehicles, the city regains its social and environmental balance.

True progress requires the courage to enforce what already exists on paper: the statutory Red Lines against encroachment, the long-delayed regional coordination, and the prioritisation of a robust, high-frequency public transport network. The choice before Chandigarh is not a flyover versus traffic. It is a choice between two futures. One is defined by speed, fragmentation, and a gradual erosion of identity. The other is rooted in balance, accessibility, and the enduring vision of a humane city.

Infrastructure decisions of this scale do more than alter movement patterns; they quietly rewrite the values a city lives by.

Curbing hate speech: Law enforcement beset by partisanship

The SC has sounded a moral alarm by asserting that hate speech is “fundamentally antithetical” to the constitutional value of fraternity

THE Supreme Court has observed that existing legal provisions are sufficient to deal with hate speech, an offence which poses a threat to public order as well as communal harmony. Putting the onus on the executive, the Court has flagged uneven enforcement of laws as a major concern. The SC has sounded a moral alarm by asserting that hate speech is “fundamentally antithetical” to the constitutional value of fraternity. Its message is clear: the erosion of civil discourse strikes at the very foundation of the republic. Laws that remain dormant or are selectively applied are as ineffective as laws that don't exist. The executive, particularly law enforcement agencies, needs to act without fear or favour. However, the efforts of governments to curb hate speech have left a lot to be desired. Powerful politicians often get away with divisive and communal remarks because the police are



reluctant to take action against them. It's this brazen dereliction of duty that the courts must closely monitor and firmly reprimand. When offenders go unpunished,

the rule of law and public trust in institutions are undermined.

The judiciary's refusal to create new legal mechanisms shifts the responsibility to the legislature. Parliament must now assess whether the current framework of provisions is adequate in an age where speech travels instantly and widely through digital platforms. If gaps exist, they must be addressed through carefully crafted legislation that balances free expression with the constitutional vision of unity, dignity and equality. Public figures, in particular, must exercise restraint as their reckless remarks can fan the flames. Ultimately, combating hate speech requires a collective effort. The State must enforce the law impartially, the legislature ought to remain responsive and the citizens

should uphold the spirit of fraternity. And the judiciary needs to step in whenever the other pillars of democracy falter.

Does Trump's war with Iran mark the start of de-dollarisation?

— The immediate effects are visible: a sharp rise in gas prices, inflation climbing to a two-year high, and growing concerns that, as consumers cut back on spending to offset higher costs, unemployment will rise

As the economic consequences of US President Donald Trump's war against Iran become evident, policymakers around the world are running out of patience. The recent Spring Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in Washington made this abundantly clear, with UK Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves lamenting the “folly” of a war that is “not ours”. But much of the cost will be borne by the US itself. The immediate effects are visible: a sharp rise in gas prices, inflation climbing to a two-year high, and growing concerns that, as consumers cut back on spending to offset higher costs, unemployment will rise. While these short-term shocks are serious, a major risk that has received less attention is that the dollar could lose its status as the world's primary trade and reserve currency.

The decline of a reserve currency is a slow process. The British pound ceded its dominance to the US dollar over roughly two decades, beginning in the 1920s. As Barry Eichengreen has noted, the Roman denarius — arguably the world's first international currency — also unravelled over a long period, starting when Emperor Nero debased it in the first century CE.

Any international currency ultimately depends on trust. I witnessed this during my time as chief economic adviser to the Indian government under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. On August 5, 2011, S&P downgraded the US long-term credit rating from AAA to AA+, fuelling fears of immediate capital flight. Instead, the opposite happened: money flowed into the US economy. In the face of global turbulence, investors trusted that the US would honour its obligations, no matter the cost.

That trust, a cornerstone of soft power, is rapidly eroding. Samantha Power, the former administrator of US Agency for International Development (USAID),

highlighted this in a recent lecture at Cornell University, where she criticised the Trump administration's decision to dismantle the agency. The abrupt and “heartless” manner in which it was shut down, she said, halted humanitarian aid without warning, leading to immense suffering among populations around the world that had depended on its continuity. The closure of USAID, alongside Trump's military adventures in Iran and Venezuela and relentless attacks on long-standing allies like Canada and Denmark, has cast a shadow over America's global standing and trustworthiness. This, in turn, puts the dollar's hegemonic status at risk.

To understand the potential cost, consider seigniorage: because the dollar is globally trusted, the Federal Reserve can print a USD 10 bill for less than seven cents, and it will be accepted at full value around the world. As empires from Rome to Britain have shown, issuing the world's leading currency allows a country to create value almost out of thin air. Losing that capacity would slow economic growth.

Unless US policy reverses course, this year may go down in history as the moment the US dollar began to lose its status as the world's currency.

This raises the question: Which currency will replace the



dollar? The renminbi appears to be the strongest candidate. A decade ago, the Chinese currency gained credibility when the IMF included it in the basket of global currencies underpinning Special Drawing Rights (the Fund's reserve asset), but it was still widely dismissed as “no match” for the greenback. Today, the prospect of renminbi primacy no longer seems unthinkable. Yet China's ability to assume that global role is far from assured. As economist Qiao Liu observed

in his 2016 book ‘Corporate China 2.0’, the country combines an “authoritative political regime” with more flexible institutional arrangements in which “relationships still matter”, a hybrid that does not readily inspire the kind of global confidence a reserve currency requires.

Chinese President Xi Jinping appears to understand this dynamic. In a 2024 speech, Xi emphasised the need to internationalise the renminbi to bolster China's soft power, calling for a “powerful currency that can be widely used in international trade, investment, and foreign-exchange markets and attain reserve currency status”. But the main obstacle to reserve-currency status for the renminbi — the maintenance of capital controls — remains firmly in place.

The strongest rebuke of Trump's policies over the past year came

from an unexpected source: King Charles III. His address to Congress on April 28, delivered with characteristic British wit and restraint, sent a clear message that the US is on the wrong path, one that could destroy its global standing.

There was, however, cause for optimism. The repeated bursts of bipartisan applause Charles received from members of Congress suggested they were already aware of America's predicament.



How to grow a pocket-friendly

Follow these tips to grow an eco-friendly garden that doesn't burn a hole in your pocket

Eco garden!

Shrink the lawn

Expanses of lush green lawns use up a lot of resources — including water and fertilisers — and cost a bomb to maintain. A more ecologically friendly option is to reduce the stretch of planted grass and replace it with low shrubs and all-season ornamental grasses.

Grow organic

Make full use of your garden to grow your own food. Plant fruits, vegetables and herbs

to have a fresh stock of ingredients for your kitchen. An organic garden is cost-effective since you are cutting the cost of buying expensive organic groceries from the supermarket. Start with having nutrient-rich soil, add natural compost to balance it and use organic solutions to treat pests. An important factor of eco-friendly organic gardening is planting crops by season. Lettuce and leafy veggies grow quickly in other seasons but die out in summer's heat, while tomatoes and pepper are hot weather crops.

Mulch your landscape

Mulch refers to a covering placed around plants and over the soil in a garden to conserve moisture, ward off weeds and prevent soil erosion. It is especially good for domestic gardens in a city like Mumbai since water shortage is a common issue here. Sustainable mulch materials include coconut shell coir, grass clippings and shredded bark. Add a 2-3 inch layer of any of these around the plants and garden beds.

Plant perennials and natives

Natives are plants that are indigenous to the region you live in while perennials are plants

that live very long. Native Indian plants need less water to grow, less effort to maintain and grow faster and healthier since they are attuned to our climate, rainfall and soil. Another advantage of natives is that they are sources of food and shelter for native bird and insect species. As for perennials, experts

recommend buying small ones if you are on a budget. They will grow tall fast. In fact, every two years, you will need to divide these burgeoning plants. This leaves you with more plants for your own garden or to share with gardening enthusiast friends.

Save water

An essential feature of an eco-friendly garden is one that doesn't drink much water. Use methods like xeriscaping that involves planting an array of beautiful drought-tolerant shrubs and perennial plants. Get water straight from nature by installing a rain barrel at the base of your downspouts. You can use a DIY rain barrel or buy one from a gardening supply store.

Do composting

Compost is also known as black gold, because of its richness and the value it adds to soil. It's an essential element of any eco-friendly garden. The most sustainable way to make compost is to use garden and kitchen waste. Make good use of 'waste' materials like dried leaves, raw fruit and vegetable peel, and grass clippings by putting them in a compost pile and thus making them a source of nutrition for the garden's soil.



7 Tips for hand-washing Dishes fast

Not every home or apartment owner is lucky enough to have a dishwasher, and most of us don't have a tonne of time to spend cleaning dishes.

The dish-washing process is tedious, to be sure. But there are hacks to make it go faster. Jolie Kerr, columnist and author, and Dr Kelly Reynolds, a professor specialising in food safety and disease transmission, give us seven tips for ultra-speedy dish washing so you can clean up, dry off and get on with your life.

1. Switch to a soap with the right



ingredients. Look for soaps with lactic acid, which provides antibacterial benefits and gets the job done fast. Soaps with lauramine oxide have grease-cutting.

2. Use a sanitising rinse. Dipping dishes in the rinse will

mimic part of the process they go through in a dishwasher, and it'll provide peace of mind that your dishes are clean, even if you don't scrub them for hours. Next, dip your plates in one tub of water with one teaspoon to one tablespoon of bleach. You can also use this solution to clean your dish sponge and your sink in a jiffy.

3. Let dishes soak.

It's tempting to start scrubbing caked-on food right away, but do yourself a favour and let pans soak in warm water first. It'll loosen food particles and save your hands from sponge-induced fatigue. Soak pots with burn marks on the bottom in salt and cold water overnight, then boil the water to remove grime.

4. And while you're waiting, go get a serious sponge.

Sponges covered in a plastic netting allows you to scrub well, and doesn't cause any scratching.

5. Use cold water to un-stick dairy and starches.

Rinsing ice cream or butter off a plate with hot water can cause it to gum up. Get these foods off with a cold rinse before continuing to wash the dish in warm water.

6. Make baking soda your grease-dissolving best friend.

Coat a sticky, greasy pan with baking soda and cover the bottom with water. Heat it up a bit, then scrub the gunk off in mere seconds.

7. Never ever stack dirty dishes in your sink.

Have your guests leave their dishes on

the counter next to the sink, not inside it. Remember, you need to leave your sink open so that you can actually wash those dishes. Unstacking and re-stacking is going to make washing your dishes take longer, and ain't nobody got time for that.

Simple ways to freshen up Your home

Here are some more easy ways to bring the best of the season into your home. Take out any dark accessories like velvet pillows, wool throws, and even that dark leather club chair and ottoman. Don't worry! You can bring them back in when the weather changes.

Nothing brings freshness like a casual decor. Use wicker, rush, iron, or painted white garden furniture in place of heavy upholstered pieces.



Add colourful pillows. Sheer, pretty curtains keep a room feeling cool and open while offering some privacy. White is always a good choice, but don't shy away from some of the new citrus pastels. Subtle colour and texture make a big difference to mind and body. Colour choices such as white, almond, soft shades of orchid, dusky blue and corn silk yellow can turn your bedroom into an oasis of calm.

Don't forget to bring the outdoors in. Toss out leggy, brown plants that you're trying to nurse. Bring in fresh, flowering new ones. Flowers bring freshness into any room. Choose your favourite glass vase or colourful ceramic jug and keep it full of fresh cut stems from your garden, the

neighbours, or the flower market. Add fresh flowers and plants to your guest room or bedroom. Enjoy colourful, cheery, summery new flowered bed linens. Layer sheer, frothy fabrics on tables, as a second layer on a bed skirts, and even make a sheer pillow cover for a dark pillow. Add a touch of whimsy with embroidered sheer fabric.

When you enter a home, the first scent you smell makes a significant impact on you. You may quickly formulate impressions or opinions about the home, even if you are not conscious of this occurring. Make sure you fill your own home with inviting and pleasant scents, both for your own enjoyment and the enjoyment of guests. Make a homemade liquid potpourri to simmer on your stove top. Revive your home and perk up your senses with homemade liquid potpourri. A few items from your cupboard or refrigerator are all you need to create an aroma that is pleasing. Use potpourri in the bathroom or bedroom to create a mood. Potpourri mixes can be purchased from stores, but you can experiment with different combinations of fruits and spices until you find the perfect fragrance for your home.

Don't ignore your kitchens. Invest in a kitchen chimney, which will keep the heat and smoke of cooking out of the home. Kitchens with steel partitions instead of wooden ones ensure proper ventilation and retard heat and dampness. While you may not be able to decorate every room in the house, there are numerous ways to add flair to your living space. Lighten up your colours, accessories, and decorate your home with less. Pare down, and let the air circulate. Now sit back and sip a cool pinacolada.

The first rule of contemporary decorating is - lighten up! It's not necessary to change every room or throw out all the old furniture, but there are lots of ways to lighten up and freshen up your home for a wonderful seasonal change.

How to take care of artificial Jewellery

Avoid spraying deodorant/perfume on the jewellery while getting ready. After removing your jewellery, store it in a soft zip up pouch so that dust doesn't easily get to it. Don't use tissues to cover them as they might cause scratches.

Do not wear your jewellery while taking a shower.

If you have to clean your jewellery, try and use only warm water. Clean your jewellery with a soft cloth and mild detergent with warm water if required. Don't clean any jewellery piece that is broken or damaged since cleaning it might damage it more. Inspect your jewellery at regular intervals to ensure that it isn't tarnished.



Beginners' guide

to growing orchids at home

And just when you are about to give up, they surprise you with their real beauty -in various shapes, sizes, colours and fragrances. And like most pretty things, they are high-maintenance," says Dr SL Rahman, joint secretary, The Agri Horticultural Society of India. However, not all orchids are difficult to grow. Some are practically indestructible. It is estimated that there are more than 1,300 species of orchids found in India, primarily in the Northeast -Assam, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh -and also in Sikkim and south India. Most orchids are perennial herbs with simple leaves and if raised in the right conditions (temperature not less than 16-17oC), they should last eight weeks with flowers, after which the blooms slowly start dropping off. They eventually re-flower. A word of caution: Never cut off the aerial roots, and never, ever remove the orchids from the pots they root in.

BEGINNERS' CHALLENGE

Growing orchids can be addictive. But you can take proper care of your orchid only when you know its genus. Most orchids you get in nurseries are hybrids, created specifically for flowers. They are easy to care for at homes and offices. However, a few things should be kept in mind, like light and humidity. If you can imitate a plant's natural habitat, it will thrive.

ORCHIDS WHICH ARE GOOD FOR BEGINNERS

The most commonly available orchids, such as the Moth Orchid, Phalaenopsis and Cattleya are so popular because they grow well at home. Phalaenopsis hybrids are usually considered the 'beginners' orchids', largely because they re-bloom under the conditions most windowsill growers can offer them. They require lower humidity levels. They, however, easily die off due to over-watering. Underwatering can be a problem too. In Vedic scriptures, there is mention of a plant named Vanda, which has been adapted as a generic name for one of the most beautiful group of orchids. "Vandas could be mostly found on trees. And unlike most plants, they do not grow in soil, but air. Their roots attach to trees or rocks, and they draw moisture and nutrients that wash over them in the forest," Dr Rahman tells us. **SOIL** Beginners often make the mistake of assuming that orchids need to be potted in soil like other

blooming flowers. That would be a grave mistake. Most orchid roots need far more air than potting soil would give them. So, look for a porous mix.

LIGHTING

Direct sunlight should be avoided. Some common types of orchids that thrive on bright light are Cattleya and Vanda, while low light is preferred by Phalaenopsis and Paphiopedilum, among others. Orchids should be given as much light as they can tolerate. Varieties with thicker and erect leaves can tolerate more light than those with thinner or more horizontal leaves. Too little light is one of the common mistakes beginners make.

TEMPERATURE

Warm-growing orchids like day temperatures between 21oC and 29oC. This includes Phalaenopsis orchids. The commonly available orchids that are sold in nurseries do well in temperatures that are comfortable for human beings.

HUMIDITY

Most orchids like about 70 per cent humidity in the atmosphere, which is more humid than most homes. So, you have to make an effort to provide your plants with extra humidity. Orchids usually appreciate misting with a spray bottle. If the plant has aerial roots growing up and out of the pot, those roots will like getting some moisture. At home, you can keep the planter on a tray. Fill it with water and gravel. As the water evaporates, it will provide some extra humidity to the plant. For anyone keeping tropical plants on a windowsill, this technique really helps.

NUTRITION

Orchids need nitrogen, sulphur, phosphorus, potassium, calcium and magnesium for growth.

WATER

Overwatering kills far more orchids than underwatering. When in doubt, just don't water. The potting mix also has a lot to do with how often an orchid needs watering. Most orchids are sold in mixes that allow for weekly watering. Don't water until the soil is approaching dryness. To water an orchid, just submerge the pot in a bucket for a few seconds, then lift it out and let the excess water drain off.

PRUNING

Beginners often wonder how to prune orchids. Trimming old flower stems that have turned brown is a good idea. If it's still green, it may re-bloom, either from the tip or by branching further back on the stem. Trimming orchids should only be done to remove leaves, roots, or flower stems that have already died or have turned brown. You must sterilise your cutting tools or use disposable ones so that you don't spread diseases between plants. The best time to re-pot is when new roots start to grow. So, what are you waiting for? Get started!



This is what Indian offices need to change

An office worker spends nearly five years sitting at a desk and thus it is important to understand that the ergonomics in relation to office furniture is important. With the league of start-ups, new work culture has cropped up. There are no rigid cabin walls and heavy furniture anymore to keep the equations between the employees at bay. New-age concept furniture is building the backbone of successful offices. We spoke with Umesh Rao, Founder & CEO, Vector Projects to understand what is the latest trend and if Indian offices are ready for the change.

What is floating furniture all about? How does help soothe an office environment?

Floating furniture is a new concept that has been introduced in the interior space. While in the recent past, rigid and bulky furniture were the norm at workspaces, the new-age concept of floating furniture has changed functionality of an office. One such product is E-Stilts Desk System. This product can be modified to not only function as a staff workstation, but as a manager workstation or conference table. The system offers the utility of a sturdy desk, while allowing agility of a compact workstation at the same time. It was also built to solve one of the basic challenges faced by small offices - a cluttered workspace with numerous pieces of furniture & accessories. The modern designing techniques using cutting-edge technology, by not completely tarnishing the traditional furniture look has increased the demand for floating furniture in the markets. **What kind of changes do you think Indian offices need currently and why?**

In order to successfully create a rich working environment, it is essential to make employees feel comfortable and at ease, while being efficient and productive. With open workspaces, flexi-seating, and ergonomically enhanced furniture, Indian offices today are in the process of re-invention. It is important that workplaces that can help enhance productivity are introduced. For example, many companies like Google, Facebook have opted for new age offices that have employee friendly environment. While the country is still adapting itself to this new concept, start-ups have started to pave the way. They have redefined commercial interior spaces in the country by breaking the monotony and cutting the clutter associated with traditional workspaces. **What is radical seating all about?** The term 'Radical' in its simplest form, means a departure from tradition. For us, it represents change and departure. Change from routine and departure from monotony at the workspace. Radical design has slowly started to gain acceptance in offices. The scenario has changed from restrictive to refreshing,

confined to comfortable and passive to portable. Radical design doesn't mean only futuristic. If interpreted correctly, it could be a mix of traditional and modern decor. That is the beauty of this concept, it lets you decide how 'radical' you want to be. While radical design and seating has transformed large offices, it has also come as a boon to small offices and has changed how small spaces are planned. The question of small working spaces confining the application of radical designs has been solved by creating multipurpose furniture and systems that fit the needs & budget of clients. **Which is the most difficult corner in Indian offices that you always fail to modify?**

It wouldn't be right to generalize; however, we have seen that the Indian Companies are still paper intensive and this leads to a huge requirement for storage. There are statutory obligations that require some of the contracts, legal documents to be preserved for 10 years. High numbers of storage units limit the flexibility and openness in the office. We are suggesting ways to combat this by providing Compactor storages for dead and movable storage caddies for personal storage. This partially helps to achieve the balance between storage needs and flexibility. **What changes do you wish to make to Indian Government offices?** Indian Government offices are the perfect example of traditional work-spaces. With private organisations adapting new age office concepts, the government workspaces also need to transform to become attractive to young talent. For starters, the work environment and the office design can become more transparent. The area could be distributed more equitably between cabins and open work areas. Technology could be integrated more closely in the office design. An efficiently planned, well lit, well ventilated workspace can really help to enhance productivity regardless of the sector.

Set up your own terrace Vegetable garden

Have you, inspired by what Jyotika did in 36 Vayadhinile, wanted a terrace veggie garden of your own? It's a good idea, actually, to grow everyday spices and herbs, so that you have them at hand — fresh — whenever needed. But if you're among the many who don't know how to go about setting up this garden, read on... **Choose the right space** Go to the terrace, take a good look. Judge the play of the sun throughout the day. And then, select a place that is shady, but at the same time, gets direct sunlight for some part of the day. You've

to ensure that the plants get at least five hours of sunlight daily. But mind you, herbs are delicate leaves, so be careful that the sunlight is not so strong that the leaves get scorched by the heat. Get this... The state government, as part of its environment and green cover initiatives, provides coir peats that come in plastic bags, which means you can grow the veggies in them, without having to bother about spending on pots. To begin with, wet the peats, place them on a sheet in the terrace. Keep watering them regularly, and in about a week, you'll see what looked like a small brick would've expanded to look like debris, and filled the bag. Now, to plant the seeds... **Prepare the soil** Get some soil and natural manure from any nursery, and mix it well with the peats. If you want to keep it organic, add cow dung or goat dung manure to the mix.

Leave this mix aside for a few days. Meanwhile, when you peel veggies, etc, do not throw away the skin. Instead, create your own compost with these vegetable skins and waste veggies in another pot in the terrace, and add them to this mix. After about a week, this mix is ready for plantation. Get the seeds of whatever you want to grow (tomatoes, chillies, coriander, basil and herbs are good choices). Sprinkle a few seeds over the mix, slightly dab them in with your hand, and leave it be for a couple of days. Watch them grow. **Pick the right veggies**



To start with, try out just one or two vegetables, and then go in for more veggies. Tomatoes, chillies and keerai (spinach) are easy to grow, so start with them. Sometimes you might need to net out the seeds and the saplings as they grow, to keep pesky sparrows and other birds from feasting on them. **Watering is the key factor** Water the plants regularly, as and when needed. Excess water often causes damage and decay to plant roots, and it also washes away the nutrients of the soil. Also, post every heavy rainfall, remember to add manure to the soil.



Wheat grain cheaper now, but your atta, bread prices haven't dipped. Why?

While wheat prices have gone down in mandis, there is no resultant relief in atta and bread prices for households. What's behind the mismatch between the rates at which farmers sell wheat and the retail prices of flour? Who is really benefiting?

New Delhi.(Agency)

When the price of wheat falls in the mandi, it should bring relief to the kitchens because of cheaper wheat flour (atta). That's a common perception. But across India, the impact of the falling prices of wheat is nowhere to be seen. Though farmers are forced to sell wheat below the Minimum Support Price (MSP), yet, the prices of atta and bread on the dining tables haven't got any cheaper. What's the reason behind this paradox? According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, prices of wheat have dipped significantly in recent months. In several wholesale maidis across Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan, prices have fluctuated between Rs 23 and Rs 25 per kg in April, which has often been below the MSP of Rs 25.85 per kg. The MSP on wheat was increased by the Narendra Modi government



in 2025 from Rs 160 to Rs 2585 per quintal. A quintal is equal to a hundred kilograms. Logically, cheaper wheat should translate into cheaper flour and bread. But that has not happened in India. Retail atta prices continue to float around Rs 36 to Rs 40 per kg nationally, with branded products often selling at a range of Rs 40 and Rs 50 or more for a kilogram.

"Ideally, when wheat becomes cheaper, flour

prices should also come down. But that hasn't happened. The question here is whether this is the farmer's loss or the consumer's gain, or is someone else pocketing profits in the name of consumers? The bitter truth is that the middlemen's system is thriving," said Om Prakash, agricultural expert at Kisan Tak, India Today Digital's sister portal.

"For the average household, the promise of cheaper roti remains something that is far from reach," Prakash added.

This gap between falling raw wheat prices and spiking retail prices of atta exposes a structural imbalance in the supply chain. From mandi to mill to market, wheat passes through multiple processes like milling, packaging, branding, transportation, and retail distribution. Each stage adds costs, but more importantly, it adds margins that do not always adjust downward when input prices

fall.

WHAT'S BEHIND WHEAT-ATTA PRICE MISMATCH?

Agriculture experts and economists describe the situation as asymmetric price transmission. In the case of wheat flour, millers and companies tend to pass on cost increases to the customers but are slower to reduce prices when wheat becomes cheaper. This allows them to protect and even expand profit margins.

"The decline of wheat prices in mandis of several states has been driven by strong production expectations, heavy arrivals, and comfortable government stocks exceeding 22 million tonnes," said Kisan Tak's Om Prakash. "Sweat is sold at throwaway prices in mandis, while consumers are charged premium rates in malls. This is today's harsh reality. The farmer's loss is not turning into savings for the consumer."

Fear, confusion grip Delhi residents as emergency alert blips on phones

New Delhi.(Agency)

Shock, fear, and confusion gripped people across the national capital on Saturday after a loud emergency alert sound from a Cell Broadcast message issued by the Government of India. Many were initially alarmed, only to later realise from the message that "no action is required by the public upon receipt of this message".

Deepti Nainwal, a former school teacher, said she was in her kitchen deciding what to cook when a loud, unfamiliar sound echoed at her home. "First of all, when the alert sound suddenly started on my phone, I was completely shocked. It was so unexpected that for a moment I didn't understand what was happening."

However, after I read the message carefully, I realised it was a routine security alert issued by the authorities. Everyone in the house understood that it was only for safety and security purposes, and there was nothing to panic about. After reading it properly, I acknowledged the message and pressed OK," she said.

She added that such alerts are issued periodically to keep citizens informed and prepared rather than to create panic. Mobile phones across the country displayed the alert with a loud tone. The message read: "Extremely Severe Alerts now in India. Launch of Cell Broadcast using indigenous technology for instant disaster alerting service. Alert citizens, safe nation. No action is required... This is a test message."

The Delhi Police also clarified on social media platform that the alert was part of a test and required no public action. Residents shared mixed reactions online. Some found it easy to dismiss on Android devices, while others said the sound persisted longer on iPhones.

Ankit Prakash from East Delhi said, "It felt as if my phone had exploded. The sound was so sudden and loud that it completely startled me. My wife was asleep at the time, and she too woke up in shock. In that moment of panic, she even told me to throw the phone away." Ashish Saini from Dwarka said, "I got scared because I had no idea what had happened. It definitely grabs attention. If the government wants to send such alerts, it's a good initiative."

Online feedback mandate sparks teachers' protest at Delhi's Shaheed Bhagat Singh College

New Delhi.(Agency)

A recent circular issued by Shaheed Bhagat Singh College mandating students to fill online feedback forms through the ERP portal has triggered strong opposition from the college's teachers' body, AADTA. The association has termed the directive "unilateral" and "anti-teacher", arguing that it disregards the collective position consistently maintained by the Delhi University Teachers' Association on such mechanisms.

AADTA expressed surprise that the move was implemented despite the known affiliation of DUTA leadership with the college, raising concerns over the commitment to safeguarding teachers' rights and



institutional solidarity.

The association contended that making feedback compulsory, without addressing long-standing issues regarding transparency, and accountability, risks creating a coercive environment rather than fostering constructive engagement.

Teachers also flagged fears that the system could be used as a tool for harassment, undermining professional autonomy. Describing the circular as a "farman", AADTA suggested that the measure appears more aligned with administrative control than genuine quality enhancement in teaching-learning processes.

Charred Bodies, Debris: Video Shows Grim Aftermath Of Delhi Building Fire

New Delhi.(Agency)

The aftermath of the massive fire inside a four-storey building in Delhi's Vivek Vihar remained grim,

nearby hospital for treatment. The blaze was put out after nearly two hours, around 6 am.

The video, accessed by

showed a broken pipe or a fire suppression system. As the clip moved through the building, charred furniture was visible, and light smoke could be seen in the air.



Officials were seen recovering the charred bodies and wrapping them in a white cloth. According to the police, they have recovered all the bodies and handed them over to the Delhi Police crime team. The cause of the fire is not yet known, but a resident claimed an AC blast may have triggered the blaze. "A blast in the AC triggered the fire... Around

12-15 were rescued. However, 4-5 people are still missing," he told news agency ANI. Local MLA Sanjay Goyal also reached the spot to take stock of the situation.

One-year-old among nine killed in massive blaze at residential building in Delhi's Shahdara

New Delhi.(Agency)

Nine people were charred to death on Sunday morning after a fire broke out at a residential building in Shahdara's Vivek Vihar area. The fire department has recovered nine charred bodies from different floors -- one from the first floor, five from the second floor, and three from the staircase mummy which was found locked.

According to reports, nine people -- including four women, four men, and a one-year-old child - lost their lives in the fire. Police said a preliminary investigation suggests the blaze may have been triggered by an air-conditioner explosion. They added that further probe is underway.

According to the fire officials, they got information at 3.47 am regarding the blaze. A total of 14 fire tenders were rushed to the spot to douse the blaze. The fire was brought

under control at 6.25 am. The fire was in domestic articles in six flats, and 12 to 15 people were rescued by the Delhi Fire Services personnel.

A senior police officer said that they got a PCR call at 3.48 am regarding the incident, following which staff reached the spot. The fire brigade and crime team also reached the spot at Vivek Vihar B-Block.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Shahdara) RP Meena said after reaching the spot, fire was found in the flats situated on the second, third, and fourth floors. During rescue and fire extinguishing operations, 10 to 15 people were rescued from the building, out of whom two persons, having sustained minor injuries, were shifted to Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital for medical treatment, the DCP said. Further enquiry and proceedings at the spot are in progress, Meena added.



How Indian Start-up's Drishti Satellite Could Be New Headache For Pak, China

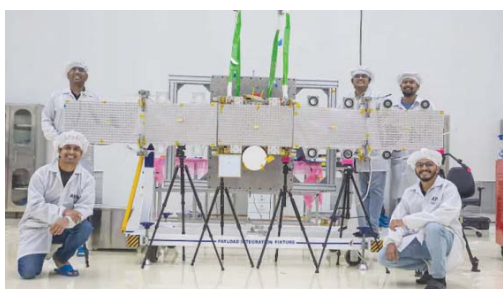
New Delhi.(Agency)

Suyash Singh, CEO and Founder of GalaxEye, called the mission a technological first and explained why India needed to think differently while designing satellites.

India is getting ready to launch a satellite unlike any the world has seen before. Built by a private space start-up and designed to see through clouds and darkness, the mission marks a turning point for India's space ecosystem. At the heart of this effort is Drishti, a uniquely engineered Earth observation satellite developed by Bengaluru-based GalaxEye and set to fly aboard SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket. The launch takes place from California on May 3 at 12.29 pm IST.

Speaking ahead of the launch, Suyash Singh, CEO and Founder of GalaxEye, called the mission a technological first and explained why India needed to think differently while designing satellites.

"This satellite mission is called Drishti. Drishti stands for seeing through anything and



everything in our context," he said. "The speciality of this particular satellite is it has a multispectral camera and a synthetic aperture radar (SAR) imager on the same satellite. This is a first of its kind."

If this was operational, India could have gotten quality images of the bomb damage assessments from Operation Sindoor rather than relying on commercial American

satellites. In fact the current Israel, USA and Iran conflict has amply shown why countries need eyes in the skies from sovereign countries as USA has barred space giant Vantor, earlier called Maxar, from sharing images from the conflict.

The idea for Drishti was born out of India's geography and climate. Unlike temperate regions in the West, much of India lies in the tropics, near the Tropic of Cancer. Cloud cover is frequent and persistent, often rendering conventional optical satellites ineffective. "We have found that India is a country which is tropical in nature. We have more clouds than the West," Singh explained. "The West has never thought about this concept because they never had this problem. If they have a clean sky, they will have a clean sky. If they have some cloud, they will have for some time and then it will go away."

'Rescue fares': US air carriers step up with after Spirit Airlines winds down

New Delhi.(Agency)

US air carriers on Saturday mobilized to help passengers and crew members stranded by the overnight shutdown of Spirit Airlines, after the low-cost carrier's last-minute talks with creditors and the White House collapsed.

Spirit, known for its bright yellow planes, succumbed to crushing fuel prices and announced in the early hours that it was "winding down its global operations, effective immediately," with all flights canceled and customer service no longer available.

Other carriers -- including American, Delta, United and JetBlue -- moved quickly to scoop up Spirit's customers, offering what some dubbed "rescue fares" to those waking up with cancelled itineraries. "In just over 12 hours, United has helped Spirit customers book 14,000 tickets to get to where they need to be," United said in a statement on Saturday.

Some airlines said they would increase the number of flights or schedule larger planes in and out of airports where Spirit had a significant presence. Carriers also sought to support marooned Spirit staff-- and hire them.

Spirit has been in and out of bankruptcy since 2024, and the White House was recently considering a bailout."

The recent material increase in oil prices and other pressures on the business have significantly impacted Spirit's financial outlook," the company said in a statement."With no additional funding available to the company, Spirit had no choice but to begin this wind-down."

The company had nearly 7,500 employees at the end of last year, according to filings. Unions representing them slammed the failure to reach a deal.

Market recap: Top 10 firms add Rs 2.20 lakh crore in value; Reliance emerges biggest gainer

New Delhi.(Agency)

Dalal Street closed the holiday-shortened week in the green, lifting the combined market valuation of India's top 10 most valued firms by Rs 2.20 lakh crore. Reliance Industries led the rally as investor sentiment remained resilient despite a volatile trading environment.

The gains came even as the stock market moved within a narrow range. The BSE Sensex rose 249.29 points, or 0.32%, over the week. "Markets ended the week with marginal gains, reflecting a volatile and range-bound trading environment amid mixed global and domestic cues," Ajit Mishra -- SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

He said markets started the week on an optimistic note, helped by easing geopolitical tensions and steady Q4 earnings progress, which supported sentiment in the early sessions.That momentum, however, weakened later as higher crude oil prices, subdued Asian market trends and sustained foreign institutional investor (FII) outflows limited further gains.

Reliance Industries accounted for the largest jump in valuation, with its market capitalisation increasing by Rs 1,39,655.8 crore to reach Rs 19,36,303.30 crore. Bharti Airtel also posted a significant rise, adding Rs 43,503.51 crore and taking its valuation to Rs 11,49,222.13 crore. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) saw its market worth rise by Rs 27,569.83 crore to Rs 8,94,933.95 crore, while Bajaj Finance gained Rs 9,432.32 crore, pushing its valuation to Rs 5,83,123.13 crore.

Adam Back again denies he is Satoshi, Bitcoin's inventor

New Delhi.(Agency)

Adam Back has spent weeks being asked yet again, by various people, whether he is the inventor of Bitcoin. He is not, he says.

He has been saying so for years and again since the New York Times suggested in early April, after dissecting writings from the early cypherpunk era, that Adam Back was the most credible candidate yet for Satoshi Nakamoto, the pseudonymous figure who released Bitcoin's design paper in 2008 and disappeared in 2011.

A documentary released weeks later proposed two other candidates. Back has done what he usually does, which is to deny the attribution, explain why people keep making it, and return to work. "It's not me, for the record," he said in late April, in a polite tone. "It's very hard to prove a negative." "Mystery around founder helped Bitcoin's growth"

The repetition does not seem to bother him. The mystery has been useful, he says. A Bitcoin without a known founder is a Bitcoin without a single point of capture, without a chief executive to subpoena, a founding team to coerce, a charismatic figure whose departure could destabilise the network. That, he believes, is part of why the asset has reached the position it now occupies.

"It helps Bitcoin be more understood as a digital commodity rather than shares in a startup," he told Bloomberg at the sidelines of the Bitcoin 2026 conference in Las Vegas. "Nobody has any particular strong influence."

Back is British, the holder of a doctorate in computer science and the chief executive of Blockstream, one of the oldest and best-capitalised infrastructure companies in the Bitcoin ecosystem. He is also one of the few known people whose work demonstrably influenced Bitcoin's design.His 1997 paper on Hashcash -- a proof-of-work algorithm intended to combat email spam -- is cited in Satoshi's 2008 whitepaper. He was, by his own account, working on the problem of digital scarcity, more than a decade before Bitcoin's release.

Digitalisation push raised productivity in Indian MSMEs, helped smaller firms: IMF

New Delhi.(Agency)

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has lauded the digitalisation reforms in public administration in India saying it pushed productivity in the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The IMF stated the benefits of the digitalisation push in a working paper and stated that states that have adopted these changes have witnessed the benefits. "We find that states that undertake more public administration digitalisation experience higher productivity growth and lower productivity dispersion among firms," wrote economists Somnath Sharma and Kenichi Ueda. To write the paper, the IMF economists studied the productivity of unincorporated manufacturing businesses in states which have adopted more digitalisation reforms and those that have undertaken fewer changes in public administration.

Significance of MSMEs in Indian economy

MSME is an umbrella term that encompasses a very bog category of businesses in India. They account for about 35% of the manufacturing activity and output in the country and provide livelihood for 11 crore workers. These units also contribute to about 45% of the country's cumulative export figures. The IMF working paper said that the business reforms undertaken in India between 2010-11 and 2014-15 were mostly through digitalisation of business-related public administration. This helped in reducing the cost of dealing with bureaucratic hurdles, which often become a big hindrance for small and micro businesses. "Thus, these reforms can be considered to help improve the

productivities of firms, in particular, small-and micro-manufacturing enterprises," the economists said



according to a PTI report.

Reforms in six areas

The IMF economists listed reforms in six areas. These are tax systems, construction permits, environment and labour

compliance, inspections, commercial disputes and single-window clearances. They mentioned clearly that digital tools drove down the administrative burden, especially for small firms. Steps such as online tax filing and automated approvals helped improve transparency and slashed delays. "By automating and making processes more transparent, digitalisation levels the playing field for all businesses," IMF said.

IMF stance in 2023

Three years ago, the IMF also came out in support of the digitalisation push. In a paper titled "Stacking up the benefits: Lessons from India's digital journey", the IMF mentioned, "India Stack's development is guided by a foundational building blocks approach, and a focus on supporting innovation across the ecosystem."

AI is helping you invest. But should you trust it?

New Delhi.(Agency)

Artificial intelligence has moved from being a novelty to a necessity in everyday life. We use it to write, edit, search, and create. It helps us save time, reduce effort, and make quicker decisions.Gradually, it has become a tool we depend on without thinking twice. Now, that same technology is being trusted with something far bigger; our money.People have started relying on AI to make decisions, whether it is picking a stock, understanding market trends, or figuring out when to buy and sell?

At recent app launches and updates across India's fast-growing fintech space, one thing has become clear. Artificial intelligence is no longer just a feature inside financial apps, it is the main pitch.

From stock suggestions and portfolio insights to some tools that claim to help users "time the market", AI is increasingly being positioned as a smarter way to invest.But when money

is involved, the question becomes far more important than the technology itself, how much should you actually trust it?

AI IS NOW EVERYWHERE IN INVESTING

The use of AI in financial services is not



new, but its role is expanding rapidly.According to Sebi's consultation paper on responsible usage of AI and machine learning, these systems are already being widely used across Indian securities markets -- from advisory and support services to surveillance, risk management, and even product recommendations.

Better data, faster computing power, and advances in generative AI have pushed this adoption further.For platforms, the logic is simple. Markets move fast. Data is overwhelming. And retail investors need help navigating both.

"AI helps us process large volumes of data quickly, identify patterns, and present information in a more usable way," said Navy Vijay Ramavat, Managing Director at Indira Securities.

"It strengthens decision-making by reducing noise and improving efficiency."

THE BIG PROMISE: SMARTER INVESTING

For users, AI promises something very appealing, better decisions with less effort.Instead of

tracking earnings reports, analysing charts, or reading research reports, investors can now rely on AI-powered tools to simplify the process.

But even companies building these tools are careful about how far they take that promise."AI does not replace that team, it amplifies what they can do," said Pranit Arora, Co-Founder.

Weak global cues, oil price, FII data likely to drive D-Street next week

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Indian stock market is likely to remain under pressure in the coming week as investors grapple with rising crude oil prices, persistent foreign fund outflows, and escalating geopolitical tensions. Alongside these macro triggers, a busy earnings calendar is expected to keep stock-specific action high, even as the broader sentiment stays cautious.

During the last trading session, the Nifty declined 0.73 per cent to close at 24,000, recovering from its day's low, while the Sensex slipped 0.78 per cent to end at 76,891 compared to the previous session.

The sell-off was largely led by oil-sensitive stocks, as crude prices stayed elevated above the USD 100-per-barrel



mark.Commenting on the Nifty technical outlook, experts said that the price action suggests consolidation with a mildly bullish bias."On the upside, resistance levels are placed at 24,350 and 24,600. On the downside, support is seen at 23,900 and 23,550. A breakdown below 23,500 could result in increased selling pressure," an analyst stated.

Looking ahead, market participants are expected to closely track a packed earnings calendar. More than 250 companies are set to announce their results for the March quarter.

Geopolitical developments will also remain a key overhang. Concerns around a potential escalation in tensions between the United States and Iran have kept global markets on edge.

Crude oil prices will continue to be a crucial factor for domestic equities, given India's heavy reliance on imports.

Although prices eased slightly after reports of Iran's willingness to engage in talks, Brent crude continues to hover near USD 108 per barrel, while West Texas Intermediate remains around USD 101.

If crude stays high, Indian aviation faces margin squeeze, demand risk: Oil Analyst

India's aviation sector is particularly vulnerable because aviation turbine fuel (ATF) already forms a large part of operating costs, and the market is highly price-sensitive.

New Delhi.(Agency)

If the crude oil prices stay elevated, losses will become harder to absorb as Indian aviation is more sensitive, stated Sparta Commodities Senior Oil Analyst Abhishek Kumar.

In an exclusive conversation with ANI, he said, "If the fuel shock stays elevated, the risk is that losses become harder to absorb, flights are cancelled, and

government intervention may be needed to protect connectivity and prevent deeper stress across the sector."

Kumar explained that India's aviation sector is particularly vulnerable because aviation turbine fuel (ATF) already forms a large part of operating costs and the market is highly price-sensitive. Airlines may increase fares on some routes, but they cannot fully pass on higher fuel costs without hurting demand.

"India is more sensitive because ATF is already a large cost item and the airline sector is highly price-sensitive. Airlines may raise fares on some routes, but they cannot pass through the full cost without hurting demand," he said.

He added that the impact is already visible, with airlines reducing discounts, increasing fares and reviewing weaker routes, along with a rising risk of capacity cuts. The industry

has also started seeking policy support, including relief on ATF pricing and taxes.

Kumar noted that the surge in aviation fuel prices is creating a direct margin shock for airlines. "The aviation fuel



surge is now a direct margin shock for airlines. The issue is not only higher crude, but that jet fuel has risen faster than crude, making the ATF cost squeeze much sharper," he said.

Brent crude is currently trading around USD 109 per barrel, jet fuel prices have risen faster, increasing the cost burden on airlines.

He pointed out that airlines have now moved from the absorption phase to the adjustment phase after several weeks of elevated prices and disruptions."We are also no longer in the first week of the shock. After several weeks of elevated prices and war-related disruption, airlines have moved from the absorption phase to the adjustment phase," he said.

Airlines initially relied on hedging and limited fare increases, but that protection is now weakening. "Airlines are cutting discounts, adding fuel surcharges, raising fares, reviewing weaker routes and becoming more cautious on capacity. The first casualty is margins," Kumar said.He also warned about demand risks. "The next risk is demand destruction. Airlines can pass on part of the fuel cost, but not endlessly. If fares rise too quickly, price-sensitive passengers start delaying or cancelling trips," he added.Kumar noted that leisure travel, budget flyers and weaker domestic routes are likely.

Short news

Four women teachers killed after tree falls on moving car in Kullu

Shimla.(Agency)

Four women teachers lost their lives after a giant conifer tree uprooted during inclement weather and fell on a moving car on Saturday. The accident occurred in the Ani subdivision of Himachal's Kullu district when strong winds accompanied by light rain lashed the region, police said. According to officials, the tree crashed directly onto the vehicle, leaving little chance for the occupants to escape. Four teachers died on the spot, while the driver and two other occupants sustained injuries. They were rushed to a nearby medical facility for treatment.

The deceased have been identified as Sneha Lata (38), a resident of Parolibhar, Ani; Banti Kaushal (39), resident of Lami Seri, Ani; Usha Kumari (43), resident of Tarala, Ani; and Seema Azad (54), a resident of Ropdi, Ani.

The injured include Suresh Chand (driver), a resident of Ropdi; Tara Devi, also from Ropdi; and Reena Kumari, a resident of Sarkaghat in Mandi district.

Eyewitnesses said a bus and other vehicles were also passing along the same route at the time of the incident. "Fortunately, the tree fell directly on the Bolero. Had it struck the bus, the casualties could have been much higher," a local resident said.

Police, administrative officials, and fire brigade teams rushed to the spot soon after receiving information and carried out rescue operations. The bodies were shifted to a nearby mortuary for postmortem, and an investigation into the incident has been initiated. Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Ani, Laxman Kanet, expressed grief over the loss of lives and announced immediate relief.

LPG price hike: Hotels in Kerala to down shutters on May 6

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.(Agency)

The steep rise in commercial LPG prices has jolted Kerala's restaurant industry, with eateries warning of a 50-60% hike in menu prices. On Friday, the central government increased the price of 19kg commercial LPG cylinders by Rs 993, with the cost of a cylinder crossing Rs 3,000 in the state.

The decision has come as a further blow to food-business operators who are already on the verge of closure due to the LPG crisis triggered by tensions in West Asia.

Warning of job losses and a spike in food prices, the Kerala Hotel and Restaurants Association (KHRA) has called for a statewide shutdown on May 6, while demanding immediate relief measures from the Centre and state governments.

KHRA state president G Jayapal said the sector is already under severe stress and will not be able to absorb the latest LPG price hike.

He said that the situation is grave and the cumulative rise in cost of LPG, milk, vegetables, pulses, and cooking oil has made operations unsustainable. "Prices of essentials have skyrocketed. Coconut oil that once cost Rs 100 is now nearing Rs 300. Pulses are around Rs 150 per kg, chickpeas have crossed Rs 100, and even small lentils are touching Rs 170. Along with this, LPG prices have shot up drastically. To stay viable, we may have to raise menu prices by 50-60%," he said.

Kerala Congress parties await election results with bated breath

KOTTAYAM.(Agency)

With just a day left for the counting of votes in the assembly elections, much attention has shifted to the performance of Kerala Congress (KC) parties – including leading breakaway factions led by P J Joseph and Jose K Mani, whose survival will largely hinge on the poll outcome.

The election is particularly pivotal for Kerala Congress (M), led by Jose, who aligned with the LDF shortly before the 2021 assembly elections after being expelled from the UDF. A second consecutive defeat for Jose in Pala could not only jeopardise his political career but also potentially destabilise the party's foundational structure.

In the 2021 election, KC (M) demonstrated its strength by winning five of the 12 allocated seats. However, Jose's defeat was a blow to the party. In the aftermath, Roshly Augustine, who was second in command, ascended to a ministerial position, emerging as an alternative power centre. This time, too, Roshly's statements announcing Jose's candidacy in Pala triggered some controversy.

Given all that has transpired, nothing less than a victory will do for Jose to reinforce his clout. However, both Jose and Roshly's election prospects – in Pala and Idukki respectively – appear far from rosy. Adding to the uncertainty, a failure to retain the previously held seats could precipitate a serious internal crisis for the party.

Jose has claimed that with no anti-incumbency in play, the exit polls point to the LDF continuing in power. "The results will prove that the people are with the government, which has delivered public welfare to every household," he told reporters.

2 workers fall to death from gantry crane at site for coastal road

Mumbai.(Agency)

In the second mishap within a week at an infrastructure project site of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), two workers lost their lives after falling from an industrial gantry crane at a casting yard site for the Mumbai Coastal Road Project (Phase 2) in Mira Bhayander area.

A casting yard is an industrial facility where concrete segments like pillars, boulders and piers are constructed for an infrastructure project. Saturday's incident took place days after a police constable lost his life when a portion of a construction rig fell on him at a flyover construction site on Sion-Panvel highway in Mumbai's eastern suburbs.

Before that, on February 14, a slab of the parapet wall on the viaduct of a Metro line in Mulund fell atop a rickshaw and a car,



killing one and injuring three. The latest incident in a series of such mishaps exposes a pattern of safety negligence at sites of government authorities such as the BMC and MMRDA.

Bhayander police station senior inspector Jitendra Kamble said that a platform attached to the crane where the labourers were working collapsed around 1 pm in

Bhayander (West), severely injuring Raghunath Das (38) and Kanha Singh (45). They were rushed to hospital where they were declared dead.

The BMC has initiated a safety audit of all casting yards and construction sites of the Coastal Road project.

According to BMC, the two victims were responsible for assembling the gantry crane, a tall structure with A-shaped legs on both sides supporting a horizontal beam at the top. These cranes are used for lifting heavy concrete segments for bridges and moving large machinery and materials.

The two workers had climbed on to a platform 35-feet above the ground for carrying out routine inspections. A civic official said suddenly the platform collapsed, and they fell on the ground. Officials said the workers were wearing safety belts.

Results declared a day before NEET leave many aspirants in Mumbai anxious

Mumbai.(Agency)

The declaration of the HSC 2026 results a day ahead of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) has left a section of aspirants in Mumbai anxious, with many saying the timing has added to pre-exam pressure.

Students preparing for the national-level medical entrance test on Sunday said the release of results has intensified concerns about meeting NEET cut-offs.

Several reached out to counsellors appointed by the Maharashtra State Board for support. One counsellor said many students were worried about their scores and required reassurance, often involving conversations with their families to ensure emotional



support.

Another counsellor noted that parental comparisons based on HSC percentages were adding to students' stress. "With NEET tomorrow, such comparisons are creating pressure. We are counselling parents to support their children rather than

add to their anxiety," they said.

Calling the timing "unnecessary pressure," Anubha Shrivastava Sahai of the India Wide Parents Association said the results could have been announced earlier or after NEET to help students stay focused.

The State Board, however, defended the decision. Chairman Trigun Kulkarni said there was demand to declare results before NEET and pointed out that supplementary exams are approaching for those seeking improvement. Meanwhile, four of the ten official counselling helpline numbers were found switched off or out of service on the day. Kulkarni said the issue would be reviewed, adding that contact details of over 300 counsellors are available on the Board's website.

Over 1,000 kg of suspect paneer destroyed in April in Gujarat

Ahmedabad.(Agency)

THE GUJARAT government on Saturday said that the Food and Drugs Control Administration (FDCA) had destroyed 1,018 kg of suspect paneer worth Rs1.83 lakh in April across the state. This was part of the drive to search, seize and destroy analogue dairy products being fraudulently sold as paneer in the market.

Gujarat health minister Praful Pansheriya was on Saturday quoted by the government as saying, "Anyone who cheats citizens by selling analogue products as paneer will not be spared under any circumstances. Food business operators should immediately start following the rules, otherwise the government will not hesitate to take strict legal action against them."

In April, the Gujarat Food and Drugs Control Administration (FDCA) had undertaken a drive to stop the

fraudulent sale of analogue dairy products in the name of paneer. As part of this drive, a total of 4,193 units including manufacturing units, restaurants, dhabas and hawkers were inspected.



The statement said, "During this inspection, a quantity of about 1,018 kg of suspicious paneer/analogue worth an estimated Rs1,83,240 was found, seized and destroyed on the spot. Notices have been issued to about 270 units for serious negligence. Apart

from this, 118 suspicious samples have been sent to the laboratory for testing, after which strict legal action will be taken."

In addition, a total of Rs2,84,300 in fines have been collected from the firms violating the rules in municipal corporations. A total of, 18 units that showed serious negligence have also been sealed, the minister was quoted as saying after a meeting with top officials of the Gujarat FDCA.

As part of food safety in the summer season, "Food Safety on Wheels" initiative had so far conducted intensive checks at 1,576 places and tested 1,705 samples on units selling sugarcane juice, mango juice, golas and watermelon.

Not only this, 284 training programs and 255 awareness programs were organized under this drive to create awareness among traders and citizens about food purity and adulteration.

Andhra reels under severe heatwave as temperature hits 45 degree Celsius

VIJAYAWADA.(Agency)

Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority (APSDMA) has issued a fresh advisory as severe heatwave conditions gripped the state on Saturday.

Managing Director Prakhar Jain said Prakasam district's Kopperapadu recorded the highest temperature at 45.4°C. Across 17 districts, 239 mandals registered temperatures above 41°C, with Kadapa (34 mandals), Nellore (32), Tirupati (29), Palnadu (26), Prakasam (25), Markapuram (21), Nandyal (20), Kurnool (17), and Chittoor (10) among the worst affected.

For Sunday (May 3), APSDMA forecasts severe hot winds in six mandals of Guntur district, including Medikonduru, Pedanandipadu, Phirangipuram, Prattipadu, Thulluru, and Vatticherukuru. In addition, 124 mandals across districts such as Vizianagaram, Manyam, Polavaram, East Godavari, Krishna, NTR, Bapatla, Palnadu, Prakasam, Nellore, and Tirupati are likely to experience hot winds.

Saturday's maximums included 45.1°C at Botlaguduru (Markapuram), 45°C at Venkatagiri (Tirupati), 44.4°C at Kaligiri (Nellore), and 44.3°C at Nuzendla (Palnadu).

Meanwhile, a trough extending from Rajasthan to Tamil Nadu via Vidarbha, Telangana, and Rayalaseema is expected to trigger light rains with thunder and lightning in parts of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Manyam, Alluri, Polavaram, Visakhapatnam, Anakapalli, Kakinada, Konaseema, East Godavari, Chittoor, and Tirupati districts. APSDMA advised farmers and workers to avoid sheltering under trees during thunderstorms and urged the public to take precautions against heat and humidity.

Tricity braces for thunderstorms, rain as temperatures likely to dip over next 48 hours

Chandigarh.(Agency)

The Tricity is set for a fresh spell of pre-monsoon activity, with the Meteorological Centre, Chandigarh forecasting light to moderate rainfall at a few places on May 4 and 5, accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds.

According to the latest forecast, isolated places in Chandigarh may witness thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds reaching speeds of 40-50 kmph on May 4. The change in weather is likely to bring much-needed relief from the rising heat, with day temperatures expected to dip over the next two to three days.

The development as per weather department is being attributed to an active western disturbance impacting northwest India, a system that has already begun influencing weather patterns across the region.

In recent days, the Tricity has been witnessing fluctuating weather conditions. While maximum temperatures had climbed to around 35-37°C under partly cloudy skies, similar rain spells earlier this week led to a sharp drop of nearly 6-7 degrees, bringing temperatures below normal levels.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has indicated that such intermittent rain and thunderstorm activity is likely to continue in the first week of May, keeping maximum temperatures in check and preventing severe heatwave conditions for now.

Admin failures, procedural violations led to TTD ghee adulteration, says one-man panel

VIJAYAWADA.(Agency)

In a major development in the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) ghee adulteration scandal, the findings of the One-Man Committee constituted by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu have come to light, exposing a deep-rooted nexus of administrative failures, procedural violations, and possible collusion that enabled the supply of adulterated ghee used in Srivari laddu prasadam.

The committee, headed by retired IAS officer Dinesh Kumar (1983 batch), was tasked with identifying those responsible for the scandal and examining lapses in the procurement system. Its report squarely fixes accountability on senior officials and

the procurement machinery, holding them responsible for creating conditions that allowed adulterated ghee to enter the sacred supply chain.

The committee's mandate was confined to governance and administrative responsibility, not criminal liability, as a police case had already been registered in Tirupati East Police Station (Crime No. 470/2024).

The report highlights how the eligibility criteria introduced in August 2019 were diluted within five months without justification, enabling non-compliant and unverified dairy firms to participate in ghee tenders. This relaxation opened the door for suppliers such as Bhole Baba Organic Dairy Milk Pvt Ltd, whose entry



marked the beginning of a decline in quality standards.

Procurement was driven by unsustainable lowest-price (L1) bidding, with reductions up to Rs 207 per kg incentivising adulteration. In several cases, post-auction negotiations were permitted in violation of tender rules, further undermining

transparency.

A critical CFTRI laboratory report dated August 3, 2022, confirmed adulteration with vegetable oils through the presence of β -Sitosterol. However, senior management suppressed the findings and failed to enforce Tender Condition No. 50, which mandated blacklisting of such firms. Instead, suppliers continued to receive orders, and procurement went on unchecked. Plans to mandate FSSAI β -Sitosterol testing from July 2022 were reversed, resulting in the procurement of over 70 lakh kg of ghee without legally required checks. The report notes that consignments were accepted and used even before laboratory results were received, raising serious concerns.

NEWS BOX

The Vibhuti Effect: Why do India's chess prodigies swear by the sacred ash?

New Delhi. (Agency)

The silence in an elite chess hall is thick, almost tactile. Under the clinical hum of the air conditioning and the unforgiving glare of broadcast lights, the world's finest minds sit frozen in a state of hyper-focus. Their eyes dart across sixty-four squares of impending mayhem, calculating permutations that would leave even the most sophisticated computer grinding for time. Yet, amidst this landscape of cold logic and high-tech tension, a small, organic detail has begun to pull the gaze of the curious spectator: a smudge of white ash on the brow of a Grandmaster.

Whether it is a single, contemplative stroke or the traditional marking of the forehead, the presence of vibhuti is a subtle visual that has largely escaped deeper exploration. From the historic rise of Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa and D Gukesh to the steady brilliance of R Vaishali, a generation of Indian prodigies, predominantly from the country's southern heartlands, is conquering the world while wearing their culture with an unselfconscious pride.

This is a sight that travels. When Bodhana Sivanandan, a British-Indian prodigy of just 11 years old, appeared at a tournament in North London bearing the mark, it served as a quiet reminder of how deeply ingrained this practice is — a visual bridge between the ancient traditions of an Indian household and the sharp, secular world of international chess.

EGO'S END GAME

For the players themselves, the practice is less about outward display and more about an internal grounding. In the stratospheric world of elite chess, where a single blunder can ruin months of preparation and shatter a carefully constructed reputation, the ego is a dangerous passenger.

Pragganandhaa, who has become the face of a new generation of Indian chess — calm, collected, almost preternatural in his composure — once explained the philosophy plainly to podcaster Raj Shamani: "This is basically the ash. We come from ash and go back to it. So, this is basically [to remind us] that whatever we do is not something to be arrogant about. It's something that I have been doing from a young age, and I have been doing it ever since."

Max Verstappen sees light at the end of tunnel

Miami. (Agency)

Four-time world champion Max Verstappen said he could "see light at the end of the tunnel" after claiming an impressive second place in Saturday's qualifying for Sunday's Miami Grand Prix. The 28-year-old Dutchman, frustrated by progress at Red Bull and the driving experience of racing in the new hybrid era of F1 cars, said his team's upgrades had made his car far more comfortable and pleasing to drive.

"For sure, the car has not been great in the previous races," said Verstappen, whose previous best grid position this year was eighth.

On Sunday, he will start alongside championship-leading Italian teenager Kimi Antonelli of Mercedes, who claimed his third consecutive pole on Saturday.

"From my side, I never felt comfortable with the layout of the car," said Verstappen. "I think over these last few weeks the team has been pushing flat-out to try and bring upgrades to the car and make me feel more comfortable with a lot of things and it really paid off."

"I feel more in control of the car again and then I can push a bit more. The upgrades are working and to be on the front row is way better than I expected heading into this weekend." Now, let's start with a good start. I've not had a lot of them this year. We'll try to have a look at that, for sure, and see what the weather will do tomorrow, but I'm already very happy with where we are. "From here there's like light at the end of the tunnel, and we can just push on and try to close the gap further."

Red Bull, in common with most leading teams, made use of F1's enforced five-week hiatus due to the conflict in the Middle East to deliver major upgrade packages for their cars.

While Verstappen purred with satisfaction, his friend and rival -- defending world champion Lando Norris of McLaren, who won Saturday morning's sprint race in convincing style from pole -- was unhappy at qualifying only fourth.

"I think we did a good job but I think the others just did a really bad job yesterday and did what they should have done today... so I have no complaints."

"It was trickier today with the wind and the high temperatures and I was struggling a big more for whatever reason. We didn't change anything. It was just the conditions."

Has Hardik Pandya lost MI dressing room? EX-IND batter's big claim after CSK defeat

Manoj Tiwary said Hardik Pandya appears to have lost the Mumbai Indians dressing room after the defeat to Chennai Super Kings. He said the side looked fundamentally unsettled, with limited backing for the captain and inconsistent performances damaging the campaign.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Former India batter and IPL winner Manoj Tiwary claimed that Hardik Pandya has lost the MI dressing room after their latest loss to Chennai Super Kings on Saturday, May 2. Mumbai were beaten by their arch-rivals by eight wickets in another one-sided derby. The loss meant that Mumbai are ninth on the points table.

Hardik's captaincy has been questioned by pundits, with fans also observing some

unrest within the squad. During the loss to PBKS, Jasprit Bumrah was seen to be unhappy with the MI skipper's calls and showed his displeasure on the field.

Speaking to Cricbuzz after the match, Tiwary said that MI's campaign is well and truly over and feels that there seems to be something fundamentally wrong with the team.

"For me, it certainly is over; in fact, for me, it was over a long time ago. As you know, whenever we sit down for a discussion, we speak quite openly and frankly with one another. I base my observations and comments strictly on what is visible on the field. And, in my opinion—judging by the brand of cricket we've witnessed—it appears that something is fundamentally amiss," said Tiwary.

Coming to Hardik and his captaincy, Tiwary felt that none of the players are standing behind the all-rounder. While the former India batter admitted that Hardik hasn't lived up to the hype of being MI skipper, he also blamed the rest of the squad for not stepping

up during the season.

"Look, a captain is supposed to win the confidence of every single player in the squad; you have to step up and be a true leader. Right? However, observing the



situation, it seems as though no one is truly standing by Hardik. It feels like no one is rallying behind him; the kind of support he ought to be receiving simply isn't materializing."

"Yes, the captain certainly has a specific role to play—and perhaps, he isn't fulfilling that role as effectively as he could be. From my

perspective, he isn't quite living up to the task. But beyond that, the players themselves need to shoulder their share of the responsibility," said Tiwary.

The former KKR man pointed out the examples of Suryakumar Yadav and Tilak Varma, who remained inconsistent throughout the campaign.

"Take Suryakumar, for instance: he hasn't been delivering performances on a consistent, match-to-match basis. Similarly, Tilak had one standout match, but he hasn't been scoring runs since then. If this kind of inconsistency persists among the rest of the squad, how can you possibly expect to achieve positive results? It is, quite frankly, deeply disappointing," said Tiwary.

'REMOVE EL CLASICO NAME'

Chennai's win on Saturday meant that CSK have now won six out of the last seven matches against MI. Chennai also closed the gap to Mumbai in their head-to-head record, which now stands at 24-21, still in favour of MI.

From T20 World Cup heroes to IPL 2026 flops: Will MI rest their Indian core?



New Delhi. (Agency)

If you're Jasprit Bumrah, Hardik Pandya, Tilak Varma or Suryakumar Yadav, you would probably be wondering how things have unraveled so dramatically in a matter of weeks. On March 8, all four were being hailed as heroes as India clinched their third T20 World Cup title — the faces of a triumphant campaign, carrying the weight of a nation with ease.

Fast-forward to May 2, and the mood has shifted sharply. The same names are now being scrutinised as some of the biggest underperformers of IPL 2026. Bumrah, long regarded as a T20 master, has just three wickets from nine matches at an average of 94.67 — numbers that feel almost surreal for a bowler of his calibre.

Tilak has 193 runs this season, including a hundred, but the southpaw has struggled to leave a consistent mark. Suryakumar's poor run continued at Chepauk, where he looked set before falling for 21 — another start that slipped away. The former World No. 1 T20I batter now has 183 runs from nine matches.

Hardik, meanwhile, cut a dejected figure after the game, admitting the season simply hasn't gone their way. His returns — 183 runs and four wickets from eight matches — reflect a campaign that has lacked rhythm and control.

So has the T20 World Cup high turned into a lingering hangover? Has the toll of back-to-back cricket finally caught up with MI's Indian core?

Well, Mumbai coach Mahela Jayawardene isn't ready to go there just yet. Despite the mounting pressure, MI still retains a mathematical chance of qualification — and for him, that keeps the fight alive and the belief in the famed Indian core still intact. "I think it's too early for me to say anything. I think we've still got 5 more games. I mean, anything can happen for us."

IPL 2026: Punjab's bowling in focus as Gujarat look to spice up playoffs race

New Delhi. (Agency)

The IPL playoff race is heating up as the Punjab Kings and the Gujarat Titans battle it out in Ahmedabad. Earlier in the day, in-form Sunrisers Hyderabad look to strengthen their position on the points table against a resurgent Kolkata Knight Riders, who have shown some signs of life in them at the Uppal.

However, the firm focus will be on the evening game, which will be a proper clash of ideologies. When you look at Punjab and Gujarat, the difference is almost like attending a rock band's concert and a ghazal session. One is all about giving you that adrenaline rush with the big hits, and the other is about being simple, soothing, and at times, just old school cricket.

The current PBKS can be considered the



most attacking batting lineup in the history of the IPL, and the numbers back it up. Across four metrics. They lead the all-time charts across the board — boasting a staggering average of 43.1, a strike rate of 186, striking a boundary every 3.6 balls, and clearing the ropes every 7.9 deliveries. But the gulf between their batting and bowling was exposed during the loss to RR when the Royals chased down 223 with

ease. GT, on the other hand, are once again dependent on their top three, who have shown signs of being more aggressive. Their bowling seem to be in top form with the likes of Kagiso Rabada, Arshad Khan, Rashid Khan, and Mohammed Siraj stepping up this season.

A win for GT will spice up the playoff race as they will enter the top four. For Punjab, they need two more wins to reach the magical 16 points mark to secure a playoff spot.

For SRH, another win will be their sixth on the trot and push them ever so close to a playoff spot themselves. For KKR, it is all about survival and another victory will keep them just about alive in the competition for now. With so much at stake, Sunday promises.

Thomas Cup: No Lakshya, no party, as India get blown away by France 0-3 in semi-finals

Horsens. (Agency)

It felt more like a rowdy football match and less of a badminton competition when India took on France in the semi-finals of the Thomas Cup 2026 on Saturday, May 2.

Despite hosts Denmark taking on China on the other court at the Forum Horsens Arena, Indian and French fans dominated the decibel meters, turning the semi-final into an electric, high-voltage clash. The 0-3 scoreline, which saw India getting knocked out of the competition, does not do justice to the way the tie ebbed and flowed through the evening. There were many moments when the French camp fell silent, and many phases when their players looked under pressure and even a little shaken, but they somehow managed to pull off a victory. In doing so, they helped their nation register their first-ever final appearance in the tournament.

The French, led by Toma Junior Popov and



Christo Popov, beat India in straight matches, helping France become only the second European nation, besides Denmark, to reach the finals of the competition. It was a historic moment for the Popov brothers, who carried the weight of the nation on their shoulders and produced exceptional badminton to beat a strong Indian side in straight games.

Without the services of Lakshya Sen, India's calculations were thrown out of the window, as they were forced to play

young Ayush Shetty in the first singles of the match, and then a 33-year-old Kidambi Srikanth in the second singles against world No. 10 Alex Lanier.

Lakshya, who had pulled off a sensational victory against world No. 6 Chou Tien-chen in the quarter-finals, was ruled out of the tie due to a swollen elbow and blisters on his feet. He watched on painfully as India were beaten in

three straight matches in little more than two hours.

One can argue that India were put on the back foot even before the tie began, as the side could not field their strongest players against France's best combination. Because Christo Popov and Toma Junior Popov play both singles and doubles for the French team, the tie was not lined up in the usual manner. Instead of the traditional order, the matches were arranged as follows to ensure adequate rest for the French players:

No longer CSK's Rs. 14.2 Crore gamble, Kartik Sharma spreads his wings in yellow

Kartik Sharma finally proved that he wasn't just a big-money gamble for CSK, repaying the faith of the management by scoring a well-composed fifty to get his side the win in the El Clasico against Mumbai.

New Delhi. (Agency)

When Kartik Sharma reached his fifty against Mumbai Indians on Saturday, May 2, there was a visible release—a weight finally lifted off his shoulders. Bought for Rs. 14.2 crore after being pursued by five teams, expectations were sky-high. But the returns

hadn't matched the hype. Just 58 runs from five matches isn't what you expect from a big-money signing.

Yet, the Chennai Super Kings management didn't waver. They doubled down on their belief in the youngster and handed him a role that demanded both composure and courage. Against Mumbai, he was asked to walk in at No. 4, steady the innings, and guide the chase alongside the captain.

The trust ran deeper — he was picked as the impact player ahead of the more experienced Sarfraz Khan.

What followed wasn't fireworks or a highlight-reel blitz. Instead, it was something far more valuable—a composed, no-frills 54 off 40 balls that quietly did the job. Well, maybe not entirely without flair, considering the Dhoni-esque celebration at the end. But more importantly, it was the



innings that introduced the world to the real Kartik — the player CSK had backed all along. And finally, that faith began to pay off. "Today was the perfect platform on a difficult wicket where they knew that the spinner was going to operate in the middle over phase, and they wanted one Indian player to bat with Ruturaj, and he came, and he took that responsibility really well, and so happy for

him because he was not getting runs, and people are talking so highly about him. Finally, that trust has paid off for CSK," said Piyush Chawla after the game to JioStar.

The praise didn't stop there. CSK head coach Stephen Fleming also lauded the knock, calling it a reward for Kartik's temperament through a challenging start to the season.

"You have the young players, there's two parts to it," said Fleming. "One is how you introduce them. It is a big stage no matter what they've been doing at domestic level. So understanding their mentality is really important and it is a big step-up. They can have all the talent in the world but the temperament is what we're looking for, and his [Kartik's] introduction was tough at the start and then he had a little bit of time out. He worked hard and today was a good reward for that," said Fleming.



Malaika Arora

On Women Being Questioned About Age, Desirability: 'Men Are Rarely Subjected To Scrutiny'

Malaika Arora, who has completed over 30 years in the entertainment industry, recently spoke out about the stark disparity in how ageing is perceived for men and women. She highlighted how women are constantly questioned about growing older and expected to justify how they feel about it, while men are rarely subjected to the same scrutiny.

When asked about navigating perceptions around the evolution of her appearance over time, Malaika Arora said on The Right Angle podcast, "There are days when these thoughts cross my mind, days when I question the obvious, and then there are days when I simply don't care because I know I'm doing what I love. I'm enjoying this phase of my life, I feel like I'm in my prime, and I'm still hungry to do so much more. That's what truly matters to me."

She further added, "What I find interesting is that women are constantly asked these questions about age, beauty, and desirability, while men are rarely subjected to the same scrutiny. A woman is always expected to justify how she looks, 'Do you still feel beautiful? Do you still feel desirable? How does it feel to be this age?' These questions are almost never directed at men."

She mentioned, "For me, it's never been just about physical appearance. Of course, that's what the world sees first, but there's so much more. It's about how you feel mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. It's about what drives you, what motivates you to get out of bed every morning and seize the day."

"I don't wake up thinking, 'I look good today.' That's not how most women function. We wake up wanting to create, contribute, build something meaningful, and leave behind a legacy that our children and families can be proud of. And honestly, the constant commentary around women and age needs to change."

"She looks amazing for her age," "She's so fit at this age", why is age always the headline? I was myself then, I am myself now, and I'll continue to be myself twenty years from now because I feel good, I feel strong, and I feel fulfilled. I think women everywhere need to wear that confidence like a badge of honour, unapologetically. We should celebrate ourselves, our journeys, and everything we continue to become," Malaika concluded.



Tumbbad 2: Has Alia Bhatt Joined Sohum Shah And Nawazuddin Siddiqui's Film? Find Out



Sohum Shah's Tumbbad has long been regarded as one of Bollywood's most underrated horror dramas, earning cult status over the years for its atmospheric storytelling and mythological depth. With Tumbbad 2 now in the works, expectations are naturally soaring among fans. In March, Sohum announced Nawazuddin Siddiqui's addition to the cast, upping the excitement quotient. Now, the latest report suggests that Alia Bhatt has also come on board for a special appearance.

According to Mid-Day, the makers have roped in Alia Bhatt for a cameo role in the folk horror film. Even though her screen time will be short, the report suggests that it is a very pivotal role in the story. A source told the portal, "The makers needed someone who brings gravitas and intrigue in a short screen time. Alia fit that space." It is also being said that Alia will shoot for the film on May 3 before heading to the US for the Met Gala on May 4. The source further added, "The shoot is tightly planned with an elaborate set constructed in Madh Island. Alia will shoot for two days in all. Since she is making an appearance at the Met Gala on May 4, the makers have brought a double for some patch scenes." However, the makers are yet to officially announce her addition.

Director Adesh Prasad's sequel is set to delve deeper into the dark, cursed mythology surrounding the deity Hastar, expanding on the eerie lore established in the first film. It will explore the dangerous consequences of awakening forces that were never meant to be worshipped, promising a more intense and unsettling narrative that builds on the original's haunting premise.

Meanwhile, Alia is currently busy shooting for Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Love & War with Ranbir Kapoor and Vicky Kaushal. It is set to hit theatres in January 2027. On the other hand, Tumbbad 2 is set to arrive on December 3, 2027.

Karan Johar Reviews Meryl Streep, Anne Hathaway's The Devil Wears Prada 2: 'This Sequel Speaks Of Our Times'



Filmmaker Karan Johar has often spoken about his admiration for The Devil Wears Prada, a film he has re-watched countless times over the years. So when The Devil Wears Prada 2 finally arrived nearly two decades later, the excitement was inevitable! The film, starring Meryl Streep, Anne Hathaway and Emily Blunt, was released in theatres on May 1, and Karan Johar has now shared his thoughts about the film, calling it deeply rooted in today's times.

Karan Johar Reviews The Devil Wears Prada 2
Karan Johar took to his Instagram to share his review of The Devil Wears Prada 2, the much-anticipated follow-up to the iconic original starring Meryl Streep and Anne Hathaway. "Nostalgia is powerful.... It keeps the present hopeful ... my memory of watching #devilwearsprada is embedded in my heart... I walked out more in love with Meryl Streep (if that was possible) and understanding the pursuits of Miranda Priestly .. even though she was a tough leader, even though she was aesthetically judgemental and raising eye brow elitist to a fault.... But I understood her for her chase to attain excellence and perfection.... I wondered how I would feel revisiting Andy, Nigel, Emily and Miranda," he wrote.

Karan Johar wrote that the sequel cleverly blends humour with a sharp commentary on the current media landscape. "Right at the top let me not compare the two films as the first has a massive heads up of cumulative nostalgia.... This sequel speaks of our times, the (sadly) emerging irrelevance of serious journalism ...the digital overdrive Mania that is eating into the beauty of print... the powerlessness of the artistically powerful forces at the hands of corporations... the need for consolidations over ideations... all that in a Comedy? Yes... that's the solid strength of Part 2 it makes you think of the travesty of our times," he added. KJo wrote that Meryl Streep's character Miranda Priestly is 'more vulnerable', while Anne Hathaway's character Andy Sachs is 'more hopeful' this time around. "Nigel is more amiable and Emily is just wonderful! I ate my popcorn and sat back on my red hot seat and went back to my 33-year-old self who believed that visions can't be replaced by vendors!!! That's all," he wrote.

Twinkle Khanna

Offers Glimpse Of Her Favourite Spot At Home: 'I'd Give Up My Bedroom, But Never My...'

Author, columnist and former actress Twinkle Khanna on Friday afternoon gave her fans a sneak peek into her most cherished spot at home, that is her balcony. The actress referred to it as a peaceful space, where she 'works, unwinds, listens to music, spends time with family and

In one of the other clips, Twinkle is seen sitting thoughtfully in a denim shirt paired with loose pants.

In another frame, the actress is seen working on her laptop while seated in the same hanging lounge setup.

She captioned the post as, "This is my favourite place to work, unwind, watch my dog watch the world, listen to music, chat with my family, and most importantly, daydream. I'd give up my bedroom, but never my balcony. What's your favourite spot in the house?"

Talking about Twinkle Khanna's career, the actress who made her Bollywood debut with Barsaat in 1997 was loved for her character portrayal as Komal.

Followed by Barsaat, she was seen in movies like Jab Pyaar Kisi Se Hota Hai, Baadshah and other movies. The actress then went on to also be a part of the movie Mela that flopped at the box office. Twinkle met Akshay on the sets of International Khiladi where they reportedly fell in love and got married soon after. The actress stepped away from acting and decided to focus on her family life alongside being an author and also an interior designer.



most importantly, daydreams.' Twinkle shared a soothing video montage on her social media account and offered glimpses of her cozy balcony space at home. The clip shows Twinkle seated comfortably on a beautifully designed hanging daybed placed in the balcony, surrounded by cushions, indoor plants. Twinkle appears to overlook a breathtaking sea-facing view from the daybed.



NEWS BOX

Shakira eyes biggest career show with free Copacabana concert in Rio

World. (Agency)

Colombian superstar Shakira will give a free concert on Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro on Saturday night in an event that Rio officials say will draw approximately 2 million people to one of the world's most iconic waterfronts. The performance follows similar shows by Madonna in 2024 and Lady Gaga last year, also attended by huge crowds that danced on the sprawling sands. It is part of Shakira's "Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran" ("Women No Longer Cry") world tour, named after her 2024 album. The Latina pop star said in an interview with Brazil's TV Globo that she expects the Copacabana concert to be the biggest of her career.

"For me it's a dream. I always dreamed of singing on this beach, because I think it's a magical place," she said in Portuguese, adding that she learned the language before English. Brazil was one of the first countries where Shakira became successful back in the 1990s, thanks to her charisma and the connection she created with the Brazilian public, according to Felipe Maia, an ethnomusicologist who is pursuing a doctoral degree on popular music and digital technologies at Paris Nanterre University.

Her historical success in Brazil "has a lot to do with the fact that she comes from Colombia, a country whose culture has many similarities with Brazil," Maia said, adding that Saturday's performance "crowns the relationship she has had with Brazil for a very long time." By Saturday morning, crowds had started piling onto the beach to nab a good spot for the performance. Street vendors were selling food and drinks, but also toilet paper, deodorant and even bags of sand on which to stand to get a better view of the stage set up opposite Copacabana Palace. DJs will start performing on the beach in the late afternoon. Shakira's set is scheduled for 9:45 p.m. local time and is expected to last around two hours. After the performance, another DJ will take to the stage — a new addition to keep the crowds entertained and help with an orderly exit, according to Rio officials.

'Rescue fares': US air carriers step up with after Spirit Airlines winds down

Washington. (Agency)

US air carriers on Saturday mobilized to help passengers and crew members stranded by the overnight shutdown of Spirit Airlines, after the low-cost carrier's last-minute talks with creditors and the White House collapsed.

Spirit, known for its bright yellow planes, succumbed to crushing fuel prices and announced in the early hours that it was "winding down its global operations, effective immediately," with all flights canceled and customer service no longer available.

Other carriers -- including American, Delta, United and JetBlue -- moved quickly to scoop up Spirit's customers, offering what some dubbed "rescue fares" to those waking up with cancelled itineraries. "In just over 12 hours, United has helped Spirit customers book 14,000 tickets to get to where they need to be," United said in a statement on Saturday.

Some airlines said they would increase the number of flights or schedule larger planes in and out of airports where Spirit had a significant presence. Carriers also sought to support marooned Spirit staff -- and hire them.

Spirit has been in and out of bankruptcy since 2024, and the White House was recently considering a bailout.

'Structural headwinds': 2026 midterm race enters last six months with US Congress at stake

Washington. (Agency)

The battle for control of the US Congress entered its final six months on Sunday, with midterm elections in November that could reshape President Donald Trump's second term and redefine the balance of power in Washington. As ever, the midterms will be a referendum on the president, with Democrats hoping to capitalize on economic discontent and Trump's sliding approval ratings to retake the House of Representatives and Senate -- while Republicans fight to defy political headwinds.

At stake is not just legislative control but the trajectory of Trump's agenda, with a Democratic-run Congress able to launch investigations, block nominees and generally complicate the remainder of his presidency.

Early indicators point to a challenging environment for Republicans, with Trump's approval rating around 40 percent and economic dissatisfaction -- particularly inflation and Iran war-related costs -- eroding confidence.

Polling shows Democrats with a narrow edge on the generic ballot, while some surveys suggest voters now trust them more on the economy.

A Republican-aligned group, AFP Action, warned the party's Senate majority was "at risk," citing "structural headwinds" and disengaged voters.

In midterm elections, Americans vote to fill all 435 House seats, about one-third of the 100-member Senate and most governorships. Democrats need to flip three House seats and four in the Senate to take control. "The Senate is on the table here," Molly Murphy, of pollster Impact Research, told cable network MS NOW, pointing to Trump's waning popularity and strong Democratic turnout in recent elections.

Trump's pirates remark direct admission of criminality: Iran demands UN action

Iran accused Donald Trump of admitting criminality after he said the US Navy acted like pirates against Iranian vessels. Tehran has urged the UN and its member states to reject any normalisation of such conduct under international law.

World. (Agency)

Iran has accused US President Donald Trump of making a "direct admission of criminality" after he likened the US Navy's actions against Iranian vessels to piracy, and called on the United Nations to intervene. Tehran's foreign ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei said Trump's remarks amounted to an open

acknowledgement of unlawful conduct at sea. "The President of the United States has openly described the unlawful seizure of Iranian vessels as 'piracy,' brazenly boasting that 'we act like pirates,'" Baqaei said in a statement. "This was no verbal slip. It was a direct and damning admission of the criminal nature of their actions against international maritime navigation."

He urged the international community, UN member states and the UN Secretary-General to reject what he described as attempts to normalise violations of international law.

TRUMP'S 'PIRATES' REMARK

The response followed Trump's comments on Friday, when he described US naval operations enforcing a blockade on Iran as being "like pirates."

"We took over the ship, we took over the cargo, we took over the oil. It's a very profitable business," Trump said. "We're



like pirates. We're sort of like pirates, but we are not playing games."

US forces have in recent days seized vessels linked to Iran, including tankers and container ships, as part of Washington's broader pressure campaign during the ongoing conflict involving Iran and Israel.

ESCALATING MARITIME TENSIONS

The confrontation at sea has intensified alongside the wider conflict, with Iran restricting most shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, a key global energy route, while the US has imposed its own blockade

on Iranian ports.

The disruption has affected a critical corridor that handles roughly a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments, contributing to volatility in energy markets.

WAR CONTEXT AND GLOBAL REACTION

The current phase of the conflict began on February 28, when US and Israeli forces launched strikes on Iran, prompting retaliatory attacks by Tehran on Israel and Gulf states hosting US bases.

The fighting has resulted in large-scale casualties and displacement, with hostilities also spilling over into Lebanon.

Trump's remarks have drawn criticism from several quarters, adding to earlier controversy over his statements on the war, including threats to target Iranian infrastructure.

Some US experts have also raised concerns over the legality of certain actions during the conflict.

Ghana becomes latest African nation to reject US health deal, cites data concerns

Accra. (Agency)

Ghana has rejected a proposed health deal with the United States over concerns about data privacy and is now seeking a new agreement, an official said Friday. It was the latest African country to walk away from the deal over similar concerns. The deal included provisions that would have allowed US entities access to Ghana's sensitive health data without necessary safeguards, according to Arnold Kavaarpuo, executive director of Ghana's Data Protection Commission.

The scope of the data access that was requested under the deal "went far beyond what would typically be required," Kavaarpuo told The Associated Press.

A US State Department spokesperson said the department does not disclose details of bilateral negotiations. "We

continue to look for ways to strengthen the bilateral partnership between our two countries," the spokesperson added, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the matter.



Under the Trump administration's "America First" approach to global health funding, the US has struck such health deals with more than 30 countries, most of them in Africa. The new approach that kicked off late last year replaces previous health agreements under the now-dismantled

United States Agency for International Development.

The deals offer hundreds of millions of dollars in US funding to some of the African countries worst hit by the US aid cuts to support their public health systems and help fight disease outbreaks.

The agreements, however, have raised questions about data privacy concerns. In February, authorities in Zimbabwe said they rejected the proposed deal over issues around health data, fairness and sovereignty. Zambia is also reported to have pushed back on a section of its deal, although no decision has been made there. Activists in

Africa say the agreements often lack adequate safeguards for the use of the data and are sometimes limiting in who is being helped -- such as in Nigeria, where the US committed to supporting mainly Christian faith-based healthcare providers.

White House dinner shooting suspect seeks end to jail suicide watch

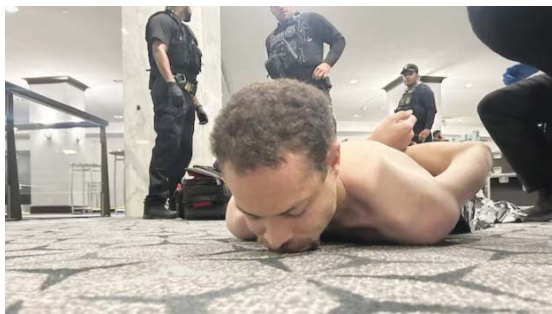
World. (Agency)

Attorneys for a man accused of attempting to assassinate President Donald Trump at a black-tie press gala last weekend asked a judge on Saturday to remove him from suicide watch at a Washington jail. The suspect, Cole Tomas Allen, allegedly forced his way through a security checkpoint and fired a shotgun outside the White House Correspondents' Dinner on April 25.

After being booked on April 27, Allen was placed in a "safe cell," described in a court filing as a padded room under 24-hour lockdown, where he was required to

wear a restrictive vest similar to a straitjacket.

He was later moved to suicide



precautions, which still barred him from making phone calls, receiving visitors other than his legal team, or leaving his cell except under escort for

legal meetings or showers.

According to the filing, a nurse recommended ending those measures on Friday, but they remained in place during a lawyer's visit that same day.

His attorneys argue the restrictions are punitive and limit access to basic resources, including a jail tablet that would allow him to communicate with family members.

Allen faces charges of attempted assassination, discharging a firearm during a violent crime, and illegally transporting weapons and ammunition across state lines. He has not yet entered a plea.

Iran Nobel laureate Narges Mohammadi hospitalised after fainting twice, cardiac crisis



World. (Agency)

Iran's imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi has been urgently transferred from prison to a hospital in northwestern Iran after a "catastrophic deterioration" of her health, her foundation said Friday.

The Narges Mohammadi Foundation said the Nobel Prize laureate had two episodes of complete loss of consciousness and a severe cardiac crisis.

Earlier Friday, Mohammadi had fainted twice in prison in Zanjan in northwestern Iran, according to the foundation. She was believed to have suffered a heart attack in late March, according to her lawyers who visited her a few days after the incident. At the time, she appeared pale, underweight and needed a nurse to help her walk.

The hospital transfer comes "after 140 days of systematic medical neglect," since her arrest on Dec. 12, the foundation said. "This transfer was done as an unavoidable necessity after prison doctors determined her condition could not be managed on-site, despite standing medical recommendations that she be treated by her specialized team in Tehran," the foundation said.

Help may be little too late, family says Mohammadi's family had advocated for her transfer to adequate medical facilities for weeks.

The foundation, quoting her family, said her transfer Friday to a hospital in Zanjan was "a desperate, 'last-minute' action that may be too late to address her critical needs." Mohammadi's brother Hamidreza Mohammadi, who lives in Oslo, Norway, said in an audio message shared with The Associated Press by the foundation that her family is "fighting for her life."

"My family in Iran is doing everything they can. But the prosecutors in Zanjan are blocking everything," he said. On March 24, Narges Mohammadi's fellow inmates found her unconscious, her lawyers said she told them during the visit a few days later. Upon later examination at the prison's clinic, a doctor told her that she probably had had a heart attack.

Dutch Princesses targeted in scary murder plot, suspect found with axes, Nazi symbol

This is not the first time the safety of

Amalia — the future Queen of the Netherlands — has been under threat.

She has previously been the target of multiple serious threats, including an alleged gang plot by drug cartels to kidnap her along with then Dutch Prime Minister

Mark Rutte, who currently serves as Secretary-General of Nato.

World. (Agency)

Authorities in the Netherlands foiled an attack targeting two members of the Dutch royal family — Princess Catharina-Amalia, 22, and her younger sister, Princess Alexia, 20 — who were allegedly targeted by a 33-year-old man suspected of far-right extremist views and accused of plotting a

sinister Nazi-inspired attack to kill the future Queen and her sister. The suspect, who is due to appear in court on Monday, was arrested in The Hague in February. The court date is listed in an official scheduling order published by The Hague Public Prosecutor's Office. Authorities said he was found with two axes engraved with the words "Alexia," "Mossad," and "Sieg Heil," a Nazi-era salute. He was also carrying a handwritten note bearing the names "Amalia," "Alexia," and the word "bloodbath."

AUTHORITIES HAVE NOT REVEALED MOTIVE

The Hague Public Prosecutor's Office did not disclose further details, including the suspect's identity, citing Dutch privacy laws. Authorities have also not revealed a motive behind the alleged plot or the disturbing writings. Details of the February arrest emerged as the royal family — including Amalia and Alexia — marked King's Day with public

appearances in the heavily secured city of Dordrecht on April 27.

Amalia, the daughter of King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima, is the heir to the Dutch throne, while Alexia is second in line.



FUTURE DUTCH QUEEN HAS BEEN TARGET OF MULTIPLE THREATS

This is not the first time the safety of Amalia — the future Queen of the Netherlands — has been under threat. She has previously been the target of multiple serious threats, including an alleged gang plot by drug

cartels to kidnap her along with then Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, who currently serves as Secretary-General of Nato.

In 2020, she was forced to go into hiding after a man sent messages threatening her with rape and violence. In 2022, authorities intercepted communications between gang members targeting Amalia and Rutte. That same year, she was compelled to leave her student accommodation in Amsterdam over security concerns, and Queen Maxima moved her to the heavily guarded royal palace in The Hague. In 2024, Amalia secretly relocated to Madrid to complete her studies and experience greater personal freedom due to ongoing security concerns. Queen Maxima described the impact on her daughter, saying, "She can't live in Amsterdam and she can't really go outside the palace." "It has enormous consequences for her life," she added, noting that her daughter could no longer live in Amsterdam or move freely outside.