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"From Ruin To Renewal": PM Modi On Somnath Temple's 75th Anniversary

PM Modi marks 75 years of Somnath Temple restoration highlighting unity and civilisational spirit.

Tamil Nadu.(Agency)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday that every part of Bharat is sacred, bound together by a sense of oneness that transcends geography, and in a world often marked by divisions, this spirit of unity is more relevant than ever. PM Modi, in a signed article marking 75 years since the restored Somnath Temple was reopened to devotees, said the struggles and sacrifices of those who laid down their lives to protect the temple in Gujarat and those who rebuilt it time and again will never be forgotten. He said in a world often marked by divisions, this spirit of unity is more relevant than

ever and Somnath will continue to stand tall in all its glory because the sense of unity and shared civilisational consciousness lives on in the hearts of every Indian.

"Countless individuals from different corners of India contributed to restoring its glory. They saw every part of Bharat as sacred, bound together by a sense of oneness that transcended geography. In a world often marked by divisions, this spirit



of unity is more relevant than ever," he said. He said as a tribute to this, remembering the extraordinary courage of a thousand years, there will be special pujas at Somnath for the next thousand days. It is gladdening to see several

people donating for these pujas as well, he said. "I urge my fellow Indians to travel to Somnath in this special time. When you stand on the shores of Somnath, let its ancient echoes speak to you. You will not only be overwhelmed by devotion but will also feel the strong pulse of a civilisational spirit that refuses to fade, that is unbroken and unyielding," he said.

PM Modi said the devotees will experience Bharat's unconquerable spirit and understand why, despite every effort, the Indian culture remained undefeated and the people will have the opportunity to behold the vision of eternal triumph, which will surely be unforgettable. The prime minister said that at the start of 2026, he had gone to Somnath for the Somnath Swabhiman Parv, marking a thousand years since the first attack on the Somnath Temple. Now, he said, he will be back in Somnath on May 11 to mark 75 years since the inauguration of the restored temple by the then President of India, Rajendra Prasad. He said that in less than half a year, it is a privilege to be attending two important milestones relating to Somnath and its journey from ruin to renewal or what everyone describes as from Vidhvans to Srijan.

Vande Mataram row: Owaisi opposes Cabinet move on legal protection

Asaduddin Owaisi has objected to the Union Cabinet's move to give Vande Mataram the same statutory protection as Jana Gana Mana. He cited the Constitution, while the BJP said the objection reflected resistance to cultural integration.



Hyderabad.(Agency)

AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi on Thursday objected to the Union Cabinet's decision to grant 'Vande Mataram' the same statutory protection as the national anthem 'Jana Gana Mana', saying the song cannot be treated on par with the anthem, as it is an ode to a goddess. The nation does not run in the name of a god or goddess and it does not belong to one god or goddess, he said.

In a post on X, he said, "Jana Gana Mana celebrates India and its people, not a particular religion. Religion nation. The man who wrote Vande Mataram was sympathetic to the British Raj and despised Muslims. Netaji Bose, Gandhi, Nehru, and Tagore all rejected it."

Referring to the Constitution of India, he said the Preamble begins with "We, the People" - not "Bharat Maa". It promises "liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship". The very first provision of the Constitution, Article 1, describes "India, that is Bharat" as a Union of States, he said. In the Constituent Assembly, some members wanted the Preamble to begin in the name of a goddess and they specifically invoked Vande Mataram. Others wanted it to begin "In the name of God" and to replace "its citizens" with "her citizens". However, all these amendments were defeated, Owaisi said. "India, that is Bharat, is its people. The nation is not a goddess; it does not run in the name of a god or goddess, and it does not belong to one god or goddess," he said.

Meanwhile, Telangana BJP president N Ramchander Rao took exception to Owaisi's objections to the government's decision and said the AIMIM leadership views any form of cultural integration as a threat to religious exclusivism. It is not just limited to Owaisi, even Jinnah followed the same trajectory, he said.

Jinnah had not objected to Vande Mataram during the early phase of his political career as a Congress member and his opposition emerged only after he left the Congress, he said. "What does this tell us? Once politics becomes dependent on religious exclusivism, every civilisational symbol is portrayed as a threat," Rao said in a post on X. Suggesting a pattern, the BJP leader said the AIMIM opposes not just Vande Mataram, but also the Uniform Civil Code, the abolition of Triple Talaq and every attempt at creating a common framework.

Mamata Banerjee Stays Defiant, Assembly Dissolved: What Are Her Options Now?

As Mamata Banerjee continues to claim wrong doing in Assembly Elections, it has been anticipated the legal battle over Bengal might escalate to courts.

New Delhi.(Agency)

After outgoing Chief Minister of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee refused to resign from her post, Governor RN Ravi has officially dissolved the state's legislative assembly. The term of the assembly was due to expire at 12 am on Thursday. Last evening, the Raj Bhavan made public a letter "for general information". The single-line communication read: "In exercise of the power conferred on me by sub-clause (b) of Clause (2) of Article 174 of the Constitution of India, I hereby dissolve the Legislative Assembly of West Bengal with effect from 07th of May 2026". As Banerjee continues to claim wrong doing in Assembly



Elections, it has been anticipated the legal battle over Bengal might escalate to courts.

What Constitution Says

Swapnil Tripathi, Lead at Charkha, the Constitutional Law Centre, at the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy told NDTV that the constitutional position is relatively clear. Once the Assembly has been dissolved under Article 174(2)(b), its tenure comes to an end, and with it, the institutional basis of the Council of Ministers. "In such a situation, the outgoing Chief Minister may, at best, continue in a caretaker capacity-ideally at the Governor's request-until a new government is sworn in. However, this is a matter of constitutional convention rather than an enforceable rule, and the Governor retains a degree of discretion in managing this transitional phase," Tripathi explained.

ED Raid Shock: Bags Full of Cash Thrown From 9th Floor, Currency Notes Rain From Sky

Pawan Makan (Group Editor)

Kolkata/New Delhi: In a dramatic scene straight out of a crime thriller, officials from the Enforcement Directorate (ED) witnessed currency notes raining from the sky during a high-profile raid at a luxury residential complex today. As the agency began its search operation, bags allegedly stuffed with cash were thrown from the 9th floor of the building, sending ₹500 notes flying across the area. What Happened? According to sources, the ED team had arrived to conduct raids in connection with an alleged corruption and money laundering case linked to a prominent businessman. The moment officials knocked on the door, panic reportedly broke out inside the apartment. In an apparent attempt to destroy evidence and hide illegal cash, those inside allegedly hurled bags full of currency notes out of the window. Cash Shower in the Air: As the bags hit the ground and burst open, hundreds of ₹500 notes scattered in the air, attracting huge crowds outside the building. Crores Suspected: Preliminary estimates



suggest the bags contained crores of rupees in cash, allegedly being disposed of in a desperate bid to evade seizure. Political Storm Erupts: The sensational raid has now triggered a major political controversy, with opposition leaders launching sharp attacks on the ruling establishment. "This is not just one businessman's money. This is black money generated through corruption that reaches the highest levels of power. The businessman is said to be very close to the Chief Minister's OSD. The investigation must now reach pow-

erful officials and political corridors as well."—Opposition Leader ED sources claim that apart from huge amounts of cash, several incriminating documents and digital devices have also been seized during the operation. Investigators are now reportedly examining the alleged links between the businessman and the influential OSD. Questions are also being raised over whether the recovered cash is tied to a larger scam or part of unaccounted election funds ahead of upcoming polls. Further investigation is underway.

Tamil Nadu's New Political Equation: Congress & Left Back Vijay

Chennai: Tamil Nadu's political landscape appears to be heading toward a major realignment as actor-turned-politician Vijay and his party TVK move closer to power with the backing of Congress and Left parties. The development has sparked intense political debate, particularly over the future of Congress' relationship with M. K. Stalin-led DMK. Coalition Politics Under Spotlight: A section of the media has portrayed the Congress move as a "betrayal" of DMK. However, political observers argue that the reality is far more nuanced and strategic. According to analysts, the current situation is not a case of Congress abruptly abandoning DMK, but rather a carefully calibrated political decision shaped by evolving electoral realities. Politics of Sacrifice: During the elections, Vijay's party TVK had reportedly offered Congress as many as 75 seats. However, Congress chose to maintain alliance discipline and contested only 28 seats alongside DMK. Analysts say this reflected Congress' willingness to prioritize coalition unity over immediate political gains. Preventing an NDA Shift: Political circles believe Congress' primary objective is to prevent Vijay and TVK from moving closer to the NDA, led by the BJP.



Centre authorises J&K LG to exercise telecom powers during emergencies, public safety situations

SRINAGAR.(Agency)

The Centre has empowered the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir to exercise telecom-related powers in the interest of public safety and during emergencies in the Union Territory. According to a gazette notification issued by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, the President in pursuance of clause (1) of Article 239 of Constitution, directed the Lt Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, shall until further orders exercise the powers and discharge the functions of the State government under sub section (2) of Section 20 of the Telecommunication Act, 2023 (44 of 2023) within the Union Territory. The LG will exercise these powers under the control of the President of India and shall remain valid till further orders. The notification has defined the authority to exercise telecom-related powers in the Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory and authorises the LG to exercise telecom-related powers on behalf of the government in J&K. Earlier, when J&K was a state, such powers used to vest with the state government. LG Manoj Sinha, by using the Telecom powers, can order monitoring of telecom communication, temporarily block transmission when required by law, allow interception of calls and messages during any public emergency or in the interest of

News box

Mother, daughter crossing tracks at Garhi Harsaru railway station in Gurgaon crushed by train

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A 48-year-old woman and her mother died after being hit by a train while crossing the railway tracks at Garhi Harsaru railway station on Thursday morning.

They were identified as Mamta Devi, a resident of Basharia village in Farukhnagar, and her mother, Madhubala (82), a resident of Charkhi Dadr.

According to Govt Railway Police (GRP), the incident took place around 5am on Thursday when the family reached the station to board a train for Jaipur. Madhubala had come to visit her daughter along with her son, Basant, and daughter Babli.

Police said Mamta and her husband, Vinod, had accompanied them to the station. While crossing the tracks to buy tickets, Vinod, Basant and Babli moved



ahead, while Mamta and Madhubala were behind them. During this time, the Tanakpur Express arrived on the Delhi-Rewari track, prompting the two women to stop midway. Simultaneously, the Bikaner Express approached on the Rewari-Delhi track and hit them before they could move away. Madhubala fell on the tracks and Mamta was also struck while trying to help her. GRP personnel reached the spot after receiving information. The bodies were handed over to the family after autopsy.

'You know what you did on birthday': Harassed in relationship, Class 12 student dies by suicide in Gurgaon

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Harassed in a suspected relationship, a 17-year-old Class 12 student took the extreme step on Wednesday at her house in Khoh village. The victim left a two-page suicide note in which she expressed her fondness for a youth and clarified that she never thought ill of him and had genuine feelings, which he doubted. In her note, she apologised 17 times, stating that she could not understand what to do when she was continuously questioned and looked down upon by the youth she had known for a year, as well as by others.

She wrote that she felt misunderstood and did not want others to disrespect her. She also narrated an incident in which she was allegedly harassed and abused at her tuition class by a friend. Addressing the suicide note to the youth, she said, "You know what you did or said to me on my birthday (unclear whose birthday), which made me feel worse." One was at home at the time of the incident. When the family returned, they found the student's body hanging in her room. The family informed the police, who arrived at the scene and conducted an investigation. The suicide note was recovered from her belongings. Police have initiated an investigation keeping all facts in consideration. They also contacted the boy mentioned in the suicide note and have retrieved his chats with friends regarding the victim. The deceased's family originally hails from Rohtas district in Bihar. Her father runs a ration shop, and her mother is a teacher at a private school. She is also survived by an elder brother. According to the father, no one was at home. When he returned around 1:30 pm for lunch, he found his daughter hanging in her room.

Woman cab driver assaulted in broad daylight near Ambience Mall on Delhi-Jaipur Expressway

Noida.(Agency)

A woman cab driver was allegedly stopped and assaulted in broad daylight on the Delhi-Jaipur Expressway near Ambience Mall, following which the DLF Phase-3 police station registered a case and launched an investigation. Police said the complainant, Rajni, a resident of Badarpur in Delhi, works as a cab driver in the Delhi-NCR region. In her complaint, she stated that the incident took place on Tuesday evening while she was travelling from Delhi towards Gurgaon. According to the complaint, an unidentified motorcyclist suddenly



brought his bike in front of her cab near Ambience Mall, forcing her to apply emergency brakes and stop the vehicle. Rajni alleged that soon after she stopped the cab, the accused began misbehaving with her. When she objected, the man assaulted her and later fled the spot. The victim alerted the police immediately after the incident, following which an investigation was initiated. Police said CCTV footage from cameras installed near the spot is being examined to identify the motorcycle registration number and trace the accused.

MCG sanitation workers extend strike till May 11, block garbage collection

Gurgaon.(Agency)

MCG sanitation workers across the city have extended their strike till May 11, alleging that the Haryana govt has failed to address their demands so far.

The sanitation workers continued their protest at the old MCG office on Thursday. Members of the Haryana Sarv Karamchhari Sangh also prevented sweeping and waste collection exercises in Sadar Bazar, Madanpuri and Sector 17, which were being carried out by outsourced workers from contractual agencies. "Our protest is for their demands too. We are demanding rights for all sanitation workers and thus asking outsourced contractual workers to not participate in their regular duties of sweeping and waste collection," said Basant Kumar, president of the Gurgaon unit of the union. Union representatives said they have been visiting locations where MCG is getting waste cleared from roadsides and vacant plots through outsourced staff. They said they are



informing these workers of the aim of the agitation and asking them to show solidarity. "These sanitation workers outsourced through private firms are also extending their support to us," Kumar added. The union further stated that it is forming round-the-clock monitoring teams to keep watch and prevent

sanitation work from being carried out during the protest.

The strike, which began on May 1, has led to garbage piling up in different areas. Several residents said if the protest continues, there might be a 'sanitation crisis' in the city. "Such strikes have become far too frequent, yet the MCG

appears to be taking the issue casually. Roads are littered with garbage, and nobody seems bothered about the worsening civic conditions," said Chaitali Mandhotra, a resident of Ardee City. Ward 4 councillor Pardeep Padam said the condition of sanitation was poor before the strike but it has become even worse now. "The condition was already bad since a limited number of sanitation workers were turning up. The authorities concerned should have a dialogue with the union so that they end their strike in Gurgaon," he said. Among their 19-point charter, the protesters' key demand is the regularisation of contractual sanitation employees. Union leaders said the Haryana govt should hold talks with the employee unions and resolve their demands. Three rounds of talks with MCG have failed after the workers said they only got assurances but saw no implementation on the ground.

Dry spell raises night temp in Gurgaon, IMD sees no change soon

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Clear skies over the past 24 hours have raised the minimum temperature across the city by 3-4 degrees Celsius after a brief spell of relatively cooler weather earlier this week. The city's minimum temperature on Thursday was recorded at 24 degrees Celsius, up from 20 degrees Celsius a day earlier. It remained close to normal for this time of the year. At the Gurgaon KVK station, the minimum temperature increased from 19.3 degrees Celsius to 23.8 degrees Celsius within 24 hours. At NorthCap University station, the minimum temperature climbed to 24.4 degrees Celsius from the previous day's 20.8 degrees Celsius. The rise in night temperatures has been attributed to clear and dry weather conditions prevailing in the region. According to India Meteorological Department, no immediate relief is likely over the next three days. The daytime temperatures, on the other hand, fell by nearly 1-3 degrees

Celsius over the past 24 hours owing to breezy conditions and partly cloudy skies that prevailed during the day. The city recorded the maximum temperature at 34



degrees Celsius — seven notches below the season's normal, down from 35 degrees Celsius a day earlier. At the Gurgaon KVK station, the daytime temperature was logged at 31.6 degrees Celsius, down from 34.5 degrees Celsius on Wednesday. Similarly, it dropped by

over three degrees to 33.5 degrees Celsius at the NorthCap University station. "The maximum temperature is expected to rise by 4-6 degrees Celsius in the coming days," an IMD official said. However, the weather department has forecast a possible change from May 11 under the influence of a western disturbance, which is likely to affect the Western Himalayan region from May 10 onwards. IMD has predicted the possibility of thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds with speeds reaching 40-50 kmph on May 11 in parts of Haryana, including Gurgaon. According to IMD, the maximum temperatures are likely to be in the range of 42-44 degrees Celsius over the extreme southwestern and southeastern parts of Haryana during the next week, while the minimum temperatures are likely to be in the range of 26-28 degrees Celsius in the southern parts of the state.

Forum asks insurer to pay man Rs 15,000 mediclaim

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The district consumer commission has asked Star Health Insurance to pay a Dankaur resident a medical insurance claim of Rs 14,716, with interest calculated at 6% per annum from the date of filing the complaint in April 2023 until payment is made. On May 2, commission president Anil Kumar Pundir and member Anju Sharma ordered the insurance company to pay an additional Rs 2,000 for mental agony and litigation costs within 30 days of the judgment. Bijendra Singh sought relief from the commission after his application to the insurance company for settling the claim went unanswered. Singh told the commission that he bought a Rs 5 lakh mediclaim policy with a yearlong validity

on Oct 23, 2021. In Sept next year, he was admitted to Sukhmal Dalchand Numberdar Hospital with high fever. He said he informed the insurance company about this and the company issued a claim



number. He was treated at the hospital for three days. When he contacted the insurance company, they assured him that the expenses would be taken care of once

he submitted the bills and diagnostic reports. During discharge, he settled the hospital bill. After he submitted the documents, Singh alleged the insurance company stopped responding to him. "Following repeated attempts, the insurance company finally sent me a message stating that the claim failed. But when I tried contacting them to know the reason for rejection, they did not provide a satisfactory response. Such an action constitutes deficiency in service," Singh told the commission. Notices were sent to the insurance company, but there was no response. The commission then decided to proceed with the matter on Feb 27, 2025, in its absence. It noted, "The insurance company has committed a service deficiency by rejecting the claim, although Singh paid the entire premium on time. Therefore, Singh's complaint is admissible."

YEIDA looks for developer for its centre office near Noida airport

Noida.(Agency)

Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority has invited developers to build its central office at F4 in Sector 18 off Yamuna Expressway. It will come up around 10 km from Noida International Airport. The project is to be completed in two and a half years at an estimated cost of Rs 257 crore.

The move is significant as the region is seeing rapid expansion through projects such as the new airport, industrial parks, logistics hubs, residential sectors and data centres. The Authority has issued a tender to appoint an EPC (engineering, procurement and construction) contractor who will handle the entire project, from design to completion. The building will have two basements, one lower ground floor, a ground floor and five upper floors. It will have solar roofing, renewable energy sources, motion-sensing controls and advanced technology systems. The proposed steel-and-glass structure is expected to speed up construction and improve safety and quality standards. At present, the Authority operates from Sector Omega I in the Greater Noida Authority area. Officials said YEIDA requires a larger and more modern administrative

headquarters to efficiently manage planning, approvals and public services in the fast-developing region.

"There are a lot of industrial and residential activities in the Authority's area. We have decided to develop our main office near the airport to ensure that people's issues are addressed," said the Authority CEO, RK Singh. The project scope includes civil construction, plumbing, drainage, fire-fighting systems, internal and external electrification works, lifts and elevators, CCTV surveillance, access control systems, solar power infrastructure, landscaping and horticulture works, signage, rainwater harvesting and sewage treatment



facilities. The Authority is planning to equip this fully integrated office campus with modern building management

systems, audiovisual facilities, public address systems, energy infrastructure and electrical substations.

AC blast sparks fire in Greater Noida house

Noida.(Agency)

A fire broke out on the first floor of a house in Greater Noida's Beta 2 after an air-conditioner exploded on Wednesday night. Fire officials said there were no injuries or casualties and the blaze was brought under control within 30 minutes. According to a senior fire

officer at Knowledge Park, the incident occurred at a three-storey house in the Beta 2 area. Residents alerted the fire department around 10.30pm about the blaze at a three-storey house in Knowledge Park, Beta 2. Two fire engines were dispatched to the spot from the Knowledge Park fire station. When firefighters reached the spot, they noted

that the flames had spread quickly throughout the first floor of the building due to the flammable mattress and bed in the room with the AC unit. The residents of the building had already evacuated when firefighters arrived. Firefighters managed to prevent the fire from spreading to other floors and the blaze was controlled within 30 minutes.

UP man arrested for hiding daughter's death, her skeletal remains for 4 months

The case surfaced on April 10 after relatives found Uday Bhanu at a tea stall. After initially claiming Priyanka was hospitalised, he later admitted her body remained inside their house.

Meerut . (Agency)

A 72-year-old man in Uttar Pradesh's Meerut has been arrested for allegedly hiding the body of his daughter inside their house for months after her death and attempting to suppress the smell by spraying perfume. Police said the skeletal remains of 35-year-old Priyanka were recovered from the family's residence in the Sadar Bazar area last month, sending shockwaves among residents and relatives alike.

According to police, the accused, identified as Uday Bhanu Vishwas, did not perform his daughter's last rites after she died due to prolonged illness in December 2025. Instead, he allegedly locked her body inside a room filled with garbage and scrap material and kept the house shut for

nearly four months.

Investigators said the decomposed remains were eventually found in an advanced skeletal condition. The matter came to light on April 10 when some relatives reportedly spotted Uday Bhanu sitting at a tea stall in Begum Bagh area after months of absence from the neighbourhood.

When questioned about Priyanka's whereabouts, he initially claimed she had been admitted to a hospital in Dehradun for treatment. However, after sustained questioning, he allegedly confessed that she had died and that her



body was still inside the house. The relatives informed the police, who reached the spot and broke open the lock of the residence. Inside, officers

discovered Priyanka's skeletal remains in a room barricaded with waste material.

Family members alleged that the elderly man had sprayed perfume inside the house to mask the foul smell of decomposition and had remained in the house with the body for several days after her death. Police subsequently registered a case against Uday Bhanu Vishwas under Sections 239, 271 and 301 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for concealing the body and failing to ensure a dignified funeral. Authorities also cited concerns that the decomposed body could have posed a

health risk to nearby residents. Investigators said the accused had earlier been undergoing counselling at the Psychiatry Department of the local Medical College.

Following his detention, he was again admitted for a psychiatric evaluation to assess his mental condition. Officials, however, said preliminary findings suggested that his mental state appeared largely stable. Neighbours told police that Priyanka had been suffering from prolonged illness and mental health issues and was frequently taken for treatment by her father in a rickshaw. Residents added that both father and daughter had remained largely isolated since the death of Priyanka's mother in 2013.

Short news

Gujarat achieves 90% HPV vaccination coverage

Ahmedabad . (Agency)

A total of 5 lakh girls in Gujarat have received HPV vaccination since the launch of the campaign on February 28, achieving a 90 per cent target under the national programme, the state government said on Thursday. The health department had identified 5,43,483 eligible teenage girls in Gujarat for the vaccination against the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) within 90 days of the launch of the programme.



Health Minister Praful Pansheriya said, "The campaign launched under the guidance of Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel is achieving remarkable success in Gujarat. Not a single case of serious side effects has been reported due to the vaccination, which proves that the vaccine is 100 per cent safe. The vaccine is available for all 14-year-old girls at all medical college affiliated hospitals, district hospitals, sub-district hospitals, as well as CHC, PHC and UPHC centers in the state." India is using Gardasil-4, a quadrivalent HPV vaccine by MSD India, that protects against HPV types 16 and 18 (which cause cervical cancer), as well as types 6 and 11. The state conducted the drive in more than 2,200 health centres across 34 districts and 8 major cities of Gujarat, starting March 2.

Rajkot police seize 108 kg ganja brought from Odisha, arrest three

Ahmedabad.(Agency)

The Special Operations Group (SOG) of the Rajkot Rural Police on Wednesday night seized ganja weighing 108 kg and worth around Rs 54 lakh near Shivrajpur village of Jasdan taluka. The SOG team arrested three persons identified as Raju Ishwar Chauhan of Botad, Kadadahar alias Kadarbapu Kasamshah Shaikh of Jamnagar, and Naresh alias Hari Ishwar Limbadiya of Botad. The police seized Rs 84.26 lakh worth of goods from them including the ganja consignment, three phones and the truck. A total of six persons were booked at Bhadla police station under sections of the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act in connection with the seizure.

The truck was traveling from Adenigarh village of Purnakatak taluka in Boudh district of Odisha to Kalavad town of Jamnagar, Gujarat, said Police Inspector Fatehsingh Pargi of the SOG.

The truck covered over 1,662 km for more than a day across five different states undetected by law enforcement agencies before being caught in Rural Rajkot, just 120 km from their destination in Jamnagar, the police said. "This was their fourth trip trafficking ganja across state lines. They earlier brought smaller loads of 20-30 kg," Pargi said, adding that the arrest was made following a tip off.

Those yet to be apprehended include the supplier, Alekha Bishnu Behra of Adenigarh village of Purnakatak taluka of Boudh, Odisha, and two persons who allegedly ordered the illegal consignment - Mohammadrafik Ashraf Lodi and Abdullatif Osman Sama, both residents of Kalavad in Jamnagar. Pargi said that a team would be sent to Odisha to apprehend the alleged supplier Alekha Bishnu Behra.

Achieved 90% placements for MBA batch: PU's UBS

UBS students also achieved a 100 per cent conversion in the recruitment process of Federal Bank for candidates who appeared, facilitated through the Central Placement Cell, UBS said.

Chandigarh. (Agency)

University Business School (UBS) at Panjab University in Chandigarh has recorded a 90 per cent placement rate so far, as 126 MBA students secured placements with the average annual CTC expected to be about Rs 12.5 lakh, during the 2025-2026 academic session, compared to 105 students being placed the previous session, according to a UBS statement.

An 85 per cent placement in the Human Resource specialisation is the highest in the past two decades. UBS students also achieved a 100 per cent conversion in the recruitment process of Federal Bank for candidates who appeared, facilitated through the Central Placement Cell, UBS said.

According to UBS, more than 60 recruiters have already participated from different sectors like IT, BFSI, finance, consulting, e-commerce and FMCG. Offered roles include business analytics, business consultant, business development, sales and marketing, operations, supply chain

management, financial analysis, HR analytics, HRBP and talent acquisition, highlighting the diverse skill sets of UBS students and the dynamic needs of the market.

Appreciating the improvement in the placement of UBS students, PU Vice-Chancellor Prof Renu Vig said, "The 90 per cent placements reflect the academic strength, professional competence and industrial readiness of the students. The improved placements demonstrate the confidence of leading organisations in the talent emerging from PU. I congratulate the students and all stakeholders for carrying forward the University's legacy of excellence."

Prof Parmjit Kaur, UBS chairperson and Dean, Business Management and Commerce, said, "The placement process is still underway. UBS expects a few more students to secure placements, which may take the overall placement percentage beyond 95 per cent. The placement results reflect the strength of the academic

ecosystem and the collaborative efforts of faculty, alumni and corporate partners."

Prof Purva Kansal, Faculty Placement Coordinator, highlighted the collective approach behind the placement process. "This placement season saw a 60:40 bifurcation, with 40 per cent being new companies added to the portfolio of UBS. Recruiters like Aditya Birla Capital, Airtel, Avery Dennison, Axis Bank, Britannia, HDFC, the ICICI Group (ICICI Bank, ICICI Prudential, ICICI Lombard), JSW, KPMG, Korn Ferry, Niva Bupa, SBI General Insurance, Signify, STL (Sterlite Technologies), SGGG, SHJ, HDFC Life, and WNS, among others, visited the department this year.

Another key highlight of the placement season was the strong performance of the MBA Human Resource specialisation, which recorded over 85 per cent placements, reflecting the program's focused capability-building approach and alignment with evolving industry requirements."

Chandigarh to see extension of 4 more state legislations

Chandigarh. (Agency)

Apart from the Assam Tenancy Act, Chandigarh will also see extensions of four other state legislations — the Punjab Prevention of Human Smuggling Act, 2012, the Punjab Abadi Deh (Record of Rights) Act, 2021, the Indian Stamp (Punjab Amendment) Act of 2001 and 2003, and the Haryana Fire and Emergency Services Act, 2022.

The Punjab Prevention of Human Smuggling Act, 2012

Chandigarh will now see an extension of the Punjab Prevention of Human Smuggling Act, 2012, to check illegal immigration rackets, fraudulent travel agents and organised human smuggling

operations. Even as Chandigarh would from time to time give advisories and



directives to check immigration rackets, there was a need to have a proper act to check the nature of this crime.

The new law now seeks to regulate overseas travel and visa businesses, and protect people from being cheated in the name of foreign jobs, education or migration.

The Act defines human smuggling as illegally sending or facilitating the movement of people abroad through inducement, cheating, fraud, false promises or deception in exchange for money. Under the Act, no person can run a travel or immigration consultancy business without obtaining a valid government licence. The law covers visa consultants, overseas education agents, ticketing agents, foreign travel facilitators and even freelance touts involved in arranging foreign travel.

ED searches continue in Mohali: Prominent businessmen Nitin Goyal, Pritpal Singh Dhindsa under scanner

The ED searches are being conducted in connection with alleged irregularities in Change of Land Use approvals and suspicious sale transactions linked to Mohali companies.

Mohali. (Agency)

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday continued to carry out searches in Mohali as part of a money-laundering probe into alleged irregularities in Change of Land Use (CLU) approvals and suspicious sale transactions linked to companies under the Greater Mohali Area Development Authority (GMADA) jurisdiction.

The searches, which began around 7.30 am on Thursday, have sparked a row in Punjab after the central agency mentioned the state Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) president, Aman Arora, in its official press note.

The ED teams are carrying out searches at the residences of Mohali-based IT entrepreneur Nitin Goyal and businessman Pritpal Singh Dhindsa, owner of the well-known firm Mohali Electricals.

Who is Nitin Goyal?

Nitin Goyal is the founder and CEO of Fortec Web Solutions Pvt Ltd and Techlive

Solutions. He launched his company in April 2018 and has been associated with web development, software services and digital solutions for several years.

Based in Mohali, Goyal has remained active in the IT and web-designing sector. According to available information, he has also been involved in training students in website development, digital tools, and other IT-related skills. As per his LinkedIn profile, he was associated with SUS College of Engineering and Technology.

He resides in Weston Tower Society, Sector 126, near Kharar in Mohali district.

Who is Pritpal Singh Dhindsa?

ED teams are also conducting searches at the residence of Pritpal Singh Dhindsa in

Phase 4, Mohali. Dhindsa is the owner of Mohali Electricals, a prominent electrical business operating in Industrial Area,



Phase 1. According to sources, the company was established decades ago by the Dhindsa family and gradually built a strong reputation in Mohali's electrical

business sector. The firm is considered a well-known name in the local business community. Sources said that after Dhindsa

took charge of operations, the company expanded rapidly and secured several large-scale electrical projects and contracts. He is believed to have handled electrical works linked to reputed companies and major real-estate developments. According to sources, Dhindsa later expanded his interests into the property and real estate sector and allegedly maintained strong connections in influential political circles. However, no official statement has yet been issued regarding the exact nature of the allegations against him. Investigating teams are currently scrutinising documents, financial records and digital devices seized during the raids.

Caught on CCTV: Meerut man corners teen with his scooter, molests her on road

A man in Uttar Pradesh's Meerut was arrested after a CCTV video showed him molesting a teenage girl while riding a scooter on a road.



Meerut . (Agency)

A man riding a scooter molested a teenage girl on a road in Uttar Pradesh's Meerut district and was later arrested after a CCTV video of the incident went viral, police said.

The incident took place in the Railway Road police station area of Meerut. In the viral CCTV footage, the accused, identified as Bilal, was seen riding a scooter and allegedly touching the girl inappropriately while she was walking along the road.

After the video surfaced online, police launched a search operation and eventually arrested Bilal along with one of his associates. According to police, the accused had allegedly been stalking and harassing the teenager repeatedly for several days.

Following his arrest, Bilal was seen inside the police station apologising with folded hands and holding his ears. He repeatedly said, "I made a mistake. I will never commit such an act again. Please forgive me. This will not happen in the future."

Meerut City SP Vinayak Gopal Bhosale said police initiated action after the CCTV footage came to light a few days ago.

The officer said the accused tried to evade identification by borrowing someone else's scooter, using a fake number plate on the vehicle, and later hiding the scooter after the incident. Police also arrested one of his associates in connection with the case.

Bhosale said strict action was being taken against the accused.

Obituaries of the Left are premature

The obituary pages of Indian political commentary have been unusually crowded of late. Commentator after commentator has announced the terminal decline, if not the death, of the Left. The evidence, at first glance, may appear persuasive. Electorally, it is much diminished. Its political programme may also seem, to many, out of tune with a transformed society and economy. The tone of such obituaries often carries a finality, as if a long chapter in ideological history has come to a close.

Yet history rarely yields such neat conclusions, because we know that ideologies do not disappear. They recede, recalibrate and return, often when the conditions that gave rise to them reappear in altered forms. The temptation to equate the electoral fortunes of political parties with the vitality of ideas is understandable, but it is also profoundly misleading.

Let us concede that the Left's crisis in India is real. Electoral setbacks, particularly in longstanding strongholds, have been severe, including the recent one in Kerala. Organisational structures that once commanded admiration have thinned, and the idiom of class politics appears increasingly out of place in a political culture driven by identity, cultural grievance and populism, among other factors. In such a climate, it is perhaps easier to interpret the present moment as an endpoint rather than simply as a phase. But this reading conflates institutions with ideas because the Left has never been reducible to its organisational carriers. Its stable concerns—such as inequality, labour rights, social justice and the limits of unregulated markets—are rooted not in party offices but in the lived realities of ordinary citizens across India and the world. Whenever disparities widen and livelihoods become precarious, these questions return with renewed urgency. India's own trajectory bears testimony to this tension. The economic reforms of the early 1990s ushered in growth and optimism, but they also contributed to a gradual marginalisation of Left parties at the national level. For a time, the narrative of liberalisation appeared unassailable, yet even then the imprint of Left thinking persisted in policy frameworks. Rights-based legislations that expanded transparency, guaranteed rural employment, and recognised the claims of marginalised communities were shaped, in no small measure, by sustained engagement from Left groups and allied civil society. These interventions altered the grammar of State-citizen relations.

The subsequent decade has complicated this narrative. Jobless growth, agrarian distress and the proliferation of informal and gig-based work have introduced new insecurities. The pandemic, in particular, exposed the fragility of livelihoods—already under duress from systemic shocks such as demonetisation and the overall deprioritisation of smaller businesses in the policymaking imagination—with unsettling clarity. The images of migrant workers walking across highways were manifestations of structural inequalities that had accumulated over time. In such moments, questions about the dignity of labour, role of the State and distribution of resources acquire a renewed moral force. Let us also consider the global experience. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was widely interpreted as the definitive defeat of socialism. In the triumphant aftermath, the language of markets and liberalisation acquired an air of inevitability. Yet within less than two decades, the global financial crisis of 2008 exposed the vulnerabilities of deregulated capitalism. While banks were rescued by the State, austerity measures were imposed on society. A new generation began to question the orthodoxy they had inherited.

Op Sindoor enforced our red lines

A future crisis with Pakistan must be treated as part of a wider collusive challenge

ONE year ago, on the night of May 6-7, 2025, India carried out precision strikes on nine terrorist targets in Pakistan, including the headquarters of Lashkar-e-Taiba at Muridke and of Jaish-e-Mohammed at Bahawalpur. This came in response to the horrific massacre of Indian tourists in Pahalgam by terrorists linked to Lashkar-e-Taiba. Code-named Operation Sindoor, it marked a new phase in India's resolve to enforce its counterterrorism red lines. The crisis escalated as Pakistan launched hundreds of drones into Indian airspace. As the fighting continued, the Indian Air Force carried out damaging strikes on Pakistani airbases at Chaklala, Rafiqi, Rahim Yar Khan, Sargodha, Bholari and Jacobabad on the night of May 9-10. On May 10, Pakistan's Director General of Military Operations called up his Indian counterpart with a request for a ceasefire, which was accepted.

Operation Sindoor lasted only 88 hours, but its brevity should not be confused with limited significance. It offers important lessons for how the Indian military should prepare for the next crisis with Pakistan. Four imperatives stand out. The first is an intense and compressed battle cycle.

Operation Sindoor demonstrated how quickly a crisis can escalate, both vertically through the expanding use of force and horizontally across a wider geography. While the operation was largely confined to the land and air domains, the next crisis could extend to the maritime domain, with naval forces playing a more active role. The geography of conflict will also expand into the digital realm, with cyber operations targeting critical infrastructure. In such a conflict, war will no longer unfold in a neat sequence. Intelligence, targeting, precision strike, air defence, drone warfare, escalation management, diplomatic outreach and information operations will occur almost simultaneously. This demands a high state of military readiness as the side that enters the crisis with prepared options will enjoy a decisive advantage over the side that improvises under pressure. This is also where jointness will be tested. In a short, high-intensity conflict, delays caused by service silos can become strategic vulnerabilities. What is essential is integrated planning, common target folders, interoperable communications, shared situational awareness and pre-agreed escalation options. Jointness, therefore, must not be treated as a fashionable slogan but the fundamental operational grammar of the compressed battle cycle. Second, new technologies are no longer lessons to be drawn from distant wars but are already present on our battlefields. Operation Sindoor was described as South Asia's first drone war. In the year

since, we are seeing a much greater induction of drones in the inventories of both militaries. Drone warfare will be central in the next conflict. Future crises are also likely to see greater use of long-range standoff weapons and precision missiles, allowing air forces to strike without crossing borders. Because such attacks are launched from a distance and viewed on screens far from the battlefield, they can appear controlled, clinical and almost risk-free. That makes them politically attractive. But this perception is dangerous. When both sides believe they can strike from afar without paying an



immediate price, the threshold for using force may be lower, and escalation can become faster.

Third, information warfare is no longer a sideshow, but a central theatre of conflict. In Operation Sindoor, even as kinetic strikes were being carried out, a fierce parallel battle of perceptions unfolded across television screens, media outlets and social networks. The information space was flooded with fake news, exaggerated claims, misinformation and disinformation. Even though Pakistan suffered extensive damage, its narrative claimed victory over India.

Pakistan has attempted to frame India's counterterrorism response as an unprovoked attack, and its own response as measured and aimed at protecting its territorial integrity. India must not allow that framing to take hold. The information campaign must, therefore, begin before the first strike, with credible evidence, prepared diplomatic briefs, rapid public communication and a clear explanation of the threshold that has been crossed. There is also a domestic lesson. Some sections of the

Indian television media became amplifiers of misinformation during Operation Sindoor. Such behaviour undermines national credibility and must be checked by the government. When media institutions distort reality, they inhibit India's ability to project a legitimate picture to the global audience.

The fourth and perhaps the most important lesson concerns the China-Pakistan nexus. India was not dealing with Pakistan in isolation. It was dealing with a Pakistani military system increasingly equipped, enabled and diplomatically cushioned by China. The clearest warning came from India's Deputy Chief of Army Staff, Lt Gen Rahul R Singh, who said after the operation that India had "one border" but was facing more than one adversary, with Pakistan in front and China providing support.

The old distinction between the western and northern fronts is becoming less clear. China need not open a front in Ladakh to influence an India-Pakistan crisis. It can do so through platforms, sensors, intelligence feeds and diplomatic signalling. Operation Sindoor was not only an India-Pakistan clash, but a preview of collusive pressure below the threshold of a formal two-front war.

The implication for India is clear. A future crisis with Pakistan must be treated as part of a wider collusive challenge. Operational planning must account for Chinese-origin platforms in Pakistan's inventory, real-time data support and the likelihood that every engagement will be studied by Beijing as a live test of Indian tactics and strategy. Operation Sindoor showed that Pakistan may be the immediate adversary, but the system behind it is increasingly Chinese-enabled. India's preparedness must reflect that reality.

A final caution is necessary. Operation Sindoor offers important lessons for the next India-Pakistan crisis, but it should not be taken as a template for all future wars. It was largely an air and missile campaign, with the Army and the Navy playing peripheral roles. A longer war, especially one involving major ground operations and sustained maritime conflict, would impose very different demands in terms of logistics, reserves, industrial capacity and national endurance. India must be prepared for both a compressed crisis that unfolds in hours and the larger war that may follow if escalation is not contained.

Punjab counts: Success tied to truthful addiction reporting

The real test lies in translating insights into sustained action

PUNJAB's decision to launch a statewide drug and socio-economic survey, covering nearly 65 lakh households, is a bold administrative step. Though long overdue, the move is fraught with challenges. For decades, the state's drug crisis has been debated in political rhetoric and media narratives, often without a reliable, evidence-based foundation. This survey seeks to change that by mapping the scale, patterns and socio-economic linkages of substance abuse. At one level, the initiative reflects an acknowledgment that the problem cannot be tackled through policing alone. By integrating socio-economic indicators, the government appears to recognise the deeper roots of addiction. Prominent among them are unemployment, distress in agrarian economies and social dislocation. If executed well, the exercise could enable targeted interventions, including rehabilitation programmes and livelihood support. However, the credibility of the exercise will



hinge on its methodology and implementation. Deploying around 28,000 personnel, many of them teachers, raises concerns about administrative overreach and diversion from core duties. More

critically, drug use is a sensitive subject. Underreporting due to stigma, fear of legal consequences or social pressure could distort findings. Without strong safeguards for confidentiality and trust-building at the grassroots, data accuracy may suffer. There is also the question of what follows. Punjab has seen numerous committees and reports on drugs, but policy continuity and execution have often lagged. Data collection, however extensive, is only the first step. The real test lies in translating insights into sustained action, such as strengthening deaddiction infrastructure, disrupting supply chains and addressing the socio-economic vulnerabilities that fuel demand. The survey, therefore, must not become another statistical exercise. It should mark the beginning of a transparent, accountable and long-term strategy. Punjab does not lack awareness of its drug problem; it has lacked decisive, data-driven follow-through.

When India struck terror camps in Pak Punjab

Deterrence must evolve into compellence — a posture that discourages aggression

APRIL 22, 2025 began like any other day at the Western Command: briefings on infrastructure projects, routine updates, the hum of staff work. Then the television flashed images that would change everything — a terror strike in Pahalgam, innocent civilians singled out and killed on the basis of their faith. The brazenness of the attack shocked the nation and demanded a response; swift, precise and unmistakable. We had reasons to be alert. Recent flare-ups and public unrest across the border suggested a volatile mix of political turmoil and military posturing. Pakistan's internal dynamics — a powerful military leadership, religious rhetoric woven into public addresses and visible political fractures — all pointed to a dangerous willingness to use violence as leverage. Pakistan Army Chief, himself a Hafiz, has fused the country's two most potent forces — militarism and religion. So, less than a week before the Pahalgam terror attack, when he invoked the two-nation theory and declared Kashmir the "jugular vein", it struck me not as grandiloquence but as a calculated signal.

In the Western Command, we had anticipated conduct of military operations post cross-border provocations and deliberated our response options in a war game in 2024. That preparation paid off: formations already understood their role and could move quickly when the alertness levels were enhanced. The secrecy of plans was crucial for the success of operations, so the targeting options were kept tightly compartmentalised; even formation commanders were not aware of the final list of targets. Deception and redundancy were built into the plan to preserve surprise. The media grew impatient as days passed without visible action. I remember the Editor-in-Chief of The Tribune visiting my office at the end of April 2025, pressing for answers. I could only confirm intent, not timing or place. With a vast background in dealing with Pakistan, she asked bluntly,

"Are you going to strike Muridke?" I kept my face blank and said, "All options are on the table."

On May 7, 2025, at 0105 hours, we commenced precision strikes and by 0130, the identified terrorist bases were fully destroyed. The message was simple: justice delivered. In a just operation, we had deliberately targeted only terrorist infrastructure rather than civilian or military bases, which also constrained escalation options for the Pakistan military.

Predictably, the adversary retaliated. Pakistan launched drones and missiles against military installations; almost all those attacks were blunted by our air defence and counter-drone systems. We responded in kind, degrading a number of Pakistan's posts and military bases. In the middle of the fire assault, a Pakistani post even raised a white flag. Each day, around noon, Army commanders joined the Army Chief in a secure video-conference to review progress of operations and decide the future course of action. Implications of own actions and their second- or third-order effects were also deliberated upon. The latitude of military leadership to shape operations was quite evident. The conflict exposed new realities. Drones were launched deep into our territory, even over cities once thought safe by virtue of distance from the border. On May 8, we had a blackout in Chandigarh consequent to drone sightings. But soon we realised that such blackout drills have limited value against modern-day precision standoff threats.

We adapted the drills and accelerated plans to harden and, where necessary, move critical operation centres underground. When Pakistan publicly proclaimed that it might strike the Golden Temple, we treated it as both a signal of intent and an effort to pre-empt blame and immediately strengthened air defence and counter drone

measures in Amritsar. Public sentiment was overwhelmingly supportive. Small acts of solidarity — villagers bringing water to soldiers, a 10-year-old boy fetching lassi for troops — became national symbols of unity. The media, for the most part, backed our actions; some channels grew hyperbolic, but the intent was



patriotic. There were surreal moments. On May 9 morning, my wife woke me up with a channel breaking news that Indian troops had reached Lahore. Half asleep, I wondered aloud: did we order the move forward of offensive formations or the GOC of my Strike Corps had taken the initiative akin to Op Parakram days!

On May 10, it was already daybreak when we broke up from the operations centre, so I decided to head to the golf course to declutter my mind. The DGMO was quite surprised when I took his call on a secure mobile from the golf course and so were a couple of veterans playing golf. They assumed the operation was winding down — and, lo and behold, Pakistan asked for a ceasefire a few hours later! A year on, I look back on Operation Sindoor with pride and satisfaction. The Indian armed forces executed a complex operation under intense scrutiny and pressure. We delivered punitive effects, dominated the escalatory ladder and signalled capability and intent.

But the question remains: have we achieved lasting deterrence? The Pakistan Army appears politically stronger today and more prominent on the world stage. Emboldened and under an ambitious Field Marshal, it could well revive its decades-old strategy of "bleeding India through a thousand cuts." If that happens, our response must be swifter, more forceful and integrated across domains.

Deterrence must evolve into compellence — a posture that not only discourages aggression but also changes the adversary's cost-benefit calculus. That will require strategic imagination: better intelligence fusion, deeper resilience at home and a willingness to combine military action with diplomatic and economic levers.

Hill stations Near Delhi

that are perfect for long Weekends



7 reasons to visit Kullu-Manali

From the snowy delights of Rohtang Pass to the soothing warmth of the surrounding thermal springs, there are several places to visit in Kullu Manali for nature lovers and thrill seekers. With its picturesque views of snow-clad mountains, river valleys, charming cafes and laidback vibe, this hill station in Himachal Pradesh is an immensely popular vacation spot with both domestic and foreign tourists. Its widespread appeal draws everyone from adventure sport enthusiasts and vacationing families and honeymoon couples and hippie backpackers. Here are seven places you must visit during your holiday.

Hadimba Temple

This wood and stone temple is dedicated to Hadimba, the wife of Bhima, one of the Pandava brothers from the Mahabharata. It was constructed in 1553, and is located in the middle of the Dhungri Park. The structure has a four-tiered pagoda-shaped roof, and a carved doorway that is embellished with figures of Hindu gods and symbols. Ghatotkach, the son of Bhima and Hidimba, is also worshipped as a sacred tree.

Gadhan Thekchokling Gompa

Manali houses a small Tibetan community, and has a couple of peaceful Buddhist monasteries. Built in 1969,

this prayer hall is decorated with wall paintings and contains a statue of Shakyamuni. Nearby, the Gelukpa Cultural Society Gompa has statues of 'boddhisatvas' and Buddhist lamas, and a workshop for Tibetan carpets.

Rohtang Pass

This snow-covered pass is located on the highway to Leh, and is only open from June to October every year. It lies at a height of 3979 metres, and offers spectacular views of glaciers, mountain peaks and the Chandra River. The pass is a gateway to Lahaul, Spiti, Pangri and Leh. Due to its increasingly popularity, the route to Rohtang is often clogged with traffic during the peak tourist season. However, once you reach, there are facilities for skiing and sledging near the pass, and plenty of photo opportunities for snap-happy tourists.

Naggar

The former capital of Kullu, this town lies on the left bank of River Beas, 21 kilometres from Manali. It was founded by Raja Visudhpal and remained the political centre until the capital was shifted to Sultanpur in 1460 AD. Its major attraction is a beautiful castle, which has now been converted into a heritage hotel operated by the Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation. The building was once the residence of the rulers of Kullu, and is an excellent example of western Himalayan architecture. It is made of wood and stone, and has carved doors and windows. There is a small museum, a temple and a nice restaurant within the premises. Naggar was also the home of Russian painter Nicholas Roerich, who lived here from 1929 till his death in 1947. His house has been converted into an art gallery, which exhibits his colourful paintings of the surrounding Himalayan ranges.

Solang Valley

Around 13 kilometres away from Manali, this pretty valley is a popular spot for adventure sports, especially skiing. Situated between Solang village and Beas Kund, it offers panoramic views of the surrounding snow-capped mountains and glaciers. In summer, it has facilities for paragliding, zorbing, mountain biking and horse riding. In winter, especially between January and March, it is used for skiing, snowboarding and sledging. It also hosts a winter skiing festival. The Directorate of Mountaineering & Allied Sports in Manali also organises basic, advance and intermediate level courses in skiing. For the less-adventurous, there are also plenty of walking trails all around.

Dharamshala

Top attractions in Dharamshala Best known as the base of the Dalai Lama in India, and its strong Tibetan influence, Dharamshala is a small hill station that lies on the spur of the Dhualadhar range high up in the Kangra Valley in Himachal Pradesh.

Bhagsunag

The Bhagsunag shrine is about as old as the Dal Lake, and originated around a myth about a great fight between the demon king (Bhagsu) and the snake god (Nag). It has been rebuilt more than once, and although it is presently covered in white tiles, there is something about the place that draws you in.

Dal Lake

Legend has it that a king who went to bathe in the sacred Manimahesh Lake below the Kailash Mountain lost his gold ring. The ring later re-surfaced in the Dal Lake. This water body was considered the poor man's Manimahesh for those who couldn't afford to go to Kailash for salvation by bathing in it. What remains today, is no more than a pond, but nonetheless, the lake is sacred to locals. A beautiful walk from the town, the lake is inundated with goldfish, and is worth a visit.

Norbulingka Institute

The most recent Tibetan institution near Dharamshala, Norbulingka embodies all the old-world charm of Tibetan architecture and has been modelled and named after the Dalai Lama's summer palace near Lhasa. Sprawled across seven acres, this traditional Tibetan building has been constructed by master craftsmen who fled from Tibet along with the Dalai Lama, and has been made so as to blend with the surrounding landscape. Comprising a complex of buildings that include a temple, library, college, design studio, guest house and even a cafe, it is set amidst a beautiful garden of meandering paths, flowing streams, waterfalls, bridges, and koi ponds, with the stunning backdrop of the Dhualadhar mountains. Stay at the guesthouse and immerse yourself in the Tibetan culture, all the proceeds go directly towards the Norbulingka Institute to further the preservation of the culture.



Darjeeling's most charming Tea estates

Glenburn Tea Estate

Step into the idyllic world of Glenburn, a tea estate established by Scottish tea planters in 1860. It sprawls over 1600 acres of verdant forests, rolling hills, tea picker villages and a pair of river valleys. Set in the heart of the tea estate, two colonial-style planter bungalows overlook the rolling hills on one side and the mighty Kanchenjunga mountain range on the other. The aroma of fresh flowers hangs in the air and the four-poster beds, hand embroidered linen and open verandas lend a very English country air to the bungalow. Signature Glenburn experiences include exploring the plantations and villages within the tea estate, nature and bird walks, overnights in the log cabin by the river Rangeet, picnics in the tea gardens, tea tours and excursions around Darjeeling.

Makaibari Tea Estate

Makaibari Tea Estate, the producer of Darjeeling's costliest

tea, was established in 1859—making it one of the oldest family-owned tea gardens in Darjeeling. Located at Kurseong, the land of the white orchid, the tea estate offers a peek into the daily life of plantation workers with numerous home stays. Local families at the estate have opened up their homes to visitors providing them with simple accommodation and hearty meals. With 70 percent of its entire area still under forest cover, the eco-diversity at Makaibari is astonishing. The dense forests of the estate house numerous species of flora and fauna and visitors can explore the estate through activities like tea plucking, tea tasting or scaling the slopes where the tea grows.

Happy Valley Tea Estate

Wandering through tea gardens settled on the gentle hill slopes of Darjeeling is the perfect way to start your day at the Happy Valley Tea Estate. With plantations as old as 150 years

Besides its quaint eateries, vibrant markets hidden in busy lanes and hilltops that are home to stunning vistas, there is a range of charming tea estates that stand apart in the list of places to visit in Darjeeling. Tea was first introduced to this Himalayan city in West Bengal in the mid-19th century by the British, and these sprawling tea estates are still reminiscent of that culture. A trip to these vast stretches of tea plantations is all about misty mornings, tea leaves blooming under the sun, endless walks discovering various types of tea and of course, sipping your favourite brew. Here's your guide to exploring the best tea gardens of Darjeeling.

and picture-perfect stretches of lush green tea bushes beckoning you, this tea estate will floor you with its scenic charm. Stop by the gardens during the process of plucking, processing and packaging and you'll be privy to one of the most fascinating tea garden experiences. Tea lovers can pick up a handful of fresh tea from here or sip a cup of their favourite aromatic tea at the nearby Happy Gold Cafe. A few routes around the estate offer great trekking paths, along with spectacular views of the sprawling landscape.

The employees at the estate help guide you around the aromatic factory and explain the withering, rolling, fermenting and drying processes.

Chamong Tea Estate

Nestled in the misty hills of Darjeeling, Chamong Tea Estate stretches over 900 acres of lush green land that houses a tea plantation, a tea factory and a village for the tea pickers. Most of the land is forested, with an abundance of flora and fauna. The incredible splendour of the rolling hills, the verdant tea bushes and the quiet daily life makes this area popular amongst visitors. The tall, deciduous forest makes way for multiple scenic walking trails and you'll soon discover monkeys frolicking amidst the ferns and shrubs. The Chamong Tea Estate is a part of the Chamong Tea Group and is one of the prime producers of Organic and Fair Trade teas in North India.

Gomtee Tea Resort

Lesser known than its famous neighbours Makaibari and Glenburn, visitors at Goomtee get to stay in a 100-year-old heritage bungalow at a height of about 4000 feet, with sweeping views of the valleys and mountains. Located in south Kurseong, the estate has a total area of about 500 acres, out of which 50 percent is currently used for tea plantation. Producing mainly black tea and employing over 300 workers, the garden originally belonged to the pioneering British tea planter Henry Lennox in 1899. Visitors at Gomtee can spend the day in the tea gardens, visit the tea factory, don the role of a tea taster, converse with tea pickers and taste freshly-brewed tea from the factory.





Mowgli land

After three hours of a rather bumpy drive from Kanha to Pench, we were about to make it to the enchanting land of Mowgli. As we drove closer to Sarrahiri, a hamlet near Karmajhiri gate of Pench National Park, thick grassy lands surrounded us on both sides. The bright green landscape, peppered with tile-roofed mud huts, made for a beautiful pastoral terrain. We checked into our tree lodge, perched on top of a mahua tree and the next few minutes were spent gazing at the deciduous forest from our balcony.

Feeling alive



Having grown up reading The Jungle Book, I was excited to traverse the national park, the land of the famed characters - Bagheera, Balloo and Shere Khan.

The guide suggested we also take in the other little pleasures of the jungle while looking for wild cats on our safaris, which are not difficult to spot in the peak summer season. So, we decided to make the most of the open-jeep jaunt by breathing in fresh air, soaking up the sun, the musty smells of the earth, cacophony of the birds and much more.

Into the wild

Unlike other forests like Kanha and Bandhavgarh, Pench is a lot drier and sparse, allowing you to take a sneak peek into the intimate moments of the resident birds and animals. At the same time, it is refreshingly

diverse in its topography - undulating scrublands, bamboo patches, stunningly large water bodies, hills and jungle valleys form a beautiful landscape. With more than 200 species of birds, including wagtails, horn bills, kingfisher, barbets and minivets, and rich fauna, the jungle is a treat for anyone keen on photography. Watch out for the Indian Ghost Tree, a beautiful tree with a white trunk and peeling paper-thin skin. It eerily stands out, and yes, it does glow in the dark!

Man is an outsider

While you are likely to spot a tiger with her cubs by following the alert calls from deer and langurs, leopards and sloth bears are the elusive creatures here. The closest we got to Collarwali (the celebrity tigress of the forest), were fresh pugmarks, but what exhilarated us more was the 15-minute intense jeep chase where our naturalist and the forest guide managed to create a tale full of mystery and suspense.

How to get there

Fly to Nagpur and drive for about two hours or more to your hotel or take a train to

Nagpur railway station (94 km) followed by a two-and-a-half hour drive. Since the roads here aren't in great condition, avoid a road trip.

When to go

The best months to visit are between Nov and June. Visit during the winter season to enjoy pleasant days and cold mornings and evenings. Summer is sweltering hot, but chances of spotting a tiger are higher. Plus, this is also the time when chitals shed their antlers.

Did you know?

The character Mowgli originated in Pench National Park, but his creator Rudyard Kipling never actually visited the park. It is believed that a 19th century British official wrote about a wolf-boy he found in the jungle. Kipling read his journal and got inspired to pen The Jungle Book.



Miami Beyond the beaches

Pore over cutting-edge street art, learn to roll a Cuban cigar or simply monkey around...

For someone who tips the weighing scale a little (okay, a lot) over 100 kg, visiting the beach town of Miami can be quite scary. Most of the people here are not only fit, but they also like to flaunt it. So, on a recent trip to the beach city, to avoid further guilt of bingeing on massive American burgers, I decided to skip the surfboard and zone off to the 'other' side. You might wonder what's more to Miami than beaches. Well, lots more.

The Cuban Corner

The one place that adds oodles of character to Miami and gives a happy twist to its facade is a neighbourhood called Little Havana. Home to Miami's ever-expanding Latin community, this is the place that many migrating Cubans have called home since Mr Castro took charge of Cuba in the late 1950s. Extremely different from the rest of Miami, Little Havana has a sub-culture all its own. It is always time to party here - you will generally find people tapping away to folksy tunes or engrossed in their little board games at the Domino Park. Little Havana is also home to many cigar makers; you can always walk in to one of them and watch as they roll a fresh batch of leaves for you. From the finest cigar cutters to other accessories, this place is like a candy store for all cigar lovers.

The Wall Of Rebellion

Now who would have thought that Miami would be home to some of the finest graffiti in the world. Wynwood Art District is for those who wish to step out of comfortable galleries and experience the maniacal thoughts that reside in the head of artists, who literally use the world as their canvas. Here you will find art in every imaginable form. From abstract art to geometric patterns that can only be created once your mind is pushed into an overdrive... Wynwood has it all. The entire district is a massive canvas - you won't find a single wall or street that's not covered.

Tripping on art

Museums is something I am happy to give a miss. But when my charming tour guide



suggested a quick stop at the Perez Art Museum, we obliged, albeit grudgingly. What we expected: an hour-long snooze fest. The reality: a mind-blowing experience. This haven for modern and contemporary international art of the 20th and 21st centuries is unlike any other museum. From the first exhibit to the final one, there was not a single piece that didn't transfix us. From using light to mirrors and sound to miniatures, the works at Perez are such that they take you on a trip that's parallel to this universe, and yet not from our realm. Sounds absolutely bonkers, but Perez is a sensory overload that's a must-do in Miami.

The Wild Zone

Like most cities, Miami too has its own little paradise for animal lovers. The Jungle Island is a place that both kids and adults would love to visit. Built about 80 years ago, most of the

animals are kept in massive enclosures that mimic their natural habitats. You also get to spend quality one-on-one time with certain four-legged friends. Your head can be a dance floor for the a bunch of lemurs or you can get some much-needed TLC from a baby Capuchin monkey (the same breed that Ross had in Friends) - all-in-all a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Fun detour

If you have a couple of days to spare, do visit Orlando. It might not have the glitz and glamour of Miami, but what it scores high on is a strong dose of testosterone in the form of some crazy simulation rides at Universal Studios. Also, if you have grown up binge watching cartoons, a trip to the Walt Disney World will rake up some memories.

Nordic adventure

My summer adventure in Iceland had a big plus point, the travel part apart. For company, I had a local writer, poet, social activist and a political adviser - all rolled into one! My friend Halla Gunnarsdottir is a brilliant multi-tasker, like most Icelanders, and she made sure I saw her country not like a tourist but as an insider. So, armed with hiking boots and our driving licences, we designed a road trip that was to begin in Reykjavik in the west and take us to Borgarfjorour Eystri on the eastern side.

In a loop

Iceland has one main road called Route 1, or the ring road which goes around the island - with inroads leading to fjords, towns, peninsulas and highlands. Over the next two weeks, Iceland revealed itself to me in a series of arresting visions, untouched by man, as it has existed for scores of centuries. I also got the chance to mingle with the natives, experience their culture (two weddings and a ceremony accepting me as an honorary Viking) and try some of Iceland's unique culinary treats like fermented shark, minke whale, puffin and, of course, Iceland's famous hot dogs.

Gushing start

Two hours from Reykjavik, is one of Iceland's most magnificent waterfalls - Seljalandsfoss - that drops down from a height of 60 metres. Keep your rubber boots and raincoat handy if you want to walk to the big cave behind the falls. (If you are warm enough, you'll never want to leave this picturesque icy cold wonder.) Another 30 minutes of driving got us to another impressive waterfall, Skogafoss. Most tourists attempt a one-day hike from here to reach the famous Eyjafjallajokull volcano.

Blacked-out

When Halla mentioned a visit to a black beach called Reynisfjara, I didn't take her seriously. Not even after I was standing in the middle of this vast blackness! The black escapade continued with a hike to Svartifoss aka Black Waterfall. Why black? Because of the dark basalt columns here.

Eastern Fjords

Iceland's eastern coastline is full of numerous mountains, beaches and countless majestic fjords (long, narrow inlets created by glacial erosion), which are home to the country's diverse wildlife - wild reindeer, seal colonies, birds. The jagged, snow-capped profile of the



Eastern Fjords provides the first glimpse of Iceland. Each fjord looks more amazing than the last one, so take a deep breath and enjoy the ride. We were lucky enough to get to see a couple of swans strut around the Swan Fjord, as it is known.

The last stop was Borgarfjorour Eystri, a quaint little town that ended the trip on a high note - literally. The Daler Mehendi-crazy crowd here (yes!) threw a party for their "friend from India" and we danced all night to paaji's bhangra beats. In the end, words like beautiful, amazing, must-visit fail to describe my Iceland experience. Life altering comes close... perhaps.

2 Indian crew aboard ship with deadly hantavirus outbreak, their status unknown

Three people have died and eight others have been infected aboard the MV Hondius, where two Indian crew members remain on board as authorities race to contain a rare hantavirus outbreak at sea.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Two Indian crew members are among the 149 people aboard a luxury expedition ship stranded in the Atlantic Ocean, where three passengers have died and eight others have been infected with hantavirus, one of the rarest and most lethal viruses on the planet. India Today TV reached out to Oceanwide Expeditions, the Dutch polar travel company that operates the MV Hondius, seeking a full account of who was on board the ship. On May 4, the company wrote back. In their response, they provided, for the first time, a nationality by nationality breakdown of every passenger and crew member on board.

The list ran to 23 nationalities across 149

people. Most were passengers, tourists from Great Britain, the United States, Germany, Spain. But buried in the crew column, alongside sailors and support staff from the Philippines, Ukraine, the Netherlands and Poland, were two names that brought this story home: India. Two Indian crew members, nationality confirmed, condition undisclosed.

Oceanwide Expeditions stated it would share new information only as soon as it had been verified, and no further details about the Indian crew members were provided. Their roles on the ship, their health status, and whether they have been in contact with any of the infected passengers, all of it remains unknown.



The virus on this ship is called hantavirus. The strain, the Andes strain, can pass between humans, but not through the air in a crowded room, not by sitting nearby. Only through the kind of closeness you share with a spouse, a cabin mate, or a

doctor treating you without protection. **BIRDWATCHING TOUR TURNS DEATHTRAP**

The ship is the MV Hondius, a Dutch expedition vessel that left the southern tip of Argentina on the first of April. On board: 149 passengers and crew from 23 countries. Somewhere on that journey, a killer came aboard.

Argentine investigators believe the source was a birdwatching tour in Ushuaia, the southernmost city on Earth.

A Dutch couple on that tour most likely inhaled microscopic particles from infected rodent droppings on the ground. They felt fine. They boarded the ship.

They had absolutely no idea.

THE DEADLY COUNTDOWN

On April 11, a passenger died on board. The cause of death could not be determined on the ship. On April 24, his body was disembarked on St Helena, with his wife accompanying the repatriation. On April 27, Oceanwide Expeditions was informed that the wife had become unwell during the return journey and had later died. Both were Dutch nationals. On April 27, another passenger became seriously ill and was medically evacuated to South Africa. This person is currently being treated in the intensive care unit in Johannesburg, in a critical but stable condition. A variant of hantavirus has been identified in this patient.

Rs 5K crore invested for modernising IT infrastructure in post offices: Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia

New Delhi.(Agency)

Union minister for communications Jyotiraditya Scindia and chief minister Rekha Gupta have inaugurated the newly renovated and modernised Nehru Place post office. Addressing the gathering, Scindia said that India Post is one of the country's most trusted institutions and continues to play a critical role in financial inclusion, service delivery and national connectivity.

He said that just as arteries carrying blood sustain the human body, the department of posts serves and connects every corner of the nation through its unmatched network and dedicated workforce, including the Dakiyas (postmen), who remain deeply connected with every household.

He emphasised that legacy institutions must evolve with changing times and highlighted the department's efforts to modernise infrastructure, strengthen logistics capabilities and improve customer-centric services and experience. He stated that the renovated post office reflects the department's commitment towards creating bright, efficient, digitally enabled and citizen-friendly public service spaces.

He said that the department has invested nearly Rs 5,000 crore in modernising its IT infrastructure and has rolled out advanced postal technology over the past year.

As part of this transformation, the department has introduced several citizen-centric reforms, including UPI-enabled services, OTP-based delivery, 24x7 and extended-hour post office services, and guaranteed time-bound delivery services such as 24-hour speed post and 48-hour speed posts across major metros.

Delhi approves Rs 806-crore medical college project at Indira Gandhi Hospital in Dwarka

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Delhi government has approved the construction of a modern medical college and hostel complex at the Indira Gandhi Hospital campus in Dwarka. The project, estimated at Rs 805.99 crore, is targeted for completion by 2028, officials said. In a major push to Delhi's healthcare and medical education infrastructure, the project received clearance at a recent meeting of the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) chaired by CM Rekha Gupta.

On Thursday, Gupta said the project would include a full-fledged medical college, separate hostels for male and female students, faculty housing and a modern academic block. The initiative is expected to address the growing demand for doctors in the capital while significantly strengthening Delhi's healthcare services.

The college will be developed in accordance with National Medical Commission (NMC) norms and will eventually accommodate 250 MBBS seats annually. Teaching activities will begin with an initial batch of 150 students, officials said.

The project will be executed in phases. The first phase will focus on the construction of the academic block, student hostels and residential quarters for faculty members. Around 1,17,246 square metres will be developed in this phase, including nearly 34,000 square metres of basement space for parking and other essential facilities, officials said.

The academic block will be a multi-storey structure equipped with modern classrooms, laboratories and advanced teaching facilities. The hostels will accommodate a large number of students, while faculty residences will provide modern living spaces. The Public Works Department (PWD) will execute the construction work, while the Health and Family Welfare Department will oversee the project, officials added.

The Chief Minister said the project would adopt modern and sustainable construction techniques. The buildings will be earthquake-resistant and designed for energy efficiency.

ISI-backed module busted in Delhi, planned attacks on temple, military camp

New Delhi.(Agency)

Pakistan's ISI-backed Shahzad Bhatti module allegedly planned attacks on a historic temple in Delhi, a popular dhaba on the Delhi-Sonipat highway, and a military camp in Hisar, sources said after the interrogation of arrested operatives by the Delhi Police Special Cell.

The revelations came a day after the Delhi Police Special Cell arrested nine alleged operatives linked to the Pakistan ISI-backed Shahzad Bhatti module from Delhi and several other states. Police also recovered weapons from the accused during the operation.

According to sources, the accused

revealed during questioning that a historic temple in Delhi was one of the key targets of the module. One of the arrested operatives had allegedly conducted



reconnaissance of the temple and sent photographs of the site to handlers based in Pakistan.

Sources said the module planned to open fire on police personnel and paramilitary forces deployed at the

temple before targeting the religious site.

Investigators also found that the module planned a hand grenade attack on a famous dhaba located on the Delhi-Sonipat highway, where thousands of people visit daily. The alleged objective was to cause large-scale destruction and panic.

The interrogation further revealed that a military camp in Hisar was also on the target list of the Pakistan ISI-backed module. An accused allegedly conducted reconnaissance of the camp and sent videos of the location to handlers in Pakistan. Sources added that the module also planned to target police personnel stationed at some police stations in Uttar Pradesh.

Petition seeks veg-only hostel facilities in Delhi University

New Delhi.(Agency)

A petition has been filed before the Delhi High Court seeking separate vegetarian food facilities in hostel messes and college canteens across the University of Delhi.

Besides separate food preparation, the plea has also sought segregation of vegetarian and non-vegetarian food storage and serving areas in hostels and colleges. The petition, likely to come up for hearing in the coming days, alleged violation of food safety norms, hygiene standards, and constitutional rights. Filed by Vijeta, a DU student and resident of a women's hostel, the petition claimed she was "directly and substantially" affected by the issue. She alleged that the lack of segregation caused her "grave prejudice", inconvenience, and infringement of her "legitimate expectations" and rights.

The plea, filed through advocate Barun Kumar Sinha on

Wednesday, urged the court to direct authorities to establish "separate and hygienic vegetarian mess facilities at an appropriate distance from mixed mess systems", ensure compliance with statutory food safety and hygiene standards, and frame a transparent policy for students with strict vegetarian dietary requirements.

It also sought adjustment of mess charges and constitution of a grievance redressal mechanism for timely resolution of complaints related to mess and canteen services. The petitioner said she approached the court after authorities allegedly failed to act on repeated representations regarding the issue. According to plea, the absence of "hygienic, pure vegetarian food" at a reasonably proximate distance within the hostel mess prevented her from availing complete meals there. Despite repeated requests to hostel staff and officials for remedial measures, no effective response was received, she claimed.



Relief in name only: A peep into Delhi's heat-struck shelter homes



New Delhi.(Agency)

The night shelters run by the Delhi government, which aid the poor and homeless during extreme winter and peak summer months, are unprepared to handle the impending high temperatures, even though occasional showers have brought temporary relief. The shelter homes this newspaper visited appeared ready to help residents, with individual cabins, beds placed side by side, coolers specially equipped for summer, and water filters. Even though the facilities appear fully functional at first glance, a deeper look into residents' living conditions reveals several loopholes.

Sitting in one corner of the Sarai Kale Khan shelter run by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) is 18-year-old Nazmi. She is worried about the environment she lives in. She showed this reporter the unhygienic conditions in the washrooms and lavatories. They are in this state because most taps do not function, she says. The saving grace, she adds, is access to drinking water, which becomes more than an essential commodity during peak summer.

Behind the washroom area, a water pipe peeked out from a small heap of waste. "We collect and store water from here in our buckets," she says, adding the water supply resumes at 7 am daily, when they are expected to store enough water for the entire day. There are five to six porta-cabins in the Sarai Kale Khan shelter, each of which has been provided with two air coolers. However, many of these coolers emit warm air because the motors meant to pump water into the cooler pads are dysfunctional most of the time, residents claim.

"One non-functional air cooler has been lying here unused for a long time. No one is repairing it. It is almost like a piece of scrap," says 55-year-old daily wage worker Bappa, who has been staying at the shelter with his family for the last five years. Another family living in the same shelter claims that the water dispensers installed in their cabin are never refilled. "The dispensers are there as showpieces," says Shilpa, a 27-year-old mother of two toddlers.

Six vacant seats of Municipal Corporation of Delhi's standing committee to be filled this month

New Delhi.(Agency)

The standing committee has 18 members and serves as the top executive and decision-making body of the corporation.

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi's 18-member standing committee is likely to fill six vacant seats in the upcoming weeks, officials said on Thursday. The standing committee has 18 members and serves as the top executive and decision-making body of the corporation. It handles key financial functions, approves projects and plays a central role in shaping, finalising and implementing policies for the city. According to officials, remaining six vacant seats on the standing committee will be filled through elections from zonal ward committees in the meeting, which is likely to be held in the third or fourth week of May. Nine members retired after a draw of lots conducted on March 31, they added.

On April 29, Jai Bhagwan Yadav from Begumpur and Manish Chadha from Paharganj were elected to the standing



committee from the BJP, while AAP councillor Jalaj Chaudhary from Shalimar Bagh was also elected to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) panel, taking the tally of the panel to 12. Out of 18, six are elected from the MCD house and 12 from each zonal ward committee. Under MCD rules, each standing committee member has a two-year term, but after the first year, half the members retire through a draw of lots.

Officials said the draw of lots process is carried out only once during the five-year tenure of the corporation, at the end of the first year of the standing committee. At the end of the next financial year, the remaining nine members will automatically retire.

According to the outcome in the March 31 meeting, six ward committee members and three house members were excluded by the draw. Of these, six members belong to the BJP and three to AAP. Among those nine excluded on March 31, one member from the house and five from ward committees were from the BJP, while the AAP saw two members from the house and one from a ward committee being left out. Shikha Bharadwaj, Indrajit Sehrawat, Rajpal Singh, Anju Devi, Nema Bhagat and Pankaj Luthra of the BJP, and Ankush Narang, Mohini Jeenwal and Amil Malik of AAP were the nine councillors who exited the standing committee.

Sensex opens 400 points lower, Nifty slips below 24,200 as banking stocks drag

New Delhi.(Agency)

Benchmark stock market indices opened sharply lower on Thursday, weighed down by weakness in banking and IT stocks amid continued foreign investor selling and concerns over rising geopolitical tensions in West Asia.

The BSE Sensex fell 422.11 points, or 0.54%, to 77,422.41 in early trade. The NSE Nifty50 slipped 129 points to 24,197.65, falling below the 24,200 mark. Banking stocks were among the top laggards in morning trade, continuing the recent pressure on heavyweight financial counters. IT shares also remained weak, contributing to the decline in benchmark indices. Market sentiment remained cautious as investors tracked developments in West Asia, where volatility in crude oil prices has added uncertainty to global markets.

Dr VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments Limited, said the ongoing "de-escalation-escalation drama" in the region continues to impact crude oil prices and investor sentiment. He noted that while some global markets have rallied strongly this year, India has underperformed due to concerns linked to the energy crisis and sustained foreign portfolio investor (FPI) selling. "An important trend in India is the outperformance of the broader market. The Nifty Midcap index is now at a record high despite high valuations," Vijayakumar said.

According to him, benchmark indices are being weighed down by continuous selling in heavyweight banking and IT stocks. "The dichotomy in market trend, broader market outperformance versus Nifty underperformance, will continue so long as FPIs remain net sellers," he added.

India's \$863 Billion export milestone: A closer look at where India stands in the global trade league

New Delhi.(Agency)

India's total exports crossing USD 863 billion in FY 2025-26 is, without question, a moment worth celebrating. The infographic from NDTV Datatv tells a compelling visual story — a trajectory that dips around 2019-20, recovers sharply, and then surges to an all-time high. A 4.59 percent annual growth rate in a year marked by global trade tensions, US tariff escalations, and geopolitical friction is no small feat. Yet, when you place this milestone on the same canvas as the world's leading export economies, the picture becomes more nuanced — and the gaps more sobering. China exported nearly USD 3.8 trillion in goods alone in 2025, maintaining a commanding lead over every other economy on the planet. That is roughly 4.4 times India's total export figure — and China's number covers only merchandise, not services. The United States, the world's second-largest exporter, recorded an export value exceeding USD 2.18 trillion in 2025. Germany, with approximately USD 2.10 trillion in export revenue, holds third place globally, driven by precision machinery, automobiles, and chemicals. India, by comparison, sits well outside the top tier. Its USD 863 billion figure — a combined goods and services number — places it as an emerging mid-table player rather than a dominant force. The gap between India and the top three is not merely quantitative; it reflects structural differences in manufacturing depth, supply chain integration, export complexity, and global market positioning.

The Services Lifeline: Strength and Vulnerability Perhaps the most defining feature of India's export story is its growing reliance on services. Services exports for FY 2025-26 are estimated at USD 418.31 billion, reflecting nearly 8 percent annual growth and generating a services trade surplus of USD 213.89 billion.

Indian banking credit growth to moderate to 12-13% in FY27E: Report

New Delhi.(Agency)

Indian banks are entering a phase of moderated expansion, with credit growth expected to cool to 12-13 per cent in FY27E, according to Way2Wealth's Thematic Report - Banking Sector. This anticipated slowdown stems from a combination of demand-driven cooling and supply-side constraints as lenders navigate a tightening liquidity environment.

While deposit growth is projected to stabilize and improve marginally to match credit growth at 12-13 per cent by FY27E, the traditional reliance on low-cost savings is under significant pressure.

"The deposit challenge is not a temporary imbalance that will self-correct when credit growth slows. It reflects a permanent structural shift in India's financial savings landscape. Household financialization is irreversible — India's 18 cr+ demat accounts, Rs 32,000+ cr monthly SIP flows, and a digitally-native younger generation will not return to passive FD investing," the report stated. The report highlighted that the Credit-Deposit (CD) ratio, a key metric of banking health, is expected to ease from current levels of 82 per cent to approximately 79-80 per cent by March 2027. This shift is described as a gradual normalization rather than a sharp correction.

However, the report mentioned that the path forward remains fraught with regulatory and market-driven risks. A system-wide CD ratio crossing the 85 per cent mark would likely trigger macro-prudential action or guidance from the Reserve Bank of India. Banking margins are also expected to feel the heat, with a projected Net Interest Margin (NIM) compression of 10-15 basis points in FY26.

I broke my FD 3 times: When it helped and when it hurt

A fixed deposit feels safe because it is supposed to sit quietly in the background, growing slowly over time. But when life throws sudden surprises, that safety net often becomes the first thing people reach for. The real question is, when does breaking an FD actually make sense, and when does it backfire?

New Delhi.(Agency)

The first time I broke my fixed deposit (FD), it felt wrong. I remember staring at the bank app for a few minutes before finally clicking on "premature withdrawal". That FD was supposed to stay untouched for five years. It was my "safe money" — the kind Indian families build slowly and protect carefully. A medical emergency had suddenly drained

my savings, and the FD became the quickest source of cash. The money arrived within hours. The penalty hurt a little, but the relief felt bigger. The second time was different. It was not an emergency. It was a "once-in-a-lifetime" holiday deal that I convinced myself I deserved after a stressful year. I broke another FD, promising I would rebuild it soon. The third time came during a period of financial stress when credit card bills had started piling up. That decision, surprisingly, turned out to be one of the smartest financial moves I made.

And that is perhaps the strange truth about fixed deposits. Sometimes breaking them protects you. Sometimes it quietly damages your future wealth.

YOUR FD IS NOT JUST MONEY. IT IS EMOTIONAL SECURITY

For many Indians, fixed deposits are not just investments. They are emotional

cushions. Parents build them for children, retirees depend on them for stability, and salaried workers see them as untouchable savings. That is why breaking an FD often comes with guilt. But according to Kumar Binit, CEO of airpay money, a personal

finance management platform, there are situations where using that money is exactly what an FD is meant for. "Fixed Deposits serve as a reliable foundation for your financial plan. They are designed to



to roughly Rs 7.18 lakh. When you break it midway, you are not just losing penalty money. You are interrupting the compounding journey completely," he says.

THE COST NOBODY NOTICES IMMEDIATELY

Most people focus only on the premature withdrawal penalty. Usually, banks charge around 0.5% to 1% lower interest for early withdrawals.

But the bigger loss is invisible. It is compounding that never gets the chance to happen. Rohan Goyal, Investment Research Analyst at MIRA Money, an investment management platform, explains it with a simple example. "A Rs 5 lakh FD at 7.5% for five years grows to roughly Rs 7.18 lakh. When you break it midway, you are not just losing penalty money. You are interrupting the compounding journey completely," he says.

8th Pay Commission: The family unit formula behind salary revisions of govt employees

New Delhi.(Agency)

Salaries of central government employees are not decided only by inflation, fitment factor or dearness allowance (DA). One of the biggest and least understood factors behind government salary calculations is something called the "family unit" — a formula used to estimate how much money an employee needs to support a household. Now, during the ongoing 8th Pay Commission discussions, employee unions and staff bodies are pushing for changes to this formula, arguing that older assumptions no longer reflect the realities of modern Indian families dealing with rising rents, school fees, healthcare costs and urban living expenses. The issue has come up during consultations and memorandums submitted to the 8th Pay Commission by employee organisations, including the All India NPS Employees Federation. The debate may sound technical, but even small changes in the family unit formula can eventually affect minimum basic pay, fitment factor, allowances and pensions

for lakhs of central government employees.

WHAT IS THE 'FAMILY UNIT' FORMULA?

In simple terms, the government first tries to estimate how much money a typical employee's household needs to maintain a minimum standard of living. That estimated cost then becomes the foundation for salary calculations under the Pay Commission. This model household is known as the "family unit". Abhishek Kumar, Sebi-registered investment adviser and founder of Sahaj Money, explained that the family unit refers to the employee and the dependents supported by that employee. "A family unit is used in Pay Commission to describe an employee and their dependents," Kumar told Indiatoday.in. Traditionally, the formula assumes a household consisting of the employee, spouse and children, and estimates expenses accordingly. The system is linked to what is known as the Aykroyd formula, which calculates the minimum wage required to cover essential expenses

such as food, clothing and housing.

"It serves as the foundation for the Aykroyd formula, which determines the minimum wage by calculating the total cost of essential items like food, clothing and housing required to sustain that specific unit," Kumar explained. **HOW DOES FAMILY SIZE AFFECT SALARIES?**

The size and structure of the assumed family directly influence salary recommendations. If the Pay Commission assumes that a family now spends more on food, rent, healthcare, transportation or education, then the estimated minimum expenditure rises. Once that base rises, salary recommendations also move higher.

Kumar said the family unit effectively acts as a multiplier in salary calculations. "As per our understanding, size of the family unit assumed by Pay Commission acts as a multiplier for the cost of basic necessities, meaning any increase in the number of consumption units directly raises the calculated minimum expenditure," he said.

Tata Trusts board meeting postponed amid Tata Sons governance, listing

New Delhi.(Agency)

A crucial Tata Trusts board meeting scheduled for Friday has been postponed to May 16, according to a report by The Economic Times, amid widening internal differences over Tata Sons governance, board representation and the future ownership structure of the Tata Group. The meeting has drawn significant attention because Tata Trusts collectively hold a majority stake in Tata Sons, the holding company of the Tata Group, making any governance-related developments closely watched across corporate India. The postponement comes amid ongoing legal challenges linked to the Trusts. ET reported that the Bombay High Court recently refused to urgently stay proceedings related to the meeting despite a petition challenging the validity of the Sir Ratan Tata Trust board. News agency Reuters had earlier reported that differences had surfaced between Tata Trusts chairman Noel Tata and Tata Sons chairman N Chandrasekaran over issues linked to governance, leadership and the future structure of Tata Sons.

BOARD REPRESENTATION, LISTING TALKS IN FOCUS

One of the biggest issues expected to come up during the meeting is Tata Trusts' representation on the Tata Sons board. According to a separate Moneycontrol report, former Titan Company managing director Bhaskar Bhat is being considered as a possible replacement for TVS Motor chairman emeritus Venu Srinivasan as a nominee director of Tata Trusts on the Tata Sons board. In addition, ET had earlier reported that Tata Trusts was expected to review its representation on the Tata Sons board amid widening differences over governance and strategic issues within the group. The May 16 meeting is also expected to see discussions around Tata Sons' future ownership structure, succession planning, reappointment of key leadership figures and the long-running debate over whether Tata Sons should remain privately held. The issue of a potential Tata Sons listing has emerged as a key point of debate within the group. According to multiple media reports, some trustees are believed to favour preparing for a future listing amid RBI regulations applicable to upper-layer NBFCs, while Noel Tata is understood to support keeping Tata Sons privately held.

WHY THE MEETING MATTERS

The discussions are also being viewed in the context of leadership and succession planning following Noel Tata's appointment as chairman of Tata Trusts after the death of Ratan Tata in 2024.

Lenskart shares fall over 2% amid block deal buzz, IPO lock-in expiry

Lenskart shares fell in Thursday's trade as block deal chatter coincided with the expiry of its IPO lock-in period. The move put the spotlight on possible supply pressure even as analysts said fundamentals remain unchanged.



HONG KONG.(Agency)

Shares of Lenskart Solutions Ltd fell sharply in Thursday's trade amid reports of a potential block deal and the expiry of the company's IPO lock-in period. The stock declined over 2% on the BSE in early trade and was trading around Rs 475.80, down Rs 12.20

intraday. Market chatter around a possible institutional stake sale weighed on investor sentiment. According to reports, nearly 4% equity stake in the company could change hands through block deals. The pressure on the stock also comes as Lenskart's six-month IPO lock-in period expired today, making a large number of shares eligible for trading. Brokerage estimates suggest that around 104.7

crore shares worth more than Rs 51,000 crore have become eligible for trade following the lock-in expiry. While lock-in expiry does not necessarily mean investors will immediately sell their holdings, markets often react cautiously due to the possibility of increased supply in the secondary market. Several early investors and pre-IPO shareholders, including large institutional backers, were covered under the lock-in restrictions. Analysts said the decline in the stock appears to be driven more by concerns around potential supply pressure than by any change in the company's fundamentals. Block deals typically involve large transactions between institutional investors and are closely tracked by markets because they can influence near-term stock movement and investor sentiment.

Think PAN is needed only for ITR Filing? 7 transactions where you must quote it

New Delhi.(Agency)

For many people, the Permanent Account Number or PAN is simply a document used while filing income tax returns. But today, PAN has become an important part of almost every major financial activity in India. From opening a bank account to buying property or making expensive purchases, quoting PAN is now compulsory in several transactions.

The government has made these rules stricter to improve financial transparency and reduce tax evasion. Under Rule 114B of the Income-tax Rules, individuals must provide their PAN details for certain high-value transactions. Having said that, here is a look at seven financial transactions that require mandatory PAN quoting.

OPENING BANK AND DEMAT ACCOUNTS

PAN is now essential for opening bank accounts and demat accounts. Financial institutions use PAN to track investments and banking activities. Without PAN, opening many types of accounts can become difficult.

APPLYING FOR LOANS AND CREDIT CARDS

Whether someone is applying for a home loan, personal loan, car loan or even a credit card, PAN details are mandatory. Banks and lenders use PAN to verify financial history and assess repayment capacity.

HIGH-VALUE CASH PURCHASES

PAN must be quoted for cash purchases above Rs 2 lakh in a single transaction. This rule applies to expensive purchases such as jewellery, luxury items and even certain travel-related expenses. The move is aimed at keeping a check on large cash dealings.

CASH PAYMENTS AT HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS

If a person makes cash payments exceeding Rs 50,000 at hotels or restaurants, PAN details are required. This rule covers high-end spending and helps authorities monitor large cash transactions.

BUYING BANK DRAFTS OR PAY ORDERS

Purchasing bank drafts, banker's cheques

or pay orders above Rs 50,000 in cash also requires PAN. Banks are required to record these details to maintain transaction transparency.

PROPERTY DEALS AND BIG-TICKET PURCHASES

PAN has become especially important in property transactions. Anyone buying or selling immovable property worth more than Rs 10 lakh must provide PAN details. It is also mandatory where the stamp duty valuation exceeds Rs 10 lakh.

Apart from property, PAN is needed while purchasing goods or services valued above Rs 2 lakh.

BUYING OR SELLING UNLISTED SHARES

Investors dealing in unlisted shares worth more than Rs 1 lakh are also required to quote PAN. This helps tax authorities keep track of high-value investments outside the stock market. PAN Application Rules Have Also Changed

Meanwhile, the Income Tax Department has revised the PAN application process. From April 1, 2026, Aadhaar alone is no longer enough to apply for a PAN card.

Applicants must now submit separate proof of date of birth along with their application. Accepted documents include birth certificates, voter ID cards, Class 10 certificates, passports and driving licenses.

Why PAN Matters More Than Ever

PAN is no longer limited to tax filing. It has become a key financial identity document linked to banking, investments, property deals and large purchases.

Short news

Bengaluru man set on fire by in-laws dies, blames them, wife in his dying declaration

BENGALURU.(Agency)

A 25-year-old man was murdered in Anekal area in the outskirts of the city after asking his in-laws to send his wife and children with him. The accused had set the victim ablaze after dousing him with petrol.

The victim, V Naveen, a resident of Chudenahalli in Anekal taluk, named his wife, parents-in-law and brother-in-law in his dying declaration before a magistrate while under treatment in a hospital in Krishnagiri district of Tamil Nadu.

The Krishnagiri court sent the dying declaration to the Anekal police, who had earlier registered a case of attempt to murder on April 14. Based on the dying declaration, a murder case was registered on May 2. Naveen's father-in-law, Sampangi, and brother-in-law, Munesh were arrested and held in judicial custody. Naveen succumbed to the injuries on May 2. Naveen, a coconut vendor, visited his in-law's house in Janatha Colony, Kavalahosagalli village in Anekal with his wife Suchitra and two sons on April 13. On the next day, when he went to bring his wife and sons, she refused to go with him. When he asked his in-laws to send her, the accused assaulted him. Sampangi brought a bottle of petrol and poured on Naveen. Munesh set him on fire. A passerby doused the flames with water.

"The victim went to the Anekal Government Hospital for treatment on his own. The hospital informed the Anekal police as it is a medico-legal case. Naveen was later shifted to another government hospital in Krishnagiri where he succumbed to injuries after battling for life for almost 19 days. The role of the victim's wife and mother-in-law in the incident is being ascertained and they are not yet arrested. Sampangi and Munesh were arrested immediately after registering the attempt to murder case," said an officer.

Rowdy in police custody dies of prolonged illness while undergoing treatment at Victoria Hospital

BENGALURU.(Agency)

A 36-year-old rowdy sheeter who was in police custody for a woman's murder has died due to prolonged illness while undergoing treatment at Victoria Hospital on Tuesday morning.

The victim was a woman living alone on Pipeline Road in Kurubarahalli. The rowdy sheeter, Manjunath, a resident of Seshadripuram, and his four other associates allegedly conspired to steal the money kept in her house and flee. On 20 April, when the woman was walking on the road, they hit her with a bike, causing her to fall and sustain injuries. A case was registered at Vijayanagar Traffic Police Station for causing an accident by dangerous driving.

It was found that the accused had conspired and committed the act with the intention of robbing the money and gold ornaments in the woman's house. The woman succumbed to injuries on 27 April. A case was registered at Mahalakshmi Police Station regarding house theft and murder by causing grievous injury.

Andhra HC issues notices to govt against dismissal of ex-secretariat staff leader

VIJAYAWADA.(Agency)

The AP High Court has issued notices to the State government and senior officials in a petition filed by former AP Secretariat Employees Association president and Panchayat Raj Department Assistant Secretary Kakarla Venkatarami Reddy, challenging his dismissal from service.

Justice Donadi Ramesh directed the State government, the Special Chief Secretary of Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Department, and the Kadapa District Collector-cum-Enquiry Officer to file counters with complete details regarding the dismissal proceedings. The matter was adjourned to June for further hearing.

Venkatarami Reddy approached the High Court challenging the government order issued on April 20, dismissing him from service. He sought an interim suspension of order.

Appearing for the petitioner, advocate Veluru Maheswara Reddy argued that the government dismissed his client on allegations that he violated service rules by allegedly supporting the then YSRCP. He contended that the charges were based largely on newspaper reports and four cases registered alleging violation of the election code.

The counsel argued that the government failed to properly consider the explanations submitted by the petitioner and issued the dismissal order in a unilateral manner. He further alleged that the enquiry officer acted with bias and did not conduct the enquiry in accordance with prescribed procedures.

Bike from Telangana, fake Aadhaar card from MP: Gangster in Bihar jail plotted robbery at SBI branch eyeing gold in vault, say Surat police

Surat.(Agency)

The probe into Rs 50 lakh robbery at the State Bank of India branch in Surat has led to a gangster in Bihar's Beur jail identified as Kundan Bhagat, who, according to police, plotted it in the hope of stealing gold, but got unlucky as the keys to the vault were with the manager, who was away on duty for the Gujarat local body polls.

According to police, the SBI branch in Varachha ranks second in the city in approving gold loans, which the robbers seemed to be aware of.

Five men had come to the bank on April 27 afternoon inquiring about opening accounts and held six persons, including customers, hostage for nearly an hour-and-a-half "demanding keys to the vault".

The police said the robbers have bought a second-hand motorbike from Telangana with a fake licence plate and rode to Surat

and stayed there for two months, taking houses on rent using fake Aadhaar cards which they made in Madhya Pradesh, and done several recce before they eventually robbed the SBI branch. The two arrested accused - Subham Thakur, 24, and

Surat Police Commissioner Anupam Singh Gahlaut said, "Subham Thakur is one among five gang members who entered the SBI Varachha bank on April 27, at 1 pm and committed the robbery. Others involved in the robbery are still absconding and they will be arrested soon."

"The notorious gangster Kundan Bhagat had hatched a conspiracy to rob the SBI branch at Varachha. He had hired people from different states such as UP, Bihar, MP, etc., to commit the robbery. They had procured fake Aadhaar cards from Madhya Pradesh. They had bought a bike from Telangana and had selected Surat to commit their first crime in Gujarat. The gang members involved in the bank

robbery are having criminal cases against them, and they came in contact with Kundan through his jail links," Gahlaut said.



Vikram Singh Rajput, 30, both residents of Gonda, Bihar - were produced before the Surat district court which sent them to 8-day police remand till May 14. A conspiracy hatched in jail

Bombay HC 'surprised' at persistent odour, methane emissions from Kanjurmarg landfill despite orders, seeks CCTV surveillance

Mumbai.(Agency)

The Bombay High Court on Thursday "expressed surprise" over grievances related to odour and emission of dangerous gases including methane from the Kanjurmarg dumping site in suburban eastern Mumbai between 1 am and 6 am that still have not been "satisfactorily resolved" by the authorities despite orders, affecting workers at the site and lakhs of people in the vicinity.

It said that concrete steps were required to be taken to control the odour and directed the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to install additional CCTV cameras at the dumping facility and its live coverage to be linked to the civic body's office through its website, to monitor activities at night hours. It also sought to know if additional waste from an abattoir or some other place was arriving at night. The court said the late-night monitoring should be undertaken on a

continuous basis.

The court also directed that the presently operating complaints portal shall be made more "citizen-friendly" and immediate

measures for the workers at the site, who are most vulnerable, should be undertaken.

A bench of Justices Girish S Kulkarni and Aarti A Sathe was hearing pleas of residents of Kannamwar Cooperative Housing Society Association Ltd, situated in the vicinity, and NGO Vanashakti, raising issues concerning disposal of municipal solid waste at the Kanjurmarg dumping site. The judges visited the site on April 25.

On Thursday, senior advocate Anil Sakhare, representing BMC, submitted its affidavit filed through Chief Engineer (Solid Waste Management) detailing the steps taken to supervise vital aspects of odour and emissions at late-night hours. The steps included deployment of officers at night to identify quality of waste and to monitor receipt of waste during the night-time operations.



redressal be provided by the BMC. It also observed that reports of the independent third party and monitoring van at the facility merely provided levels of respective gases emitted from the dumping facility without recording findings on their effect on the

TCS Nashik employee Nida Khan, key accused in conversion case, arrested

Nida is named in the first of the nine FIRs registered in connection with the case at the Deolali Camp police station and her anticipatory bail plea had recently been rejected by the Nashik Sessions court.

Mumbai.(Agency)

Nida Khan, who is one of the eight accused in the TCS sexual harassment and conversion case, was arrested by the Nashik City police from Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar on Thursday. Nida is named in the first of the nine FIRs registered in connection with the case at the Deolali Camp police station and her anticipatory bail plea had recently been rejected by the Nashik Sessions court. Nashik City Police Commissioner Sandeep Karnik confirmed Nida's arrest.

Nida will be brought to Nashik and produced before a court on Friday where the police will seek her custody. Nida's lawyer had earlier sought anticipatory bail plea citing that she was pregnant and that her name was only in one FIR and she is accused of hurting religious sentiments. The

prosecution, while opposing her bail plea, had said that Khan had played a role in the 'religious conversion' of a victim by giving her burqa, religious books and installing religious apps on her phone.



Khan, who worked at TCS's BPO office in Nashik, is one of eight accused named across nine FIRs registered by the Nashik City police between March 26 and April 3 in connection with the alleged sexual harassment and

conversion. Seven others - Danish Sheikh, Shafi Shaikh, Asif Ansari, Tausif Attar, Shahrukh Qureshi, Raza Memon and Ashwini Chainani - have already been arrested. The case came to light in February when a local political party worker approached Nashik police alleging that a Hindu woman working at the BPO had been influenced to follow Islamic practices at her workplace.

Police deployed constables as undercover housekeeping staff inside the 147-employee BPO for several days, which, the police claim, provided the grounds for action.

TCS had stated that it has a zero-tolerance policy towards harassment and coercion of any form, and that the employees allegedly involved in sexual harassment have been suspended.

Karnataka to bolster commercial space tech: Minister Priyank Kharge

BENGALURU.(Agency)

"Space technology is a key pillar in Karnataka's DeepTech Decade vision. The state is uniquely positioned to lead the next phase of India's commercial space growth by building deep capabilities across innovation, advanced manufacturing, data, upstream and downstream applications," said IT/BT minister Priyank Kharge at a roundtable conference with space tech startup founders and stakeholders from the industry and academia on Thursday.

Kharge vouched for common testing and validation infrastructure as a means to significantly reduce barriers for startups and MSMEs while accelerating product development cycles and commercial readiness.

"Karnataka was the first State in India to put out a draft Space Policy, reflecting our early commitment towards building a globally competitive commercial space ecosystem. Our policy vision is anchored in long-term ecosystem leadership spanning infrastructure, manufacturing, research, talent development and industry collaboration," added secretary of the IT/BT department N Manjula.

Representatives from startups and organisations including Pixxel, KaleidEO, Astrogate Labs, SkyServe, MISTEO, GalaxEye, Ananth Technologies, Centum Electronics, HAL, Astra Space, BHEL, Raman Research Institute, Indian Institute of Astrophysics, and others attended the conference.

Taluka panchayat polls: After member's death, Congress holds key to ending AAP-BJP impasse in Bharuch

AAP's Gunvant Vasava died days after he fell at a resort in Maharashtra, where the party had sent its winning candidates amid fears of horse trading

Surat.(Agency)

The death of a winning taluka panchayat member has put both the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on edge in Bharuch's Netrang, where the former had won the highest eight seats in the recent local body polls. As things stand, the AAP and the BJP now have seven winning candidates each for the 16-member body of the tribal district. As such, both parties are vying to get the support of the lone Congress winning candidate to break the deadlock, their leaders said.

Gunvant Vasava, 62, who won from the Bilothi seat in Netrang on an AAP ticket, died at Surat's Universal Hospital on

Wednesday, days after he fell in a bathroom at a resort in Maharashtra's Shahada on May 2, the AAP's Gujarat working president Chaitar Vasava said.

"The doctors told us that the cause of his (Gunvant's) death was brain hemorrhage. This was the first time Gunvant was elected to the Netrang taluka panchayat. Our full support is with his two sons and wife," Chaitar, who's the AAP MLA from Dediapada, told The Indian Express.

Gunvant and seven other AAP candidates were taken to a resort in Maharashtra's Shahada, which neighbours Netrang, on May 1, amid fears of horse trading by the BJP, the Dediapada MLA said, adding

the elected members had complained that the BJP and its workers were pressuring



them for support. "After the election results (on April 28), BJP leaders had gone to Gunvant Vasava's residence, where

they met his son Narpat and asked him to get his father to support or join the BJP, and offered him several posts. After that, the eight winning members from the AAP stayed for a few days at our party leader's home in Valia taluka. On May 1, they were taken to a resort in neighbouring Shahada," the MLA said. Meanwhile, Netrang taluka BJP president Mansukh Vasava confirmed that the party had approached the Congress. "We are in talks with the Congress party to get the support of their lone elected member. We are ready to offer her a vice-president position or any committee member position, but not the president's, in Netrang.

After Ram, Shiva and Krishna, UP plans a Guru Gorakhnath spiritual corridor

From a 25-foot statue to ancient caves, discover how the state is mapping the Nath tradition.

Lucknow.(Agency)

Having reshaped Uttar Pradesh's religious tourism around Ram (Ayodhya), Shiva (Kashi) and Krishna (Mathura), the state government is now moving to develop a dedicated Guru Gorakhnath Circuit.

According to sources, the proposed corridor will bring together temples, caves, monasteries and meditation sites associated with the Nath sect. The Gorakhnath Temple in Gorakhpur, headquarters of the Gorakshapeth - of which Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is the head - will be at the centre of the circuit, sources



said. Guru Gorakhnath is regarded as the founder of the Nath tradition, also known as the Nath Hindu monastic movement, with followers spread across Gorakhpur, Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu, and Nepal.

Officials said the objective is to connect Nath sites that are currently scattered across regions into a single, navigable route through better infrastructure, visitor facilities and branding. The planned corridor seeks to integrate religious sites from Mahoba and Chitrakoot in Bundelkhand region, Bareilly in the West, Amethi and Ayodhya in Central UP, to Gorakhpur and Balrampur in the East.

NEWS BOX

IPL on honey-trap alert, BCCI cracks down on players' hotel room access

New Delhi. (Agency)

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Thursday, May 7, issued an eight-page directive for all the IPL teams, raising concerns about the serious breach of protocols during the ongoing tournament. BCCI also rolled out diktats for both players and teams, which will need to be adhered to in the future and with immediate effect. This comes after the various controversies, including RR manager Romi Bhinder using a phone inside the dugout and the vaping row involving Riyan Parag. BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia wrote to all ten franchises on Thursday, highlighting the protocol breaches this season and urging the teams to reinforce professionalism and discipline. "The advisory has been issued in light of certain incidents observed during ongoing season and is intended to reinforce the standards of professionalism, discipline, security



awareness and protocol compliance expected from all stakeholders associated with IPL," wrote Saikia, according to PTI. The directive sets the record straight with the teams, owners and the players, pointing out the breaches that have been reported by the Anti Corruption and Security Unit (ACSU) of BCCI. "It has come to the attention of the BCCI that certain incidents of misconduct and protocol violation have occurred involving players and support staff and team officials during the course of the current IPL season. These incidents if left unaddressed, carry the potential to cause significant reputational harm to the tournament, the Franchise concerned and the BCCI as the Governing Body. They may further expose individuals and franchises to legal liability and security risks of serious nature," read the statement. The message from the BCCI also pointed out the visits from unauthorised people in the players' hotel rooms as a major area of concern. "It has been observed that certain players and support staff members have permitted unauthorised persons to access their hotel rooms without the knowledge or approval of the concerned IPL franchise Team Manager. In a number of instances, Team Manager was entirely unaware of the presence of such visitors.

Not money or parades, just want to know India is watching us: Badminton star Satwik

MADRID. (Agency)

Former men's doubles World No.1 Satwiksairaj Rankireddy clarifies the remarks that he made after India's Thomas Cup bronze medal win. Satwik felt that his comments may have been misunderstood. In an exclusive chat with India Today, Satwik vented out his frustrations and highlighted the limited support system available to Indian athletes, who compete globally in their quest for excellence and to bring pride to the nation. The Indian ace sparked buzz on social media when his Instagram story went viral, as no representative from the badminton body or the government was present at the airport to welcome the bronze medal-winning squad on their return from Denmark. In an open letter, Satwik clarified his intent behind his comments, saying that he wasn't looking for fame or taking credit away from other athletes. The last few days have brought a lot of attention to my recent comments regarding the lack of a reception for our Thomas Cup bronze medal. While I



am grateful for the overwhelming support and encouragement, I want to clarify my intent because I see many people deviating from the original point."

"My words did not come from a place of wanting personal fame or taking credit away from anyone else's achievements. I have the utmost respect for every athlete who brings glory to India, regardless of the sport," said Satwik. JUST WANT TO KNOW OUR COUNTRY IS WATCHING'

Satwik said that he wanted to put across a message that would start encouraging and celebrating such wins in the country, regardless of its magnitude. The Indian ace said he felt disheartened seeing that the Thomas Cup team was welcomed with silence, something he claimed would discourage young talent as well.

Beyond Kohli's wicket: Prince Yadav reveals what he cherished most in LSG vs RCB

How many wickets did Prince Yadav take against RCB in IPL 2026?

What role has Virat Kohli played as an Impact Player for RCB in 2026?

What viral moment occurred between Virat Kohli and Mohammed Siraj after RCB vs GT?

New Delhi. (Agency)

When it comes to an international game or a match in the IPL, nothing is sweeter than getting the wicket of Virat Kohli in a must-win clash. Kohli had ensured that RCB got over the line in four chases, scoring 222 runs at an average of 111. But Prince Yadav changed everything with an incredible delivery at the Ekana. The Delhi pacer bowled a beauty to beat Kohli all ends up and send his off-stump for a walk as the RCB star



was dismissed for a 2-ball duck. But despite this, Prince was more happy with seeing his team win. Speaking at the press conference

after the game, the LSG pacer said that Kohli's wicket wouldn't have mattered had they lost the match. "I felt good about Kohli's

wicket, but what makes me happiest is that we won the match. If I had taken the wicket and we still lost, it wouldn't have felt the same. The best feeling for me is when my team wins," said Prince.

USING VARIATIONS PERFECTLY

A feature of Prince's bowling in the IPL this season has been the way he has varied things up in different phases with the ball. With the new ball, 73.8% of his deliveries have consistently hit the good-length or back-of-a-length areas, the traditional control zones. When it comes to the middle overs, the LSG pacer goes for a hard length more often than not. And at the death, he leans more on full length deliveries.

But Prince remained coy on the use of variations and more happy about the fact that he was able to get the wickets at the right time to script LSG's win.

"Whether it happens in different ways or one way, as a bowler you do feel good when you take a wicket. But like I said earlier, in that situation we could only win the match by getting that wicket, and that's exactly what happened. So yes, it feels really good, absolutely," said Prince.

Rishabh Pant's final over dilemma: Why Digvesh was picked over Shahbaz Ahmed

Lucknow. (Agency)

With 20 runs to defend in the final over against Royal Challengers Bengaluru, Rishabh Pant found himself staring at the kind of decision that can define a captain's night. Lucknow Super Giants had done the hard work to stay ahead in the contest, but with Romario Shepherd and Krunal Pandya at the crease, the match was still very much alive. What made the decision trickier was the tactical corner LSG had backed themselves into. The Lucknow surface had offered enough assistance for spin through the evening, making that the logical route for the final over as well. But logic only goes so far when two powerful finishers are capable of launching even decent deliveries into the stands. Pant's choice came down to two spinners with very different appeals. Shahbaz Ahmed brought experience and control. Digvesh Rathi brought unpredictability, deception and the kind of mystery that can unsettle a batter under pressure.

A captain's toughest conversation

Just before the final over began, the cameras picked up an intriguing exchange in the middle. Pant made his way in for a conversation with both Shahbaz and Digvesh, with the two bowlers appearing

more than ready to take responsibility. Captains often have the luxury of reading hesitation in moments like these. A bowler unsure of himself can make the choice easier. But there was no such signal here. Both Shahbaz and Digvesh looked convinced they were the right man



for the job, with Shahbaz particularly animated as the discussion unfolded.

Pant remained composed through it all, even taking a moment to consult Mitchell Marsh before arriving at his decision. In the end, the ball went to Digvesh, a call that immediately raised eyebrows given Shahbaz's greater experience in pressure situations.

Why Romario Shepherd changed the equation This was not just about defending 20 runs. It

was about defending 20 against one of the most dangerous hitters in the competition.

Romario Shepherd had already shown enough to suggest that one over was more than enough time to swing the game, while Krunal Pandya was beginning to settle into his innings at the other end. The challenge was not whether spin was the right option. The challenge was which spinner had the better chance of disrupting the batters' rhythm. Pant's explanation after the game suggested the decision was rooted in match-up thinking rather than pure instinct. "It was a tough call (to go with Rathi over Shahbaz). We were under pressure. But at the same time you've got to trust your bowler. Rathi was the right matchup for sure against Shepherd. He trusted himself and got the job done for the team." That trust was clearly central to the decision. Pant was not simply choosing between two bowling styles. He was choosing the bowler he believed could handle the moment.

The gamble that paid off

As it turned out, Pant's call could not have worked out much better. Digvesh kept his composure brilliantly, conceding just 10 runs in the over and ensuring LSG closed out a memorable victory.

Now or never for misfiring Delhi as rejuvenated Kolkata await in must-win showdown

BARCELONA. (Agency)

Delhi Capitals are back to square one. A strong auction had given them one of the most balanced squads on paper, but baffling selection calls, Axar Patel's inconsistent captaincy and an inability to read conditions at home have dragged them back into must-win territory once again. Nothing has worked consistently for DC this season. Flat pitches have not guaranteed victories, difficult surfaces have exposed their batting, big totals have slipped away, and collapses have become an alarming pattern. With their IPL 2026 campaign now hanging by a thread, Delhi head into Friday's clash against Kolkata Knight Riders knowing there is no room left for another mistake. For both teams, the playoff race is still alive only in theory. The reality is far harsher. Another defeat could leave either side staring at elimination. When Delhi Capitals and Kolkata Knight Riders meet at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on Friday, it will be about far more than just two points. It will be about survival. There is no margin for error left now.



One more slip-up could effectively shut the door on the season for either side, and only one team is likely to walk away from Friday's clash still feeling in control of its playoff destiny.

Delhi Capitals are seventh on the table with eight points from 10 matches and must win all four of their remaining games to stay in contention for the playoffs. KKR are only slightly better placed in eighth with seven points from nine matches. The biggest difference between the two sides at the moment is momentum. After stumbling badly at the start of the season, Kolkata have finally found some rhythm and arrive in Delhi on the back of three straight wins. Their poor start has left them with almost no breathing space, but there is at least a sense that they are building momentum at the right time. KKR still need to win all five of its remaining matches to reach 17 points and remain alive in the playoff race. Delhi, meanwhile, still look like a side searching for clarity. That uncertainty is expected to shape one of the biggest decisions ahead of Friday's game: the pitch.

Is Varun Chakravarthy's IPL blip a case of T20 World Cup fatigue?

SEVILLE. (Agency)

Varun Chakravarthy's inconsistent IPL 2026 season could be linked to the mental and physical toll of India's hectic T20 World Cup-winning campaign earlier this year. According to Dwayne Bravo, the Kolkata Knight Riders spinner probably needed a proper break after the World Cup before jumping straight back into another demanding tournament. This IPL season has seen several members of India's T20 World Cup-winning squad struggle for rhythm, including Jasprit Bumrah and Arshdeep Singh. Speaking ahead of KKR's clash against Delhi Capitals on May 8, Bravo backed Varun and insisted the spinner's quality was never in doubt despite his uneven returns this season. "Yeah, I think in sports, especially when you play at

this level, everything is very result-oriented and sometimes people get very emotional," Bravo said. "A player like Varun, who is a



world-class spinner, has just come out of the World Cup, which was also a very hectic tournament." "So a break at the right time is always important, but no one ever questioned his ability because when you are

that good, it is only a matter of time before you come back into form."

Bravo also highlighted how mentally draining a tournament like the IPL can become, especially immediately after international duty. "The group is very supportive of him, and a mental break is also very important, especially in a tournament like the IPL where there are so many games, high pressure, and the best players competing against each other." "No matter who you are as a player, you will go through these moments. There are so many other quality players struggling this season as well." The conversation around fatigue has quietly become one of the bigger themes of IPL 2026, especially around players who were central to India's T20 World Cup triumph.

Should DC roll the dice on Prithvi Shaw in their last-gasp IPL playoff push?

Delhi Capitals need a spark in their last-gasp playoff push. But should that spark come from a returning Prithvi Shaw? Here is why DC might just roll the dice.

BENGALURU. (Agency)

Delhi Capitals are running out of road. The playoffs are still theoretically within reach, but the margin for error has all but disappeared, and the decisions made in the next few days could define their entire season. Friday's clash with Kolkata Knight Riders is not quite a must-win. But it is close enough that the distinction barely matters. And in the middle of all this pressure, one question refuses to go away: is now finally the time to hand Prithvi Shaw a game?

The man who never quite got going There is something almost poetic and painful about Shaw's story. He arrived in senior cricket with everything. The footwork, the instinct, the swagger at the crease that you simply cannot coach. He looked like the real deal, and for a while, he was.

But somewhere along the way, it all got complicated. The discipline questions, the form slumps, the sense that a generational talent was slowly slipping through the cracks. Now, at a stage in his career where every opportunity feels like it could be his last in the IPL, Shaw has not played a single game for Delhi this season.

When DC brought him back to where it all started, there was a quiet optimism about it. A second chance at the franchise that first believed in him. So far, that chance has not come.

The case for and against It is completely fair to wonder why Shaw over

Abishek Porel. In DC's last game against Royal Challengers Bengaluru, Porel was the only batsman who showed up. He played with freedom and intent on a day when



almost everyone else went through the motions. He also offers something increasingly valuable in T20 cricket: a right-left combination at the top of the order that keeps the opposition guessing.

When a team is struggling and morale is low, sometimes what you need is not the safest option. You need a spark. Shaw, for all his recent struggles, is a player who genuinely wants to prove people wrong right now. That kind of hunger, that desperation to succeed, can be infectious in a dressing room that badly needs something to rally around. It is fair to say that Shaw might've not shown that hunger to succeed as the many other generational talents we have seen in Indian cricket. But the situation dictates that the current combination is clearly not working. The top order has been the biggest problem, and if Pathum Nissanka makes way, Shaw coming in at the top allows David Miller to slot into the middle order where his big-match experience is worth its weight in gold. The bowling has been decent enough. It is the batting that needs fixing, and it needs fixing now.

Palak Tiwari

Says She Has Done Her 'Bit Of Easy Acting', Wants To Challenge Herself Now

Actress Palak Tiwari seems to have become more particular about the projects that she plans to opt for. The actress who made her Bollywood debut with 'Kisi Ka Bhai, Kisi Ki Jaan' feels she is all set to explore roles that challenge her as an actor, stating that she has already explored her share of "easy acting".

The actress, in an exclusive conversation with IANS, spoke about what drew her to her upcoming intense OTT drama Lukkhe.

Palak opened up about why she instantly connected with the story and decided to come on board for the project. Sharing what made her say yes to the show, Palak initially quipped, "I



think we all can agree that I have done my bit of easy acting."

She added, "I can do that, but honestly, I remember reading the script I got for the audition without any context. I didn't know anything about my character or even the character I was auditioning with. I got two or three scenes for the audition, and one of the scenes I read genuinely made me tear up without any context."

She further added, "I think that's such a special feeling because, as actors, sometimes you remain

detached from what you are reading. But this story really spoke to me, and I knew I wanted to be a part of it somehow. It makes your job easier as an actor when you truly feel the emotions being portrayed and relate to them on some level." She added, "That really motivated me to try something so different from anything I have done before. All credit goes to the story. Exploring a drama like this has always been a dream."

Palak, daughter of television star Shweta Tiwari, made her Bollywood debut with Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan alongside Salman Khan, where she played a supporting role.



Ileana D'Cruz Gets Candid About Breastfeeding Struggles, Says 'We Are In Whatever The Heck This Phase...'



Bollywood actress Ileana D'Cruz seems to be keeping her opinion her motherhood experience real and relatable. The actress recently shared a candid glimpse from her parenting journey and posted an honest moment with her little one and wrote, "We are in whatever the heck this phase is of breastfeeding."

The actress, known for her unfiltered take on motherhood, shared a monochrome video where Ileana was seen seated comfortably on the floor while attending to her baby during a breastfeeding session. The clip also gave a glimpse of baby essentials and toys scattered around. Keeping her quintessential sense of humor intact, the actress captioned the post as, "We are in whatever the heck this phase is of breastfeeding." Over the past few months, the actress has been sharing snippets of her life as a new mother. Earlier, the actress was seen celebrating a good hair day as she had a perfect blow-dry, until her two-year-old son showed up and adorably played with his mother's long tresses.

For the uninitiated, Ileana married her beau, Michael Dolan, in 2023. They welcomed their first child, a son named Koa Phoenix Dolan, in the same year. In 2025, she gave birth to her second son, whom they named Keanu Rafe Dolan.

On the professional front, the 39-year-old actress, who made her screen debut in 2006 with the Telugu-language romantic-drama film Devadasu, has worked in films including Pokiri, Jalsa, Kick, and Julayi. She also starred in the Tamil film Nanban.

In Bollywood, the actress known for films like Barfi!, Rustom, Main Tera Hero and Raid, has actively been using social media to share personal moments from her journey beyond the screen.

Saba Pataudi Rings In 50th Birthday With Kareena Kapoor, Saif Ali Khan; Jeh And Inaaya Steal The Show



Saba Pataudi celebrated her 50th birthday with close family members, including brother Saif Ali Khan and sister-in-law Kareena Kapoor Khan. Giving fans a peek into the intimate celebration, Saba shared a series of heartwarming moments on social media that quickly caught everyone's attention. Taking to her Instagram handle, Saba shared photos from the celebration and wrote, "1st May 2026! Familia50th....Lovin it! There is more to come...but this was a special beginning to a beautiful journey ahead. Thank you Soha for hosting this lunch! Bebo for the fabulous balloons, card and gift..bhai too! Inni card and jeh baba voice note were gems! All of you for making it special. This year started...on a fabulous note! Missed the boys . Jeh Tim Iggy and of course Sara too! And Amma! Love you all! Thank uuuuu." Fans also wished her in the comment section.

According to Variety India, Salman Khan himself is said to have personally reached out to her, helping to accelerate the discussions. Despite earlier rumours about Samantha Ruth Prabhu being the frontrunner, Kareena is now the likely choice for the lead. While Bebo hasn't formally signed the project yet, she has responded enthusiastically to her role and verbally committed interest. If this collaboration materializes, it will be the fifth time Salman and Kareena share screen space, and their first since 'Bajrangi Bhaijaan' in 2015. Their previous films, including 'Kyon Ki...', 'Main Aur Mrs Khanna', and 'Bodyguard', were all major hits. Fans have long awaited a reunion between the two stars, and if it goes ahead, it would definitely be a highly anticipated moment for their fans! Produced by Atul Agnihotri and Mythri Movie Makers, the film will feature Salman as an aging superhero who is drawn back into action by unforeseen circumstances, eventually finding himself entangled in a much larger conflict.

This will also mark Raj and DK's return to theatrical films, following their 2017 release A Gentleman, after a successful run in the streaming world with The Family Man, Farzi, Citadel: Honey Bunny, and Guns And Gulaabs.

The actor will be next seen in upcoming Netflix film Kartavya, a tense heartland drama backed by Red Chillies Entertainment. Recently, Shah Rukh shared the poster of the film and wrote, "Kartavya ke iss chakravyyuh mein, har faisla ek intihyaan hoga. Watch Kartavya, out 15 May, only on Netflix." The poster features Saif Ali Khan in an intense avatar as a police officer, standing against the backdrop of a police vehicle and fire.

Nora Fatehi

Apologises To NCW Over Sarke Chunar Controversy: 'T'll Sponsor Education For A Few Orphan Girls'



Nora Fatehi appeared before the National Commission for Women in connection with the controversy surrounding the song Sarke Chunar from KD: The Devil. The actor submitted a written apology to the Commission after being summoned in the matter. The controversy around the song has remained in the spotlight since its release, with criticism over its lyrics and choreography. Nora Fatehi also announced that she would sponsor the education of orphan girls following her appearance before the Commission.

Nora Fatehi submits apology to NCW

After appearing before the NCW, Nora Fatehi addressed the matter briefly and acknowledged her responsibility as a public figure and performer. Speaking about the issue, the actor said, "I have submitted my apology to the Commission. It was not my intention to offend anybody. I have to be responsible as an artist. I have decided to sponsor the education for a few orphan girls." The Commission had summoned Nora Fatehi over concerns linked to the portrayal of women in the song. The issue had already triggered strong reactions online, with several people questioning the content of the

track soon after it was released.

Singer Armaan Malik had earlier criticised the song's writing and called it a "new low". The backlash later intensified as legal complaints seeking a ban on the song were filed. Amid the growing controversy, the makers reportedly removed the track from YouTube.

Sanjay Dutt had also appeared before the



Commission

Earlier in the controversy, Sanjay Dutt had also appeared before the National Commission for Women in connection with the same issue. The actor submitted a written apology and expressed regret over any unintended offence caused by the song. As part of corrective measures, Sanjay Dutt committed to sponsoring the education of 50 tribal girl children.

NEWS BOX

Partial results show losses for Starmer's Labour and wins for Reform UK in local elections

LONDON. (Agency)

Partial results from local elections in England on Friday showed big losses for Prime Minister Keir Starmer's governing Labour Party and gains for the hard-right party Reform UK. The votes are being widely seen as an unofficial referendum on Starmer, elected less than two years ago. Areas that counted their ballots overnight saw Reform UK, led by Nigel Farage, win hundreds of local council seats in working-class areas in England's north such as Hartlepool. The picture will change throughout Friday as results come in from the majority of local councils, including Labour strongholds like London. Votes will also be counted in contests for semi-autonomous parliaments in Scotland and Wales. A Labour rout could trigger moves by restive party lawmakers to oust a leader who led them to power in July 2024. Even if Starmer survives for now, many analysts doubt he will lead the party into the next national election, which must be held by 2029. Deputy Prime Minister David Lammy cautioned the party not to topple the prime minister, saying "you don't change the pilot during the flight."

UAE reports drone, missile attack as Iran ceasefire strains; US military says not seeking escalation

DUBAI. (Agency)

The Iran war's shaky ceasefire came under further strain on Friday as the United Arab Emirates responded to a missile and drone attack hours after the US said it thwarted attacks on three Navy ships in the Strait of Hormuz and retaliated against Iranian military facilities. The violence jeopardized the fragile truce between Iran and the US while the two sides considered a deal to end the fighting. On Thursday, Tehran said it was examining the latest US proposals for ending the war. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said the Islamic Republic was reviewing messages from Pakistan, which is mediating peace negotiations, but Iran "has not yet reached a conclusion, and no response has been given to the US side," Iranian state TV reported. The Trump administration has sent mixed messages on its strategy to end the war. The ceasefire and previous declarations that military operations were over have given way to new threats of bombing if Tehran does not accept a deal that allows for resumption of oil and natural gas shipments disrupted by the conflict. Trump reiterated those threats after Thursday's exchange of fire involving the US Navy. "They have to understand: If it doesn't get signed, they're going to have a lot of pain," he told reporters in Washington. Asked how close the US was to a deal with Iran, Trump said: "It could happen any day," but quickly added, "And it might not happen." The ceasefire between the US and Iran has largely held since April 8. In-person talks between the two countries, hosted by Pakistan last month, failed to reach an agreement to end the war that began Feb. 28 when the US and Israel launched strikes against Iran. US military says it's not seeking escalation. The UAE's defense ministry advised residents not to approach, photograph or touch "any debris or fragments that have fallen as a result of successful air interceptions."

WHO Warns Of More Hantavirus Cases In 'Limited' Outbreak

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

The World Health Organization said Thursday that more hantavirus cases could emerge after the disease killed three passengers from a cruise ship, but it expected the outbreak to be limited if precautions were taken. Another sick passenger from the MV Hondius landed in Europe earlier in the day, as the vessel headed to the Spanish Canary Islands and health officials scrambled to trace the outbreak of the potentially deadly human-to-human strain. The fate of the Hondius sparked international alarm after three people travelling on it died, though health officials have played down fears of a wider global outbreak from the rat-borne virus, which is less contagious than Covid-19. US President Donald Trump said Thursday he had been briefed on the situation. "It's very much, we hope, under control," Trump told reporters.

"It was the ship -- and I think we're going to make a full report about it tomorrow. We have a lot of great people studying it... It should be fine, we hope."

A Dutch couple who had travelled around South America before boarding the ship in Ushuaia, Argentina on April 1 were the first fatalities.

Argentine health authorities said Thursday they had not yet been able to establish where the outbreak began.

"With the information provided so far by the countries involved and participating national agencies, it is not possible to confirm the origin of the infection," the health ministry said after a meeting with authorities from all 24 Argentine provinces. WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told journalists in Geneva that five confirmed and three suspected cases had been reported overall, including the three deaths. Given the incubation period of the Andes virus, which can be up to six weeks, it's possible that more cases may be reported," he said, referring to the rare strain detected aboard the Hondius, which can be transmitted between humans. The Leiden University Medical Centre in the Netherlands later announced another patient had tested positive.

But the WHO's emergency alert and response director Abdi Rahman Mahamud said he believed it would be "a limited outbreak" if "public health measures are implemented and solidarity shown across all countries." People thought or known to have contracted the virus are being treated or isolating in Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and South Africa.

Alarmed ASEAN leaders discuss crisis plan to mitigate backlash from Middle East war

The alarm by the heads of state of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations is underscored by their decision to focus discussions on a contingency plan to ensure their fast-growing region.

CEBU. (Agency)

Southeast Asian leaders met in an annual summit Friday under intense pressure to mitigate the impact on their people and economies from the Iran war, which one top minister said, "should not have occurred in the first place." The alarm by the heads of state of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations is underscored by their decision to focus discussions on a

contingency plan to ensure their fast-growing region, which imports most of its oil and gas from the Middle East, will have stable fuel and food supplies. The Philippines is hosting the summit on the central island province of Cebu. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has ordered the summit to be stripped of the traditional pomp and pageantry in keeping with the economic headwinds worldwide.

A key dilemma of the ASEAN leaders is how to carry out large-scale evacuations from the Middle East, where more than a million of their citizens work and live, if widespread hostilities flare up again.

Several Southeast Asian citizens have been killed since the United States and Israel launched military strikes on Feb. 28 against Iran. The hostilities have continued sporadically despite a month-old ceasefire, especially in the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

A draft of a joint declaration by the leaders which outlines a contingency plan and which was seen by The Associated Press, called on the regional bloc's 11 state members to share information and

strengthen coordination with international organizations "to ensure the safety and welfare of ASEAN nationals in affected areas." Known for their conservative and careful rhetoric, top delegates to the



ASEAN summit avoided blunt expressions of their disappointment over the continuing hostilities, but Thailand's foreign minister, Sihasak Phuangketkeow, was more emphatic and called for the current ceasefire between the U.S. and Iran to be indefinitely extended and the safe passage of ships through the Strait of Hormuz

assured. "This war should not have occurred in the first place," Sihasak told AP in a brief interview and added that all ASEAN states were alarmed. "We don't know what the objectives are right?" "The peace talks seem to be moving but we want the war to end," Sihasak said. ASEAN's contingency plan calls for actions including the ratification possibly this year of an agreement that will pave the way for coordinated emergency fuel sharing, planning a regional power grid, diversifying the region's sources of crude oil, promoting the use of electric vehicles and studying the use of new technologies, including civilian nuclear energy. Despite the focus on the Middle East and their shortened summit to cut costs, the leaders will take up major regional flash points, including the South China Sea territorial disputes involving Beijing, a five-year civil war in Myanmar and a recent border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia. In a separate statement by the leaders on maritime issues.

A year in, what's on Pope Leo XIV's to-do list? And what has he done so far?

Several upcoming appointments in the U.S. and at the Vatican will give Leo an opportunity to shape the church's hierarchy and central governance more to his liking and priorities.

VATICAN CITY. (Agency)

Unlike Pope Francis, who shook things up early on with a flurry of reforms, appointments and new structures, Pope Leo XIV has sought to find his footing and take a longer view of his pontificate. Pope Leo has made some significant decisions so far, and has several challenges looming. Several upcoming appointments in the U.S. and at the Vatican will give Leo an opportunity to shape the church's hierarchy and central governance more to his liking and priorities. Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich turned 77 in March, two years over the normal retirement age for bishops, meaning Leo could soon

name an archbishop for his hometown. In December, Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez turns 75, giving Leo a chance to name a new leader for the largest U.S. archdiocese. He already has named Archbishop Ronald Hicks



to replace retiring Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, but that appointment "didn't ideologically code dramatically one way or the other... in keeping with Leo's overall kind of approach to a lot of these decisions," said Michael Moreland, professor of law and religion at Leo's alma mater, Villanova University. At the Vatican, British Cardinal Arthur Roche turned

76 and heads the liturgy office, which was responsible for enforcing Francis' controversial crackdown on the old Latin Mass. Roche's eventual successor will be scrutinized to see how Leo might address the divisive issue. Another Vatican heavyweight is American Cardinal Kevin Farrell, who at 78 is well beyond retirement age but still heads its family and laity office. He also serves as the camerlengo, who oversaw the conclave that elected Leo, and the most sensitive Holy See committees that are responsible for financial investments and the city state's highest court of appeal. Canadian Cardinal Michael Czerny's 80th birthday in July will not only make him the oldest Vatican prefect -- he heads the Vatican's office for migrants, the environment and development -- but also will exclude him from voting in the next conclave.

That will reduce the number of voting-age cardinals to 117, below the threshold of 120 that is the usual cap for the number of cardinals under 80 who can vote.

North Korea will deploy new artillery guns targeting Seoul and commission its first destroyer

SEOUL. (Agency)

North Korea said Friday it will deploy new long-range artillery systems this year that are capable of striking South Korea's capital region and will commission its first naval destroyer in coming weeks. The announcement comes days after South Korea said North Korea's newly revised constitution drops all references to Korean unification, in line with leader Kim Jong Un's vows to terminate ties with South Korea and establish a two-state system on the Korean Peninsula. Kim visited a munitions factory Wednesday to inspect the production of 155-mm self-propelled gun-howitzers to be deployed at an artillery unit in the southern border area within this year, the North's official Korean Central News Agency reported.

KCNA cited Kim as saying the striking range of this large-caliber rifle gun is

over 60 kilometers (37 miles). He said that "such a rapid extension of striking range and remarkable improvement of striking capability will provide a great change and advantage in the land operations of our army," according to KCNA. Kim said various operational and tactical missile systems and powerful multiple rocket launcher systems are also scheduled to be deployed along the border.

North Korea's artillery systems draw less outside attention than its ballistic missiles whose launches are banned under U.N. Security Council resolutions. But the country already deploys many artillery guns near the border with South Korea, posing a serious threat to Seoul, the South Korean capital that has 10 million people and is about 40 to 50 kilometers (25 to 30 miles) from the border.

KCNA said Kim on Thursday rode on

the destroyer Choe Hyon to review its maneuverability off North Korea's west coast. Kim ordered authorities to hand over the ship to the navy in mid-June as scheduled, after appreciating all the tests for the destroyer's operational commissioning progressed smoothly, according to KCNA. KCNA photos showed Kim's teenage daughter on the destroyer as well, in the latest public activity with her father. One photo showed her standing behind her father as he spoke to navy sailors, and another showed them eating a meal with the crew on the destroyer. South Korea's spy service said last month she could be considered Kim's heir. The destroyer, which was unveiled with great fanfare last year, is North Korea's largest and most advanced warship. North Korea later unveiled a second destroyer of the same class.

David Attenborough, the excited but hushed voice of nature programs, turns 100

DALLAS. (Agency)

The BBC is hosting a party for David Attenborough at the Royal Albert Hall. Cinemas are playing his nature films. Friends have spent weeks lavishing praise on the man and his work. But the world's most famous wildlife presenter is likely to be uncomfortable with all the attention as he celebrates his 100th birthday on Friday, said Alastair Fothergill, the producer of some of Attenborough's most well-known documentaries.

"He's always been very clear to all of us that work with him: 'Remember, the animals are the stars, I'm not,'" Fothergill told The Associated Press. "So, yes, surprisingly for one of the most famous men on the planet, he doesn't like being famous at all."

Glorious gorillas But Attenborough has had to accept the accolades this week as scientists, politicians and conservationists celebrated the man who has brought frolicking gorillas, breaching whales and tiny poisonous frogs into living rooms around the world for more than 70 years. Through BBC programs such as Life on Earth, The Private Life of Plants and The Blue Planet, Attenborough has illuminated the beauty, ferocity and sometimes downright weirdness of nature in a hushed melodic voice that conveys his own awe at what he is witnessing. Viewers who might never leave their hometowns were transported to the Himalayas, the Amazon and the unexplored forests of Papua New Guinea. But behind the stunning images was an attention to scientific accuracy that helped teach people about complex subjects like evolution, animal behavior and biodiversity. And as the evidence mounted, he began to sound the alarm about climate change, ocean plastic and other human-caused threats to the planet. That helped people understand not only how life evolved but, more importantly, why we have to protect it, said Ben Garrod, an evolutionary biologist at the University of East Anglia and himself a broadcaster who has worked alongside Attenborough. Attenborough, Garrod believes, initially saw himself as a neutral observer but was compelled to speak out when he saw that politicians, business leaders and the public weren't taking the emergency seriously. "He is showing you the majesty, the ferocity, the fragility of the natural world. He shouldn't have ever had to have turned to policymaking and advocacy," Garrod said. "I think it's very easy for a lot of people to say, 'He should have done it sooner. Why didn't he act 20 years, 30 years, 40 years ago?'" Garrod then asked: "Why didn't we?"

Fond of fossils from the start Born in London on May 8, 1926, the same year as the late Queen Elizabeth II, Attenborough was raised on the grounds of what is now the University of Leicester, where his father was a senior leader.

Sudan was already at war and hungry, now its farmers are hit by another conflict

OMDURMAN. (Agency)

Two years after Sudan's war forced him from his land, Omer al-Hassan returned to rebuild his farm. But now a new conflict in the Middle East threatens to push him deeper into financial loss and food insecurity as fuel and fertilizer prices rise.

Al-Hassan and other farmers in Sudan are bracing for an expensive planting season in the weeks ahead. Some told The Associated Press they are reducing production or not planting at all -- dangerous news for a country where three years of war have left millions hungry. The Iran war has "affected everything related to agriculture," al-Hassan said as he and others pulled onions from the ground. They had spent two months clearing the weed-choked land, "plowed the soil and we said God bless, and even then we struggled so much, one had to sometimes skip a meal." He and 10 other farmers who work his land said they can't handle agricultural costs without government support, forcing cuts in production and rationing of fertilizer on his farm that also produces potatoes and

tomatoes. Another farmer, Mohammed al-Badri, said he could afford to plant only half his farm because of the rising costs: "The rest of it is nothing." The Gulf region, where hundreds of commercial ships have been stranded for weeks because of Iran's grip on the Strait of Hormuz, provides over half of Sudan's fertilizer that's imported by sea. And fuel prices have shot up by around 30%. Experts warn of a "dangerous chain reaction" Sorghum, Millet, Sesame. These staple crops for Sudan are now at risk.

Farmers already stressed by the war at home between Sudan's military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces are now watching costs rise for fertilizer, gasoline to power farm equipment and diesel for irrigation pumps. The rising costs have created "a dangerous reality" for farmers who will struggle without government intervention, said Abdoun Berqawi, a farmer in Gezira, one of the country's main food-producing regions. Berqawi said a 50-kilogram (110-pound) bag of urea fertilizer now costs about \$50, up from \$11 the same period last year. Fuel for tractors has risen

from \$2.50 to \$8 per gallon. Officials in Sudan's agriculture ministry didn't immediately respond to requests for details on how they are addressing the crisis. A member of the military media



accompanied the AP during its visit, including during interviews. The AP retains full editorial control of its content. The Iran war has triggered a "dangerous chain reaction ... at the wrong moment" as farmers prepare for planting season, said Melaku Yirga, Mercy Corps vice president

for the Africa region, who recently visited Sudan's provinces of Kassala and Gedaref, another top food-producing region.

"People are buying less food, cutting or skipping meals, selling assets and taking greater risks just to survive," Yirga said. "Mothers are being forced to make painful choices about who gets to eat the little food that is available, while some families are resorting to leaves or animal feed just to get by." And farmers who took bank loans risk jail if poor crop yields leave them unable to repay, said Merghany Omar, a farmer in al-Matammah in River Nile province. He said onion farming, a local staple, no longer covers planting costs there. All of this is occurring alongside existing vulnerabilities including currency depreciation, said Samy Guessabi, country director for Action Against Hunger in Sudan.

People in some of the country's most remote areas, Kordofan, White Nile, Darfur and Blue Nile, are hurting the most where "agricultural zones are remote and poorly connected," he said.